Parliamentary representation and general elections in Cheltenham Spa between 1832 and 1848: A Study of a Pocket Borough.

Thesis

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PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION AND GENERAL ELECTIONS IN CHELTENHAM SPA BETWEEN 1832 AND 1848: A Study of a Pocket Borough.

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Cheltenham gained its first Parliamentary representation under the terms of the Great Reform Act of 1832 by which it was deemed to be a schedule D borough with the right to send one M.P. to Parliament. Foremost in the campaign to have Cheltenham represented was Lord Segrave of Berkeley Castle, already social patron of the town and now hoping to be its political master. Lord Segrave was successful in his attempt and for a number of years Cheltenham was represented by a member of the Berkeley family, whilst contemporaries bemoaned its status as a nominated or pocket borough.

That status, however, was soon to be challenged. First, and somewhat unexpectedly, by discontented liberal, Radical and Chartist elements within the town supported by the outspoken *Cheltenham Free Press;* second by the recovery and emergence of a well-organised and powerful Tory group backed by the spiritual teachings of the town's evangelical rector, the Reverend Francis Close.

This thesis traces the means by which Cheltenham sought representation under the terms of the 1832 Reform Act and how borough politics operated there for the next twenty years. This period also saw a major transition in Cheltenham's parliamentary credibility from that of pocket borough to one which was thought worthy of being contested by Tories and Liberal alike. As such, although primarily a local study, this thesis relates more generally to the twin themes of the decline of aristocratic influence in nineteenth century politics and the rise of more 'professional' party organisation.

The study of Cheltenham's general elections over the period 1832-48 traces the decline of personal influence through patronage and bribery and sees it replaced by the influence of party management, through the work of the party agents in the registration and organisation of voters and a powerful supporting role of various press lobbies.
For my mother and other radicals
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Adrian Courtenay
Cheltenham 1990
Introduction

It is a well known fact that the 1832 Reform Act did little to rid the electoral system of some of its more blatant evils. In the words of Professor Norman Gash, 'The Reform Act represents no more than a clumsy but vigorous hacking at the system to make it a roughly more acceptable shape....inevitably therefore the characteristics of the old system persisted in the new'. Not only had the franchise been cautiously extended from 286,527 voters to an electorate of 366,250 giving the vote to a mere 18% of the adult male population of England and Wales, but more flagrant abuses remained. The continued existence of many single member boroughs with relatively small populations, and the absence of a secret ballot allowed a significant number of pocket or proprietary boroughs to survive.

There has been much debate as to the true intentions of the framers of the Reform Act, but neither space nor time will allow for a discussion of them in this thesis. Although D.C Moore's revisionist view of the Act as a measure introduced not as a concession to radical demands but rather as a means of strengthening aristocratic control through 'the politics of deference', is largely out of fashion, it is still true to say that aristocratic control continued well after 1832. As Alan Heesom points out in his discussion of "Legitimate" versus "Illegitimate" influences in the elections for County Durham:

'Within a few years of the passing of the Reform Act aristocratic domination of the politics of city and county was re-established on patterns very similar to those that had existed before 1832. In one sense it was increased, since the division of the county, by confining Lambton
and Londonderry influence to the north, established magnate control over both seats for North Durham, while the Duke of Cleveland continued to control one seat for the southern division. ¹ ⁶

Various estimates ranging from forty to over seventy (even ninety in some contemporary sources) have been given as to the number of peers able to nominate members to the House of Commons after 1832, but most agree that one borough where this was possible was Cheltenham. ² Here the borough's local patron was Colonel William Berkeley, Lord Segrave. His family was long established in Gloucestershire and its connections with Cheltenham went back at least to 1466 when a Sir Maurice Berkeley purchased the lease of the manor. The family's main estates were centred on Berkeley Castle in the Severn Vale, and by 1873 they amounted to over 18,000 acres across the county. The predominance of the Berkeleys in Gloucestershire politics in the Whig interest is well documented. In the words of Cheltenham's most famous Chartist, W.E. Adams:

'During the whole period of the Chartist agitation, and indeed for the years before and after it, the representation of Cheltenham was controlled and practically owned by the Berkeleys'. ⁷

Head of the family in the early nineteenth century was Colonel William Berkeley. He was regarded by many as the 'uncrowned king of Cheltenham', being a powerful and wealthy benefactor of the races, the theatre and the local hunt; provider of many of the town's amenities; focal point of Cheltenham's fashionable round of balls and concerts; and holder of many local offices, such as that of Lord Lieutenant of the county and president of the Whig Association.

Since the death of his father, the fifth Earl of Berkeley in 1810, William (the future Lord Segrave) had been at the centre of a disputed claim to inherit
his father's title. This had come about as the fifth Earl, regarded by his critics as no more than 'a rake of the first order', had taken a certain Mary Cole (daughter of a Gloucester butcher) as his mistress. For some time he had refused to marry her despite the birth of several sons. However, Mary, a woman of 'model virtue' and whom Grantley Berkeley described as being of 'irreproachable character', at last prevailed on the Earl to marry her at Lambeth in 1796. The first legitimate son to be born after their marriage was Thomas Moreton, but as he had no wish to inherit his father's title, he allowed it to pass to the eldest of the illegitimate brothers, namely William.

William's claim to his father's earldom, however, was not sustained by a Committee of the House of Lords. Instead William remained head of the family and possessor of the family estates, but for the time being, known only as Colonel Berkeley rather than the Sixth Earl. He continued his search for a title however and this now took him into the area of county politics as he attempted to use his considerable influence to return members (all members of his family) for the Whigs from whom in turn he expected reward. Whether or not, as his brother Grantley suggested, an actual deal was struck up between William and the Whigs, the attempt proved successful as he was created Lord Segrave in 1831 and Earl Fitzhardinge in 1841.

Lord Segrave seems to have acquired the Lord Lieutenancy of the county by somewhat similar means in 1837. Lord Grenville writes in his memoirs that as soon as the Duke of Beaufort had died, Segrave went to Lord Melbourne, then Prime Minister, to claim the appointment for himself on the grounds that he returned three members; 'more than any man in England'. Grenville records that Segrave told Melbourne that 'My brothers, the electors do not know by sight; it
is my influence which returns them'. Finally Grenville concludes that Segrave was 'an arrant blackguard, notorious for his general worthlessness' and that his behaviour 'exhibited all the most objectionable features which were supposed to be swept away'.  

Contemporary sources such as poll books and county histories seem to agree that, for good or worse, Lord Segrave's Whig influence was very much at the heart of Gloucestershire politics in the years immediately after the 1832 Reform Bill. How long this influence would prevail is the main study of this thesis, but a note of caution may already be detected when his brother Grantley writes:

'His wealth, the influence of his wide possessions, and the sway attendant on the castle towers as they looked over the fertile acres of the rich vale of Berkeley, that had maintained them for so many centuries, from the Severn to the hills, in all their ancient feudalism, and the willingness of the Whig Government to barter rank for support in Parliament formed a strong foundation for success. Unless, however, these means were skilfully brought to bear, and carried out in a popular way, so that the political support that was afforded, seemed to come from the people, the Government would have been put in a difficulty as to the creation of rank, and the expenditure of money would go for nothing. It was therefore Colonel Berkeley's object to select one of his brothers to take the first step in political arrangements, who was popular in and around the castle, and well received by all the best residents'.

In fact, at one time no less than four of Lord Segrave's brothers sat as M.P.s for Bristol, Gloucester City, Cheltenham and the Western Division of the County. Of these, Cheltenham particularly could be considered as a safe proprietary
THE HON. GEORGE H. HERKETHE, Esq.

Source: Drawn by George Rowe (1841); original at Cheltenham Public Library.
borough with his younger brother, Craven Berkeley, (see print) holding the seat from 1832 to 1847 and again from 1852 till his death in 1855; and with a Berkeley representing Cheltenham virtually continuously until 1865. 12

The 1832 Reform Bill permitted the continuance of many proprietary boroughs but in some ways the true success of the Act was the stimulus it and the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act gave to party organization in the constituencies. Professor Gash has shown in numerous articles how the Tory party in particular responded to the challenge of gradually rebuilding its lost fortunes after 1832.13 As a result of these two measures, local party activity in Cheltenham increasingly became more lively and hectic with both main parties and some of the lesser ones appointing local election agents, forming local election associations and mobilizing their respective press against their opponents. Initially their main tasks were to encourage the registration of friendly voters and contest the registration of hostile voters. In 1838 the Conservatives were able to take encouragement from the fact that they had been able to expunge some 170 Liberal voters and add 101 of their own to the registration list. 14 But in general terms, the greater effect of these measures was to imbue local electoral politics with a sense of vitality and encourage candidates to pay considerably more attention to local interests.

Cheltenham's story in the years between 1832-1848 is not, as its election results might suggest, one of complete and unabated Berkeley dominance. To begin with, however, there was little in the way of contest as the Tories not only did badly in 1832 by losing a number of safe seats, but also by losing the confidence of the electorate for some years to come. Their difficulties in Cheltenham were compounded in that, initially at least, they did not possess a
hereditary candidate of the stature or influence of the Whigs; nor did the Tories yet possess the same kind of network of political control which the Berkeleys had established. In fact their very opposition to reform, particularly the enfranchisement of Cheltenham itself (Lord Ellenborough had tried to introduce an amendment which would have denied both Cheltenham and Brighton representation), meant that for some time after 1832, they had very little in the way of electioneering machinery in place to contest the borough. Therefore, instead of considering party divisions, chapter one of the thesis looks at Cheltenham's campaign to be amongst those gaining representation for the first time in 1832 and how the town went about choosing its first Member of Parliament. As such, we can examine the nature of aristocratic patronage by studying how Berkeley influence had already established itself in the town and was working closely (in fact playing a leading role) within the local Whig party.

In complete contrast to (perhaps even in reaction to) the 'politics of deference', we can also see in Cheltenham a nascent yet vigorous political Radicalism. In the light of recent study it should no longer come as a surprise to us that fashionable provincial towns such as Bath and Cheltenham were centres of a newly emerging radical force in politics. In both cases the wealthy and respectable ranks of society were supplied and provided for by a service class of skilled artisans and craftsmen. These men were often self-educated with aspirations of self-improvement and consequently were not without political opinions of their own. However, in many cases they were the very class who had been largely excluded from the 1832 Act with its stringent £10 household borough franchise provision. Their aspirations for a degree of political emancipation had been raised by men like William Cobbett, Henry Hunt and Francis Place only to be
frustrated by an Act which seemed to strengthen the status quo rather than weaken it and denied such measures as secret ballot and more frequent Parliaments. Gradually those radicals who felt they had been betrayed by the Whigs in 1832 began to find their own political voice and organize themselves independently of the Whig party, not least under the umbrella of Chartism. In Cheltenham it was such a group who, inspired by the leadership of William Penn Gaskell and encouraged by the editorials and addresses of the Free Press, mounted the first challenge to Berkeley rule over the borough. Chapter two examines their spirited, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to unseat the sitting member.

By 1837, a more general disillusionment still had set in with the Whig governments of Grey and Melbourne. The great legislation of their first few years in office had now seemingly been replaced by inaction, apathy and even hostility towards the lower orders given its record on the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act and its support for the judgement on the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Meanwhile, the Tories had not been slow to capitalize on growing Whig unpopularity and under the dynamic leadership of Sir Robert Peel had been enjoying something of a party revival with the 1835 election bringing them about a hundred new seats. Chapter three deals with the Tories' initial attempt to contest Cheltenham as they extended their search for new seats in 1837.

This attempt failed, but their fortunes picked up in 1841 with their first candidate of any real local stature, namely James Agg-Gardner, the new lord of the manor. This election became a three-way contest with the Radicals investing their hopes in the candidature of the veteran Colonel Perronet Thompson. Chapter four, as well as attempting to analyse emerging trends of political support by
drawing upon the borough's first available poll books, also considers the election against a background of two significant undercurrents. First were the activities of Cheltenham's zealous parish priest, the Rev. Francis Close, who sought to 'improve' the Spa along Christian and Tory principles and whose ceaseless activities did much to diminish the influence of the Berkeleys there. Second, and in contrast to the former, but just as effective in attacking Berkeley influence, were Cheltenham's Chartists and Owenites. These groups were particularly active at this time and Cheltenham played host to such national figures within the radical movements as Feargus O'Connor, Henry Vincent and George Holyoake. As we shall see, both these forces were to be instrumental, in various ways, in the decline of Whiggism and consequently in the revival of Toryism within the borough.

The Berkeleys, for the time being, managed to weather the scylla and charybdis of Radicals and Tories, albeit with a vastly decreased majority. It would seem that borough management was becoming a more difficult and significantly more costly business. The contested elections of 1847 and 1848, with their wealth of statements to be found in the acrimonious petitions and counter-petitions, allow us to take the lid off the workings of a local election. Chapter five considers how a political campaign was organised and fought, and how the mechanics of the representation system were carried out in a provincial borough. Such an examination also allows consideration of contemporary opinions as to what was acceptable electioneering practice and helps draw the line between what Heesom describes as "Legitimate" and "Illegitimate" aristocratic influence.

It would be possible to continue the story of the Berkeleys in Cheltenham
at least another twenty years until their final demise in 1865. However, a close look at the narrowness of their majorities would suggest that after 1848 the borough could no longer be described as proprietary or pocket. Chapter six offers a number of suggestions for the Berkeleys' declining political status within the borough, some reasons for which it seems were of the family's own making. Heesom, taking Lord Londonderry and Lord Durham as his examples, suggested that "Aristocratic Influence" was able to maintain itself after 1832 by rejecting the politics of coercion and of abject submission and replacing them instead with the politics of 'mutual advantage' i.e. between landlord and tenant, employer and employee, patron and client. In this respect the Berkeleys began to lose favour with the voters of Cheltenham. Their particular brand of patronage (the races, balls, hunting, etc), which had its heyday in the heady days of the Regency, no longer suited the Town's more serious minded (even moralistic) approach to its image adopted in the mid-century.

Despite its lack of any significant local industry, Cheltenham's Tories increasingly portray the town not as a fashionable pleasure resort but as a commercial centre (the Agg-Gardners were prominent Conservative candidates and had interests in both the local brewery and bank), a centre of learning (this aspect is particularly stressed by Schreiber, the town's conservative M.P. in 1865) and, thanks to the work of the Rev. Francis Close, a centre of Anglican Evangelicalism (in this respect Close's contribution to the development of the town is mentioned elsewhere). With the town turning to more sober-minded pursuits, the Berkeley's found themselves increasingly out of tune with the town's real interests and as such had little of mutual advantage to offer its voters. Unlike the Lords Londonderry and Durham, they could neither act as
employers to the town's new businesses nor as patron to its new institutions.

Ironically, after the passing of the Second Reform Act of 1867 when the Berkeleys might have hoped to launch a successful bid to regain their control, when the seat changed hands in 1868 it fell initially, not to a Conservative but to H. Samuelson, a reforming Liberal. The days of aristocratic Whiggism were numbered and the old borough patrons everywhere were being driven out by the spiralling costs of holding onto a seat against a well-organised and determined opposition, by the increasing professionalism of party managers and by the increased effectiveness of legislation against 'old corruption'. Colonel Francis Berkeley, the last Berkeley to contest the borough, wrote to his father on losing his seat in 1865, stating that he wished that he had never seen the town of Cheltenham. Perhaps an even greater irony, but one which clearly illustrates how uncomfortable the old Whig aristocracy felt in Gladstone's Liberal party, was the proclamation in August 1886:

'The Berkeley family, whose residence is the historic castle of that name in Gloucestershire, has for generations been noted for its strong support of the Liberal Cause. This state of things has now been altered, Lord Fitzhardinge, the head of the Berkeleys, having been accepted for the post of president of the Tewkesbury Conservative Association'.

In his wholly admirable study of politics in the age of Peel, Professor Gash points out that the work of classifying constituencies is full of pitfalls and only a local historian can hope to reach finality. No doubt the local historian is prone to pitfalls as well, not least by the limitations of the sources available. Whereas Cheltenham's radical politics remain relatively well documented, particularly in the Free Press (the town's outspoken radical journal founded in
1834), there is a disappointing dearth of manuscript sources relating to the 'high politics' of the borough (although in this context, references in the Peel papers proved illuminating). The most frustrating gap is that caused by a lack of family records concerning the political activities of both William and Craven Berkeley. In spite of this, however, the workings of borough politics as shown in its newspaper columns, poll books, petition statements and electoral addresses, ballads, skits and handbills make it possible to build up a comprehensive record of Cheltenham's political life whereby we may come nearer to understanding the effects of perhaps the most pre-eminent piece of legislation of the nineteenth century.

In fact, in comparison to other provincial boroughs, Cheltenham was particularly well served by its local press and by the 1860s the number of 'weeklies' published there reached eight. Its earliest paper was the Cheltenham Chronicle founded by Henry Ruff in 1809 and sold for 6d a copy. Despite its original intent to 'steer clear of party spirit' the paper came, at first, to support the Whig interest in the town, particularly after 1811 when its new owners were the Griffith family, themselves Whig supporters. In 1824 J. Hadley produced a rival, the Cheltenham Journal, founded to support the Tory party and later backed by the Reverend Francis Close. As we might expect, (despite its rather more moderate stance around 1832) its policy was to oppose reform, to promote the Tory cause and to stand fast by the Church and Crown. 1833 saw the arrival of The Looker-on, a fashionable journal for the Cheltenham rich which generally listed their comings and goings and contained articles of good humoured interest rather than those which 'might be deemed objectionable or personally offensive'. As a source, The Looker-on tends to testify to the
snobbery which existed in polite Victorian society.

At the other end of the market, so to speak, there arrived the Cheltenham Free Press in 1834. More will be said of this paper in later chapters, but it will suffice to point out now that it became an outspoken critic of Tories and Whigs alike as it championed progressive liberal arguments.

The Berkeley and Whig cause was taken up in 1839 by the Cheltenham Examiner, the same year in which the Cheltenham Chronicle swapped its allegiance to the Tories. The Examiner, Chronicle and Journal were all blatant in their support for their own political interest and consequently each was dismissed by its rivals as a mere organ of party faction. Their, often differing, accounts of events do much to add to both the colour and interest of party divisions within the borough. Later arrivals on the scene were the conservative Cheltenham Parish Register founded in 1840, the radical Cheltenham Mercury (1855), the conservative Cheltenham Express (1866) and the short-lived Cheltenham Times and Musical Record (1859-1868).

Cheltenham, for its size, was relatively well endowed with a local press offering the electorate, virtually, a daily press of varying political hues. The part played by these journals in local politics was to heighten party divisions and party feelings and to produce an electorate at least partly enlightened of both national and local issues (in this respect the Cheltenham Free Press particularly stands out). That the press could also begin to challenge more traditional forms of aristocratic influence was perhaps shown on a notable occasion when the Berkeleys attempted to tangle with it. In 1824 the Cheltenham Journal, having already spoken disparagingly about Colonel Berkeley's treatment of one of his mistresses, the actress Maria Foote, also made some pointed remarks
about the ladies at the Berkeley Hunt Ball. In response an indignant Colonel Berkeley went to the offices of the editor, Mr. J. Judge, and attempted to horse-whip him. This event was later depicted in a cartoon by Robert Cruikshank shown opposite. However, in the action which followed Colonel Berkeley was found against and was made to pay the unfortunate Mr. Judge substantial damages of £500. With the moral and spiritual backing of the Reverend Francis Close, such attacks against the Berkeleys were eventually to reach their mark. In this respect, the emergence of a strong Tory challenge to the Berkeleys in the 1840s owes something, at least, to its predominance in the local press with the Journal, Chronicle (after 1839) and The Looker-on all supporting the Tory cause.

Despite the lack of any particularly large or important archive collection, there exists sufficiently varied local material, such as newspapers, guide books, directories, diaries, poll books and election petitions, to make a study of Cheltenham, of the kind suggested by Professor Gash, both possible and rewarding, not only in parochial terms but in helping to analyse the effects of the 1832 Reform Act more generally on the political nation.

Lastly and not least, as well as a political study, the history of Cheltenham in the years after the passing of the Great Reform Act has also its human side, as suggested by the Cheltenham Chartist, W.E. Adams, one who had no cause to admire the Berkeleys:

'The story of the Berkeley family, interesting as a romance of the peerage, is not without interest also as exemplifying the enormous political influence which territorial nobles, notwithstanding the scandal of their private lives, exercised in England even after the Reform Bill of 1832'.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. N. Gash, Aristocracy and People (1979), page 152. See also N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953), especially chapters 1, 7, 8, and 9.


8. G. Berkeley, My Life and Recollections (1865). See Vol. 1, chapter XV.


- 14 -

   See entries for each constituency as listed.

12. *Idem.*


16. A. Heesom, *op. cit.*, page 301


In his recollections the Hon. Grantley Berkeley records how the celebrated physician, Dr. Jenner, described how he found the little town of Cheltenham when he first began his practice there in 1795:

'It consisted of one street; and the bright little trout-stream, the Chelt, whence the town takes its name, meandered across the road, glittering in the sun, and haunted by the emerald-hued kingfisher, lost itself in bosky wilds'.

The beginning of the nineteenth century, however, saw a dramatic increase in the growth and importance of the Spa. Within the thirty years, 1801-1831, its population rose by an eight-fold ratio to over 24,000 inhabitants. Grantley Berkeley writing in 1865 continues his description by saying that by then 'kingfisher, trout, and glittering pebbly strand alike are gone; the trout stream has become a drain and the rural sweetness has given place to the filth created by a large population'.

Part of the reason for Cheltenham's rise in popularity were the royal visits there by King George III and Queen Charlotte during 1788. That year the Morning Post reported that 'the Cheltenham cap, the Cheltenham bonnet, the Cheltenham buttons - all the fashions are completely Cheltenhamised'. Cheltenham had entered a period of social brilliance with some 200 eminent visitors a year by 1800. With its 700 lodging houses full, balls and concerts crowded and its churches crammed, there was concern that the town lacked suitable accommodation.
of the scale now required.

The beginning of the nineteenth century also saw the start of an extensive building programme. In particular these years witnessed the development of Pittville - an area to the north of the town of fashionable mansions and elegant suburbs built by Joseph Pitt on land received under the Inclosure Acts. Elsewhere the Lansdown and Montpellier estates were developed by Pearson Thompson on land bought by his father. Such was the scale of the building of new Cheltenham that in 1831, out of a total of 4,013 inhabited houses, 1,939 were assessed at between £10 and £20, whilst a further 1,225 were assessed at £20 and upwards, leaving only 849 houses of the poorer class.  

Cheltenham's development was not haphazard, for since an Act of 1786 the Spa had a strong local government in the form of fifty-eight commissioners, whose efforts shaped the growth of the new town. Its ranks included local men of distinction such as Dr. Thomas Newell (a founder member of the Conservative True Blue Club); Dr. Boisragon (physician to the King and a friend of Byron) and James Agg Gardner (Conservative M.P. in 1841 and the town's leading brewer). Despite inevitable political rivalries, the commissioners supported vigorous general town improvement schemes. Wide pavements and 120 street lamps were among its first projects. A town Surveyor with a salary of £10 and two scavengers were appointed, whose job it was to keep the streets clean. In 1818 a private gas company was formed and in 1822 work was started on a town sewer. Despite their timidity to spend money on occasions, it is a testimony to the work of the commissioners that there were no visitations of cholera in the town during the nineteenth century, and that unlike many other expanding towns no large slums appeared.
However, it would be wrong to suggest that Cheltenham was altogether free of the public health problems which inflicted many of Britain's towns in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1848 the Commissioners called for a government inquiry into the state of the town. This inquiry was headed by Edward Cresy. Cresy was critical of both the sewers and water supply, both still in private hands. He particularly pointed to the poorer areas of the town which were not well cleansed and often harboured unhealthy, insanitary conditions. In this respect he was able to point to a high infant mortality rate and epidemics of scarlet fever. The report did not meet with the commissioners' full approval, but despite initial opposition, the town accepted Cresy's conclusion that it should set up its own local Board of Health.

Although much of the cause of Cheltenham's expansion was an influx of wealthy residents attracted there by the Spa waters, it was also due to a growth in service industries providing for these wealthy visitors. From the 1841 list of electors we learn that the professional classes were represented by architects (2); clergymen (8 Anglicans and 3 non-conformists); gentlemen (150); physicians (11); solicitors (28); surgeons (18) and a great many military and naval officers (33). Amongst the town's tradesmen, it is those in the service industries who clearly dominate: bakers (37); beer sellers and inn keepers (48); boot and shoe-makers (51) brick layers, builders and masons (98); cabinet makers and carpenters (122); drapers and tailors (93); gardeners (45); plasterers, plumbers and decorators (59); and lastly those connected with coaches, stables and riding schools (80). However, with the exception of the town's breweries, there was very little in terms of local industry to provide employment for the labouring classes, and one must assume that most of the town's poorer population found
employment either in domestic service or within the building trade both of which were benefiting from the town's considerable growth.

However, Cheltenham's most glaring omission by 1830 was its lack of an M.P., despite having a population of 23,000. That Cheltenham was without an M.P. is only partly explained in an editorial that appeared in the Cheltenham Journal:

'It is a matter of historical record that up to the reign of Elizabeth, Cheltenham sent representatives to the Grand Council of the Nation; and it appeared that in reply to a writ of quo warranto issued for the purpose of ascertaining the cause from which such a privilege was suffered to lapse into disuse, the returning officer - who was an ancestor of the Norwood family of Leckhampton, stated "in consideration of certain services which he had rendered to Queen Elizabeth, her majesty had been graciously pleased to exonerate him from the trouble and burden of returning the said member to Parliament".'

By 1830, the inequalities in the system of parliamentary representation were patently absurd, with Tewkesbury and Cirencester both having two M.P.s and a population of 5,000 each, and Cheltenham with over four times their populations with no M.P. Consequently the news of 'Lord Brougham's Reform Bill' caused much excitement in the town:

'This place is in a bustle owing to the Reform Bill being brought in Parliament, as Cheltenham will be among those towns returning a new member to Parliament'.

Although Cheltenham was happily free from the rioting which elsewhere accompanied the campaign for reform, it was very much involved in the nationwide
struggle for the Reform Bill to become law. In November 1830, as a response to a
circular from Lord Melbourne, the new Home Secretary, a public meeting was called
at the Assembly Rooms to discuss how the authorities might deal with the threat
of riots and incendiaryism. The meeting was chaired by Sir William Hicks, a leading
Three resolutions were passed, namely that seven hundred persons were to be
enrolled as special constables, that one hundred men were to form a mounted
association and that five hundred pounds was to be raised by a subscription to
meet the expense of the former. However, despite the riots of Bristol and
disturbances in nearby Burford and Northleach, the meeting had the satisfaction
to be able to declare that 'the general conduct of the Inhabitants of this town
and district has, so far as their experience goes, been hitherto loyal and
peaceable'.

Despite Cheltenham's liberal sympathies (surviving poll books of the
eighteenth century indicate that the majority of freeholders entitled to vote for
the county members were Whigs), it was the Tories who organised themselves first
in opposition to the Reform Bill. A True Blue Club was formed in Cheltenham in
1830 along the lines of that formed in Gloucester in 1788. On 12 February 1831,
Gloucester Tories met at the Bell hotel under the presidency of R.W. Johnson to
hear a speech by Robert Bransby Cooper, chairman of the Cheltenham Board of
Health. Mr. Cooper talked about:

'a present crisis of public affairs when a revolutionary spirit
appears to be excited and fomented by a more licentious press
that this country had witnessed since the former French Revolution'.

But, perhaps with an eye to the strength of local feelings, he continued that
although not an enemy of reform he wanted a reform to be 'identified with improvement not merely a theoretical and speculative change but a practical good'. Other speakers at the meeting were more direct in their condemnation of the Reform Bill, hoping that 'the loyal and rational sentiments of the middle classes in the country would prove an effectual barrier to the progress of innovation and revolution'. One speaker, a Mr. Goodrich, dismissed the proposed vote by ballot as 'an un-English and unconstitutional mode of exercising the elective franchise'. Also present at the meeting were Lord Granville Somerset, Mrs Pitt, a 'descendant by marriage' of the former Prime Minister, and Mr Trye, one of the Tory candidates for Cheltenham in the 1831 canvass. 

The following year at a meeting in the Yearsley Hotel, the Cheltenham Conservative Club was formed 'upon the principles of conserving property'. Its members included Sir William Hicks, Dr. Newell, Robert Bransby Cooper, the newly arrived Earl of Ellenborough (former Lord Privy Seal in the Duke of Wellington's ministry) and many of the town's commissioners. Within the town, though, Tory opposition was largely silent with most newspapers given over to support, albeit cautious, for reform. However in May 1831 the Tory Cheltenham Journal proclaimed its fears that the giving of an M.P. to Cheltenham would:

'produce discord to the tranquillity and harmony so far enjoyed by this favoured retreat of fashion...have turned out to have no foundation, the unanimity of feeling, the moderate and quiet manner in which political affairs have been conducted and the determined principle upon which the friends of Reform have resolved to prevent....every encouragement to riot upon the part of the lower classes'.

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The efforts of Cheltenham's Liberals (as they now called themselves) were centred on their, and the town's Patron, Lord Segrave, formerly Colonel Berkeley, and on a society founded in May 1831 known as 'the Patriotic Association for the purpose of obtaining a full, fair and free representation of the People in the Common House of Parliament'. Almost as a natural step, one of the first actions of the new association was to elect Lord Segrave to its Presidency.

Colonel W. Berkeley (Lord Segrave) was one of two men who dominated Cheltenham in this period, the other being the town's incumbent minister the Rev. Francis Close, who will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. Even before Cheltenham gained its M.P., the Berkeley family had a predominant influence in the parliamentary representation of Gloucestershire. William Berkeley had stood briefly as member for the county in 1810 before resigning the seat on his father's death that year. His claim to his father's earldom was disputed on the grounds that William was the first of three sons born out of wedlock and that Moreton Berkeley, the fourth son but born after his parent's marriage, was the rightful heir. A committee of the House of Lords did not sustain his claim, but William remained head of the family and owner of Berkeley Castle. In 1831 he became Lord Segrave and in 1841 he was created Earl Fitzhardinge and served the county as Lord Lieutenant. Granville Berkeley, a brother with whom he argued, claimed that the Whig government had made William an Earl in return for his services in returning four M.P.s of Liberal opinions in Gloucestershire constituencies.

Before the creation of Cheltenham as a borough with one M.P., Berkeley brothers sat as M.P.s for Gloucester, Bristol and West Gloucestershire. Despite his reputation as a sporting libertine and social rake (mainly fostered by the
Tory Press), Lord Segrave was portrayed by his supporters as an educated man, an able public speaker and one who was deeply interested in politics and sincerely concerned in promoting parliamentary reform. His contribution to the amenities of the borough has been measured largely by his patronage of the town's theatre, hunting and the races which every year attracted thousands of visitors. Grantley Berkeley writes:

"When I came there, I found Colonel Berkeley regarded almost as a local deity, whose word was law; and his splendid establishment of hounds and horses, with which to hunt the Cotswold Hills, were looked on, as they deserved to be, as a godsend to the town, that gave a powerful impulse to mercantile interests of every description....All dinner parties were fixed according to his convenience for acceptance; all balls were deemed a failure unless he came.... in short, in the popular sense he was the colossus that bestrode that little world". 15

The first hints of reform also saw activity of another kind in Cheltenham: namely the (in some people's view, unseemly) early canvass for a possible forthcoming election. As early as the spring of 1831, a number of candidates offered their services to the potential voters of Cheltenham through the pages of its local newspapers and through the posting of handbills. A letter by the anonymous 'Q' in the Cheltenham Journal of 14th. March refers to an original list of candidates whereby he fears 'that we have all candidates and no voters'. A public meeting had taken place on Wednesday 9th. March when a number of the candidates had addressed the crowds. The most favoured candidate was Colonel Berkeley's younger brother, the Hon. Craven Berkeley, who up to 1831 had served
in the Life Guards, reaching the rank of Captain. The editor of the Cheltenham Journal made the following remark:

'The unassuming but manly appeal of the Hon. Craven Berkeley to the confidence of those in whom he hopes to meet as his future constituents has created a strong sensation in his favour, which has since acquired, we might almost say, a decisive influence from the blended tribute of individual esteem and public gratitude to so liberal and truly valuable a patron of this town, as Colonel Berkeley has long since proved'.

The charge that Lord Segrave was merely seeking family aggrandisement is slightly lessened by his offer to stand his brother down on hearing that Thomas Gray, a revered Cheltenham Liberal 'of superior claims', might offer himself as a candidate. In addition Colonel Berkeley offered to give Gray his full support, as 'a sacrifice so nobly and so voluntarily offered of personal interest at the shrine of public interest'. Such was Gray's popularity that his candidature had been requested by a most respectable number of inhabitant householders of Cheltenham who were convinced that 'no man is better qualified to represent us in the Great Council of the Nation'. However, Gray suffered from blindness, and although flattered by the invitation to stand as Cheltenham's candidate, considered that 'the practical inconvenience and difficulties' he suffered from, would in his mind 'oppose the faithful and effectual performance of the duties of the trust, which your members would delegate to me'.

Another candidate who might have challenged Craven Berkeley's candidature was John Gardner, owner of a large brewery in the town and partner with Joseph Pitt in the County of Gloucester Bank. On hearing of Craven Berkeley's intention
to stand as a candidate for Cheltenham, Gardner, a friend of the family, resigned
his canvass when he considered 'how much this town is indebted to the liberality
of a distinguished member of this family' and felt that it had 'a strong claim on
our gratitude'. (See appendix A number 5).

Those candidates remaining in the canvass included Major Payn of Rodney
Lodge, a Whig dismissed by the anonymous 'Q' in the Cheltenham Journal as an
outsider (he had been formerly an attorney in Berkshire) and a liker of field
sports. Payn was unfortunate to become involved in a quarrel between Craven
Berkeley and the Rev. Francis Close, which did his canvass no good whatsoever.
Gage John Hall of Sackville Street, London, offered himself to the voters as one
who considered the Reform as 'essentially and imperiously required for the due
representation of your rights and the honour and dignity of the Crown'. However,
important business had taken him away from Cheltenham at the time of the
canvas, and he does not seem to have figured large in the activities of those
months.

Cheltenham's Tories, in the present spirit of reform, could not afford to be
too outspoken. One of their number, now reconciled to reform, offered himself to
the voters; Norwood Trye of Leckhampton described himself as a moderate Tory
offering long residence in the town, family connections and a private interest in
the town's prosperity. As a moderate Tory, Trye claimed to support:

'the liberal principles which have advanced with the course of events
so far as they can safely be applied either to the reforming or the
remodelling of the constitution'.

Trye eventually retired from the canvass for, as 'Q' stated, 'doubtless his
friends have advised him not to enter the contest'.

