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Vol. VII 1985-86 No. 3

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CONTENTS

PAGE

Notes and News 135

The Importance of the Peterborough Manuscripts
Dorothy Owen 139

Medieval Bridges in Northamptonshire
Peter Goodfellow 143

Lesser Known Poets of Northamptonshire: (i) Mildmay Fane
Trevor Hold 159

The Development of Inland Navigation on the River Nene in the Eighteenth Century
J. D. Alsop 161

National Politics and the Local Community in the Eighteenth Century; the Northampton Election of 1734
David Paton 164

Child Workers in the Victorian Countryside: the Case of Northamptonshire
Pamela Horn 173

Old Soldiers in Victorian Northamptonshire 186

'A County Parliament': the First Northamptonshire County Council
Peter Gordon 188

Old Kettering and its Defenders
Tony Ireson 196

Book Reviews 203

All communications regarding articles in this and future isues should be addressed to R. L. Greenall, the Hon. Editor, Adult Education Department, University of Leicester

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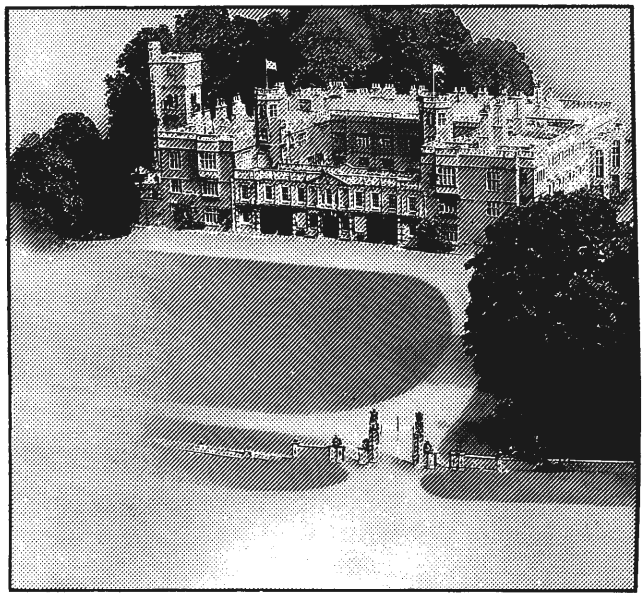

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NOTES AND NEWS

The day of our 1984 Autumn lecture was gloriously sunny and crisp: a day, if ever there was one, to spend outdoors. Yet not one of us who turned up in the Great Hall of St. Andrew's Hospital last October 27 can have regretted foregoing that pleasure. We were treated to a lecture quite out of the ordinary run of the mill. Reflecting on the theme of journalism and contemporary history in the light of the Falklands War, Max Hastings was simply superb. He disarmed us at the start by saying that he, like any good pragmatist, inclined more towards the 'cock-up' than the 'conspiracy' theory of history but for this listener the day's pleasures lay in the devastating series of insights and revelations he recounted from the start to the finish of his talk. The fact that Mr Hastings is an expert on modern military matters and a raconteur of enviable fluency and humour was a bonus. But appallingly frank he was. What Thatcher supporters made of it I do not know: perhaps that you can't make omelettes without breaking eggs. He first startled us with the information that when Sir Henry Leach eagerly committed the navy in response to the government's inquiry whether it was up to a reconquest of the Falklands, the chiefs of the other armed forces were appalled. Mr Hastings left us in no doubt that the admiral's action was motivated by a desire to take a heaven-sent chance to halt the rundown of the senior service. If that was so, the navy was to pay for it heavily. On the *Belgrano* he made it plain that it was not a danger to the Task Force when it was sunk: it was a *strategic* threat, and its sinking improved the odds. Mr Hastings saw no moral issue in this, despite the fact that war had not been declared. He was sharp and frank about British failings. *HMS Sheffield* was a failure as an air defence ship because it could not do what an air defence ship is supposed to do: defend itself against air attack. *Sea Wolf* and *Sea Dart* were not a success against the Argentine Air Force: so much for all that expensive technology. The naval Task Force had to be kept well out of air-strike range of the enemy.

For Mr Hastings the most decisive day of all was 20 May, the day before the amphibious force got ashore. When doing so it was extremely vulnerable, and was subjected to heavy air attacks. Mr Hastings made it clear that the landing was reported too optimistically: Fleet Street and TV misinformed the public for the good of the cause, and even today most people do not realise what a close run thing it was. The politicians forced Brigadier Thompson to attack Goose Green before he was ready. By 25 or 26 May the Cabinet were desperate for a victory, and under political pressure the Brigadier committed 2 Para to attack without sufficient artillery and armour. They pulled the chestnuts out of the fire superbly, but at a cost. British equipment was like the curate's egg, good in parts. Food, clothing, artillery were good; the self-loading rifle, the soldier's basic weapon, was not. The Argentines had fully automatic weapons and it was a good job they lacked the qualities to use them. The navy lost three frigates, unable to defend themselves against Exocet. Although the Task Force had a superb 'sharp end' Mr Hastings made it clear that the 'Fire Brigades', the forces

backing up the commandos and marines were not in the same class: they did not have the same sense of urgency, and bad communications had much to do with the *Sir Galahad* disaster. Interestingly, Mr Hastings left us in no doubt that one day the SAS will have to be properly integrated into the British Army. This was the best and most revealingly frank lecture this writer has heard for some time. It had the authenticity that comes from one who has been on the spot and seen things at first hand (the first man into Port Stanley!), and is also a historian, who has to reflect on it all in the tranquillity of his study some time after the events, with more evidence at his disposal than is available at the time. He was being a revisionist in front of us, and fascinating it was.

R.L.G.

Notes on contributors

Dorothy Owen is Keeper of the Archives, Cambridge University.

Peter Goodfellow is a retired lecturer who enjoys local history, especially the medieval period. The bridges and markets of the county have been a main interest.

Trevor Hold, a composer and poet, is senior lecturer in the Department of Adult Education, University of Leicester.

J. D. Alsop is in the History Department, McMaster University, Ontario, Canada.

David Paton was an art historian, educated at Charterhouse and Magdalene College, Cambridge. He was killed in a motor accident in Spain on 14 August 1985, aged 24 years.

Pamela Horn teaches at Oxford Polytechnic and is the author of many books and articles on the history of English rural life.

Peter Gordon is a Professor in the Institute of Education, University of London. He is at present preparing Vol. 2 of the Papers of the 5th Earl Spencer for publication by the Society.

Tony Ireson is a native of Kettering and was a journalist there for many years.

Acknowledgements

The Editor wishes to thank all who have contributed to this number, in particular Miss M. Arnold of Northamptonshire Libraries and Ms J. Hodgkinson of Northampton Museum and Art Gallery.

Cover

The delivery of the Bassett-Lowke engine 'Blacovesley' to the miniature railway of C. W. Bartholomew at Blakesley Hall, Northampton, in 1909. W. J. Bassett-Lowke and Squire Bartholomew are posed left and right respectively of the engine. The original photograph is in the possession of Mr R. Chapman of Abthorpe, Towcester, by whose courtesy it is here reproduced. Miniature railway buffs among our readers may like to know that there is an account of this railway in P. B. Kingston's *Blakesley Hall and Its Miniature Railway*, 1981 (with 16 illustrations).

OBITUARIES

Local historians in Northamptonshire will have been saddened to have heard of the death last year of *Mrs Helen Belgion* of Titchmarsh, at the age of 86. Before retiring there she had been the owner and headmistress for 25 years of Westwood House, a private school in Peterborough. When over 80 she published a well-researched history of her parish, *Titchmarsh Past and Present*, 1979.

Dr Curt Bühler, emeritus research fellow at the Pierpoint Morgan Library, and a member of this society, died in New York Hospital at the age of 80 on 2 August 1985 after a brief illness. Dr Bühler was one of the world's leading authorities on the art and history of the printed book, and especially on incunabula, or books produced in the fifteenth century, when the art of printing was in its infancy. He worked in the Morgan Library's department of printed books for 52 years, and was a past chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies.

Mr Tom Litchfield, a frequent speaker on historical and antiquarian matters to groups in the Barnwell and Oundle districts died this summer (1985). I believe attempts are being made to have his local history of Lilford published.

R.L.G.

THE REV. J. H. HOLDICH AND HIS FAMILY

The following information on the subject of Mr Ireson's piece in our last number has been supplied by one of our readers, Mr John L. Gilbert of Wansford.

I was extremely interested to read the article in *N.P.&P.* Vol. VII, No. 2 entitled "A Victorian Rector and his Village", about the Rev. J. H. Holdich at Bulwick. The Rector's daughter Evelyn and her husband Alfred Henry Dashwood came to live at Stibbington House after their marriage in 1892. The family had connections with the village going back to the 17th century.

I remember Mrs Dashwood well. She always got to know who was ill in the village, and packed a "parish basket" full of titbits which she had delivered by her gardener. She ran her own Sunday school, took the children for walks, and presented the church with an organ from Bulwick, and a prayer desk.

After leaving Bulwick, J. H. Holdich passed his last few months at his daughter's home, where he died in 1893. His widow, Catherine Jane, survived him by two years, and is remembered through her book "Wothorpe-by-Stamford" which she wrote in 1880 and dedicated to her husband and daughter. Their only grandchild, John Maydwell Dashwood died in 1902 when only nine, and all three are buried at Stibbington.

Mr and Mrs Dashwood lived at Stibbington House for 35 years as tenants, and moved out in 1927 when the owner required it. Leaving her beloved Stibbington House saddened Mrs Dashwood, and she died after only a year in a new home at Luffenham. Her husband died at Stamford in 1937.

**Since receiving this piece I have heard that Mr Gilbert has died. His papers on local history, notes and indexes will go to the Huntingdonshire Record Office, in accordance with his wish that this should be done. (Ed)*

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PETERBOROUGH MANUSCRIPTS*

DOROTHY OWEN

Almost seventy years ago that great medievalist, and most humane of scholars, Alexander Hamilton Thompson, talking to members of the Northampton and Oakham Archaeological Society, spoke of the intense life to serve which the great church and its surrounding buildings at Peterborough were constructed, and said in passing, that its history had never been fully written. This is no longer quite true, as the work of Dr King, and of the late Mr W. T. Mellows, in the Record Society's volumes and elsewhere, can show, yet much remains to be done. To help towards this Mr and Mrs Mellows endowed the second series of Peterborough volumes, preparations for which began ten years ago, and one of which is now in members' hands.

It thus seems appropriate that we should consider afresh what is so important about this institution whose records we are now making available, and how they came into existence. I am not in the same league as Hamilton Thompson, whom I knew and loved at Lincoln, almost in his last days, but I *will* try to tell you, as he might have done, why your Society is beginning to publish these interesting and important books.

Peterborough is one of the earliest monastic houses to be founded in Eastern England, in a situation on the fen edge, where its original endowments and later acquisitions enabled it to play a leading part in the development of the area. The drainage and reclamation of the fen lands came first, followed by the exploitation of its site, which allowed navigation upstream as far as Northampton, and downstream, via the system of meres, to King's Lynn and the sea. Trade and transport went hand in hand and the Abbey commanded sales of corn, timber, and even stone, and made rich profits in its market and quayage tolls.

Peterborough was a Benedictine house, following the same rule and way of life as most of the monasteries founded here before the Norman conquest. It was independent of all other monastic houses although its abbot, as a feudal tenant, held his lands of the King. It lay in the diocese of Lincoln, the bishops of which gave benediction to the abbots on their election, and from time to time visited the house, so that it never had the same sort of autonomy of all ecclesiastical authority as was achieved by the abbeys of St. Alban's and St. Edmundsbury. Like other Benedictine houses it was ruled by an *abbot,* who was elected by the monks, and who represented the public face of the house to the world. He had a splendid household of many servants, and to this the sons of local gentry, and of the leading tenants of the abbey came to learn their manners and to serve their apprenticeship to the world. Here too came important lay and clerical guests, to dine as they passed, or to seek a night's lodging. Here were discussed the politics of the locality and the region, and here were concerted proceedings in the local courts or in King's Bench, like those which concerned the stoppage of navigation on the Well Stream near Wisbech, by which the trade of Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire was completely blocked in the early fourteenth century. At times, too, the abbot sat in Parliament as a peer and was privileged to wear a mitre like a bishop, and though as a simple monk he had regularly followed the rules of the house, and kept the monastic hours, he now no longer did so, but had his own chapel and did not share the monastic meals.

* First delivered as a lecture to this Society in May 1985.

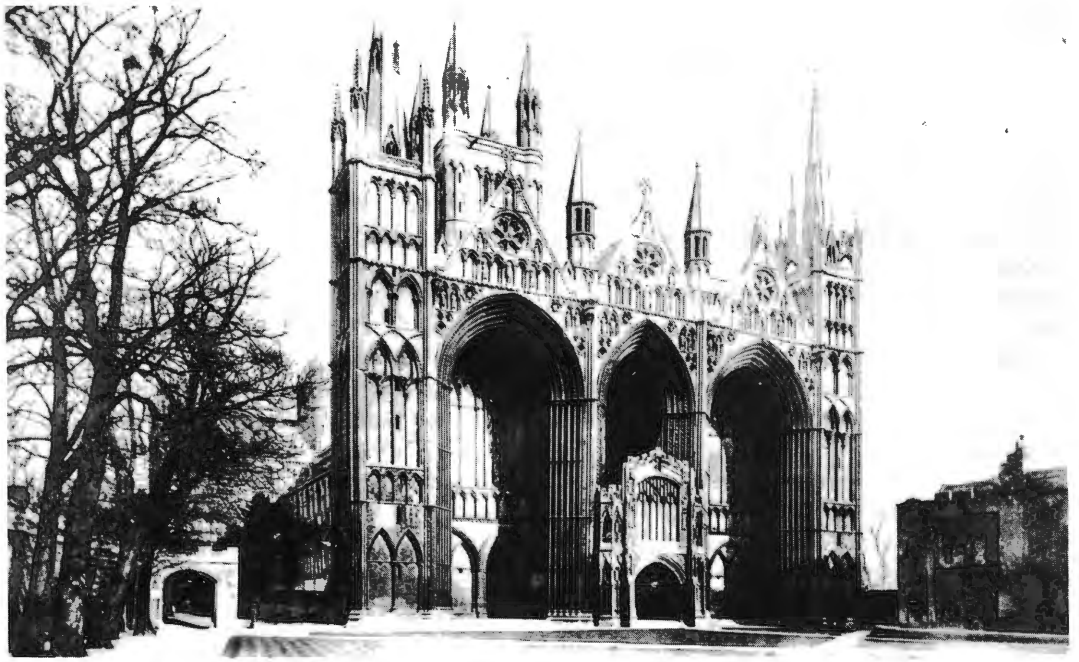

PLATE 1: THE GREAT WEST FRONT OF THE ABBEY CHURCH, now Peterborough Cathedral *[Northamptonshire Libraries]*

Within the monastery the abbot appointed all officials and these took an oath of obedience to him before taking on office, and hence were called *obedientiaries*. These were senior monks, who ran what one would now call administrative departments. At some point, perhaps early in the twelfth century, the abbot relinquished direct control of all the monastic estates, and divided them with the house. He retained a very large endowment but funds, or accounts were created, mostly permanent ones, from the rest. These were intended to provide for specific objects, the church and its services, the domestic buildings, the food and clothing of the monks, and so on. Each of these funds was the responsibility of an obedientiary, who had an office, and sometimes a whole building for his affairs. There were several clerks and sometimes secular workmen, on his staff. For these he paid wages, provided mass pennies, and bought the materials in which they worked. His funds to do this were provided by the estates of his office, which he himself administered, collecting rents, repairing buildings, leasing holdings, and each year he submitted an account of receipts and expenditure to the audit of the abbot. Any surplus he could show at the end of the account was paid over to the abbey's receiver.

We know what offices were held by Peterborough obedientiaries, but very few of their account rolls have survived. You will all remember the book of William Morton the almoner, volume xvi in your series, and will know that this is a rough account book which shows what sort of payments and purchases were the *almoner's* business, for the novices, the poor, and the boys in the almonry school. The *cellarer* controlled food and drink and its preparation; he bought not only food but fuel to cook it and pots to cook it in; he or his representatives frequented the fairs at Ely and Sturbridge, as well as the Bridge fair and market at Peterborough itself. His staff included a *granger* who collected and ground the staple wheat. The *sacrist*, too, was much in touch with the outer world for the church, its fabric, and its services were his business. The *chamberlain* bought shoes and clothing for the monks, provided them with baths and barbering, arranged the making up of the clothes and

shoes, and had dirty clothes washed, so laundresses, sempstresses, cobblers and barbers (out-workers, one hopes) were among the servants whom he fed, clothed, and paid. There was an *infirmarer* with his own building, where he cared for, and treated sick and elderly monks, a *pittancer* who provided the sweets, comfits and nuts with which on special occasions normal meals were enlivened, the *precentor* who arranged for the weekly readers and cared first for the service-books and then other books. Since study was one of the pre-requisites of the monastic life there was much demand for the precentor's books; the buying of parchment, the writing and illuminating of books, and, eventually the acquisition of texts already written, formed a large part of his business.

There were other smaller offices about which we know very little, the *guest-master,* the *refectorian,* the *warden of the Lady Chapel* have left few records. Superintending the whole monastic life, under the abbot, was the *prior*, the leading obedientiary who was the abbot's deputy in spiritual matters and in discipline.

Scanty though the remains of the account rolls are, they are full of interest for the medieval trade and economy of the region, for building techniques, even for cookery. Perhaps they tell us less about the daily life of the choir monks, who held no office and whose chief business was the regular devotion of the monastic hours, varied by study, and even, in some promising cases, by a spell at Oxford. We know more about their lives from the Rule itself, or from the occasional detail which emerges at a visitation. The surviving visitation documents for Peterborough have been published by Hamilton Thompson in two series of volumes in the Lincoln Record Society and from them it is obvious that occasional indulgences were being abused or elevated into sacred rules, that choir monks slipped food to their town friends at convenient moments, that young monks felt themselves put on because meals times were irregular, or the table beer too small. The burden of nearly all the complaints was that the abbot was depriving the house of its privileges and abusing his powers and it is time, therefore that we looked again at the central position of the abbot to see how in fact it was used, not only in the life of the house itself, but also in the economy of the whole region.

The basis of the abbot's power was, three fold. He wielded an immense economic power as an owner of arable and woodland, as controller of the trade routes by which central and western England reached Lynn, western Europe and the Baltic, and as a large-scale employer of bailiffs, receivers and other lay-officials in the area. As owner of the soke of Peterborough (the hundreds of Nassaburgh, Polebrook and Navisford) he was lord of an extensive jurisdictional liberty, which gave him a ready-made following of lay tenants. Finally by command of considerable spiritualities, rectories, and large tithe portions which were themselves valuable properties, but also sources of influence, he created an appanage which was to last until long after the Abbey itself had disappeared.

These sources of power are reflected in the lively household I have described and in the abbot-centred narratives of the various chronicles of the house. These are an unparalleled series beginning in the late eleventh century with a special Peterborough version of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle going on through Hugh Candidus (who seems to have been called "White" because he *bled*, that is, he must have been a haemophiliac), and ending only in the fourteenth century. The feats and glories of the abbots are particularly well brought out in the last of them, usually attributed to William of Whittlesey, when great play is made of such things as the great expenditure at the funeral of Abbot Adam of Boothby, in 1338, when 250 lbs. of wax were provided for candles, as well as 45 quarters of grain and 1000 herrings for distribution to the poor, and, for the funeral feast, bread, ale, wine, 13 varieties of fish including salmon, sturgeon, sea-wolves, plaice, congers and whelks, 200 ells of linen for table cloths and napkins, troughs, bowls, wooden wine cups and 1400 pewter dishes.

The abbots' public lives are equally well displayed in the registers of their acts, which have

copies of law-suit proceedings, letters and administrative documents, lists of their books, plates and jewels, examples of gaol-delivery records and sessions of the peace within the soke of Peterborough, besides copies of important title deeds and all sorts of national documents. Adam of Boothby's register for example, goes from "how alms are collected in the abbot's hall," via an agreement reached with the neighbouring religious house of Thorney about a road leading from Eye to Thorney, a narrative of a dispute between Thomas Wake, who was a tenant of the abbey by knight service, and the prior of Spalding, to the royal ordinance setting up staple towns in 1332. No other monastic house has such a splendid series of registers as this, and they alone will show why the publication of these Peterborough records is so important.

Finally, to conclude, I should remind you that although at the Dissolution the whole monastic administration seemed to disappear, the influence within your own county of its estates and jurisdiction has continued until our own time. The newly established bishop and dean and chapter of the Henrician foundation at Peterborough carried on the traditions and administrative ways of the old monastery and lived in its buildings. We even know how this took place, for Mr Mellows was able to trace the story from the accounts kept by the first warden of the new cathedral's endowments, who was the last prior of the abbey. We can see the vicars choral and lay clerks who replaced the clerical and musical staff of the abbey, being castigated for the same faults of frivolity, unsuitable occupations and reluctance to keep their hours, as their monastic predecessors. The thought I should like to leave with you is that the monastic life of medieval Peterborough is not a water-tight compartment, completely cut off from the present day, but has been one of the most powerful influences in the evolution of the present-day county and region. You cannot afford to ignore anything which will help you to understand this process of evolution.

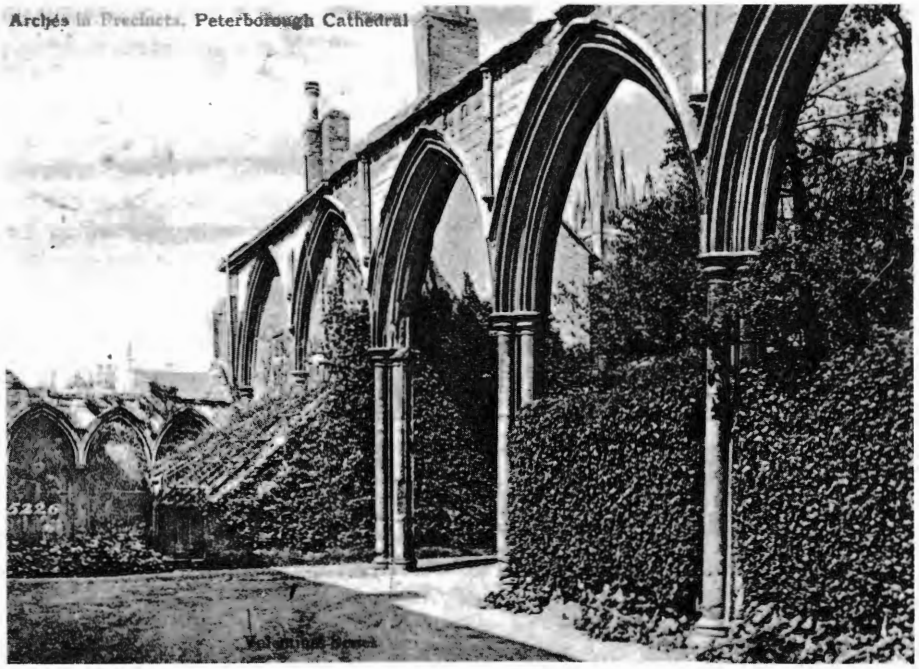

PLATE 2: THE RUINS OF THE INFIRMARER'S HALL AND LODGING in the cathedral close, from a photograph of 1908 *[Northamptonshire Libraries]*

MEDIEVAL BRIDGES IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

PETER GOODFELLOW

It was Sir Frank Stenton who observed that "it was not by the making of new roads, but by the building of bridges that [medieval] Englishmen set about improving their communications."[1] The gazetteer which follows lists over ninety places where documentary evidence has been found for the existence of a bridge at some period between 1066 and 1540, and no doubt there are others that are known to those with special local knowledge, as well as some that have left no record. This fully confirms the observation quoted above, for it is no great exaggeration to claim that, over the wider rivers and streams of the County, where there is a road bridge today there was also a bridge there or thereabouts at some time during the Middle Ages. Over the Nene between Northampton and Peterborough the only gaps in the record are at St. Peter's Bridge (on the Bedford Road, one and a half miles from Northampton), at White Mills near Earls Barton, at Cotterstock and at Elton. The last of these is open to question because although in 1846 it was proposed to build a wooden bridge near the ford it was to be at "a place called Brigford", suggesting a bridge was there at an early date.[2] There is also the possibility of a lost bridge. The place name Botolph Bridge is marked on the O.S. map south of the Nene and to the west of Peterborough and Dr C. Hart has argued that a bridge across the river there was part of the route to the south for the monks of Thorney Abbey.[3]

For the River Welland between Market Harborough and Stamford no record for Little Bowden or for Middle Bridge near Gretton has been located but the latter is marked on a late sixteenth century estate map and the present modest structure has a datestone, much eroded, of 1607. The length of the River Ise from Great Oxendon to Warkton is complete, with the exception of Rushton (which still has Sir Charles Cokayne's bridge of 1641), but below Warkton to the Nene only Finedon bridge near Wellingborough has so far been identified with some certainty although the "Irnewellebrigge" entered under Great Harrowden was probably on the road from that town to Finedon. Harpers Brook has only Risingbridge and Brancey bridge confirmed with Brigstock doubtful, but the siting of all the villages on the left bank together with the making of the extensive series of medieval parks of Brigstock and Drayton (described by J. M. Steane in *N.P.&P.*, Vol. V, No. 3) may have a bearing on this. Records mentioning Blatherwycke, Apethorpe and Woodnewton on the Willow Brook remain untraced as, surprisingly, does King's Cliffe.

Sources of Information

Evidence for the existence of medieval bridges has been found in a variety of sources, some of the earliest coming from ecclesiastical records. The church, because of its widespread land holdings had a direct and practical interest in bridges, but the symbolic importance of the bridge as a link and safe crossing was used to describe the church itself and it was taught that giving towards the work of bridge building or maintenance was especially meritorious. This was encouraged by granting remission of penance to those who gave "of your charity something from the goods which God had given you for the building and repair of the bridge."[4] These indulgences offered to those crossing the bridge on their journeys, or living

[1] "The Road System in Medieval England", *Economic History Review*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1936, p. 6.
[2] N.R.O., *Bridge Papers*, No. 9.
[3] *Northants Past and Present*, Vol. VI, 1981-82, No. 5, p. 245.
[4] *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, (Lincoln Record Society), Vol. 6, p. 206.

in the town nearby, were usually for one to three years validity, and the alms were collected either at the bridge or in the town. Hugh of Wells, Bishop of Lincoln in the early thirteenth century granted indulgences for the Nene bridges at Wellingborough, Thrapston and Wansford as well as for those at Aynho, Rockingham and Brampton. The presence of a chapel on many bridges or a hermitage nearby combined religious duty with practical advantage, for travellers could say, or have said prayers for their safety while the alms could be used for the repair of the bridge as well as for the priest or hermit. There were bridge hermitages at Northampton, Thrapston and Old Stratford, while as late as 1532 Nicholas Wodhull directed his executors to repair the hermitage at Banbury (in Grimsbury, then in Northamptonshire) and to "place therein an honest man to pray for him and his friends."[5]

The monks were credited with being great builders of bridges, and there is one unusual record from the twelfth century when William de Albini gave woodland to the Cistercians at Pipewell near "the high road leading from Rokyngham to Northampton with a right to erect and maintain a bridge of two arches, forty eight feet long and sixteen feet wide."* Martin, Abbot of Peterborough from 1133 to 1155 built a bridge in the town but the first bridge across the Nene there may have been that built by Abbot Godfrey in 1308. It was destroyed by ice that winter and rebuilt a year later "higher and stronger". The same abbot was concerned in a 1329 enquiry into the right of the abbey to take tolls at Oundle. He claimed that there was no common right of passage through the vill and that his predecessors had "a licence to make fast and build two bridges and diverse causeways" and that they had been entitled to "thorough toll" from a time "whereof the memory did not exist". The bridges over the Nene at Irthlingborough and Ditchford still have stones set in the piers carved with the keys of St. Peter. As the manor of Irthlingborough belonged to the abbey the monks would have been responsible for both bridges up to the boundary stones. At Ditchford a second stone on the same pier bears a Katherine wheel, the mark of Irchester manor and it is probable that, although Ditchford bridge may date from about the sixteenth century (though much repaired), the carved stones come from an earlier structure.

