

Voluntary Associations and the Civic Ideal in Leicester

1870-1939

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Abstract

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This thesis discusses the contribution of voluntary associations to the civic ideal in Leicester between 1870 and 1939. It demonstrates the growth in local voluntary associations over the period and illustrates the role they played in public life.

Voluntary associations throughout the period 1870 to 1939 helped in the management of local public affairs and provided an organized social life in the town. They promoted social cohesion and a perception of civic unity as well as allowing an expression of difference. Associational life in Leicester became denser between 1870 and 1939, mutating from an elite to a more inclusive model and involvement in voluntary groups that embraced the civic ideal helped previously marginalised groups to integrate into public life. Although national influence encroached on local associational life over these decades there remained a balance between local bodies and those with a national dimension, with branches of some national associations assuming a strong local identity.

The meetings of the voluntary associations helped structure an annual local calendar that was represented by the Leicester newspapers as part of a shared culture of interest to all Leicester residents. This regular programme of associational life underpinned the organisation and credibility of a 'one off' spectacular, the Leicester Pageant of 1932, an event which was supported by local voluntary associations, through which thousands of Leicester townspeople were mobilised to participate. The success of this occasion demonstrated that, in the 1930s, Leicester residents still retained a sense of civic and local identity. This is contrary to a perception in recent scholarship that the popularity of civic ceremony in provincial towns had decreased from the end of the nineteenth century and that this was symptomatic of a decline in the credibility of the civic ideal.

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Abbreviations

ROLLR	Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
FHL	Freemasons' Hall Leicester
ULA	University of Leicester Archive
ULL	University of Leicester Library
WL	Women's Library, London Metropolitan University

Introduction

In June 1932, the Leicester civic authorities in partnership with the county and local voluntary associations staged the Leicester Pageant, a ten day spectacle of historical enactments and public ceremony. Over 4000 local people actively participated in the Pageant, while many more took part in related events. A purpose built amphitheatre was filled to capacity every night and crowds of both locals and visitors thronged to watch the civic and industrial processions. The occasion represented Leicester both to its own residents and outsiders as a prosperous confident city; a place which had a working relationship with its hinterland and where the different groups who comprised the city population were united under a shared civic identity. The Pageant was initiated by the Leicester civic authorities, but its success depended on local voluntary associations through which town residents were organised to take part.¹

This study is about the contribution of voluntary associations to local identity and the civic ideal in Leicester between 1870 and 1939. It seeks to show that, despite social divisions among town residents, participation in associational life helped promote social cohesion and sustain a perception of civic unity, as well as permitting an expression of difference. The regular beat of a shared local calendar, the similar style of procedures and events adopted by associations as well as overlapping memberships and between groups all supported this. The local newspapers, throughout the period, played an important part in publicising associational events and conveying that, associational life, together with the activities of the civic authorities, was part of a

¹This brief summary is derived from a fuller description of the Leicester Pageant in Chapter Three, based on primary sources.

shared culture of interest to all town residents. It is also argued that this local public life continued to thrive throughout the decades 1870 to 1939, despite an increasing emphasis in Britain on London and on the national at the expense of the provincial. By 1939, the number of associations and the range of people involved had expanded. While at the beginning of the period, the major focus had been on the activities of a small wealthy elite, by the end, it was on the activities of a wide cross-section of the population, who had become active participants in local public life rather than mere spectators.

The link made by commentators between towns and voluntary associations has been a longstanding one. Weber identifies associations as a major characteristic of the city and a current generation of urban historians has explored the role of associational life in creating a specific provincial urban culture in the nineteenth century.² The contribution of voluntary associations to urban governance in provincial towns from the early nineteenth century onwards has been a focus in recent scholarship. The use of the word governance rather than government has corresponded to a wider view of how towns have been managed, with commentary moving from a more traditional narrow focus on the activities and achievements of the statutory authorities to include the part played by voluntary associations and institutions in the running of town life.³ An important influence in this strand of analysis has been the notion of the public sphere as conceptualised by Habermas, with its emphasis on the development of public opinion, as a curb and a supplement to government, generated by associations and publicised by newspaper coverage.⁴

² M. Weber, *The City*, (eds) D. Martindale and G. Neuwirth (New York, 1958), 65-92.

³ This emphasis on local governance, as opposed to government, can be seen in the collection of essays published in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (eds), *Urban Governance in Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), and also by the inclusion of a section entitled 'Governance' in M. Daunt (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 1990), 262-395. These commentaries take a wider view of how towns and cities were managed than more traditional accounts of local government, such as D. Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford, 1979), have done; although another commentary published in the 1970s, E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (London, 1973), broke new ground by highlighting the link between potential councillors and voluntary associations.

⁴ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 2005).

This study illustrates how the memberships of leading middle class societies contributed to a spectrum of views on what was needed to manage the town and then, adopting the role of active citizens, stepped up to provide it. The ‘civic gospel’ as practised in mid-nineteenth-century Birmingham had provided one model of civic duty and subsequently the New Liberalism, associated with thinkers such as T.H. Green and L. Hobhouse, also espoused a philosophy of active citizenship.⁵ Such ideas continued to dominate political thinking throughout the Edwardian period with working for the common good envisaged as both a duty and a self-realising activity, and seen as the correlative of individual rights.⁶ In Leicester, there was activity in a range of fields including the commercial, cultural, educational and philanthropic. In the late nineteenth century, longstanding voluntarily-run institutions, such as the Leicester Royal Infirmary and the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’, were involved in this, as well as new groups such as the Kyrle Society and the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the work of these groups continued while new associations emerged to meet perceived needs. A leading example of this from the end of the 1870 to 1939 period was the Leicester Rotary Club, which promoted active citizenship and was prominent in local public life during the interwar years. In this study of Leicester, the informal interaction of the Town Council and prominent voluntary associations, as reflected in the associational memberships held by town councillors, is often highlighted. An example of more formal influence is illustrated by the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’ which promoted and helped run the Town Museum from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and whose members played an important role in establishing University College, Leicester in the 1920s. However, by the interwar years, the type of active citizenship which demonstrated concern for the provision of civic facilities was not just the preserve of the middle class business men who comprised the membership of the Rotary Club and were still a force in the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’. A wide range of groups in the town with memberships from a variety of class backgrounds, including sports clubs,

⁵ See, for example, T.H. Green, ‘Lectures on the principles of political obligation’ in P. Morris and J. Morrow (eds), *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 2001), 213-93 and L. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (Oxford, 1964).