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The 1831 canvass was, in the light of proceedings at Westminster, an abortive affair and ended with a number of candidates thanking their supporters and claiming that had the poll been taken there and then, they would have been returned. However, the canvass did produce one moment of local notoriety that was to set the scene for much of the division in Cheltenham's political and social life. The Rev. Francis Close, who had been appointed incumbent of the parish in 1826, was a strong Evangelical who came to despise the activities of the Berkeleys and their friends. His early targets were the races and the gambling attached to them, and he regularly denounced such activities in his sermons. However, Close did not stop short of religious activity, but on the grounds that 'the Bible is Tory', entered the political list and determined that Cheltenham should not fall into the hands of Berkeley and the Liberals. On hearing of Craven Berkeley's intention to stand for the borough, Close is claimed to have called him 'an atheist and a scoffer at religion'. In return Craven Berkeley's supporters denounced Close for this slur, and a correspondence between them was printed in the Cheltenham Journal. Close's defence was that he had not said these remarks but that they had been made to him by someone of standing. Although he refused to name the person, strong suspicion fell on Major Payn, another candidate in the canvass. The affair died down but not before a number of letters had been written in Craven Berkeley's defence and the seeds of future bitterness had been sown. ²⁰

The news that in the elections of May 1831 six reformers had been returned against only two anti-reformers for Gloucestershire constituencies, gladdened the hearts of Cheltenham Liberals. Lord Grey now had a majority of over 130 seats in Parliament and the Cheltenham Reform Association decided to adjourn its
proceedings in the full hope that the Reform Bill would soon become law. The Cheltenham Journal reported in July the passing of the Bill through the House of Commons; but the hopes of reformers were soon frustrated by the Bill's defeat in the Lords during October. Although Cheltenham remained unaffected by the riots which followed, much vitriol and bitterness was aimed at the Duke of Wellington through the pages of Cheltenham's local liberal press.

Parliament opened again in December and Earl Grey presented the third Reform Bill to the Commons; once again it passed, this time with a majority of 162. The Bill was presented to the House of Lords in April 1832, but by May it lay amidst the tatters of wrecking amendments. On the refusal of William IV to create fifty new Liberal peers, Lord Grey resigned. Cheltenham once again joined the campaign for the Bill to become law by sending an address to the King.

Colonel Berkeley's role in the campaign for the representation of Cheltenham led to some fears that a pocket borough was being created, and that Berkeley's concern was primarily that of family aggrandisement and of self-interest rather than the promotion of the town's interests. Such a view might be borne out if were it not for the respect and genuine loyalty shown to him by his own supporters and Cheltenham Liberals in general. When he offered his services to, and became President of the more formal and newly created Cheltenham Loyal and Patriotic Association, Thomas Gray resolved that the:

'warm and cordial thanks of the meeting be given to Lord Segrave ....for the thoroughness and zeal with which he has upon this as upon every other occasion come forward to promote the cause of reform and of civil and religious liberties. 21

The Association came into being in May 1832 after the Lords had wrecked
the Second Reform Bill and Lord Grey had resigned. It was also formed in consequence 'of the extraordinary display of zeal at this time exhibited by the anti-reform Party' in the establishment of Conservative Clubs in Gloucester and Cheltenham, and of 'their continued active exertions to extend their political unions throughout the county'. At its first meeting the Committee resolved to allow all residents and visitors to the county to be eligible for membership and furthermore to write letters to local nobles and gentry inviting them to become members. Elections for membership needed to be approved by three-quarters of the general committee, and once elected the new member was required to sign a book of enrolment and to contribute 2/6d to the funds. Officers were to be apart from Lord Segrave as president, two vice presidents, Thomas Gray and Colonel Olney, a treasurer, Thomas Henney, and a secretary, J. Winterbotham, solicitor. Letters from those wishing to join the Association were received from Craven Berkeley, Lords Ducie and Dunalley, Lord Sherborne, Mr. Walker (mayor of Gloucester), Sir Berkeley Guise M.P., William Hyett and many others. By the middle of May those sitting on the Committee alone reached forty-five, with more requests for membership still being received. A public meeting was called for on Monday 14th May at Mr. Barnett's riding school (for the use of which he received two guineas).

At the meeting it was resolved to send an address to the King to thank him for dissolving Parliament after the rejection of the Bill and to make him aware of the strength of feeling for reform when choosing his new ministers. In addition, a petition was drawn up to be presented by Sir Berkeley Guise M.P. to the House of Commons, containing some 3,787 signatures, and later a petition was sent to the House of Lords not to reject the Bill a second time. The latter of these collected over 5,000 signatures. Lord Segrave, at that time suffering from
gout and rheumatism, was asked to present the address to the King personally, and letters between the Lord and the Committee reflect the close cooperation that existed between the two. Much of the remaining business of the committee consisted of the voting in of new members and the appointment of sub-committees to carry out such tasks as paying bills incurred for the use of 4, Clarence Street, and for inserting advertisements publishing its resolutions in the liberal Cheltenham Chronicle and the Gloucester Journal.

Through this popular pressure and the inability of Wellington and reluctance of Peel to form a ministry, opposition collapsed and the Bill became law in June, with a large number of Tory peers absenting themselves on the day of its passage through the Upper House. In its editorial of June 11th, even the Tory Cheltenham Journal announced to its readers that:

'\textbf{the days of patronage and pensions are numbered with the past. Sinecures must henceforth belong to history; they can form no part of the new system}'.

Plans were drawn up to celebrate the passing of the Act, with the Reform Association calling a public meeting. This meeting took place at the York Hotel in August and planned for illuminations and a dinner to be held on Friday 10th August. Some in the borough, perhaps conscious of the recent riots in Bristol, were anxious that such an occasion would be an opportunity for public disorder. Others such as the Rev. Francis Close felt that a more relevant gesture would be a collection and distribution of charity to the town's poor. The editorial of the Cheltenham Journal of August 13th struck a note of compromise by announcing that:

'where a proper respect to the laws is observed and good humour
prevails nothing can be more exhilarating than the sight of beautiful buildings like those of Cheltenham drest up in a blaze of light.

Despite the fears and misgivings of Lord Ellenborough (see Appendix D), Cheltenham once again behaved itself with good order and dignity and the celebrations were among the finest ever seen in the borough that century. Its houses and hotels were decorated with stars, crowns, transparencies and busts of William IV and Lord Grey. Mr. Bayliss, a salesmen, had a transparency announcing 'England's King and England's Glory', whilst Mr. Knapp displayed one stating 'The reward of the Faithful. Russell and Reform'. Dr. Boisragon's house in the Royal Crescent displayed in large letters the inscription 'Magna Carta 1215 - Maxima Carta 1832 esto perpetuo', whilst Mr. E. Raven showed a boxing match between a 'bloody' Duke of Wellington and Lord Grey looking triumphant and William IV calling time.

Elsewhere, in the Sussex Arms inn a hundred members of the poor were given a dinner of roast beef and plum-pudding and liberal allowances of beer paid for by John Halton, a local builder. The following Sunday one hundred tradesmen sat down to an excellent dinner in the Sydney Arms in Pittville in honour of the Bill, a sheep was roasted at Mr. Lait's of Newmarket Street, and an ox in Charlton Kings. A more formal occasion took place at the York Hotel on 27th of September, when at a dinner attended by Lord Segrave and leading reformers, Thomas Gray was presented with a superb service of plate inscribed to 'the enlightened promoter of every local improvement and the intrepid and unwearied advocate of Parliamentary Reform and Civil and Religious Liberties'. Even before these celebrations had died down, Cheltenham turned its attention again to electing its
first representative under the terms of new Act.

Even now, however, things did not go quite as smoothly as the reformers might have hoped as Lord Ellenborough attempted to bring forward an amendment which would have had the effect of excluding Cheltenham from the franchise. Once again Lord Segrave earned their gratitude by championing the cause of the town in the House of Lords by pointing out that it was entitled to representation both for the increase in its wealth and population and for the taxes it paid to the State. Such was his success that the Lords failed even to divide on the proposed amendment. Consequently by the 1832 Act, Cheltenham became one of twenty-one 'schedule D' parliamentary boroughs, with the right to send one member to Parliament and an electorate of 919 voters.

Even before the Bill had received its royal assent, Craven Berkeley was canvassing the voters. His address of June had declared his 'firm attachment to the sacred principles of civil and religious liberty' and his 'determination to support all such measures of retrenchment and economy as may be consistent with the maintenance of public faith and public service'. A committee room at 6, The Colonnade, was set up with a committee of forty-five, including men such as Thomas Gray, Colonel Olney, Thomas Henney and John Fosbroke M.D. By now not only was Craven Berkeley the only Liberal in the running, but as yet the only candidate in the poll. Once again, reference was made to his family connections as his prime qualification for representing the borough:

"The principles of the ancient and noble family from which he is immediately descended, have been too long known, too severely tried and too honourably proved to leave a doubt upon any candid mind of the liberality of those political sentiments which animate
every number of the House of Berkeley'.

Craven Berkeley concluded his canvass by the end of June and claimed to have received the promises of the vast majority of Cheltenham's voters.

With the new legislation there was also the task of registering the new voters. On August 2nd, Thomas Griffiths, a local solicitor, was appointed returning officer for the borough and throughout August, two London solicitors, Henry Egerton and Edward Gillam White, were required to make circuits of the county registering new voters. For the borough, like the county, all persons claiming to be voters had to deliver their claim to the overseers of the parish, with a fee of one shilling. Between registering their claim and the general election, all parties could contest these claims and it was the job of Egerton and White to hold courts in the various parishes and weigh up the rival claims. Of some 846 claimants, 332 objections were raised in all. In November, Egerton and White arrived at Cheltenham and opened their court at Sheldon's Hotel.

Initially there was some confusion over those borough freeholds where the properties were leased out, but the families' own servants were retained there (a common practice in fashionable Cheltenham). Eventually these were ruled as a county franchise rather than borough franchise. Another area of doubt was as to whether the pews in St. James Church constituted a freehold for their owners. After a few days consultation, White and Egerton ruled that they did not! Objections to borough voters amounted to 195 but were all made by one gentleman, mostly on points of taxes and occupations. Only 68 of those lost their right to vote, most however on grounds of non-attendance at the courts. The Liberals rejoiced that so few of their voters had been objected to, and in an election address of 14th November, Craven Berkeley announced that:
The revision of the voters of this borough, being now completed, it is with infinite pride and satisfaction, that I refer to the result seeing that it has produced an irresistible majority in my favour. I cannot refrain from taking the present occasion to congratulate you upon the complete failure of the very extraordinary attempt made to disqualify so large a number of you whose claims were altogether unquestionable. 26

The town's Conservatives were obviously dismayed. Such was Lord Ellenborough's anger with Cheltenham's Liberals in general, and the editor of the Cheltenham Journal in particular, that he is reported to have pledged to spend £2,000 to 'get revenge' on the paper. Later, Ellenborough publically refuted this charge, and so dismal were the Tories' hopes in 1832 that it is unlikely that even a sum of that kind would have done them much good. However, for the time being not all was lost and during November a certain Mr. Ryder (a son of the Earl of Harrowby) commenced his canvass. Accusations immediately came from the Liberals that votes pledged to Berkeley were being lost to Tory bribes or the threat of force. The anonymous 'Vox Populi' attacked Ryder as 'a man not known at all' and as someone who was at 'the beck and call of a Tory clique in the same manner as the service of Slaves may be conveyed with an estate'. It then called on Cheltenham's voters to 'reject with scorn the solicitations of a man who can suppose you capable of such degrading conduct as that he would have you to commit, to secure to him even the faintest glimmer of hope'. 27

On a more specific level, Ryder was accused of spending £1,500 in bribes to win over Liberal supporters, and of being in cahoots with the Rev. Francis Close. The latter's involvement with borough politics had caused much disgust and anger
with the Liberals, all the more so when the said clergyman tried to deny this involvement. Close's attempts to prevent the rebuilding of the Theatre Royal and to close the Cheltenham races in 1827 had brought him into direct conflict with Lord Segrave and the Berkeleys. In his sermons he frequently attacked Dissent and radicalism over a wide range of issues and in one sermon even claimed that 'the Bible was Tory'. More so than politics, religion was causing a deep rift in the fabric of the town.28

In 1832 it was the Berkeleys and the Liberals who held the upper hand, but that hold was shortly to be contested and the general mood of the town would eventually shift, with the support of an emerging Tory press, to be more in accord with the views of Close. However, that year Close's support for Ryder did them both more harm than good. An address from 'a parishioner' drawn up in November, although 'recognising those rare examples of humility and Christian charity' pointed out that Close's support for Ryder was laying him open to the charges of 'cant and hypocrisy'. He went on to urge Close and those 'Clerical intriguers', who had here and elsewhere interfered to prevent the return of Reform Candidates, that 'they may also find, perhaps, that their good offices will be remembered, unquestionably much to the advantage of the Church, in a reformed Parliament'. 29

Close tried to argue publically that he was only supporting Ryder for his religious principles and that he was not simply opposed to Craven Berkeley for personal reasons but for his support of religious liberties, namely the removal of disabilities placed on nonconformists and even (suspected Close) on Catholics - although much rancour still remained from his former charge of atheism. Such was the public concern with the incident, that the Bishop of Gloucester requested
his clergy 'to refrain from plunging into the agitation of political conflicts' or else they would 'lower themselves in the esteem even of those whose cause they espouse; and among that part of their flock to whom they are opposed they will create feelings of disgust and offence'. (See appendix A number 17).

After three days of canvass, Ryder issued a face-saving address in which he argued that he had received assurances from a large proportion of the constituency and that, had many of the voters not already pledged themselves to Berkeley, he would have won the election. He denied having spent £1,500 on his campaign and of having acted unscrupulously. His withdrawal from the contest was because he was 'unwilling to prolong the excitement necessarily attendant on an electioneering contest'.

On 15th November, Craven Berkeley made his entry into Cheltenham. Not planned as a grand occasion, it became a spontaneous outburst of joyful support on the part of the townspeople of Cheltenham for their potential member. As news of his arrival spread around he was 'hailed as he passed through the streets with loud cheers by nearly all our population who crowded the streets although the weather was by no means favourable'. The Cheltenham Chronicle wrote that 'an immense concourse of people with music, flags and flambeaux assembled in the London Road long before the time appointed for the arrival of the coach' 31. When the coach did arrive, Berkeley was persuaded by his supporters to make an election address to the dense crowd assembled at the Plough Inn. He was able to tell them that some 690 of a total 900 voters had given him their support and had remained loyal despite Tory attempts to win them over.

By now Craven Berkeley's election was a certainty and the Cheltenham Journal wrote that through early December the town's social life and gaiety went
on as usual and the canvass passed almost unnoticed. In Westminster that month, Parliament was dissolved and everywhere preparations were being made for the new elections.

In Cheltenham the election itself took place on Monday 10th December at Barnett's riding school, a place capable of containing several thousand persons. Presiding over the proceedings were Thomas Griffiths, the returning officer, and Mr. Russell, the chief of police. Craven Berkeley and his supporters first met at Sheldon's York Hotel, before they marched with banners and music to the riding school. On their arrival, the returning officer addressed the townsmen, asked for good order, read the Bribery Act and requested the nomination of any candidates. Thomas Gray rose and made his nomination of Craven Berkeley. Once again the Liberals congratulated their voters for having 'virtuously resisted temptation and intimidation, and that undismayed by the combined offensive operations of the new Conservative and Holy Alliance, they have remained true to their political principles, true to their love of enlightened freedom and true to their promises'.

Gray, at some length, dealt with the objections made by opponents to Berkeley's lack of a detailed policy, his youthfulness, his aristocratic connections and the fact that three of his brothers were already sitting in Parliament. Gray spoke with much persuasion and his speech was punctuated with many loud cheers. Thomas Henney followed Gray in seconding Berkeley's candidature and finally Berkeley himself spoke. Although avoiding any statement on definite issues, such as the Corn Laws or the currency question, Berkeley pledged himself to be a thorough reformer, gentleman and true friend of the 'Liberties of the People' and also to pursue a policy of restoring former prosperity by shifting
the burdens of tax to those who could best bear them, and of steady, practical reform of all abuses in Church and State.

It was then asked if any candidate wished to oppose Berkeley, and as no-one came forward he was proclaimed 'duly returned as a Burgess to represent the borough of Cheltenham in the House of Commons'. After speeches of thanks, three loud cheers were given for Reform and Craven Berkeley and three groans for the Tories!

The following day Berkeley was chaired through the town in a 'superb carriage pulled by six beautiful horses decorated with laurels, orange and green drapery and banners'. The procession was accompanied by a band of musicians and made its way to the Plough Inn having travelled along most of the principal streets. Rachel Whinyates wrote in her diary:

'A member for Cheltenham is chosen today. The whigs have prevailed; Lord Segrave's heavy purse has attracted the tradespeople. This day was the chairing. The Hon. Craven Berkeley sat embowered in laurel. The voters and tradespeople walked four abreast in front. Two flags of England went before, with those of 'Reform' and 'Berkeley and Independence', it was a pretty sight, though it was said to be a shabby procession, as no gentlemen were in it on horseback. Lord Segrave glories in having his brother returned by the middle and lower classes and not the gentry'.

Needless to say such a description is from a Tory viewpoint, as the Whinyates were one of Cheltenham's leading military families.

The Cheltenham Journal in a special report on 13 August also described both the chairing and the banquet which followed. That evening one hundred gentlemen
invited by Craven Berkeley sat down to a dinner at Turner's sale room in Regent Street. Thomas Gray took the chair and after toasting the King and Queen, he gave a speech in honour of the new member. This was followed by addresses by the vice-president, William Evans, Dr. Boisragon and Lord Segrave. The latter dealt with the charge levelled by Close that a candidate could not be fit to represent a constituency if his religious principles were not the same as theirs, by showing how Dissenters had been at the forefront of a number of leading issues such as the campaign for the abolition of slavery. More speeches of thanks followed and toasts were drunk well into the late hours after 'a dinner consisting of every delicacy of the season and served with wine of the finest quality and flavour'.

Cheltenham thus celebrated having its first M.P. For the time being the Berkeley name, reputation and a general sense of gratitude felt towards them by supporters of reform ("Legitimate" influence according to Heesom) had ensured the return of a Berkeley candidate. Despite their rumblings of discontent, the Tories had been unable to organise an effective opposition. Part of the failure must be apportioned to the general anti-Tory mood of the country towards those who had too long delayed the Reform Bill; part must be apportioned to the Tories' inability to match Berkeley prestige, patronage and early mobilization. Throughout the election, one cannot help but notice the overall support the Liberals received from Cheltenham's newspapers. Tories were frequently lampooned whereas Liberals received at times cautious, but mostly generous, support. Even the Tory Cheltenham Journal had come to support the cause of reform and with a degree of caution had spoken up for Craven Berkeley's suitability as Cheltenham's candidate:

'The Hon. Craven Berkeley goes to Parliament the representative not only of
the reformers of Cheltenham but of its entire constituency. His undisputed
election frees him from the mere imputations of being a party member. His
birth, station in society and family connection are the best assurance that
even the most arbitrary aristocrat could desire. 35

Such a view might allow the Tories to save face for now, but as we shall see, it
was not a view they held for long!

Ironically though, it was not a Tory who attacked Cheltenham's press for its
subservience to the Berkeleys, but an address by an anonymous 'Reformer of
Abuses'. 36 At Berkeley's election dinner, Lord Segrave had proposed a toast to
'Dr. Fosbroke and the liberty of the press', although a proprietor and editor of
each of the town's major journals were present. The writer of the address
compared this toast to that of 'Corporal Scroggins and the battle of Waterloo'. So
conspicuous had both papers (presumably the Cheltenham Chronicle and the Tory
Cheltenham Journal) been in their 'abject servility' in advocating the pretensions
of the house of Berkeley that such a toast was 'more likely evidence of BERKELEY
GRATITUDE than of gentlemanly feeling'. The address continued:

'How grateful the Independent proprietors of the Cheltenham press must feel,
to find themselves thus honourably distinguished, after working per fas et
ne fas, to secure the return of his Lordship's brother. If they have any
manly spirit left, they will remember that the very day he mounted the
highest round of the political ladder, they, his supporters, who had helped
him up, were thus scornfully kicked away from under him'. 37

This attack on Berkeley was not unlike a previous letter which had appeared in
the pages of the Cheltenham Journal under the title 'a warning from a
correspondent' which warned Berkeley that the middle classes were 'not to be made
pack horses of for ever by the Whig aristocracy and country gentlemen, and to be cast off when electioneering purposes are served'.

Had such a open statement on Berkeley patronage come from the Tories or the Rev. Close, it perhaps would not have been notable, but that it came from one calling himself 'a reformer' is indicative of a new source of disquiet against the noble family. We may not know who the author of the address was, but its printer was a Mr. Samuel Charles Harper of Regent Street. This Mr. Harper was to establish the Cheltenham Free Press in 1834, which was to become the main voice of Cheltenham's radical middle class and whose pages would attack amongst other things the political apathy and poor record of Craven Berkeley's parliamentary career.

After 1832 and the passing of the Reform Act, there were three elements contributing to Cheltenham's political scene. An established, almost complacent, Liberal party riding high on the back of the Berkeley name but with few new political initiatives; a discontented Tory party, although in a minority, backed by the established Church, the vociferous Rev. Close, the local gentry and an emerging Tory press; and finally, a nascent radical working class and a sprinkling of discontented small shop-keepers and nonconformists (particularly Unitarians) with various advanced ideas but with little chance of representation under the 1832 Reform Act. As we shall see, the political conflicts that ensued were lively, closely fought but increasingly resolved at the expense of the Berkeleys. Perhaps once the euphoria of Reform had worn off, this was to be an inevitable penalty for the nature of the early victories in the political race in post 1832 Cheltenham.
NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

7. CPL 'Report by Edward Cresey to the General Board of Health – an enquiry into the sanitary conditions of Cheltenham' (1849).
18. Papers relating to Cheltenham elections, GRO D3893/3.
22. Idem.
23. Idem
26. GRO D3893/3.
27. Idem
29. GRO D3893/3.
33. Idem
34. Quoted in Gwen Hart, op. cit., p.223.
35. Cheltenham Journal, 10 December 1832.
36. GRO D3893/3.
37. Idem
Craven Berkeley was returned unopposed in Cheltenham's first election under the terms of the 1832 Act. Such was the gratitude of the town's inhabitants, that a statue of William IV was erected in the Imperial Nursery near the Queen's Hotel to commemorate the passing of the Reform Bill. However, the elation of the Whigs was soon to be matched by frustration and disappointment of those still not included in the franchise under the reformed system. Not only had a number of important Radical items been rejected by the Whigs, such as the secret ballot and more frequent Parliaments, but the new franchise was still very restricted. The £10 occupation qualification in the boroughs in effect kept out many non-property owners, who were deemed unworthy to be trusted with the vote.

As rental values differed over the country, it is difficult to ascertain with any precision exactly which groups were excluded from the franchise. In Leeds, a city with a population of 125,000, only 5,000 people were entitled to vote and in Birmingham, with a population of 144,000, there were only 7,000 registered voters (some 4% and 4.9% of their respective totals). The situation was improved in such Gloucestershire boroughs as Tewkesbury, with 386 voters from a population of 5,780 (6.7%); Gloucester, with 1300 voters from a population of 11,933 (10.9%); Bristol, with 10,315 voters from a population of 59,074 (17.5%) and Stroud with 1,247 voters from a population of 8,607 (14.5%). Such figures compare with a national population of 24 million with 813,000 registered voters (3.4%).
A political map of Gloucestershire showing County divisions and boroughs after 1832.

(Population figures are for 1831).

Based on 'Gloucestershire' by J & C Walker. 1840.
At first Cheltenham's position with a population of 23,000 and only 919 voters (4%) seems a little hard to understand, especially as it has already been reported that it had some 1,939 dwellings assessed at over £10 and 1,225 over £20, some 3,164 in total. However, the £10 franchise was not always enough to ensure the potential voter his right to vote. He would first have to pay a shilling a year to place his name on the electoral register and even then his right to vote might be challenged on a number of grounds, such as recent changes of address or defaulting on payments of rates. After 1832 both parties had local organisations and local agents whose job it was to get rival voters struck off the list. In addition, it must not be assumed that the holding of a £10 franchise was always matched by a desire or enthusiasm to join the political process. One may speculate how many Cheltenham Tories, lacking a feasible candidate in 1832, decided not even to register their vote.

However, there may have been yet another reason why Cheltenham had relatively few voters despite having so many large properties. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Cheltenham's main source of wealth lay in the many visitors both to the Spas and to the attractions of the Cleeve races and the Theatre at Cambray Place. People of rank and fortune flocked to Cheltenham to attend the round of balls and concerts. The more important visitors are faithfully recorded in the pages of the fashionable Cheltenham Looker-On and by 1800, they had reached some 2,000 a year. All these visitors had to be housed whilst in Cheltenham and many of the town's villas and properties were given over to this purpose. The first Cheltenham Directory of 1800 records no less than 153 of the town's principal inhabitants letting lodgings during the season. Land tax returns also indicate that many of the town's families were not resident in
the houses for the entire year. Even where their servants were kept resident, the property then acted as qualification for the County franchise and not that of the borough. As such then, the number of houses rated at £10 or more is not always a reliable guide to the number of electors. This indeed had been one of the main arguments against the proposed enfranchisement of Cheltenham and Brighton with one Tory critic dismissing them both as 'such mushroom places ... which derived importance only from the migratory shoals which annually resorted to them'.

A major deficiency of the 1832 Act was that in restricting the franchise and by refusing to grant the secret ballot, it allowed pocket boroughs to continue. How much it was in the minds of those who introduced the Act to reduce the influence of landowners and local patrons is debatable, but historians are agreed that such influence continued. Asa Briggs states that pocket boroughs were maintained with the nominees of great families continuing to be returned. Norman Gash's view is that 'in smaller boroughs family and personal control still sometimes decided the outcome of elections'. Moreover, Sir Llewellyn Woodward deduces that the direct territorial influence of the landed aristocracy was increased 'with about forty peers after 1832 being able to nominate members to the House of Commons'. In many ways Cheltenham can be considered a pocket borough, at least for the next thirty-three years whilst it lay in the hands of the Berkeleys. Grantley Berkeley's charge against his cousin William, that the latter was rewarded with an earldom for returning three safe seats to Parliament, has already been mentioned. In Cheltenham, where Lord Segrave is said to have owned considerable property (although later suggestions question this assumption, restricting this ownership to his kennels and a house for his mistress!) and held considerable social influence over a relatively small group of
electors, such control was quite possible. As we have seen, the 1832 election was a relatively easy affair for Lord Segrave's brother, Craven Berkeley, as the Tories were unable or unwilling to produce a candidate for the poll. For the time being, the Berkeley name and purse alone was enough to ensure election success in the borough.

However, before long there was both national and local disquiet at the woeful inadequacies of the 1832 Reform Act, particularly from those excluded from its provisions. In many cases, the middle classes, who beforehand had been allies of the working man, now deserted him as 'once they had their rightful position, they did not favour further adventures'. Voting by ballot, which had been one of the main points of the radical programme for reform, was now dropped by the Whigs along with demands for universal suffrage and annual elections. One only has to look at the reception of the first Chartist petition of 1839 to see what the 'reformed' House of Commons thought about such matters. The 1832 Reform Act was emphatically not a democratic measure and rather than weakening the concept of aristocratic government seemingly strengthened it.

Disappointment within Cheltenham at the Reform Act now focused on a small group of progressive liberals, some editors, publishers, and solicitors but mainly shop-keepers, artisans and tradesmen, in many cases men still without the vote. The borough's development as a fashionable shopping centre was closely related to its role as a Spa and the town seems to have had more than its fair share of grocers, tea-dealers, outfitters, cobblers, drapers, jewellers and brewers, not to mention solicitors, printers and doctors. Many of these were skilled and intelligent men with an active interest in politics, but as yet little say in national or local affairs. What was to increase their frustrations in the years
between 1832 and 1835 was Craven Berkeley's failure to support further political reform and in general what they saw as his poor record in Parliament.

The activities of these progressive liberals and radicals centred round three main areas: The Cheltenham Free Press founded in 1834 by Samuel Charles Harper; the Mechanics' Institute opened in the autumn of 1834; and the candidature of William Penn Gaskell in the general election of 1835.

The Cheltenham Free Press first appeared in November 1834, published on Saturdays, appearing weekly and selling at 7d. Its first editor was Samuel Charles Harper whose offices were at 350, High Street. A letter dated October 28th 1828 exists from Harper to the Clerk of the Peace of Gloucestershire requesting permission to set up a printing press within the town of Cheltenham. The 1851 census records Harper as living at 1, Bath Street with his wife, Mary, a son Samuel, and a servant called Ann Jones. At that time he is also described as an auctioneer, printer and register of births, deaths and marriages. His tombstone records his death on October 11th 1869 at the age of 70. It is not possible to discern Harper's role in events before 1834, but after that date, through the pages of The Cheltenham Free Press, he emerges as a frequent critic of the Berkeleys, the focal point of shop-keepers' political disputes and a confirmed supporter of the Radical cause.

In his opening address Harper declared his aims were 'to speak the truth boldly and to uphold the true interests of the community, by an unflinching advocacy of all liberal and enlightened measures'; he then continued to stress the need for a journal unallied to any party or interest but the common interest of every man in Britain. His desire was to 'awaken people from mental apathy to a sense of their true social and political interests' through truth and through
principles of rational liberty.

In terms of policy, Harper was not a democrat; he declared himself for the vote by ballot and triennial Parliaments, but universal suffrage he considered 'a generous but erring creed'. Other concerns of his included a diminution of the public burdens of the Church; a lawful resistance of the abuses of misgovernment and an anxiety over the new Poor Laws (i.e. the proposed Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834). Finally in support of free speech, Harper announced the columns of The Free Press open to all correspondents 'so long as contributions neither violate the humanities nor offend the decencies of society'.

So successful was The Cheltenham Free Press that on its first day it went into a second print. Harper was soon able to announce that 'aspirited by the great and unsought success which had attended its publication and encouraged by the daily increase of subscribers, from nearly every quarter of the kingdom', the paper was to be enlarged by four additional and lengthened columns. A review of its circulation at 19,900 copies compared with the Tory Journal's 10,000 and Liberal (Berkeley-backed) Chronicle's 22,000 demonstrated how quickly the paper had established itself with the town's readership (although such figures were most probably exaggerated in all cases). At first Cheltenham's Whigs welcomed The Free Press and both Lord Segrave and Craven Berkeley were among those who took out subscriptions. However, somewhat more predictably, the response of the Cheltenham Chronicle was to accuse The Free Press of 'poisoning the minds of the working classes in the Spa'.

Initially, the Tories' Cheltenham Journal also gave cautious praise to The Free Press, but such a situation did not last for long. Speaking shortly afterwards at the Liberal and Constitutional Reform Club, Harper claimed that the
Tories had 'injuriously operated' against his paper, not least by intimidating tradesmen not to advertise in his columns and by their attempt to establish a second Tory paper.

In return, as it turned out, both Whigs and Tories gained little support from a paper determined to point out to its readers that it did not belong to any party or faction. In fact it was Berkeley and the Whigs who soon became the target of the paper's attacks. In November 1834 it rejoiced that the Whigs were finally out of office; a ministry which 'refused vote by ballot and short parliaments, which upheld impressment and flogging in the army, declared sanctity of the pension list, shuffled off Church reform and afflicted Ireland with a law far more severe than any offspring of a 30 year Tory tyranny'. Its conclusion was that no longer should 'men of honesty waste their powers and energies on the bolstering up of what is proven innately worthless... and that the country at large is sickened with the Whigs' 16.

As the new election approached, to begin with, however, The Free Press did not completely denounce Craven Berkeley's representation of the borough; but a first warning shot was fired when its editorial announced that although his support for the ballot commended him to the paper, 'he must not on the strength of one or two good votes imagine himself exempted from all further accountability to his constituents'. 16 Its real venom, for now, was reserved for the Tories. The Duke of Wellington was no more than 'a dictator' and Toryism was 'as contemptible as it is corrupt and as imbecile as it is loathsome'. 17

Although somewhat wary about adopting the label of radical, the paper did not altogether hide its allegiance, stating that it would accept it, 'if by that term (radical) is meant one who would uproot every corruption and destroy every
deformity which defaces the constitution of England'. At the same time, The Free Press gave its support to the candidature of William Penn Gaskell, of whom the paper said 'we know of no man living who will with more sterling integrity, unflinchingly and determinately uphold to the very letter the principles and pledges he has declared'.

As with Samuel Harper, we know little of Gaskell's career before 1835, save that he came from Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire, read mathematics at Christ's College Cambridge, became interested in politics, and came to Cheltenham in 1832 where he took up residence at 4, Bedford Buildings. In the autumn of 1834 he founded the Mechanics' Institute in Albion Street with the aim of 'diffusing knowledge amongst the trading and mechanical portions of the country'. Membership was open to both men and women for a subscription of 3/- a quarter, and lectures were held on all subjects 'within the whole field of knowledge which was not exclusively within the domain of religion'. At its height the Institute had some two hundred members, and received much support from the pages of the Free Press:

'we cannot too strongly commend this society to the tradesmen and artisans. It is an admirable means of obtaining the best scientific and political knowledge, and also furnishes a most economical and comfortable resort for the evening'.

Like Gaskell, Samuel Harper considered the gaining of knowledge as 'the key to the casket of power and necessary so that the grounds for excluding the working class from power on the score of their ignorance may be removed'.

Harper's support for William Gaskell went beyond the pages of The Free Press. On November 28th. 1834, Harper took the chair at a meeting of Cheltenham radicals at the Roebuck Inn where Gaskell and Jelinger Symons, fellow students
from Cambridge and fellow radicals (Symons was attempting to win the representation of Stroud), spoke to a gathering of some five hundred. At this point Harper stressed that as chairman his duties were to remain impartial and to maintain order at the meeting, but Harper gave a very favourable report of the meeting to his readers through the pages of *The Free Press*. Later, however, during the hustings of January 1835 Harper was to deliver an impassioned speech on Gaskell's behalf making it quite clear where his sympathies lay. This speech is quoted, in part, later in the chapter.

One note of caution that crept in between the two men was as to which radical programme they supported. Harper, who thought of himself as a 'Progressive Liberal', had made it a virtual crusade of his to campaign for the secret ballot and triennial Parliaments, and *The Free Press* frequently contained addresses and editorials on the subject. Gaskell, much more of a radical, however, went further, ('a man of advanced opinions' as Williams calls him 22), and advocated universal suffrage and annual parliaments. That this rift did not widen too much during the election campaign of 1835 was helped by an address by Gaskell on January 1st. 1835 whereby he promised that if elected and faced with the opportunity of voting in the House of Commons on either issue, he would immediately resign his seat and go back to the constituency and let the electors of the borough make their wishes known through the polls. He wound up his address with this assurance: 'in conclusion, suffer me to remind you that the chief ground on which I have solicited your votes is my pledge to support, by every Parliamentary means, the Ballot and Triennial Parliaments as the only course through which Toryism or Oligarchy under any other name can be for ever prevented from becoming predominant in the country'.

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Any rift on Harper's part was probably healed by a growing conviction in
the pages of The Free Press that Craven Berkeley was not the best candidate for
Cheltenham. In the eyes of Cheltenham radicals, the Whigs had become 'Do-littles'
and though willing and ready to yield their humble tribute of praise to the good
deeds of the late Whig government, the radicals considered that 'much had been
left undone, that they could and ought to have done'. The December issues of
The Free Press contained several attacks from Gaskell that Berkeley had been
neglecting his Parliamentary duties and had not been present on a number of
important divisions in the House of Commons. Berkeley eventually produced
evidence from Gooch's 'Book of the Reformed Parliament' that he had in fact been
present in the House on more occasions than Gaskell had maintained, and Gaskell
was forced to produce an apology. The charge of Whig apathy though was one that
was to stick with both the party and with Craven Berkeley.