William de Albini was not the only lord to encourage the making of a bridge, for in 1358 the clerk to the Black Prince was ordered to supply two oaks to the men of Weldon so that they could build bridges at each end of their town – less welcome would have been the provision of more oak to make a pillory and a "cukstol". Later on Sir Thomas Latimer began the stone bridge at Braybrooke which is still in use. His widow left forty shillings in her will for its completion, giving us the only *definite* date we have for the building of a bridge in these centuries.

Bridge maintenance

The constant need to keep a bridge in repair was recognised at least as early as the eighth century when their maintenance was regarded as an obligation shared by all free men. A different emphasis is shown in the Magna Carta clause "No village or individual shall be compelled to build bridges over rivers except those who from old were bound to do so."[6] This exemption was acknowledged in 1240 when Henry III sent to the sheriffs of sixteen counties, including Northamptonshire, requiring bridges to be repaired by all those who by custom and law were obliged to do so. In 1253 twenty two counties were ordered to "build or repair bridges so that the king might pass freely with his falcons over all the rivers."[7] In 1373 Edward III added that fords should be marked out with stakes[8] and, faced with these

* Details of this and other references not footnoted are given in the Gazetteer.

[5] R. M. Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites of England*, 1914, p. 64.

[6] *Calendar Close Rolls*, 24 Hen. III mId.

[7] C. T. Flower, *Public Works in Medieval Law*, Selden Society, Vol. II, 1915, p. xxiv.

[8] J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, 1931, p. 42.

demands the sheriffs probably did not concern themselves unduly with the spirit of Magna Carta.

In the fourteenth century there are frequent references to disputes over the repair of bridges, sometimes with the conclusion that no one was responsible, as at the unidentified "Eresford" on the borders of Northampton and Buckingham, where it was said to be only a plank, "placed there from devotion of persons crossing."[9] The Abbot of Bec was less fortunate at Weedon *(see Gazetteer)* but often the duty of repair was held to rest with a nearby township. The hundred court decided that Duddington should repair their bridge (the bridge is still there and the boundary is marked by a plate carrying the names, not of the counties but of Duddington and Tixover in Leicestershire). Great Doddington had to repair Hardwater, but Harlestone and Church Brampton shared the task at their boundary stream. Earlier in the century the men of Cotterstock and Glapthorn were distrained for failing to repair a bridge, as were the men of Fotheringhay for neglect of the bridge at Walcotforth on the road from Oundle to Stamford. It seems probable that both of these were on the road called Stamford Way that passes between Cotterstock and Glapthorn and to the west of Fotheringhay. In many cases alms-giving evidently failed as a sufficient source of income, for in the fourteenth century there are frequent examples of the right to take pontage, or toll being granted, usually for a limited period of three years, renewed if it was found to be necessary. At Wansford in 1332 the "good men of the town' were permitted to collect alms in churches for the repair of their bridge,[10] but a year later they were granted pontage on saleable goods passing over it,[11] a grant that was renewed several times in the century. The money raised by these means may sometimes have failed to find its proper use, for at Old Stratford in 1400 the hermit, John Blawemuster, was to collect the dues but overseers were appointed to see that the repairs were carried out.

The money for maintenance of the more important bridges may have been "secularised" in this way but the charitable motive found an outlet for there are many examples in wills of bequests for this purpose. One of the earliest is that of William de Pavelli who left money for the repair of "Cademan" (Cappenham) and Hulcote bridges. In the next century Matilda of Flore left sixpence to the South and West bridges of Northampton[12] while, at the end of our period, Kislingbury had a legacy of "a heyfor of five years with a white baby". The outstanding will in this respect is that of Thomas Bukke of Northampton who, in 1500, left money to eight bridges over or near to the Welland. Sometimes a gift was withheld, for in 1295 the Dean of Stamford was to compel the widow and executors of Gilbert of Chesterton to pay the forty shillings he had left to the bridge of Wansford.

Bridge names

Grants of land and the forest perambulations use bridges as boundary marks and the names themselves are often more interesting than the prosaic use of an adjacent place name. In his account of the bounds of Whittlewood Forest Baker mentions Newbrigge, Litelheyebrigge, Lurtebrokbrigge and Huberdisbrigge, all on the Towcester to Brackley road.[13] Huberd was not the only one to give his name, for there is Turtle or Thurkil's bridge over the Welland and Gunnildesbrigge (now Gunhole in Ashton), while the recently rebuilt crossing at Bulwick, once known as Swine Bridge was originally named after Sweyn. The Lady Bridge near Milton Malsor keeps its old name but the Childrebrigges at Barnwell and Brackley do not. Dove as the early form of Dow is questionable, but Goose or Geese bridge on the

[9] *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, Vol. III, 208.
[10] *Victoria County History*, Vol. 2, p. 537 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 6 Edw III).
[11] *ibid.* (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 7 Edw III).
[12] N.R.O., Records of the Feoffees Charity of St. Giles
[13] G. Baker, *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, Vol. I, 1822-41, p. 76.

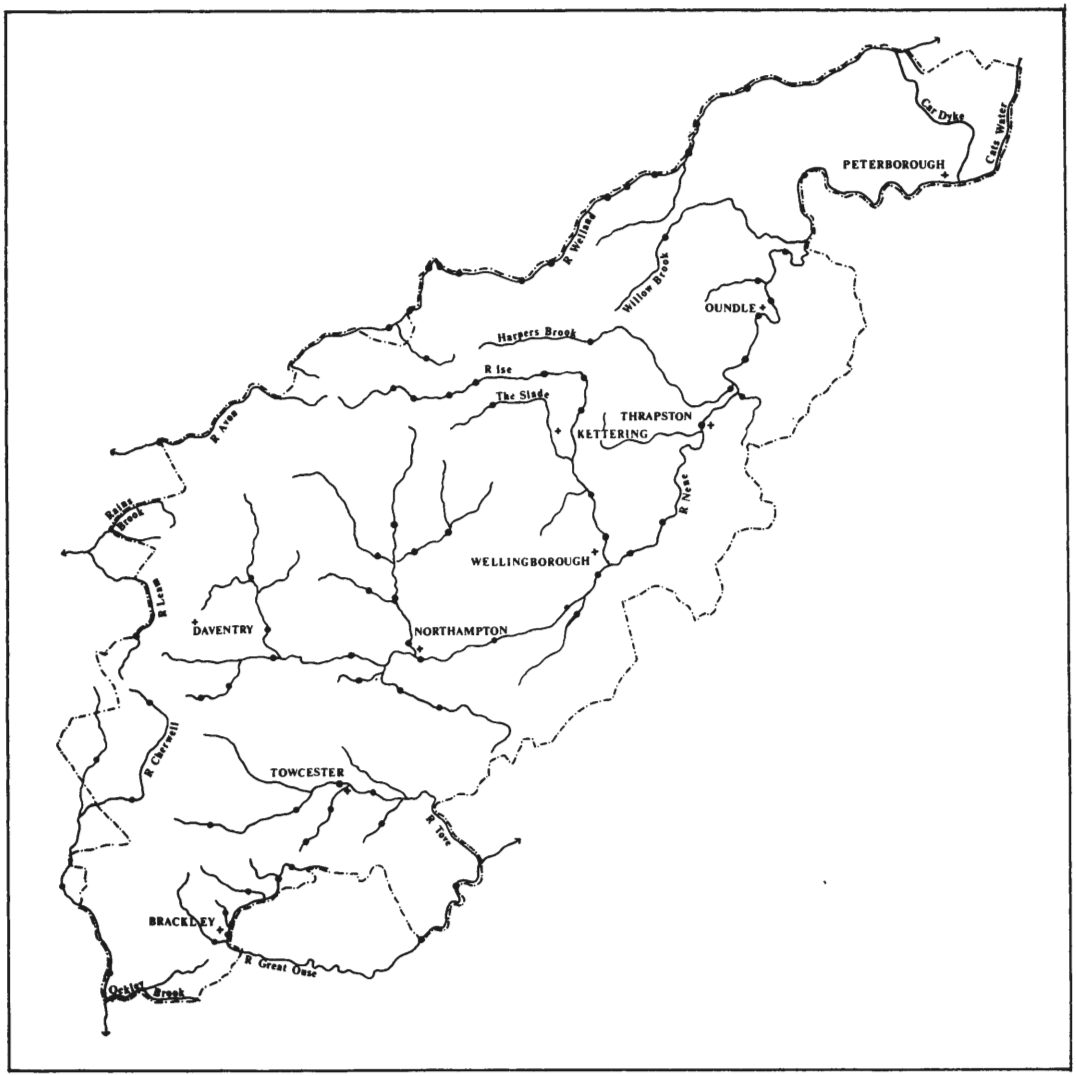

FIG. 1. THE MAP INDICATES THE RIVER SYSTEM OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND SHOWS THE POSITION OF MEDIEVAL BRIDGES THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN A MAP REFERENCE IN THE GAZETTEER

Watling Street south of Weedon must surely derive its name from the miracle of St. Werburgh who banished the wild geese from the fields. Anglo-Saxon charters mention stone bridges at Everdon and Fawsley and also a brook called the Blythe, while on the lane from Rothersthorpe to Kislingbury is the "pontem de Bly". An Old English name for a stream was "Blǽe" (Blythe).

Wood and Stone Bridges

Field names, recorded at a later date, sometimes suggest the building material used, as with Boarden bridge Field at Woodnewton and Stone Bridge Furlong at Strixton, but there is very

little contemporary evidence. Apart from the two Saxon references to stone (both may have been clapper bridges like the existing one at Bugbrooke) we must use the physical evidence to give a total of ten medieval stone bridges for which there is proof. No doubt many of the smaller streams were crossed by foot bridges or planks supplementing a ford but the longer bridges must often have had a timber deck resting on stone piers or wooden supports. The proposed bridge at Pipewell was so much wider than the usual that it is likely to have been of wood. At Peterborough the wood bridge over the Nene was not replaced until 1870, and as five trees were given for its repair in 1628 it seems to have been of that construction from the beginning. Another clue comes at Wellingborough where the Nene bridge was known as Staplesbrig and as the Old English word 'Stapul' meant a post or prop it is possible that the material there was wood. Leland described the bridge at Fotheringhay as being "of timber" and another material has been included in the name "Risinbrige" – a brushwood causeway – on the modern A43 near Little Oakley. The great bridge at Wansford was built, or repaired, with oak in 1233 but was there a stone one built in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, to be replaced by the present massive sixteenth and seventeenth century work? Pontage was granted on numerous occasions indicating the importance of the crossing and there is the possibility that in 1542 the new bridge was subscribed to on a national scale. The Folkestone Churchwardens' accounts for that year include the item "Gevon in reward unto a crying of the King's commission out of Northampton shyre for the making of a bregge there." Although the bridge is not named, Wansford was being rebuilt soon after this date and its position on the great road makes it the most likely candidate. The stone arches at Irthlingborough and Wakerley probably date from the fourteenth century, and are the finest examples of medieval bridge work that the county possesses, but there must have been many more, built to replace wooden structures that have themselves been swept away, sometimes literally.

Existing Medieval Bridges

The chief characteristics of the later medieval stone bridges are well known – they include the pointed arch, often with ribbed construction, large triangular cutwaters that are sometimes extended to the top of the parapet so that they form the refuges needed when the width was only sufficient to allow a wagon to cross. All of these features can be seen in the county, but dating a bridge on this evidence is most uncertain especially as they had to be repaired or rebuilt so often. It is safer and more accurate to say that medieval work is present rather than to describe a structure as a medieval bridge. With this reservation, there are ten bridges in the present county that would qualify. The following summary is based on selected details rather than complete descriptions.

Braybrooke

One of the three arches is almost completely hidden; the others very plain with a small chamfer and no ribs. The two cutwaters have flat tops level with the roadway similar to those on the packhorse bridge close by at Medbourne (Leicestershire) and at Cropredy (Warwickshire). Medbourne has and Cropedy had, post and rail fencing – did Braybroke at one time?

Charwelton (see Plate 1)

A packhorse bridge four and a half feet wide with two pointed arches. The arch rings have a slight chamfer and the cutwater forms a small refuge although the parapet is no more than twelve inches high. The coping stones are of interest in that those downstream are flat topped while upstream they have roll top moulding (a pattern seen on the Triangular bridge at

PLATE 1. CHARWELTON: PACKHORSE BRIDGE

Crowland, Lincs.) Sometimes attributed to the thirteenth century this is probably the nearest we can get to an original medieval bridge in the county.

Collyweston
An attractive bridge but the three arches on the Rutland side were rebuilt with segmental shapes in 1620 and it is possible that the three in Northamptonshire, although they retain the pointed style, were rebuilt at the same time. It has fifteen foot roadway, no refuges or arch ribs. The cutwaters weather back to just below the coping and parallel to it. A doubtful candidate for this group.

Duddington
Widened downstream in 1919 by about six feet. The upstream face shows four pointed arches with chamfered rings but no ribs. The two remaining cutwaters weather back to a point midway up the parapet and the string course is carried round them.

Everdon (see Plate 2)
Although the parapets have been rebuilt, probably in the eighteenth century, this two-arched bridge is one that shows all of the characteristics listed above. The pointed arches have two chamfered rings and are ribbed. The upstream cutwater has a substantial plinth and forms a refuge on the twelve foot roadway. The coping stones downstream and those upstream are different, the former being moulded, and the choice of this pattern resembling that at Charwelton, four miles away, suggests that this could have been the original.

PLATE 2. EVERDON: CHAMFERED ARCH RING AND RIBBED CONSTRUCTION

Geddington (see Plate 3)
Frequent repairs have been necessary which is hardly surprising as its ten foot roadway, until the building of the new bridge and bypass in 1925, carried the A43 between Kettering and Stamford. At a survey in 1926 it was found that the bridge had a foundation of rubble superimposed on a five inch course of pebble and stones under which was a clay cushion twelve inches deep resting on a hard bottom. It was reported then that all the arch faces seemed to have been rebuilt. Three of the arches are pointed with a slight chamfer but the fourth (the second from the south) is semi-circular and has a date stone of 1784. The three large cutwaters form refuges upstream. There is no evidence of a ribbed construction but rebuilding could account for this.

Irthlingborough
Perhaps the best known, certainly the most spectacular of the old bridges, in spite of widening. The main span has ten pointed arches, each with three chamfered arch rings and ribbed construction. The old arches at either end are plain. The original width was about ten feet and there are still five refuges downstream but the widening has removed those which probably existed upstream. Limestone and ironstone has been used in the past and on one cutwater the two stones have been laid alternately producing the banded effect seen on houses in the county. Fortunately the bridge is now by-passed and a concrete viaduct, opened in 1936, carries the A6 across the valley.

Thorpe Waterville
This is almost lost to sight beneath the A605, but the ribs can still be seen underneath and are described by Pevsner as having "three straight across and two oblique".

PLATE 3. GEDDINGTON: CUTWATERS AND REFUGES WITH THE OLD FORD

Thrapston
Looked at from the footbridge downstream there is little that could be regarded as early. Upstream the bridge has been widened in brick but the third and fourth spans from the Islip end have pointed arches with some moulding. The great "sea flood" (as it was described) in 1795 destroyed five of the arches.

Wakerley (see Plate 4)
This was widened in stone by about two feet in the eighteenth century but the five pointed arches can still be seen clearly under the segmental ones upstream and are unchanged downstream. They were built without ribs and the cutwaters weather back and are tapered off just below the coping so there are no refugees although the roadway was only ten feet wide. The county boundary is indicated by carved heads on each side of the second arch from the Rutland end and, as at Collyweston the repairs have been carried out independently by the two counties. Of the three and a half arches in Northants one is dry and it may be that the next was a dry arch at one time leaving three to cross the main stream; the heads being then on the middle arch.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PLATE 4. WAKERLEY: CARVED HEAD THAT PROBABLY MARKED THE NORTHANTS/RUTLAND BOUNDARY, RESET AFTER BRIDGE WIDENING

GAZETTEER OF MEDIEVAL BRIDGES IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

In the following list a brief entry has been made of the earliest reference found with further details in a few cases. The map reference has been given if it has seemed reasonable to think that the medieval bridge was on the site of, or at least close by the present structure. In some instances the reference has been queried while in others it has been omitted because the location is uncertain. The evidence for the early bridges in Northampton has been published in *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 1980.

Abbreviations

Flower	*Public Works in Medieval Law* Ed. C. T. Flower, Selden Society.
Baker	*History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire,* 2 Vols.
Jervoise	*The Ancient Bridges of Mid and Eastern England*
J. Bridges	*The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire,* 2 Vols.
N.R.O.	Northamptonshire Record Office
N.R.S.	Northamptonshire Record Society
P.N.N.	*Place Names of Northamptonshire,* ed. Gover, Mawer and Stenton
Leland	*Itinerary,* ed. L. Toulmin Smith

Arthingworth SP 753813

". . . as the road called Bedford Waye goes to Arthingworth bridge . . ."
Close Rolls 12 Hen. III

Ashley SP 792918

Thomas Bukke of Northampton in his will of c. 1500 left to the bridge of Ashley 3*s.* 4*d.* and the same to that of Medbourne.
N.R.O., *Wills*, Fol. 25, No. 51

Aston le Walls SP 489515

The jurors of Chipping Warden Hundred, in 1380, presented that the bridge had been broken for three years past and ought to be repaired by the said township.
Flower, Vol. 2, p. 101

Aynho

An indulgence granted by Hugh of Wells, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1226. The alms to be collected at the bridge.

Lincoln Record Society Vol. 6, p. 220

Banbury SP 460406

In 1294 "an assize of novel disseisin taken at the head of the bridge of Banebir" in the county of Northampton.

W. Potts, *History of Banbury*, 1900, p. 97

Barford SP 861831

"In the year 1329 the bridge of Bereford . . . was reported as being thrown down and broken"

Jervoise, p. 74

Billing SP 815831

Roger de Warton was, in 1274, accused of having for four years withdrawn the customs and tolls at Billing bridge which belonged to the King and Bailiffs of Northampton.

Borough Records, Vol. 2, p. 198, (*Hundred Rolls*, 2, p. 2)

Bly SP703582

"Bly lane comes up from the Banbury lane and crosses . . . a tributary . . . and goes to the Nene . . . Pontem de Bly"

P.N.N., (1253 Assize Rolls) p. 87

Brackley (Bandlings) SP 595369

"I entered into Brackley by a little stone bridge in a bottom, of one arch under which Ouse riveret rennethe"

Leland, Vol. 2, p. 35

Brackley Hatch SP 648419?

Probably the bridge called "Litelheybrigge" in the 1228 Forest Perambulation.

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 75

Brancey TL 015816

Elizabeth Chambers in 1489 gave "to the making of the bryge called Bransey brygge betwyx Thorp and Waldwyncle xlis."

N.R.O., *Wills*, Fol. 100, No. 355

Brampton SP 734653

Indulgence granted by Hugh of Wells in 1219.

Lincs Record Society, Vol. 6, p. 108.

Braybrooke SP 765846

The present bridge begun by Sir Thomas Latimer c. 1400. Mentioned in the will of Dame Anne Latimer 1402 "Also to make the brigge that my lord began xls."

N.R.O., *Topographical Index*

Brixworth SP 736707?

Richard Attwood of Spratton left, in 1512, "two sheep to the pavement anext Brixworth bridge"

N.R.O., *Wills*, 1st Series, A Fol. 79.

Brockhall SP 631618

Indenture dated 14 April 1392. "To Robert Taylor de Dodford, Joan his wife and John their son, of all lands and meadows lying on the near side of Brochole bridge for the lives of two, paying annually one grain of corn"

N.R.O., *Thornton*, 1221

Bulwick SP 962943

"Grant by John Loveth of Boclewyk to John Baberham of Blatherwyk of land in Bolewyk, part abutting on Swynbryggesyke and part lying beyond Laxtonpath"

Cal. Ancient Deeds, D929, 8 Hen. IV 1406/7

Burcott SP 682471?

Newebrigge named in the 1299 Forest Perambulation and Baker says "near Hanley Park side". Possibly this bridge.

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 75.

Cappenham SP 715488

William de Pavelli in 1243 left five shillings to Cademan bridge.

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 199

Charwelton SP 535560

No documentary evidence but "a medieval packhorse bridge"

Jervoise, p. 152.

Childrebrigge (Barnwell)

Mentioned in 1272

N.R.O., *Buccleuch Charters*, B.I. 216.

Also in 1302 a drowning accident in the meadow of Barnwell below Armston under a bridge called Childerbridge.
Select Coroners Rolls, Selden Society, Vol. 9, p. 61

Church Brampton SP 715654
Presentment by the jurors of Nobottle Grove Hundred that the townships of Church Brampton and Harleston are bound to repair a bridge between those towns which has broken for a while past
Flower, Vol. 2, p. 101. (*Coram Rege Roll,* 4 Ric. II)

Collyweston SP 991036
No direct evidence but in 1330 the Bishop of Ely claimed Thoroughtoll and said it was for repairing the ways.
J. Bridges, Vol. 2, p. 435
Substantially rebuilt in 1620 when the arches in Rutland were made segmental but Northants retained the pointed shape.

Corby
"Corbybrygge" mentioned in the 1299 Forest Perambulation.
Bellamy, B. (N.R.O., *Bru.* Exxiv 9), Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 307.

Cotterstock TL 039905?
In 1329 the men of Cotterstock and Glapthorn were distrained for failing to repair a bridge.
V.C.H., Vol. 2, p. 555 (*Assize Rolls,* no. 632m)

Cottingham SP 845911
Thomas Bukke left 3s. 4d. c. 1500.

Cransley
Cranslea brig mentioned in 10th century charter
Bull, F. W., *History of Kettering,* p. 3 (*B.C.S.* 943)

Cuttle Mill SP 718465
Transfer of a messuage in "Tovecestr in le Netherende . . . next Cuttellebrigge . . ."
Fermor Hesketh papers, MTD/D/20/6

Deene
Dame Philippa Brudenell, wife of Sir Robert, died 1532. She left to "the church bells at Deene 5s. and to the bridges and highways in the parish 40s."
Wake, J., *The Brudenells of Deene,* 195, p. 35

Desborough SP 804825
Thomas Bukke 3s. 4d. c. 1500

Ditchford SP 930683
"Dikfordebrigg" 1282
P.N.N., p. 183 (Compotus Rolls, Peterborough Abbey)
In 1330 the bridge and causey were presented as being "ruinous and dangerous to passengers"
J. Bridges, Vol. 2, p. 194, (*Placita Corona,* 3 Edw. III rot. 18)

Dow SP 544779
In 1283 Richard de Stokys gave to Sulby Abbey lands in Lilbourne including half an acre at "Doubrigge".
B.M. Add. Ch., 220, 822

Duddington SP 985009
Presentment by the jurors of Willibrook Hundred in 1380 "that Duddington bridge is broken and ought to be repaired by the said township"
Flower, Vol. 2, p. 102.

Evenley (Lady Bridge) SP 583354
A land grant "juxta pontem domine"
Magdalen Charters, Brackley 178, 1220/30
A reference to "Laudi bruge"
N.R.O. Field Name Survey

Everdon SP 599574
A tenth century charter refers to a stone bridge on the site
Northants Archaeology, Vol. 12, p. 156 (B.C.S. 792)
The present late medieval bridge has not been found mentioned in records.

Fawsley SP 574564
The same charter identifies another stone bridge on the route that became known as Oxford Lane.
Northants Archaeology, Vol. 12, p. 159 (B.C.S. 792)
An indenture of 1240/1 records that Hugh Russell of Fawsley had opened up a way that was called the road to the New Bridge; this could have been a successor to the 10th century one.
N. Denholm Young, *Cartulary of the Medieval Archives of Christchurch,* p. 92.

Finedon SP 908697?
"Pontem de Tyngdene" 1275
Hundred Rolls 2,2. SP 908697
"Thence six good miles to Finton bridge (of stone) under which Ketering water rennyth . . . by Welingborow market."
Leland, Vol. I, p. 5.
Stanbrigge and Southbrygge mentioned in 1423 rent roll.
Bailey, J., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon,* p. 17.

Fotheringhay TL 061930
"the bridge to Fotheringhay over Avon is of Timber"
Leland, Vol. I, p. 5.
the same position may be meant ". . . in the reign of Henry II Benedict, abbot of Burgh . . . held . . . Piryho meadow . . . except one acre near the bridge on the high road lying between St. Mary's and St. Martin's meadow"
J. Bridges, Vol. I, p. 473 (Cd. Achurch in 450, Fol. 7 8 penes Com. Exon.)
the following may have been over the Willow brook TL 054941
In 1330 the "men of Foderingeye and Nassington were distrained for neglecting to repair the bridge at Walcotforth which is crossed by footmen, horses and carriages from the vill of Undale to Stunford."
V.C.H., Vol. 2, p. 569. (*Ass. Roll* no. 632m 30d.)

Geddington SP 894829
Mentioned in 1255 *(Select Pleas of the Forest)*
"I passid agayne in the middle of the toune over Ardingworth water, that ther rennith under a stone bridge"
Leland, Vol. I, p. 11.

Great Bowden SP 750883?
"The bridge of Great Bowden benefited by the legacy of 6s. 8d. from William Southerey whose will was proved in 1523"
Jervoise, p. 62

Great Harrowden SP 900710
"molend aquat voc Wetemill juxta Irnewellebrigge"
N.R.O., *Knighley,* Ch. 91

Great Oxendon SP 738823
"This bridge is mentioned in a fine . . . 5 John (1203/4) . . . on the south side of it is a bridge of two small arches . . . To this bridge the bounds of Rockingham Forest extended."
J. Bridges, Vol. 2, p. 54 (Peramb. For. de Rockingham 9, Edw. I)

Hardwater SP 876638
Presentment by the jurors of Higham Ferrers Hundred that Hardwater bridge is broken by default of the township of Great Doddington. Michaelmas 1380. The men of Doddington admitted their fault and were amerced 6s. 8d.
Flower, Vol. 2, p. 104

Harringworth SP 915976
Thomas Bukke 3s. 4d. c. 1500

Holcot SP 782706?
"Holcotebrygg"
P.N.N., p. 139 (13th North. St. Andrews)

Huberdisbrigge SP 595387?
". . . between the park of (Whistley Wood) and the vill of Westcote to the bridge called Huberdisbrigge and then by the same way by the middle of the vill of Brackley."
Baker, Vol. 2, p. 76.