⁶ A. Vincent, ‘The new liberalism and citizenship’ in A. Simhony and D. Weinstein (eds), *The New Liberalism: Reconciling Liberty and Community* (Cambridge, 2001), 205-27.

Working Men's Clubs and Adult Schools were regularly engaged in raising money for local causes.

The connection between associational life and liberal democracy, with its stress on the active participation of citizens in public life, is also a longstanding one. In *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville famously remarked on the use by American citizens of voluntary associations to debate and manage a wide range of issues and he observed the capacity of associational life 'to keep alive and to renew the circulation of opinions and feelings in a way that government could not'.⁷ The recent revival of interest in the concept of civil society has focused the attention of contemporary commentators on the impact of associational life and led some to make similar observations.⁸ Morris, for example, defining civil society as the gap between family and state where relations are non-prescriptive, argues that voluntary associations functioned productively in nineteenth-century towns within this social space. As town populations grew and as the franchise was extended, urban voluntary associations 'provided an arena for making choices, for reasoned informed debate and for the collective provision and consumption of services in an open and pluralistic manner'.⁹ The flexibility of associational life added to its dynamism, participants could hold

⁷ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (ed.), R.D. Heffner (New York, 1956), 201.

⁸ Many commentators have traced the history and the range of meanings attributed to this term. A small selection of these, relevant to this thesis, is listed here. In J. Keane, *Civil Society and the State* (London 1988), 33-129, the author comments on the distinction between state and civil society as a useful tool for analysing, with the help of empirical evidence, the development of particular institutions their actors and interactions. This relates to the approach that has been taken here regarding the development of associational life in Leicester between 1870 and 1939. In E. Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (New York, 1994), 97-102. Gellner uses the metaphor of 'modular man' to describe a situation where individuals can hold multiple associational memberships because each group does not demand total and separate commitment. Overlapping memberships of voluntary associations are stressed throughout this thesis. A useful historical perspective on changes of meaning attributed to civil society is given in K. Kumar, 'Civil society: an inquiry into the usefulness of a historical term', *British Journal of Sociology*, 44 (1993), 375-95 and in J. Harris, 'From Richard Hooker to Harold Laski: changing perceptions of civil society in British political thought, late sixteenth to early twentieth centuries' in J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions* (Oxford, 2003). Harris comments on the ambiguity of the term civil society observing that 'classic' Scots and English writers including Locke, Hobbes and Ferguson identified the state as an institution of civil society. She points out, however, that commentators have more recently meant non-governmental bodies by the term. R.J. Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 289-301 cites Ferguson as an influence but in fact uses civil society to mean voluntarily-run bodies.

⁹ R.J. Morris, 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 289-301.

overlapping memberships and were not irrevocably tied to the associations they joined.¹⁰ This type of civil association underpinned the process through which successive groups, middle class men, working class men and eventually women were integrated into a democratic system. Associational life is seen as having encouraged mutually respectful ways of conducting relations, developed democratic values, encouraged members into politics and prepared them for leadership, as well as providing an alternative way of articulating opposition or the right be included, away from the more extreme expressions of class and gender conflict.¹¹ In this thesis, this process is perhaps best illustrated by the study in Chapter Six of the Leicester branch of the National Council of Women. By the 1930s, against the backdrop of the extension of the franchise, the active citizenship which had been demonstrated in Leicester by this association for nearly forty years, resulted public and widespread acknowledgement in the city of women's entitlement to status in public life.

This thesis sets out above all to emphasise the contribution made by voluntary associations, of all types, to social cohesion. In response to theorists who have stressed the isolation experienced by town and city dwellers, Briggs warns against an overemphasis on the Victorian cities as an anonymous whole. He makes the point that throughout urban centres there were groups bound by strong personal relationships. For example, in the mid Victorian period, relationships between Nonconformist ministers and their congregations were often close knit and more an example of *gemeinschaft* than *gesellschaft*.¹² In the last decades of the century, many churches met the challenge of a perceived decline in Sunday attendance and growing secularisation by encouraging church-based leisure activities in a range of clubs and societies.¹³ Leicester newspapers and parish magazines show that this was the case in Leicester and although commentators have remarked on a falling-off in this social

¹⁰ E. Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, 97-102.

¹¹ J. Garrard, *Democratisation in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform Since 1800* (Basingstoke, 2002), 5-6 and 121-216.

¹² Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 204.

¹³ See, for example, H. McCleod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London, 1974), x-xii, J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit* (Oxford, 1993), 150-57; S. Nicholas, 'Being British: creeds and cultures' in K. Robbins (ed.), *The British Isles 1901-1951* (Oxford, 2002) 330-48, for comment on the perceived secularisation of society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

life, at least by the interwar decades, Leicester newspapers were still recording a great many church-based social activities in the 1930s.¹⁴ From the late Victorian decades onwards, new opportunities for commercial entertainment rivalled associational life generally, whether church-based or not.¹⁵ Despite this, the lists of voluntary associations in the town directories increased from the 1880s onwards and continued to do so up to the eve of the Second World War, showing that the competition from commercial providers of leisure did not prevent voluntary associations from flourishing.¹⁶ This is illustrated in the study of town directories from the 1870s to the 1930s, in Chapter Three. Associations in Leicester during these decades varied widely in style, class composition and level of formality. However, what they shared in common was that they brought individuals together and created an organised social life in the town.

The discussion of associational life and social cohesion in this study draws on recent commentary on social capital. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam argues that participation in voluntary associations encourages an interdependence among individuals and groups that improves cohesion in societies and encourages active citizenship, benefits that he characterises as social capital'.¹⁷ He also introduces the notions of bonding and bridging social capital, with bonding social capital conceived of as inward looking and derived from the reinforcement of exclusive identity in a homogenous group. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is depicted as a more outward looking benefit, resulting from links made across social boundaries. However, as groups can be inward looking in some ways and outward looking in others, bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive. These concepts have been used to explore the ties that held individual Leicester groups together and the bridges that connected them with

¹⁴ R.J. Morris 'Clubs, societies and associations' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 420, refers to the 1890s as the peak time for church-based clubs and societies. S. Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London, 1976), 173-84, observes that church-based societies in the Edwardian years in Reading were less vibrant than they had been in the 1890s.

¹⁵ H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and culture' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1990), 305 and 330.

¹⁶ See Chapter Three.

¹⁷ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York, 2000), 1-24.

other groups, in selected strands of associational life and at particular times in the period between 1870 and 1939. Using this approach, Chapter Four includes a study of educational associations in Leicester in the 1870s and early 1880s, a section of Chapter Five surveys the Freemasons from the late nineteenth century to 1939 and in Chapter Six the Leicester Branch of the National Council of Women and the Baden Powell Youth movements are analysed in the same way.