Harper not only considered Craven Berkeley an unsuitable candidate for
Cheltenham; 'can military officers [Craven Berkeley had been a Captain in the
Second Life Guards] be fit persons to entrust with your rights and
liberties?', but wanted to see the entire Berkeley patronage of the borough
ended. At the husting of Craven Berkeley's nomination, Harper, making a speech on
Gaskell's behalf, passionately announced;

'This is a day of which every free and independent elector may be
justly proud, for, notwithstanding the herd of mercenary slaves that
swell the Berkeley train, there are some who dare assume to the
natural port and bearing of Freemen. The head of the noble house of
Berkeley will know that the representation of the town is not
altogether his private property - nor a parliamentary preserve to
which none are to be admitted, without his express permission,

I for one protest my unwillingness to wear the badge of Berkeley
slavery, although the collar may be composed of gold and studded
with diamonds'.  

Elsewhere in its pages, The Free Press was not slow to point out its
suspicions of the Berkeleys' political corruption. On January 3rd, its editorial
contained an account of Henry Moreton Berkeley (William and Craven's brother)
resigning his seat for the Western Division of the County with Lord Segrave
allowing the seat to fall into the hands of the Marquis of Worcester ('or some
other Tory'), plain proof to The Free Press of 'trickery and treachery whereby the
representation of this important county has been basely neutralised'. If the
allegation was not true then it was incumbent on Lord Segrave to furnish the
necessary proof to deny it, said Harper. In the meantime 'no member of the family
of the noble Lord will at such a crisis as the present, be entrusted with the
representation of the people'. In Cheltenham itself, The Free Press drew attention
to intimidation by Craven Berkeley; he had apparently visited the shops of local
tradesmen who had the vote, accompanied by a number of friends, whose joint
income amounted to £10,000 or £20,000 a year, with the clear intimation that such
trade would be lost to tradesmen who did not vote the 'right' way in the
forthcoming election.

The election of 1835 was primarily the result of Lord Grey having resigned
from office the year before. Lord Melbourne had taken on the leadership of the
Whig party on the condition that Lord Althorp should lead it in the House of
Commons. Unfortunately, Lord Althorp almost immediately succeeded his father and
withdrew to the Lords. Lord Melbourne, doubtful whether he could continue at the
head of a ministry containing liberals such as Lord Russell, put the case to King William IV and offered his resignation. The King, who disliked many of the more radically minded Whigs, in fact took the opportunity to dismiss Melbourne's ministry in the hope that a coalition government of more acceptable men might be formed. Initially, though, it was to the Duke of Wellington that William turned, but Wellington refused and advised the King to call on Robert Peel, who on returning from Rome took office. Such action had made a general election necessary and the date was set for January of 1835.

The Tory party had in fact been increasing in strength since 1832, but even its winning of around new 100 seats in the election of January 1835, left it still unable to form a majority government. Peel resisted the suggestion to form a coalition ministry in January and tried instead to create a wholly Tory or Conservative government, much to the pleasure of the editor of The Cheltenham Free Press as he regarded it a much easier prospect to defeat a Tory ministry than a coalition one. Despite being in a minority, Peel took office only to be defeated six times in six weeks by the Lichfield-House compact of Irish Catholics, Whigs, Dissenters and radicals. Eventually after some hundred days in office Peel resigned in April 1835 and Lord Melbourne became Prime Minister again.

Overall this period had not been a failure for the Tories. Peel was now the acknowledged head of a united party which was able to contest about three fifths of parliamentary seats. In particular the 1835 election had given Peel the opportunity of presenting his Tamworth Manifesto by which he and his party pledged to conserve the 1832 Reform Act and to adopt the principles of moderate reform: 'Then as to the spirit of the Reform Bill, and the willingness to adopt
and enforce it as a rule of government....if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining, with the firm maintenance of established rights the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances, in that case I can for myself and colleagues undertake to act in such a spirit.  

Such a policy laid the foundations of a continued Tory recovery and one feature of the election in the months afterwards was the multiplication of Conservative Associations in both the boroughs and the counties all over England. A Tory recovery, though, was not yet to be staged in Cheltenham as the borough remained firmly in the hands of the Whigs. The 1835 election was fought between two candidates, not between a Whig and a Tory but between a Whig and radical. Because the dissolution did not come until late December 1834, the 1835 canvass was a relatively short and uneventful affair. The sitting member, the Honourable Craven Berkeley, made very little appearance before the election in comparison to the activities of the challenger, William Penn Gaskell.

We have already seen how Gaskell attacked Berkeley's poor attendance at House of Commons' divisions and how in return Berkeley was able to quote statistics from Gooch's 'Book of the Reformed House' to show that he was in attendance on a number of occasions and had in fact voted for the secret ballot; abolition of the window tax; the admission of Dissenters to the universities; the revision of the pension list and the new Poor Law. Berkeley chose not even to defend himself against the attacks of Gaskell and simply ignored an address of six questions put to him, leaving Gaskell to assume that it was because he was not a voter that he had been left without an answer.
Craven Berkeley also found himself the subject of some criticism by a certain Fulwar Craven of Brockhampton Park, near Cheltenham, who declined to enter the canvass for fear of splitting the Liberal interest but instead was going off to Berkshire to vote for 'a real reformer'. Gaskell too was accused by Fulwar Craven of being a revolutionist and an enemy of religion, both charges which the former refuted. On the other hand, The Cheltenham Free Press maintained a notably, if unusually, impartial stance by simply encouraging voters to register their votes and announcing that Monday 5th January had been declared as the day for the nomination of the candidates. Mr. Newman was the returning officer and the nomination was to be held at Mr. Barret's Riding School in Regent Street.

On the appointed day both Craven Berkeley and William Gaskell, attended by their respective supporters and bands of musicians, proceeded to the Riding School and very shortly the whole area became a dense mass of people. The returning officer then asked for proposers and seconders for the candidates. Berkeley was proposed by Captain Gray, who despite being greeted by an almighty uproar of shouts did not lose the occasion to make a lengthy speech. In this speech he not only attacked Peel's ministry but also warned that:

'on the other hand we must be equally on our guard against persons miscalling themselves Reformers, and bringing disrepute upon the name, whose aims are destructive of all good government who cry out for annual parliaments and annual suffrage, and who rave about the age of reason and the rights of man. If indeed they should ever get the upper hand again, I say with double emphasis, God help us, for then all of us who are now simple enough to trouble our heads about our worldly concerns, about the acquirement of riches and the security of
property, would then have a speedy deliverance from all our cares and burthens'.

Captain Gray concluded by calling on those who loved good government and who sought to remedy the abuses with which it had become deformed, to rally round their late representative Craven Berkeley. The latter was then seconded by W.S. Evans esq. In turn William Gaskell was proposed and seconded by Mr. William Hollis (a Cheltenham gunsmith) and Mr. Vaughan (shopkeeper). Gaskell complained from the platform about intimidation used by Berkeley's supporters and that a number of voters had wanted to vote for him but were apprehensive of injury to their domestic interests if they went against Berkeley. Gaskell also contended that if there had been a secret ballot then he would have been elected. The meeting was also addressed by Samuel Harper who delivered a scathing attack on Berkeley patronage of the borough (seemingly allowing himself to be more outspoken when not acting as editor of *The Free Press*).

On a show of hands the returning officer declared in favour of Gaskell, but Berkeley immediately protested and a poll was demanded which was set for the following Thursday and Friday. This time Berkeley did not fail to rally his supporters and with the voting standing at 411 for Berkeley to 25 for himself, Gaskell resigned from the contest. Such a disparity is perhaps explained by the fact that many of those present at the nomination were working men who although vociferous in their support for Gaskell, did not actually possess the right to vote. In speaking of the conduct of such supporters, *The Free Press* priggishly explained that:

'We cannot neglect this opportunity of expressing our utter disgust at the brutish conduct of the audience(!) who assembled to yell at the nomination of
the candidates.....we would correctly suggest to the working classes the indecency of turning public meetings into bear gardens and conducting themselves infinitely more like wild beasts than men'.

With the election over, in speaking of the two candidates The Free Press seems to have now adopted a more cautious (even hypocritical!) approach to the successful Craven Berkeley:

'Excepting Mr Craven Berkeley's vote for the ballot we have not seen any sufficient ground in his parliamentary conduct to allow us conscientiously to expouse his cause, neither on the other hand have we ever ranked ourselves amongst his declared opponents'.

The Free Press declared that despite Gaskell's espousal of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, it should have liked to see him as the successful candidate if only because of 'his manly candour'. But a Berkeley victory was something that Cheltenham liberals and radicals were going to have to live with. Despite taking the occasional side-swipe, such as in its report of Mr Hope's victory in Gloucester, 'who has done his best to besmirch the people by the most lavish expenditure in every species of corruption and the drunkenness has been revolting...another instance of the abuses of hereditary wealth', The Free Press took a more pragmatic view towards the Berkeleys. Lord Segrave's speech at the party's victory dinner was reported as being the best the Lord had ever given. In it Lord Segrave made a special point of refuting the charge of 'place-hunter' by showing that although he had spent over £15,000 on three election contests he had never sought place or reward for himself. The Free Press then added its own footnote that it had never itself levelled this charge against the noble Lord!
After the completion of the election, Gaskell, in a letter to *The Cheltenham Free Press*, thanked the electors for their support, put his defeat down to the 'tyranny of factions...which compelled the electoral body to vote against its consciences', and promised to stand again in the near future. However, he did not see the 1835 election as a complete disaster and writing in *The Cheltenham Free Press* he confidently announced that:

'better times are coming for Cheltenham....The industrious classes begin to think that the non industrious are no wiser than themselves. Nothing is learned without practice, let them attend a few more such meetings at the Riding School, let them be allowed liberty of speech and action themselves and they will soon grant the same to others'.

For the time being Gaskell would have to fight his radical campaign at the forum of the Mechanics' Institute. Through its activities and free lectures he generated and moulded a type of artisan radicalism which steadily evolved into the more general upper working class solidarity of the Chartist movement of the late 1830s and 1840s, which also later was to find support in Cheltenham. 30

As early as May 1835, Gaskell was busy drumming up support for a petition from the working men of the town to the House of Commons to prepare an address to the King to recall the six Dorchester labourers (now known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs) who had been transported by a Dorset assize judge, supported by Lord Melbourne's government, for swearing a secret oath in attempting to form a workers' association. Gaskell received support from *The Free Press*, who considered the petition 'an eloquent refutation to the vile aspersion and contemptuous epithets so liberally bestowed on the working classes by the ...foul-mouthed factions'. Not always were the two in such agreement, especially over the case of
Gaskell's continued support for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. But as Gaskell once explained using an analogy of some topicality, 'if one wished to take a carriage to Oxford, surely it was better to take one marked London than one marked Witney?'

Lord Segrave, the Berkeleys and the Whigs might have liked to have thought that the 1835 election had brought about the removal of radicalism by defeating it in the polls, but this was to prove far from the case. Gaskell was to continue the struggle against 'Old Corruption' and to keep Cheltenham radicals' hopes very much alive, no mean feat when one considers that before 1831 Cheltenham had had no significant tradition of political radicalism.

The radicals were not the only ones to learn from the 1835 election. As we have seen, although the Tories did not contest Cheltenham, there was a national revival of Toryism with the party winning some hundred new seats in the poll, including the local boroughs of Tewkesbury and Evesham. Encouraged by their success the Tories looked round for even more seats to contest, and as early as 1836, Francis Bonham, the party manager, wrote to Lord Ellenborough (now a local Tory patron who had recently bought an estate at nearby Southam) about the possibility of returning a Conservative member for Cheltenham. The latter's advice was not wholly dismissive but he did conclude that such a candidate must be a man 'able to speak decently, who has some money, and who would fortify the ludicrous vanity of the shopkeepers and idle inhabitants of Cheltenham', a task that no longer seemed quite so daunting.

For the Berkeley Whigs the victory of 1835 was tainted somewhat by the death of Captain Gray on April 26th that year. Both Lord Segrave and Craven Berkeley were among the pall-bearers at his funeral. Contemporaries tell us that
thousands, including principal inhabitants of all shades of political opinions, watched his funeral as the mournful cavalcade proceeded to St. Mary's Churchyard. Captain Gray had been an important lynch-pin in the activities of Cheltenham Whigs and a character who had brought them much respect. After his death he was to be missed not only for his untiring zeal, but for the credibility and integrity he brought to the Berkeley cause in Cheltenham. Without him the Berkeley faction would find it harder to retain the votes of Cheltenham's middle classes, especially those who were turning away from the fashionable and sporting image of the Spa to a more sober-minded way of thinking under the guidance of the town's self-appointed spiritual guardian, the Rev. Francis Close.

The 1835 election had also driven home to the Berkeleys the widening divide within the party between Whigs and progressive liberals. Such men of the latter group, mainly shopkeepers, traders, solicitors, or newspaper printers such as Samuel Harper, might not wish to give their support whole-heartedly to the more extreme radical views of a man like Gaskell, but they remained far from content with Craven Berkeley's record. Nationally too, although the Lichfield House Compact had united Whigs, liberals and radicals there was much discontent amongst the latter that Lord Melbourne seemed unwilling to offer any significant office to those of opinions more advanced than his own. Most liberals and radicals continued to support the Whigs after 1835, as to oppose them would bring about a return of a Tory ministry under Peel. The price they paid was in having to accept Whig limitations on their liberal aspirations. In Cheltenham, this group was eventually to form the Liberal Reform Association of 1837 but till then their main efforts centred on The Cheltenham Free Press and its long term campaign for the secret ballot.
For the time being though, once again Lord Segrave's 'heavy purse' and perhaps the beginnings of a more "illegitimate" type of influence had ensured success for his brother in Cheltenham and the notion of a pocket borough continued. Moreover, according to Harper and The Free Press, such political influence would continue unabated until the coming of the secret ballot - only then would an end to the tyranny of faction allow the people to withstand 'the menaces or the corruption on their enslavers' \(^{34}\). Other factors however, as we shall see, were to ensure that the Berkeley monopoly was, at least, to be challenged if not ended, well before the arrival of the Secret Ballot Act of 1872.
NOTES

CHAPTER TWO


9. Refer to chapter one.


11. Letter from Harper, GRO Q/RP.


- 63 -
20. O.R. Ashton, 'Radicalism and Chartism in Glos. 1832-1847'


22. W.R. Williams, op. cit., page 145


24. Cheltenham Free Press, 10 January 1835.

25. Cheltenham Free Press, 10 January 1835.


27. Cheltenham Free Press, 10 January 1835.


30. O.R. Ashton, op. cit., refer to Chapter one.

31. See also R.S. Neale, 'Economic conditions and working class movements in
   the City of Bath, 1800-1850' (Bristol University M.A. thesis 1963).

32. N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953), page 110.


34. Cheltenham Free Press, 1 November 1834.
1837 was a year not without both national and local interest. It was the year in which a cormorant (Pelicanus Carbo) was shot in Pittville Street, a great Nassau balloon ascended from the Montpellier Gardens and landed some forty miles from London, and a Tory attempted to capture the Spa's seat. Nationally it was the year of a general election occasioned by the death of William IV in June and the accession of Queen Victoria.

This election was to have repercussions for both major parties nationally and within the borough. The Tories' revival which Peel, as leader of the party, had begun in 1834 was to bring them gains of some 35 seats in 1837. The majority of these seats came from English counties, the traditional heartland of Toryism, but also notable were the Tory gains in small boroughs. Their representation in English boroughs where the franchise was below 1,000 increased from 63 in 1832 to 98 by 1837. Such a trend would also imply that the Whigs/Liberals were failing to maintain control over their traditional areas of strength, namely the urban boroughs.

The recovery of the Tories was by no means inevitable, but the elections of 1835, 1837 and 1841 do seem to mark convenient milestones for the party. We have already seen how in response to their failure in 1832 the Tories put much effort into the organization of the party at grass roots level. Local election committees were formed and agents appointed. At national level too Francis Bonham, unofficial party organizer since 1830, worked untiringly to see Tory
candidates re-elected and new seats captured. 1834 had given the Tories an experience of office, albeit a short one, and a taste for future power, the means of which were indicated by Bonham, who later wrote to Peel that 'we had to find candidates, organizers and friends in almost every place'. By 1836, Bonham estimated that they could gain over fifty seats in England alone. Whereas before 1835 the party had looked askance at the chances of a Tory candidate winning a seat like Cheltenham, by 1837 it seemed an outside possibility.

In Professor Gash's view, the 1837 election was a crucial point for the Tories, as after this date they were established as an Opposition stronger than any known before. As the Tories 'floated into harbour on the full and rising tide of public confidence', the Whigs struggled against a general atmosphere of weakness and decline. Much disillusionment had set in with the Whigs' record in government. Nothing they had done since the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 had recaptured the excitement and fervour of the 1832 Reform Bill. To many, Whiggism seemed a spent force, and Melbourne's treatment of the Tolpuddle labourers in 1834 was symptomatic of his Government's narrow, essentially aristocratic, interest. The Lichfield House Contract between Whigs, Liberals and Radicals was now in danger of collapse, an event eagerly awaited by the Tories.

Within the borough of Cheltenham, criticism of the Whigs was voiced most strongly by The Free Press. Even before the King's death, its editorials were announcing that: 'Whiggery will very shortly expire, and the many must gird their loins for the battle with monopoly... A tide is now setting in, which will ere long, disperse their small craft and annihilate the sham skirmishing of this baby flotilla'. The editor of The Free Press saw the defeat of the Whigs coming from a strong radicalism within the town, but in 1837 this hope was as improbable as
it was naive.

William Gaskell's failure to win more than 25 votes in the 1835 election had shown the radicals that a direct confrontation under the existing political system would inevitably result in defeat. Instead of fighting an electoral campaign Cheltenham's radicals were inclined to concentrate their efforts into a programme of political awareness and education through the regular meetings of the Mechanics' Institute and a branch of a Working Men's Association founded in December 1837. Gaskell saw the potential for the development of Chartism in the borough and this was to be the future course for Cheltenham's radicals. This change of direction left the radicals unprepared for the election of 1837 (the first national Chartist petition was not drawn up until 1839) and coupled with Gaskell's absence in North Devon, they were unable or unwilling to field a candidate.

Opposition to the Whigs came not from the radicals but in the unlikely guise of the Tories. Not since 1832 had the Tories put a candidate forward for Cheltenham and even then he had withdrawn before the final poll. However, since Peel's accession to the party's leadership the Tories were on the look-out for new seats. Lord Ellenborough's disparaging remarks about the chances of a Tory candidate have been quoted in the previous chapter, but such a view had not deterred the party altogether. Significant numbers of electors had not registered a vote in the previous election: the electorate was over 900 by 1835, but only 436 votes were recorded by the supporters of both Berkeley and Gaskell. It would not be out of the question to consider some of these silent voters to be Tories who wished neither to vote for the Whig nor Radical candidate. The potential for Tory support within the borough was apparent to contemporaries. Its military and
Anglo-Indian connections were well known and are wryly described thus by W.E. Adams:

'It used to be said of a certain city in America that you couldn't fire a shot in any direction without hitting a colonel. Much the same joke might be made about Cheltenham. Half-pay officers abounded there....Cheltenham was associated, before and afterwards, with famous Anglo-Indians. Lord Ellenborough, once Viceroy of India, had his seat in the neighbourhood.'

This potential support from such military families, aided by a Tory press in the form of the Cheltenham Journal and shortly by the Cheltenham Chronicle (swapping its allegiance from Whig to Tory in 1839), together with the political outspokenness of the Reverend Francis Close, as yet remained unsought by a Tory candidate. One reason given was that the party lacked a hereditary candidate of the stature of the Berkeleys. Lord Ellenborough, although of great social status, was a relative newcomer to the town and the Trye family of Leckhampton manor, although content to be a force in local politics, never put forward a candidate after their experience in 1832. In a series of letters between Francis Bonham and Lord Ellenborough the former made frequent references to the fact that any potential candidate for Cheltenham must be a gentleman at least, and preferably a man of money. Such evidence would seem to confirm Professor Gash's view that in the counties and in the ordinary boroughs, 'the electors usually chose as their members not their equals but their social superiors'.

The Tories' determination to contest the 1837 election, in contrast to their former inactivity, did not go unnoticed. The Free Press wrote in July 1837 that 'this determination animates the satanic faction from land's end to land's end. Never was the devilry of Toryism greater: never was its machinery stronger: never
were its appliances in better trim'.

The Tories were unable to forward a local candidate but instead gave their support to one Jonathan Peel, whose decision to stand for the seat seems rather a late one. In fact during the first week of July The Free Press gloated that once again the Tories were unable to produce a candidate and could merely promise to fight the Whigs on the next occasion. However, the July 15th edition contained an unexpected address from Jonathan Peel dated July 11th, and in it he referred to his canvass of the borough, which suggested that he had been in the town at least for a few days previously. The Free Press in its editorial of the same edition expressed its astonishment that the Tories in their desperation had managed to 'catch a stray Tory and have actually put him up for the Borough'. It then rather cheekily offered the advice to the Tories that they should 'hang on tightly to their candidate and not bleed him too dry'.

Peel's tenuous connection with the borough still remains to be established. Most contemporary references describe him as a man of property and some refer to him owning estates around Abingdon in Berkshire. His credentials as a loyal Tory rested on the fact that he was 'nearly allied' to the leader of the party, namely Sir Robert Peel, Bart. His candidature may be explained by the fact that his brother Joseph was at the same time standing for Tewkesbury. Local Conservatives, wishing to field a second candidate, had sent three of their number up to London to obtain a suitable man. Joseph arrived in Tewkesbury on 3rd. July in the company of his brother and it may have been at this point that Jonathan decided to stand for Cheltenham. Local Whigs remained disparaging about the hopes of two men so blatantly alien to the two boroughs and a contemporary election ballad entitled simply 'Song', contained the lines:

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Peel had better go down
To some poor rotten Town,
Take with him his kin from Tewkesbury;
They both see with shame,
That their old Uncle's name
Avails them but little, if any."

Peel's campaign attacked Craven Berkeley on two main fronts. First was the notion that the Tories were the true heirs to the claim of being the party of the Crown and the Church. The Whigs, on the other hand, were portrayed as the party of Jews, Catholics and infidels and as such stood for the destruction of the established Church. Berkeley's suspected atheism did not stand him in good stead. Neither too did the Whigs' support for Daniel O'Connell's Irish party who were in the eyes of many 'the avowed and natural enemies of the Church'. Also quoted in this respect was Berkeley's support for Richard Shiel, Irish agitator, M.P. for Louth County and O'Connell's co-founder of the Catholic Association, and a man who was supposed to have referred to the Protestant Church as a 'gorgeous nuisance'. For many electors, the only thing worse than an atheist was a possible Papist sympathiser, and Craven Berkeley was seeming dangerously close to both.

One person determined to keep religion at the forefront of the town's politics was its incumbent of the parish, the outspoken evangelical Francis Close. Despite warnings from the Bishop of Gloucester that the clergy should not involve themselves in politics, Close made frequent and determined attacks on the Berkeleys, whom he saw as champions of religious dissent and social libertines. For Close, good government and social order was that based on conservative principles and the preservation of the Protestant ascendancy. In his sermons he
thundered out against a range of topics from gambling, the town's Theatre and the races, to Catholicism and Dissent, and he openly declaimed that the Bible was Conservative as was the Prayer book and Liturgy. In many ways the rallying of Cheltenham's Tories owed as much to its clergy as to its election agents.  

The other front on which Peel attacked Berkeley took a leaf out of the radicals' book by claiming that under Lord Segrave's 'misrule' the borough and its electors had lost their freedom and political independence. A frequent Tory taunt, making reference to Berkeley's hunting activities, was that Cheltenham had become no more that a 'kennel borough'. Lord Segrave's campaign for Cheltenham to have representation in 1832 was portrayed by the Tories as a cynical attempt to create a single member borough which he would have little difficulty in controlling. The Reverend F.E. Wits recorded in his diary a meeting he had with the Berkeley foxhounds during which he was informed how much benefit had been conferred on the town by His Lordship (Lord Segrave) having made it his residence in the winter and headquarters of his hunting establishment, and concludes with the observation that as a result, the Berkeley family had been able to treat the town very much as a family borough appendant to the Castle.  

Lord Segrave's activities in the rest of the county were portrayed as follows:

'His Lordship seems determined upon rivalling the self-styled 'Representative of all Ireland' in a small way, that is if not as the 'Representative of all England' at least as the 'Representative of all Gloucestershire'.  

The Tories claimed that, even by his own admission, Lord Segrave had spent over £20,000 on securing his brothers' return to various seats within the County,
and that this way he had held the voters of the County in bondage in the years since the passing of the Reform Bill.

More specifically though, for the first time one or two matters of party policy emerge from what was essentially a contest of wealth and personality. In an attempt to detach the radical vote from the Whigs, the Tories pointed to the disastrous and brutal consequences of the recent Poor Law Amendment Act, which in setting up 'Bastile' Unions intimidated the poor and split up families to the extent that husbands did not even know of their wives' deaths until after the burial. The other issue that was taken up by the Tories was the subject of the Corn Laws. It was pointed out by his opponents that Craven Berkeley's promise to repeal these Acts would be much to the detriment of Gloucestershire's farmers.

The Tories' main agent in the borough was William L. Lawrence, J.P. and deputy Lieutenant of the County, and owner of Sandywell Park, a substantial property just outside Cheltenham. Lawrence kept both Lord Ellenborough and Francis Bonham regularly informed of the party's activities in the town. In addition Jonathan Peel was assisted in his campaign by a committee chaired by Captain Younghusband, a town commissioner and husband of Sarah Whinyates, daughter of one of the town's leading military families.

A notable feature of the period is that despite Berkeley's control of the parliamentary seat, a number of Tories held office in the town's local government. Among such men were Thomas Newell, Surgeon Extraordinary to George IV and a founder member of the True Blue Club, who held office on the Commission and the Vestry, and Bransby Cooper, also a founder member of the True Blue Club, and President of the Board of Health and a member of the Board of Guardians. It would seem that the increasing number of army and navy officers, particularly
those retired from India, although recent arrivals to the town, were quick to
take up office in local government. Such men, coupled with Francis Close's fierce
evangelical Anglicanism, gave the Tories a strong base on which to build their
local power and confidence.

Attempting to break the monopoly of the Berkeleys in a national election
though was another matter. The biggest problem for the Tories was in matching
the large amounts of money that Lord Segrave was able to spend on his
candidates. In 1640 Lawrence wrote to Ellenborough that local club funds had
been shattered by having to spend over £200 to strike off some 600-700 Whig
voters from the register, resulting in an overall debt of between £200 and £300.
Such figures pale into insignificance alongside the thousands Lord Segrave was
said to have employed.

Berkeley wealth could count in other ways too. It was a frequent complaint
of the Tories that during the canvass, Berkeley's supporters had visited local
tradesmen and made it clear that Berkeley trade would be taken elsewhere if they
should vote the wrong way. Lord Segrave himself made it quite open that should
his brother not be returned he would remove his fox hounds from the town. Such
an issue may not seem important to us had it not been for the damage the Tories
argued it did to their vote.

The canvass and campaign of 1837 was a relatively short affair. Part of the
reason for this may have been, as the Tories claimed, that Lord Segrave, as Lord
Lieutenant, had kept the electors in ignorance of the date fixed for the
dissolution of Parliament 'with a view of taking them by surprise in the election
of the next'. 15 Craven Berkeley's presence in the borough before the poll was
fairly low key. He announced his intention to stand for the seat again in a short
address at the beginning of July with a promise to pay the electors a personal visit shortly, stating his refusal to stir up political excitement until the old King had been buried. In terms of policies he merely stated that he would continue his 'steady course' without, as was noticed by The Free Press, making any reference to whether he proposed to support the secret ballot or not. Berkeley's reluctance to give his whole-hearted support for this measure caused a dilemma for the town's radicals who, like Gaskell, considered that the Whigs were not true reformers, and that a Whig House would do them no good, but without their own candidate were unable to directly express their discontent.

Finally, Tory taunts about his religious beliefs spurred Craven Berkeley into response with the following address:

'I also find that in many instances it has been hinted that I am an enemy to the established Church. This I deny most flatly. I will yield to no man in my support of that Church in the tenets of which I was brought up; but I am an enemy in the strongest sense of the word to the abuses which now exist in it'.

Berkeley also agreed with its critics that the Poor Law Amendment Act had its faults but considered these to be in the detail and not in the substance of the Act and that all that was needed in this respect were some 'judicious alterations'.

Some of Berkeley's supporters seem to have been rather more outspoken than their candidate. A certain Charles James Fox wrote to the Cheltenham Chronicle on 14th July questioning the suitability of Berkeley's opponent to represent Cheltenham. The Peels, he argued, were a family of commerce so why did they not then stick to representing the likes of Manchester or Oldham? With more than a
hint of social snobbery directed against the nouveau riche of business, Fox proclaimed that Cheltenham's staple commodity was amusement and that Peel would be best returning to his 'snug little farm at Abingdon'.

Others were even more active in their support, for although the Whig complaint had been that by contesting the borough the Tories were guilty of smashing the political and social tranquillity of the town, contemporary observers remarked that it was Berkeley's men rather than Peel's who resorted to 'the lowest, the most witless, but the most malevolent personal scurrility'.

Amongst the Tory complaints against the way their opponents had conducted their campaign were the following: no electoral list being made available to Peel when he first arrived in the town; Berkeley having completed his canvass before Peel had arrived; several voters being told by the Whigs that Peel never intended to stand and had left town; the election having taken place before some of Peel's supporters had been able to register; the intimidation of tenants and tradesmen and of course Lord Segrave's threat to remove his fox hounds from the town.

In response to these tactics, the Tories instructed their supporters on how to register their vote and to make sure that they had no outstanding payments of poor rates or assessed taxes which would disqualify them. They also tried to provide encouragement with news of their candidates contesting Cirencester, Gloucester, Tewkesbury and both divisions of the County. In a wave of unprecedented optimism, the death blow to Berkeley parliamentary monopoly was now eagerly awaited by Tories across the County. Some last minute attempts in Cheltenham to ingratiate Peel with the voters included making known his donations to various charities, such as £10 to the General Hospital and £5 a piece to the National School, the Infant School and the Female Orphan Asylum.
The date of the nomination was set by J. Straford, the returning officer, for Monday 24th July at Reeve's riding school. At this point some description of Cheltenham's system of open voting might be allowed. Oddly enough it was the Chartist W. E. Adams who claimed that the ballot robbed elections of their colour and picturesqueness and turned them into humdrum affairs. The following is largely based on his account of the procedure that existed in the 1830s and 1840s.

A major part of the proceedings was the party paraphernalia, readily produced the moment they were needed. Whig colours were orange and green, and their flags and banners hung aloft in the town's streets and squares. Blue was the Tory colour, but Adams says that they were not as organised as the Whigs, with fewer banners and fewer bands. Fights between supporters of both parties were common, as were black eyes and broken heads. The streets were often the scene for chaos as two processions met, neither prepared to give way. Stirring times, proclaimed Adams!

The first formal business of the election was the nomination at the hustings. A great wooden structure was erected, divided into compartments for the returning officer, his assistants and the opposing candidates. The supporters would then assemble opposite their candidate's compartment. When the candidates appeared they were not just greeted with cries and jeers, but rotten oranges, rotten eggs, dead cats and harder, less unsavoury, missiles. The candidates, having been proposed and seconded, attempted to address the crowd. Hardly a word of this would be heard as the two groups of supporters shouted down the rival candidate. The returning officer then took a show of hands which more often than not the defending candidate lost. This, however, was only a formality before
proceeding to a poll, for many of the assembled crowd did not possess the franchise qualification. This way, says Adams, Chartist candidates were nominated not with the idea of succeeding at the poll but merely for the opportunity of making a speech to the populace.

Between the nomination and the poll a host of canvassers, messengers and watchers were busy working for both candidates. The number of persons engaged in these posts, says Adams, far outweighed the requirements of the candidates but was more of a simple and effective form of bribery. The work of the confidential party men was mainly involved in securing more votes by spiriting them away from the opposite side. Large sums were often spent on free beer and breakfasts for voters on polling day, and the candidate who was niggardly in providing these was generally defeated.

On the day of the poll exciting scenes often took place around the booths. The poll opened at eight and closed at four and if needed was spread over two days (or longer if needed). Hourly returns of the state of the poll, if the contest was close, would also cause increased speculation and excitement. When the poll was completed the returning officer made his declaration. The supporters of the losing candidate would then quit the field leaving celebrations to the victor, who the following day would be chaired around the town in great style accompanied again by bands and banners. In some cases, if the defeated candidate was unhappy with the way the result had been reached, he could send a petition to the House of Commons, which if it felt there had been a miscarriage of justice could declare the election null and void and force a new one.

We will have another, more detailed, chance to study the workings of an election in chapter five but for now the final word will be given to Sir James
Tynte Agg-Gardner, later M.P. for the town, writing in the 1860s. He pointed out that the general cost of an election under the old system (i.e. that which operated in the 1830s and 1840s) was about six times the cost it was under the new rules which prohibited certain expenses. 20

The 1837 election was not perhaps the stirring affair that Adams might have hoped for, maybe because there was no radical or Chartist candidate. The Whigs and Tories agreed beforehand that their supporters would fill half the riding school each. Outside anxious spectators pressed at the windows. The returning officer read out the writ of the election and Craven Berkeley was proposed by Mr. W. Evans and seconded by Mr. G. Williams. The Tories attempted to shout down Williams but when Mr. Sherwood and Captain Lloyd proposed and seconded Jonathan Peel hardly a word could be heard at all until Berkeley quietened his own supporters. After this both candidates made speeches, Berkeley claimed to be a friend of the Church whilst Peel called on the electors to prove themselves 'not slaves in a rotten borough' by voting for him. The next day five booths opened at eight o'clock. Initially the Tories kept up but by the end of the day the poll closed at 632 to Berkeley to 298 to Peel. The poll remained at this figure on the Wednesday and the returning officer declared Berkeley elected and that the poll was the best he had seen carried on with better spirit and with more good humour than any other, and which did credit to both parties.

The chairing then took place with Berkeley carried on a chair covered in green velvet trimmed with orange, pulled in a carriage drawn by six beautiful grey horses each wearing a rosette of orange and green. He was accompanied by a band and banners bearing the legends 'Berkeley is our choice and make no mistake' and 'Berkeley and Liberty'. On a less good humoured note however, it was stated
that the windows of Peel's committee room were smashed by 'a person of low and malicious character'.

The Free Press as one might expect, was quite outspoken with joy at the defeat of the Tory candidate. Its editorial carried the observation that:

'The Tories are rightly served for their mean and foul conduct in this contest. Their proven intimidation and their reckless untruths and their paltry and bigoted attacks were well worthy of that black and base character they have borne for centuries.'

At the same time it gave a modified welcome to Craven Berkeley's return, reluctantly pointing out that:

'the resistance of Craven Berkeley to any promise for the ballot having reduced the number of those who would unquestionably otherwise have given him their support, proves how contemptible and insignificant is the rebel faction on the town.'

For the time being, The Free Press hailed Craven Berkeley, apart from his opposition to the secret ballot, with its sincere and cordial pleasure.

The Tory press tried to put a brave face on matters claiming that they had shaken the political domination of the Berkeley family to its very centre and that there was always a next time. The Cheltenham Journal's view was that they might not have beaten Berkeley or have removed from the Spa the stigma of being a rotten borough, but that much had been done to emancipate the town from political bondage and that another election would bring a Conservative representative.