Hulcote
William de Pavelli in 1243 left to Hulcote bridge, xijd.
Baker, Vol. 2, p. 199

Irthlingborough SP 957706
A possible reference in 1290 – "Grant . . . of one and a half roods in Irthlingborough at Normansbrigge . . ."
Carte Nativorum, (N.R.S. Vol. XX), p. 383
The will of John Pyel 1378. "to amend . . . the bridges of Irtlyngburge."
Serjeantson and Longden, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire.*

Kettering
from the 13th century copy of B.C.S. 943, dated AD956 . . . "these are the boundaries (of the land) at Cytringan, Cransley bridge along the brook until it comes to Humbridge (Hunan brigge) . . .
F. W. Bull, *History of Kettering,* p. 3.

Kingshill SP 638414

"Lurtebrokbrigge" appears in the 1299 forest perambulation and is identified by Baker as this bridge near Syresham.

Baker, vol. 2, p. 75.

Kislingbury SP 700598

The will of T. Werwyke, 1540 . , . "I bequeath to the bridge of Kislingbury a heyffor of five years with a white baby . . ."

N.R.O.; *Wills,* First Series, G. 27.

Lady (Milton Malsor) SP 737571

A private charter with the dates 1315/18 gives the name "Laudibrige"

S. A. Moore, *Northampton Charters,* (N.R.O.)

Lilford TL 026839

A bridge over the river mentioned t. Edward I

Calendar Ancient Deeds, B2890

"One told me that there was a stone bridge at Lilford over Avon"

Leland, Vol. I, p. 6.

Lois Weedon SP 583461

Presentment by the jurors of Chipping Warden Hundred 1380.

"Aylcabrigge in Weedon field is destroyed and the township and parish of Weedon ought to repair it."

Flower, Vol. 2, p. 100

J. Bridges refers to the brook as "Aily" and in the 19th century the bridge had become "Halley". It was on the Oxford Way.

Lolham

No documentary evidence but Camden stated "Bridges certainly of great antiquity, whereof eleven arches are still to be seen though ruinous with age"

Britannia

Market Harborough SP 734872

The bridge of "Haverburgh" is mentioned in the 1228 Forest Perambulation.

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 74.

Nell SP 497343

". . . a fair stone bridge called Nell bridge leadeth to Adderbury wrote in old writing Neiel bridge"

J. Bridges, Vol. I, p. 134 (*Rot. Cur.,* 21 Hen. VII)

(Ralph de Neville was lord of the manor in the 14th century.)

Newbottle SP 782814

Newbottle bridge is "New bolthl" (Fees 1242) and Neubotlebrigge (1330 Ass. Rolls)

P.N.N., p. 114

Old Stratford SP 782410

"the bounds and division of 'Wylewode were from the bridge of Stony Stratford by the old watercourse of the Ouse . . .'"

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 75. (Forest Perambulation 1299)

Grant to the bailiffs etc. of Stony Stratford of pontage for three years

Cal. Patent Rolls, 1349.

Grant to Robert de Seymore and Thomas Pavely of pontage for three years for repair of the causeway between the bridge

Cal. Patent Rolls, 1352

John Blawemuster, hermit, granted pontage in 1300 but overseers were appointed.

R. H. Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites of England,* p. 633.

Oundle TL 047889 and TL 037878

In 1329 the abbot of Peterborough claimed the right to take tolls at Oundle saying that there had been no common way until the abbey had had license to build two bridges.

Placita de Quo Waranto, 3 Edw. III

Pontage was granted in 1352, 1360, 1364 and 1369 for the repair of Asshetonbrigge (Oundle North Bridge).

Cal. Patent Rolls

In 1312 the South bridge (Barnwell or Crowthorpe bridge) was described in an inquest "In the vill of Oundle . . . a bridge . . which is built of stone and mortar, and crosses the river Nen (the width of the bridge is twelve feet between the two crosses which stand upon it, and it extends twenty feet from one cross towards the north and forty feet from the other cross towards the south).

Select Coroners Rolls, Selden Society, Vol. 9, p. 64

Peterborough TL 193983

"Abbot Godfrey of Croyland in 1308 built a new bridge over the river at a cost of £14 8s. but during

the winter this was destroyed by floating ice. In the following year he rebuilt a bridge stronger and higher than the former at a cost of £18 5s."

Peterborough Churchwardens Accounts, N.R.S. Vol. IX, p. cii (from Walter of Whittlesey's Chronicle)

Pipewell

Grant to the Cistercian abbey

"This William de Albini gave them also a portion of wood named Pikmede, lying between the abbey and the high road leading from Rokyngham to Northampton, with a right to erect and maintain a bridge of two arches, forty eight feet long and sixteen feet wide over a stream running between Longmede and Pikmede"

William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum,* p. 431.

Pitsford SP 750684

In 1498 John Chapman of Brixworth for the repair of the bridge called "Pysford Brigge" left two bushels of Barley.

N.R.O., *Wills,* 55N, No. 129

Polebrook TL 058869?

c. 1280. Grant to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist of Armeston of two selions in the fields of Polebrook, one of which is the seventh from the furlong which abuts towards the stone bridge called "Brokforde brigge" one end abutting on "le lynch" and the other on the King's Highway . . .

Buccleuch Charters, B.I. 79, N.R.O.

Rising Bridge SP 900857

"Risenbrige – a bridge or causeway made of brushwood"

P.N.N., p. 166 (c. 1220, *Pleas of the Forest*)

Rockingham SP 866923

In 1230 an indulgence granted for three years, the proctor not to go outside the parish of Rockingham to collect alms.

Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 6, p. 238 (*Rot. Hugo de Welles*)

Rothwell SP 817805

Thomas Bukke 3s. 4d. c. 1500.

Silverstone SP 663444?

"Tonebrigge" in the 1299 Forest Perambulation is identified by Baker as the "Watergates at Silverstone".

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 74.

Slapton SP 639465?

"And from thence as the road leads to 'Brackel' without 'Gayle' to the bridge of Slapton."

Baker, Vol. 2, p. 74 (Forest Perambulation 1228)

Spratton SP 720682

In 1510 Thomas Parnell, vicar of Spratton bequeathed to the mending of Spratton bridge "two long pesus of tymber of hert of oke".

N.R.O., *Wills,* First Series A 46

Stamford TF 030069

"There were and are six wards, five in Lincolnshire the sixth in Northamptonshire, it is across the bridge . . ."

Domesday Book (Phillimore edition)

Staverton SP 524615

Demise of rent ". . . for land and meadow towards Staverton bridge next land of John de Schukkeburg." 1318/9

Cal. Ancient Deeds, A9773

Strixton

"Pasture between Strixton Bridge and knappard . . ." from a 1426 Rent roll

Hall, D. N., *Wollaston,* p. 142

Surney SP 620658

"Sutheney Bridge" 1437

P.N.N., p. 66

Thornton SP 752364?

"Thoty bridge" mentioned in an inquiry into the tenure of Wakefield bailiwick "to Stratford and along the river to Thoty bridge."

Cal. Misc. Inqu., Vol. I

Thorpe Waterville TL 023813

The ribbed arches of a medieval bridge can still be seen under the roadway. Pevsner suggests "early C14th."

Thrapston SP 991786
Indulgence granted in 1224 by Hugh of Wells to those crossing the bridge who gave towards the repair of the same.
Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 6, p. 207
Frequent grants of pontage in the C14th. and early C15th.
V.C.H., Vol. 3, p. 139

Towcester (North or Spital bridge) SP 689493
In 1366 twelve men (named) were appointed proctors to collect alms for the repair of "le Northbrughe next hospital of St. Leonard"
Fermor Hesketh MTD/D/I/7

Trafford SP 518479
"Trafforde brige"
P.N.N., p. 37 *(Cal. Ancient Deeds)*

Turtle SP 928985
Thurkel brigge 1298.
Inqu. Post Mortem, Vol. 3, p. 377
(The name Turkil occurs at Harringworth in the 11th and 12th centuries.)

Turweston SP 600380?
The Bailiwick of Wakefield . . . "from Thoty bridge along the river called Huse up to the mill of Gravesende and so to Turveston bridge and so to Childebridge and so to the chapel of Luffield . . ." 1252
Cal. Inqu. Misc., Vol. I, 148.

Wakerley SP 956997
"Wakerle brigge", 1298
Inqu. Post Mortem, Vol. 3, p. 377.

Wansford TL 075992
1221 Indulgence granted by Bishop of Lincoln (Hugh of Wells). Not valid outside the town of Wansford.
Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 5, p. 196
1295 Mandate . . . to compel Alice, widow of Gilbert . . . to pay forty shillings . . . bequeathed for the repair of Wansford Bridge.
Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 5, p. 71
Frequent grants of pontage in the fourteenth century.
Cal. Patent Rolls

Warkton SP890802
"Buried beneath the road at the east end of the bridge over the Ise is a medieval arch (14th C.?) . . .
V.C.H., Vol. 3, p. 252

Warmington
The jurors of Polebrook Hundred presented (t. Ric. II) "that a bridge for horses and men at the west end of Warmington is broken and ought to be repaired by the said township"
Flower, Vol. 2, p. 63

Weedon SP 638592
"In 3 Edw. III (1329) the abbot of Bec was adjudged to repair Weedon bridge on the Watling Street . . ."
Baker, Vol. I, p. 450

Weldon
1358 an order to the Prince's clerk . . . "to deliver . . . two oaks to the prince's tenants of Little Weldon as a gift from the prince towards the work of two bridges one on each side . . . of Little Weldon"
Black Prince's Register, Part IV, Folio 154

Welham SP 767924
Thomas Bukke 20d. c. 1500

Wellingborough SP 902664
Indulgence granted in 1227 to the bridge of "Wenlingburg" also called "Staplesbrig"
Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 6, p. 225
In 1500 Richard Clerke bequeathed to "the bridge called Stabulbriggc XXd. and to the bridge called Brekebridge XXd."
J. Cole, *History of Wellingborough*, p. 146

Welton
Grant . . . "of land in Weleton, part upon Tonestale, part at Horspolbrigge . . ." 1303/4
Cal. Ancient Deeds, A5039

Weston by Welland SP 779923
Thomas Bukke 20d. C. 1500.
Whilton SP 621644
No documentary evidence but an 1870 report described them as being very old and narrow, one having two pointed arches and the other a four centred pointed arch.
N.R.O., *County Surveyor's Report*
Wootton SP 767558
In his will dated 1483 John Green left three shillings to the bridge of Quinton.
N.R.O., *Wills*, Early Series, Fol. 34

Most of the references to the bridges listed in the gazetteer came from records in the Northamptonshire Record Office and it is only proper to thank Mr King and his staff there, especially Mrs J. Minchinton and Mr C. Tongue for their ready help.

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LESSER KNOWN POETS OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: SELECTIONS *by* TREVOR HOLD

I. MILDMAY FANE, 2nd Earl of Westmoreland (1602-1666)

Mildmay Fane was born 24 January 1601/2, probably at the family home of Apethorpe Hall. His father, Sir Francis Fane, had married Mary, daughter of Sir Anthony Mildmay (d. 1617) and became 1st Earl of Westmoreland in 1624. Mildmay was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (M.A. 1619) and represented Peterborough in the Short Parliament of 1620-1. He was created Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Charles I (1625) and Charles acted as godfather to his son and heir, Charles (b. 1634). He succeeded to the earldom on the death of his father in 1629. At the outbreak of the Civil Wars, he fought for the King, was lodged in the Tower (1642), took the Covenant, having been compounded in £2,000, was released (1643) and returned to Apethorpe to cultivate his estate and poetry. He was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire in 1660. On the death of his first wife, Grace (1636) he married Mary, daughter of Sir Richard Townsend, and a letter written from Apethorpe to his stepson, Lord Townsend (23 March 166?) gives a vivid picture of the elderly couple:

"Your mother . . . is much after the old manner never perfectly well. So like Bausis and Philemon we two owld acquaintances set cherishing one the other in the chimney corner hawking and coughing like mad . . ."

He died 12 February 1665/6.

Mildmay Fane was one of those influential courtiers and amateur poets who acted, in H. J. Massingham's words, as "an ornamental bridge between literature and fashionable society." He was a friend and patron of Herrick, who dedicated his poem, *The Hock Cart*, to Mildmay and encouraged him to go into print itself:

> You are a Lord, an Earle, nay more, a Man,
> Who writes sweet Numbers well as any can.

In 1648 he took Herrick's advice and printed for private circulation a volume of verse, *Otia Sacra*. He left among his papers a volume of "Fugitive Poetry", consisting of epigrams, acrostics and anagrams, in English and Latin, suggested by events of the Interregnum and was also author of seven plays, six still extant (BM Add. MS. 34,221). One of his most attractive poems is *My Happy Life*, an account of the joys of rural living at his home at Apethorpe. It is virtually a verse-catalogue of birds, fish, flowers – and other rural 'beauties' – and for the naturalist is a treasure-trove of Northamptonshire records. For years it has been assumed that John Clare was the first person to record in the county such birds as jays, magpie, cuckoo, buzzard, kite, moorhen, dabchick, pied wagtail and kingfisher. But Fane had anticipated him by nearly 200 years. The following is an extract from this 170-line poem.

My Happy Life

. . . Whilst in the Branches perched higher,
The wing'd Crew sit as in a quire:
This seems to me a better noise
Than Organs, or the dear-bought voice
From Pleaders breath in Court and Hall
At any time is stockt withall:
For here one may (if marking well)

Observe the plaintive Philomel
Bemoan her sorrows; and the Thrush
Plead safety through defendant Bush:
The Popingay in various die
Performs the Sergeant; and the Pie
Chatters, as if she would revive
The Old Levite prerogative,
And bring new Rotchets in again:
Till Crowes and Jackdaws in disdain
Of her pied feathers, chase her thence,
To yield to their pre-eminence:
For you must know't observ'd of late,
That Reformation in the State,
Begets no less by imitation,
Amidst this chirping feather'd Nation;
Cuckoos ingrate, and Woodcocks some
Are here, which cause they't seasons come,
May be compar'd to such as stand
At Terms, and their returns command;
And lest Authority take cold,
Here's th'Ivy's guest of wonder, th'Owl,
Rufft like a Judge, and with a Beak,
As it would give the charge and speak:
Then 'tis the Goose and Buzzard's art
Alone, t'perform the Client's part;
For neither Dove nor Pigeon shall,
Whilst they are both exempt from gall.
The augur Hern, and soaring Kite,
Calendar weather in their flight;
As do the cleanlier Ducks, when they
Dive voluntary, wash, prune, play;
With the fair Cygnet, whose delight
Is to out-vie the snow in white.
And therefore always seeks to hide
Her feet, lest they allay her pride.
The Moorhen, Dobchick, Water rail,
With little Washdish or Wagtail:
The Finch, the Sparrow, Jenny Wren,
With Robin that's so kind to men;
The Whitetail, and Tom Tit obey
Their seasons, bill and tread, then lay;
The lyric Lark doth early rise,
And mounting, pays her sacrifice;
Whilst from some hedge, or close of furze,
The Partridge calls its Mate, and churrs;
And that the Country seem more plesant,
Each heath hath Powt, and wood yields Pheasant;
Juno's delight with Cocks and Hens
Turkeys, are my Domestic friends:
Nor do I bird of Prey inlist,
But what I carry on my Fist:
Now not to want a Court, a King-
Fisher is here with purple wing,
Who brings me to the spring-head, where
Crystal is lymbeckt all the year . . .

Otia Sacra (1648)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INLAND NAVIGATION ON THE RIVER NENE IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

J. D. ALSOP

The improvement of the River Nene between 1714 and 1761 was of critical importance in the development of transportation within Northamptonshire. A commercial success in its own right, it opened the way for the canal ventures at the end of the century which eventually connected Northampton with the Thames valley and other regions, and it also coincided in time with the introduction of turnpike roads into the county.[1] The Nene–Ouse waterway system had served to connect Northampton and places below it to the Wash, and in particular King's Lynn, even before the mid-seventeenth century draining of the fens and the introduction of the cut on the Nene below Peterborough.[2] However, it was only with the completion of the final section of the river improvement in the 1760s that Northampton acquired direct water access to the east coast shipping trade. By that date proposals for the development of Nene navigation had already been current for over a century and a half. It had been claimed in 1606 that if the river was made navigable from Alwalton, six miles upstream from Peterborough, to Oundle the cost of transportation would be halved to three pence a ton or load.[3] In 1662 Thomas Fuller proposed the improvement of the Nene right to Northampton.[4] Nevertheless, an attempt in 1692 to secure a parliamentary act extending navigation from Peterborough to Oundle failed,[5] and the head of navigation remained Alwalton. In 1714 parliament did pass a statute authorising the development of the river to Northampton, but the regulations imposed by this act were prohibitory and the commissioners were unable to secure an undertaker for the project.[6] This was rectified by supplementary legislation of 1724 (11 George I, c. 19) and navigation was extended to Oundle in 1730 and Thrapston in 1737.[7] A final statute in 1756 (29 George II, c. 69) permitted the completion of the final Thrapston to Northampton section.[8]

Although the efforts to extend navigation beyond Alwalton before 1724 were stillborn, they are none the less of considerable interest, both as a prelude to later successful development and for the light which they shed upon commercial and political opinion within early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. Some important evidence predating the 1714 act has been uncovered among the papers of Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland (d. 1722). In a letter dated 2 September 1710, Wriothesley Russell, Duke of Bedford, dispatched to Sunderland a two and a half page presentation which considered first the detailed cost of making the Nene navigable from Alwalton to Oundle, and second a general calculation of the charge involved in developing the entire Peterborough to Northampton stretch of the river.[9]

[1] R. L. Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1979), pp. 93-5; A. Cossons, "The turnpike roads of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough", *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, I, iii (1950), 28-45.

[2] T. S. Willan, *The Inland Trade* (London, 1976), p. 18.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[4] Greenall, p. 94.

[5] *House of Lords Journals*, XV, 165, 177a.

[6] 13 Anne, C. 19: *Statutes of the Realm*, IX, 960-7. This act and the following legislation are discussed in: Joseph Priestley, *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals, and Railways, Throughout Great Britain* (London, 1831), pp. 496-9; H. R. De Salis, *A Chronology of Inland Navigation in Great Britain* (London, 1897), pp. 15-26. For the difficulties with the 1714 statute note also T. S. Willan, *River Navigation in England, 1600-1750* (London, 1936), p. 66.

[7] Greenall, p. 95.

[8] This is discussed at length in V. A. Hatley, "Locks, lords and coal: a study in eighteenth century Northampton history", *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI (1980-81), 207-18.

[9] Formerly Blenheim Palace files D 2/9, F 1/16, now among the Sunderland manuscripts in the British Library, Add. Ms. 61,655, fos. 114-18. Quotations appear by permission of the British Library. A minimum of punctuation has been added and contractions extended to facilitate reading.

Bedford was promoting the venture because, as he said, the navigable sections of the Nene would extend through a part of his estate and would be financially advantageous to it, as well as beneficial for the public at large. He sent William Horsley to deliver the presentation to Sunderland, and to explain the project in greater detail on Bedford's behalf. Horsley, however, apparently did not see the Earl in person because along with the letter and the document in the Sunderland papers there survives an undated letter from Horsley to Sunderland outlining some of the background to the present proposal.[10] This was clearly an introduction of the subject to Sunderland, beginning with the statement that shipping at that date came to Peterborough from King's Lynn by way of Wisbech. An earlier, unspecified, attempt had been made to extend navigation through Wansford, Oundle, Thrapston, Higham Ferrers, and Wellingborough to Northampton, but this had failed owing to the opposition of the dean and chapter of Peterborough, whose lands extended almost as far as Wansford, and the city of Peterborough itself. Vested interested were obviously at stake, but, as both Horsley and Bedford related, Bedford had finally prevailed upon the dean and chapter to withdraw their repeated objection to the development of the Nene. It was now hoped that remaining difficulties could be removed and Sunderland was requested to consent to the enterprise and to recommend it to the gentry within his part of the county.

The death of Bedford in May 1711 with the succession of his three year old son presumably led to the collapse of this venture. But the proposal, unsuccessful in the short-term, may be viewed as part of the activity which generated the 1714 statute. Sunderland himself was in the House of Lords when the committee considered the 1714 bill, and was present when it was passed.[11]

The calculation of charges printed below is necessarily a partisan document, but one which illustrates the manner by which supporters of the Nene navigation argued their case. The figures are precise, but the information is speculative and general. No survey of the actual anticipated cost of development, even for the Alwalton to Oundle section, has been attempted. The second portion of the presentation is based upon similar calculations by Sir William Fleetwood. It goes on to offer support for Fleetwood's estimates, against criticisms from the supporters of land transportation, through a projection of the charges which would be entailed in constructing an entirely new canal from Peterborough to Northampton. Overall, the general tendency was to stress the economic advantages and reasonableness of the extension of river navigation.

A Computacon of the Charge of makeing the River Nine Navigable from Allerton to Oundle

Between Allerton and oundle are eight mills (*vizt*) Allerton Newton wansford Yarwell Elton warmington Peiro & Cotterstock at each of which suppose a lock att 120 ^{li} – 960
Suppose halfe a square acre of ground to be taken up in the lock & the passage by the mill in all the 4 acres att 25^{li} an acre – 100
Suppose a 1000 Pole of scoweing work in Rush bedds and other things att 5^{s} a pole – 250
For Willow trees and grass spoyled by the horses which draw the boates – 200
[total £] 1510
Now Considering that the Commodities upward will be Coal deal Flax Hemp Turff Reeds Grocery & such like & those downewards will be wheat Barley malt brick Tile Iron timber stone Lime & such like and supose att a low rate but 1500 Load upward and 500 Load downeward. att 2000 Load in one year to pay at 3^{d} a load each Lock in all two shillings then the Toll will amount to 200^{li} a year which is Intrest enough for 1500^{li} layd out & so the watermens charges and Tolls will not exceed three shillings a load. If the watermens Charges & Toll be Considerable lesse a load Carrage then the water will Carry the trade.

[10] B.L., Add. Ms. 61,655, fo. 116.
[11] *House of Lords Journals*, XIX, 691, 694. He was not, however, included among the long list of local commissioners responsible for the enactment of the statute: *Statutes of the Realm*, IX, 960.

The lowest rate from Allerton to Oundle is six shillings a load by land and if it will be brought to Oundle by water for three shillings then all Carriages will be brought by water.
That the watermans wages may be sufficient the Toll *etc* paid & yett not exceeding 3^s a load wee must Consider that ever[y] boat suppose 10 Tun or load and that the same number of men with fewer horses then with land Carrage will in two dayes att furthest bring up A gang or three or 4 such boats which will be 30 or 40 loads. allowe the watermen one shilling a load, he will then make 15^s or 20^s a day for his wagges which is a great deal more then he Can earn by land.

An Abstract of S^r Wm Fleetwoods Booke about the Probability, Charge, & way of raiseing the money to make the river Nine navigable from Peterborough to North[amp]ton. As for the Probability by reason of the descent he sayes by seven surveys taken on purpose tis but 146 foot descent from Northton to Peterborough and the distance from one to the other is 50 miles which is something more then 3 foot descent in one mile.
As to the Charge of doeing it he sayes upon view thereof there were found 33 miles (*i.e.* mills) att each of which he supposes a lock to be made and upon a survey made of skillfull men how much one would Cost makeing twas found to Come to 120^{li}. 33 of which will Come to 3960^{li}. Tone Roods of Ground upon Computation was thought sufficient for each lock which comes to near 17 acres which att 30^{li} an acre purchase comes to 510^{li}. scoweing of rushbedds which was thought might Come to 3000 pole which att 5^s a pole comes to 750^{li}. for willowes and etc growing by the waterside 260^{li}. in all 5480.
As for the wayes of raiseing the money he proposes 3. first A voluntary Contribucon which he doubts will faile in a short time. Secondly particular Undertakers who he doubts will lesson the Generall good and raise the prise of Carrage by the Tole they will expect & may be prejudicall by monopolizing the trade to there owne boats or such as they lycence thereby raiseing or faileing the markett as they please. 3^dly A Generall assessment which will he sayes occasion a free Traid & Cheap Carraige & draw Costome from places which pay tole.
The Bigness of the boates he proposes are about [blank] foot wide or [blank] tun Carrige a peice. the Locks [blank] foot long, the flood gates [blank] foot wide & he sayes 3 foot of water is sufficient to Carry such boats.
Because some oppose the making this River navigable from their apprehentions of the great Charg, think it not to be done under 40 or 50000^{li}, therefore to remove their mistake here is Cast up the whole Charge of Cutting a new river 50 miles Long, 6 yards wide So that the boates may pass by one another, And two yards deep, together with the purchase not only of the ground dug but also as much more to lay the Casting upon & for the horses which draw the boates to goo upon, vallewing the land att 30^{li} an acre & the diggin at 4^d the solid yard vict
Since 1760 yards makes one mile & 4840 yards makes one square acre, therfore 1760 x 50 x 12 divided by 4840 gives the Square acre which x by 30 gives the value – 6545 40

In all 24145 80

And it is so far from seeming probable that the River Nine which is for the most part navagable can cost so much as to cut a new navagable river the same length. That on the Contrary most people must needs say twill Cost much less, nay hardly exceed One quarter of the Charge. ffrom thence may be gathered how much theire above Land Opponants are out in their accounts, but also how near to truth the account by S^r W^m ffleetwood comes since the fourth part 24145^{li} is 6036 and his account Comes to 5480^{li}.

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NATIONAL POLITICS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE 18TH CENTURY: THE NORTHAMPTON ELECTION OF 1734

DAVID PATON

1. Introduction

The political history of Northamptonshire in the 18th century has been written with a heavy emphasis on the county, and consequent neglect of the borough. Perhaps overly responsive to Thomas Oldfield's low opinion of borough politics – an opinion endorsed by Northampton's 19th century chronicler, Charles Cox – E. G. Forrester's otherwise excellent study[1] rarely descends into the turbulent and muddy waters of the borough elections. This is surprising, for the intensity of political activity in Northamptonshire was much greater in the town than in the usually complacent county: there were contests at county level in only three of the twenty general elections called in the 18th century, while the borough electorate was given eleven opportunities to vote in the same period.[2] A full study of borough politics remains to be written, but for the present it is hoped that a study of one election – that of 1734 – will serve to shed some light on this important part of the county's history. It may also serve to reinforce the argument advanced in some recent writing on the period that the Tories, rather than being a collapsed and moribund group generally more interested in hunting than in parliamentary attendance, were in fact a conscientious and highly motivated party, determined to avoid political oblivion and well able to do so.[3] Incidentally it may allow us to question the assumption, too often accepted, that "many wrappings were . . . packed between provincial politics and the sharp feelings which stirred newspapers and coffee-houses in London."[4]

The borough of Northampton offers an excellent example of what Professor Plumb has described as "the growth of a large political nation with voting rights."[5] Theoretically, the right of election of the two borough MP's lay with the inhabitant householders, though this was more than once subject to further interpretation, and in practice the electorate was usually extended to embrace other categories, among whom the Freemen were the most important. The size of this electorate grew from around sixty in 1604 to roughly 1000 in 1661, and by the middle of the 18th century it stood at approximately 1,750.[6] Generally speaking, the corporation was Tory in its sympathies, and looked to the Earl of Northampton for support, but its influence over elections – potentially considerable – was somewhat tempered by a pro-Whig local press, which enjoyed the backing of the Earl of Halifax, who also acted as protector of the important Dissenting community.[7] There was thus an

[1] *Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering, 1695-1832* (Oxford 1941); J. C. Cox's account is contained in his *The Records of the Borough of Northampton* (2 vols., Northampton 1898) see esp. vol. II, pp. 499-500.