Although there is a strong emphasis on social cohesion and associational life in this thesis, the intention is not in any way to deny the significance of class and gender division during the period either nationally or locally or to contradict other studies of Leicester which have focused on these issues.¹⁸ It seeks instead to balance these studies by illustrating that social divisions had not been destructive enough in Leicester to prevent a continuing perception of local solidarity in the interwar years, a perception that permitted the success of the Pageant in 1932.

It is also not the intention to deny that the shift in focus away from the provinces to London between 1870 and 1914 deeply affected aspects of social and economic life in Leicester, as it did elsewhere in Britain. The growth of London as a financial and social centre at the end of the nineteenth century, the increased centralisation in the management of education and social welfare over the period 1870 to 1939 and the general trend to a more homogeneous British society, encouraged by many factors from the mass circulation of newspapers to the impact of railways and the telephone, were some of the more obvious forces which encouraged this shift.¹⁹ However, it is argued that despite this, civic and associational life in Leicester still retained a local character in the 1930s. Approximately fifty per cent of associations listed in the town directory, in the late 1930s, were home-grown and the way in which some national associations were organised permitted branches to retain a local identity. Two examples of this were the Leicester branch of the National Council of Women and the Leicester Scouts and Guides, both of which are discussed in Chapter Six.

¹⁸ For example, B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism: Leicester Working Class Politics* (Leicester, 1987) and N. Newitt, *A People's History of Leicester* (Leicester, 2008).

¹⁹ See, for example, Harris, *Public Spirit, Private Lives*, 17-23, for a useful overview of this shift.

This analysis of Leicester's associational life over the long period between 1870 to 1939 also gives scope for highlighting longstanding continuities and for assessing when changes came and whether they came gradually or suddenly. In terms of the debate as to whether or not the First World War precipitated a 'deluge' of social change or whether there had been a more gradual evolution from the late nineteenth century, the development of Leicester's associational life, from the 1870s onwards, fits more happily with the gradualist model.²⁰ Both town directories, and newspapers, suggest an expansion in the number of voluntary associations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, continuing up to the First World War and beyond. However, what was noticeable in the interwar years was the higher level of publicity given to many groups which previously might have received some coverage but would not have been the centre of attention. Women's groups and non-elite groups, from Working Men's Clubs to Scout troops to church amateur dramatics societies, were all brought to life, especially by the increased use of press photography in the 1930s.

Why should Leicester be a particular focus for study? An important point of interest is the 1932 date of the Leicester Pageant. This event, as has already been observed, was an ambitious celebration of the civic ideal. It was staged through the cooperation of the municipal authorities and local voluntary associations and the success of the occasion indicated that the notion of a shared civic and local identity was still credible to Leicester residents. The success of the Pageant, however, contradicts a perception in recent scholarship-Gunn's *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Classes: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* -that the popularity of civic ceremony in provincial towns had decreased from the end of the nineteenth century onwards and that this was symptomatic of a decline in the credibility of the

²⁰ See A. Marwick, *The Deluge* (Basingstoke, 2006) for the classic 1965 depiction of the First World War and its aftermath as the sudden cause of cataclysmic, though largely beneficial, social change. Joanna Bourke's 1991 'Preface' to *The Deluge* is reprinted in the 2006 edition, ix-xxii. This discusses the debate that ensued about the extent of the impact of war on the social history in Britain after the publication of *The Deluge*. See again Harris, *Public Lives: Public Spirit*, as an example of the school of thought which focuses on the late nineteenth century as a time of social change and frames the changes of the interwar years in terms of continuity with the changes that were already occurring in the four decades prior to the war.

civic ideal.²¹ Gunn argues that the civic processions, popular in provincial towns in the second half of the nineteenth century, reached the pinnacle of their popularity in the 1870s. After this, a decline set in until 1914 finally marked the end of an era ‘characterised by the primacy of the local and the identification of politics with the specific urban milieu’.²² He highlights the elaborate public funeral of Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham in 1914 as an occasion which symbolised the passing of this era. Gunn acknowledges that the zenith of popularity for civic ceremony was not uniform in towns and cities and suggests that, in the smaller industrial towns, the highpoint was more likely to have come between 1880 and 1914. However, despite these differences in timing, he implies that a decline in the popularity of civic ceremony in the larger industrial cities led a general decline that became clearly evident in the interwar years. This, however, was not the case in Leicester where the most ambitious civic spectacular in the history of the town was put on in 1932.

This disparity indicates that the interwar years in Leicester were a highpoint for civic ceremony rather than a time when spectacular events of this type were no longer staged, and this equally suggests that civic and local pride were still a significant force in the city during these years. As this deviates from the pattern depicted by Gunn, further analysis of public culture in Leicester and its development in the late Victorian period and early twentieth century is of interest. Moreover, Gunn’s analysis, with its emphasis on Birmingham, and the northern towns of Leeds and Manchester, opens the way to analysis of the public culture of towns with a different economic base, size and geographical situation and the smaller town of Leicester, situated in the East Midlands, provides just such a contrast. Unlike the three cities highlighted by Gunn, Leicester did not make the full transition to a manufacturing economy until the late nineteenth century. The main development of the boot and shoe industry took place from the 1850s onwards, creating an important new industry alongside the town staple of hosiery and then full mechanisation and the addition of a

²¹ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class* (Manchester, 2000), 163-186.

²² *Ibid*, 181.

light engineering industry came in the last quarter of the century.²³ The second half of the century saw dramatic population growth, a rebuilding of the town centre from the 1860s and, in the 1880s, the provision of new amenities including parks and libraries.²⁴ This renaissance was marked in 1882 when the Prince of Wales visited Leicester to open the new Abbey Park. Fifty years later, the Leicester Pageant celebrated further developments in the built environment as well as promoting Leicester commerce. The relatively positive state of the local economy supported this for although the economic crises of the 1930s affected Leicester, further diversification of the local economy up to and during the interwar years meant that the city was comparatively prosperous.²⁵ This strengthened the impact of the Pageant, which conveyed a message of unity supported by productivity.