As has already been stated though, the Tories were far from happy as to the way Berkeley had conducted his campaign and they were under no illusions
that his success was in the main due mostly to Lord Segraves' financial exertions. There were also suspicions that many who had voted for Berkeley had in fact previously forfeited their qualification for the exercise of the vote. Henceforth the activities of the Tory agent stressed the removal of such voters from the electoral lists. The Tories also took encouragement from the number of voters who had promised their support should the contest be a close one. 23

One side issue of the 1837 election was a duel fought between Craven Berkeley and Captain Younghusband, Peel's committee chairman. Berkeley had called Peel's conduct 'false' during the election and Captain Younghusband had wanted this remark retracted. Berkeley had refused and 'an affair of honour' was arranged. The two parties met in a field at Arle, just outside the town. Last minute attempts to reach an accommodation were to no avail as Berkeley refused to retract his remark. Shots were fired but neither side was injured; however Younghusband, honour being settled, agreed to terminate the affair. This duel preluded a more famous one between Berkeley and Captain George Boldero, M.P. for Chippenham, fought in July 1842 and brought about by Captain Boldero having made some disrespectful remarks about the Queen.

The 1837 general election was a milestone for the Tory party both nationally and locally. Professor Gash in fact regards it as a crucial point in the recovery of the party. Despite this there was little overall change in the county representation of Gloucestershire with both the eastern and western divisions each returning, as in 1835, a Whig and a Tory.

In Gloucestershire's boroughs, the city of Gloucester itself provided the most interesting return, with Craven Berkeley's brother, Maurice, losing his seat to H. Hope, a Tory and John Phillipotts, an independent Whig. One of Phillipotts'
main contentions had been that he was a local candidate with great experience in local affairs, and was not merely of 'some favoured caste or family'.

Tewkesbury remained a shared borough, despite the party fielding Joseph Peel as a second Tory candidate. The final state of the Tewkesbury poll was 219 votes to Dowdeswell, the sitting Tory candidate; Martin, the Whig candidate, 192 votes and Peel, 169 votes. Some contemporaries were of the view that had Peel commenced his canvass at the same time as the other candidates, there would have been a transfer of promised votes which would have given him a majority over Martin. The problem for Peel was that as Tewkesbury was a double member constituency a number of potential 'plumpers' for the Tories (i.e. those voters leaving their second vote unused) had promised their second vote to Martin not aware that a second Tory candidate would be fielded.

Cirencester remained a safe Tory seat returning two Tory candidates, whereas Stroud stayed a safe Whig seat in the hands of Lord John Russell and George Scrope, although its first Tory candidate, Sergeant John Adams, did manage to pick up some 297 votes. The only new Whig success in the county came in Bristol where Craven Berkeley's brother, Francis Henry (a man who afforded The Free Press and reformers alike 'much satisfaction for his pledge to the ballot'), defeated the second Tory candidate, thereby preserving Lord Segrave's nomination of at least three M.P.s.

In Cheltenham the Tories had been caught relatively unprepared and without a local candidate, but even so had still managed to put up a respectable fight. They now had effective local organisation in place and important local backing, both lay and clerical, and were coming to represent, more so than the Whigs, those important groups within borough society in which political power resided,
namely the gentry, the Church and the town's commissioners. A degree of Tory support from the working quarters of the town might also be suggested by the Reverend Witts' observation that many of 'lower orders' were now flocking to the parish church to hear the often lengthy sermons of Francis Close. 27

However, the Tories as yet lacked two important ingredients to success in Cheltenham: a candidate of sufficient social stature and standing to match the Berkeley family and, perhaps more importantly, sufficient campaign funds to defeat not only Lord Segrave's candidate but also his purse.
NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

2. N. Gash, Pillars of Government (1986) p. 120.
5. O.R. Ashton, 'Radicalism and Chartism in Glos.' (Birmingham Univ.
   Ph. D.Thesis 1980)
8. N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953) page 110.
11. GRO D3893/3. See appendix A.
12. O.R. Ashton 'Clerical control and Radical responses in Cheltenham Spa 1838-48'
    in Midland History (1983).
    However, for a different interpretation of Close's influence within the
    borough, see also A. Munden, 'Radicalism versus Evangelicalism in
14. The Cheltenham Journal, 10 July 1837.
16. The Cheltenham Journal, 10 July 1837.
   - 83 -
25. The Tewkesbury Yearly Register and Magazine Vol.1 1840.
CHAPTER FOUR.

'THE LORDS ARE THE WHIGS - A BREWER THE TORY':
local government and the general election of 1841.

The early 1840s saw in Cheltenham not only a growing disillusionment with the Berkeley Whigs, but an increase in the polarisation of political feeling within the borough. The latter was especially evident in three particular ways. First was the activities of Rev. Francis Close, scourge of Berkeleys and radicals alike, who brought a sense of moral supremacy to the Tory cause in the town. Second was the increasing significance Cheltenham held as a centre of Chartism and Owenism, not only locally but nationally. Third was increased dissension in the town's system of local government, more often than not along party lines. As I have already touched on the radical - clerical conflict, I should now like to consider in more depth the third of these and examine its effect on the General Election of 1841.

The first effective local government in Cheltenham dated back to 1786 when an Act was passed appointing commissioners to make changes essential for the mushrooming development of the town. Although the Vestry Committee was a thriving institution, manorial power had virtually disappeared in Cheltenham. The Act made provision for the appointment of 58 commissioners (whose qualification was real estate to the value of £400 or an annual rent of £40) who were empowered to raise an annual rate. Their work was mainly concerned with the upkeep and building of roads, lighting and paving, and was supervised by officials.
including a treasurer, clerk and surveyor.

Because attendance at their meetings was often low, and perhaps because the Commissioners were appointed and not elected, after their initial outburst of enthusiasm, little was achieved. In 1806 a new Act was passed raising the number of Commissioners to 72 and for making appointments from professional men willing to serve, voluntarily and in the town's interests. However, as they became more active in improving the town, so the rate went up, and by 1811 it stood at 2/6d in the £1. An Act of 1821 increased the Commissioners' powers further and they were then able to start on more ambitious schemes such as gas lighting, a town sewer and a town police force.

It might seem that such an 'improving' body would have been welcomed by all in the town. However, by many they were considered an unpopular oligarchy. Not the least reason for this unpopularity was the fact that they were unelected, they denied the public access to their meetings and they refused to make public their accounts. Jealous of their powers they had rejected any suggestion that Cheltenham might have an elected town council along the lines of that proposed by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. Although the party lines were by no means clear cut what made matters sharper was that the majority of Commissioners were Tory - mainly drawn from the town's military and naval officers, such as Captain Robert Younghusband and the group that opposed them mainly Liberals, such as James Boodle secretary of the Liberal Association or progressive radicals such as Samuel Harper, editor of the Free Press, and member of the Vestry committee.

As Cheltenham continued to grow the Commissioners hoped to increase their powers and extend the rate to the new private estates such as
Joseph Pitt's Pittville that had sprung up around the town. To do so the Commissioners decided in 1839 to apply for a new Act. This proposal was met by much opposition from Boodle and the Liberals who then drew up a petition with some 2368 signatures. The Commissioners countered with their own petition of 543 signatures. Although the opponents of the Bill had more names the Commissioners claimed that their signatures represented rate-payers contributing some 13/14th of the town's rate.

The Bill left Lord Segrave and his brother Craven Berkeley in an unenviable situation. Obviously further clarification of the Commissioners' powers was needed if they were to tackle the demands placed on them, but many Liberals were opposed to the Bill and the Berkeleys might easily alienate their own supporters. As the town's M.P., Craven Berkeley agreed to introduce the Bill into the House but could not pledge his further support for it. One particular clause that angered the Liberals was the Commissioners' demand for plural voting, and their insistence on this clause made a compromise impossible. Ironically, the most effective opposition to the Bill came from Joseph Pitt and other Tory property owners who did not wish to see the power of the Commissioners extend to their own private enclaves within the town. The Bill, despite various amendments and compromises, was eventually defeated by nine votes, having only spent three days in the House of Commons, on one of which it was claimed, no business was done anyway!

Although the attempt to extend their powers had failed, the Commissioners were still left with the need to raise enough in the rates to maintain such essential services as the £993 needed to pay for the town's fire service. Because money was already owing in terms of contracts to the gas company and police wages, the Commissioners had had
to borrow £1,885 at 4% from the County of Gloucester Bank. Their estimated expense for paving, cleansing, watching and scavenger's work under the act (1786) was about £2,400. To meet this cost on 3rd January 1840 they decided to raise a rate of 9d in the £1. This time their opponents attempted to thwart the power of the Commissioners by contesting their right to raise such a rate. What followed was an at times confusing and bad tempered episode that certainly did the town no benefit and in fact was seen as damaging to Berkeley's hold over the representation of the borough.

In what seems to have been a fairly deliberate and organized 'set-up' the notorious "Fleece riots" took place. At the beginning of March 1840 the Commissioners met at the Fleece Inn where they were hearing rating appeals. One such appeal was from a Philip Strickland, a painter of 36, Bath Street, and was presented in the form of a printed address which contained some eight grounds of appeal. The appeal claimed that the rate was not necessary, it was greater than that required by the Act, that the Commissioners had spent and borrowed money illegally and that the rate was being collected retrospectively to pay off old debts. A crowd had gathered to witness Strickland and others present their appeals. In fact it was reported that a certain Malone (who sometimes acted as a runner for Mr W.H. Gyde, a solicitor and Liberal supporter, who had recently opposed the new Town Bill) was standing at the corner of Henrietta Street handing out printed appeals to all who wished to sign them. Matters were made worse by the fact that the Commissioners were only letting those presenting appeals into the chambers one at a time, where, it was stated, they were cross-examined. The crowd outside grew angry and impatient and feeling that they had
been shut out of proceedings eventually burst in on the Commissioners with shouts of 'robbers and thieves'.

Although no bodily harm was being done the Commissioners felt anxious enough to pack up their belongings and call out the police. The police were unable to dispel the crowd and the Commissioners were forced (somewhat thankfully) to close their meeting. One report stated that the appellants then elected a Chartist tailor into the chair and passed a vote of censure on the Commissioners, however there is little evidence that those present were Chartist in any way.

The "Fleece Riots" as they became known led to the arrest and trial of several townsmen at the assizes in Gloucester. Liberals commented disparagingly on the fact that 'Tory malevolence' had blown proceedings out of all proportion by not letting these cases be heard at the local magistrates' court and the men having the 'heavy matter of the trial kept hanging over their heads for a year'. The case for the defendants, when it was eventually heard on April 5th 1841 at Gloucester, hinged mainly on the fact that the 'riot' was not premeditated, that the actions of the Commissioners had made matters worse and that no bodily harm or damage to property had been done. Baron Gurney presided over the case with a 'special jury' and the Cheltenham solicitor, W.H. Gyde, acted for the defendants. Despite claims from the Commissioners that they had been intimidated and jostled, only two of the defendants were found guilty, a Mr. Bidmead and Mr. Spackman, who both received a month's imprisonment and Bidmead an additional £10 fine. Claims that many of those who had been present at the riot had not been rate payers were deemed not to be relevant as all those on trial were.

In fact their occupations (painter, plumber, auctioneer, tradesman,
greengrocer and currier) give us some idea of those classes which tended
to support the Liberals in the town, namely the skilled working and
financially independent middling ranks. In opposition to the
Commissioners the Liberals made light of the charges (the result of
'Tory malevolence') by feting Bidmead through the streets of Cheltenham
and honouring him with a public dinner at The Lamb after his release.

One significant point that does emerge from the evidence heard at
the trial was that party feeling was running high both then and at the
time of the riot. The 'rioters' were said to have shouted 'Tory robbers,
Tory thieves' and the chairman of the Commissioners, Major Askew, was
grabbed by Bidmead who said to him, 'I am astounded to see you keep such
company: you are now as bad as these Tory fellows'. Given its timing of
just a few months before the election of 1841 the trial could only have
served to have raised both party and social tensions still higher in the
borough.

Shortly after the event itself, on Thursday 9th March 1840 a number
of opponents to the Commissioners called a meeting at the Athenaeum
which was attended by over 150. The Rev. Jenkin Thomas was elected to
the chair and a number of resolutions were passed. George Rowe, a
founder member of the Liberal Association and a shareholder in the
Liberal Cheltenham Examiner, pointed out that the new Bill would have
cost some £2,900 whereas the present one only cost £1,200 and then drew
attention to the fact that Mr. Roy (the Commissioner's parliamentary
agent and potential Tory election candidate) was charging £1,500 for
his general expenses. The chairman asked if there was a Commissioner
present who wished to put their side of the argument but none came
forward. Mr. Bulgin proposed that a committee should be formed to appeal
to the Quarter Sessions against the rate and Mr. Dallaway censured the Commissioners for not publishing their accounts and for running up debts of £3,000; both motions were carried unanimously.

The appeal eventually came before the Quarter Sessions in April and the case was heard with much local interest with many magistrates including Lord Segrave and Craven Berkeley being present. Evidence was heard with Mr. Talbot and Mr. Gyde leading the appellant's case and Mr. Kelly and Mr. Greaves that of the Commissioners. The Commissioners' main defence against the charges relating to Strickland was that they were in fact hearing appeals before the meeting was interrupted and that the validity of Strickland's case was weak in that being a printed handout, it was not of an individual nature. Their view on the events that day was that the whole thing had been stage managed.

After an adjournment J. Cox, Clerk to the Commissioners, put the case for a necessary expenditure of £3,000, which included such items as £446 for the police and £397 for the fire engine; even lighting the town clock, he told the court, cost £60. The case of the Commissioners found some sympathy with the chairman of the court and some four other magistrates but they were outvoted by Lord Segrave, Craven Berkeley and eight others (of whom it was later implied were personal friends of the brothers, most of them having 'lately been put in the commission of peace by Lord Segrave himself'). The result of the hearing, much to the dismay of the Commissioners, was that the rate was quashed and a new one was ordered.

Unable to pay their employees the Commissioners had to lay off the police force (not a bad thing in some people's eyes as Cheltenham with its blue coated police officers had acquired the look of a garrison
town). The gas company pressing for payment then threatened to cut off the town's supply if it was not paid. In April 1840 the Commissioners tried as a final measure an appeal direct to the Court of Queen's Bench, where Lord Chief Justice Denman reversed the decision of the Gloucester magistrates and established the Commissioners' legal right to raise a rate. In effect the Commissioners emerged from their setback with increased powers and the town recovered quickly. The rate was collected, the police re-employed and the gas bill paid! However, the one person to emerge rather less successfully from the whole affair was Craven Berkeley. Despite his claims that he had acted with the best interest of the rate-payers at heart, Berkeley found himself under attack throughout his election canvass, both by the Conservative and radical press, for his part in the defeat of the Town Bill and the attempted quashing of the rate.

Predictably the now Tory Cheltenham Chronicle called his action a shameful instance of public interest sacrificed to individual selfishness. The defeat of the Town Bill, it was claimed, had inflicted great and lasting injuries on the town, had disturbed its peace and unnecessary litigation had cost the ratepayers £5,000. Here, says the Chronicle, was sufficient reason why owners of property should earnestly desire a change of representation, and as we shall see, the eventual Conservative candidate - James Agg Gardner - did much to bring to the voters' attention the fact that, as their new lord of the manor, he was a man of substantial property within the town. During the canvass of the 1841 election, the Conservative press made frequent reference to the 'unworthy part enacted by Berkeley in his factious opposition to the Town Bill; so much so that the affair must be regarded as playing a

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significant part in the eventual result.

Further criticism for Berkeley, oddly enough, also came from the *Free Press*. Its editor, Samuel Harper, seemed to have forgotten that he himself had been against the Commissioners and had voted against their proposal to raise the new Bill in 1839, when in an editorial of June 26 1841 he hypocritically accused Berkeley of voting against a measure essential to the prosperity of the town. For Harper, when it came to attacking the Berkeleys, any mud, it seems, was good enough to throw at them. If one may be forgiven the pun, Craven Berkeley's part in the whole affair did little more than to suggest that he was a wolf in sheep's clothing, furthermore weakening the family's control over the borough.

Disenchantment with the Whigs was taking place at a national as well as local level. Melbourne's government had more than run its course by 1839 when it was defeated in the House of Commons over the Jamaica Bill. Peel and the Conservatives had only been prevented from taking office by Queen Victoria's stubbornness to compromise over the appointment of her 'Ladies of the Bedchamber'. Eventually amidst difficulties such as a budget deficit of £6 million, high taxes and fierce opposition from the Anti-Corn Law League the Whigs resigned having been defeated by an opposition 'no-confidence' in June 1841. The forthcoming election was to assume more importance for its result than for the issues over which it was fought - for instance despite the Corn Laws assuming such prominence, both parties still supported them in principle. Rather, it is the fact that the election of 1841 was the first time that a minority opposition party had defeated a government backed by the Crown which gives it its significance. The Conservatives fielded nearly 500
candidates and fought a campaign guided by their party manager Francis Bonham as never seen before. After the election Conservative success was fairly general with them winning 302 seat to the Opposition's 196, but in particular they seem to have been most successful in the counties and the smaller boroughs.

Essentially the 1841 election in Cheltenham was short on national issues; even Berkeley's announcement that he was now in support of the ballot seems to have made little impact within the town. Rather than considerations of the Corn Laws or the abolition of Church rates, both important issues, it was the struggle between the town's essentially Tory group of Commissioners and an outraged group of Liberal rate-payers that formed the background and in fact galvanised party politics into action. That final victory in the matter of the new rate had gone to the Commissioners was also indicative of the growing strength of the Tory party within the town.

The first difficulty the Tories had to face in their canvass of 1841 was to find a suitable candidate with enough local standing to combat the wealth of the Berkeleys. Their first hope was Mr. Roy who had acted as the Commissioners's political agent at the time of the struggle with the new Town Bill. Disclosures that his fees were in the order of £1,570 led to his standing down. Writing to Francis Bonham (Peel's central party manager) in October 1840, Lord Ellenborough then resident at Southam Manor, also pointed out that Mr. Roy was a very bad candidate and that no one would succeed in Cheltenham but a gentleman.

In an unexpected address from Paris, John Butler announced his intention to stand as an 'independent conservative' who, although indifferent to the ballot and triennial parliament, supported education
of the people, civil and religious liberties, but opposed monopolies be they commercial (Corn Laws) or ecclesiastical (tithes). 14 However, little else came of Butler's declaration which even the liberal minded Free Press dismissed as a 'mere jeu d'esprit' 15.

On a more hopeful level the news that James Agg Gardner was about to purchase the manor of Cheltenham for £39,000 from Lord Sherborne was received with much enthusiasm by the Tories. Not only was it claimed that this purchase would benefit the material standing of the borough but it would also strengthen the local Conservative interest. 16

James Agg Gardner of Hadley House was the son of Major Agg, one of Cheltenham's leading military men. He was also nephew to John Gardner, owner of the town's largest brewery and partner with Joseph Pitt in the County of Gloucester Bank. James Agg Gardner had both wealth and local standing and the Tories were only too quick to sing his praises:

'He is well known to be a gentleman of great enterprise... a friend of the Church and staunch admirer of the constitution. The rich, the tradesmen and the poor man will hail alike the advantages from this change of property'. 17

At first Agg Gardner declined to stand as a candidate but a requisition with some 536 signatures all claiming that they would support him finally changed his mind. The Tories drove forward with their most energetic canvass so far in the political history of the borough. Much was made of Agg Gardner as a man of property, but what is more, local property. The Tory Cheltenham Looker-On printed his address which contained telling phrases such as 'I am but one of yourselves' and that he would promote the interest of 'his native town'. 18 Craven Berkeley on the other hand was portrayed as a man fit for the course of
'blind reasoning partisanship' who had denied the interests of the town by opposing its new Bill. Furthermore, Berkeley's aristocratic background was presented as a handicap: 'brought up amidst the dissipation and frivolity of fashionable circles it may be readily conceived how unfit for laborious duties of public life must be a mind thus formed'. Agg Gardner, by contrast, was presented as a careful and hard-headed businessman who seldom ventured upon speculation without a corresponding spirit of emulation to carry its object fully into effect.

The Tory press reserved some of the hardest punches for Berkeley's social pursuits. The Cheltenham Chronicle announced to its readers that 'many have grieved, few have marvelled that the Berkeleys should be patrons and supporters of low, inhuman diversions which the good feelings of the times would have banished to the haunts of ruffians and which the laws prohibit by shameful penalties'. Included in these shameful pursuits were cock fighting and prize fighting.

This moral, even evangelical crusade against the Berkeleys was furthermore kept very much alive by many of the town's leading clergy, foremost of whom was the Rev. Francis Close, who on a platform address to the Working Mens' Association in 1841 once again re-affirmed that:

'I cannot for the life of me separate politics from religious preaching..there is no distinction between politics and religion.....In my humble opinion the Bible is Conservative, the Prayer Book is Conservative, the Liturgy Conservative, the Church Conservative, and it is impossible for a minister to open his mouth without being a Conservative'. 19

The effect of such strictures was such that they could only have helped consolidate Conservative support amongst Cheltenham's church goers for
the credentials displayed by Agg Gardner in his political addresses.

Having emphasized the unsuitability of Berkeley, the Tories then appealed to 'sensible' Liberal voters to transfer their votes to Agg Gardner. Not only were they out to capture Liberal support but also that of the town's small but significant group of Chartists. 20 There had been some thought that William Penn Gaskell who had done so much to foster the Chartist movement in Cheltenham would himself stand as a candidate for a second time but he was otherwise preoccupied with his efforts to start up a Chartist newspaper. Left to choose between the Berkeley Devil and the deep blue sea of Conservatism, some of Cheltenham's Chartists in fact chose the latter. Addressing a Chartist meeting shortly after his release from prison, the Chartist leader, Henry Vincent, in accordance with national Chartist policies, urged workers to vote for the Tory candidate on the grounds that they could not hope to return one of their own but they could at least get the Whigs out. 21 Further suspicions of a Tory connection with town Chartists were furnished by the Whig Cheltenham Examiner who spoke 'of the damming fact that had been made apparent to all that employment at the Tory club room and Saturday night wages from the Tory purse had been the price of the nightly harangues at the Mechanics' Institute'. 22

Once again, Craven Berkeley's own canvass was remarkably low key and hinged on the fact that he had successfully represented the borough since 1832. However, in this election there does seem to be rather more evidence of both party machines working away in the background attempting to ensure the success of their candidates. The workings of the Conservative club locally were well known and a source of great pride: 'perhaps few places in the kingdom can boast a better organised
club than the Conservatives of this loyal borough'. Their local agent, William L. Lawrence of Sandywell Park, had throughout the 1830s worked hard to improve Tory chances at the polls even to the extent of spending some £200-300 of party funds on the de-registration of Liberal voters.

The Liberals, too, had their party agent, namely James Boodle secretary of the Liberal Association which had been formed in 1836. Throughout the 1841 canvass, Boodle took every occasion to raise membership and subscription to the Association. Its activities not only included the almost statutory attempts to de-register opposition voters but more sophisticated methods such as the purchase of £10 cottages, which if bought by 28 Liberals for the sum of £22 each would bring to the party 28 votes in the county election.

Cheltenham's radicals were less impressed by Boodle, who they regarded as the mere slave of the Berkeleys, and Harper through the pages of the Free Press published the following lampoon which began:

'Have you ne'er heard of Jimmy, the fam'd Berkeley poodle,
Who's by most men esteemed as half rogue and half noodle?'

With both parties having appointed election committees and with their respective canvasses well underway, Joseph Cooper Straford the returning officer set the date for nomination to be 29th June at Bay's Hill and the borough was divided into seven polling districts.

One colourful feature of this election was the number of squibs and ballads that appeared from both sides. This perhaps is a testimony to the growing awareness and exploitation of the power of the printed word, not least that of the local press. The Liberals made much of the pun provided by presenting Agg Gardner as a pig - (H)agg becoming hog - or

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by changing his name into (H)agg as in this squib directed against
Captain Younghusband, a prominent member of the Tory Committee:

'Husband young, Husband young,
Put a check on your tongue,
Or your wife will no more let it wag,
For young husbands like you,
To run about after a (H)agg'. 26

Also at the nomination the Liberals held aloft banners displaying a
boar's head.

To such taunts the Tories replied with ballads like 'The Cheltenham
Ragged Regiment':

We'll have a man of our town,
Since he has given consent,
No more we'll have the Berkeley clown,
To sit in Parliament;
He may fight his dogs and bait his bulls,
For that is his delight,
But Gardner shall be our man,
Our battles for to fight.' 27

Commenting with a certain amount of irony the Free Press provided
its own squib on the choice that confronted Cheltenham's voters:

At Cheltenham they tell a fantastic story
The Lords are the Whigs - a brewer the Tory:
Thus freedom shines forth from the shield of a peer,
And liberty's swamped in a barrel of Beer.' 28

How much electors were swayed by this kind of popular literature is
difficult to assess. It does perhaps suggest though that jibes, taunts
and skits were having a politicizing affect; and that the hitherto virtual electioneering dominance of the Berkeleys was being challenged from different quarters (of a somewhat cheaper nature) in the run up to the hustings.

Despite the confidence of the Tories that their campaign was going well, bets taken at the Mechanics' Institute meetings gave Berkeley odds of 5-1. Only towards the end of their canvass did the Tories start to worry that many of those who had signed the requisition to Agg Gardner to stand had now been approached by the Liberals and were going to abstain or even change their vote.

The nomination, however, had one further surprise in store for both candidates. Once Berkeley had been proposed and seconded by Dr. Greaves and Mr. Bulgin, and Agg Gardner likewise by Colonel Watson and Mr Pearson Thompson, Samuel Harper stepped forward and proposed the nationally known radical, Colonel Perronet Thompson. Thompson of Blackheath, a veteran of the Peninsular campaign, a previous Governor of Sierra Leone and editor of The Westminster Review, was a radical reformer best known for his attack on the Corn Laws in his 'Corn Law Catechisms'. Previous Thompson had unsuccessfully contested Preston, Maidstone, Marylebone and Manchester. His appeal to Cheltenham radicals seems to have been based on the dismay that Berkeley's commitment to repeal the Corn Laws in effect was turning out to be no more than support for a fixed scale of duties.

The response of the Liberals to Thompson's nomination was immediately to accuse Harper of being a Tory out to split the Whig vote. When John Coding, the Chartist, got up to second the proposal of Thompson he was shouted down with cries of being 'a wolf in sheep's
clothing' and was drenched by a quantity of water poured over his head. A show of hands though produced a respectable degree of support for the radical candidate and so the returning officer ordered a poll to be held the next day. Once again, as with the case of Gaskell and the 1835 election, it seems that many of those present who put their hands up for Thompson at the nomination were not entitled to vote and eventually Thompson only polled four votes. Also, it might be supposed that in conditions of open-voting, many potential radical supporters were unwilling to vote in defiance of the wishes of their social betters.

By contrast, voting between the two main parties was much closer and it was only during the afternoon period that Berkeley pulled significantly ahead, finally polling 764 votes to Agg Gardner's 655 votes. Berkeley's followers tried to put a brave face on things claiming that they had won in spite of clerical influences and 10/- bribes, but underneath were shaken by the dramatic increase of Conservative support in the town.

The Tories on the other hand were jubilant with their increased vote which had doubled since the last election: 'all that we wished for and expected has not been won, but enough has been accomplished to reward our past exertions and animate our confidence in the future. The days of Whiggery in Cheltenham are numbered'. A remaining doubt in Tory minds was the suspicion that Berkeley had polled a large number of voters who were not entitled to do so. For a time it looked as if an election petition would be presented to contest the result. However, the Tories reconciled themselves to this defeat and for the future looked to the advice of their leader, Sir Robert Peel, when he said that 'the battle for the Constitution must be fought in the Registration Courts'.
Before looking at the registration battle which followed the 1841 election, the survival of the first available copy from an election poll book makes it possible to analyse more deeply where Berkeley and Agg Gardner drew their support. 

Poll books were not a feature of every nineteenth century election for various reasons: they were costly to produce; they were of little use where a candidate's majority was sizable; and despite the open voting system, voters might wish to preserve as much anonymity as possible in order to be spared repercussions from opposition party supporters. The 1841 Cheltenham poll list was the work of J. Hadley, editor of the Conservative Cheltenham Journal, whose motives may have been to expose those voters who, having originally signed the requisition to Agg Gardner, later abstained or even polled for Berkeley. Electors were listed with their addresses and occupations according for whom they had voted. Hadley also supplied a list of 27 voters who signed for Agg Gardner but afterwards voted for Berkeley!

An analysis of the voting patterns by occupation does not reveal any surprising conclusions, but rather confirms what one might expect. Tory support was predominant amongst the following groups (the figures indicate those voting for the respective candidate over the total number of voters in that group or profession): brewers 20/30; Anglican clergy 8/8; dentists 4/5; farmers 9/14; gentlemen 82/150; military and naval officers 24/33 and surgeons 13/18. In addition, Tory support was strong amongst the following tradesmen: bricklayers 20/30; chairmen 7/7; coal merchants 10/14; confectioners 5/6; hotel keepers 5/5 and painters 11/12.

Liberal support in the town tends to bear out the theory of a
Area of working class quarter = 1111

Source: GRO D5105/3.
Sketch Map of Cheltenham (around 1850).
strongly radicalised working class of self sufficient and financially
independent voters drawn from such 'upper' skilled trades as boot and
shoemakers 35/51; cabinet makers 22/31; carpenters 62/91; drapers 21/32;
carvers and guilders 5/5; grocers 22/37; masons 18/30; plumbers 22/38
and tailors 46/61. The influence of Berkeley patronage on both the
racing and the town's fashionable life is shown by the following
recorded votes: shoeing smiths 1/1; smiths 6/9; stable keepers 8/8;
stable men 4/4 and musicians 5/5. Perhaps an anti-Agg Gardner brewery
interest can be detected in the votes of publicans 18/30, beer sellers
11/18 and wine merchants 7/11. Finally, as one would expect, all three
dissenting ministers in the town voted for Berkeley.

A number of occupations were equally poised between the two parties
such as: bakers 17-20; druggists 8-5; gardeners 21-24; hairdressers 5-6;
physicians 5-6; schoolmasters 5-5; solicitors 14-14 and surveyors 3-3.
Other groups recorded by Hadley had too few members to detect a
significant trend in terms of occupation. The four votes recorded for
Thompson were from Samuel Harper, bookseller, John Goding, grocer,
William Hollis, gun maker (both Chartists) and Joseph Davis, painter.

A geographical survey of Cheltenham's voters is less revealing with
both parties drawing support from all areas of the town. The artisan
quarter of the town (see map) which has been identified by some writers
as present by 1840, furnished voters for both the Liberals and
Tories. By taking those voters whose addresses were in predominantly
artisan streets such as, Henrietta Street, Burton Street, Union Street
etc. we can see that approximately 20% of Agg Gardner's vote and 25% of
Berkeley's vote was derived from the poorer quarter of the town. That
the Tories could almost match the strength of the Whig/Liberal working

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class vote in the town reflects the growing general trend of urban communities, especially in smaller boroughs, to vote Conservative, a factor that contributed significantly to Peel's victory in 1841. The erosion of the Whig vote in Cheltenham also bears out Professor Gash's notion that 'the fundamental defect of the Whigs was that they could not make up their minds after 1832 whether to be an oligarchic or popular party'. Their attachment to the former was presumably the tactical reason why Feargus O'Connor issued instructions to Chartists to vote Tory if they did not have their own candidate, with the object of ousting the aristocratic Whigs. Cheltenham's artisans were tiring of the haughty aristocracy of the Berkeleys who did little to represent their interests both in Parliament and in the town. Putting the case at its strongest, the *Free Press* claimed that Cheltenham Whiggery was 'rotten with a sick head and a heart of black corruption'.

The level headedness and practical good sense and trading connections of a man like Agg Gardner (or even a Sir Robert Peel) gave credence to the claim made by the Conservative *Chronicle* that 'we do but echo the sentiments of the working men of Cheltenham when we affirm that they are sick of the Whigs'. To capitalise on such feeling Mr. Bevil, a leading Tory, announced after the 1841 election that he was forming a Conservative Association of Tradesmen and Working Men of the town. Craven Berkeley's claim, on the other hand, that he had come before the voters 'a Whig of the school of Charles James Fox' did nothing to raise the hopes of the more radically minded Liberal voters opposed to aristocratic privilege.

The 1841 poll list also serves to show how Toryism had strengthened its hold further within the town's local government. By comparing the
poll list with the names of the town's Commissioners of the same year, we see that those Commissioners who were resident in the town and recorded a vote polled 2-1 (19-8) for Agg Gardner, and furthermore some 11 of the Commissioners were members of his election committee. It would seem that the notion of 'Tory Democracy' as an alliance between the leaders of society and the servants of society as proposed by Disraeli and others, was perhaps embryonic in Cheltenham.

The Tories in Cheltenham regarded their increased poll as a significant success that boded well for the future. However, the election itself was not the end of the contest between Whigs and Tories that year. Despite claims that the election had been a well-ordered affair, recriminations of corruption rang on both sides. The Tories claimed that a certain Mr. Williams had intimidated tradesmen with loss of future orders if they did not vote for Berkeley. In addition, the Tories complained that some 67 persons who had voted for Berkeley were in fact ineligible to do so, and a number of voters had polled twice at different booths or had taken the names of dead men. The Whigs, on the other hand, claimed that the Tories had used £10 bribes and that even 'ladies had not hesitated to stoop from the privacy of domestic life to canvass their tradesmen for the Blue candidate'. With such claims a petition seemed imminent but the Tories decided not to contest the result, and instead following the advice of their leader gave their efforts to the Registration Courts held later that year.

Registration battles continued throughout the summer until finally in October when two London lawyers, Tyrwhitt and Keating, came to hear cases at a court held in the Fleece Inn. At first there were Liberal fears that these two lawyers would not be fully impartial, but these
soon proved unfounded.

That the Tories put great effort into their case is testified by the Liberal agent, James Boodle, who observed how busy they had been over the last few months and that they were contesting an excessive number of 1,060 Berkeley votes. The Liberals were contesting some 806 of the Tory votes and a further 440 objections were made by 'others'. The greatest number of 'screws' (the name given to bad votes) were caused by voters not owning enough property to qualify; other objections were to voters taking the name of dead men or of voting twice. The Registration judges found that 613/806 of the Liberal objections were valid whereas only 316/1,060 Tory objections were upheld. 'Other' objectors only secured 72/440 successful objections. 40

Even the outcome of the Registration Court was not the end of party bitterness which increased rather than subsided in the borough. The Liberals quoted various cases of 'Tory revenge' against voters, including that of Barrett, an old man who worked for the GPO (sic) as a carrier, who was served with a writ for voting (a recent court ruling had made it illegal for carriers to do so). Barrett, amidst Liberal crocodile tears and claims of Tory malevolence, lost his job and was fined £100. James Boodle's brother, Thomas, also came under attack from the Tories who claimed that as assistant overseer of the poor he had made a number of inaccuracies in the collection of the rates (a case that the courts later found in his favour). 41

Petty as such occurrences may seem, they were in fact symptomatic of the 'same bad spirit' which had also influenced the parties during the "Fleece riots" and in the registration courts. Cheltenham was now a two party borough with support firm and feeling high in both camps. The
stage was set for its most dramatic, bitter and fiercely contested election. Berkeley supporters might fete the return of their candidate once again but equally the Tories could claim that it was a 'disastrous victory' their opponents were celebrating.
NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. GRO Cheltenham Borough Records 1839-41, bundle 17.
2. Idem.
5. Cheltenham Examiner, 7 April 1841.
6. Cheltenham Examiner, 5 May 1841,
17. Cheltenham Chronicle, 2 June 1841.
21. The Times, 14 May 1841.