[2] J. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832* (Cambridge 1973), pp. 279, 284.

[3] See L. J. Colley's excellent study *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party, 1714-60* (Cambridge 1982).

[4] K. G. Feiling, *The Second Tory Party, 1714-1832* (London 1938), p. 6.

[5] J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675-1725* (London 1967), p. xv.

[6] Figures from W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701-1715* (London 1970), p. 14; and R. Sedgwick, *The House of Commons, 1715-1754* (2 vols., London 1970), vol. I, pp. 292-3.

[7] The size of the Dissenting vote is difficult to estimate, but in 1715 as many as 986 Dissenters had votes in the county and borough, out of an electorate of some 5,500, see E. D. Bebb, *Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life, 1660-1800* (London 1935), p. 182. On Halifax as an ally of the Dissenters see M. Deacon, *Philip Doddridge of Northampton, 1702-51* (Northampton 1981), *passim*.

important element of aristocratic interference in borough politics, one which could flare up – as it did in 1734 – into open and expensive conflict. 18th century Northampton politics were marked, as Thomas Oldfield noted at the close of the century, by a long-running feud between Lords Northampton and Halifax which constituted "the most violent contest, for aristocratic preeminence, that has happened for many years in this country."[8]

2. Political Background: The Excise Scheme

On 5 October 1733 the corporation of Northampton, as one of their first acts under the new mayor John Woolston,[9] ordered an address to be presented to the Hon. George Compton, MP thanking him for "his diligent and disinterested attendance in Parliament."[10] Compton, whose brother was the Earl of Northampton, was an ambiguous figure. Scion of an erstwhile Tory family which had made a dramatic and not wholly convincing conversion to Whiggery in 1714, he enjoyed the confidence of the Tory gentry of the county and was shunned by true Whigs, such as the Dissenting minister Philip Doddridge.[11] The early part of his political career was spent in opposition to Walpole, and he did not accept government office until the latter's fall in 1742, when he briefly accepted a Treasury post under his uncle, Lord Wilmington.[12]

The compliment paid to Compton was equally a snub to his fellow MP, the Hon. Edward Montagu, who received no thanks of any kind. The county MP's, however (Sir Justinian Isham and Thomas Cartwright) were congratulated on "their brave and vigorous opposition to the pernicious Bill . . . for extending the Laws of Excise," and presented with the freedom of the borough.[13] Together with Isham and Cartwright, Compton had voted against the Excise Bill, while Montagu – to the clear annoyance of the corporation – had supported it.

Tory opposition to the Excise in Parliament was natural, sustained and successful; their delight when Walpole was forced to withdraw the scheme in April 1733 was expressed in the form of fireworks, illuminations and a banquet at the Mansion House. In the aftermath of victory *The Craftsman*, the strongly Tory weekly newspaper, demanded that "every Gentleman, who voted for the Excise, should be catechised upon a little stool by the Minister of the Parish, to which he belongs, and be obliged to explain . . . his Conduct in the face of a full Congregation,"[14] and, with a view to the forthcoming elections, reminded its readership to avoid voting for those "ready . . . to lay new Burthens upon Traders, by reviving old Duties, and new modelling others."[15] Although Philip Doddridge chose to dismiss the Excise affair in a letter to his friend John Barker as an issue about which "very few, either in town or county, were much concerned,"[16] there can be no doubt that it was taken seriously, and it occupied a great deal of space in the columns of the *Northampton Mercury*. The *Mercury*, however, perhaps conscious of the number of petitions against the bill originating among its county readership, did not take sides. Instead it contented itself with reporting events in London: even a matter of days before the scheme was abandoned by

[8] T. H. B. Oldfield, *An Entire and Complete History . . . of the Boroughs of Great Britain* (3 vols., London 1792), vol. II, p. 326.

[9] He had been elected on 9 August.

[10] N(orthamptonshire) R(ecord) O(ffice), Northampton Borough Records, Assembly Book, 1623-1744.

[11] Doddridge to John Barker, 25 November 1733. For the full text of this important letter see J. D. Humphreys, *The Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, D.D.* (5 vols., London 1829-31), vol. III, pp. 125-30.

[12] Sedgwick, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 567-8.

[13] NRO, Northampton Borough Records, Assembly Book, 1623-1744. Cartwright and Isham were duly enrolled on 2 January 1734, and subsequently voted for Compton.

[14] *The Craftsman*, no. 367, 14 July 1733.

[15] *Ibid.*, no. 385, 24 November 1733.

[16] Humphreys, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 137.

Walpole it optimistically reported that ". . . 'tis generally believed that the Scheme . . . will take place."[17] Once Walpole had backed down it fell to the paper to perform the melancholy task of reporting the Tory riots and celebrations.[18]

Recognising the importance of making their position clear, the county MP's inserted an open letter to the traders of Towcester in the *Mercury*, in which they stated: "we were early in our Opposition to the Schemes."[19] Compton, on the other hand, did nothing, while Montagu was no doubt one of those who, in the words of *The Craftsman*, chose "to confine themselves at home, or skulk among their Friends and Acquaintance."[20] Undoubtedly, Montagu's position in the election was made more difficult by his support of the Excise Scheme, even if Forrester's opinion, that "excitement over Walpole's Excise Scheme dictated the tone of the 1733-'4 elections,"[21] seems somewhat to overstate the case. The tone of the elections was dictated equally by family rivalry between Northampton and Halifax, and by Montagu's decision to stand in the borough with William Wilmer, a former MP displaced in 1727 to make way for a Compton/Montagu alliance.[22] The 1734 election thus appears as a concerted attempt to assert Whig authority in Northampton, and to unseat a man who, since his election, had "proved a staunch Tory."[23]

3. Preparations for the Election

Compton's position in the borough was undoubtedly helped by the fact that the county members, Isham and Cartwright, were unopposed, despite rumours and hopes that a challenger would emerge.[24] In an effort to forestall such an eventuality, Justinian Isham sent his brother Charles round the county in January and February 1734 in order to make sure of his supporters. The reports which reached him at Lamport were encouraging,[25] and not only with regard to his own chances. The Earl of Cardigan, for example, while promising his support to Isham, added: "I hope Mr Compton has all the success he can desire."[26] Charles Isham not only canvassed for his brother, he worked hard on Compton's behalf, and the latter's election owed not a little to Isham connections.[27]

In thanking Compton for his past services as their MP, the corporation had also promised that they would take "all justifiable measures . . . to secure your election and that of the Gentleman who shall be judged proper to join you,"[28] thus implying that they did not think Montagu suitable, and that they would do what they could to prevent his re-election. In order to carry out this promise the corporation acquiesced in the creation of "Honorary Freemen". Beginning on 12 February 1734, the corporation offered the freedom of the borough to 406 assorted aristocracy, gentry and clergy, leavened with a handful of merchants.[29] Of those 202 who accepted the offer, 184

[17] N(orthampton) M(ercury), vol. XIII, no. 48, 19 March 1733.
[18] *Ibid.*, vol. cit., no. 52, 16 April 1733.
[19] *Ibid.*, ed. cit.
[20] *The Craftsman*, no. 367, 14 July 1733.
[21] Forrester, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[22] For Wilmer's career, see Sedgwick, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 547-8.
[23] Humphreys, *loc. cit.*

[24] This was the substance of Doddridge's letter to Barker, quoted above; Doddridge hoped that William Hanbury, who had contested the county in 1730, would stand. These rumours had not reached the Earl of Pomfret, who knew of no opposition when he wrote to Justinian Isham in January 1734, NRO, IC2992.
[25] Charles Isham wrote to his brother from Oundle, where he had called on Sir John Robinson, who "assured me that Mr Hanbury had no manner of thoughts of standing," 9 February 1734, NRO, IC2672 (see also letters IC2670, IC2671).
[26] NRO, IC2990.
[27] He visited Spratton, Brampton, Brixworth, Althorp, Harrowden, Holcot, Pitsford and Hannington on Compton's behalf; see the Canvassing Book (1734), Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby).
[28] NRO, Northampton Borough Records, Assembly Book, 1623-1744.
[29] *Ibid.*; the admissions are recorded in the Register of Freemen of the Borough (Central Museum, Northampton).

eventually polled – casting their votes singly for Compton.[30] In addition, the corporation sanctioned the admission of a further 114 tradesmen, craftsmen and labourers to freedoms to which they were entitled, but for which they could not afford to pay,[31] these being admitted entirely at Compton's expense.[32] The result was almost 320 extra potential votes for Compton, more than 90% of which were actually cast. Neither Montagu nor Wilmer could compete on this scale, though there is evidence that, more modestly, they tried to do so.[33]

In a recent article, J. A. Phillips has argued that "mass creations of freemen . . . are unconvincing examples of electoral corruption," on the grounds that "an impending election is a motivating influence that can be expected to expand the electorate . . . corruption need not be involved."[34] Unfortunately the leap in admissions of freemen in Northampton during the mayoral year 1733-'34 (see Table 1) cannot be explained away so easily. Of 452 freemen admitted during that period, no fewer than 316 are accounted for by the creations made in Compton's interest.

Montagu and Wilmer retaliated through the columns of the *Northampton Mercury* which, with rare partisan courage for a Whig paper,[35] espoused their cause. Commenting on the first admissions, in early February, the *Mercury* noted that "this is esteemed a very extraordinary step . . . and as it is a violation of the liberties of (the) freemen and householders . . . and as there are several Gents. of great Honour among them; it is believed very few . . . of them will accept the offer."[36] A few weeks later, when the threat to Montagu was more apparent, the *Mercury* tried again, adopting a policy of publishing a weekly list of those who had accepted the corporation's offer "for the satisfaction of our readers," and again emphasised that such methods had "never been employed here, but in the unhappy reign of King James II."[37] Finally, on the eve of the election, Montagu and Wilmer jointly addressed an appeal to "the householders and Freeman (not honorary) of the town of Northampton," desiring "the favour of your votes and interest."[38] By then it was too late.

Table 1
Enrolment of Freemen, 1730-'40

1730–1	9	Nathaniel Easton, mayor
1731–2	10	Thomas Peach, Jun., mayor
1732–3	21	Edward Bayly, mayor
1733–4	452	John Woolston, mayor
1734–5	6	John Battin, mayor
1735–6	8	John Fawsitt, mayor
1736–7	11	Thomas King, mayor
1737–8	13	Benjamin Chapman, mayor
1738–9	11	Samuel Marriott, mayor
1739–40	15	Stamford Farrin, mayor

Note: the mayoral year began in September.
(*Source:* Northampton Borough records, Register of Freemen, Central Museum.)

4. The Honorary Freemen

The 202 Honorary Freemen created in Compton's interest for the 1734 election were a fair cross-section of Tory society. Taken together they show just how cohesive a party the Tories were, and how the ties of family connection, patronage and friendship served to ensure that the Tory cause was never entirely lost. Of the two hundred, the majority – 120 – were landed gentry, but by no means backward or insignificant for that reason; they cannot be dismissed as a crop of Tory squires. The

[30] Poll Book (1734), Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby).

[31] Compton MSS. 1057, (Castle Ashby).

[32] They cost him £86 16s. 9d. in total. Of this sum the mayor took £18 18s. 4d., the Town Clerk £23 12s. 11d., and the Mace Bearer £5 13s. 6d.; the rest was divided between Stamp Duty and the corporation.

[33] Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby): "Note: Mr Montagu and Mr Wilmer paid the full Price for all persons admitted free on their Account, who were not inrolled." In addition, Wilmer seems to have split the cost of making Arthur Lewis, a lastmaker, a freeman, Compton paying the other half.

[34] J. A. Phillips, "The Structure of Electoral Politics in Unreformed England", *Journal of British Studies*, XIX, 1979, p. 96.

[35] On the political stance of the *Northampton Mercury* see G. A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760* (Oxford 1962), pp. 125-33.

[36] *NM*, vol., XIV, no. 44, 18 February 1734.

[37] *Ibid.*, vol. cit., no. 51, 8 April 1734.

[38] *Ibid.*, vol. XV, no. 1, 22 April 1734.

next largest group – 59 – consisted of the beneficed clergy, while the remainder included a sprinkling of the aristocracy, some fellows of Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and a few merchants. One of the most immediately striking features of the group as a whole is the high proportion of its members educated at either Oxford or Cambridge: no fewer than 120 out of the 202, or approximately 60%. Of these, sixty-seven had been at Oxford, and fifty-three at Cambridge;[39] not so great an imbalance as one might expect given that, during this period, "Oxford University was predominantly Tory; Cambridge University preponderantly Whig."[40] It is, unfortunately, impossible to be categorical as to the political opinions of either the Oxford or the Cambridge group – though the former certainly contains more identifiable Tories – and we should remember that many votes were probably cast for Compton on grounds quite unconcerned with party loyalties.

Although there was no attempt to emulate Worcester corporation's gradual introduction of sixty-three Tory MP's into the city franchise,[41] the new Northampton freemen did include a number of politically active figures. Among them were seventeen past, present or future Tory MP's,[42] including the sitting members for the towns and counties of Warwick and Leicester, and single members from Bedford, Peterborough and Stockbridge. Unsurprisingly, there was no Whig MP among George Compton's electoral allies. There was, however, the son of a Whig MP: Michael Hillersden, whose father had represented both the town and the county of Bedford before his death in 1725.[43] There were others too, who, though not MP's, were active in politics, like Lucy Knightley, who had played an important part in Justinian Isham's campaign at the 1730 county by-election;[44] or Sir Stewkley Shuckburgh, head of a family of active Warwickshire Tories, whose father had, in his day, been "an almost professional Tory election-monger."[45]

The Honorary Freemen converged on Northampton from every surrounding county – particularly Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire – and from further afield as well: Suffolk, Essex and Staffordshire all appear in the list.[46] What brought them together was not just party loyalty, or the reciprocation of help given in crucial elections elsewhere, though both these factors are important. They were brought together just as surely by ties of friendship, and, even more importantly, by kinship; the result of the extensive intermarriage of their families. Osborne Atterbury, son of the arch Tory Bishop of Rochester, Francis Atterbury, no doubt turned up because his father's old friend Sir John Dolben, the vicar of Finedon, was a keen Compton supporter. Gilbert Affleck, sometime Tory MP for Cambridge, who likewise came to vote, was Dolben's brother-in-law. Sir Francis Skipworth was similarly connected by marriage with the Cartwright family of Aynhoe; William

[39] The sources for this breakdown are, for Oxford, Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714* (4 vols, Oxford 1891-2), and the same author's *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886* (4 vols., Oxford 1888); and, for Cambridge, John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part I, To 1751* (4 vols., Cambridge 1922-'7).

[40] Colley, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

[42] Gilbert Affleck, William Bromley, Boteler Charnock, Sir John Chester, Edward Digby, Sir William Keyt, Richard Lowndes, Sir Humphrey Monoux, Sir Charles Mordaunt, Wrightson Mundy, Sir Thomas Palmer, Armstead Parker, Ambrose Phillips, Sir Jeremyah Sambrooke, Edward Smith, James Wigley, and George Wright.

[43] See Sedgwick, *op cit.*, vol. II, p. 141.

[44] See NRO IL1988; Knightley's son was to serve as MP for the county from 1748 to 1754.

[45] Forrester, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[46] Northamptonshire accounted for 89 of the honorary freemen, Warwickshire for 25, Buckinghamshire for 23, and Leicestershire for 21. Of the other counties, Bedfordshire took eight, as did London, while Cambridge and Huntingdon took five each, and Middlesex and Oxford three apiece. The remaining twelve were accounted for by Gloucestershire, Essex, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Suffolk.

Whitwell had married into the Griffin family; Thomas Noble, whose father had been Tory MP for Leicester, was the brother-in-law of the sitting member for Warwick, Sir William Keyt; George Wright and George Clarges, two more Compton voters, were also brothers by marriage. Once one member of a family had accepted the freedom of the borough his relatives frequently followed suit. Thus five members of the Backwell family of Great Billing in Northamptonshire and Tyringham in Buckinghamshire ultimately voted for Compton. Four members of the Mundy family – which was spread across Leicestershire and Derbyshire – similarly answered the call. Other families which produced several of their members to help Compton included the Maules of Ecton, the Palmers, the Reynoldses, and the Kimberleys. These last two families both had a long tradition of loyalty to the Stuarts behind them, a reminder of the undercurrent of Jacobitism that ran close to the surface among some of George Compton's adherents.[47] A number of the new freemen were distinguished men, like Richard Dawes, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and noted Greek scholar; or Charles Balguy, a Peterborough doctor who translated Boccaccio's works into English. One of the most interesting of these figures is Francis Smith, the Warwick architect who remodelled Lamport Hall for Sir Justinian Isham in the 1730's. He seems to have moved among a circle of Tory patrons, for he worked also for the Cave family at Stanford, and for the Skipworths at Newbold.[48]

According to the anonymous author of an *Extempore Epigram on the Ongoing Election at Northampton,* "the Church and Compton nearly are ally'd."[49] That Compton should receive significant support from the clergy is hardly surprising at a time when "incumbents of Tory livings were automatically engaged in their patron's partisan activities,"[50] especially if, as in many of the Northampton cases, the patrons happened to be members of their own family. It is impossible to be certain of the numbers involved, but at least eleven of the fifty-nine beneficed clergy involved in the election occupied livings which were still in the gift of their family in 1745.[51] Another group, seven strong, occupied proprietary livings of their former Oxford or Cambridge colleges.[52] However, in the majority of cases, it was up to the patrons to ensure that their clergy complied with their electoral wishes. Not surprisingly, the occupants of the Earl of Northampton's livings of Castle Ashby, Yardley Hastings and Little Houghton in Northamptonshire, and Compton Parva and Whatcott in Warwickshire were prevailed upon to vote for his brother. Sir John Chester duly produced the incumbent of his livings of Chichely and Farndish, as did Justinian Isham for his living at Harrington, and Thomas Wright for Gayhurst in Buckinghamshire. John Boldero, rector of Lord Griffin's living at Dingley, turned up to vote for Compton, though his patron was not an active Compton supporter. The clergy were of a more than numerical importance; they had also a symbolic role that was not lost on the

[47] Anthony, Decimus and Thomas Reynolds were three of the sons of Richard Reynolds (1675-1744), Dean of Peterborough and Bishop of Lincoln (and persecutor of Philip Doddridge, see Deacon, *op cit.*, pp. 100-01). Charles and Jonathan Kimberley's father had been Chaplain to Charles II. Other notable Jacobites included, of course, the Ishams, as well as Sir William Keyt and Ambrose Phillips.

[48] See the *Dictionary of National Biography*; on Francis Smith see also H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1660-1840* (London 1954), pp. 549-53.

[49] Copied into the back of the Canvassing Book (1734), Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby).

[50] Colley, *op cit.*, p. 131.

[51] See *The Clergyman's Intelligencer* (London 1745). The eleven were: Brett Backwell (Filgrave), John Barton (Great Brickhill), Beaumont Dixie (Market Bosworth), Sir John Dolben (Finedon, Burton Latimer), William Hervey (Collingtree), Euseby Isham (Lamport), Samuel Keynton (Bugbrooke), Lewis Palmer (East Carlton, Carlton Curlieu), Bradley Whalley (Cogenhoe), Eyre Whalley (Winwick, subsequently Cogenhoe), and William Wragge (Galby).

author of the *Extempore Epigeram,* especially since both the representatives of the diocese in convocation – Richard Grey, rector of Hinton, and Sir John Dolben, vicar of Finedon – were of their number.[53]

To support Compton must, in a number of cases (the Ishams for instance)[54] have involved families in swallowing their pride. Although anciently Tory, the Compton family had opportunistically converted to Whiggery in 1714, something which the sterner Tories who voted for George Compton hardly took lightly. By moulding the borough franchise with such skill, Compton put himself in an almost impregnable position. To counter him, Wilmer and Montagu had to rely on the influence of the *Northampton Mercury* and on the loyalty of the Dissenting vote. Though Compton had no control over the press, the Tories did at least have *The Craftsman*, which was read and circulated widely.[55] This paper served to rally the Tory party, and was also influential in other groups in society, except, perhaps, among the Dissenters, who – if Philip Doddridge is to be believed – never touched it.[56]

5. The Election and its Aftermath

The nominations of new freemen, which had begun in February, continued right up until the election; indeed, over the four days of polling, from the 24 to the 27 of April, twenty-two freemen and honorary freemen were admitted.[57] When the election was over and the results were announced it was clear that Compton – who headed the poll with 973 votes, to Wilmer's 965 and Montagu's 873 – owed his lead to the 184 honorary freemen who had polled. The *Northampton Mercury*, outraged, was quick to point this out, publishing the results in a manner which made it clear that Wilmer and Montagu, with a "majority in the legal votes," should be elected as the borough MP's.[58] It was obvious at once that a petition would be made to Parliament in an attempt to have the result overturned, and the *Mercury* – using St. Alban's as a comparison – started the campaign: "We please ourselves in a persuasion that other corporations that have been injured as St. Albans was will take as warm measures in their own vindication."[59] A petition, complaining of an "undue election," was duly got up by the inhabitants along the lines suggested by the *Mercury*, and, in due course, it was heard in the House of Commons.

It was characteristic of the Whig oligarchy that "Tory election petitions tended to be consigned to parliamentary oblivion, while Whig petitions were determined 'as justice requires and whiggs desire.'"[60] *The Craftsman* was certainly worried by the practice of "weeding the house," informing its readers

[52] These were: Samuel Adams, William Antrobus, Francis Clarke, Thomas Foster, Edward Ivie, Humphrey Lloyd, and William Whitehead.

[53] Richard Grey, interestingly enough, was a friend of Philip Doddridge's, and preached the inaugural sermon for the Northampton Infirmary in 1744; see Deacon, *op cit.*, p. 123. The general source for the clergy is H. I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (15 vols., Northampton 1938-'52).

[54] On the Isham attitude to the Earl of Northampton's actions in 1714, see Forrester, *op cit.*, p. 37. It is by no means impossible that Northampton's sympathies in 1714 were those of a Hanoverian Tory rather than a true Whig, which may explain why, within a year, he was in disgrace (see Plumb, *op. cit.*, p. 164). However, it seems clear that George Compton, elected in 1727 within the old tradition that the borough of Northampton sent two Whigs to Parliament while the county sent two Tories, was expected in many quarters to behave like a Whig.

[55] Both Lord and Lady Northampton appear on the mailing list for *The Craftsman* prepared in September 1730, taking a total of fifty-two copies, no doubt for distribution among their friends, C(ambridge) U(niversity) L(ibrary), Cholmondley (Houghton) MSS. P74/72. S. R. Varey, *The Craftsman, 1726-1752: An Historical and Critical Account,* (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 197), pp. 47-8, assumes an estimate of twenty readers and hearers per copy, so no Northamptonshire Tory needed to go without.

[56] Letter to John Barker, 25 November 1733: "I suppose there is not one Dissenter in a hundred who reads *The Craftsman,"* see G. F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, DD* (Northampton 1979), p. 68.

[57] Northampton Borough Records, Register of Freemen (Central Museum).

[58] *NM,* vol. XV, no. 2, 29 April 1734.

[59] *Ibid., vol. cit.,* no. 8, 10 June 1734.

[60] Colley, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

as early as May 1734 that "menaces . . . have already been thrown out very liberally against several Members, who are chosen on the Country Interest," and further, that it feared that "the Right of Honorary Freemen is to be set aside, wherever their votes have served the Country Party; particularly in the Boroughs of St. Alban's, Southampton and Northampton. At the same Time, some nice Distinction . . . will be found out to establish in other places, where it hath been made subservient to the opposite Interest."[61] As things turned out *The Craftsman* was being unduly pessimistic.

In March 1735 warrants were issued under the signature of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Arthur Onslow, for the collection of evidence regarding the Northampton election.[62] Compton was able to ensure that at least two of the agents charged with this duty were his supporters, but another, George Powell, had been an adherent of his rivals. The petition was heard on 21 March 1735, and two of the parliamentary diarists of the period, William Hay and Edward Harley, noted the result, though neither clearly explains the reason for it.[63] As documents preserved at Castle Ashby show, Compton and his solicitor, Lucas Kenn, had calculated that, even if the votes of the honorary freemen were set aside (as, indeed, they were) Compton would preserve a slight majority over Montagu (though Wilmer would top the poll) because a large number of persons in receipt of Christmas Charity had been prevailed upon to vote for Wilmer and Montagu, regardless of the fact that this was contrary to a ruling given in 1664 (see Table 2).[64] Thus it was to this ruling that Compton's counsel adhered, and it was duly upheld by Parliament.[65] Montagu was forced to admit defeat, and the only consolation for the Whigs was the banning of honorary freemen from voting at subsequent polls. This decision was not, however, to ensure peace at future elections.[66]

Table 2
George Compton's Electoral Calculations
Abstract of the Northampton Poll 1734 –

	Comp[n].	Wilm[r].	Mont.
In the Town of Northampton	587	690	601
In London	1080	109	110
In the Country	92	166	162
Hon. Freemen	186★	. . .	. . .
Total	973	965	873

If the Freemen and Christmas Charity people be struck out the poll will stand thus:

Freemen	186	. . .	. . .
Christmas Charity	1	97	95

Which being deducted there will remain:

786	868	778

(*Source:* Compton MSS. 1057, Castle Ashby.)
★Compton included Justinian Isham and Thomas Cartwright in his calculations, though they were not really 'Hon. Freemen'.

The 1734 election was an expensive one for George Compton. In all he spent nearly £5,000, including more than £1,600 on the four days of polling, and he was still settling the bills two years later.[67] But votes were bought with more than money, as both Compton and Montagu appreciated. Unlike Montagu, whose brother, the Earl of Halifax, commanded a considerable body of patronage, Compton could promise relatively little to potential supporters since his

[61] *The Craftsman*, no. 412, 25 May 1734.
[62] Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby).
[63] William Hay, *Journal*, NRO L(C) 1732; Hay notes that "the freemen will for ever hereafter be excluded"; Edward Harley's *Parliamentary Journal*, CUL Add. 6851, notes the same conclusion.
[64] *Journals of the House of Commons*, VIII, p. 550, 26 April 1664: it was resolved that "the inhabitants of the town of Northampton being householders, and not receiving alms, are the proper electors . . . and that the sharing in the charitable gift . . . at Christmas, is a taking of alms."
[65] *Journals of the House of Commons*, XXII, p. 426, 21 March 1735. See also *NRO* YZ 4984, which gives the final figures of allowed votes as: Compton, 576; Montagu, 566.
[66] The Halifax/Northampton rivalry lay dormant until the 1748 election when it was revived.
[67] Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby). It was to avoid expenses as heavy as those incurred by Compton that electoral pacts, such as that for 1767, NRO YZ 1707, were agreed.

family was out of favour. However, he could hope to secure votes from those who were disappointed in their expectations, and a page in his canvassing book was devoted to those who assured him of their support "if Ld. Halifax don't give them places or positions."[68]

6. Conclusion

The Northampton borough contest in 1734 shows very clearly the lengths to which the Tory party was prepared to go in order to avoid political eclipse. In George Compton they had a candidate who was enough of a Whig to gain some sympathy from that quarter, but who was yet Tory enough to be acceptable to Jacobites of the calibre of Sir Verney Cave, Sir Jeremyah Sambrooke, or Sir William Norwich. That he was, in the opinion of Horace Walpole, "a very silent person" may well have halped him in the difficult task of apearing to be all things to all men.[69] He was able to use a pliant and willing corporation to expand the franchise to his advantage, and had the money to do so. From the county he derived valuable support, not least from the Ishams, who had personal as well as party reasons for opposing the Montague interest.[70]

Equally surely Edward Montagu lost his seat because his brother had clumsily abandoned William Wilmer in 1727, a move which angered the Dissenting community to whom he had traditionally been an ally. 1734 was a difficult year for the Dissenters, and Philip Doddridge in particular was under attack.[71] William Wilmer, on the other hand, owed his high poll to the fact that he remained "the darling of all the Dissenters."[72] A further element in Montagu's defeat was no doubt his inopportune support of the Excise Bill – perhaps the most contentious of all 18th century legislation[73] – which alienated the powerful corporation. By his own acts, and those of his brother, Montagu was, in 1734, placed at odds with political society in Northampton.