A consideration of whether support for the civic ideal declined or was sustained in Leicester in the early twentieth century depends on what is understood by the term. Gunn's view is that civic solidarity was illusory and that its expression in civic ceremony had largely been a propaganda exercise to legitimate and assert the authority of provincial town councils during the mid to late Victorian period. On the other hand, the civic ideal can be seen in terms of the contemporary philosophies of active citizenship and manifested in the participation of town residents in associational life. Gunn argues that civic processions represented only the 'imaginary constitution of a united community'.²⁶ The use of the word 'imaginary', however, suggests that the notion of a shared local and civic identity had no shared authentic roots at all. The argument presented in this study in relation to Leicester, is that civic ceremony, participation in associational life, the regular cycle of associational events and coverage of this by the local press contributed to the perception of an 'imagined' rather than an imaginary community and that this widespread perception of a shared

²³ See J.S. Simmons, *Leicester: Past and Present*, vol.2. *Modern City, 1860-1974* (London, 1974), 2-5.

²⁴ See Chapter Two and R.H. Evans, 'The local government of Leicester in the nineteenth century' in A.E. Brown (ed.), *The Growth of Leicester* (Leicester, 1972), 71-77 and Simmons, *Leicester: Past and Present*, 74.

²⁵ See Chapter Two and also D. Reeder and C. Harrison, 'The local economy' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 49-90.

²⁶ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 163.

local culture gave substance and support to the civic ideal.²⁷ While it is likely that a civic spectacular such as the Leicester Pageant partly stimulated civic pride through clever stage management, the occasion may equally well have drawn on a genuine feeling of attachment to the city, fostered by the experience of smaller groups who knew each other well from involvement in churches, schools, workplaces and voluntary associations and who were constantly made aware of and kept up to date with other groups in Leicester through the local press. Individuals could have a range of roles and identities by participating in different groups and these identities could be complementary rather than oppositional. Likewise, in the absence of polarised local conflict, many groups seemed willing to opt into an overarching civic identity derived from sharing the same territory and local calendar of activities and to demonstrate this by active participation in the Pageant.

The civic ideal and the role of ritual

This study is about voluntary associations and the civic ideal in Leicester between 1870 and 1939. However, because the Leicester Pageant of 1932 has been used as an entry point to discussion and because the rhythms and patterns of associational life are a focal point, events and practices with a symbolic dimension, which could be characterised as rituals, are a feature of the discussion. Gunn's commentary on nineteenth-century public culture, and Morris's commentary on the formation of the middle class and voluntary associations in nineteenth century provincial towns have both been important points of reference in this study and both make use of the term ritual.²⁸ Gunn represents the civic ceremonies and processions organised by provincial town councils from the mid nineteenth century onwards as ritual events, while Morris has used the term ritual to describe the procedures of voluntary associations. Although both writers use the metaphor of ritual to illustrate aspects of

²⁷'Imagined' in the sense used by B. Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 5-8.

²⁸See Gunn, *Public Culture*, and S. Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture in the English industrial city, c.1835-1914' in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor (eds), *Urban Governance*, 226-39. See R.J. Morris, 'A year in the public life of the British bourgeoisie', in R. Colls and R. Rodger (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain, 1800-2000* (Aldershot, 2003), 121-43 and also Morris 'Clubs, societies and associations', 395-443 and R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), 161-227.

provincial urban culture, they approach the topic from different angles and, as a result, produce some contrasting as well as overlapping insights. Both depict Victorian middle class public culture as hegemonic and Gunn foregrounds the role of ritual as a statement of male middle class authority, while Morris also emphasises the legitimacy and authority that set procedures lent to voluntary associations. However, in addition to this, Morris also focuses on the contribution to social cohesion made by the regular patterns of the associational year and the rituals of associational procedure. Highlighting the contrasts between the two approaches lends further explanation to the approach adopted in this study, which argues that civic culture did not collapse in Leicester the early twentieth century but survived because associational life proved capable of assimilating new groups and permitted civic culture to mutate from an elite to a more inclusive model.

In *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, Gunn connects ritual and authority from the onset by giving the book the secondary title *Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City 1840-1914*. Central to his discussion is the extensive rebuilding of industrial centres during this period, which he examines in relation to the middle class fear of both physical and moral disorder. A widespread perception prevailed of city centres under threat from surrounding slums which fueled the need to take control of these newly rebuilt public spaces. Gunn argues that one way the middle classes took control was through ‘ritualisation and performance’.²⁹ He argues that the clearance and reconstruction of industrial city centres in monumental style provided a stage for the middle classes to display themselves, their wealth and their status. For Gunn, this was ritual, a way of symbolising the separation of the cultivated few from the vulgar masses and the respectable from the non respectable. He refers to ‘the regular, formalised, and often ceremonial appearance of the rich and powerful in the city centre, at the promenade on concert nights and in civic processions’ and argues that ‘these were the rites, or for some, the rights of power’.³⁰ In this way, Gunn interprets the middle class dominance of the city centre as an expression of the

²⁹ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 71.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

need to assert authority in the face of potential disorder, an authority that was that was acted out in the stage set of town centres before ‘a wider urban audience.’³¹

An important focus in Morris’s work is the nature of civil society and the development of voluntary associations through the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with particular reference to early nineteenth-century Leeds. It is in this context he uses the metaphor of ritual to describe the meeting procedures and events of voluntary associations, an area of interest to which Gunn gives comparatively little emphasis. Like Gunn, he uses the term ritual in a broad sense, accentuating, for example, the regular, formalised and patterned nature of associational meetings and the ceremonial atmosphere of public dinners.³² While Morris highlights the use of the voluntary associations by the urban middle classes to combat disorder among the lower orders, he also stresses the part played by associational life in building bridges, not only between the differing middle class allegiances of denomination and party, but also between classes. He particularly emphasises the way in which the ritualistic procedures of associational life provided a shared point of reference for groups which differed in other respects and observes that, from the mid to late nineteenth century, working class activists integrated middle class meeting procedures into their own meetings.³³ By making the rituals of associational life a focal point, Morris underlines the role of ritual in promoting cohesion rather than division. Morris also illustrates how the meetings and events of voluntary associations contributed to the shaping of a coherent local calendar in early nineteenth century Leeds. Taking one year in 1829, he shows how meetings and events fell into regular seasonal patterns, suggesting a coherent whole, although a variety of different groups were involved.³⁴

Gunn’s perspective suggests that potential conflict rather than consensus dominated in late Victorian cities and towns. It was not just that the rituals of middle class life, from the symphony concert to the civic ceremony, were about asserting authority,

³¹ *Ibid*, 72.

³² Morris, ‘A year in the public life of the bourgeoisie’, 140-43.

³³ Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’, 416-19.