See also M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1918, reprt. 1925) p.238.
27. Quoted in full in Appendix A No. 30.
29. W.R. Williams, op. cit., p. 146.
32. GRO D2025 A List of Electors, 1841, abstract provided in Appendix B.
34. See especially Ashton and Vincent op. cit.
35. Ashton, op. cit., chapter one. See also T. D. Fosbroke, An account of Cheltenham (1826) p. 40.
38. The Times, 10 June 1841.
41. Cheltenham Examiner, 20 October 1841.
The events of 1847 and 1848 take us into one of the most bitter and fiercely contested periods of Cheltenham's political history. Over two years there were three elections held in the town, each of which produced a different successful candidate and two of which subsequently were overturned by election petitions amidst cries of bribery and corruption. These years saw both the waning of Cheltenham as a pocket borough and a challenge to oligarchy and nomineeism; they also helped to prepare the town for the political melting pot of the 1850s from which more generally the party politics of Gladstonian Liberalism and Disraelian Conservatism were eventually to flow. This development is traced more in the next chapter and the subject of this chapter is rather a specific concentration on the workings of the electoral system in Cheltenham, particularly with respect to the various charges of corruption as raised by the petitions of 1847 and 1848. As such, this also allows for some investigation as to what might be considered the division of "Legitimate" from "Illegitimate" aristocratic influence in elections after the 1832 Reform Act.

It no longer comes as a surprise to the reader that bribery and corruption still remained integral parts of the election process well after the so-called Great Reform Bill of 1832. The old Whig view of an emerging democratic constitution forged by one great measure after another is no longer tenable, but rather we see a series of compromised
and limited measures begrudgingly adapting themselves to new circumstances with somewhat narrow application.

That aristocratic influence remained firmly in place (as indeed was intended by the framers of the Bill) after the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 is undeniable. However, what historians are in less accord about is the nature of this influence. Alan Heesom has argued that men like Lord Durham and Lord Londonderry maintained their influence by adopting the politics of 'mutual advantage' with their tenants, employees and clients. He maintains that the more blatant "illegitimate" influence of the Duke of Newcastle or the Marquess of Exeter were the exception rather than the rule.

However, Charles Seymour in writing about the reformed system states that right up to 1885 aristocratic control of elections persisted and that 'the voice of the people was still hushed by means of corrupt influence'. More recently, Professor Norman Gash has commented on the serious short-comings of the 1832 Reform Act and concluded that 'inevitably therefore the characteristics of the old system persisted in the new'. In his influential Historical Association pamphlet, Professor H. Hanham, too, points out that 'the absence of effective central control over the preparation of the registers was paralleled by a lack of effective policing of the process of voting itself. Not only was there much intimidation of electors...but there was widespread treating and bribery'.

However, in an age still sensitive to issues such as the Poulson Affair in English local government and Watergate in international politics, we must be careful not to bring our own twentieth century perspectives to the issue of so-called corruption. In an attempt to make
more clear the contemporary significance of influence and bribery, P.F. Clarke has written as a corrective to the more moralistic view taken by earlier historians of the nineteenth century that:

'at heart, Seymour dealt with the question as a moralist. He maintained that it was impossible to overstate the importance or the extent of corrupt practices in early Victorian elections. He tended to view them unequivocally - we read a good deal about not only the 'low grade of political ethos' shared by bribers and bribed, but also the morally degrading effects of treating....How we should regard it has very little to do with morality. What matters to us now is contemporary opinion and practices.'

Clarke then goes on to show how the system regarded electoral influence not as a black and white issue, but that election judges at the time attempted to 'make a clear distinction between bribery, which was by definition corrupt, and treating, which had to be linked to corrupt motivation'.

Finally, T.J. Nossiter, in his study of post 1832 North-east politics, states more dispassionately that the vote was seen in terms of a commodity to be bought and sold according to the laws of political supply and demand. 'However', he writes:

'to see voting as a financial transaction did not necessarily entail crude bribery and corruption. "Expenses" were paid, often generously interpreted to include something for lost time, while at the margins market politics faded into influence when a voter was tipped for rendering what was a customary service and into conscience politics when the voter chose to take his expenses or a tip from the side he would not have supported in any case...If the
elector was not part of an estate or saw no large principles involved in his particular contest, there was a certain instrumental rationality in casting his vote for the highest bidder'.

In examining the nature of aristocratic influence wielded locally by Lord Segrave we are fortunate in that there exists for Cheltenham in 1847 and 1848 two important election petitions and their accompanying statements and cross-examinations, one against either party, both of which successfully overturned the previous election result; and both help shed light on contemporary views as to what was acceptable and unacceptable influence in the 'reformed system'. That is not to say though that contemporary opinion was necessarily clear or unanimous on this subject, for legislation controlling it had only recently been passed in the form of the 1841 Bribery Acts. The first of these Acts had been introduced by Sir Robert Peel as a means of improving the methods of choosing the committees that considered controverted elections. The second was introduced by Lord John Russell and enabled election committees to inquire into allegations of bribery before specific proof could be found against a candidate, thereby making it easier for his opponents to present a case against him. Prior to this latter Act it had been necessary to produce actual proof of agency before a candidate could be unseated.

The effect of both Acts may be judged in that between 1833 and 1837 there were 86 election petitions of which 36 were declared void or undue (i.e. where the sitting candidate was found not duly returned and the return was amended by the substitution of another candidate), whereas between 1841 and 1853 there were 99 election petitions of which 66 were
declared void or undue. Certainly one result of the Acts was to produce more, if not always successful, litigation. The nature of such litigation can clearly be seen in the Cheltenham petitions produced by the elections of 1847 and 1848 and in a consideration of the evidence heard by two select committees.

At the start of 1847, however, controversies of a different kind absorbed the inhabitants of Cheltenham: the rival claims of two railway companies to build a line connecting Cheltenham with Oxford and London and a second issue dealing with the state of the town's health. With regard to the former, one railway company backed by Brunel and the Great Western Railway favoured the use of a broad gauge track, whilst the Midland Railway favoured Stephenson's narrow gauge. The details of the debate need not concern us here save for the fact that the Free Press in its coverage offered the following revealing comment which gives us some idea of what the town's continuing self-image should be:

'If Cheltenham was exclusively a commercial place, this argument (i.e. narrow gauge to Euston Square Terminus) would doubtless have considerable weight, but as many of our fashionable visitors are from the 'West End' much may on that account be urged on the other side (i.e. broad gauge) on behalf of the Paddington terminus.'

Eventually the broad gauge prevailed and Cheltenham found itself with a railway system that connected it to Bath, Bristol, Birmingham, Swindon and London. The battle had not been that easy for the railway company, for one of the main opponents to the scheme had been no less than the Rev. Francis Close whose opposition was based on the opinion that a deep railway cutting in the town would drain off all the water, a suggestion that the Free Press was pleased to announce as uninformed,
slap-dash and irrelevant, for Close was no man of science and should not as such offer his opinion on such matters!  

The railway controversy did not, it seems, have much direct effect on the election of that year, unlike the other current concern of the town which was its state of health. Nationally, following two severe cholera epidemics, there had been growing concern for the state of public health in Britain's towns. Much of the work in initiating the issue had been spearheaded by the indefatigable Edwin Chadwick. Naturally this debate had been picked up in Cheltenham, which though in general was a fairly healthy town trading off its image as a spa resort for the sick, still had certain quarters which were in need of much improvement.

As a reformer in favour of the proposed Public Health Bill, Craven Berkeley had made a speech in which he supported government policy and spoke in favour of the need for new sanitary measures to be introduced into the towns. In part of this speech he was reported to have said that Cheltenham had more deaths from miasma than any town of the same size in England. The impact and potential damage of this supposed remark were not lost on a town which had established its fame as a Spa resort, 'the Queen of Watering Places'. Immediately the opposition press pointed out that the town had a much better mortality rate than comparable places like Brighton and Bath, and that most of the town's deaths could in fact be ascribed to the high influx of invalids who came because of its reputation as a healthy town. Craven Berkeley tried desperately to explain that his remark had never mentioned miasma and fever and that he had given the figures merely to bring about further public health benefits for all the town. However, the damage had been done and the
opposition made great issue out of the supposed harm Berkeley was said to have caused the town by his remark.

Cheltenham Tories could claim the moral ascendancy still further by pointing also to Berkeley's failure to support the recent Prostitution Bill. Berkeley's argument was that the Bill was a blatant piece of class legislation and that in punishing the unfortunate women who often turned to prostitution in order to feed their families, the Government was doing nothing against those who organised and benefited from the trade. Such an argument failed to convince the Rev. Close and his fellow high-minded Evangelicals who already saw the Berkeleys as moral reprobates, for it was an open fact that Lord Segrave housed his mistress in Cheltenham.

Nationally, the 1847 election was not to mirror the success of the Tories in 1841. Sir Robert Peel resigned office following the defeat of his Irish Coercion Bill, though a more significant factor in his departure was the split which had occurred within the party after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, together with his support for the Maynooth Grant and Irish Catholics the previous year. Under Derby one wing of the party rallied under the old cry of 'The Church in danger' and the banner of protectionism whilst a smaller group of 'Peelites' stayed loyal to their leader and his notion of cautious reform.

In Cheltenham at least, the Tories could take heart in Berkeley's pre-election stumbles and were able to produced their own candidate to fight the 1847 contest in the shape of Sir Willoughby Jones. Although he claimed to be a local man, Sir Willoughby Jones' family came from Norfolk, where he himself had been a J.P. The effects of the recent split in Tory ranks over the repeal of the Corn Laws does not seem
evident in Cheltenham as the party managed to put up a spirited attack against the Liberals. A second Tory (presumably Peelite) candidate, Captain Edmund Carrington Smith, stood on a platform of repeal of the malt and window taxes and reform of public health in the town, but made little impact polling only four votes. Undeniably Willoughby Jones was the town's official Tory candidate and as such, he enjoyed the firm support of two key figures: the previous Tory candidate and lord of the manor James Agg-Gardner and the untiring Rev. Francis Close.

The speeches of Sir Willoughby seem curiously devoid of any policy but do contain what are by any standards marvellous examples of campaign rhetoric:

'I consider England and all her colonies should be as one empire, and that London should be her great capital, and that we should be able to say, on our empire the sun never sets'; and 'Yes gentlemen, it is by the diffusion of education, it is by looking after the welfare of our population, it is by improving their dwellings, it is by draining their streets, it is by driving away fever, it is by helping the physical and moral welfare of the people that this country must maintain its position as Queen of the Seas.'

The patriotic tone of such speech with its accent on the twin themes of Empire and public welfare is most reminiscent of Disraeli's Young England movement, which in turn was to become the focus of a new Conservatism. If the stirring appeal to Empire encouraged the military residents, like Disraeli, some of Cheltenham's Tories were also beginning to sense that the new working class, a few of whom had the vote, were a force that needed to be won over whilst the commercial middle classes remained loyal to Liberalism; and Sir Willoughby Jones
made sure to include in his speeches promises to attend to the physical comfort of the labouring population.

It is hard though to see where Berkeley support in the town may have dwindled, for meetings of both Cheltenham's Chartists and Cheltenham's non-conformists ended with them pledging their firm support to Berkeley. At the time of the 1847 election, with Berkeley's support for the ballot, even the most radical of opponents, the *Free Press*, had come over to supporting his candidature.

The voting, when it took place, was close. Berkeley polled 907 votes to Willoughby Jones' 1015. Immediately the *Free Press* called the result a disgrace and stated that the Liberal party (sic) need not speculate upon the causes which combined to produce their defeat, for they were too plainly 'misrepresentation, corruption, misfortune, intimidation and treachery'. Some months later it was therefore able to report that the Liberal party agent, James Boodle, had made such representations as to bring a case against the Tories for bribery during the election. Such a process it seems was a slow one for it was not until December that the House of Commons voted on whether the Cheltenham petition would go to a select committee (the voting was actually 134-125 that it should), and not until May the following year that the case was heard.

The Committee, which met in May, of Rt.Hon John Wilson Fitzpatrick, Hon. William Bagot, Sir George Philips and Alex Smallett esq. was chaired by Morgan John O'Connell and heard the evidence of five witnesses: Samuel Morris, William Durbin, John Pitt, William Isher and George Hawkins. The opposition case that bribery had taken place focused on the offers made to four of these men of employment as messengers during the election. Sums ranging from 5s. to 35s. were
quoted for which the men were told that they need not do anything other
than report to the party rooms at the Royal Hotel. Although much of the
canvassing and payment was done by George Hawkins and two Cheltenham
solicitors, Gwinnet and Micklewright, some of the witnesses spoke of Sir
Willoughby Jones himself being present at the committee rooms. This was
an important point if agency was to be proved. Another important point
was that four men who had received payment from the Tories also said
that formerly they had voted Liberal. The key witness was Hawkins
himself, who in the first instance, as a Tory agent, had approached
these men about voting for Sir Willoughby Jones. Despite Tory attempts
to keep him out of the way by sending him to London, he had eventually
been prevailed on by the Liberals and persuaded to give them the
evidence they needed.

In this case the Committee were happy that both bribery and agency
had been proved (i.e. the acts had been committed with the knowledge and
consent of Sir Willoughby Jones) and declared the election void.

A new election in June 1848 returned Craven Berkeley with 1024 to
his former adversary, James Agg-Gardner's 848, which in turn was
immediately contested by a Tory petition. This time the Select Committee
met in August and included amongst its members Savile Craven, Henry Ogle
esq., Roundell Farmer esq., Ralph Thickness esq., Hon. Captain Harris
and its chairman Sir William Clay. A much larger number of witnesses
were called (some twenty-six) and all gave testimony to how Craven
Berkeley had used illegal methods to obtain votes during the election.
Manuscript copies at the Gloucestershire Record Office suggest that many
further statements were collected and prepared but not actually used for
the petition. 14
The range of activities in which Berkeley was said to have indulged is both colourful and considerable. One of the most common was again the employment of messengers, who were paid various sums during the election for nominal duties if they gave their votes to the Liberals. One such witness was William Cull, a 26 year old carpenter of 254 High Street. Cull stated that he was approached in the High Street by James Boodle, the secretary of the Liberal Association, and asked whether he would give his vote to Berkeley. Cull expressed concern that he did not think that he was able to vote because he had not yet paid his rates. 'Never mind that,' said Boodle, 'I'll put that right if you'll come with me'. Boodle then put Cull in contact with Peter Vines, who took Cull on as a messenger, whereby he received £1 a week for the duration of the election. Like many others, Cull's status as a messenger seems to have involved him in doing no work at all other than his going to the Committee Room each Saturday night to collect his £1! On one visit he estimated that there were some 150 persons waiting to be paid. In addition to his £1 per week, Boodle seems to have given Cull 13s. to pay his rates, which at the time Cull thought to be a gift, but afterwards became the subject of a court case. Another witness, Joseph Hill, was paid like Cull to be a messenger, but he also added that he met and shook hands with Craven Berkeley in the Committee Room.

Despite Berkeley's supposed instructions to his agents that not a single pint of beer or a single breakfast should be given free during the election, his opponents were able to produce a number of printed cards given out to voters promising breakfast at various public houses. George Norman stated that he had been ordered to print some 1700 of these 'superfine coloured breakfast tickets' which had then been sent
out to Berkeley's agents. Later instructions had been given to remove the word 'breakfast' from the cards, but Cull's statement tells a rather different story.

On the morning of the election a letter arrived at his house with a ticket for breakfast at the King's Head. He then went there with ten others and breakfasted before polling. On their return from the poll they continued to breakfast sumptuously on cold meats, coffee, eggs, beer and brandy. As well as his fellow voters, Cull was now accompanied by his wife, and they all continued to eat and drink until 3 o'clock. Cull gleefully recited that 'I took my wife and a friend or two there and sat different times and I ordered for them what, and what I ordered was brought' (all at no cost to himself). At 4 o'clock when it became clear that Berkeley's agents were saying that they did not want to run up any more expense, the energetic Cull still managed to visit and indulge at the Royal Oak, the Golden Grapes, the Cleveland Arms and the Cross Keys. During the evening the excess continued as he also received free suppers at the Adam and Eve, the Dolphin and the Lansdown Inn!

As well as messengers parties also employed flagmen, who in this case were paid 5s. a day by Berkeley's Liberals to show their colours. Peter Vines, the Liberal agent, claimed that many of the two hundred or so were not voters and that their reward of free beer was a modest one in view of their services on the day.

Luke Hayward, however, was a voter as well as a keen amateur player of the cornopean. He also had been approached by Boodle who hired him for £2 12s 6d to play his instrument during the election. He was also paid an additional half a guinea for blowing it at four in the morning on poll day 'to murder sleep all over Cheltenham' after which he and his
fellow musicians were given a free breakfast at the Dolphin.

Both during the 1847 election and the 1848 re-election in June, the Tories claimed that not only had Berkeley bribed, threatened and cajoled various electors but that in some cases he had corruptly influenced voters to vote or forbear from voting. During the 1848 election, Rowland James Ticehurst, a solicitor of Cheltenham, attempting to serve notices on a number of Berkeley supporters informing them that Berkeley's canvass would be declared null and void, was approached by a Mr Arkell holding a stick in a threatening manner, warning him of further violence should he continue to deliver the notices. Henry Smart, a bailiff, also claimed that Berkeley had recruited strong men from all over the county, (including one named Evans, a prize fighter from Tewkesbury) and armed them with yellow ash staves with instructions to 'knock the blues down' should they interfere at the polling. Smart went on to say that a number of blues were prevented from polling by these 'men with bludgeons'.

Another list of names collected as evidence against Berkeley included those not entitled to vote (bad votes referred to as 'screws'). These included Joseph Dancy whose rent of £8 was not sufficient to allow him to vote; Joseph Freeman of Beckford who lived beyond the statutory seven miles from the borough; William Jennings who was brought down from London at great cost in order to vote; William Jones of Birmingham who impersonated William Jones of 10, Portland Place who had died in October 1846, and both George Reeve and George Cooke who impersonated their fathers. Two further categories of false voters were listed, namely collectors of the window tax and lunatics, both with examples supplied.

Once again the Select Committee's problem was to consider how much of this was legitimate expense and influence, and second, how much
knowledge of it could be attributed to Berkeley himself, or the machinations of his agents James Boodle and Peter Vines. Their first verdict was that Berkeley through his agents had been guilty of treating and as such was incapable of being elected to sit in Parliament. The intention was to hand the seat over to the defeated candidate, James Agg-Gardner, but this in turn was contested and eventually the Committee declared the election void and new writs were issued.

In September 1848 the third election in three years was duly called and, with Craven Berkeley ineligible to stand, his place was taken not unnaturally by his cousin, Grenville Charles Lennox Berkeley, who defeated the Liberal Conservative (Peeelite) candidate Bickham Escott 986 votes to 835.

Such events were not to be limited to Cheltenham alone as over the next fifty years Gloucestershire was to acquire something of a reputation as a corrupt county. Stroud, for example, saw a remarkable series of five elections and three petitions within the two years of 1874 and 1875, and of twenty-eight petitions presented nationally in 1880, three were from the Gloucestershire boroughs of Cheltenham, Stroud and Tewkesbury. The one from Cheltenham had been brought against the Liberal Baron de Ferrieres by the defeated Conservative James Tynte Agg-Gardner (M.P. for the borough 1874-80 and 1885-94 and eldest son of James Agg-Gardner). Initially the Conservatives claimed that the Baron was an alien but this was soon dropped when it was discovered that he had been naturalised by a private act of Parliament in 1867. Instead, they concentrated on the claim that he had treated the voters to free coal, bread and beer. The Baron it seems had not only varied the fayre, but more significantly selected a skilful election agent in Mr.
Chesshyre; the latter had, it appears, been wise enough to make sure that there had been no direct association between the party leaders and the more dubious election practices, and the petition was eventually dismissed as the Select Committee failed to find sufficient proof of agency. The judges' more tolerant attitude towards such procedures is shown by their remarks that they had no wish to inhibit genuine charity nor did they wish to consider cases brought before the dissolution of Parliament and the start of the election campaign proper.

Despite the passing of the Secret Ballot Act of 1872 and the Corrupt Practices Act in 1883 and the steady decline of election petitions, corruption and bribery continued in the County up to the election of 1910 and the advent of the First World War. Only the enlarged electorate after 1918 made the practice of direct bribery too expensive and no longer practicable.

Election malpractice then was not a new or odd feature of the system, but there remains a need to assess its importance in the 1840s. As the comments of the 1880 election judges have shown, there was a thin divide in contemporary minds between legitimate reward and illegal treating or bribery. Custom dictated that voters looked to be rewarded for their favours and for those working class elements who had the vote, the additional income provided by employment as messengers, flagmen or musicians must have been very welcome. Much has been written on how easy it was under the unreformed system for local patrons to control a borough seat in this way:

'the eighteenth century electoral system was admirably suited to the use of patronage for political purposes...In constituencies where the franchise was restricted to a handful of people the
potential of patronage is apparent. The smallness of electorates also made it possible for patrons to dominate and control several constituencies. 15.

Such expenses then were tolerable in constituencies where the amount of voters was small and where contested elections were few. The 1832 Reform Bill saw the creation of much larger constituencies (by 1847 Cheltenham had over 2,000 registered voters) and contested elections became the norm. In addition there was always the Press (particularly active in Cheltenham) and printed election literature to ensure that political excitement was kept at its highest around election time. It must also be remembered that alongside the business of treating one's supporters there were a host of other expenses to be met, such as the erecting of booths, the hiring of committee rooms, the expenses of the returning officer and poll clerks, and the cost of administering oaths. Professor Gash quotes official charges from £400 to £700 for boroughs contested in the 1841 election. 17

To these must be added the quasi-legal or more individual expenses borne by the candidate if he wished to win the seat. One of the main points brought out by the 1847/8 petitions was that both parties were indulging in treating the voters to such an extent that it would not pay a candidate to be niggardly if he wished to avoid defeat. No longer do we just hear talk of Lord Segrave's heavy purse, for the local Tory party seems to have recovered from its impecunious state of the 1830s and was able to spend large amounts itself on the election. We may speculate on the source of the funds but the addition to the party ranks of such wealthy landed families and business men as the Agg-Gardners (with their brewing interests) must have been of enormous benefit. One
piece of evidence alone, collected by the Liberals for a counter-petition in 1847, indicating the scale of these costs, is a hefty bill from the White Lion for food, wine and broken glasses, to the sum of £193 15s. 

One problem for candidates was that with a contested election they could no longer be sure that their spending would produce the right results. Take the case of George King junior: he signed on as a messenger at £1 a week and was plied by the Liberals with free beer and breakfasts only to be thwarted by the 'true blue' George King senior, who angrily marched his son down to the booth on polling day and stood over him whilst he voted for the Tory candidate. There was also the opportunist cornopean player, Luke Hayward, who quite happily received commissions from Liberals and Tories, playing for both at the same election.

There are also some ominous signs in the witnesses' statements that some of the more traditional practices were not enough to win over the voters. Thomas Heywood, for example, complained that he only received £1 per week for his services, when he expected 5s a day, and that as far as he was concerned he would take his vote over to the Tories. Undoubtedly the cost of borough-mongering was spiralling and candidates would have to think hard before undertaking the expense of an election. Significantly, Colonel Francis Berkeley, who held the seat from 1856-65, wrote to his father on his defeat in 1865 that 'the place is very dear and more money is spent on political matters than it is worth. I wish I had never seen the town of Cheltenham.' In fact, he was the last Berkeley ever to contest the borough.

The petitions also show a more positive side to borough politics
emerging in the 1840s, that is the development of party organization and machinery alongside a partisan press. Much has already been said of the work of party agents James Boodle and William Lawrence in the registration courts after the election of 1841. However what the petitions also show is party activity during the election itself. Both sets of petitions mention party head-quarters in the shape of committee rooms and an apparatus for the systematic payments to the host of messengers employed by both parties. Both parties had their own network of public houses decked out in party colours and serving beer and breakfasts to their own supporters. In addition, both parties had groups of hired musicians to play (sometimes at ungodly hours) during the election. The Liberals took their organization a stage further and had cards printed out and distributed to their local agents in the wards to hand out to offer free breakfasts to potential voters. On these occasions their respective newspapers provided useful means of addressing the electorate.

As well as James Boodle, the Liberals had a number of regular party workers whose recruitment from particular social groups may have also helped. Peter Vines described himself as a former carpenter and sometime collector of the parochial rates. His duties for the Liberals included the registration of their voters and the employment of messengers during the election. According to many of the witnesses' statements it was Vines who, with Boodle, directly approached a number of potential voters to secure their services for the Liberals. Henry Bishop, a leather seller, was given charge of the two hundred or so flagmen and constables. For the purpose of canvassing, the party workers divided the borough up into eight districts each with two canvassing agents. One of
which was Charles Cheshire, a solicitor of Cheltenham, who canvassed Number 7 district which included the High Street and Bath Road. His job was to report regularly to Boodle at the committee rooms and then go out with canvassing letters and breakfast tickets to solicit votes for Berkeley. He was also told to make arrangements to get voters to the booths on the day of the poll.

Less evidence is presented in the petition against Sir Willoughby Jones and the Tories but they also had their own agents. George Hawkins, a shoemaker, was given the task of approaching potential voters directly and employing them as messengers; George Micklewright, a banker and attorney's clerk, was responsible for paying them at the party's committee rooms.

Obviously one need for such middlemen was to protect the candidates should any charge of bribery be brought against them after the election (not always a successful ploy as we have seen). However, one also strongly suspects that more than nascent party machinery was developing in Cheltenham in contrast to the waning politics of personality and patronage. A candidate could no longer hope to control a borough of over 2,000 voters by personality and name alone. Party agents, party newspapers and party solicitors were now becoming the essential trappings of a contested election in the mid-nineteenth century.

As both J. Bourne and F.M.L. Thompson have shown, the great political patrons did not disappear after 1832 and they can still be seen in evidence even in the late 1850s, but the price of such control by patronage alone was rising steeply. A patron who was not in tune with local sympathies and local politics found himself in an increasingly hostile environment. If he wished to survive in power he
had to take notice and advantage of the growing development of party
after 1832. To quote Bourne:

'In the newly enfranchised great towns, numbering their electorates
in thousands, the direct application of patronage to maximizing the
vote had no utility. Patronage was best devoted to other functions.
In the eighteenth century, both inside and outside parliament,
patronage had acted as a substitute for the later disciplines of
party. After 1832 it was increasingly applied to the support of
party and it was this which constitutes one of its most enduring
contributions to the successful social and political integration of
English life and to the tenacity and flexibility of English
institutions'. 21

What the 1847-8 petitions indicate most in Cheltenham is the twofold
process of the decline of the influence of a great landed family and the
emergence of party organisation at local level. There is much less talk
of the influence of Lord Segrave's heavy purse, although the charge of
nomineeism is still levelled against the Liberals. What we see more and
more in the town is the decline of direct Berkeley family influence in
elections and the growing importance of local party organisations for
both parties. For the time being these two factors remained compatible
in the shape of Craven Berkeley, who as a moderate reformer was still an
acceptable candidate to Whigs and Liberals alike, and for now was even
tolerated by some radicals and Chartist. Had Craven Berkeley been an
old style Whig one feels that Berkeley influence in the borough (without
a significant industrial or commercial base) would have ended much
sooner than it did, either through divisions amongst the ranks of the
Liberals or through the onslaught of an increasingly confident and able
The struggle was now for votes of a kind that the Berkeley name alone would not command support. If Berkeley influence was to remain, the family needed to adopt more the 'politics of mutual advantage': as it was, the theatre, the races and the hunts and balls were of limited interest to an increasing number of Cheltenham's voters. It is no coincidence that both parties included from the late 1840s frequent references in their election addresses to the physical welfare of the town's working classes. Neither is it coincidence that both parties had spent much on winning over working class votes during the elections of 1847 and 1848. However, with the working class holding no immediate loyalty to either party or aristocratic patron, such a struggle now needed the support and organization of party agents and party presses. To this extent it was no longer feasible to talk of Cheltenham simply in terms of a pocket borough but of one in transition. How well and successfully the Berkeleys adapted to this challenge will be the subject of the following chapter.
NOTES

CHAPTER FIVE


7. Quoted in Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953) p. 431.

8. The Cheltenham Free Press, Jan 1847.


10. CPL, 'Report by Edward Cresy to the General Board of Health...an enquiry into the sanitary conditions of Cheltenham' (1849).


14. GRO, D2025 Box 135


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18. GRO, D2025 Box 135.


    See also F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963)

Craven Berkeley's defeat in the election of 1848 did not mark the end of the family's influence within the borough, but it did indicate that the task of controlling it was no longer an easy one. Some evidence of the declining status of Earl Fitzhardinge (formerly Lord Segrave) as a borough-monger is hinted at in Charles Dod's *Impartially stated Electoral Facts from 1632 to 1852*, published in 1852. In discussing the nature of influence over various boroughs he describes that in Cheltenham as being 'in some degree wielded by Earl Fitzhardinge, but the number of visitors and pleasure residents limits this influence.' As for the County vote, Dod talks of the Eastern division as being 'chiefly possessed by the Duke of Beaufort, whilst the Earl of Ducie, the Duke of Norfolk and Earl Fitzhardinge have some influence, but not of a commanding character' and of the Western division being 'chiefly possessed by the Earl Fitzhardinge and the Earl of Ducie for several years; but the Duke of Beaufort's influence now predominates'. Furthermore, no mention is made of Fitzhardinge having influence over the boroughs of Gloucester City or Bristol, both seats that for some time had been held by Berkeleys. No longer, would it seem, was the noble Earl Fitzhardinge sole political master of those seats he had been able formerly to influence.

Eventually the family itself was to lose control over all their long-held boroughs: F.H.F. Berkeley was the last of the family to hold Bristol when he stood down in 1868; Admiral M. Berkeley lost his seat at Gloucester in 1857, never to stand again, (although it was briefly
recaptured by the family by C. P. Berkeley between 1862-4 - but he too was the last of the family to hold that seat); G. C. G. F. Berkeley, despite a number of attempts, was never re-elected for West Gloucestershire after his defeat in 1852; finally, as we have seen, Col. F. Berkeley defeated in 1865, was the last of the family to sit for Cheltenham.

Exactly what brought about this decline is hard to establish. Although the cost of borough-mongering was increasing, Earl Fitzhardinge, if not a great landowner, was still a relatively wealthy man who owned some 20,274 acres and enjoyed an annual income of £33,717. The Cheltenham Examiner in an address celebrating the Earl's seventieth birthday was able to testify to the scale of his wealth by recording the fact that the Earl had conferred an 'annual expenditure of £10,000 on Cheltenham's pecuniary advantage', which amounted to over half a million pounds over the last fifty years. In one year alone, 1823, the Earl was estimated to be responsible for building contracts to the sum of £450,000 which were giving employment to between four to five hundred men in the building trades. Later that year, when the Earl died as the result of a fall from his horse, the details of his will (his rent-roll alone amounting to over £40,000 a year and estates worth around £300,000), suggest that the family fortunes were still very much intact. Their waning political influence was not due, it seems, to a reduction in their financial status.

A clue of a rather different nature, though, might be provided to the family's declining political influence and credibility by an event which had taken place in 1847. That year a quarrel broke out between Earl Fitzhardinge and his brother, Grantley Berkeley. Initially this took the form of a disagreement between Grantley and Mrs Barker, Fitzhardinge's mistress, whom he housed at German Cottage, Cheltenham. However, it soon
developed into a political feud when Grantley decided to stand as candidate for the Western division against Fitzhardinge's own candidate, namely his cousin Grenville Berkeley.

The election was fought with more than the usual bitterness with Grantley's supporters at the declaration of the poll at Dursley being attacked and stoned by those of Earl Fitzhardinge. Grantley, however, successfully managed to defeat the Earl's nominee to take the second of the County's seats by 2,744 votes to 2,123. Even after the election the quarrel continued with the disgruntled Earl stripping his brother of his command in the Yeomanry and leaving various debts to clubs and subscription lists in arrears which he had formerly agreed to pay on his brother's behalf. The Earl even drew up a petition to contest the election, but when this was heard by a committee of the House of Commons it ruled that Grantley had been fairly elected.

The quarrel itself is of less importance, though, than its repercussions. The Chartist, W.E. Adams, wrote, somewhat gleefully one might imagine, that 'at this time the family's (i.e. Berkeley's) dirty linen was washed in public' and that 'throughout the whole constituency of West Gloucestershire, political literature was besmirched with personal scandals'. Even The Times carried in its columns a salutary warning that 'the intestine feuds of the Berkeley family put one in mind of the closing calamities of one of those doomed races from whose legends the Greek tragedians have taken their most mournful themes'. It was also alleged that in his attempts to deny his brother the seat of West Gloucestershire, Earl Fitzhardinge had spent over £30,000.

Within a year of this set back, Earl Fitzhardinge also suffered defeat in Cheltenham when on petition, the election of his brother Craven,
who had polled 1,024 votes to James Agg-Gardner's 848, was declared void. Debarred by this decision from sitting in Parliament until after the next dissolution, Craven Berkeley had to bide his time until the election of July 1852. In the meantime, however, all was not lost in the borough for the Berkeley cause as Grenville Berkeley (the cousin of Craven) won the seat polling against Bickham Escott, a 'liberal Conservative' (as described by Williams, presumably meaning that he was a Peelite), who had recently been M.P. for Winchester. Oddly enough, Escott actually approached Craven Berkeley for his assistance before the poll. His request, however, brought him the advice to save his money, or instead spend it on some deserving charity and to depart at once thus 'saving some two or three hundred pounds, and the small wreck of your political reputation'. Berkeley was sure that the electors of Cheltenham would not be hoodwinked by a man who had shown such a desertion of principle in the past (referring to his support for the Repeal of the Corn Laws). Once again though, the vote of 986 to 835 cannot be considered a sizeable majority for Berkeley by any means.

By mid-century, Berkeley success in the borough was becoming, it seems, more dependent on the support of the class of skilled artisans, shop-keepers and traders whose ranks included many of the town's growing band of self-confident radicals and Chartists (see Appendix B for analysis of the 1841 poll). These voters, in turn, demanded rather more from the representative in terms of support for policies than had hitherto been the case. Before his election in 1848, Grenville Berkeley had to pledge himself to the secret ballot and free trade when quizzed on the hustings by one of the local Chartist leaders, J.P. Glenister, and after his election he supported the Chartists by presenting to the House of Commons a petition on
behalf of the local branch of the National Land Company. Likewise, when he stood again in 1855, he received what amounted to a grilling on a number of issues ranging from Sunday trading and the Franchise to the war with Russia, before he was nominated by his own supporters. Such increased awareness and concern over controversial issues would suggest that for many of Cheltenham's voters the politics of policies were replacing the politics of patronage and personality.

For the meanwhile though, Grenville's possession of the seat between 1848 and 1852 was only that of caretaker and Craven Berkeley enjoyed one last resurgence of popularity when he was elected M.P. for the borough for the sixth and final time in 1852. This time he campaigned once again against Sir Willoughby Jones, eventually defeating him by 999 votes to 869. This, too, might partly be attributed to a new deal struck with the town's radicals rather than any remaining clout still attached to the Berkeley name. Ashton perhaps goes a little too far when he talks of a 'conversion' to Chartist arguments but certainly Craven Berkeley's election addresses do show a rather more obvious attempt to win the popular vote. Not only did he too now pledge to support the Secret Ballot, but also to abolish Church rates, to support Free Trade and to abolish the rate-paying clauses of the Reform Act.