If this was the case, why then is the Northampton result so remarkable? It seems to be so for two reasons: firstly, because it showed that the Tory party could act in concert to ensure the election of the candidate most favourable to them; and secondly, because the result was allowed to stand in a House of Commons which, even in 1734, was a pliant instrument of Walpole's will. However, a word of caution is not out of place. The Northampton contest was not a straight battle between Whig and Tory. In spite of appearances to the contrary – appearances strong enough to fool Philip Doddridge – George Compton was a Whig, and was later to serve in a Whig government. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from this study is that, in the right circumstances, a close alliance could be forged between Tories and the Whig opposition, and that the Whiggery of the shires was of a different order to that of the court. In supporting George Compton, Northamptonshire Tories were ensuring that the Whigs did not have everything their own way.

I would like to thank the Marquis of Northampton for giving me access to the Compton Papers at Castle Ashby.

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[68] Canvassing Book (1734), Compton MSS. 1057 (Castle Ashby).

[69] Quoted in Sedgwick, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 567-8.

[70] The Ishams always suspected, probably rightly, that young Justinian Isham's removal from his position at the Leather Office in 1714 had at least been acquiesced in by Lord Halifax; see Forrester, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40.

[71] In 1734 Doddridge was forced to defend his right to preach in Westminster Hall, see Deacon, *op. cit.*, p. 101. He was much helped by the Earl of Halifax, and by the personal intervention of Sir Robert Walpole.

[72] The phrase is Doddridge's, see Nuttall, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[73] The opposition to the Excise Bill, and the decision to climb down over the issue, seriously weakened Walpole, though as J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole: The King's Minister* (London 1960), p. 325, points out "the slope towards defeat and retirement was so gentle that few of his contemporaries perceived it." The controversy was revived when, in the early 1760's, Sir Francis Dashwood – as Chancellor of the Exchequer to Lord Bute – attempted to introduce an excise on cider, see B. Kemp, *Sir Francis Dashwood: An Eighteenth Century Independent* (London 1967), pp. 54-62, 84-5.

CHILD WORKERS IN THE VICTORIAN COUNTRYSIDE: THE CASE OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE*

PAMELA HORN

In country districts for much of the nineteenth century it was the custom for labouring families to send their children to work from an early age, and Northamptonshire was no exception to that rule. In 1868 a visitor to the county reported that "all the boys in the agricultural villages . . . begin to work about the age of 8, a few as young as 7; and almost all of them have been to work before they are 10 . . . after the age of 10 or 11 they are usually employed continuously throughout the whole year".[1] At a time when wage rates in the county for adult male farm workers ranged from 11s. or 12s. per week to a maximum of 14s., the 4d. or 6d. a day that a child could earn was a valuable addition to household resources. While to the youngster concerned, this opportunity to contribute to the family income was often a matter of considerable pride. James Hawker, born in 1836, the son of a poor Daventry tailor, later recounted that he began work in the fields at the age of eight for a wage of 1s. a week. "This sum," he wrote, "Bought my Mother a four Pound Loaf".[2]

Children in part-time occupations

By the late 1860s, in Northamptonshire as a whole, country boys aged between eight and ten years were estimated to work for at least 10 to 12 weeks a year and to earn 2s. a week whilst so doing. Of this, they might be allowed by their parents to keep 1d. or 2d. for themselves.

The position regarding child workers was, however, complicated by the very high proportion of young people within the community. In 1841, the under tens formed over 25 per cent of Northamptonshire's total population, and the under fifteens, over 36 per cent. Those proportions were largely maintained even at the beginning of the 1890s, when the 1891 Census revealed 25.4 per cent of the population under ten and 35.9 per cent under 15. Such figures may be compared to the position in 1971, when only 18.2 per cent of those living in the administrative county were under the age of ten, and 25.89 per cent under fifteen. Inevitably to have so many youngsters within the community created special problems and economic burdens for Victorian society.

The overall parental response to this situation was summarised by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, when discussing Northamptonshire in 1866, he noted sadly: "In nine cases out of ten, when the child can add the smallest sum to the family earnings, or help in the smallest way to ease the labour of any member of the family, the requirements of the school are made to give way . . . The truth is, that in the eyes of a vast number of parents the school possesses little or no value as an *educational* establishment. When their children are young they send them to school to get them taken care of and kept out of the way; when they become useful at home they are, as a matter of course, withdrawn from instruction without any misgiving or compunction".[3] In such circumstances, school came to be regarded almost as a luxury, at any rate once the basic ability to read and write had been

*Delivered as a lecture to the Society on 23 April 1983.

[1] *First Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*, P.P. 1867-68, Vol. XVII, Report by Mr F. H. Norman on Northamptonshire, 111. Hereafter cited as *1867-68 Report*.

[2] James Hawker's Journal, *A Victorian Poacher*, ed. G. Christian (Oxford University Press, 1978 ed.), 1.

[3] *Report of the Committee of Council on Education*, Report by the Rev. W. F. Tregarthen on Schools in Northamptonshire, P.P. 1867, Vol. XXII, 238.

PLATE 1: GIRLS' WORK IN THE SHOP OF A NORTHAMPTON 'CLOSER TO THE TRADE' in 1869 *[Northamptonshire Libraries]*

absorbed. This attitude was confirmed by the incumbent of Pytchley in 1868 when he frankly declared that: "If at all seasons of the year children above 8 years old were confined at school, their parents would become paupers without the assistance of their children" Pytchley was a village where the child labour problem was acute. On 26th September, 1871, the master at the local school complained that most of his pupils were only six years of age or less, adding on the following day: "Many children away, taking care of pigs, getting up potatoes &c."[4] Again, on 15th April, 1872, he noted: "Two boys left for farming work, one aged 9, the other 8. So many have left in the Upper Classes that I have been compelled to re-arrange the classes". Clearly he found the situation deeply frustrating and eventually left on 28th June, after being at the school for less than a year. Under his immediate successor, matters continued in much the same vein.

From the point of view of the farmers, children represented a cheap and amenable labour force which could be used flexibly as the seasons dictated. There was also a belief among some agriculturists that if the youngsters were not set to work at an early age they would never become efficient labourers. Mr Tate, agent for the Duke of Buccleuch at Barnewell Castle, was one who held this view, declaring firmly: "All the boys about are employed as soon as they are able to work. I think that if you educate them you must pension them. I have been here 35 years, and I find that when they have been taught much they become too independent. If kept at school until 12 or 14 years of age I would not engage them".[5]

As Table 1 shows, work on the land provided the principal employment for Northamptonshire's country boys through-

[4] Pytchley School Log Book at Northamptonshire Record Office, 275P/327. *1867-68 Report*, Evidence, 446.

[5] *1867-68 Report*, Evidence, 439.

out the nineteenth century. But for the girls the position was less clear cut, with domestic service and the outwork industries of shoemaking and cottage lacemaking all playing a major role. Although the passage of protective legislation in the 1860s and 1870s sought to place restrictions on this use of child labour, enforcement was always difficult and truancy remained a major problem. In 1875, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Mr Currey, reported of the county as a whole: "The operation of the Factory and Workshops Acts is fitful and uncertain. The Inspectors cannot be perpetually looking up the attendance of children in remote villages, and there seem to be several loopholes in the Acts whereby a good number of children evade the necessity of going to school at all".[6]

Legal restraints on child labour

The legal restraints imposed on the employment of country children in the second half of the nineteenth century can be divided into two groups. Firstly, there were those which were concerned with employment in its own right, and secondly those connected with education, which influenced employment only indirectly. Under the former heading was the 1867 Workshops Regulation Act, which made it illegal for any child below the age of eight to be employed in a domestic or outwork industry. Between eight and thirteen, he or she must attend an approved elementary school for at least ten hours per week. Enforcement of the Act was placed initially in the hands of the police and the sanitary authorities, but evasion continued on a wide scale, and in 1871 the Factory Inspectorate formally took over. Unfortunately their task was made more difficult by the fact that there were still villages which lacked adequate elementary school provision. In 1869 the Factory Inspector for Northamptonshire complained that even at Wellingborough the legislation was in abeyance "through the want of school accommodation. Both the board of health and the vicar assure me they cannot provide for the half-timers till additions are made to the schools".[7] Three years later, his successor was deploring a similar situation elsewhere in the county, pointing out that in such places "it was impossible . . . to cause children to attend school".[8]

In the field of education, the major measures were the Education Acts of 1870, 1876, and 1880. The 1870 legislation laid down for the first time that every child must have an elementary school place provided for it, and in areas where the existing voluntary (usually Church of England) schools could not make good the deficiencies, local ratepayers were to form an elected school board, financed partly out of the rates, to fulfil that obligation. School boards were allowed to make bye-laws forbidding the employment of children below the age of ten, and requiring attendance at school at least part-time up to the age of thirteen. But the Act was of limited significance in Northamptonshire, since voluntary schools continued to supply the bulk of school places. As late as 1899, there were only 46 board schools in the county, compared to 237 voluntary schools (of which 225 were Anglican). About two-thirds of all children on the school registers were attending voluntary schools at that date.[9] In earlier years the role of the Church had been still more important. At Helmdon, the Anglican school continued to cater for the children until September 1877, when it had to close due to shortage of funds. More than three months then elapsed before machinery was

[6] *Report of the Committee of Council on Education,* Report by Mr W. E. Currey on Schools in Northamptonshire, 1875, P.P. 1876, Vol. XXIII.

[7] *Report of the Factory Inspectors for the Half Year Ending 31st October, 1869,* Report by C. N. Girardot, P.P. 1870, Vol. XV, 183.

[8] *Report of the Factory Inspectors for the Half Year Ending 31st October, 1872,* Report by Alexander Redgrave, P.P. 1873, Vol. XIX, 23.

[9] List of Schools on the Annual Grant list on 31st August, 1899, P.P. 1900, Vol. LXV, Pt. I, 12.

PLATE 2: A BEDFORDSHIRE LACE SCHOOL *c* 1900
[Northampton Museum and Art Gallery]

set in motion to provide a replacement board school. In the interim, the children received no education, unless they could make private arrangements of their own.[10] A similar situation had arisen at Piddington two years before, with one irate parent eventually writing to the Education Department in London to complain that his five sons were deprived of schooling "at an age when the loss of 3 months education is felt to be . . . very serious". His action led to an order for the establishment of a school board being issued within four weeks.[11]

In order to tackle the problem of children who lived outside the jurisdiction of a school board, in 1873 a private member's bill, the Agricultural Children Act, appeared on the statute book. This prohibited the employment of any child on the land below the age of eight (except where he was working for his parents), and laid own minimum attendance levels for those between eight and twelve. Unfortunately, its failure to nominate any enforcement agency, and the ease with which its regulations could be set aside in order to meet the seasonal needs of agriculture, soon led to its being disregarded. It came into operation on 1st January, 1875, and by 15th May in that year Northamptonshire's J.P.s were reporting "that no proceedings had been taken at a petty sessions under the said Act" in that county.[12] It was in the light of this failure that in 1876 the first general Education Act was passed seeking to impose attendance at school on all children between five and ten years of age, and thereafter at least part-time up to the age of fourteen, unless they could pass a leaving examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Parents neglecting

[10] Helmdon File at the Public Record Office, ED.2/330.

[11] Piddington File at the Public Record office, ED.2/332.

[12] *Return on the Agricultural Children Act,* P.P. 1875, Vol. LXI, 10.

to send their children to school could now be fined, as could the employers who engaged them. But even at that stage not all local authorites drew up bye-laws, and it was left to an Act of 1880 finally to make the adoption of attendance bye-laws mandatory. By 1880, therefore, attendance at school had theoretically been made compulsory for every child at least to the age of ten, though full attendance in this context only meant a minimum of 250 attendances a year, or the equivalent of 125 full days' attendance. In 1891 education became virtually free, as fees, usually of 1d. or 2d. per child per week, were abolished in most elementary schools, thanks to an additional government grant. Finally in 1893, the minimum school leaving age was raised from ten to eleven, and in 1899 it was raised again to twelve – though in rural areas it was still possible for youngsters to leave at eleven if local bye-laws permitted.

But despite this legal framework, as entries in school log books and the reports of H.M. Inspectors indicate, it remained difficult for teachers and attendance officers to enforce the regulations. As late as 1891, H.M.I. Cartwright noted that whereas the percentage of average attendance to the number on the register was 77.3 for England as a whole, there were parts of Northamptonshire where the corresponding figure was as low as 63 and 65 per cent.[13] Not until 1895 was a more hopeful note sounded, when he reported: "It is not many years ago that Northamptonshire stood, with some two exceptions, at the bottom of the list of counties as regards regularity of attendance. We now occupy the position of 18th out of a list of 42". But even that could hardly be regarded as entirely satisfactory.[14]

Throughout the period, agriculture remained the major cause of this irregularity. Youngsters were engaged either in looking after smaller brothers and sisters at home whilst their mother went to help with the harvest, or they would themselves work in the fields, leading the horses, weeding, bird scaring, stonepicking, singling turnips, carrying food and drink to the harvesters, or perhaps helping to bind the corn into sheaves. Later, when the grain had been carried, a mother and her children would go out gleaning, or leazing as it was called in parts of the county. The grain thus collected was either ground into flour or used to feed the family's chickens.

It is an indication of the priorities of education and agriculture that in many villages the return to school after the summer holidays was delayed until the end of the harvest season. This happened at Preston Capes in 1891, when an extra week was given 'on account of the harvest".[15] Or else school hours were adjusted to fit in with the children's work plans. An entry in the Wadenhoe school log book for 14th October, 1892, reads: "Children assembled on Wednesday at 12.55. Dismissed at 3.5 to allow a number of them to go and pick potatoes." And in the Daventry school attendance district, the regulations were suspended by the Education Committee itself so that the children might work. This happened in the spring of 1883, with the head of Preston Capes school noting that the "prohibitions &c. of the Education Act" had been suspended for three weeks. At this school children were also allowed to leave permanently once they had achieved the very modest academic level of Standard IV of the Education Department's official code.

But in earlier years, before attendance regulations were imposed, the position had been still more difficult. At Finedon boys' school the master gloomily observed on 4th September, 1865: "Opened school this

[13] *Report of the Committee of Council on Education*, General Report by Mr Hernaman for 1891,m P.P. 1892, Vol. XXVIII, 375.

[14] *Report of the Committee of Council on Education*, General Report by Mr Du Port for 1895, P.P. 1896, Vol. XXVI, 61.

[15] Preston Capes School Log Book at Northamptonshire Record Office, SLB/126. The school log books referred to in the remainder of the paragraph and in the succeeding one are also preserved at Northamptonshire Record Office.

morning with 24 scholars. The gleaning still continues & there is a probability of having no more until Finedon Feast is over which will take place in another fortnight". Even in October 1879, problems remained, with the lateness of the harvest blamed for bad attendance: "Mr Sheffield [the attendance officer] called but said he could do nothing".

Children in full-time work

1. Agriculture

So far attention has been concentrated upon those children who worked, either officially or unofficially, on a part-time basis, but especially in the earlier nineteenth century many young children were engaged on a permanent basis. In 1868 the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture pointed out that some children in Northamptonshire began full-time work at the age of eight, and the 1861 Census of Population reveals that over 460 boys aged five to nine inclusive (or about 3.4 per cent of the total age group) were regularly employed in agriculture; about eight times that number in the age range ten to fourteen inclusive (or 29 per cent of the total age group) were similarly occupied. (See Table 1.) Even a decade later, almost a quarter of the ten to fourteen-year-olds were still at work on the land. Those engaged as carter boys to help with the ploughing probably had the hardest situations. Occasionally they were hired as annual servants and lived in with their employer, or his senior carter. But, in general, Northamptonshire had few residential farm labourers. In 1861 there were only 112 boys aged between ten and fourteen in this category, compared to 3,500 youngsters employed on a non-residential basis.

The working day of those involved with ploughing commenced before 7 a.m., at which hour they were expected to go out with the horse team. They then rested for about half an hour at 9.30 or 10, before continuing until 2 p.m. or 2.30 p.m., when they returned home. After they had eaten their mid-day meal, they were occupied in cleaning the stables, cutting chaff, or similar jobs in the yard.[16] But this physical drudgery was not the only problem. There were also allegations that youngsters sent to the fields at an early age suffered morally. Where girls were employed, there were charges that they got into "loose and disorderly habits, and are rendered unfit for domestic servants and badly trained for labourers' wives".[17] The headmaster of Eye school, near Peterborough, was one who complained that in his parish the girls went out to work before they could read or sew. They grew up "without knowing how to clean a house or cook their food".[18] Of the boys, there were allegations of bad language and other, vaguer moral deficiencies. "My boy shall not go to work until he is 14", declared one labourer firmly. "If he does he is sure to have a depraved nature and catch up all that is bad."

Education suffered, too. Even when children learned to read and write before leaving school, lack of opportunity to practise soon robbed them of these skills. The Assistant Commissioner who visited Northamptonshire in 1868 in connection with the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, etc. in Agriculture, noted that on his travels he had carried with him a Second Standard reading book, *i.e.* one involving words of about two syllables, and had invited boys working in the fields to read from it. Very few had been able to do so fluently.[19]

Some of the clergy also expressed concern at the premature employment of their younger parishioners. At Warkton the incumbent declared in 1868: "I think that the early labour in the fields is physically injurious. The state of education among the young is defective; I attribute that to the fact

[16] *1867-68 Report*, 112.
[17] *1867-68 Report*, 113.
[18] *Sixth Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, P.P. 1867, Vol. XVI, Mr J. E. White's Report, Evidence, 139.
[19] *1867-68 Report*, 113

Table 1
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CHILD EMPLOYMENT: 1851-1911

	1851 Census				1861 Census				1871 Census				1901 Census		1911 Census	
	5-9 incl.	10-14 incl.	% of total age group empl. 5-9	10-14	5-9 incl.	10-14 incl.	% of total age group empl. 5-9	10-14	5-9 incl.	10-14 incl.	% of total age group empl. 5-19	10-14	10-13 incl.	% of total age group empl.	10-14* incl.	% of total age group empl.
BOYS																
Total in age group	12,861	11,691			13,733	12,393			15,931	14,014			14,140		11,259	
Shoemakers	177	1,381	1.4	11.8	80	1,229	0.6	10.0	27	1,295	0.2	9.2	661	4.6	1,082	9.6
Ag. lab.	315	2,928	2.4	25.0	469	3,612	3.4	29.0	252	3,242	1.6	23.1	557	4.0	839	7.4
Dom. service	—	75	—	0.7	—	85	—	0.7	—	103	—	0.7	57	0.4	28	0.2
Lacemakers	7	10	—	—	8	5	—	—	11	11	—	—	—	—	n.a.	n.a.
Scholars	8,066	3,666	62.7	31.4	9,928	4,460	72.3	36.0	11,804	5,964	76.7	42.5	n.a.	n.a.	7,944	70.5
GIRLS																
Total in age group	12,878	11,538			13,924	12,455			15,348	13,664			14,259		11,239	
Shoemakers	110	724	0.8	6.3	106	1,036	0.7	8.3	28	946	0.2	7.0	618	4.3	944	8.4
Ag. lab.	5	106	—	0.9	12	79	—	0.6	—	34	—	0.2	—	—	2	—
Dom. service	3	499	—	4.3	5	795	—	6.4	20	1,370	0.1	10.0	362	2.5	537	4.8
Lacemakers	754	2,124	6.0	18.4	335	1,370	2.4	11.0	157	982	1.0	7.2	10	—	n.a.	n.a.
Scholars	7,280	4,152	56.5	36.0	9,849	6,152	70.7	49.0	11,672	7,252	76.0	53.0	n.a.	n.a.	9,100	80.9

The figures are likely to be *underestimates* as part-time workers are not included and many in cottage industries may be excluded.
*This includes the administrative county of Northamptonshire only.
N.B. From 1881 children under 10 were not recorded as employed in the census, as it was illegal for them to work.
See Census Reports: P.P.1852-53, Vol. LXXXVIII, Pt. 1; 1861, P.P.1863, Vol. LIII, Pt. 1; 1871, P.P.1873, Vol. LXXI, Pt. 1; 1901, PP.1902, Vol. CXX; 1911, P.P.1913, Vol. LXXIX.

that children attend school irregularly, and are taken away too early . . . One little boy in my parish was killed by being run over in 1865; he had the charge of the horses when it occurred; his brother subsequently had his foot severely injured by a harrow". A colleague who had lived at Brafield for about fifteen years agreed, noting that almost all the boys left school at nine to go to work: "at the present time there are only two or three in the school out of a total of 45 boys, who are over 9 years of age. Now and then, when a boy gets a job at pig keeping or bird minding, he comes back to school again when it is over; but as a general rule, when they have once left school they do not come back . . . I don't like the notion of compulsory education, but I think you might prevent them from being employed up to a certain age . . . I think it would be very desirable and very practicable to enact that no boy should be employed in the fields until he is 9 (I should prefer 10), unless he has obtained a certificate of proficiency before that age."[20]

Changing attitudes

Gradually, then, attitudes towards child employment began to change. In part this was due to the influence of the education legislation mentioned earlier. But it was attributable to other factors, too. Among these were the improvement in money wages of farm labourers which took place as a result of trade union agitation in the early 1870s, reinforced by growing job opportunities outside agriculture, and perhaps most important of all, by the sharp fall in food prices in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as cheap imports of wheat, dairy produce, and frozen meat became available. Even if families still lived "near the bone", most could afford to let their children attend school for the greater part of the year, while for the youngsters themselves, the unremitting toil of earlier generations had largely disappeared. Parental views were also altering. The benefits of a better education were coming to be recognised and children ceased to be regarded in the old mercenary light, as

[20] *1867-68 Report*, Evidence, 438 and 453.

small adults who must make a contribution to family income as quickly as possible. In the early twentieth century Northamptonshire boys no longer so often went to work on the land when they left school, and those who did were apt, as soon as they were old enough, to go off to the boot factories and ironstone works, or to the railways and, in a few cases, to the police force.[21] By 1911, under 8 per cent of the age group 10 to 14 inclusive was still working on the land.[22] The girls, too, grew less willing to carry out part-time work on the land, in a way their predecessors had done. In 1910 Sir Herewald Wake commented on the fact that whereas village women had once been prepared to gather winter fuel or go out gleaning, "Nowadays . . . they are not at all anxious to do any manual labour in the fields, or their own allotment gardens, for that matter . . . I think we have to thank the Education Acts for this alteration in the character of the rising generation of our rustic females. The teachers are town and city bred for the most part, and look upon manual labour . . . as beneath the dignity of a twentieth century 'laidy'"[23]

A marked reduction in the size of agricultural labourers' families likewise reduced the proportion of young people seeking occupations by 1914. At the time of 1911 Census, the under tens had fallen to 19.6 per cent of the county's total population – compared to 24.5 per cent recorded twenty years earlier, while the respective percentages for the under fifteens were 30 and 35.9.

On the part of farmers the demand for cheap child labour also diminished as the nineteenth century drew to a close. The greater use of machinery, and the switch to pastoral farming by agriculturists hit by the collapse of grain prices during the "Great Depression" years between 1875 and 1895, contributed to this. And those farmers who engaged in arable husbandry no longer employed the labour intensive methods of more prosperous years.

But whilst both boys and girls worked in the fields during the early and mid-Victorian period, particularly at the busy hay and corn harvest times, the girls were always more likely to be kept at home to help their mother look after younger brothers and sisters. Or, especially in the earlier years, they might be employed in cottage lacemaking or the boot and shoe trade. Domestic service, too, was a common resort for girls aged about twelve or thirteen. Even in 1901, 362 girls aged from ten to thirteen inclusive in Northamptonshire were working as maids; that represented about 2.5 per cent of the age group. Three decades earlier the proportion had been considerably higher, as Table 1 indicates.

2. Lacemaking

In districts where domestic industries flourished, however, girls might prefer these, at any rate as a means of earning a little money before they were old enough to go out of service. In 1851, lacemaking employed 2,124 girls aged ten to fourteen inclusive, plus a further 754 under the age of ten. These totals are probably underestimates, since many of the part-time workers did not declare their occupation to the census enumerator, and a number of the children were probably classed as "scholars" even when they were only attending lace schools. The youngsters normally began to learn their trade about the age of five or six, with production particularly concentrated in the Wellingborough area and in villages on the south-west side of the county. Spratton, Paulerspury, and Towcester were three major centres of the lace trade, while Middleton Cheney was famed for the fine quality of the fabric produced. The county

[21] *Report of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries on Wages and Conditions of Employment of Agricultural Labourers,* P.P. 1919, Vol. IX, Report on Northamptonshire, 235

[22] Occupations, etc. in the 1911 Census, P.P. 1913, Vol. LXXIX, Report on the Administrative County of Northamptonshire.

[23] Draft article on Agricultural Wages in Wake Papers, Northamptonshire Record Office.

as a whole was noted for its baby lace, which was used for trimming babies' caps.[24]

Most children learnt their trade at one of the special "schools" which were found in virtually all of the lacemaking communities during the early and mid-Victorian period. Within the schools, youngsters were kept at work many hours each day in the small cottage rooms where they congregated. They received almost no academic instruction, the main aim of the "mistresses" being to impart their own skills to their charges and to encourage the children's dexterity so that they would produce the best work in later life. Each child who attended paid about 2d. or 3d. per week, and discipline was severe, with a ready resort to the cane. The youngsters had little freedom to move about, and this close confinement of young and active limbs was a cruel restraint. In 1841, a Towcester doctor commented on the high incidence of tuberculosis and digestive disorders among them and, less seriously, on the bad effect upon the circulation of their practice of warming feet and legs by placing a small earthenware pot of heated charcoal beneath their clothes. This led to swollen ankles and chilblains.[25]

Interviews with young workers confirmed the poor health experienced by many of them. Thus Elizabeth Kemzel, aged eleven, interviewed at Wellingborough in May 1841, complained of excessive tiredness and aching legs and arms. She had "been very bad several times; five or six weeks ago I was taken ill . . . one Sunday-night, and had fits all the week afterwards". She had started at the lace school when she was about eight. Similarly, Mary Ann Webb, aged ten, from Towcester, who had commenced at the lace school when she was 7½, confessed: "I never feel well hardly ever; wasn't so bad before I began lace-making . . . I am now sometimes obliged to stay away from work a day or two, feel bad in my inside. Earn a shilling a week, pay 4d. a week for schooling out of it".[26]

Annual mortality rates for the period 1838-44 to a limited degree bear out these complaints, with the lacemaking districts of Brackley, Daventry, Towcester, and Potterspury having a female death rate for ten to fifteen year olds of 0.65 per cent of the age group, which was almost twice as high as that in the purely rural Peterborough area, and 85 per cent above the comparable male death rates for these districts. Though it must be stressed that in neither case did they equal the very high mortality rates experienced for both boys and girls below the age of *five*; this stood at 6.4 per cent and 5.3 per cent, respectively, for these lace districts.[27]

More than twenty years later, the incumbent of Moulton, another lace centre, confirmed the damaging effect upon the girls' hands of the continuous work: "when they go to service", he declared, "their hands are sometimes so cramped that they cannot use them properly". Eye strain was a further hazard, especially when the girls struggled to make their lace in the evening by the shared light of a candle. Mary Ann Sumter, who kept a lace school at Broughton during the 1860s, recalled that most of her young charges began their training at seven, working from 8 a.m. in winter and 7 a.m. in summer to 6 p.m. in the evening. They had a break of one hour in the middle of the day, and did not begin to work by candlelight until they had reached the age of ten. At that point they "sat till 8, having an hour also for tea at 4 . . . I believe that lace making is very injurious to the health . . . Some, chiefly the weak girls, lean very forward at their work, which presses their chest against the 'maid,' or 'horse' as a few

[24] The Revd. R. M. Serjeantson and W. Ryland D. Adkins ed., *Victoria History of Northamptonshire*, Vol. 2 (Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd., 1906), 337.