³⁴ Morris, ‘A year in the public life of the bourgeoisie’, 124-26.

what was also important was that those rituals were socially exclusive, which meant that perceptions of a ‘civic community’ were not credible. Gunn implies that the Victorian middle class public culture, although it achieved some success in regulating criminal disorder in urban centres, did more to exacerbate than alleviate class division. He argues that middle class notions of taste and distinction in everything from clothing to music helped reinforce class division and reproduce the hierarchical social order. Likewise, he emphasises the male dominated nature of the culture, which, he argues, aggravated gender division to the point where conflict rather than consensus was at the forefront.³⁵

The perspectives of Gunn and Morris contrast in that Gunn depicts an elite culture that merely repressed other groups while Morris depicts an elite culture that succeeded in managing rather than just repressing the wider population. In Gunn’s vision of the late Victorian provincial city, an inflexible and male dominated public middle class culture excluded outside elements to an extent that was unsustainable. When women and workers openly revolted in street demonstrations the collapse of this culture was inevitable.³⁶ Morris’s argument, however, is more Weberian. His vision is of a multi-layered society in which, different groups, by taking on associational procedures and imitating each others practices, had by the second half of the nineteenth century, helped avert the threat of polarised conflict and achieved a workable consensus. He depicts an urban middle class culture which emerged in the early decades of the century, predominantly in response to the need to combat instability in urban centres. The backbone of this culture was the voluntary associational network, which developed throughout the course of the century an increasing capacity to manage urban life.³⁷ He highlights, for example, philanthropic projects as key channels through which class relations were negotiated, and compares the success achieved with the disastrous failure of more coercive bodies in the early years of the century.³⁸ The use of ritual both to legitimate authority and to express

³⁵ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 4-5.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 182

³⁷ Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’, 395-443.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 408-09, illustrated, for example, by the behaviour of the Yeomanry at Peterloo.

and consolidate social solidarity were observed by Durkheim³⁹ and more recently Hobsbawm has also attributed both functions to the social rituals he calls ‘invented traditions’.⁴⁰

The position taken in this study is that to understand the success of the Leicester Pageant, it is helpful to underline the capacity of ritual to express social solidarity as well as to convey authority.⁴¹ The contrast between the ceremony surrounding the royal visit to Leicester in 1882 and the Pageant in 1932, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Two, demonstrates how the symbolism of civic occasions had mutated to convey a greater level of social inclusion. Echoing Morris’s discussion of Leeds in 1829, the study also outlines a Leicester calendar, as represented in the local press in the 1870s, and traces some of the ways in which this developed between the 1870s and the 1930s to showcase the meetings and events of a wider range of town residents. Throughout the period, associational life, as it had in Leeds in 1829, played a large part in shaping this cycle. The calendar, although composed of many different elements, fell into broad regular rhythms that were shared and could be perceived as a symbol of local solidarity. By the late 1930s, the calendar depicted by the newspapers was complex with a multiplicity of different activities and sub cycles, but there were still broad rhythms where groups and activities interconnected and which conveyed the perception of a coherent whole.

Outline, approaches and sources

It is argued in Chapter One that the staging of the Leicester Pageant in 1932 both reflected civic pride and disguised breaches in local solidarity. However, the success and widespread support for the occasion, particularly the level of direct participation, showed that for a significant proportion of the Leicester population, civic and local identity was meaningful. Leading commentators agree that there was a fragmentation in provincial towns in the twentieth century, a move in emphasis from the public to

³⁹ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of The Religious Life* (London, 1915).

⁴⁰ E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: inventing traditions’ in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2000), 1-14.

⁴¹ See also the further discussion of ritual in Chapter Two.

the private and a corresponding decline in a sense of urban unity. There is disagreement, however, on the timing of this. The main argument in Chapter One is that in Leicester, in the interwar years, this fragmentation had not yet set in with full force and that there was continuity with the pre-war years. Privately organised associations flourished during this period but this did not detract from the enthusiasm needed to produce a civic spectacle.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the period 1870 to 1939 in Leicester, with special reference to suburbanisation. It starts with a brief discussion of population growth and the expansion of local industry from the 1870s to the 1930s, which resulted in the diverse local economy that allowed Leicester to enjoy relatively low levels of deprivation during the widespread economic difficulties of the interwar decades. It is argued that, in terms of class relations, the prospering economy of the city provided a favourable setting for the Pageant with its message of local solidarity, as did a history of reasonably harmonious relationships between employers and employees, fostered in the personalised atmosphere of small to medium sized family firms. The greater part of the chapter discusses the challenge to perceptions of civic unity posed by suburbanisation - the physical fragmentation of the town. The development of upper middle class suburbs on the south side of Leicester from the mid nineteenth century onwards, highlighted the social segregation associated with housing. However, throughout the period 1870 to 1939, middle class residents with addresses in the up-market suburbs continued to participate in town based associations. In the less exclusive pre-First World War suburbs, churches, chapels and educational institutes frequently hosted a vibrant social life. Parish magazines and newspaper photographs show that this often continued to flourish in the interwar years, with activities such as Scouts and Guides, and amateur dramatics becoming particularly popular. Some of these suburbs had a strong territorial identity; however, there is no significant evidence that these loyalties were in competition with town loyalty. More severe challenges though emerged in the interwar years with slum clearance and the development of poorly provided council estates, which left the residents stigmatised by and isolated from the town by inadequate transport links. In

addition, the growth in the number of owner occupiers in Leicester during the interwar years increased the number of disgruntled ratepayers groups, a problem that would be further exacerbated by a boundary extension in 1935. While popular participation in the Leicester Pageant may have reflected local feelings of solidarity, the civic authorities no doubt hoped that the Pageant would help paper over some of the cracks in that solidarity.

A range of sources were used in this chapter. Newspaper reports were used to illustrate various points including the personalised family relationships in the workplace, the activities and protests of ratepayers in the 1930s and the efforts to foster civic awareness in the new council estates in the interwar years. A local periodical, *The Wyvern*, gave insight on the celebrity status of leading citizens at the turn of the century, parish magazines were used to give details on church and chapel based social life and *The Leicester Pioneer* was a source of information about the socialist network. Published oral history interviews were used for information about life in the West End of Leicester during the interwar years and additional details about Leicester in the interwar years were taken from *Scholarship Boy*, J.F.C. Harrison's autobiography. Some associational records, for example, the minutes and reports of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' and the records of the Kyrle Society were also useful resources.