Ironically though, it was these (rather reluctant) overtures to radicalism which helped to cede Whig control of the borough to the Conservatives. Throughout the late 1830s and 1840s the Tory press, particularly The Cheltenham Chronicle after its conversion to Conservatism in 1839, led a ferocious attack on Craven Berkeley and the Whigs for their apparent concessions to radicalism. The paper's accusations even went to the point of claiming that Whiggery and Chartist were 'blood-brothers'.
With the Conservatives gaining considerable support from the town's gentry (see Appendix B) Whigs and moderate Liberals, such as Craven Berkeley and Earl Fitzhardinge, were obviously increasingly compromised by their dependence on radical support, but to deny it, as we shall see, would cost them more dearly still. As it was, the popular fears amongst the ruling and propertied classes of a threat to the 'established order' and to the Established Church, particularly at the time of the Chartist demonstrations, contributed much to the revival of the Conservative party within the borough. An editorial in The Cheltenham Chronicle of 23 October 1839 shows the seeds of this already germinating:

'Whig-Radicalism has a most injurious tendency to beget a fierce political excitement, which unfit its subjects for the ordinary duties of life, and renders them idle, loquacious and vindictive. This is sufficiently proved by the innumerable meetings continually taking place, at which hundreds of the working classes are dragged....We believe it is the general opinion of the inhabitants that from this cause has resulted great injury to the town's commercial interests... But how is this to be restored while 'Liberal' politicians continue to stir up the angry feelings of their ignorant dupes by unprincipled attacks upon the religion and laws of their country?

To Conservatism we must look for the cure of these evils'.

The revival of Conservatism within Cheltenham owes much to both a strengthening of the bonds between those of the wealthy and propertied classes alarmed at the spread of radical demands, not least those of Chartism, and of those of the supporters of the Anglican Church, equally alarmed at a series of Whig measures aimed to weaken its supremacy. The
Berkeleys had alienated the latter, both by the pursuit of pleasure (in hunting, theatre, mistresses and the races!) and (in championing the cause of religious liberties), by their numerous clashes with the Established Church particularly in the guise of Rev. Francis Close and his brand of 'improving' Evangelicalism. Although Close himself professed to have avoided 'as much as possible meddling with the politics of the town', he in fact was in many ways a very influential figure within the borough during the years 1826 to 1856 and Munden has suggested that he could count amongst his supporters almost half of the town's total residence:

'This would have consisted of the congregation of the parish church, together with the clergy and congregations of the other Anglican churches associated with the parish church, and a large number of Dissenters, in all but matters relating to the payment of rates'.

Munden is perhaps too sweepingly dismissive when he goes on to argue that 'only a vocal minority opposed Close' and that 'the strength of radical opposition can be overstated'. What is more, support for Close and his Evangelicalism did not necessarily equate to the same degree of support for the Tories and their candidates, but as has been shown, all Tory candidates in Cheltenham in the 1840s and 1850s made much of their support for the Established Church or for their support for another of Close's 'improving' schemes, namely Cheltenham College, of which Close was one of four vice-presidents. In this respect then, religion has to be identified as one of the important factors in Tory emergence in Cheltenham politics and to this end it was aided greatly by the preachings and work of the Rev. Close and by the generally perceived low moral tone set by the Berkeleys.

The Berkeleys had also done much to discredit themselves with the
town's propertied classes by their opposition to the Town Improvement Bill (see Chapter Four). In an article of 12 June 1839, sustaining very much the main thrust of the attack on the Berkeleys as no longer identified with the borough's present interests, The Cheltenham Chronicle points out that:

'Cheltenham is now too large and too important a town to have as its representative in the British Parliament the mere nominee of a great man... It ought to have a man of talent, influence and acknowledged standing in society; no cockfighter, but a man of business'.

Future Tory candidates made much of their support of the Established Church and of their property qualifications within the borough in a way which increasingly seemed to remove the Berkeleys from the centre of the town's real interests - the 'politics of mutual advantage' was seen to reside more with the Conservative interest than the Whig one. Such a stand was exemplified by The Cheltenham Chronicle, when it made apparent to its readers in writing of Mr. Roy, a possible candidate for the 1841 election that:

'He is not a mere man of pleasure... he is an architect of his own fortunes...... another and not unimportant qualification he has which will insure his attention to local interest is that he is the possessor of a very large property within the borough.'

On many occasions following, the Berkeleys were increasingly portrayed, by the Conservatives at least, as nominees with little or no substantive interest (particularly in terms of property) within Cheltenham - they were no more than 'mere men of pleasure'. ¹² A Conservative candidate like Agg-Gardner with his strong brewing interest was presented to the voters as a man with a genuine stake in the town's commercial prosperity and future

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development.

As it was, Craven Berkeley's tenure of the seat was not for long for other reasons, as from 1852 his health soon began to fail him. In 1855 he went abroad in the hope of rejuvenation but instead his state became worse until his death at Frankfurt-on-Maine on 1st July 1855. His demise was followed soon after by that of his brother, Earl Fitzhardinge, in 1857 and thus that year Cheltenham lost its former patron and with his death the influence of the family finally reached the last stage of its decline.

On Craven's departure the seat passed once again to his cousin, Grenville Berkeley, until he in turn accepted the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds in 1856. Berkeley influence over the borough was not completely ended yet as the seat then was taken up by Captain Francis William Fitzhardinge Berkeley, the eldest son of Sir Maurice Berkeley and nephew to Craven Berkeley. Between 1857 and 1859, during the period whilst Palmerston ruled the Foreign Office, both Liberal and Conservative interests in the borough remained largely united and Francis Berkeley was returned unopposed.

However, in 1859 the Conservatives fielded a new candidate. Charles Schreiber, a former pupil of Cheltenham College and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He proved to be generally an all round hard worker and good organiser. In the election of 1859 he ran Berkeley to a narrow majority of twelve votes, a fact which the Conservatives were ready to celebrate as a victory in itself. In the next election of 1865 he defeated the Honourable Colonel Berkeley (as he now was) by 1,157 votes to 1,129. Schreiber made much in his address of the fact that the town no longer relied on the Berkeley family patronage and their annual expenditure there:
'There has been a time when that sacred animal the fox had a large share in the return of your member of Parliament. That day is past and we come to that which is of vital interest to the town, and what do we find it to be? - the College. Remove your College, and your property (land and house) will depreciate by about 50 per cent, and Cheltenham will be a residence surrendered to owls and bats. If you accompanied me in my canvass around the town, you would have seen how the labour of Cheltenham finds its occupation. It is in ministering to the comforts, necessities and luxuries of the rich; and if I may raise the question, which side of the hustings gives most employment to the labour of the Poor?'

The Tories attacked the Berkeleys not only for their fox-hunting activities but for their support of the removal of disabilities of the Nonconformists: 'shall England abandon Protestant faith, her Established Church, the blessing she enjoys, for the evils offered to her clothed in the specious garb of Progressive reform and Civil and Religious Liberty?' As in 1841, the old cry of 'the Church in danger' still proved to be an effective rallying call at least to Tories of the old school.

The role of clerical opposition as a significant factor in the decline of Berkeley influence is, to a certain extent, also shown to be true by the rather more dramatic account of Colonel Berkeley's defeat found in the memoirs of Sir James Agg-Gardner, son of a previous Conservative candidate. The author describes how, for many years, Cheltenham had been a 'pocket borough' controlled by the Berkeleys. He then tells of Schreiber's challenge mounted in 1859 and 1865. Although Schreiber was a man of high university attainments and a forcible speaker, he had little obvious chance
of success with Cheltenham voters 'accustomed, especially at election times, to regard the Whig House as a kind of Providence', had it not been for a fatal (and ironic, given Berkeley patronage of Cheltenham's races), error made by Colonel Berkeley. The month previous to the election, Colonel Berkeley had attended the Grand Prix race in Paris on a Sunday, no less! Such 'abandoned conduct' if Agg-Gardner is to be believed, cost Berkeley not only the censure of Cheltenham's high Churchmen, but also even that of such pillars of his own Liberal party as the Rev. Dr. Morton Brown, the town's leading Nonconformist. 'Thus fell the Whig ascendancy in Cheltenham' says Sir James.  

Election defeat in 1865 did, in fact, finally mark the end of Berkeley influence within the borough of Cheltenham. With the exception of the years 1868-1874 and 1880-1885, which largely coincided with Gladstone's national success and the formation of his first and second ministries, for the remainder of the century the seat resided in the hands of the Conservatives and in particular those of the Agg-Gardner family. The Cheltenham Examiner on 12th May 1866 carried the statement that:

'the influence of the Berkeleys has long been in a state of decadence and now was in a state of absolute death. In the time of Earl Fitzhardinge the noble Earl kept a large establishment and the influence of the family was then large. But those times were now gone.'

Colonel Francis, the last of the family to sit as M.P. for the borough of Cheltenham, washed his hands of the place in 1866 complaining that it was too greedy, as it always had been, in election affairs and had cost him much. Writing to his father, he revealingly admitted that the place was very dear and more money was spent on political matters than it was
worth. In addition to the failure of his party's petition against Schreiber and the Tories, his own difficulties were such that in another letter to his father he stated his concern that R.C. Chesshyre, his party solicitor, was very sore because he had not yet been paid and was about to resign. Berkeley also admitted that he would not be able to find anyone to replace Chesshyre. Emphasizing further the problems of the Cheltenham Liberals, James Fallon, another party agent, in the same series of correspondence complained that:

'I wish we had a twice a week penny paper with an unscrupulous editor. I would subscribe for a joint stock one (limited). They [the Tory Press] attack us personally and we have none to return the blow.'

Amidst such reflection and ruefulness Berkeley control of the borough, established when it had first gained its representation in 1832, finally came to an end. Well might Fallon observe that:

'It is to me most painful to think that the Borough which ought to belong to the Castle - and who have stuck to it and behaved in so generous a way as my Lord Fitzhardinge has - to think I say - that it should slip from us only from want of tact and management - yes, and at half the money it costs'.

These might have been reasons perceived by the family and their close supporters for the loss of their influence over the representation of Cheltenham, but in effect there were also rather more substantial causes to be considered.
NOTES

CHAPTER SIX

1. C.R. Dod, *Electoral Facts from 1832 to 1852* (1852)


4. The Cheltenham Examiner, 7 July 1857


7. The Times 21 August 1847.

8. GRO D3893.


10. Ibid., see conclusion.


12. For a different view of Spa Radicalism see O.R Ashton op. cit.

13. Cheltenham Chronicle, 23 October 1839


16. GRO D1291.

17. Idem.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: 'the old regime was condemned and doomed'.

What then can the local historian deduce about the development of Cheltenham as a political borough after 1832? First, it seems that it does not provide a corrective to, but rather confirms, the views of those historians and commentators who argue for the limited nature of the so-called 'Great Reform Act' of 1832, many of whom would agree with F.M.L. Thompson when he states that:

'The Great Reform Act undoubtedly marked the end of the great days of borough proprietors, but 1832 brought about neither the total destruction of the nomination system, nor the elimination of interest and influence as essential ingredients in the electoral process. One of the purposes of the framers of the Bill, indeed, was to preserve and fortify the legitimate influence of rank, position and property, while undermining that which, by acting through close boroughs and bribery, was held to be illegitimate, or too much at the disposal of Ministers'.

How much success, however, the Act had in achieving even the latter is often thrown into doubt by contemporary opinions such as that of Lord Palmerston who was reported as saying in 1839: 'I speak it with shame and sorrow, but I verily believe that the extent to which bribery and corruption was carried out at the last election, has exceeded anything that has ever been stated within these walls'. As such, it seems, he could so easily have been describing electioneering in Cheltenham.

Second, Cheltenham offers us the model of a borough controlled by
a local wealthy patron. It shows that even at a time when electioneering costs were spiralling and religious and political opponents abounded, a family like the Berkeleys could for two decades still trade off their name and family influence for political power. Such a situation was not unique and a number of local studies have shown how the aristocracy and great landowning families were able to exert, or even increase their influence in the years immediately following the 1832 Act. However, what is unusual in the Berkeleys' case is that their influence seems purely derived from their social status and contribution towards the town's image as a fashionable pleasure resort. The Liberal party agent, James Boodle, in his statement to a Committee of Inquiry in 1848, was able to point out that Lord Fitzhardinge did not in fact own property within the borough (except perhaps for the cottage in which he housed his mistress and the stables in which he housed his hounds!). His Lordship's influence there was measured in hunts, concerts and balls, rather than in property or business interests such as coal, railways, brewing or textiles as was the case with many other nineteenth century borough-mongers.

The power base of the Berkeleys was both strong yet fragile. Strong in the sense that, for a time, they were fully identified with all the town's social pursuits and that fashionable town life literally revolved around them; fragile in the sense that it belonged almost to an Ancien Regime which excluded and had little or nothing to offer both many of the town's newly emerging business classes and educationalists on the one hand, and those politically motivated of the lower orders on the other. Well might George Grote state that:

'A man of wealth and rank, unless he miserably neglect the duties appertaining to his station, is sure to possess a powerful
influence...his political voice and opinion will be often asked, and always attentively listened to, by his neighbours'.

But such influence, as Heesom has pointed out, had now to be based on "the politics of mutual advantage". The Berkeleys' increasing reliance on "illegitimate influence" (see chapter five), their lack of any significant property holdings in Cheltenham which would at least have given them influence as landlords, and their declining ability to provoke sentiments of gratitude (either as employers or patrons), especially amongst the lower orders, all suggest that there was little of "mutual benefit" in their representation of the borough by the early 1850s.

Moreover, it also proved increasingly difficult for them to command loyalties of party ties. As Liberalism gradually ousted the old values of eighteenth century Whiggism, despite the Berkeleys rather reluctant shifts to a slightly more radical stance (for instance Craven Berkeley's late-in-the-day conversion to support for the Ballot), such gestures proved to be not strong enough to carry their influence with voters into the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the words of Professor Gash, 'there was a future for Liberalism, but none for Whiggery'. Ironically, as has been mentioned in the introduction, the family after being their political opponents for so many years, found eventual refuge identifying with the landed interest of the Tory party.

Third, the study of the Berkeleys' influence in Cheltenham gives various clues as to why the aristocracy declined in political importance during the nineteenth century. H.J. Hanham argues that:

'it is difficult to trace in any detail the decline in borough patronage between the forties and the seventies excepting a few obvious cases, because there are scarcely any local histories dealing with the
This thesis has at least attempted to investigate that decline in one such borough. Hanham continues to suggest that decline came with the Reform Act of 1867 with its extension of the electorate.

However, the political development of Cheltenham would suggest that in some cases the process had begun before that date and within the borough a number of contributory factors which have been identified and discussed were already at work. In addition a more general complaint, it seems, was that the whole business of contesting elections was becoming more and more expensive. In 1852 the Marquess of Bath talked about having to meet a certain expenditure of £5,000 and a possible one of £3,000 to save a number of seats falling to the Whigs. As shown, the Berkeley purse strings were similarly stretched in Cheltenham.

However, cost alone was not the only factor that was making it increasingly difficult for the aristocracy to control elections. As the public perception of bribery heightened its criticism of the practice, various Governments were forced to provide further legislation to curtail its worse excesses. The Bribery Acts of 1841, 1842 and 1852 all made certain practices more difficult, but the most effective measure proved to be the Corrupt Practices Act of 1854. By this Act not only those giving the bribe but those receiving it could be found guilty. This same Act defined the practice of 'treating' more precisely and also laid down that intimidation of any kind would be met with a £50 fine. Lastly, election auditors were appointed to deal with and verify election expenses. Obviously, whilst voting remained open some measure of bribery continued, but a Commons Committee was able to indicate its decline by 1852 with only nine void elections occurring during that year.
In addition to increased costs and legislation, the whole character of electioneering was changing. No longer was it enough for the candidate to parade through the town, greet his supporters and attend a banquet prior to the election to ensure success. Much of the work of winning votes, of rewarding supporters, of contesting rival voters' right to vote, etc., was now the business of the party agent. Men like the Liberal James Boodle and the Conservative William Lawrence were becoming far more instrumental in the election success of their candidate and it was by good electioneering and careful planning of the canvass that M.P.s were elected, rather than by the colour of their blood. Such increased competence and 'professionalism' in elections was taken a stage further when it became apparent that two or more parties were to contest an election. The study of Cheltenham shows that as the Tories became so much more politically competent within the borough, the Berkeleys could afford to leave nothing to chance and once again electioneering became more costly for them.

Another factor was the development of the political press in voicing opposition arguments and raising the general political awareness of the borough. Whereas it had been claimed after the 1832 return that Lord Segrave had commanded both Cheltenham's newspapers, by 1848 significantly less of the press represented the Berkeley interest. The continual thorn in their side was The Cheltenham Free Press whose importance will be discussed later; but equally as effective in its attacks on the Berkeleys was the Tory press.

In 1831 the Rev. G.R. Gleig, a keen Tory party supporter, had suggested to Wellington that in order to revive party fortunes and popularity, a subscription should be raised with the aim of establishing at
least one Tory newspaper in every county. 'You must find an organ through
which to address the people at large, otherwise all is over', he warned
Wellington. * At the time, though, Wellington complained of a lack of
sufficient funds to make this possible, and as we have seen this was also
the case with Cheltenham's Tories. However, as the party began to attract
men of property and wealth, like the Agg-Gardners, so too was it able to
establish its own sympathetic press. In Cheltenham the Tories were
represented first by The Cheltenham Journal and The Looker-on, and then
these were joined by The Cheltenham Chronicle when it swapped its
allegiance from the Whigs in 1839. The Tory press went on to flourish in
the 1860s with the addition of The Cheltenham Express.

Undoubtedly any explanation of a Whig collapse and a Tory revival
at local level would have to recognise the significant contribution made by
the party press in stirring up political feeling and keeping issues alive
within the borough. In particular, the press assumed great importance
around election time, not only in putting party arguments and discrediting
those of the opposition, but in the more practical business of informing
voters such as how and when to register; by announcing the deliberations of
the registration court; by introducing and endorsing new candidates; by
publishing the work of the election committees; and lastly, when it took
place over a number of days, by informing voters on the state of the poll.
In the days before radio and television, the newspapers next to the
personal canvass were the most effective way of mobilizing a party vote - a
fact, as we have seen, which did not go unnoticed by the Conservatives.

Finally, but not least importantly it would seem, was the fact
that quite simply for families like the Berkeleys the fun (and ease) of
participating in politics was decreasing whilst the cost was increasing.
J.R. Vincent indicated that this was perhaps an even more general malaise:

'in England the decline of the aristocracy was simply a decline in the areas of national life where it had influence and authority, and a decline in the will to govern'.

Politics were becoming, moreover, the preserve of the professional party politician of a kind that the Berkeleys clearly were not. As Professor Gash pointed out in his essay on Francis Bonham, it was now an age when:

'the creation of local constituency associations and the obligatory registration of voters provided a new statistical basis for the work of the party managers and made possible for the first time the effective national organisation of a party; ... moreover, though the degree of specialization implicit in the establishment of a full-time salaried election manager had not yet been reached in this period, the differentiation clearly exhibited in Bonham's career between the work of the whips and patronage secretary inside and the work of the election manager outside the House of Commons is a significant stage of development'.

Berkeley 'despotism' was perceived by its contemporary critics as essentially feudal (a term that historians nowadays approach with rather more caution!) in its basis and only, as H.J. Hanham points out, 'the prolonged political adolescence' of the borough allowed it to survive there for as long as it did. Eventually, stimulated by the various and conflicting arguments of the local press, the town rose up above 'the petty interests of the keepers of circulating libraries and vendors of oranges and lemonade' and assumed a political character worthy of the nineteenth
century and in doing lost its need for Berkeley gratitude.

If, as Hanham suggests, it was its political adolescence that allowed the town to submit to Berkeley influence, from what sources, then, did the town receive its political maturity, which eventually enabled it to shake itself free of Berkeley control? What stopped Cheltenham becoming a fashionable, genteel political backwater – in fact the kind of docile pocket borough that Lord Segrave had hoped to establish when he first supported Reform in 1832? A closer look at the town would suggest that political education and pressure for change came as much from below as above. For although never successful in terms of party or election results, radicalism in Cheltenham provided a kind of philosophical enlightenment in the minds of many of its voters which, if not taking the role of an agent of change itself, must certainly be seen as a catalyst acting on Whigs and Tories alike in effecting change in the political development of the borough. For in contrast to Cheltenham's seemingly vigorous embracing of radicalism, (so much so that Ashton argues its national importance in these matters), the more established political sentiments of the Whigs, Liberals and Tories alike appear, in the town, to have remained generally distanced from some of the more prominent national party issues of the day. It is noticeable how often only passing reference is made in the election speeches of the various candidates to such issues: the Corn Laws and attempts to modify them (particularly given the rural nature of the area); the Secret Ballot (Berkeley and the Liberals only seem to adopt this after much pressure from the radicals); the removal of religious disabilities; opposition to the 1834 Poor Law, are all given some mention in election addresses but if debate in the town's non-radical press can be taken as an indicator, they seem to have had relatively little impact on borough
politics and locally they do not appear to have fired the voters or to have been decisive in the outcome of election contests. Rather, what does seem to have determined party divisions more sharply were the combined factors of religion (Close's role has already been discussed in the previous chapter), such local issues as the Town Improvement Bill of 1839/40, and, not least, matters brought to light and fuelled by the radical press, as will be explained later.

It would be incorrect, however, to think of Cheltenham as a political backwater, for despite the general lack of discussion and debate of national party issues (with the noted exception of the Free Press) there was a manifestation and mirroring of national trends and issues played out at a local level. The period started with a large degree of public euphoria and support for the Whigs as framers of the Reform Bill. In addition, many radical hopes were raised as Tory arguments against the Act were swept aside. Gradually, however, when the limited nature of Whig reform became apparent the radical opposition grew more critically outspoken even to the point, as in 1835, of challenging the Whigs at the polls. Meanwhile in the background the Tories were regrouping themselves and were taking a more considered look at the opportunity presented by the Reform Act, yet at the same time appearing as the guardians of the established Church and State against a vortex of change and instability. Peel saw the need to adopt the spirit of reform, albeit in a cautious manner, and to take advantage of the new political system (particularly with respect to the registration of voters).

At both a local and a national level the Tories began to experience a degree of election success, culminating in them taking office in 1841. That year the radicals were thoroughly disillusioned by the Whigs
and even considered voting with the Tories to bring the Whigs down. In doing so the demise of eighteenth century Whiggism was finally brought about. Its only way forward was to recapture radical support by adopting a more progressively Liberal programme such as that put forward by Gladstone from 1868 onwards. Those Whigs who failed to respond to the new political climate (and surely the Berkeleys had already found themselves in this category) were mostly driven out by the 1867 Reform Act which enfranchised that very class whose interests they had neglected for so long.

Undeniably, any explanation of the collapse of Berkeley support has also to consider factors for the rise of their main opponents, namely the Tories, and this will be the subject of discussion later in the chapter. However, with respect to Cheltenham, I would suggest that within the process of the town's political development it was the assertiveness of its more radical elements which was the initial factor in the borough's shift away from a docile pocket borough to one where there was a generally higher level of political awareness and more open party contest. For chronologically it is they who launched the first challenge to the Berkeleys by contesting the 1835 election at a time when the town's Tories had not even organized for themselves a candidate of their own - in fact Lord Ellenborough was most disparaging about the possibility of contesting the borough at all!

As has been suggested, at first glance, if we look at election success alone, it would seem that the town's flirtation with radicalism was wholly pathetic until we realise that it was perhaps remarkable that such an event should have taken place at all. The poor performance of the radicals and Chartists was not through their own failings but rather the failure of the political system of the time to give them any kind of
independent voice. Even if Cheltenham's artisans did in some cases possess the vote it is most doubtful that given the town's relatively recent tradition of radicalism, such men would have dared used it against their social 'betters' or spiritual leaders. In this respect Ashton points out that the newness of the borough's radicalism (in fact of its whole political history) meant, in effect, that the radicals lacked both local organization and leadership - both their candidates, Colonel T.P. Thompson and William Penn Gaskell, were outsiders. 15

We also need to bear in mind that Chartists and radicals did not seek necessarily to elect their own candidates to Westminster but instead sought to change the ideas and opinions of those already there. W.E. Adams writes of the nomination of R. Gammage during the 1852 General Election:

'R. Gammage's visit [to Cheltenham] coincided with the occurrence of the General Election of 1852. We therefore got him nominated so that he might have an opportunity of making a speech from the hustings. This was all we wanted, for of course it would have been utterly useless to go to the poll in the then state of the franchise. Suffice it to say that Gammage made what we all thought a capital speech for the Charter'. 16

In this respect then, we should judge the success of Cheltenham's radicalism rather in terms of the political climate and informed debate it encouraged. Its political sub-culture might not have been a wholly enfranchised one (yet), but its strength and articulation was such that neither Tories or Whigs could afford to ignore it. Nationally, such was its significance that it helped elevate the former to office in 1841 17 and was instrumental in the reconstruction of the latter from a party with outmoded eighteenth century values to those of nineteenth century Liberalism.
Locally, it was responsible partly for the revival of the Tories (if only by setting an early precedent that the Berkeleys could in fact be opposed), and in the main for the collapse of Berkeley control.

Such a view of political activity and stimulus for change 'from below' (although not always of a radical nature) is, it seems, consistent with the findings of a number of other local studies of the period, not least that of C. Fisher in his attempt to examine the cause of a Tory revival in South Nottinghamshire in the 1830s. He writes:

'Politically, the most active members of rural society in 1837 were drawn from the less prominent groups of smallholders, professions and rural tradesmen...it would seem that such groups which normally only figure as dependants and agents in studies of the nineteenth century electoral system, could play a role of considerably greater significance'.

Of course, Fisher's smallholders, etc., would have been in possession of the vote, but his general point is certainly true of Cheltenham's working class Chartists, middle class radicals and Dissenters alike.

Having emphasized the role of radicalism within Cheltenham, it perhaps needs to be said whence it sprang. Two factors remain central to what Ashton calls in wider terms the 'radicalization of the Spa'. The first is the town's almost unprecedented wealth of newspapers and journals. It should not be surprising that a Spa town given over to the pursuit of leisure should have been so well endowed in literary terms. However, what does remain noticeable is that amidst all the fashionable and genteel journals and gentlemen's magazines there flourished The Cheltenham Free Press whose aim it was to enlighten and educate all on the political issues of the day.
The *Free Press* (with a circulation of 19,900 in 1834) was typical of many radical journals of the time in that it benefited from the reduction of newspaper tax in 1836. Of these journals it has been written that they were 'destined to transform national politics by helping working class Ultra Radicals to create a Chartist party' as well as 'to further the cause of middle class radicalism in its support for a more liberal programme of reform' and in both respects their 'influence on the politics of the time may be easily underrated'. Such could be said to be true of *The Free Press*. Although in the main a radical paper, *The Free Press* often tried to avoid a mere party line, encouraging its readers to make up their own minds rather than presenting a dogmatic argument. Yet at the same time the paper showed a fearless opposition and a determination to speak with integrity even against such powerful figures of the Establishment as Lord Segrave and the Rev. Francis Close.

Furthermore the paper provided a valuable focus for all those political groupings denied an independent political voice through the parliamentary system of the day. Radicals like W.P. Gaskell and Colonel Thompson, and Chartists such as W.E. Adams, John Goding and J.P. Glenister, all had the opportunity to express their views through its columns. In terms of extending the political development of the borough, *The Free Press* must take the highest place amongst Cheltenham's newspapers and journals.

A second and rather different factor in the political maturation of the borough is provided by the other 'Colossus' who bestrode the town alongside Lord Segrave, yet with his feet firmly planted in a different camp. The Rev. Francis Close's thirty year (1826-56) tenure of the incumbency of the parish church of St. Mary's has been described by some observers as the 'Close season' and that under him Cheltenham became 'the
Close Borough'. Undeniably his influence on the town was enormous and amongst his lasting contributions were four new churches, four national schools, six infant schools and a new hospital, a female refuge for prostitutes and a training college for teachers. However, for Close, education was just one weapon in his evangelical desire to spread the Gospel, particularly amongst the poor of the parish.

Under Close virtually every aspect of the town's life came under his scrutiny. His most notable early successes came against the Berkeley family whom he regarded as no more than degenerates, even to the point where Grantley Berkeley claims he put a curse on them! More tangibly, Close both managed to stop the town's three day race meeting for a time and to prevent the rebuilding of the Royal Theatre when it burnt down in 1839. During the years in which he dominated the scene, it has been argued that the town's character changed and that his evangelical preachings and activities 'sounded the death-knell of Georgian Cheltenham'. This view was also somewhat begrudgingly borne out by Grantley Berkeley when he stated that Close:

'took the lead with a certain class of society, and kept it. A man in a red coat was looked on as a 'scarlet abomination'; balls were forbidden; and, in short, Cheltenham no longer was a place for innocent amusement; the old regime was condemned and doomed, and waltzers, quadrille dancers, and sweet ballad singers sent to the deuce.'

His influence extended even to the politics of the borough, and this in turn had two notable effects. First as suggested, is the obvious one in that his attacks on the Berkeleys gradually weakened their hold on the borough by giving credence and moral support to the Conservative cause. His
own profession that he had always tried not to meddle with the politics of the borough had not prevented him on a number of occasions publically declaiming Craven Berkeley as an atheist and on other occasions in giving public support to Tory candidates, such as James Agg-Gardner in 1841, to whom he sent 'hearty good wishes for the ultimate triumph of sound Conservative principles, over loose and latitudinarian liberalism'.

Munden asserts strongly that during the period whilst Close was influential in Cheltenham his brand of reforming evangelicalism produced a profound change in the ethos of the town from the support of worldly activities of health and pleasure seekers of a previous generation to a more sober-minded place given over to education, exhibitions, choral societies and conferences. If such a transformation did in fact take place, it would help explain in more general terms why the town's electorate found itself drifting away from the Berkeleys towards the more level-headed interests of a business and propertied class who looked towards Conservatism to protect and represent its political interests. As Bradley mentions in his survey of the impact of evangelicalism, there was generally 'a marked decline in race-going, in attendance at theatres and other entertainments, and a closing down of several gaming clubs and pleasure gardens through a lack of custom'. If the impact of Close was as strong on Cheltenham as Munden claims it was, one can quite easily appreciate the aptness of Bradley's observations and the importance they would have locally explaining the declining influence of the Berkeleys within the borough.

Such a view of Cheltenham is also confirmed by G. Hart who wrote of Tory success in the 1860s that:

'There were various interacting causes for the failure of the
Liberals to maintain their long hold on the town. The influence of the Church was for many years thrown on the side of the Conservatives. The Proprietary College attracted as residents many families who were traditionally Conservative. The sale of the manor to a resident Conservative family was followed shortly afterwards by the withdrawal of the Berkeleys from the political scene.  

The second effect of Close's activities was a more subtle process which had a more telling effect on the borough than simply the loss of its 'noble patron'. His desire to spread a knowledge of the Gospels by an almost aggressive evangelical zeal led him into conflict with the influential forces of religious Dissent, particularly Unitarians, as well as movements of a radical political nature such as Chartism and Owenism. He argued that if Christians did not educate the poor they would be led astray by 'knaves, traitors and Chartists' and the fruits of their teaching would produce 'disaffection, discord and a dissolute population. Close's attempts to bludgeon these groups into submission merely strengthened their resistance. On a number of occasions the Spa's Chartists, for example, held sit-ins in the parish church; and Owenite groups boycotted both Sunday church and Sunday school. At various times the town also acted as a meeting place where radical speakers (sometimes of national fame, e.g. Feargus O'Connor, Henry Vincent and Ernest Jones) were heard, particularly at the Mechanics' Institute.

The most notorious clash with Close's spiritual authority over the town came in 1842 when George Holyoake came to Cheltenham to deliver his so-called 'blasphemy lecture' for which he received not only national attention in the press, but over six months imprisonment at Gloucester.
However, on this occasion, Close, who led the main attack on Holyoake, was not the only villain in the eyes of the town's radicals, as Craven Berkeley, 'a friend of the Church', had also spoken on behalf of the town's magistrates in the House of Commons.

Undoubtedly, Close's attacks on religious Dissent and political radicalism within Cheltenham far from weakened these groups but rather stung them into activity, often with the effect of encouraging them to temporarily overcome their differences. As Ashton says, 'at times his aggressive church leadership had the unexpected effect of creating, over some issues, a series of complex inter-class alliances between radicals, liberals and Dissenting elements. Moreover, as both nonconformist and working class consciousness within the Spa grew it became increasingly less enamoured, not just of Close's authoritarian clerical control, but more generally of Berkeley's political dominion and with the tepid nature of the Whig programme, locally and nationally. Instead it began to look to form its own political voice, or at least to follow those of a more persuasive liberal nature. Such was the strength of the tradition that it established, that even as late as the 1860s Cheltenham radicals continued a more independent line calling for a more socialist programme and independent working class candidates.

It can be argued, then, that Close's religious activities within Cheltenham provoked a determined resistance from working class radicals (albeit without the vote) and middle-class Dissenters (who were in possession of the franchise) alike. This resistance was based on an attack on all unreasonable forms of control, both secular and lay, and acted as a scourge to both Whigs and Tories alike. It was also based on the spread of political knowledge and awareness amongst the lower order to an often
impressive degree. In this respect debates on foreign policy amongst Cheltenham radicals in the 1850s appear very well informed. Westminster critics could rest assured that the town now demonstrated an interest in politics (uncomfortably so, some of them might feel!) well above the 'petty interests of vendors of lemonade'.

The growth of an assertive radicalism was one major factor in the political maturation of the borough's electorate - the rise of a competent and effective Tory opposition was another. In contrast to the interplay between Whigs and Radicals, Tory success in Cheltenham is a less complex process and can perhaps be explained in more straightforward terms. Initially their position in the town was very weak for three reasons: their opposition through the True Blue Clubs to the Reform Act; their lack of an aristocratic and wealthy patron; and the more general point that the political tone of the County had largely tended towards Whiggism in the eighteenth century. All this left the Tories high and dry when Cheltenham first became enfranchised in 1832 and as we have seen, even 'central office' was most disparaging about the prospect of ever fielding a candidate there.

However, this situation did not last for long. The recovery of the Tory party in the 1830s was not just a local phenomenon but a national one which has been well documented by a number of historians. It is not the purpose of this thesis to rehearse reasons for that recovery, but rather to consider how they might have applied more specifically to Cheltenham.

One main factor in Tory emergence in Cheltenham is linked to the fortune of the Liberals and the perceived divisions in their ranks between Whigs, Liberals and Radicals - it has already been mentioned that the first
opponent to Berkeley in 1835 was a Radical and not a Tory. Alongside this division there was in Cheltenham disillusionment with the record of the Whigs generally and Craven Berkeley more specifically as reformers and potential allies from the lower classes were drifting away in their support for the Whigs. By contrast Tory hopes received the fillip of Peel's Tamworth Manifesto of 1834 and it is from that date that their fortunes began to pick up. Correspondence between Peel and Bonham (his party agent) indicate that there was an active local party in Cheltenham (albeit one very low on funds) and much good work in preparing the constituency was being undertaken by their local agent, William Lawrence.

By 1837 the Conservative party began to start taking the prospect of winning Cheltenham (and indeed a general election) seriously - so much so that an attempt, albeit a rather speculative one, was made by Jonathan Peel to contest the borough. Peel only managed to poll just half the votes of Berkeley, but his appearance in the borough showed the Tories that they could begin to field an effective opposition against the Berkeleys. Nationally the party won over one hundred more seats in 1837 and Gash argues that it was 'a crucial point in their recovery'.

Unfortunately we do not have poll books for this election, but that of 1841 allows us to speculate as to where support for the Conservative candidate might have come from. The highest proportion of their vote came from the 'gentry' category, and in the context of Cheltenham we might justifiably assume that many of these were retired army and naval officers whose natural inclination would have been Tory. In addition, another source of Tory support would have come from those followers of the Rev. Francis Close inspired by his attacks on Papism and low church latitudinarianism. And finally there is also evidence from an
examination of the ranks of the Town Commissioners that Conservatism alongside its more traditional areas of support (the Church and the landed interest) was finding favour with many of the town's newly emerging propertied and business classes.