[25] *Second Report of Children's Employment Commission*, P.P. 1843, Vol. XIV, Report by Major J. G. Burns, A.13.

[26] Ibid., Evidence submitted by Major J. G. Burns, a.51.

[27] *Appendix to Ninth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages*, P.P. 1849, Vol. XXI, 46.

call it (pillow stand), and this must hurt them." At one time she had had as many as twenty girls crammed into her small cottage room, "sitting nearly as close as can be", and this confinement, which was aggravated by the unwieldy character of the pillow on which the lace was made, had contributed to the children's poor health.[28]

In the lacemaking villages there was normally what was known as "cut off day" every five weeks or so, when the lace was removed from the pillow and carried off for sale to the lacebuyer or his agent, who generally met the workers at the village inn. He would pay cash for it, but sometimes the lacemakers could not wait so long to receive their earnings. They would then dispose of their work to a local draper. In this case, according to a Pytchley lacemaker, they would be paid only in kind – a process which was not only illegal but was likely to lead to the exploitation of the workers, as they were forced to take goods they did not want, or which were over-priced.[29]

Yet, despite the drawbacks, in areas where lace flourished a farm labourere regarded it as a matter of course that his daughter should be sent to a lace school as soon as she was old enough and that from the time she left the school to the time she left his house for good, it was his wife's business to see that she stuck to her lace pillow and worked as many hours as he did himself. Nor was it only labourers' children who were so employed. In boot and shoe villages, the daughters of shoemakers were also involved. This applied to Denton, where two-thirds of all girls aged ten to twelve inclusive in the parish in 1861 were lacemakers, or Kislingbury, where over a third were.[30]

Then, thanks to the competition of machine-made lace and to changes in fashion, as well as to the influence of the 1867 Workshops Act and the Education legislation, the employment of child lacemakers gradually came to an end by the 1880s. In 1901, Northamptonshire had only ten girls under fourteen officially recorded as lacemakers, and the number working unofficially on a part-time basis was unlikely to be very much greater, for the rewards offered for the work were now too small. By 1911, the lacemaker category had disappeared from the census altogether.

Of course, even at the peak of the trade, the daily round of the child workers had not been all gloom. Special holidays were held in the lace schools on St. Catherine's Day (25th November) or St. Andrew's Day (30th November), according to local custom. In the Kettering area, "Cattern" cakes, made of dough and caraway seeds, were baked, and the evening was spent in singing, dancing, and feasting. At Spratton, another major centre, it was St. Andrew's Day which was the principal holiday. Then the children at the lace schools would seize an opportunity when the mistress left the room to lock her out. On her return they would sing:

> Pardon, mistress, pardon, master,
> Pardon for a pin;
> If you won't give us a holiday,
> We won't let you in.

After a brief display of assumed anger, the mistress yielded to their demands.[31] At Mears Ashby, May Day, too, was a holiday. The children carried round the village a branch of may on which were arranged dolls dressed in lace, and sang a special song as they went.

Within the rigid daily discipline of the lace schools, too, there were lighter moments as the children recited special "lace tells", designed to encourage them to work quickly. At Yardley Hastings, for example, they sang:

[28] *First Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, P.P. 1863, Vol. XVIII, Report by Mr. J. E. White, 261, *1867-68 Report*, Evidence, 450-451.

[29] Ibid., 261.

[30] See Census Returns at the Public Records Office, R.G.9.930 for Denton and R.G.9.941 for Kislingbury.

[31] Thomas Wright, *The Romance of the Lace Pillow* (H. H. Armstrong, Olney, 1919), 200.

Twenty pins have I to do,
Let ways be ever so dirty
Never a penny in my purse,
But farthings five and thirty.[32]

Rather less attractive was the claim made by the rector of Wicken, that in the 1830s and 1840s, children at the lace schools in his parish were attending "little dens of iniquity, in which not only vile talking was heard, but vile books were read aloud". It was this fact and the realisation that the girls were getting no general education which encouraged him to establish a school of his own. Here the children continued with their lacemaking, but whilst at their pillows they learnt hymns, recited their tables, and received religious instruction from the mistress, as well as having writing lessons three times a week.[33] But in many other villages, only Sunday schools provided the girls with instruction once they started work.

As demand for lace fell away, so the lace schools vanished. At Kislingbury there were three of them as late as 1871. By 1879 all had disappeared.[34] In view the sad history of poor health and drudgery associated with them, their demise could not be regretted. Not only were the girls from former lace villages likely to be far fitter as a result of their disappearance, but their education also improved. In 1847, 45.7 per cent of all females marrying in the county had only been able to make a mark when they came to sign the marriage register, and in 1860 the figure was still 30.8 per cent. But by the 1890s, the level had dropped dramatically to 3.7 per cent.[35] At this stage the female literacy rate was better than that of the males, whereas earlier in the century the reverse had been true.

3. Shoemaking

Lacemaking was largely confined to women and girls, but Northamptonshire's other outwork industry, shoemaking, employed whole families in some villages. At Earls Barton (with a total population in 1861 of over 1,500) between one in two and one in three of all males in the parish was a shoemaker and about one in three of the females. Agriculture employed around a sixth of the men and boys and cottage lacemaking a number of the females. Mat making was another minor industry, but it was clearly boot and shoemaking which dominated community life. At nearby Grendon (population in 1861, 610), about one in six of the men and a rather smaller proportion of the women and girls were similarly occupied.[36] In these villages the women and children were largely employed as "closers", sewing together the various parts of the uppers. But a number, like H. E. Bates's mother, began their working lives tying knots on shoes which had been closed by sewing machine. She earned the princely sum of 2s. a week.[37]

Where women were employed, the need to work long hours, often meant that household chores were neglected. As in the lacemaking parishes, where wives also worked for many hours each day, critics pointed to the dirty home, the slatternly habits, and the neglected children which drove the husband to the public house. Clearly the family life of children in such households must have been uncomfortable, and this was aggravated by the irregular work pattern adopted by many shoemakers. Often they would idle away the early part of the week, celebrating St. Monday, and then work extremely long hours at the end in order to fulfil their allotted tasks. Inevitably this placed strains on the youngsters employed alongside them. But the cash re-

[32] Ibid., 192.
[33] *1867-68 Report,* Evidence, 460.
[34] Thomas Wright, op. cit., 232.
[35] *10th, 23rd Annual Reports of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages,* P.P.1849, Vol. XXI, 4-5 and 1862, Vol. XVII, vi. *Report of the Registrar General for 1900,* P.P.1901, Vol. XV, lix, 'Marriages – signature by mark in counties 1890-99 and 1900 per 1,000 marriages'.
[36] Pamela Horn, *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside* (Gill & Macmillan, 1976), 103.
[37] H. E. Bates, *The Vanished World* (Michael Joseph, 1969), 7.

wards to be earned when the trade was flourishing helped to compensate for this and encouraged young men to switch from agriculture to shoemaking. A Northamptonshire surveyor and estate agent observed in 1852 that because of the prosperity of the shoe trade the price of agricultural labour was also kept high thanks to "the great number of youths who, tempted by better wages, desert the land for the last".[38]

Normally children began to work in shoemaking at about the age of ten or eleven, though a few started earlier. In 1861, a number at Earls Barton were working at six or eight years old, and overall at the time of the Census there were twenty-one girls and ten boys employed there aged ten or under. Most helped with "closing", though, according to a shoe manufacturer from Hardingstone, boys also worked for riveters, finishers and makers. For this they were paid about 2s. 6d. a week in the mid-1860s.

In the early years of Victoria's reign, the children's first task had been to boil the pitch, resin and tallow used to make wax for the thread. The mixture was then poured into a pail of water and balls of wax were prepared by the young workers. Their next job was to wax strands of hempen thread so as to make cobblers' thread for sewing on the welt. After a boy had mastered this process and had learned how to use an awl, he would be set to "close" children's shoes.

With the passage of the 1867 Workshops Act, the minimum age for employment in shoemaking became eight, but, as in the case of the other domestic trades, enforcement was at first difficult to secure. There were frequent complaints, too, about irregularity of attendance at school. Thus at Finedon on 29th September, 1873, the head of the girls' school noted: "The school was reopened this morning with only small numbers, so many of the children who used to work in the Factories, now do their shoe making at home & so do not come to school for even the ten hours a week they used to do". Visits by the Factory Inspector followed, but the difficulty remained until on 8th Janury, 1877, came the entry: "a great many girls returned to school (under pressure of the new Education Act) who had not put in a single attendance for more than a year".[40] However, legislation alone was insufficient, and the services of the school attendance officer had to be called upon. On 29th March, 1878, the mistress reported: "3 very ignorant girls who have been hunted up by the Attendance Officer have come to school this week". Almost two years later, it was a visit by the Factory Inspector which had had similar effect: "Some very ignorant Half Timers have come to school again this week in consequence of Mr Wood's visits to different Factories". Significantly, in the autumn of 1872 another of the Factory Inspectors had commented that although the chief constable of Northamptonshire had "taken great interest in the administration of the Workshops Act, and had circulated bills throughout the industrial villages", without "personal visitation it was not possible to make much impression upon the people".[41]

But as shoemaking became more factory based and as machinery took over much of the old hand closing work, so the number of children employed was cut back. As early as 1864, a Northampton manufacturer claimed that in cases where thirty children would once have been employed as closers, following the introduction of the sewing machine these were reduced to two or three operators, aged about fourteen to sixteen, and

[38] Victor A. Hatley, *Shoemakers in Northamptonshire 1762-1911* (Northampton Historial Series, No. 6, 1971), 6.

[39] Pamela Horn, op. cit., 103-104.

[40] Finedon Girls' School Log Book at Northamptonshire Record Office.

[41] *Report of the Factory Inspectors for the Half Year Ending 31st October, 1872,* Report by Alexander Redgrave, P.P.1873, Vol. XIX, 22-23.

one child of nine or ten to tie knots.[42] Prosecutions, too, were instituted in a few cases where breaches of the legislation had ocurred. Between 16th June and 2nd August, 1873, seven charges were laid by the Factory Inspectors against four Northamptonshire masters who had employed children without a certificate of school attendance. They were fined 2s. 6d. on each count, with cost of 10s. or 10s. 6d. per case. There were also six charges involving parents who had allowed their children to be so employed.[43] In these, the penalties were a mere 1s. per case, with costs varying between 8s. 6d. and 10s. 6d. each. Clearly, with such relatively small sums as these, the prosecutions could be regarded as little more than gestures. Their impact in ending illegal child labour must have been minimal.

Unpaid labour in decline

More significant were the changes in public opinion which became apparent during the last two decades of the century. In shoemaking the influence of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, established in 1874, was consistently exercised to eliminate boys from the industry, since they were regarded as cheap labour.[44] By the 1890s the nation was also entering upon its second generation of compulsorily educated children and many parents could look back upon their own school days to judge the benefits which education could bestow. Although even in the last decade or the century a substantial number of youngsters worked on a part-time or seasonal basis on the land, the drudging, remorseless routine of earlier years had disappeared. The position was summarised by Mr E. M. Nunneley, a farmer from the Wellingborough area, when he wrote in 1901:

> I do not think that in this neighbourhood children of school age are employed in agricultural work to any great extent. A few small occupiers of land employ children to take their cows to and from the fields before and after school, and several of the older boys – eleven years old and upwards – go to work for farmers on Saturdays, and during the holidays, in the summer especially. I may say that the boys themselves generally seem anxious to get to work in this way, and I think the effect on their health and character is good rather than otherwise. The work is not hard enough to injure them, and this employment is in every way better for them than factory work, or idling about the village with nothing to do.[45]

Nor should it be forgotten that even in the darkest days, life for the child worker had had its brighter side. Thus ten-year-old Frederick Page of Harrowden, who admitted getting "very cold" whilst he was employed as a bird scarer in the late 1860s, nevertheless added cheerfully, "but I go to play in the village when I come home".[46] Youngsters such as he were surrounded by green fields and hedgerows, where they could pick berries or go birds' nesting at the appropriate seasons. Added to that, as school log books show, there were the holidays given to allow them to see a local meet of the hunt, or to parade round the vilage with their garlands on May day, or to take part in the junketings of the village feast. These pleasures were simple and inexpensive. As such they could be enjoyed by virtually all country children and they helped to compensate for the harsher aspects of their lives.

[42] *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, P.P.1864, Vol. XXII, Evidence of Mr F. Bostock of Northampton, 168. See also Victor A. Hatley, 'The St Giles' Shoe-School' in *Northampton Historical Series*, No. 4 (1968), 3-7.

[43] *Reports of the Factory Inspectors for the Half Year Ending 31st October, 1873*, P.P.1874, Vol. XIII, Speciman prosecutions, 76 and 77.

[44] Alan Fox, *A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1874-1957* (Basil Blackwell, 1958), 152.

[45] *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children*, P.P.1902, Vol. XXV, Appendix 2, Evidence of Mr E. M. Nunneley, 292.

[46] *1867-68 Report*, 443.

OLD SOLDIERS IN VICTORIAN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

One of the most interesting tombstones in the old cemetery at Kettering marks the grave of a pauper. More than 2,000 people gathered to see him laid to rest, and the stone was paid for by subscription among gentlemen of the town.

James Edwin Dray drifted into the town in the 1890's in search of work. He had been badly kicked by a horse, his health broke down, and he fell victim to consumption. He sought help at Kettering Workhouse, was admitted, and died there on August 23, 1894. But Dray had known his hour of glory. Forty years before, as a young trooper in the 4th Light Dragoons, he had taken part in the Charge of the Light Brigade. Members of the Kettering Volunteers knew this, and befriended him.

But gossips cast doubt on his record, saying his name was really Driver and that he had never been in the Charge. The Master of the Workhouse, Mr Sattin, decided to check with the Regiment. He found the old soldier's claim was true, his name was on the Medal Roll of the Dragoons, and he was a holder of the Crimea Medal with Alma, Inkerman, Sebastopol and Balaclava clasps, and of the Turkey Medal.

So, when he was buried, it was with military honours. His stone is carved with a floral boss of roses, thistles, shamrock and daffodils, and records his battles. Two lines at the bottom read: 'Erected by patriotic and sympathetic friends'.

But if Kettering had not given him a fitting funeral and gravestone, Bedford would have done. An anonymous Bedford lady asked to pay all expenses, not knowing that the Kettering fund had been raised.

TONY IRESON

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'On Saturday afternoon there was laid to rest in the Northampton General Cemetery the body of Robert McMillan, late of the 12th Lancers, who served both in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. He was, however, more particularly known years ago in Northampton as one of the first to start the branch then called the Rivetters and Finishers of the Cordwainers' Trade Society. Most of the promoters of this new section were members of the Old Stitch Body, but under the changing conditions of the boot trade they wisely decided to create a new branch with the above title. This branch has since developed into what is now the No 1 Branch of the National Union of the Rivetters and Finishers. Robert McMillan was one of the first Presidents of the Branch. It was largely due to his perseverance and energy that this small body, in conjunction with similar bodies in the United Kingdom, was in 1876 finally amalgamated into one Union, now known as the Boot and Shoe Operatives. He was the delegate from Northampton to the Conference held in London in the early part of 1874 which brought about this much desired union of shoe rivetters and shoe finishers. Those of us who knew him well can recall his strong personality. Tall, rugged, and with strong Scottish accent, ever preaching "Unity! Unity! Unity! Nothing can be done, my friends, without Unity". And that spirit animated him to the last. Old, and for the last eighteen months blind, there are not very many who recollect him as about 18 years ago he went to Kilmarnock. There all the members knew "Old Mac", and relished and treasured his quaint sayings. He returned to Northampton about three years ago, worn out with toil and illness. He died on Saturday, January 17th, at 74 Roe Road. The funeral took place with

semi-military honours. About 30 soldiers from the Depot under Corporal McAllister attended, and as the deceased was borne from his home the Union Jack was placed on the coffin. The relative mourners followed. Preceding the hearse walked Mr R. Harrison (President of the Northampton No. 1 Branch of the Boot and Shoe Operatives Union) and Mr Fred Stanton (committee man), representing the Branch: Mr Harry Newcombe and Mr John Weeks, old Kilmarnock friends. At the right walked ex-Sergeant G. Butler-Floyd, of the 1st Shropshires, an old Crimean veteran: on the left was J. C. Marsh, late of the 1st and 12th (now the Suffolks), who was wounded in the New Zealand campaign. On each side marched the soldiers of the 48th. At the Cemetery Chapel the cortege was met by the Rev. A. H. Birks, of Christ Church, who very feelingly read the early part of the Church Burial Service. The coffin was borne to the grave on the shoulders of six stalwart comrades. As they neared the open ground three cavalry men came smartly to attention and respectfully saluted their old dead comrade. The flag was then removed from the coffin, and scarcely had the concluding "Amen" been said, when out rang the thrilling notes of the bugle sounding the "Last Post". In the latter portion the weird and plaintive tones seemed to say "Come home, come home, all ye soldiers!" And so we left him.' RH

(Source: Northampton Daily Reporter, 26th Jan. 1903)

R.L.G.

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'A COUNTY PARLIAMENT': THE FIRST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PETER GORDON

In 1888, after many years of debating and compromise between the two major political parties, a Local Government Bill setting up County Councils received the Royal Assent. Such a Bill had been promised by Lord Salisbury during the 1885 election campaign as part of the Conservative plans for the future. "Representative bodies are the fashion of the day," wrote one doubting Conservative to Salisbury, "and against a fashion it is almost impossible to argue."[1] The new Act amounted to a largely democratic reconstruction of local government, a state of affairs of which the right wing of Salisbury's party bitterly complained at too late a stage.[2]

The powers to be given to these new councils were far-reaching. Many of the functions hitherto exercised by magistrates meeting in Quarter Sessions, including the management of county funds, the making and assessing of rates and the repair and maintenance of roads and bridges, were to be transferred to the councils by 1 April 1889.

The Northamptonshire County Council was to operate for the whole county, excluding the Soke of Peterborough and Northampton, which became a new administrative county and a county borough respectively. One of the immediate tasks of the Quarter Sessions was to appoint a committee to divide the county into fifty one electoral divisions: two, for Brackley and Daventry, and 49 others for the rest of the county, made up of parishes or combinations of parishes.[3] This did not prove to be an easy operation. A balance had to be kept between the size of a division and its population: but some of the larger divisions were also growing ones, and the 1881 Census, on which calculations had to be based, was often out of date. (The two larges towns, Kettering and Wellingborough, were given three divisions each.)

The number of voters in a division ranged from Brackley (506), to Rothwell and Rushden, each with 1061.

An interesting feature of the electoral register was that, unlike those for parliamentary elections, it contained the names of peers of the realm, and women were eligible to vote by virtue of being ratepayers. They were also eligible to stand for election as councillors and aldermen. Northamptonshire could claim 23 peers and more than 3,800 women voters. This latter category was, again, unevenly distributed: in Brackley 1 in 4½ voters were women whereas in Duston they represented only 1 in 26.[4]

Elections for the 51 councillors were fixed for 17 January 1889. By the end of the previous October, the *Northampton Mercury* could state that "already notes of the coming contest are sounded, and there is, we are glad to say, every prospect of our getting the best business men of the county in the field."[5]

How to make this aspiration a reality occupied the minds of the local Liberal and Conservative parties for the next few

[1] Sir John Dorington to Salisbury, 18 August 1886. Quoted in R. Taylor, *Lord Salisbury* (London, 1975), p. 126.

[2] See P. Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft 1881-1902* (London, 1978), pp. 127-8.

[3] C. Markham, "The Northamptonshire County Council", *The County Council Magazine*, i, 6 (1889), p. 322.

[4] *Northampton Mercury*, 5 January 1889, p. 6.

[5] *ibid.*, 27 October 1888, p. 5.

months. At a private meeting of Liberal interests on 27 October, it was determined that meetings should be called by local associations to see how contests could be avoided as far as possible: when good men were put forward, they were not to be opposed merely on political grounds. However, C. C. Becke, a seasoned Liberal election agent, warned Lord Spencer that "The Conservatives are strongly urging us to make the contest non political and at the same time are putting forward a party candidate in every district. This is so like them. It is clear that if we do not bestir ourselves a little 9/10ths of the Council will be Conservatives which I do not think is to be desired on any ground. If on the contrary we take the matter up we shall win more than ½ of the seats."[6]

How far, if at all, County Council elections should be fought on a party basis, similar to those at parliamentary elections, was an issue on which there was little consensus, either between or within political parties. On the Liberal side, for instance, John Morley and G. O. Trevelyan welcomed the adversorial opportunity which such elections presented whilst Gladstone and Rosebery disapproved.[7] Indeed, Rosebery, who became first chairman of the London County Council, stated that a person's capacity for county council work could not be gauged by his political leanings. Electors, he believed, "had as much claim to bring the question of party politics forward as to ask the barber who shaved them whether he was married or single."[8]

Spencer, in congratulating Rosebery on his courageous stance in London where party issues predominated, told him: "In my humble way I have tried to do it here, and only succeeded in preventing every seat being contested on party lines by the Liberal Association and in mitigating the contests which could not be avoided. I have myself stood as you did, but I expect in every contest – and there are a majority of seats contested – the fight turns on Politics."[9] Announcing his candidature for the Brington division in November, Spencer, who was also Lord-Lieutenant of the county, made clear that he was not standing as a party candidate, a point reinforced in his election address.[10]

Such restraint was not observed by the majority of candidates for the Council's election in Northamptonshire; as in most other counties the campaign was fought on party lines.[11] Some of the leading figures in the county put their names forward, knowing that they would be returned unopposed. This occurred in 18 out of the 51 divisions. Amongst Conservatives thus elected were S. G. Stopford Sackville, Albert Pell and Pickering Phipps, and amongst the Liberals besides Spencer were Lord Henley and the Marquis of Northampton.[12] In the remaining 33 divisions, 65 candidates offered

[6] C. C. Becke to Lord Spencer, 29 October 1888, Spencer Papers.

[7] J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'Expectations of the New County Councils, and their Realizations', *The Historical Journal*, vii, 3 (1965), p. 362.

[8] The reality of the case was somewhat different. Rosebery, as a moderate Liberal, was urged to accept the chairmanship as a counterbalance to the extreme Liberals at both ends of the Party spectrum. John Morley to S. Rendel, 28 January 1889, Rendel Papers, 581 (National Library of Wales).

[9] Lord Spencer to Lord Rosebery, 14 January 1889. Rosebery Papers, 10062 (National Library of Scotland).

[10] *Northampton Mercury*, 3 November 1888, p. 5 and 24 November 1888, p. 6. Spencer addressed three meetings altogether, *Northampton Herald*, 12 January, 1889, supp., p. 2.

[11] A proposal by some Conservatives to 'mix up' the Primrose League with the County Council elections was not taken up. Lady Knightley's Diary, 11 December 1888, K. 2903 (Northamptonshire Record Office).

[12] Sackville George Stopford Sackville, of Drayton House. Defeated in North Northamptonshire by Spencer's half-brother, C. R. Spencer, in 1880. County Councillor, Brigstock; Albert Pell of Hazelbeach. M.P. South Leicestershire, 1865-85. County Councillor, Guilsborough; Pickering Phipps of Collingtree. Twice former Mayor, Northampton; M.P. Northampton Borough, 1874-80, and South Northamptonshire, 1881-5. County Councillor, Wootton; Lord Henley, of Watford Court. M.P. Northampton Borough, 1859-74. County Councillor, Braunston; William Compton, 4th Marquis of Northapton, of Castle Ashby. County Councillor, Yardley Hastings.

themselves for election.[13] Party labels were not uniformly used: the majority termed themselves either as Conservative or Liberals, a few preferred "Independent" though they were mainly Conservatives, and two candidates, Simon Collier at Duston and David Dulley at Wellingborough, preferred to be known as Liberal Unionists.[14] There was one Labour candidate, Leonard Bradley of Kettering, who received the support of the local Liberals[15] and another Labour candidate, William Ayniss of Kings Sutton. Both were defeated.

Polling was remarkably heavy on election day, 17 January, with over 90 per cent of the electorate using their vote. Although polling stations were open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., they were located only in villages with populations of over 100 to save expense. Most were within two miles of a village, but some were over three.[16] The voting produced surprises. Some divisions which were regarded as Liberal strongholds, such as Wellingborough, returned two Conservatives and only one Liberal. On the other hand at Middleton Cheney, Aubrey Cartwright, representing the magisterial and family influence, was beaten by E. F. Ashworth Briggs, chairman of the South Northamptonshire Liberal Association, who did not live in the division in which he fought. A number of clergy and magistrates were defeated though many of the elected were prominent in local affairs, usually having served on a Board of Guardians, School Board or Highways Board. On the other hand, an agricultural labourer in a rural constituency such as Kings Sutton stood little chance against T. R. B. L. Melville Cartwright, the Conservative candidate, a popular figure and landowner in the locality.[17] Women were not excluded from standing, but none came forward in Northamptonshire.[18]

The results were declared on the following day, 18 January, and showed a nice balance between the parties on the Council: 25 Conservatives, 25 Liberals and 1 Independent,[19] who supported the Conservatives. The first meeting of the Provisional Council took place on 31 January in the Grand Jury Room at County Hall to carry out two tasks: to elect amongst its number a chairman for the first two meetings, and to elect 17 county aldermen, who would then attend the second and subsequent meetings of the Council. Both these tasks were accomplished only after considerable political manoeuvring and procedural uncertainty.

The meeting began at twelve precisely and the Council immediately proceeded to the business of electing a provisional chairman. Lord Northampton proposed Lord Spencer and was seconded by a fellow Liberal, Lord Henley; Stopford Sackville was proposed and seconded by two Conservatives. In the subsequent election, 25 voted for each candidate, with Spencer voting for Sackville and Sackville voting for Spencer. There was one abstention, H. F. Henson of Kettering.[20] Amidst laughter and reference to law books, it was agreed that the decision should be by lot. Both candidates wrote their names on slips of paper

[13] The three divisions at Kettering and Wellingborough were, in each case, taken together for voting purposes. At Kettering, five candidates contested the three seats.