Chapter Two compares two examples of civic ceremony in Leicester, the royal visit and opening of Abbey Park in Leicester in 1882, and the Leicester Pageant of 1932. The chapter addresses the perception that the popularity of civic ceremony was in decline by the interwar years and argues that evidence from the East Midlands, in particular the Leicester Pageant of 1932, gives grounds for reappraisal. The role of voluntary associations in organising these events is explored and the use of symbolism to convey both a sense of civic unity and partnership between national and local in the form of the events is analysed. The main sources used in the chapter are local newspaper reports. In the case of the royal visit in 1882, *The Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* is the main source of information although the

Leicester Daily Post was also consulted. Masonic lodge histories, have also been a source of information about the 1892 occasion, as has the detailed contemporary account of the occasion written by local Freemason William Kelly. For the Pageant of 1932, the main source was the *Leicester Evening Mail*, although reference is also made to reports in the *Leicester Mercury*. Both newspapers gave extensive coverage throughout the event. In addition, souvenir booklets and a personal account have also been drawn on.

Underlying the production of the Pageant and the development of a more inclusive format for this civic event was the vibrancy of Leicester's associational life. Chapter Three traces the continuities and changes in that associational life between 1870 and 1939, as represented in the town directories. There were approximately thirty voluntary associations and institutions listed in a prominent Leicester trade directory in 1871. In 1938, the leading trade and town directory numbered around 220 entries, a sevenfold increase. The bodies listed in the 1871 directory were relatively few but comprised a variety of types, including commercial, cultural and benevolent groups and institutions. This associational life was largely home-grown, independent of London and was well publicised in the local press. It was also close-knit, with prominent bodies clustered in or near the town centre and dominated by a small, middle class elite, members of which often held overlapping memberships and served on the Town Council.

The 1870s and 1880s were a time of development in Leicester with improvements in the built environment and new amenities provided. The civic ceremony that accompanied the royal visit in 1882 was an expression of local pride in these improvements as, it is argued, was the enlarged town directory with a revamped format which detailed the new developments. By the 1880s, the town directory was listing more associations with a working or lower middle class membership. The format of the new directory listed associations by category and Chapter Three illustrates how within some of these categories a hierarchy in terms of class was evident. Among the new associations listed were some that overtly encouraged active

citizenship and these too drew on different social classes. The Kyrle Society, for example, drew its members from the urban elite, while St John's Ambulance attracted members from the wider population. It is argued that the directory helped to depict Leicester as a prospering modern town that enjoyed an active civil society in which a cross section of the population participated.

The chapter demonstrates that the town directories between the 1890s and 1914 depicted both continuity and change in Leicester's associational life. The range of associations listed changed little from the 1880s but, in the context of new influences, there was rapid expansion of certain types of groups. For example, by the 1890s, the number of trade unions had grown, although amalgamation served to reduce these numbers by the early twentieth century. The number of sports associations also increased and continued to do so throughout the period and memberships of Friendly and Temperance Societies expanded. Moreover, from the 1880s onwards, numbers were bolstered as more branches of national societies appeared in the directory listings. However, in the Edwardian years, an increase in home-grown benevolent groups proved that local initiative had not given away to the national.

The survey of town directories in Chapter Three again indicates that the trauma of the First World War resulted in little disruption to the continuity of Leicester associational life. Despite a drop in the number of groups listed in the immediate postwar period, by the end of the interwar years, the number listed was higher than it had been in 1914. Some of the more prominent increases in numbers, for example, Boy Scouts, sports clubs of all types, Conservative Clubs and Working Men's Clubs, were trends that were already in place in the pre-war years but which accelerated in the interwar period. These groups all contributed to suburban social life. However, this did not preclude a shared town identity as sports clubs were connected to each other in leagues, just as uniformed youth groups, Working Men's Clubs and political clubs were part of a city wide network. A comparison of Leicester associational life in 1939 with that of the 1870s, based on analysis of the town directories, indicates that a more representative cross section of the population participated in well

publicised, civil associations than had done at the beginning of the period. A wider group of town residents were recognized as active participants in civil society rather than just spectators and while some of the older, more exclusive associations continued, they were not as centre stage as they had been before 1914.

The research for Chapter Three was conducted by extracting and recording all the entries for voluntary societies from a selection of town directories published during the period 1870-1939. One directory for each decade was used and, as far as possible, an approximate ten year interval was retained between directories. This project was limited by both the numbers and dates of the town directories that have survived, as well as the long span of years involved. However, it has been possible to extract from the material a useful guide to the developmental trends and shape of associational life over the period. It is important though that this should be taken as a guide to associational life rather than an exact reflection. A methodology section in Chapter Three gives further analysis of both the advantages and limitations of the town directories as a source.

Chapter Four focuses on the 1870s and the early 1880s and the way that local newspapers represented the regular round of small events and meetings which comprised the annual urban cycle. The use of symbolism in the ceremonies surrounding the opening of Abbey Park in 1882 and the Leicester Pageant of 1932 gave these events a ritual quality, but this type of major spectacle was only held occasionally. However, throughout the period 1870 to 1938, both the voluntary associations of the town and the civic authorities, generated a regular annual diary of small events and the repetitiveness of this, together with the frequently formulaic format of events also gave this annual cycle a ritual feel. In the 1870s, newspaper reports showed how a number of calendars: religious, traditional and national, interleaved with civic and associational programmes. Although associational life in Leicester comprised a range of different groups, the calendars of the various bodies fell into similar patterns and the representation of this combination of activities conveyed the impression that town residents shared a communal local calendar and

reinforced the perception of an overarching civic and local identity that united town residents. While the seasonal rhythms created the architecture for an annual calendar, the events themselves were also patterned. Some examples of this were the annual meetings and dinners and, in the summer, the yearly group outings. The widespread adoption of similar procedures for meetings and events downplayed differences among groups and encouraged participation by ensuring that new participants in a group knew what to expect. The press representation of a local Leicester calendar and the patterned format of meetings and events helped to create an ‘imagined community’. The chapter also argues that associational life in Leicester at this time created real as well as imagined links among town residents and between leading associations and the civic authorities. To illustrate this, the final section in the chapter takes one strand of Leicester associational life at the time—a group of educational associations and institutions—and drills deeper to explore what was going on in terms of social cohesion, what bonded individuals together and what bridges existed between associations.

The primary sources used for Chapter Four were a mix of local newspaper reports and the individual histories and/or records of the various educational bodies used as examples. The shape of the annual local calendar was derived from local newspapers of the 1870s and early 1880s. In particular, a retrospective diary of events that was published annually each New Year in the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* was helpful in reconstructing the calendar. The descriptions of meetings, dinners and annual outings were also taken from newspaper reports of the period published in the *Leicester Daily Post* and the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*. Newspaper reports from these two newspapers were also used in connection with the educational bodies described, as well as archive material including, the annual reports of the Domestic Mission and the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’, various documents relating to the Secular Society and histories written by contemporaries of the Leicester Working Men’s College and the Leicester Ladies’ Reading Society.