The contribution of Close to the success of the Tories is not one which should be ignored. Under his evangelical regime a new moral tone was transforming the borough through which the town's Tories began to adopt a more self-confident stance against the Berkeleys. So much was this the case that by the 1840s they were able to put forward their own local candidates - men of some stature and property. Increasingly in the light of Close's transformation of the town away from that of pleasure resort and Spa, Berkeley patronage was perceived by sections of the community as self indulgent and of little real use to the future development of the town with its emerging importance as a centre of education and its increased potential from emerging businesses afforded by its new rail link. In effect, many Cheltenham voters were turning towards candidates who more successfully reflected the town's changing outlook than did the Berkeleys. The Agg-Gardners particularly stressed that they were men of local property (they owned both the manor and the town's largest brewery) and Charles Schreiber emphasized his own connection with Cheltenham College.

It has been pointed out by some historians that the Tories did not emerge on a wave of social reform or economic legislation, but rather as defenders of the Constitution, the Established Church and the landed interest. Consequently, in Cheltenham their main attacks concentrated on Berkeley's support for the abolition of the Church rate, disestablishment of the Irish Church, the repeal of the Corn laws and later his support for the Ballot. With religion so much at the fore-front of Cheltenham
Conservatism we can see how its political campaign there was inextricably linked to Close's own Evangelical activities - both saw themselves as defenders of the true and natural order of things.

As well as the work of Close, two other important factors must be mentioned which helped bring success to the Conservative party in Cheltenham. The first was the emergence of a healthy Tory Press which by 1839 had the predominant share of the town's newspaper circulation. Second, as mentioned, was the work of their local party and local agent William Lawrence whose activities mirrored the national efforts of Francis Bonham. Election defeat and the Reform Act of 1832 had forced the Tories to re-assess themselves and in 1834 Gash argues that as a result 'they grew steadily as a national movement organized as no political party had ever been organized before for the purpose of winning parliamentary elections'. As previous chapters have indicated the nature of these activities in Cheltenham: the registration of voters; the organization of the poll and drafting petitions being some of the more important. There is some indication then, that Conservative success in the 1840s was as much due to grass roots organization as it was to the lead given to it by national figures such as Peel and Bonham.

However, in considering the position of Cheltenham's Tories surely it should not seem so surprising to us that a borough like Cheltenham should have had a strong Tory interest. Gash states that broadly speaking Conservatism was the 'party of the counties and small boroughs, as opposed to industrial areas and large towns'. Fashionable Cheltenham with its genteel society of retired officers, its annual migration of health seekers, its many churches and schools, its music and fox hunting was a far cry from the industrial towns of the north and midlands. Cheltenham had no
heavy industry, nor was it the centre for any large scale production. Such a town, more so than most perhaps, would surely be at home with the party of the Establishment. Again as Gash says, for the Tories 'revival after the Reform Act started earliest and continued most effectively in the counties (and smaller boroughs?) because the gentry and the clergy provided the natural social basis for the constitutional defences which the Conservative party was designed to erect'.

Rather, what should perhaps appear more surprising is that the Berkeleys held Cheltenham for as long and as successfully as they did. What is more, as this thesis suggests, is the less expected notion that Conservatism did not emerge as the first natural opponent of Whiggism but took its place behind a wave of radicalism which pervaded aspects of Cheltenham political life in the 1830s and 1840s.

In view of its significance, one last aspect concerning Cheltenham's radicalism remains to be mentioned: having been prevalent in these two decades, why did it not continue to flourish into the 1860s and 1870s? For, in contrast to the claim made in the early 1830s that Cheltenham was the most important centre of radicalism in the county, it was not even in a position to send a delegate to a national conference proposed in 1857. This is partly explained in that in some respects the 1850s were a watershed for the borough. Both forms of authoritarian control which had largely prompted radical activity in the first place had all but disappeared. By 1857 both Lord Segrave and Craven Berkeley had died and the family's remaining hold over the borough was slight. In addition Francis Close had left Cheltenham to take up a new appointment in Carlisle.

Furthermore, by now both parties saw the need to respond more convincingly to radical pressure: the Conservative candidate Schreiber
pledged to improve the condition of the poor; Francis Berkeley championed the cause of the ballot. Both these directions were mirrored nationally by Disraeli's 'Tory Democracy' and Gladstone's new Liberalism. The stimulus for political change, which had come largely from below in the 1830s and 1840s was, a decade later, to come from above with a new state of affairs at Westminster. As such Cheltenham radicals could find a more positive programme of reform in either party (Disraeli was about to offer them the vote in 1867 and Gladstone brought in the Secret Ballot in 1872) and gradually they became absorbed, for the time being, into more mainstream political activity. It could be argued then, that Cheltenham radicalism did not disappear after the 1850s but rather, as both the Liberals and the Tories sought to adopt programmes which would accommodate radical demands, it felt less need to take such a prominent stand.

In summary, the most important contribution made by Cheltenham's radicals was in that by challenging the 'old order' both in Church and in State, they effected a change in the very political nature of the borough. Clearly it was the political awareness and activity taking place amongst the town's radicals in the 1830s and 1840s, above all else, that produced an electorate no longer prepared to surrender its representation compliantly into the hands of its 'noble patron'. In effect they helped create a political climate which changed Cheltenham from a pocket borough rife with nomineeism to a constituency in which either party would have to produce an effective and informed case if it wished to be successful. For the Berkeleys, to be master of the fox hounds was now not qualification enough to be political master of the borough. As Robert Gammage, radical and Chartist, argued in his election address of 1852:

'as there was no aristocracy in point of talent, so neither ought
there to be in politics'.

With such a statement, radicals throughout the borough (and indeed the country) were signifying the end not only of Berkeley control in particular but more generally the wider system of borough-mongering and "illegitimate" aristocratic control left intact by the 1832 Reform Act.
CHAPTER SEVEN


4. House of Commons Session Papers, HC 1847/8 xi.


14. J.K. Walton, *The Second Reform Act*, (1987) p. 39. (Walton argues that even after the 1867 Act 'long-term influences involving such basic aspects of life as employment, religion, schooling, neighbourhood, club-membership and even drinking place were more likely to have a strong impact on voting behaviour than were the issues raised and brandished during particular election campaigns').


18. C.F. Fisher 'The Tory Revival of the 1830s', *Midland History* Vol. 7 (1981) see also:


E. Jaggard, 'Farmers, Nabobs, County politics in Cornwall 1832-48', *Southern History* Vol. 7 (1985),


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27. F. Close, 'Co-operation Recommended', (1848)

28. Holyoake's own views of these events can be found in his *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*. (1893) Chapter 28.


30. O.R. Ashton, *op. cit.*, (Radicalism and Chartism in Glos.) p. 385

31. O.R. Ashton, *ibid*, p. 386


34. N. Gash, *op. cit.*, p. 145

35. *Ibid*


38. O.R. Ashton, *op. cit.*, (Radicalism and Chartism in Glos.) p. 386
APPENDIX A

A selection of addresses and ballads for Cheltenham elections 1831-1848.
Sources: GRO D3893, GRO D2025, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum (*).

1831-32.

1. Address by H. Norwood Trye, 7 March 1831.
2. Address by T. Gray, 7 March 1831.
3. Address by C. Berkeley, 7 March 1831.
4. Address by W. Payn, 8 March 1831.
5. Address by J. Gardner, 8 March 1831.
6. Address by C. Berkeley, 10 March 1831.
7. Address by G.J. Hall, 9 April 1831.
8. Address by C. Berkeley replying to charge of being an atheist, 19 April 1831.
10. Address by 'Mira', 29 April 1831.
11. Address by 'Independent Fellow-Townsmen', not dated [1831].
12. 'Song of Liberty', not dated [1831], (printed by T. Willey a leading local chartist).
13. Address from 'Reform Association' by T. Gray, 11 May 1832.
15. Address by 'Vox Populi', 16 November 1832.
17. Address by 'A Parishioner' containing extract from the Bishop's 'Charge to the Clergy' not to be involved with elections, 20 November 1832.
18. Address by C. Berkeley (with list of committee members), 21 Nov. 1832.

1841

22. 'Old Principles better than new Corn Bills', not dated.
23. Address by 'A Brother Operative' against repeal of the Corn Laws, not dated.

1847-8

   MS note 'It must be remembered there were about 100 Roman Catholic voters—latterly sufficient to win an election—an ugly fact!!!'.
25. Address by Willoughby Jones, 30 July 1847.
26. Address by C. Berkeley, 1 September 1848.

Miscellaneous.

27. 'Song' referring to Peel's canvass at the 1837 election.
28. Print by G. Rowe 'The Berkeley Banquet' after the 1841 election. (#)
29. Cartoon referring to election of 1847.
30. 'The Cheltenham Ragged Regiment' referring to 1848 election.
To the Inhabitants of Cheltenham.

Gentlemen,

As several of the late Candidates for your Suffrages, in the Event of the Bill now before Parliament passing into a Law, have resigned their Pretensions, I hope it will not be considered Presumption in me to offer myself to your Attention.

Had I been aware that the Anticipation of the Return of a Representative for the Town of Cheltenham would have caused so determined a Canvass as is now going forwards, (premature as it appears to me) I should not have been so backward in venturing to urge some Claims to your Attention.

The Claims which, in all Deference, I presume to lay to your Consideration are, my long residence in your immediate Neighbourhood, the connexion my Family have for Generations held with your Town, and the private Interest which, from local Circumstances, I must necessarily possess in its Prosperity.

My Politics are those of a Constitutional Tory, extending, however, to those liberal Principles which have advanced with the Course of Events, so far as they can with safety be applied, either to the reforming or the remodelling of the Constitution.

With this Declaration, if the present Bill is carried through Parliament with such Modifications or Additions as I shall approve, I feel confident that my Appeal to the then Electors of Cheltenham will not be made in vain, but that I shall, by their willing Suffrages, be placed in the proud Situation of their Representative in Parliament.

I remain, Gentlemen,

With every Feeling of Respect and Attachment,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

H. Norwood Trye.

Leckhampton Court; March 7th, 1831.
We, the undersigned Inhabitants, Householders of Cheltenham, fully aware of the manly Independence, which you have uniformly evinced upon all Public Occasions,—sensible also of the great zeal which you have always manifested to support the best interests of the Town of Cheltenham;—and, being individually satisfied that no man is better qualified to represent us in the great Council of the Nation, do hereby request you, in the event of the Legislature extending the Elective Franchise to Cheltenham, to offer yourself as a Candidate for its Representation. Should you accede to this our request, we pledge ourselves, collectively and individually, to use our best exertions to return you to Parliament, being conscious that we cannot better show the due sense we entertain of the Boon intended to be granted us, than by electing a man whose public and private worth is so well known by a long residence amongst us.

March 5th, 1831.

The above Requisition, subscribed by a most respectable number of Inhabitant Householders of Cheltenham, was presented to Mr. Gray, to which he returned the following answer:—

Friends and Fellow Townsmen,

Your Requisition is now before me—I am at a loss for words adequately to express my feelings at this moment of my addressing you. It must suffice for me to say that my gratitude for your kindness is most fervent and unfeigned. To find after a Residence of twenty-seven years amongst you, that my humble efforts in the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty, of Reform in our Parliamentary Representation, and of a Revision and Retrenchment of the Public Expenditure, have not been thought wholly unworthy of public regard—to find that the triumph of those liberal principles of domestic Government, for which I have to my best ability in vainly contended, through good and evil report, and to the sacrifice of my own personal interests, has been at length permanently established—to find that, in raising my voice in their support, I have contributed my mite towards producing the extension of the Elective Franchise, which will now soon emancipate the populous town of Cheltenham from the number of the unrepresented; to have been selected by you, as being deemed worthy of the distinguished honour of becoming the first Representative of your free choice, and of being made the instrument in your hands of giving an example of the purity of Election.

These considerations afford so many fair and legitimate causes of self-congratulation and exultation, that I may be allowed freely to indulge in them without the reproach of vanity, although I must not be permitted further to reap the fruits of your professed kindness.

Under the impression of such feelings, I should not for a single moment have hesitated to accept your flattering invitation, at once so gratifying and honourable to me—if imperious necessity did not compel me most reluctantly to decline it. The more maturely I consider the many disadvantages attendant on that situation, with which it has pleased the Almighty disposer of events to visit me, and which your partiality has induced you greatly to underrate, the more deeply is my mind impressed with the apprehension of the many practical inconveniences and difficulties, which would be opposed to the faithful and effectual performance of the duties of the trust, which your kindness would delegate to me. I feel that it would be impossible for me, even at the total disregard of every personal consideration, to surmount those difficulties and to discharge those duties in a manner, which would be satisfactory either to you or to myself. Nothing short of a conscientious conviction of this incapacity on my part could have forced me to come to a resolution so painful to my feelings; but with that conviction on my mind, to delay the frank avowal of it, would be an act of gross injustice towards you, and but an ill return for your esteemed favour, which will never cease to be remembered, with the sincerest gratitude, by

Your very faithful and respectful Servant,

T. GRAY.

March 7, 1831.

TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE Town of Cheltenham.

Gentlemen,

I congratulate you, most sincerely and respectfully, on the probability which now exists of your sending a Representative to the Commons House of Parliament of this Kingdom. It is a privilege to which the importance of your Town and its Population fully entitle you. Should the present measure for this purpose be carried into effect, it is my intention to offer myself as a Candidate for the honour of representing you, and should I be so fortunate as to succeed, I can with truth assure you, that to no one will I yield in the indefatigable discharge of my duty towards you, and in my vigilance and zeal to promote your Interests in Parliament.

I have the Honour to be,
GENTLEMEN,
Your devoted and faithful Servant,
CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

Cheltenham, March 7th, 1831.

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

The Abstinence which I had prescribed for myself is no longer permitted to me, and I venture respectfully to solicit the Favour of your Suffrances in the Event of the Elective Franchise being extended to this Town.

I have the Honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

WILLIAM PAYN.

RODNEY LODGE, 8th March, 1831.
TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF
CHELTENHAM.

I observe in the Journal of Yesterday, that the Hon. Craven F. Berkeley has publicly announced his Intention to become a Candidate for your Suffrages, should the Elective Franchise be extended to Cheltenham.

When I consider how much this Town is indebted to the Liberality of a distinguished Member of his Family, I feel he has a strong Claim on our Gratitude; and I am of Opinion that I cannot better serve our general Interests, than by resigning any Pretensions I might otherwise have had to the Honour of being your Representative in Parliament.

I trust, that in thus tendering my Resignation, I shall merit your Approval; and if I take Permission to solicit a Retrospect of my past Conduct through Life, I think I may, without much Imputation of Vanity, venture to indulge the Hope, that this Instance may be deemed an additional Proof of my humble Endeavours to preserve the Peace and promote the Prosperity of my Fellow Townsmen.

I cannot but embrace this Opportunity to convey my sincere Thanks to those numerous Friends who have so kindly offered me their Support, and to assure them, that it will be equally my Duty as my Pride to preserve their good Opinion.

I have the Honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your Obliged and Faithful Servant,

John Gardner.

High Street, March 8th, 1831.

Cunningham and Co. Chronicle Office, Pittville Street, Cheltenham.
INHABITANTS of CHELTENHAM ARE EARNESTLY REQUESTED TO
WITHHOLD The Promise of their Votes UNTIL THE HONOURABLE Craven F. Berkeley, AND A NUMEROUS BODY OF THEIR Fellow Townsmen, FORMING A COMMITTEE in his Favour, Have an Opportunity of personally soliciting the Honour of their Suffrages, to enable him to become their Representative in Parliament, in the Event of the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE being extended to this Town.

CHELTENHAM; 10th MARCH, 1831.
Gentlemen and Fellow Townsmen,

Apprehensive that a more prolonged silence on my part might be construed into a want of determination to pursue the object of my late short Address, I have deemed it reasonable that you should expect from me a renewal of my declaration to offer myself to your notice, and an explicit avowal of the motives which influence, that Appeal, as well as a profession of the public principles upon which I ground my pretensions to your co-operation and support.

My motives, then, are mainly influenced by a sincere and ardent desire to contribute my humble efforts to promote the happiness, political views, and welfare of a Town, where I have for some years been on terms of amity and good will with all its inhabitants, and towards whom I look forward with proud confidence and anxious hope, that through the medium of their favour and support, I shall be enabled further to extend, cement, and improve those sentiments of attachment, if placed in the enviable station of their Representative in Parliament, whereby I shall be enabled to avail myself of more frequent and substantial grounds of proving the kind feelings which unite me to them, and to their interests.

With respect to my political principles, I have only to observe, that they are in entire and perfect unison with those opinions, already so ably and fully expressed by his Majesty's present Ministers, and that I consider the Reform which they contemplate, as essentially and imperiously required for the due representation of your rights, and the honour and dignity of the Crown.

Business of considerable importance called me away from Cheltenham at the moment I first offered myself to your notice, before I had an opportunity of paying my respects to you individually, but so soon as the Bill shall have passed into a Law, I shall not be wanting in evincing the same zeal to solicit your suffrages, that (if I should be fortunate enough to become your Member) I shall always be ready and willing to exert for your prosperity.

As I consider the House of Commons expressly organized for the purpose of conveying the faithful and unbiased wishes of the People, I shall therefore pursue no undue means of acquiring or influencing your Votes, as I consider that such a line of proceeding would directly militate not only against the principles I profess, but also against the provisions of that very Law which I trust will give you your Representative rights.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

GAGE JOHN HALL.

Sackville Street, London,

April 9th, 1831.

IN HABITANTS OF CHELTENHAM.

April 19th, 1831.

GENTLEMEN.

Your devoted and faithful Servant,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

After what has passed between Major PAYNE I am under the necessity of informing you, that the Proprietor of any Report injurious to my Character, and to any person who may have entertained any doubt on the subject, has, to a certain degree of credit, been due to the Major, and by far the greater portion of the public. I have not made any comment on the above, and myself.

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

Town of Cheltenham.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Object of the REFORM BILL having been defeated, CHELTENHAM will, for the Present, continue deprived of that Privilege to which she is so justly entitled; namely, of returning a Representative to Parliament. Nevertheless, Gentlemen, I feel confident that the Day is not far distant, when the Triumph of CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM must be accomplished, and the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE be extended to this highly favoured Town.

It therefore only remains for me to return you my most sincere Thanks for the liberal Support which I experienced from all Quarters during my late Canvass; and I beg to assure you, that when the desired Object shall be attained, I will again do myself the Honour to pay my Respects to you individually; until which Time, I rely with the most unbounded Confidence on the valuable Pledges I have received.

Believe me to remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your devoted and faithful Servant,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

GERMAN COTTAGE; April 26th, 1831.

CUMBERLAND and Co. Chronicles Office, Fossvile Street, Cheltenham.
LOYAL SUBJECTS

OF

William the Beloved.

THE paternal voice of England's patriotic King, calls upon his people to uphold the prerogative of the Crown, and their own inherent Rights,—nay, their very existence as a Nation, through the constitutional selection of Representatives of abilities and principles, sufficiently commanding and sedulous, to secure the restoration of tranquillity, by crushing at once, the infuriated conspiracy of tyrannical Bullies. Let that of every Briton respond to the sacred call, till one overwhelming bulk and integrity, resounds throughout the Empire, and scatters dismay into the very heart of the Oligarchy! Let every Briton instantly bestir himself. Let each—devote himself—hand—head—heart—to ensure the return of uncompromising Champions of his Rights, and of such alone. Let the strictest scrutiny be established throughout the Empire, into the political principles of every Candidate for the approaching Representation.—Let those of each Candidate be thoroughly, impartially sifted. Let no regard be paid in this great national emergency, either to private friendship or to private worth; but, let the spontaneous rejection of every Candidate, who shall not solemnly BIND himself to the entire, to the unqualified support of the whole of Lord John Russell's Bill, be marked with the contumelious indignation of a long outraged people! Yes,—unprepossessed by hope,—unawed by fear, let every Briton bestir himself in the arduous scrutiny, as though on his own single decision depended the fate of his Country! Arduous, indeed, is the task,—since on its result rest the future alternatives of Peace & Plenty, or of Chains and Famine! Insidious—desperate—fool—are the machinations of the Oligarchic Conspirators! Let the energetic vigilance of PATRIOTISM meet them at every turn—scan them through every fawning protestation—and circumvent their every hypocritical subterfuge; that the combined energies of a magnanimous patriotic Monarch, and his affectionate patriotic People, may, through a glorious REFORM, disperse them, as the Sun dispels vapours, as dark and noxious as their framers own imaginations.

M I R A.

Cheltenham, April 28th, 1831.

Printer, 15 James's Street.
Reform of Parliament.

TO THE

INDEPENDENT INHABITANTS

OF

CHELTENHAM.

The Ministers have retracted their pledge, and announced the most unsatisfactory and misleading principles of a practical, efficient, and extensive Reform of Parliament. Cheltenham is nominated to return this MXVIII, should that measure be brought to a gloomy and successful consummation. In the fulness of expectation, therefore, of this town participating in the political councils of the Empire, it is our duty to take into immediate and deliberate consideration, what course of conduct will be expected of us, and what expectations we are entitled to hold, from the local interests, and for the purpose of Reform; and whether in that disposal, it be not imperative upon us to adhere consistently to the whole meaning and spirit of Reform in word and deed.

Assuming Cheltenham, since the lapse of more than a century, after many and dubious vicissitudes of fortune, has grown up from a humble town to a large community, equal, indeed superior, to many other places, in civilization, utilities, and public spirit; it cannot be expected that she will countenance any principle, nor her conduct upon the expected important occasion should be consistent and commensurate with her scale, station, and character in the country.

Improved with this prominent feeling, and aware that our townsfolk will be bent with pressing and permanent solicitation by various Candidates and Parties, we come to keep back UNPLEDGED and UNPROMISED, and, meaning to proceed neither well nor wisely, by what principles they should be guided and acted, and what manner of man it will be believed they should be prepared to meet the object of their choice.

We submit, whether in weighing the essential qualifications of Candidates, the following among others ought not to be drawn principal points for their consideration.

Whether the Reform which Cheltenham ought not to be ONE, who possess a stake in the country generally, whose property, residence among us, and other claims, identify him with the local interests of this town in particular; whose established principles have been long proved and known to us, as constitutional and independent, and whose disposition throughout will be to co-operate with the wishes and interests of his constituents? Whether he should not be, wholly unconnected with foreign interests, and untainted with foreign principles. The vital end and purpose of Reform being to exclude the previous corrupt influences and traffic in corruption which have flowed from this insipid source, we, governed by constitutional principles, have called upon the Reformers to render all things, should take heed, that we avow ourselves do not set any example of corruption, and depart from the meaning and practice of our professions?

Whether he should be ONE, wholly unconnected with place, pension, and manner of every description whatever, under the Government, for so man, so hampfered and transmuted, however wisely in private life, can act up to his profession, or fulfill the duties of his Constituents?

Whether he is not ONE who also connected with those branches of public service, the Army and Navy; since no such man can perform, at the same time, the professions of his profession, and those of a Representative of the People, nor direct himself as an interested party, in the measure which necessarily attaches to his situation?

Whether he is not ONE, wherever he may be, who has either held back and equivocated, or refused to join the country of large, and the Independents of this Town more especially, in admitting the principle, and praying for the measure, of Reform; but on the other hand, either openly or covertly, have been opposed to all Reform, ought not, by such conduct, to have disclaimed himself, in the eyes of every man, for a Representative of this place, and desirable to be regarded as only an interloper, matching unpersuasively and unworthily at the boon which has been tried for and won by others?

Whether he is not ONE, who, above all others, the most eligible individual, who, though good report, and ill report, have been always the unceasing advocate of Reform, and every liberal principle, even when to advocate the cause was unpopular, who has been the champion of the Irish, and local interests of this town, upon all public and private occasions, and whose wishes of his Constituents, and who is a stranger, not permanently residing amongst us, ought not to be considered ineligible!

Whether he is not ONE who has entered into the spirit of the measure, as aifter the same, to advice the &c., as a friend of the measure, and to dwell upon the benefit of the country and his constituents. Whether we should not give the preference to such a man, who is a tried man, and found trustworthy, known to us, and desirable amongst us, though he were deprived of sight; for whilst we know that one who has lost his vision honors under a physical impossibility of seeing his way to the Treasury Chamber, we also know that the loss of one family is compensated by the greater force and concentration of others?

Anxious for the honor, independence, and real interests of Cheltenham, we have shadowed forth those principles which ought to constitute the resolution, and fix the moral course of our Townsmen. With these as with persons, the measure of importance, and a decided step and character ever afterwards. As you commence, so you will continue! And upon the talents and integrity of whom, you shall act, to represent us and the country, will depend the interest of beauty and utility, you are to answer from Reform. Let Cheltenham, a young hild, give her hand with the purity and dignity of legitimate public virtue, that was from Reform. Let Cheltenham, a young hild, give her hand with the purity and dignity of legitimate public virtue, and let the same principle, as a friend of the measure, and to dwell upon the benefit of the country and his constituents. Whether he is not ONE who has entered into the spirit of the measure, as a friend of the measure, and to dwell upon the benefit of the country and his constituents. Whether we should not give the preference to such a man, who is a tried man, and found trustworthy, known to us, and desirable amongst us, though he were deprived of sight; for whilst we know that one who has lost his vision honors under a physical impossibility of seeing his way to the Treasury Chamber, we also know that the loss of one family is compensated by the greater force and concentration of others?

Certain Independent Fellow-Townsmen,

THE
SONG of LIBERTY,
ADDRESSED TO
The Electors of Cheltenham,

In the dark frowning sky, on the banks of the Chelt,
    See the day-dawn of liberty rise;
While conquer'd Corruption slinks off with a groan,
And before Independence's adamant throne
    The daemon Coercion fast flies.

Rear the standard aloft, let it pierce the high heav'n,
    That the people surrounding may see
That the poor, the despised, have the power to resist,
And lifting on high the unmanacled wrist,
    That they dare to be upright and free.

Though Oppression may curb ye, and raise in your breasts
    The indignant emotion awhile,
Yet soon each will lay his free hand on his heart,
And say——“I have acted an Englishman's part,”
    And look on the past with a smile.

But, oh! for the crew who will crouch to receive
    The proud foot of Power on their necks;
Let them know, as they pour down the wages of scorn
They are forging the chains which their babes yet unborn
    Will enslave and eternally vex.

Tell them too, that their forefathers bled to secure
    To the poor and the virtuous man,
Those noblest of rights which they thus barter down,
And then let them try those reflections to drown,
    And then let them laugh if they can.

But for you, my brave brethren, who spurn at the bribe,
    And the threat with defiance still meet,
Be ye firm, and let nothing your triumph decrease,
But march by the banners of Order and Peace
    To the olive-crown'd Victory's seat,
Loyal and Patriotic
Reform Association

"Pro Aris et Focis."

Friends and Fellow Townsmen,

WHEN our Association commenced its labours, its chief promoters were aware of the restless machinations of those who were inimical to the Rights and Liberties of their Country; but they did not deem that those machinations would so soon have proved successful.

The Crisis is now arrived; an Administration combining the highest talent, with the most unflinching honesty,—possessed of the entire confidence, and entitled to the deepest gratitude of their Countrymen, has been defeated in its attempt to bestow upon the People of England the inestimable gift of a full and adequate Representation. The reins of Government are again about to be consigned to the hands of men whom we believe to be unfriendly to the concession of our just Rights,—of men, under whose ascendency the Country has been involved in unnecessary wars,—incurred an intolerable Debt, and had it not been for the unsullied conduct of Freemen would have been forever stripped of its most vital privilege.

It is true that the Tory Party now fancies itself to be the Friends of Parliamentary Reform,—of the Liberty of the Press, of Economy and Retrenchment, but we charge them with Political Duplicity. We say that their professions are belied by every public record of the Country. Not to advert to other points, we appeal to the Reform Question to their Votes in respect to the disfranchisement of Granpound and East-Retford;—We ask which of them ever gave a vote in favor of the motion which Lord John Russell year after year so fruitlessly brought before the House of Commons? We remember the declaration of their great Leader, the Duke of Wellington, that no Reform was necessary. We have not forgotten the insult conveyed in the proposition to reject our Bill without even going into Committee;—nor can we ever forget the conduct of the men who, while professing to yield to the voice of public opinion, insidiously supported the second reading of the Bill, and then in the very first debate on its provisions, turned round—betrayed and defeated us.

Fellow Townsmen,—the time is come when every individual who values the prosperity of England must act for himself and act with energy. We call upon you to embody your strength. Already, has our Association met with the most encouraging support;—it numbers amongst its Members Peers and Commoners, of the highest respectability,—but we seek, we confidently look forward to the support of every independent Householder and Freeholder in our Town and its Neighbourhood. Our object is simple and clearly defined. The Members of our Association will yield to none in respect for the Laws,—and in attachment to the Institutions of their Country;—but satisfied that the future well-government of England imperatively demands that the People should again be admitted (through the medium of a Reformed Parliament) to an adequate share in the management of the affairs of their native land,—our associated Members stand pledged to use every constitutional means for effecting that object,—and will never cease their efforts till it shall be triumphantly accomplished.

Your worthy Churchwardens have appointed a Public Meeting for the purpose of considering the propriety of addressing the, Throne and Petitioning the House of Commons, for MONDAY NEXT, and we not only confidently rely on the attendance of every Member of our Association, but that the whole Town and neighbourhood will join in the expressions of regret at the defeat of the Reform Bill, and the Resignation of the late Ministers, which is now heard from one end of Britain to the other.

By order of the Association,

T. GRAY, Vice-President.

Cheltenham, May 11th, 1832.

Chester, May 11th, 1832
TO THE
Independent Electors
OF
CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to offer you my sincerest congratulations on the privilege of Representation in the Commons House of Parliament, which I hope and believe the Royal Assent to the English Reform Bill will, in a very few days, secure to you. An anxious desire to prevent the slightest degree of unnecessary agitation or excitement in your Town, has alone hitherto prevented me from any public expression of the sanguine and long cherished hope I entertain, of filling the high and honourable situation of your Representative in Parliament. The stage at which the Reform Bill has now arrived, calls upon me again to tender the offer of my zealous, honest, and unbiassed services. My political sentiments are too well known to need a detailed repetition of them; but I should neither do justice to you nor to myself, if I did not briefly renew the declaration of my firm attachment to the sacred principles of CIVIL and RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, and of my determination to support all such measures of RETRENCHMENT and ECONOMY, as may be consistent with the maintenance of PUBLIC FAITH, and of the PUBLIC SERVICE.

I have only to add, that so soon as the Bill shall become the Law of the Land, it is my intention to commence a personal Canvass, the result of which, on a former occasion, proved so highly gratifying to my proudest wishes, and which will, I flatter myself, on the approaching occasion, fully confirm my hopes of acquiring the high distinction to which I aspire.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient and devoted Servant,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

JUNE, 1832.

(CUNNINGHAM and Co. Chronicle Office, Pulteney Street.)
TO THE

ELECTORS

OF

CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

AFTER nearly two years have been passed, principally in endeavouring to obtain the Rights of Freemen and Britons, now happily confirmed to us by the M ARTA CHARTA, the REFORM BILL, and during which period a Majority of nine-tenths of the Inhabitants of Cheltenham have, of their own free will and accord, promised the Hon. CRAVEN F. BECKLEY, their Suffrages, unimpaired by Threats, undue Persuasion, Bribery, or any other unworthy Motive; and solely prompted by their honest conviction that the Candidate of their choice was a firm supporter of the just Privileges of the People, and of the unimpaired Integrity of the Constitution. I say—after knowing my fellow Inhabitants of this Borough had so reposed their confidence, judge of my astonishment, on hearing this morning that another Candidate—a Stranger, forthwith! had made his appearance in the Town, and absolutely proceeded to solicit your Votes in favour of his return to Parliament.

What! Does this Person, whose rank and education should have taught him better, or they have been bestowed upon him in vain—Does he think, for a moment, that the unbought favour and free Pledges of the Electors of Cheltenham, are to be transferred from a known Friend to rational Freedom and cheap but good Government, to him—a Man not known at all; and that at the beck and call of a Tory clique, in the same manner as the servants of the State may be conveyed with an estate, or bought for a price; or as the servile support of Flatterers and Hirlings is to be prostituted in a period more interesting to the unimpaired self-interest? I ask, when he knows that your firm resolves have long since been published and is possible for him or any one to offer you, as honest Englishmen, a greater or more presuming insult, than to depend on your Dishonour, on your Treachery, for his Triumph! Surely, none but the base would suspect such turpitude of conduct in their fellow men.

BROTHER FREEMEN! It behoves you with scorn to reject the solicitations of a Man who can suppose you capable of such degrading conduct as that he would have you commit, to secure to him, even the faintest hope of success.

Such an Election would indeed be an honour to him, but foul dishonour to you! Believe not, my Friends, that this honourable Man can have any such intention. Believe not that his Party can suppose you capable of voting so basely, if they know you—they know the truth, honesty, and patriotism of your character, and assuming they do so, I will not suppose them so far justified as to credit the possibility of their hoping for success.

But what, in that case, is their motive? I sadly fear it is to be traced to the worst feelings of the human heart—to disappointed ambition, and to a spirit of revenge for the defeat, by the good sense and determined spirit of the People, of their machinations to perpetuate the thraldom of the Country. And finding they can adopt no other means at present for the gratification of their malignity—they have resolved to disturb the peace of the Town, and destroy the harmony of its society, by subjecting both to the fierce rancour of a contested Election. No other profit or reward can they possibly reap from their meddling and mischievous labours! Let me urge you, therefore, to stifle in its birth this unlawful trial of your public virtue, this appeal on your consistency, this mendacious and vindictive attempt to render our peaceful and delightful Town the theatre of political strife, embittered by all the acrimony of party spirit.

My only object in entreating you to shun from your presence those who can believe you capable of breaking a promise—is to secure the public happiness, and good order of the Town. I have no fear that beyond their own Party, they will obtain a single Vote—for as an old inhabitant of Cheltenham, and knowing most of my fellow townsmen, I am assuredly believe, there is not one base enough to vote for the Hon. G. RYDER, after promising the Hon. C. F. BECKLEY.

Such men, if such there be, would disfigure the society in the age in which they live, and yet, according to the canvases which have been made by Mr. Berkeley's Committee, it is evident the Tory faction must arrogantly presume that there are a large number of such persons in Cheltenham, a town which has ever been distinguished by its character for political independence and integrity.

I can only infer that this attempt is made by Tories for the unambiable purpose of annoying their political opponents, and as such, I am convinced it will encounter, at your hands, the ridicule and indignation it so justly deserves.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your obedient Servant,

VOX POPULI.

CHELTENHAM, Nov. 16th, 1833.

Cunningham and Co., Cheltenham Office, Fanville Street, Cheltenham.
TO THE
ELECTORS
OF
CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

most cordially congratulate you upon the triumphant Result of this Day's Canvass, which has afforded a complete Refutation of the gross Libel upon the Character of the Electors of this Town—"THAT THEY WOULD FLY FROM THEIR PROMISES!!"

I shall have the Pleasure of renewing my Canvass on Monday Morning.

I have the Honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

Committer Room, 6, Colonnade;
Saturday, Nov. 17th, 1832.