[14] Collier, shoemaker and farmer, whose defeat by W. R. D. Adkins, the Liberal candidate was ascribed to his defection from his former political views; Dulley a Nonconformist and a well-known brewer, was elected.

[15] *Northampton Mercury*, 19 January 1889, p. 5.

[16] Sir Edmund Loder to Lord Spencer, 13 December 1888, Spencer Papers.

[17] W. R. D. Adkins, *Our County* (London, 1893), pp. 66-7.

[18] A Society "for the promotion of the return of Women as County Councillors" was formed late in 1888, with Lady Aberdeen as President. Lord Spencer congratulated Lady Sandhurst, a relative by marriage, on her election to the London County Council. Lady Sandhurst to Lord Spencer, 13 February 1889, Spencer Papers.

[19] Richard Britten, an Abington farmer. County Councillor, Kingsthorpe.

[20] Henry Frederick Henson, a builder and firm Conservative supporter, though professed to be an Independent.

and put them in a hat. The Clerk of the Provisional Council, E. P. Markham, drew out one of the names and announced "Sackville". One member only attempted a ghost of some applause.[21]

The election of aldermen had received more thought than that of the chairmanship prior to the meeting. The Local Government Act had given the new councils the option of choosing aldermen either from existing councillors or selecting them from leading men in the county. It was assumed that these would consist largely of county magistrates, who were familiar with conducting county business. Further, their presence on County Councils would restore to many of them the powers which they formerly exercised in Quarter Sessions. In Essex, out of 21 aldermen, 17 were county justices. In neighbouring Leicestershire, the 18 aldermen consisted of 17 Conservatives and 1 Liberal Unionist.[22]

Ten days before the meeting, Lord Spencer contacted the deputy-chairman of Quarter Sessions, Stopford Sackville, with the intention of settling the issue in accordance with his desire to choose the best candidates without strict reference to party politics. "If 51 Elected Councillors are left to their own devices to draw up a list of 17 Aldermen," he wrote, "confusion will be great and the most suitable men for the position may be overlooked." Liberal committees in the county were drawing up a list of names to be put forward and Spencer suggested a meeting with Sackville, together with three representatives from each party, with a view to settling an agreed list.[23]

Sackville's reply was discouraging. A joint meeting "might be productive of misunderstandings and unpleasantness." He went on, "I believe my object is the same as yours, viz. to get the best men possible elected as Aldermen, without much regard to party considerations, but I am bound to add that after thinking over as impartially as possible the names of all who appear qualified for the position I find a very preponderating majority in the Conservative ranks. If therefore I were to enter into conference with those whom you represent I should be virtually pledging myself to accept as Aldermen some gentlemen who in my judgment would not be so eligible as others who have been conspicuous in their devotion to County business."[24]

The two parties subsequently met separately to draw up their lists. At the Liberal meeting held on 26 January, it was decided to follow Spencer's criteria for selection, namely to subordinate party considerations to that of producing a list which was acceptable to all councillors. Two days later, 28 January, the Conservative meeting nominated twelve people: the Duke of Grafton and Drury Wake, both with Liberal leanings, and ten Conservatives.

The election of aldermen was the second major item of business at the meeting of the Provisional Council. Councillors were not debarred from standing though they would of course have had to relinquish their present posts if elected. Sackville from the chair remarked that those councillors who did not wish to serve as aldermen should say so. There was an army of decliners. The next task was to collect the election papers which had been sent to members for completion before the meeting. Four councillors were nominated by Sackville as scrutineers and the meeting adjourned for a hundred minutes, until two o'clock. This proved to be optimistic and it was not until a quarter to three before the count had been

[21] Minute Book, Northamptonshire County Council, 31 January 1889; *Northampton Mercury*, 2 February 1889, p. 6.

[22] J. W. Ross Brown, "Party Politics in the County Councils", *The County Council Magazine*, i, 2 (1889), p. 72.

[23] Lord Spencer to S. G. Stopford Sackville, 20 January 1889, Spencer Papers (copy). Spencer anticipated that few councillors were likely to risk their existing position in order to become aldermen. Lord Spencer to Lord Oxenbridge, Monson Papers, 25/13/2/30 (Lincolnshire Archives Office).

[24] S. G. Stopford Sackville to Lord Spencer, 21 january 1889, Spencer Papers.

completed. The table in the Jury Room by this time was partially littered with cake and buns which the councillors had been eating. When Briggs, one of the four scrutineers, entered the room, according to a local paper, he 'shrugged his shoulders ominously.'[25]

The reason for this was soon apparent. Of the 17 aldermen, 11 were Conservatives and 6 were Liberals. This gave the Conservatives an overall majority. Only one councillor, J. T. Stockburn, an influential Kettering Liberal, offered himself for election. Although polling the same number of votes as three of the elected aldermen, he was unsuccessful. The chairman used his casting vote against him, declaring that as all the other aldermen were not members of the Council, it would be undesirable to have one election only in the county. Lord Spencer, a witness to these events, told his brother later the same day:

> They (the Conservatives) carried all theirs and we got 4 in or 3, I am not sure – Braye, Smeeton, S. Dunkley of Creaton and Woolston. The Tories could not have voted for one of these. John Becke was defeated.[26] Henley behaved I hear scandalously. He waited to hear how votes were going, and hearing that J. Becke had a good many votes he voted the Tory ticket having promised to vote ours. The Tory Democrat[27] voted aginst us I presume, and John Gee[28] occasionally for us. The Tories behaved to my mind very badly.[29]

The party nature of the new Council was again obvious in the next business of the Council: to settle which aldermen were to retire in 1892 and which in 1895. Voting was on strict party lines. The outcome was that three out of the four Liberals were to retire in 1892, leaving only one of their number on the Council, whilst six Conservatives remained for the full six years until 1895.

Before the Council could conduct business, a permanent chairman had to be elected and this was to be decided at the second meeting which was to take place on 14 February. The obvious candidate was Lord Spencer. As Lord-Lieutenant of the County for almost twenty years and an experienced chairman of Quarter Sessions, he had taken a close interest in county affairs, both at local and parliamentary levels.[30] The only other candidate was the provisional chairman, Stopford Sackville, who could find support amongst Conservatives. Lord Exeter told C. C. Becke that he considered that the Lord-Lieutenant should not be chairman, for which reason he had himself refused to be chairman of the Soke of Peterborough.[31] This, however, was a minority view. Spencer's candidature was warmly supported by the Duke of Grafton, who drew up a memorandum which was circulated to both Liberals and Conservatives, stating the reasons why Spencer's services should be secured for the County Council.[32] One difficulty which could be foreseen was that the Liberal Unionist members might take the opportunity to express their opposition to Spencer's support of Home Rule for Ireland in Gladstone's 1886 Government.[33] In the event, this did not come to pass. At the Council meeting, the Duke of Grafton nominated Spencer and the Marquis of Exeter "heartily

[25] *Northampton Mercury*, 16 February 1889, p. 6.

[26] Lord Braye, of Stanford Hall; Samuel Smeeton, farmer of Creaton; Samuel Dunkley, also a farmer of Creaton; Charles Woolston, corn merchant and maltster, Wellingborough; and John Becke, solicitor and formerly Lord Spencer's election agent.

[27] i.e. Henry Henson. See note 20.

[28] John Gee, of Welford, gentleman farmer, Liberal with Independent views. County Councillor, Crick.

[29] Lord Spencer to C. R. Spencer, 21 January 1889, Spencer Papers.

[30] P. Gordon, *The Red Earl: The Papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer 1835-1910* Vol. 1 1835-1885 (Northampton, 1981), passim.

[31] C. C. Becke to Lord Spencer, 10 February 1889, Spencer Papers.

[32] *ibid.*

[33] D. Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs, 1832-1886* (London, 1962) pp. 404-5.

PLATE 1: THE 5TH EARL SPENCER, the Liberal leader in 1888 *[Northamptonshire Libraries]*

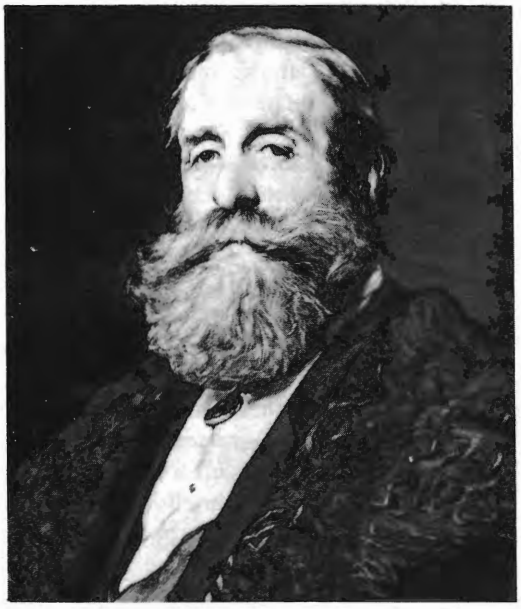

PLATE 2: S. G. STOPFORD SACKVILLE, ESQ. *[Northamptonshire Libraries]*

seconded the motion".[34] The only dissentient was the Hon. and Rev. C. J. Vernon, a prominent Conservative and an active member of the Primrose League.[35] In his acceptance speech, Spencer drew attention to the many important functions that the Council would be undertaking and the need to conduct debates in a temperate and orderly manner. Sackville was elected vice-chairman of the Council.

Lord Spencer's warning was particularly timely in view of the delicate political balance within the Council. The *County Council Magazine* commented on the state of affairs.

> This council stands thus: 68 members altogether, of whom probably 34 will vote as Conservatives, 29 as Liberals, 3 as Liberal Unionists and 2 as Independents; or in other words, the Conservatives seem to form exactly half the council. One will watch with interest the working of this council, as its machinery is so nicely adjusted that it will not require much friction to produce a complete deadlock.[36]

By the time of its next issue, the journal was commending the Council for its "thoroughly business-like manner", and congratulating Spencer 'on having his council so well in hand'.[37]

The new Council quickly got down to business. An Organizing Committee consisting of 15 members of the Council was

[34] *Northampton Mercury*, 16 February 1889, p. 6. Further light is thrown on the election by Lady Knightley, whose husband, Sir Rainald, and his nephew, Charles Valentine Knightley, were also members of the Council: "R. and Charlie went to the first meeting of the complete County Council when they found themselves obliged to elect Lord Spencer to avoid a split in the party." Lady Knightley's Diary, 13 February 1889, K. 2904 (Northamptonshire Record Office).

[35] Son of Robert Vernon Smith, 1st Lord Lyveden, Liberal M.P. for Northampton, 1831-59, and a cabinet minister in Palmerston's first administration.

[36] C. Herbert-Smith, "Party Politics in the County Council", *The County Council Magazine*, i. 2 (1889), p. 72. The discrepancy in the figures of party representation with those quoted earlier in the text may be accounted for by changes in allegiances.

appointed in February to draw up a report on the management of work under the Quarter Sessions. It also recommended that much of the detailed Council business should be conducted by the following committees: a Finance Committee, a Standing Joint Committee, consisting of 10 councillors and 10 magistrates, a Committee of Roads, Highways, Bridges and Buildings, a Contagious Diseases (Animals) Committee, a County Rate Assessment Committee, a Visiting Committee of the Berry Wood Asylum, and a Selection Committee.[38] To these were later added other important committees particularly for technical education and for sanitation.

The committees of councillors functioned efficiently, despatching much county business. One major problem was the lack of suitable accommodation for the Council. The Grand Jury Room, where the first Provisional Council met, proved too small with the addition of the county aldermen and the press,[39] so the second meeting was held in the Sessions Court. In 1890, a half-oval Council Chamber was built within County Hall (still the home of the present County Council) which accorded well with the needs of the new body.[40]

Much of the success of the first Northamptonshire County Council can be attributed to the example set by its chairman, Lord Spencer. Whilst being heavily engaged in national politics during the period of his chairmanship (towards the end he was First Lord of the Admiralty and a Cabinet member of Gladstone's 1892 Ministry) he nevertheless devoted much time to Council affairs. From the first session of the full Council on 1 April 1889, until 31 December 1892, he attended 40 meetings:[41] as an ex-officio member of all the committees, Spencer took part in the deliberations of a large number of them and continued to serve on the Technical Instruction Committee after retiring from his position as chairman. But its achievements are to be sought in a wider context than the contributions of individuals. The new County Council consisted of an amalgam of the more traditional elements from Quarter Sessions and the new blood of popular representation. County business promoted a better understanding of local issues between the political parties represented on the Council. At a different level, the work of the Council had a unifying effect on the county, with ratepayers outside the boroughs being given the vote for the first time and electing their own representatives. The wider franchise anticipated parliamentary legislation by some thirty years in including women in the electorate. Extensive press coverage of the early County Council proceedings ensured that readers were kept well-informed of local developments.

E. F. Ashworth Briggs, a member of the first Council, also pointed out in 1889 that the presence among the members of men who had attained first rank as statesmen acted as an incentive in attracting good candidates.[42] He added, "So long as a seat continues to be a matter of honourable ambition among the best men of each locality, so long will the new Boards be worthy of the trust reposed in them by Parliament."[43] However, the enthusiasm witnessed at the first elections in 1889 was not sustained. At the 1892 election in Northamptonshire 37 of the councillors were re-elected unopposed and only 14 seats were contested.[44] With the increasing range

[37] "Occasional Notes", *The County Council Magazine*, i. 3 (1889), p. 186.

[38] Markham, op. cit., p. 324.

[39] It had been decided at the first full meeting of the Council to admit the press. No fewer than ten reporters were present. *Northampton Mercury*, 2 February 1889, p. 6.

[40] N. Pevsner, *Northamptonshire* (London, 1973 edition), p. 327.

[41] Calculated from the Council's Minute Book.

[42] Some of the motives for the participation of leading politicians in local government have been brilliantly explored recently by D. Cannadine, *Land and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774-1967*, (Leicester, 1980), pp. 59-60.

[43] E. F. Ashworth Briggs, "Are the New Counties Better than the Quarter Sessions?" *The County Council Magazine*, ii, 7 (1889), p. 18.

[44] *Northampton Mercury*, 20 February 1892, p. 7.

of duties given by central government to local councils and the professionalization of services which called for administrative expertise, it was inevitable that the role of councillors should change. Nevertheless, the pioneering work of the first County Council set the pattern for its successors and deserves to be remembered by those interested in the history of the county.

I am most grateful to Victor Hatley for reading this article in draft and for making constructive comments and suggestions.

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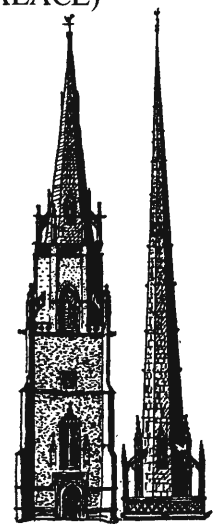

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OLD KETTERING AND ITS DEFENDERS

TONY IRESON

The author's cottage stands in the middle of an urban comprehensive development area. After defending it against the bulldozers, he compiled a personal record of the character of some areas in a Northamptonshire town which planners intended to level and rebuild, and of a memorable fight by local people to halt or modify the scheme. Under the above title his book was published in 1984. It is available from bookshops or direct from Mr Ireson at Beech Cottage, Tanners Lane, Kettering, price £6.75. Under our masthead of Northamptonshire Present as well as Northamptonshire Past we print the extracts below. In view of the current public debate on the Britain-of-the-planners it could not be more timely.

(Ed.)

The sixties and early seventies brought turmoil, upheaval and heartbreak to town centres all over Britain. It was a time of organised change. Planners in the corridors of power decided that our historic town centres were worn out. Streets, lanes and squares of shops, houses, factories and offices that had been good enough for our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and a focus of civic pride and dignity, were to be bulldozed down. In their place we were to have shopping malls, tower blocks, pedestrian precincts, multi-storey car parks and ring roads – the planners' vision of a new Britain.

Sponsors of this social revolution visualised a great era of co-operation between councils and property developers. The councils, using powers of compulsory purchase and comprehensive development, were to sweep whole areas clear of existing buildings, obliterating street patterns that had grown up through hundreds of years, and destroying all trace of previous occupation. The developers would then take over these tracts of urban desert to plan and construct new buildings. Costs would be met by the income from the blocks of shops, offices and flats soon to soar skyward.

Everybody, we were told, would do well out of this. Property owners, though dispossessed, were assured of compensation at market value. Architects, builders and contractors would get years of work on schemes costing millions. Retailers would move into fine, purpose-built, centrally-heated stores which would increase sales efficiency. The public would be offered one-stop shopping, driving into a car park, being whisked under cover to the shops by lifts or escalators, and returning to their cars with attractively-priced merchandise carried in easy-rolling trollies. Councils, as prime movers, would get their towns modernised at no cost to the rates and could look forward to financial gains in their new role of business tycoons. Borrowing the money for such schemes was no problem. Britain had never had it so good, and everywhere surplus capital was looking for investment opportunities.

So began the national fashion for shopping centres which became almost a mania. It was a bonanza, with huge contracts to be gained by property developers who brought the technique of reconstruction to a fine art. They offered package schemes to councils which, once a decision to go ahead had been taken, would relieve the authority of most of the work and worry. The developers would see the whole scheme through, from re-planning a central area to rebuilding and letting the new properties. All the council had to do was to acquire the land by compulsory purchase, agree contracts and leases, then sit back and watch the scheme take shape, modestly accepting public acclaim. Fear was a great incentive – fear

that if a town did not modernise and build a new shopping precinct it would be left behind in the scramble to attract trade. Renewal on a big scale was a glittering new concept, and people who opposed it were considered stick-in-the-mud reactionaries with no vision. It was a dazzling era in which those favouring redevelopment felt they were entering a new promised land.

The results we see today are not all milk and honey. Town centres have been robbed of much of their delightful character. Pleasant little shops have gone, and with them pleasant little shopkeepers. Nooks and crannies that make towns human are fewer. Instead there are out-of-scale, out-of-character buildings in utility styles that already seem out of date as architects see where they went wrong and move on to more harmonious concepts. Too many towns have been given "anywhere" developments with no local roots, which offend the eyes and jar the emotions because they have nothing to say to the beholder. Comfortable and irreplaceable Victorian and Edwardian facades erected with craftsmanship and pride that looked exactly right in their positions have given way to cold, right-angled concrete, steel and glass, faced as a sop to tradition with brick or reconstituted stone.

These changes did more than reduce buildings to rubble. Some people, too, endured a battering never fully appreciated by those whose lives were not affected. In the official view, you cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs. If the eggs happened to be individuals standing in the way of "progress", it was just too bad. Objectors were nuisances who delayed cherished council schemes out of self-interest or pathetic conservationist delusions. They were clinging to the past while the eager council-led world around them was impatient to move on.

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Kettering, like many other places, officially accepted the idea that a new town centre could be built at no cost to the ratepayers if the council entered into partnership with a developer. A market town for 700 years, Kettering had developed as a busy shoemaking centre with supporting industries. Its expansion had been guided by able business men and excellent local architects. It became a better than average industrial town, rather envied by comparable places which had not struck similar veins of prosperity, and in the sixties it still looked much the same as it did half a century earlier. Residents were well satisfied with their town, and many were proud of it.

But a wind of change was stirring St. George's flag on the church battlements. Kettering was "ripe for development" and hands were stretching out to pick the fruit. The northern end of the central shopping and business area had for years been labelled "higgledy-piggledy" by councillors. It was roughly a rectangle bounded by Gold Street, Newland Street, Northall Street and Lower Street, rather more than a dozen acres in extent. It was criss-crossed by the minor thoroughfares of Tanners Lane, Bakehouse Lane, Post Office Arcade and Richards Leys, and contained a remarkable collection of contrasting properties standing cheek by jowl, illustrating the delightfully haphazard growth pattern of a Victorian town.

Buildings in this rectangle included many which helped to give the town its character, notably the fine Old Post Office block of shops, the classical facade of Fuller Baptist Church, the whimsical Old Grammar School and master's house, and shop and business properties on Bakehouse Hill and at the top of Gold Street in attractive and dignified styles. In the heart of the area were two fine old houses, the Mission House and Beech House, with their outbuildings, grounds, and some splendid trees.

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My house, Beech Cottage, lies at the centre of the comprehensive development area, and was due for compulsory purchase and demolition as part of Phase II of the scheme. As things turned out, the tide of destruction was halted within yards after sweeping

away the garden, but for more than two years the building lay under a confirmed compulsory purchase order. A signature on an official notice to enter could have turned me out at fourteen days notice, and at one time I expected to be asked to leave and to see my house pulled down.

Beech Cottage still stands, and I hope it will remain permanently as an attractive fragment of old Kettering. It is standing simply because I endured a great deal of discomfort to stay in residence, and with the help of friends and a little bit of luck convinced the Council that Beech Cottage should be saved. The compulsory purchase order was not applied to the building, and the interest shown in it by passers-by gives daily proof that it is an asset to the new Tanners Lane sweeping past its frontage.

Many people up and down the country have lost homes and businesses through compulsory purchase. Though my brush with development had a happy ending, I learnt something of the damage such upheavals can do to individuals. I have experienced the strain caused by planning blight, financial uncertainty, protracted negotiations, unexplained delays, legal problems, daily destruction all round, the sadness of seeing my garden obliterated, plagues of noise, mud and penetrating dust, fruitless searching for a replacement house, and the sacrifice of valuable time.

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In matters affecting their home town the plain man and woman are wiser than the experts. They must be. They and their forebears have created their town, they live in it, and they realise that every stick and stone of it has a special meaning for someone. Planners who make sweeping alterations without the agreement of the townspeople will certainly run into trouble. That is the lesson of the Kettering comprehensive redevelopment.

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Background to the assault was Kettering's sudden importance to the property tycoons. It was "ripe for development" and ready for the standard moneymaking treatment. First the Council must agree that its pleasant old-fashioned town was behind the times and would benefit from some ruthless architectural surgery. Then, with the way legally prepared, the planners would move in. First step would be to lay out a ring road encircling the central commercial area, then to formulate schemes for comporehensive redevelopment by compulsory purchase and clearance of existing buildings, and finally to construct new stores, shops, offices, flats and multi-storey parking linked by pedestrian walkways. The scheme by its success would demonstrate the merits of modern planning and finance.

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Even the No. 1 comprehensive development area, the only one selected to go ahead, has stopped far short of its original objective with only about a third of it cleared and rebuilt as the Lower Street-Gold Street shops, the Newborough Centre and its car park. The two-acre Phase III site between the Centre and Newland Street has long hung fire, with its future uncertain. Phases I, II and III of the development together represent only about half the original proposal for the No. 1 area, so that many years after the 1967 public inquiry gained Government approval for the plan to develop eleven acres between Gold Street and Northall only a portion of the great scheme put forward so confidently then has come into being.

Instead, gathering dust in the files are ideas for enlarging the Newborough Centre, doubling the multi-storey car park, rebuilding the top of Gold Street and the west side of Newland Street with a tower block on the corner, removing factories and other buildings in Northall and replacing them with flats, demolishing and re-siting Fuller Church, and rounding things off with a tower block hotel near old Bakehouse Hill.

When planners bite off more than they can chew, eyesores result, and Kettering has been left with its share. At the time of writing, older buildings marked for demolition stand empty or run down in Phase III,

with small and useful shops carrying on bravely in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Some vacant spaces have been "landscaped" with grass, roses and shrubs, but others are unkempt and used for unofficial car parking. The scene has the familiar bomb site air of contrived decay.

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In its contribution to town life the Newborough Centre, main feature of the redevelopment, has proved disappointing. Instead of providing the promised profits it has burdened the rates with heavy losses, and not a few councillors and ratepayers wish they could be rid of an expensive luxury that was thrust upon the town. It is nothing like the prospect put before the public in the early days of the scheme, described as an asset that would bring life to the town centre, attract shoppers from elsewhere, and pay for itself.

Rather gloomy and unexciting, the Centre has the air of a run-of-the-mill precinct meeting local needs, but not aiming or able to attract out-of-town crowds. The shops are like those elsewhere, there are only a few seats where patrons can rest, and though attractions like gardens, kiosks, fountains and rebuilt fragments of old Kettering were promised at the public inquiry there are no focal points of interest. There is little in the way of special events, and the general impression is that the Council built the Centre, let it and then tried to forget it.

Architecturally the new buildings are hopelessly out of character. In 1960 a schoolmaster with a great interest in Northamptonshire, Mr Edmund Kirby, asked for an assurance that the development would harmonise with the rest of the town. He was assured that the buildings would be in vernacular style, and a later promise was that the shopping centre would be introduced without ostentation or offence.

In fact the warning by architects Gotch, Saunders and Surridge that the new buildings would neither fit nor improve the environment proved true. So did the prophecy of the Northamptonshire Society of Architects that they would be so "anywhere" in appearance that they might well be the new Tashkent.

Now, to stand on the corner of Silver Street and glance down the north side of Gold Street is to receive an object lesson in missed opportunities. The top corner with Newland Street is occupied by a dominant block, designed by Kettering architect J. T. Blackwell at the turn of the century and built by Chris Lewin before he was twenty-one. It is harmonious, dignified, and to me heart-warming and friendly. The next building, dating from about 1930, carries on this feeling to the classical facade of Fuller Church.

Then there is a sad change. First comes the intrusive, windowless and prison-like first floor of the new Boots, then the huge glass and artificial stone cube of the Newborough Centre office and restaurant block, and finally another projecting jail-type wall as a prelude to the row of smaller shops in "toothpaste" architecture – squeeze out as much as you want until it fills the space.

All this is depressing enough, but it is made worse by its background – the monstrous concrete tower put up by the Post Office in Trafalgar Road. The vista of ugliness becomes more saddening when one recalls the graceful facade of the vanished Old Post Office block, and the green open country once seen beyond the fondly-recalled gables and chimneys of the Old Grammar School.

The Council had plenty of warning. Even before the 1960s the Royal Institute of British Architects was anxious about the standard of town devlopment schemes . . .

Kettering architects appealed to the Council not to pull down buildings which gave the town distinctive character, in particular Bakehouse Hill, which if sacrificed would leave a disastrous gap in the view from High Street. The Civic Society pressed for the retention of Old Post Office block as a frontage for development behind it, and the Chamber of Trade took the same view, as did thousands of people who signed the petition.

All in vain. The Council maintained that none of the buildings in the comprehensive development area was worth keeping.

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The Kettering public never accepted the Council's repeated assurances that redevelopment would not cost the town a penny. It was clear that the great cost of buying and demolishing so much property and replacing it with new buildings had to be met, either by high rents and higher prices in the shops or by a subsidy from the rates.

There was little surprise when financial troubles with the Centre arose because the Council ventured into property development when professional firms would not risk capital. Two private developers in succession saw the red light and pulled out, but the Council pressed on with the venture, talking of profits and seemingly blind to the possibility of losses. It was not a climate to encourage critical voices, especially when the scheme had gained Government approval. In the end fateful decisions rested with the councillors and could not be avoided. It was not an enviable position for them.

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Kettering certainly wanted the Gold Street frontage in its essentials left alone. The public would have agreed with a behind-the-scenes development, if commercially justified, on land occupied by the disused brewery, the closed-down cinema, old industrial buildings and vacant sites. Entrances would have been through the Post Office Arcade arch and via the old cinema site, and the scheme could have taken in parts of the Phase III area through to Newland Street.