Chapter Five analyses the changes and continuities in the Leicester calendar, as represented in the Leicester newspapers between 1880 and 1939. In response to the perception that civic and local culture was in decline by the late nineteenth century and had collapsed by the interwar decades, it is argued that the notion of a communal local calendar, reflecting an overarching Leicester identity, remained credible in the interwar years. Despite obvious social divisions, for example of class or ethnicity, the trend was for less powerful groups to seek social inclusion through active citizenship, which guarded against greater fragmentation and permitted a shared civic identity. The shape and rhythms of the annual cycle continued to be recognisable but the numbers and range of events expanded. This reflected the emergence of a much wider participation in the associational life of the town which had gained momentum with the growth of a more democratic polity and improvements in the standard of living. While many new associations were established during the period 1870 to 1939, and a growing cross section of the town population actively participated in associational life, certain leading middle class associations from the earlier part of the period survived. This was a line of continuity from the late Victorian period to the Edwardian years that reflected the enduring existence of a cohesive, local middle class. Freemasonry in Leicester, for example, not only survived but expanded over the period and this chapter includes a case study of the Leicester Masonic lodges which discusses the increase in the number of lodges and the level of membership, as well as aspects of the social composition of the lodges and the participation of Masons in civic affairs. The chapter also highlights the annual schedule of mayoral visits to voluntary associations and institutions. This was a programme of small scale civic ceremony that developed from the late century onwards, was prominent throughout the Edwardian and interwar decades, and gave a shape and civic stamp to voluntary activity in the town.

As in Chapter Four, the main primary sources used to reconstruct the annual Leicester calendar were the local newspapers. A newspaper study for the 1880 to 1939 period was approached by selecting a leading newspaper at approximately ten year intervals between 1880 and 1939 and reviewing, in detail, the reports published in the

newspaper during that year. This was supplemented by following leads in other years and other newspapers when these were of relevance and interest. There is further discussion in Chapter Five about some of the constraints encountered resulting from changes in journalistic style over the period and some of the advantages resulting from the increased use of press photography in the later years. The commentary on the Mayor's annual schedule of visits to associations and institutions also draws on newspaper reports as well as letters and documents belonging to Charles Lakin, Mayor of Leicester from 1908-1909. The primary sources used for the case study on Freemasonry comprised a range of documents available at Freemasons' Hall in Leicester including: copies of *The Freemasons Calendar and Directory for the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*, copies of summons to lodge meetings and histories of the individual lodges. More detail regarding these sources is included in the text and footnotes of Chapter Five. The study also draws on newspaper reports, Town Council records and the records of various leading associations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' with which a significant number of Masons held overlapping membership.

Chapter Six discusses women and youth in the interwar decades. It is argued that involvement in voluntary associations, which embraced the civic ideal, helped women and young people to integrate into public life. With regard to women's involvement, the chapter highlights the activities of the Leicester branch of the National Council of Women, which was both a meeting place and a coordinating group for women involved in a range of socially important projects in Leicester. The discussion of youth and public life centres on the popularity of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in the interwar years. Although these uniformed groups were primarily patriotic associations, they also subscribed to the civic ideal and regularly participated in public ceremonies and parades attended by the civic authorities. In this way, membership of the movement rewarded young people with a certain local public status which, in the case of girls, was a particular novelty.

Two particular events are highlighted in the chapter to illustrate widespread local perception of women as citizens during the interwar years. The first event is a 'Ladies' Bazaar' which was held in 1922 to raise funds for the new University College in Leicester. This was a major civic occasion in which members of the National Council of Women played a leading role and mobilised local women to take part. The second event is the annual national conference of the National Council of Women in 1935 which was hosted in Leicester by the local branch, on which occasion the local press and the civic authorities acknowledged the public spirited contribution made by women's associations to the life of the city. This representation of women as active citizens was also apparent in the women's columns of the local newspaper. This is illustrated in the chapter by a review of Suzanne Harrison's 'Women's World' column which was a daily feature in the *Leicester Evening Mail* in the 1930s. A short survey of the column over the year 1938-1939 traces the shape of a yearly calendar for women's associations and activities at this time. As women's activities overlapped with and were an often integral part of local associational life as a whole, the rhythms of the wider local calendar were echoed in the annual cycle depicted in Suzanne Harrison's column. In this way, Harrison's column illustrated not only the variety and chronology of women's events but also gave an insight more generally into Leicester's associational life at the time. In Chapter Four, the shape of the Leicester calendar in the mid 1870s was traced. The survey of Harrison's column in Chapter Six shows that many of the contours of the earlier calendar remained at the end of the 1930s and for the most part the events and meetings of associations which involved women blended in with these rhythms.

Chapter Six also returns to the theme of the relationship between national and local, already addressed in various contexts in previous chapters. The National Council of Women and the Scouts and Guides were all national associations, but the Leicester branches had a strong local identity. This was encouraged by the way the associations were structured. The local branches of the National Council of Women were not dominated by London because the association was a federation and policy was decided by democratic process. In the case of the Scouts and Guides, policy was

decided in London but the implementation of orders was decentralized with decision making on how to carry out policy delegated to district level. These associations with their strong local roots, all contributed to local social cohesion by creating institutionalised and extensive networks which bridged social and neighbourhood boundaries. This provided members and their families with a new range of opportunities for social contact and also meant that groups could be coordinated for public events easily and efficiently.

Newspapers, the records of the associations discussed and oral history interviews were all primary sources used in Chapter Six. Both leading local newspapers, *The Leicester Mercury* and the *Leicester Evening Mail* reported extensively on the 'Ladies Bazaar' and the archives of the University of Leicester hold additional correspondence and other background material about the occasion. The newspapers also publicised the National Council of Women conference held in Leicester in 1935 and the records of the local branch give details of the membership and policy from 1897 onwards. Newspaper reports provided material related to both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides, as did the records of the Leicester Boy Scouts. Two oral history interviews with Leicester residents who were involved with youth associations in the interwar period gave further useful insights.

This final chapter draws together a number of recurring themes in the study. The continuing calendar of associational life in Leicester in the 1930s is highlighted to demonstrate the good health of local and civic culture at the time. By tracing that calendar through the women's column of a leading local newspaper the intention has been to underline the move away from the middle class male domination of the late Victorian years to a more inclusive public life. The contribution of voluntary associations to social cohesion is illustrated by the networks connected with the National Council of Women and the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, networks which were more institutionalised than those connected with voluntary associations at the beginning of the period 1870-1939. These three associations also illustrate the active

citizenship that associational life often encouraged and all three combined national and local in a way that permitted an expression of both loyalties.