The REV. MR. CLOSE in reply to the Letter of Mr. EVANS says—"I am thus accidentally brought into connection with the parties to which you allude, but I still hold myself perfectly independent of all the Political Parties into which this Parish is so unhappily divided."

How does this consist with the fact that the Signature of Mr. Close was amongst the first of those affixed to the Requisition to the Honorable Mr. Ryder, and also with another fact that Mr. Close had been for some time in correspondence with Captain Gordon on the subject of his offering himself as a Candidate for this Borough?

This is a strange mode of keeping aloof from all Political Parties. To Mr. Close, in his proper place and office, I am most ready to pay all due respect, nor do I now dispute his right of interference in the turmoil of Politics, but all will, I think, sincerely lament the act, who wish well either to the Church Establishment, or to his individual Ministry. They will regret, that he has at the Eleventh Hour espoused a cause which at this late season can only be crowned with success, by a direct breach of Moral and Religious obligations: and, that he has cast in his lot amongst those, who are day by day, running up and down the streets to intimidate and induce by other undue influence, the Tradesmen of this Town, to violate their promises to the Honorable Captain BERKELEY.

The Rev. Gentleman has at the same time afforded to his Flock a rare example of humility and Christian Charity, in thus coalescing with those very persons who have applauded, and feasted and cried up to the very skies, the itinerant advocate of Slavery, who publicly before a large assembly of his Parishioners, and afterwards in print, denounced him, as having given utterance to evil representations and untruth; and who also laid at his door, the charge of Cant and Hypocrisy.

Again, Mr. CLOSE avows that his support of Mr. Ryder is almost wholly based upon his approbation of his religious principles. Is it then consistent with Religious Principle for a Candidate after receiving from a Voter a positive assurance, that he has promised his Vote to another person, to press that Voter either to transfer his Vote to himself, or at least, not to fulfil the promise made to his opponent?

Is it even consistent with Religious Principle that he should suffer his Friends to do so in his presence, or with his connivance or knowledge. These Queries may furnish matter for doubt and disputation to Sophists and Casuists; for myself, who am but a plain Man, I cannot help thinking that he, who asks another to break his promise, will not scruple to break his own whenever it may suit his purpose, and he at once forfeits all pretension to high moral and religious principle.

What do we read in the 15th Psalm, on the subject of keeping Promises!!!

"Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle? or who shall rest upon thy Holy Hill!"

"He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance."

After reading the whole of this beautiful Psalm, and with the notoriety of the fact before their eyes, that the Honorable Captain BERKELEY had received the positive Promises of more than two-thirds of the Registered Electors of this Borough, can Mr. CLOSE and his new Confederates encourage Mr. Ryder to persevere in this vain pursuit?

One might have expected, that a conviction of the utter hopelessness of success would have deterred any man of gentlemanly and honourable feeling, to say nothing of religious feeling, from embarking in such a cause; and I sincerely hope for Mr. Ryder's sake, that he has been induced to do so, in ignorance of the real state of affairs in this Borough. He may perhaps soon find, that he has been made the Dupe and Tool of a Party; and those Clerical Intriguers, who have here and elsewhere interfered to prevent the return of Reform Candidates, may also find, perhaps, that their good offices will be remembered, unquestionably much to the advantage of the Church, in a Reformed Parliament.

Referring you to the late Charge of the Bishop of Gloucester to the Clergy of his Diocese, deprecating their interference in the approaching Elections,

Cheltenham, November 20th, 1832.

P. S. Why has Captain Gordon been unceremoniously thrown overboard, to make room for the Hon. G. D. Ryder?

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EXTRACT FROM THE BISHOP'S CHARGE TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER IN JULY LAST.

"Although I have already trespasscd upon your attention to an unreasonable length, yet I cannot be satisfied to conclude without offering my advice (which will, I trust, be heard without offence,) that you should refrain from plunging into the agitation of political conflicts. I refer particularly to the stormy scenes of contested elections, which, from the altered state of our civil polity, will probably be more frequent and more general than heretofore.

"It is true that a clergyman does not, by entering into orders, forego the rights and privileges of a citizen; and it would be unreasonable to expect him to forbear exercising his vote in a matter which so nearly concerns him as the choice of representatives who may have the power of disposing of his property. But the consideration of what is due to his sacred character ought always to overbalance every other impulse. If he embarks in such contests as an active partisan, he will probably be urged forward by the eagerness of the pursuit into scenes absolutely inconsistent with that character; he will lower himself in the esteem even of those whose cause he espouses; and among that part of his flock to whom he is opposed he will create feelings of disgust and offence, which whole years of devotion to his clerical duties may not be able to counteract."

J. J. HADLEY, PRINTER, JOURNAL OFFICE, QUEEN'S BUILDINGS.
GENTLEMEN,

On the close of this, my fourth Day’s Canvass, I cannot resist the warm Impulse of my Feelings, which prompts me to again offer you my most grateful and unbounded Thanks for the full Confirmation I have received of your former Promises.

From my long Knowledge of, and Acquaintance with, this Town, and with the manly and independent Spirit of its Inhabitants, evinced on all trying Occasions, I never could, for one Moment, entertain the Shadow of a Doubt of the Sincerity of your Professions.

I now congratulate you, from the very bottom of my Heart, upon that determined Fortitude which you have so eminently displayed (SOME OF YOU AT THE RISK OF GREAT PERSONAL SACRIFICE) by opposing an UNDAUNTED FRONT to the base and unprincipled Attempts of Intimidation and undue Influence with which you have been so repeatedly assailed.

It is my Intention to continue my Canvass until I shall have had the Pleasure of paying my Respect to every Individual Elector; and

I have the Honour to remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your very faithful and obliged Servant,

GRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

Wednesday, 21st Nov. 1832.

The following is a LIST of the COMMITTEE sitting daily at No. 6, Colonnade:

Airmage Mr. Edward
Alders Mr. Thomas
Beiragan C. H. M. D.
Burrill Sir Wm. Bart.
Bampfield Mr.
Bubb Mr.
Carrington Capt.
Cot Mr. W. H.
Chichester John M. D.
Capel Rev. C. H.
Evans Mr. W. S.
Eadie Mr. Thomas.
Shephard Mr.
Westbrooke John M. D.
Gray Capt.

Cydle Mr. W.
Haines Mr. Pea.
Haines Mr. Henry
Haines Mr. Thos. Builder
Haley Mr. J. T.
Jones Mr. Thos.
Jones Mr. C. W.
Jones Mr. W.
Jenner Capt.
Knight Mr.
Kell Mr. Frederick
Lever Mr. Samuel
Ludlow Capt. Richard Hard
Lowe Capt. James
Matthews Capt.
Oswald Sir Lotus

Ollney Colonel
Prince Mr. John
Read Mr. J.
Shedden Mr. Samuel
Smith Col. Carington
Smith Mr. M. Cusack
Smith Mr. Thos.
Thompson Mr.
Thompson Mr. T. H.
Trest Mr.
Thomas Mr. Jenkin
Williams Mr. G. A.
Watts Mr. Oliver
Watts Mr. McGregor
Walker Mr. Michael

BENJAMIN THOMAS, Secretary.
"Dr. Fosbrooke and The Liberty of the Press."

At a dinner, given at Turner’s Rooms on Tuesday, the 11th instant to celebrate the Honourable C. F. Berkeley’s Election, to represent the Borough of Cheltenham in Parliament, on which occasion, of course several hundreds of the respectable Inhabitants and Gentlemen of the Town were present, Lord Seagrave proposed, as a toast, “Dr. Fosbrooke and the Liberty of the Press,” although a Proprietor and Editor of each of the Public Journals of the Town were present. “There is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.” Dr. Fosbrooke and the Liberty of the Press! Ye Gods, what an alliance, it has no parallel in history, save that great military toast, “Corporal Scroggins and the Battle of Waterloo.” But enough of farce and folly; and to be serious, I would ask, whether the very flattering tribute thus offered to the public Press, especially to the two Papers of this Town, conspicuous as they have been for their abject servility, in advocating the pretensions of the House of Berkeley, was introduced by the Noble Lord, as a proof of gentlemanly feeling and good taste, or as a specimen of Berkeley gratitude.

How gratified the Independent Proprietors of the Cheltenham Press must feel, to find themselves thus honourably distinguished, after working per fas et nefas, to secure the return of his Lordship’s Brother. If they have any manly spirit left, they will remember, that the very day on which he mounted the highest round of the political ladder, they, his supporters, who had helped him up, were thus scornfully kicked away from under him.

A Reformer of Abuses.

December 17, 1832.
Well, Brother Elector, what think you of the coming Election?

What do I think, Sir, of it? I will tell you what I think—the Whigs will have hard work to get returned.

For why, Sir?

Because they have deceived the Country at large—In the first place, they promised they would make better times for the Poor! Now we can see what these times are—you may take a walk down the North Side of this Town, and there you will see THE GREAT UNION WHIG BASTILLE PRISON—not for the rogue and felon, but FOR THE INDUSTRIOUS POOR! This is the good the Whigs have done for the Working Classes. They have supported the Poor Law Commissioners—Lord John’s Amendment Act for Five Years to come, to allow the Pauper Five Ounces of Bread and a Pint of Water Gruel for Breakfast, while they themselves are living in luxury, out of the hard earnings of the Poor Working Class—they have transported and imprisoned honest men for speaking the truth—they have parted man and wife, against God’s laws—they have brought the Tradesman to a Labourer—the Labourer to a Pauper—the Pauper to a Beggar—and the Felon to the Gallows! and many have put an end to their existence in fear of the brutal Bastille Union. This is the system of our present Whig Government, which our blindfolded Knaves have supported.

Why, Sir, you make me tremble, if this is true!

I’ll never support the system again. They are a set of undermining pickpockets. Their system is as rotten as a pear. There is no confidence in them. The Constitution of Old England will become of no strength if ever such men are again returned. And now, at the last, they have brought forward the Corn Law Question, for “a house of refuge in the day of trouble.” Flying to it as a safeguard to place themselves in office again: but, I trust, the Electors of Cheltenham will see a little eye wise, that they may see, and not be led away blinded by the scent, fair speeches, and fine promises of the Fox, to get them into his boundary, to make a wholesale sacrifice of them, or prepare for them his Union Bastille Prison and the water gruel for their comfort and consolation. If it was in their power to repeal the Corn Laws, but they would not; they might have carried it when they pleased, and the Country would have supported them; but, when their bread was buttered on both sides they did not care for the Poor and Working Classes.

Brother Electors, look at the state of this Parish, and that will convince you of their mismanagement. Look at the Rates you pay! Two, three, or four years ago, when we had the Tories (as you call them) in office for this Town, our Poor lived well, and were allowed to attend the Parish Church, twice on the sabbath day; a little Tea and some home-brewed Beer (instead of water gruel and a dry crust) were allowed them for their comfort. Our Labourers and Working People could have a little assistance from the Parish, without selling their bits of Goods, and being brought to poverty. One, two, and three years ago, our Poor Rates were Fourpence and Firepence in the Pound, the Whigs made a push, and shifted the Tories from their office, and raised our Rates from Fourpence to One Shilling in the Pound, and rated every poor man that they could—established the Rural Police, and thus drained every shilling out of the poor man’s pocket to support a set of useless fellows. This is the system your faithless CRAVEN F. BERKELEY has supported. A Placard has appeared in our shop windows, calling him an “old friend—a faithful friend—a tried friend.” Yes! a faithful Friend, to transport poor men, and cause their wives and children to lament their husbandless and fatherless doom, merely for speaking the same opinions as Lord John and his party did before they got into office, and which the knaves pretended to support.

Brother Electors, come forward and support a man whom we can meet in our streets and unfold our grievances to face to face!

A WORKING MAN AND AN ELECTOR.
TO THE
ELECTORS
OF THE
Borough of Cheltenham.

GENTLEMEN,

Having received a Requisition, very numerously signed by all classes of my fellow townsmen, requesting that I would allow myself to be put in nomination for the Borough of Cheltenham at the next vacancy, I beg to assure you that I feel the high honor most deeply and sensibly, for I see that it will be very serviceable and useful to me, connected as I am with a large portion of the Lansdown Estate, whose growth and improvement I have ever endeavoured zealously to promote.

Based, therefore, as the invitation obviously is upon this principle and upon my connexion with the property, I cannot hesitate to accept it and though Thompson and myself may have managed it pretty well in private life yet if I can contrive to become a member of the House of Commons, depend on t, our sphere of usefulness will be considerably enlarged.

The principles of Thompson and myself have been well known to those whose intimacy we have enjoyed, at these principles we have not only never obtruded upon the pole, but for some very good reasons, done all we possibly could to keep them to ourselves.

I am a firm friend to Lansdown, and to the principles upon which this has become a great and powerful property. I will never lend a hand to impair it, or to endanger the safety of its Church or State.

Some desire for improvements in the HIGH STREET generally prevails, but the expediency of resisting them has Thompson and myself as great parties to a junction upon this common point of opinion.

For a constant recurrence to these improvements, calculated to paralyze the industry, depreciate the property, check the energies, and lessen the revenues of the Lansdown Estate.

At the same time, if there be any improvement in the High Street which I cannot prevent, I have no objection to be its advocate, but not one farthing more of any public money shall go towards effecting it than Thompson and myself possibly can help.

I need scarcely add, that identified as I am with Mr. Pearson Thompson, I shall be at all times zealously active for the local interests of both.

Before the election takes place I shall have opportunities of meeting the constituency and satisfying them (if I can) that by electing me they will elect a man who will impartially protect the rights of each property in the town, the privileges of each banking establishment, and do nothing whatever individually to advance the interests of his own, and I earnestly request your best exertions.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your very obedient humble servant,

ROBERT RIG.

*Gloucester, Birmingham, Swindon, and Cheltenham Railway Depot, Lansdown.*

W. PAINE, Printer, 127. High Street, Cheltenham.
Old Principles,  
BETTER THAN NEW  
CORN BILLS.

It is useless, the neighbours assure us;  
For mix and bar mother call sing a good song,  
And yourself hear an excellent chorus.

In your garret there stands, by your grandmother left,  
A circular little machine,  
Of its smaller appendages sadly bereft,  
I would have it repaired and made clean.

It would do for your maid-servant, daughter and wife,  
To play with, to fill up their leisure;  
It would make them industrious and happy through  
And save you a great deal of treasure.

That little machine, and one larger in size,  
Were beloved by the good dames of yore,  
Their companions through life, whence they drew  
their supplies,  
And the clothes that the family wore.

Their linen, their woollen, a mixture of both,  
Lindsay-woolsey the medley was named;  
Not a male or a female to wear it was both,  
Nor at church or at market ashamed;

The linen was stouter than Irish, they said,  
And the woollen, from black and white fleeces,  
Best in colour and cloth all the finer ones made,  
And would not near so soon wear to pieces.

These were the wise maxims of former times,  
And if farmers were happier then,  
It must heighten our follies and add to our crimes,  
Not to try the same maxims again.

Let a trial be made, Sirs, without hesitation,  
Adhere strictly to what has been said,  
And for CORN BILLS I'm sure you will have to no reason.

Nor for raising the price of our BREAD.

Bears - Farmer - has been your family friend,  
Have and let them know, your sons and daughters;  
That you make the best use of them,  
To fill up the brenting hole inостей.

Your Landlords please, your rent would be raised, we should pay them  
For food,  
And they'd leave you an old empty pitcher!
OPERATIVES!

The Corn Law repeaters have had a crafty plan to lower your wages, and change your food to the miserable diet of foreign workers, and, if you would not like it, they will get a fair deal for you. You would not like cheap, instead of dear, bread? you naturally answer "Yes." Well then, they say "If you will help us to get the Corn Laws repealed, you will have a big loaf for the same price you now pay for a small one."

Now, all this would be very well if it were the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but, it is NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH. If they once get the Corn Laws done away with, you may, perhaps, buy a CHEAPER loaf, but, rely upon it, you will NOT HAVE HALF SO MUCH WAGES TO BUY IT WITH.

Ask any Manchester manufacturer why, if the Corn Laws are repealed, to manufacture his goods cheaper; and he will answer, CHEAPER BREAD will be Cheaper. He ought to say, "BECAUSE WAGES WILL BE LOWER."

OR WHAT USE WILL CHEAP BREAD BE TO HIM UNLESS LABOUR IS CHEAPER ALSO? Where are the newspapers always talking of the price of foreign labour, and comparing it with English labour?

Because they wish to bring your Wages down TO THE FOREIGN SCALE.

Read what Mr. Greg, the Manchester Repealer, says upon this subject; and do not forget he is one of those who talk loudest about Cheap Bread. He says the Wages in Spinning Factories in foreign countries are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Weekly Wages</th>
<th>Hours per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>26. 9d. per week</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>30. 9d. per week</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persia</td>
<td>32. 9d. per week</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the Wages of the Manufacturing Operatives; Farming Labourers get still less. The same Mr. Greg states, the existing Wages of Farming Labourers in England are from 15s. to 30s. a week, which is, at least, three, and, in some cases, six times as much as the wages of foreign Operatives.

Now, in order to make a foreigner as comfortable as yourself, provisions ought to be from three to six times cheaper abroad, since the working classes there get that amount less than they do in England. But what is the fact? Why, that Corn, in England, for the last seven years, has averaged 54s. a quarter; and, at Danzig, which is the greatest of foreign Corn, it has averaged 39s. 6d. a quarter; so that Bread there is only about one-fourth cheaper than in England. Meat (which is very inferior to English) costs about 3s. a pound; being about one-half lower than in England.

The foreign Operative in England, receiving 15s. a week (which is the lowest Mr. Greg states the Wages of the Operatives to range), will spend weekly, for himself and family of five in number:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Bread, &amp; 2½ pt. of Flour, with Corn at 5s. a quarter</td>
<td>7s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Meat</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Vegetables</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Groceries</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Rent</td>
<td>1s. 10d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Clothing, Cos., &amp; extra expenses</td>
<td>1s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£1. 15. 0d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foreign Operative, if he bought the same quantity of necessaries, would have to pay, for himself and family of five,—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Bread, if he eats the same quality as yours, and with Corn at 5s. a quarter</td>
<td>7s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Meat</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Vegetables</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Groceries</td>
<td>1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Rent</td>
<td>1s. 10d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Clothing, &amp;c.</td>
<td>1s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£1. 15. 0d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, you see, he must have 9s. 10d. a week in order to buy Bread of the same quality and the same Meat, &c., as an English Operative; but he only earns, as you have seen from Mr. Greg's account, 5s. 8d. in the countries where he is best paid, and, in other countries, only 2s. 6d. a week. The consequence is that he cannot pay to buy anything but BLACK Bread and Cabcharges, with a little Grease to make Soup; and this is well known to be his daily food all the year round. Meat he never tastes, except two or three times a year on great occasions.

Thus, the Corn Laws to be Repealed, and foreign Corn to constitute the main supply of the English market, it is clear that English Farmers will grow very much less Corn; and, having less land under plough, they will want fewer Operatives. The men they turn off must go into the manufacturing districts for employment, and, then, the Master Manufacturers will have you at their mercy, for there are, already, more hands there than can find work at the PRESENT WAGES. The wily Repealers think, that with new comers asking for work, they can pit them against the old Operatives; and with such an abundance of hands, both old and new must come into their terms, or else starve. What those terms are, you can more than guess, from the way in which they are constantly talking of the advantage which CHEAP labour gives to foreign Master Manufacturers.

Remember, that when the Corn Law repealers talk to you of the Repeal and Cheap Bread, THEY MEAN LOWER WAGES.

In order that the Master Manufacturer may get high profits, you will have to subsist upon Oatmeal Bread perhaps, (which one Noble Lord, who is a Repealer, has said is very good food for the Working Classes); and, at all events, you will certainly lose the few comforts you now enjoy.

Take care, therefore, what you are about.

A BROTHER OPERATIVE.

Shenton, Printer, America House, America Passage, Cheltenham.
Liberal Electors of the Borough of Cheltenham.

BROTHER ELECTORS.

The Political Relationship which has existed between yourselves and the Hon. C. F. BERKELEY, is just closed by the Dissolution of Parliament, and you are necessarily called upon by the exercise of the Elective Franchise, to return a fit and proper person as your Representative.

The following is a list of the leading questions during the last few years, which peculiarly distinguish the Whig party, and which have been carried in Parliament.

REPEAL OF THE TEST AND CORPORATION ACTS.
CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE.
REFORM IN PARLIAMENT.
OPENING THE TRADE OF INDIA AND CHINA.
PENNY POSTAGE.
CORN LAW REPEAL.

Each and all of these measures, upon which Mr. Berkeley has had an opportunity of Voting since he first entered Parliament in 1832, has given his firm and unqualified support.

These important objects having been accomplished, it is contended by some in order to give the public mind a wrong bias, and king your attention from the real question, that the political difference between the Liberal and Conservative Policy is so trifling, that it is immaterial from which party your representative is selected. This is, to use the language of Lord Denman, "a delusion and a snare," in addition to a liberal government being entitled to our gratitude and support for the valuable measures it has brought to maturity, it is the most satisfactory guarantee we can receive for our future progress.

Much remains still to be done, and it is of great importance that a Whig and not a Tory shall be returned.

The Member who will, if I mistake not, most accurately represent your views and sentiments, is one who will not hesitate to vote in the new Parliament as follows:

To oppose all Endowments by the State for any Religious purpose whatever.
To vote for the application of the Surplus Funds at present in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, not for the Building of Bishop's Palaces and Endowing New Bishoprics; but to augment the Incomes of the Inferior Clergy, to promote the Instruction and Education of the People, and to Repair the Churches.
To abolish Church Rates.
To VOTE for THE BALLOT.
To abolish the Rate-paying Clauses of the Reform Act.
To complete Free Trade in all the necessaries of life.

the whole of these important measures the Hon. C. F. Berkeley is I understand prepared to give most cordial support.

Brother Electors, be not misled as to the grounds upon which you decide to vote at this election. Mr. Berkeley has fulfilled every promise given to you when he first entered the House of Commons as your Representative, and has cordially supported every measure adapted to promote happiness, and to extend the rights and liberties of the People. In conclusion then, let me entreat of you, to strengthen his hands, and not his opponents.

Cheltenham: July 24th. 1847.
TO THE

FREE AND INDEPENDENT

ELECTORS

OF THE

BOROUGH

OF

CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

The result of the Poll has, as I anticipated, established, finally and conclusively, the fact that Cheltenham is now a Free and Independent Borough, and that any future Member who seeks the Suffrages of its Constituents, must so on his own merits, and not relying on the name and influence of any Family, however powerful. The Town of Cheltenham, with its 40,000 Inhabitants, is too free, too enlightened, to be any longer a Nomination Borough.

By the active, zealous, and untiring exertions of all Classes of my Fellow-townsmen, I have, without any claims of my own, been placed in the proud position of our Representative, and I deeply feel the responsibility I have incurred. I shall, however, rely on your indulgence, and on a sincere endeavour to do my duty and to carry out the principles I have laid before you. I shall hope that my inexperience of Parliamentary fe may not interfere with my usefulness, either in promoting the welfare of my Country in watching over the interests of our Town.

I cannot express my gratitude for the reception you all gave me to-day at the Hustings. I was quite overpowerd by your kindness, and words will not express my feelings, for those of my Family, on this to me, and I hope to Cheltenham, ever memorable occasion.

Permit me now to express a fervent hope that all animosities, engendered by the late contest, may be buried in oblivion. And I feel sure that men of all opinions on political matters, will, ere long, agree that we have achieved a great victory, in securing from henceforth, for ever, the Freedom and Independence of the Borough.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most grateful and obedient Servant,

WILLOUGHBY JONES.

Evesham House, July 30, 1847.
TO THE

ELECTORS

OF

CHELTENHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

Having received a communication last night from Mr. Bickham Escott, requesting my assistance at the forthcoming Election, I lay before you my reply. I do not feel I have a right to publish his original Note, it being marked PRIVATE, but of course that Gentleman can do so if he thinks proper.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your faithful Friend,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

Queen’s Hotel, 1st Sept., 1848.

DEAR SIR,

Your note of this day’s date was delivered here last Evening, but it was not till late on my return that I received it. You inform me that on your arrival you did me the honor of calling upon me, but as you left neither card nor message, I was quite unconscious of that fact. With respect to the Election, and the announcement you make of your being a Candidate, and requesting my support, I have to observe that I think it would have been as well had you stated the principles upon which you venture to claim the suffrages of the Electors of Cheltenham, before asking assistance of me. I have to call to your recollection, that you sat some time in Parliament with myself as the representative of Winchester; and, during that period your public conduct was remarkable for such tergiversation and desertion of principle, that I confess my surprise at your presuming to seek assistance at my hands. Rest assured the hollow professions which I understand you to have made yesterday, will not hoodwink the men of Cheltenham. The political sentiments and feelings of Captain Robertson, under whose auspices you appeared, are too well known to need either explanation or comment; and if you will take a piece of friendly advice from me, you will keep the money which your share of the Hustings and Polling Booths will amount to in your own pocket, or bestow it upon some Charity, and depart hence with as little delay as possible, thus accomplishing a two-fold object, the saving of some two or three hundred pounds, and the small wreck of your political reputation.

I am truly yours,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

QUEEN’S HOTEL.

DEAR SIR,

Your note of this day’s date was delivered here last Evening, but it was not till late on my return that I received it. You inform me that on your arrival you did me the honor of calling upon me, but as you left neither card nor message, I was quite unconscious of that fact. With respect to the Election, and the announcement you make of your being a Candidate, and requesting my support, I have to observe that I think it would have been as well had you stated the principles upon which you venture to claim the suffrages of the Electors of Cheltenham, before asking assistance of me. I have to call to your recollection, that you sat some time in Parliament with myself as the representative of Winchester; and, during that period your public conduct was remarkable for such tergiversation and desertion of principle, that I confess my surprise at your presuming to seek assistance at my hands. Rest assured the hollow professions which I understand you to have made yesterday, will not hoodwink the men of Cheltenham. The political sentiments and feelings of Captain Robertson, under whose auspices you appeared, are too well known to need either explanation or comment; and if you will take a piece of friendly advice from me, you will keep the money which your share of the Hustings and Polling Booths will amount to in your own pocket, or bestow it upon some Charity, and depart hence with as little delay as possible, thus accomplishing a two-fold object, the saving of some two or three hundred pounds, and the small wreck of your political reputation.

I am truly yours,

CRAVEN F. BERKELEY.

HARPER, PRINTED FREE PRESS OFFICE, CHELTENHAM.
SONG.

Tune—"Abraham Newland."

Poor Peel may now start,
He's quite out of heart,
He'll never sure come to the Hustings;
His sort will ne'er do
In a Borough so true,
Spite of intimidations or worse things.

CHORUS.
For Berkeley's the man to defeat him,
By hundreds majority beat him;
It ne'er shall be seen
That our Orange and Green
Will suffer a Blue to unseat him.

Peel had better go down
To some poor rotten Town,
Take with him his kin from Tewkesbury;
They both see with shame,
That their old Uncle's name
Avails them but little, if any.

CHORUS.
For Berkeley and Martin will beat them,
What fun for the Whigs to defeat them;
And it ne'er shall be seen,
That the Orange and Green
Shall suffer the Blues to unseat them.

G. CUNNINGHAM, Chronicle Office, Pittville Street, Cheltenham.
Presented gratuitously to the Subscribers to the Cheltenham Examiner,
THIS PRINT OF
THE BERKELEY BANQUET.
Given at Pittville, July 8th 1834, by 1200 of the friends and supporters of
THE HON. C. F. BERKELEY, M.P.,
to conclude their return from the House of Cheltenham.
THE CHELTENHAM RAGGED REGIMENT

TUNE—"UMBRELLA COURTSHIP."

Come, all good people, young and old,
I'll tell you a joke,
I hope you will not think me bold,
If some I should provoke:

'Twas in the month of April last,
The truth you won't deny,
The yellows brib'd a traitor class,
To go and swear a lie.

Oh lorn, oh dear, oh lackaday!
What will the yellows do?
They've fool'd their money all away,
And lost their member too!

A regiment of the ragged race,
It's still in recollection,
They went to swear what never took place
At Cheltenham last election!

Captain W——r and Sergeant V——s.
A company did take,
For the learned to instruct their minds;
What blunders they did make!

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

They went to the old castle next
To make their troubles known,
Although the Lord was sorely vex'd,
Some sympathy was shown:

Then said the Earl, "You silly clowns,
We must not lose this chance,—
You give them 5—10—20 pounds,—
The money I'll advance."

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

There was one man among the rest
At first refused the braise,—
A Freeman's hundred pound was press'd
Says he, "I'll join the tribe;"
Away he went, to London bent,
And there he told his tale;
The hundred pound had such a sound,
It made them all look pale.

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

We'll have a man of our town,
Since he has given consent,
No more we'll have the B——y clown
To sit in parliament;
He may fight his dogs and bait his bulls,
For that is his delight;
But Gardner shall be our man,
Our battles for to fight.

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

The emancipation of our town
It soon will be complete:
B——y's gone his coat to pawn,
For Gardner to take his seat;
Lawyer P——e with all his might,
Used all his low-born wit
To deprive us of our real right,
In parliament to sit.

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

No; he knows well, the hypocrite,
That B——y's time is past,
That Gardner is the favourite;—
We'll have him safe at last!
Here's 3 groans for the B——y clown
And all the B——yites;
Here's 3 cheers for Agg Gardner,
In him we'll have our rights.

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.

Adieu once more to the B——y spouse,
The Barker and the Bun;
We'll have Agg Gardner in the house,
Then all our work is done;
Oh lorn, oh dear! what fools they were,
That they should be so vain
To expect to get their member in—
To parliament again!

Oh lorn, oh dear, &c.
APPENDIX B

Abstract of 'A List of Electors, 1841'.

Source: GRO D2025 Box 135.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea dealers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin plate workers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber merchant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trunk maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Upholsterers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Waiters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch makers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well sinker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheel chairmen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheelwrights</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White smiths</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine merchants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>655</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>4</td>
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APPENDIX B continued

Pie charts showing result of 1841 Poll as shown by occupation as a proportion of total poll.

Explanation of charts:

Group A **Gentlemen**: Gentlemen; Military and Naval Officers; Farmers.

Group B **Shopkeepers**: All service trades e.g. Butchers, Grocers, Merchants, etc.

Group C **Leg/Med/Fin**: Professionals e.g. Lawyers, Doctors, Dentists, Surgeons and Accountants.

Group D **Brewing**: Brewers; Inn keepers; Porter sellers, etc.

Group E **Building**: Builders; Carpenters; Masons; Plasterers; Painters, etc.

Group F **Tourism**: Hotel proprietors; Lodging House keepers; Coach operators; Flymen, etc.

Group G **Craftsmen**: Skilled artisans e.g. Bookbinders, Engravers, Smiths, etc.

Group H **Art/Tea/Rel**: Artists; Musicians; Teachers; Clergy.

Group I **Labourers**: Labourers and Servants.
Appendix C

Members for Cheltenham, 1832 - 1880
(Defeated candidates shown in italics.)

W. P. Gaskell. R. 25
Jonathan Peel. T. 298
J. Agg-Gardner. T. 655
Col. T.P. Thompson. R. 4
Hon. C.F. Berkeley. L. 907
Capt. E.C. Smith. C. 4
This election was declared void on petition.
J. Agg-Gardner. C. 848
On petition this election was also declared void.
1848. Sept. 2. G.C.L. Berkeley. L. 986
Bickham Escott. L.C. 835
Sir Willoughby Jones. C. 869
William Rider. C. 178
E.G. Hallewell. C. 655
1857. Mar. 27. F.W.F. Berkeley. L.
Charles Schreiber. C. 910
Hon. Col. Francis Berkeley. L. 1129
1868. Nov. 17. H.B. Samuelson. L. 1640
J.T. Agg-Gardner. C. 1468
H.B. Samuelson. L. 1842

Abbreviations: W - Whig, R - Radical, C - Conservative, L - Liberal,
L.C. Liberal Conservative (Peelite).
Edward Law (1790-1871), Earl of Ellenborough was educated at Eton and St. John's College, Cambridge. After leaving college he was ambitious for a military career, but his father desired that he should enter Parliament and he was elected M.P. as a Tory for St. Michael's, Cornwall in 1813. In 1813 he married Lady Octavia Stewart, sister of Lord Castlereagh, with whom he attended the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In 1818 he succeeded to his father's peerage. However, he fell into increasing opposition with Canning and, for a time, became an outspoken critic of the Government.

This opposition was reconciled when he took the post of Lord Privy Seal under Wellington in 1828. Later that year he transferred to the Presidency of the Board of Control, where he began his interest in Indian affairs. He remained in office until 1830 when the Wellington ministry fell. Throughout 1830-2 he vigorously opposed Lord Grey's measures particularly the Reform Bill. Not only did Ellenborough conduct a vociferous case against the Bill in the House of Lords but locally (having recently moved to Southam Manor) he gave much support to the True Blue Club in their efforts to defeat the Bill. As such, his diary contains a few (but significant) references to the political climate in Cheltenham at the time of the passing of the Act.

1. November 29th. 1831.
Lord Segrave, whom I met yesterday at Mr. Capel's seemed very hostile to the Bill, but thought that now it had been proposed it must be taken. He had much difficulty in preventing the formation of a Union here. I was surprised to find what extent the desire for the Bill had gone. He dreaded popular violence if anything short of the Bill should be proposed.

2. May 16th. 1832.
Mr. Straford called and told me the Reform Meeting at Cheltenham was a failure. Not above 20 gentlemen - plenty of ragamuffins. Mr. Peel tried to obtain a hearing and was nearly pushed out of the room.

Yesterday I met my Cheltenham Club. There may have been 60 present, perhaps more. I held moderate language, recommended oblivion and good humour, said even those who voted for the Bill might join us, for we assailed no man's rights, we only meant to defend own. The 3rd reading of the Bill must draw a line between Reformers and those who desire revolution or we are lost. The circumstance of the party are not such as to inspire hilarity, but our meeting was as good as could have been expected. It was not like that at Gloucester.
The feeling of the mob is decidedly worse than it was before the Bill was passed. I was insulted on Friday (8th) as I walked in Cheltenham, that is by cries of 'Reform' or 'Burke him' - 'Down with the Tories'. There was no attempt at violence and I did just as I should if nothing had been said. There was a mob of 4 or 500 people before the door of the hotel when I came away from the Club. Some wished me to have my carriage to the back door but I would not. There were 10 policemen who made a lane to the carriage, and of course much hooting, but my friends of whom 20 or 30 remained to see me off, gave a grand cheer and the mob were quiet. I am sure I did good both by showing my friends and enemies that I fear nothing.

I hope to get up a troop of yeomanry at Cheltenham, but this requires delicate management, or we shall have two troops on the other side and some fighting. Yeomanry however, we must have, or we shall be beaten.

From A. Aspinall (Ed.), *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries*, London (1952)
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   2. Parliamentary Papers
   3. Directories and Guides
   4. Memoirs and Diaries
   5. Books and collections

3. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Secondary):
   1. General Political and Party Histories
   2. Biographies
   3. Local Studies: Cheltenham
   4. Local Studies: Others
   5. Articles

4. UNPUBLISHED SECONDARY MATERIAL

Abbreviations:

CPL Cheltenham Public Library
GCL Gloucester City Library
GRO Gloucestershire Record Office

1. National
   
   British Library Add. Mss. 40617 Folios 27,30,41,48-52,81,83-4,& 94: papers and letters between Lord Ellenborough and Francis Bonham

2. Local Collections
   
   GRO Cheltenham Borough Records: minutes of Town Commissioners' meetings.
   GRO D1291: correspondence relating to the 1866 Cheltenham election petition.
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