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The general effect seen from Gold Street would have been that a cleaned and restored Old Post Office block, a delight to the eye, would have been the centrepiece. The Old Grammar School would have stood out as the gem it really was, serving possibly as a district museum, with a precinct of old-style shops forming its setting. Maybe Bakehouse Hill could have been kept too. All rebuilding would have been in accordance with a master plan on lines suggested by the R.I.B.A.

This was the sort of scheme Kettering favoured, and with an enlightened and sympathetic approach it might have been achieved.

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This conservationist approach, retaining attractive features instead of embarking on wholesale destruction, would have been in step with neighbouring schemes which have paid some regard to old buildings, always superior in looks to bare modern structures in recent years so lacking in appeal. At Northampton, atoning marginally for vast destruction, the ancient Welsh House has been beautifully rebuilt at the entrance to the Grosvenor Centre. Peterborough Queensgate Centre has retained the old frontage opposite the Cathedral. At Bedford the Harpur Centre has used the old School facade for its main frontage and entrance, and at Wellingborough the Tithe Barn and parts of Croyland Hall grounds have been integrated with the shopping development. At Daventry, Victorian frontages have been kept, and publicised as an attraction.

But at Kettering, opportunities to unite the best of the old with something good of the new were not so much thrown away as never entertained.

What went wrong with the scheme at so many points? Obviously the wish to do things the easy way lay at the root, compounded by the policy of secrecy. Compulsory purchase and comprehensive development put great power into the Council's hands, and when development firms offered to undertake the whole job if provided with a site cleared of owners and tenants the temptation to clinch the deal was too great. Once councillors were committed to wholesale clearance and rebuilding they did not want to hear about alternative ideas. It was too late.

Those in office at the time believed they were acting for the best. According to

PLATES 1 AND 2. GOLD STREET, KETTERING, looking west, in June 1974 when shopkeepers were moving out, and in February 1984
(Photographs by Evening Telegraph and Eddie Toseland)

fashionable ideas about urban development they thought they were getting rid of worn out buildings and would obtain a fine new town centre at no cost to the rates. Later, when the developer pulled out, they seemed convinced that they were taking over a money-spinner.

When things began to turn sour they pressed on with remarkable steadfastness despite public disfavour, disappointing negotiations, rising costs, crises behind closed doors, and at last possibly nagging doubts. But the surprising thing about this epoch is that after the early stages there was so little constructive criticism from inside the council. Events have shown that most

councillors were sadly lacking in the kind of horse sense shown by their predecessors of earlier generations. No more need be said.

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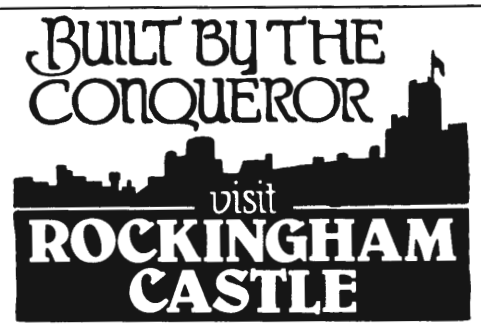
Certain it is that when we are all dead and gone some of our descendants will now and again wonder what buildings stood on and around the Newborough Centre site in former times, and what sort of people we all were.



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Published in 1971 with introduction, appendices and notes by SIR GYLES ISHAM, Bart.

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BOOK REVIEWS

EARL DAVID OF HUNTINGDON. 1152–1219. A STUDY IN ANGLO-SCOTTISH HISTORY
by KEITH STRINGER
(Edinburgh University Press, 1985. *Price* £30.00)

If any one volume sums up the work of our Society in its early years, it is perhaps volume 4, in which Sir Frank Stenton edited *Facsimiles of Early Charters from Northamptonshire Collections,* charters which had been brought to light through the industry of Miss Joan Wake. Almost contemporary with this volume was Sir Frank's general survey of what he termed *The First Century of English Feudalism,* the hundred years which followed the Norman Conquest. It is a work of historical reconstruction, based on an immense amount of detailed genealogical knowledge, in which the charters of the period are brought to life. The book on the "Second Century" has yet to be written, but when it is Dr Keith Stringer's study of Earl David of Huntingdon will prove to have been an important and a brave preliminary study. It is a work of immense learning and very clear vision. Sir Frank would surely have been delighted with it, and Miss Wake would surely have been pleased that Dr Stringer will shortly contribute a volume of charters to our record series.

Earl David of Huntingdon was both a very interesting and a rather odd man. Born in 1152, he was the third son of Earl Henry of Northumberland. His two elder brothers became kings of Scotland, and for much of the reign of the second brother, between 1165 and 1198, David was the heir apparent to Scotland. David was never quite as significant, though he was always important, after the birth of his nephew in 1198, the future Alexander II. This part of his legacy made him an important Scottish landowner, entrusted with the extension of the Scottish crown's authority in Garioch, to the north of Aberdeen. It was a long journey from there to the English midlands, but it was a journey David had often to undertake, for after 1185 he was earl of Huntingdon. The claim of the Scottish royal house to this major English estate came from the marriage of David's grand-father to Maud the widow of Simon of Senlis. Between 1113 and 1185 control over the Huntingdon honour fluctuated, depending on the political situation, between cadets of the Scottish house and the various Simons of Senlis. (It is the Senlis charters that Dr Stringer will edit for our Society.) Within the honour, the Northamptonshire properties were more extensive than those in Huntingdonshire itself. An important property, and a major administrative centre, lay at Fotheringhay in the Nene Valley, but the majority of the estate's fifty Northamptonshire properties lay in a half-circle to the east of Northampton. The important demesne manors here were Earls Barton – David was the earl of Earls Barton – and Yardley Hastings. It was at Yardley Hastings that David died: whilst he had wanted to be buried at his foundation of Lindores Abbey in Fife, he was taken no further than Sawtry Abbey. The relationship between David and the religious foundations of the estate provides much of the charter material on which this book is based. The most important of them were the Cluniac monasteries at Daventry and St Andrew's, Northampton and the nunnery – of particular interest to us – of Delapre. The nuns of Delapre were amongst those who suffered from what Dr Stringer rightly calls "the erratic history of the Huntingdon fief" – they were given an estate at Hardingstone taken from some "Scottish supporters", not football fans but equally unforgiving, and divine intervention was required before their claim was upheld.

It is the general argument of this volume that historians have under-estimated the extent to which cross-border estates, such as Earl David's, were a factor making for peace between England and Scotland. Dr Stringer argues this in a final chapter which takes the history of such estates up to Edward I's reign, and the rupture it caused. Professor G. W. S. Barrow has argued forcefully that behind this break, on the Scottish side, lay a rapidly developing sense of nationhood. Dr Stringer disagrees: "it has proved all too easy to underestimate the tendency for estates in the two kingdoms to come together". He has a good case, and disagreement could only come, if at all, if it was felt that the estate so ably studied here was not a "model" but *sui generis*. On the information we are given, the latter case could be argued. Earl David appears as a man with little political initiative. Whatever logic may have dictated, the Huntingdon honour followed the Scottish king's lead in the civil war of John's reign, just as it had done in the revolt of 1173–74. It will be interesting to see which lead Scottish historians now follow. The standard of production of the volume is excellent: there are good maps, the plates are well-chosen (though the aerial photograph of Fotheringhay shows up poorly on ordinary text paper), and on the spine is the chivalrous figure of Earl David, taken from his seal, his sword drawn, challenging those who would attack his liberty.

EDMUND KING
University of Sheffield

THE BASSETT-LOWKE STORY
by ROLAND FULLER
(New Cavendish Books, 1984, £18.50)

This book is good value for money. As well as the text it contains over eight hundred illustrations, most of them well-reproduced photographs of products made by or for Bassett-Lowke of Northampton, the celebrated firm of model makers. The author, Roland Fuller, joined Bassett-Lowke as a shop boy in 1917, succeeding its joint founder, Wenman Joseph Bassett-Lowke (known as "Whynne" or "Mr Whynne" to his friends and employees), as managing director on the latter's death in 1953. Mr Fuller was uniquely fitted to tell the story of Bassett-Lowke, for he continued with the company as adviser up to his own death in January 1981, a record of service lasting sixty-three years. Supplementary material includes a chapter by Allen Levy on Bassett-Lowke's change of ownership in 1966; "W. J. Bassett-Lowke as Architectural Patron" by Narissa Levy; "Some Personal Reflections" by Dudley Dimmock, manager of the Bassett-Lowke shop in London from 1958 to 1962; comprehensive lists of scale model railway locomotives and rolling stock made for Bassett-Lowke by firms in Germany; and a list of passenger-carrying miniature railways and locomotives supplied between 1904 and World War I by Bassett-Lowke satellite companies. The book is dedicated to Henry Greenly, a talented engineer "who did so much for Bassett-Lowke and scale model railways".

W. J. Bassett-Lowke – Whynne for the rest of this review – was born in Northampton in 1877. His father was Joseph T. Lowke, and Whynne, after leaving school at the age of thirteen, worked with him in the family firm of A. Bassett & Sons, engineers and boiler makers of Kingswell Street, Northampton, which had been established in 1859 by Joseph's stepfather, Absolom Bassett. Together with a young book-keeper employed by Joseph Lowke, the competent but retiring Harry Franklin, Whynne set up the firm of Bassett-Lowke on his father's premises, beginning as a mail-order supplier of component parts for model engines, for which there was a growing demand from amateur makers but few sources of supply. Many of these parts were obtained from John Claret, an engineer with workshops at Moulton, four miles north-east of Northampton. In 1899 a first rather crude

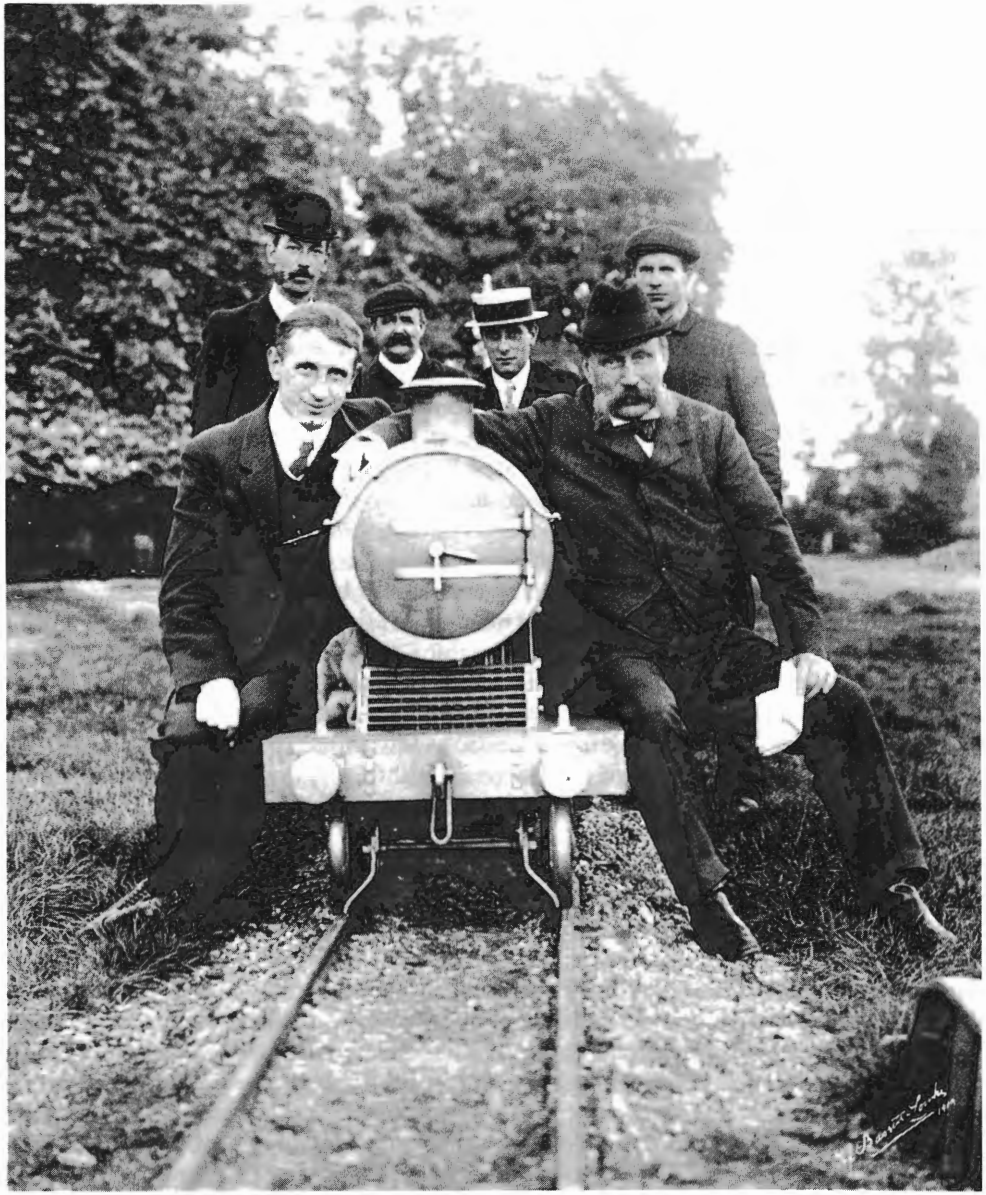

PLATE 1. THE DELIVERY IN 1909 OF 'BLACOLVESLEY' TO THE 15" GAUGE MINIATURE RAILWAY OWNED AND OPERATED BY CHARLES W. BARTHOLOMEW OF BLAKESLEY HALL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

This locomotive, which was designed by Henry Greenly and constructed by Bassett-Lowke, was a steam 4 – 4 – 4 tank engine in outward appearance, but fitted with a 14 h.p. internal combustion motor as the power unit. W. J. Bassett-Lowke (clean shaven) and Squire Bartholomew (luxuriant moustache) pose either side of 'Blacolvesley'.

The original of this splendid photograph, which is signed by W. J. Bassett-Lowke, is owned by Mr R. J. Chapman of Abthorpe, Towcester, by whose courtesy it is here reproduced.

Bassett-Lowke catalogue was produced, and next year Whynne had his first meeting with Stefan Bing, the German toymaker, who agreed to manufacture runs of scale model railway locomotives for Bassett-Lowke which were superior to anything of the kind previously marketed in England. In 1908 a Bassett-Lowke shop was opened in London, followed after World War I by shops in Manchester and Edinburgh. The company in association with several satellite companies whose principal, and sometimes sole, outlet was Bassett-Lowke, also developed in other directions, one of which was the construction of highly-detailed ship models. These included models of famous liners ordered by shipping companies for display in the front windows of their main offices, much to the delight, incidentally, of the present reviewer who, as a boy, regarded them as prime attractions of a visit to London.

Such was the success of Bassett-Lowke during its first ten years that the 1909–1910 catalogue comprised no fewer than 476 pages covering "the whole field of model railways, stationary and traction engines, fittings and castings and parts for amateur model makers, ship models and machinery, fittings and parts for building them, passenger carrying railways from 15″ down to 7¼″ gauge, aeroplanes and parts for making them, tools and materials, electric motors, generating plants and associated lines".

Whynne's posthumous claim to more than local fame is attested by his inclusion in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (supplementary volume, 1951–1960). Mr Fuller, who knew him for thirty-six years, uses two pages to describe his characteristics, which were sometimes contradictory. For example, he was aware of the snobbish way in which some "society" people treated shop assistants, and told Mr Fuller on his first day that "I [Mr Fuller] should never accept any treatment that was unreasonable, and that if he [Whynne] received a complaint, he would first ask for my report and support me in full if he felt that I had acted properly". Yet the atmosphere in the factory at Northampton appears not to have been cordial, Whynne being "critical and often suspicious – with the result that staff in turn were inclined to be reticent and even cunning". He was a faithful and devoted friend; nevertheless, he "loved to play one person against another", with very unhappy results when he broke the confidence of Henry Greenly. He was "abstemious in all things", boundlessly energetic, a lively and well-informed conversationalist (making up for his lack of formal education by wide reading), endlessly persistent in getting what he wanted, and publicity conscious to the highest degree. Whynne's practical interests included photography, cinematography, the theatre and, as is well-known, artistic and architectural design in what at the time were ultra-modern styles. He was a pacifist, a Fabian socialist and, from 1930 to 1952, a member of the Northampton borough council. A personal quirk was his dislike of motor cars; he never owned one, and used a car only when absolutely necessary. He was also a practical joker of no mean ability, and one of his more audacious escapades, which fooled hundreds of people at Northampton in 1909, is described on pp. 114–15 of last year's issue of *N. P. & P.*

Whynne's personality was so compelling that it is easy to forget that other people were involved in the successful working of Bassett-Lowke. In its infancy the company owed much to Joseph Lowke, who not only accommodated it on his own premises but transferred a valuable employee, Fred Green, as its first works foreman. Financial affairs were taken care of for nearly forty years by Harry Franklin who, although trained in accountancy, developed considerable skills in practical model engineering. Henry Greenly designed many of the model locomotives manufactured for Bassett-Lowke in Germany as well as the locomotives supplied for passenger-carrying miniature railways; according to Mr Fuller, he "brought to his work an extraordinary feel of reality". Other significant names are those of George Wintringham, E. W. Twining, E. W. Hobbs, James Mackenzie, Robert Bindon Blood and P. F. Claydon, each of whom was associated with Bassett-Lowke satellite companies. Bassett-Lowke chairmen – the company attained limited status in 1909 – included the dynamic Jack Sears, founder of the True Form Boot Company, Edward Lewis, senior member of a notable family of Northampton shoe manufacturers, and Cyril Derry, whose

tenure of office lasted for thirty-one years. Mr Fuller himself was based on the Bassett-Lowke shop in London until shortly after World War II, when he was brought to Northampton as general manager of the company.

Quality models built to customer order are, of course, very expensive, but this was the work which Bassett-Lowke excelled in performing. Even the model railway equipment manufactured for the company by German firms such as Bing, Carette and, later, Märklin was beyond the means of most would-be purchasers, and much of it, especially when designed for gauge-1 (1¾″) and over, too big to fit into the rooms of an ordinary house. Thus Bassett-Lowke never succeeded in satisfying the demand for smaller and cheaper scale model railways which came into being after World War I, although Precision Models, a satellite company, did produce a range of handsome medium-priced gauge-0 (1¼″) locomotives, of which the Royal Scot was the most popular. Production of a very different kind kept Bassett-Lowke fully occupied throughout World War II. Output included models of the planned redevelopment of devastated Coventry, model ships with compartments which could be flooded individually so as to illustrate damage control, mobile models of German E-boats for use in target practice, and model Stuka dive-bombers cable-mounted for the same purpose. Particularly noteworthy were the model Mulberry Harbours, whereby procedure for landing operations could be worked out and, in miniature, practised. For this purpose models to the same scale of all sorts of British and American war equipment were made to ensure that everything could flow off the harbour pier-head without hitch.

The end of hostilities in 1945 was succeeded by a busy period for Bassett-Lowke, with the demand for ship models leading the way. Nevertheless, the long-term outlook for the company was uncertain, especially after the death of Whynne, whose last illness incapacitated him for eighteen months, and the death or retirement of several other members of Bassett-Lowke senior management. Mr Fuller's narrative deals fairly with troubled events in the 1960s, as does the narrative of Mr Levy, although parts of both make painful reading. (The account by Mr Fuller of the final years of the Bassett-Lowke shop in London, which closed in 1964, should be read in conjunction with Mr Dimmock's recollections of his experiences there as manager; a comparison of the two points of view is revealing.) Bassett-Lowke was under-capitalised, and certain top-level decisions can only be described as unfortunate, although it is easy for an outsider to be wise after the event. The company's mainstay proved to be the supply of industrial and exhibition models, and these are now its sole concern. Production, which had been divided between several factories in Northampton, was concentrated in 1953 in premises on the west side of Kingswell Street, the original site occupied by the workshops of Absalom Bassett and where Whynne and Harry Franklin formed their partnership in 1899. In the spring of 1984 the company made yet another move, this time to a site in Harvey Reeves Road, St James, not far from Northampton railway station.

An unduly large number of minor slips was noticed in the text of *The Bassett-Lowke Story,* although many of them are corrected on an errata marker which is supplied with the book. Of those uncorrected, three are worth mentioning here. First, Absolom Bassett, Joseph Lowke's stepfather, becomes "Abraham Bassett" whenever he makes an appearance; however, reference to contemporary sources confirms that his forename was the unusual "Absolom". Second, Joseph Lowke's wife is stated on p. 11 to have been "Eliza Goodman", and on p. 330 "Miss Bassett". The reviewer has not traced the relevant marriage-register, but Cyril Derry, who wrote Whynne's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography,* gives Mrs Lowke's maiden name as Goodman, and there seems no doubt that this is correct. Finally, on p. 348 a list of the distinguished customers of the Bassett-Lowke shop in London includes the name of "Shaw, Sir George Bernard". This knight or baronet is non-existent in the editions of Burke consulted by the reviewer, but untitled the name is an exceedingly familiar one!

VICTOR A. HATLEY

THE EAST MIDLANDS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES
by PAULINE STAFFORD
(Leicester University Press, 1985, £25 cased, £9.75 paperback)

This is the fifth title in the impressive Leicester University Press series "Studies in the Early History of Britain". The previous volumes set a high standard for works by specialist authors on particular topics or places, and the new book is a worthy successor to them. Midland readers, accustomed no doubt to their region being regarded as unfashionable, will be grateful to Professor Brooks, the series editor (himself now an adoptive Midlander), that it has been chosen so soon as the subject of one of the studies. The book covers many aspects of Midland history – not only political, but economic, social and local – together with archaeology, architecture, religion and place names. Taking such a broad approach to a fairly limited area, Dr Stafford is able to make clear a considerable number of issues; for example, why upland Derbyshire, lying to the west of an essentially lowland area, should count as an East Midland county, or (in chapter 8) how the ramifications of family networks influenced the course of late Anglo-Saxon history. The first of these questions hinges on the position of the boundary between English and Danish Mercia in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In her chapter on "Boundaries and Division" Dr Stafford describes a "real" line which at its southern end follows a route different from that traditionally accepted. Given that the area covered by the book is defined by this line, the evidence should have been presented in some detail and the case argued more strongly rather than baldly stated.

It is unfortunate that the book's strengths are also its weakness. The concentration on East Midland affairs has led to the underemphasis or omission of evidence from elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon England. Northumbria gets a look-in, it is true, on the grounds that Lindsey was originally a Northumbrian province, but it seems a little odd to give coverage to the *Northumbrian Priests' Law* to the exclusion of evidence from farther south – including the other parts of Mercia. At best these omissions lead to some distortion. For example, on the subject of coinage we read that "a few Roman coins are found in early Anglo-Saxon graves", and while this may be correct according to the archaeological record of the East Midlands, it is less than true of Anglo-Saxon graves as a whole. If the East Midland evidence is genuinely different from that from the south-east, why should this be so? When a native coinage began to develop in the eighth century, it was the Mercian king, Offa, who was responsible for following the Carolingian monetary reforms, but because his issues were mainly minted outside the book's area, this important development is not mentioned. Apart from any other consideration, should not the East Midlands' failure to produce much coinage be seen against this background?

The most serious effect of this "little Mercia" policy, however, is in the matter of urban growth. The establishment and development of Mercian towns simply cannot be seen in isolation from the late Saxon towns in Wessex. Here, as in Mercia, defence against the Vikings was a major spur to the efficient organisation and layout of a system of towns. The system, and the fiscal arrangements to support it, appear to have been devised by Alfred the Great, and are enshrined in a document known as the Burghal Hidage. The earliest surviving version of this document already includes three south Mercian towns on the list, and is clearly the basis for the progressive extension of the system by Edward the Elder and Aethelflaed into the Danish occupied area. The total omission of any mention of the Burghal Hidage must count as a serious misjudgement: it is a crucial document for the understanding of urban development anywhere in late Saxon England.

A rapidly moving area of study that has overtaken Dr Stafford in her preparation of the volume is that of the Anglo-Saxon church. Archaeologists in particular have recently made

significant contributions to the institutional, liturgical and social as well as the physical aspects of the church. It comes as a great surprise, therefore, to find on the map of minsters (Fig. 6) no symbol for Northampton, where John Williams's work at St Peter's has clearly identified a major minster at the centre of an important royal estate. On a smaller scale, the development of the successive late Saxon churches at Raunds is a function not only of population growth (p. 22) but of liturgical change; the second church has a much larger chancel than phase 2 of the first, probably as a result of moving the altar and the accompanying liturgy from the west to the east side of the chancel arch. Such a move would, of course free more space in the nave for "the people", but this does not necessary imply more people to fill it. One's understanding of the chancel arch at Wittering (p. 187) is illuminated by the possibility that the priest stood under it and celebrated facing the congregation.

The book is arranged, as is the modern fashion, by thematic chapters grouped under three major headings: Land, Economy and Exploitation; Invasion, Settlement and Politics; and People in the Landscape. In many respects this is a great improvement on the traditional chronological plod from 400 to 1066 but it does lead to some repetition and dislocation. It is, to say the least, confusing to deal with the development of late Saxon towns (in Part 1) before coming to the settlement of England (in Part 2). The chapter dealing with the Anglo-Saxon influx is the first of four chronological chapters, which are followed by "Boundaries and Divisions". Then (in Part 3) back to pagan cemeteries in the quest for "Social Structure", and on to "Religion and Belief", which necessarily overlaps with "Kings, Kingdoms and Churchmen" (in Part 2). It is therefore a book which it is more satisfying to dip into than to read from cover to cover.

DAVID PARSONS

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SHORTER NOTICES

Students of that famous Northamptonshire church, All Saints, Brixworth, will be interested in the appearance of two publications on recent research on, and informed speculation about its early history. The first consists of two reports reprinted from the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*. 'Excavations at Brixworth 1981-2' by Michael Audouy and others and 'The Petrological Survey of All Saints Church' by Diana Sutherland and David Parsons. The latter is the interim report of the group which is working on a stone-by-stone petrological survey of the masonry of the church and has identified over 30 different stone types from a portion of the fabric. Their techniques represent a new and fascinating scientific approach to the dating of important ancient buildings for which documentary evidence is fragmentary or non-existent. The publication is available from the Brixworth Archaeological Research Committee, price £2.00. The second publication is Dr H. M. Taylor's 1984 lecture to the Friends of Brixworth Church, *All Saints' Church, Brixworth. How the church took its present shape a century or more ago,* and is published as Vaughan paper No. 32 by the Department of Adult Education, University of Leicester. It is a 14 page booklet with illustrations and is available from the Department, price £1.00 (including postage).

The Peterborough Arts Council has done its old/new town proud with a very nice collection of descriptions by visitors to the place from Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester (*c.*970) to Richard Crossman in 1966. Titled *A Fair Spot and Goodly* it is arranged in five sections ('Official Visitors 970-1635', 'The First Tourists 1635-1750', 'The Turnpike Era 1750-1845', 'Railway Travellers 1845-1900' and 'The Twentieth Century'). It is clearly set out and well illustrated. Altogether a very creditable publication and the thought is prompted why can't Northampton have one such. Over to you Leisure and Libraries! It is published by the Peterborough Arts Council, as Peterborough Papers No. 3, 1984, n.p.

R.L.G.

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