Chapter One

Associational life, the civic ideal and suburbanisation.

In the late nineteenth century, in the face of rapid change that included the growth of urban populations, suburbanisation and the extension of the franchise, urban elites promoted civic ritual as a means of maintaining the social fabric and legitimising the authority of the town councils.¹ As the same issues continued to fuel perceptions of social tension in the early twentieth century, it is not surprising that the leadership of certain provincial towns still prioritised civic ceremony as a means of promoting civic unity.² The continuing importance of civic ceremony in Leicester in the interwar years was demonstrated by the staging and success of the Leicester Pageant in 1932 in which thousands of townspeople participated.

The interwar years, however, also brought their own particular challenges. In Leicester, as in other cities and towns, new housing was a priority. Slum clearance and the building of new council estates were a major project followed by a drive to integrate the residents of the new estates into mainstream urban life. There was also change and a new strand of conflict in local municipal politics as the Labour party gained in strength and local Liberal and Conservative politicians joined forces to

¹ D. Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain: the Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, 94 (1982), 107-30; S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000); S. Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture in the English Industrial city c.1835-1914', in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor (eds.), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), 226-41.

² M. Dickie, 'Town patriotism in Northampton, 1918-1939: an invented tradition', *Midland History*, vol. XV11 (1992), 109-18.

combat this.³ While this political strategy indicated an alliance of different middle class groups, conflicts between the municipal authorities and ratepayers groups, which became frequent in the 1920s and 1930s, indicated that there were also divisions among local middle class residents. Against this backdrop, there was preoccupation in the town with stimulating civic spirit. In 1928, for example, the Kyrle society, established in the 1880s to improve the urban environment, renamed itself the Civic Society and pledged to become a more active body.⁴ The efforts put into organising the Leicester Pageant can, therefore, be seen, at least partly, as an attempt to promote unity and downplay underlying conflicts. On the other hand, the success of the Pageant, especially the wide level of direct participation, showed that for a significant proportion of the urban population civic identity and pride remained meaningful. Official ceremonies, despite the growing number of official employees and ‘captive’ schoolchildren could still fail if they lacked ‘genuine popular resonance’.⁵ Mass participation in the Leicester Pageant, however, indicated that it was still possible not only to stimulate civic loyalty but to do so on a more widespread and inclusive scale than had been done so previously.⁶ It was an achievement that was supported by the many smaller, often privately organised activities that comprised the regular rhythms of urban life.

Efforts to mobilise city residents to participate in the Pageant drew on an extensive local associational life. Voluntary associations had steadily increased in number

³ P. Jones, ‘Politics’ in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 90-120.

⁴ *Leicester Mercury (LM)*, 19 May 1932. See also Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR), records of the Leicester Kyrle Society/Civic Society 17 D 51. In the minutes of the 1929 annual general meeting, 17 D 51/5, it is recorded that the change of name and constitution signified the intention to widen the scope to a larger public. One way of doing this was to improve contacts within the associational network. Interested societies were asked to send representatives to the annual general meetings of the Civic Society these included the National Council of Women, the Leicester Society of Artists, the Leicester Sketch Club, the Footpaths Association, the YMCA and YWCA, the Girls Social Guild, Toc H, the Girls Friendly Society, the Time and Talents Guild, the Society of School Leavers, the Rotary Club and the Society of Architects.

⁵ E. Hobsbawm, ‘Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914’, in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), 264.

⁶ The actual events of the Pageant which included a ‘Civic Day’ and civic procession are analysed in Chapter Two.

since the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁷ Some of these were longstanding institutions with an overtly civic focus such as the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’ or the Kyrle/Civic Society, others included religious, political, benevolent, occupational, commercial, cultural, educational and sports groups. Some associations met in the city centre while others were based in the suburbs, most often around churches and chapels. The social composition of associations in both the city and the suburbs varied. However, there were certain city-based groups, such as the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’ that had a prominent upper middle class leadership, while many groups based around suburban churches, chapels and educational institutions, provided an associational life for a less exclusive clientele. Further associations, such as the Working Men’s Clubs, had a specifically working class bias. By the time of the Pageant, therefore, there was a considerable amount of associational activity taking place on a regular basis. Voluntary associations were sustained by their own meetings, ceremonies and celebrations and many of these were reported in the local press giving a pattern and shape to the urban year.⁸ However, in addition to this privately organised activity there was still clearly the motivation to participate in an event that celebrated the city as an entity. While some town residents most likely did not conform to this, for example, the more militant members of the socialist associational network, there is no striking evidence to suggest that, generally, civic loyalties and loyalties to privately organised groups were in opposition to.⁹ Indeed, the existence of a range of formally organised groups with overlapping contacts facilitated rather than hindered the organisation of a civic spectacle.¹⁰

If a strong urban associational life helped underpin the successful staging of the Pageant, it is likely that a reasonably harmonious relationship between the classes in the workplace also played a contribution. Local industrial relations had faced

⁷ See Chapter Three for an analysis of the increase in voluntary associations listed in the town directories between 1870 and 1938.

⁸ See Chapters Four and Five for a discussion of this local calendar.

⁹ The *Leicester Pioneer*, a local socialist newspaper, published from the 1890s until 1928 confirms the existence of an active socialist network in Leicester. The paper showed that in the 1920s a regular schedule of meetings underlining the necessity of class struggle, organised by a range of representatives from the Labour movement took place in the city.

¹⁰ See Chapter Two for a description of how the Leicester Pageant was organised.

significant challenges during the period 1870 to 1939. There had been, for example, serious labour disputes in the footwear industry in the 1890s. However, although the ties of local solidarity had been tested, they had not been destroyed. During the interwar period, against the backdrop of a relatively prosperous local economy, commerce in Leicester continued to be characterised by the family business, often organised on a smaller scale than in the larger industrial towns.¹¹ However, even in larger scale enterprises, personal relationships had been cultivated between employer and employee. The success in building these relationships can be shown in many ways. The tone of gentlemen's agreement was apparent in negotiations between employer and employee. For example, in 1903, when Edward Wood, a leading local shoe manufacturer, presided over a difficult meeting negotiating piece-work, the workforce representative was quoted as saying 'when they knew that Mr Wood was going to preside, whatever doubts they had before as to the utility of the meeting were dispelled.'¹² Social ritual was also used to symbolise and celebrate a personal connection between employer and employee. In 1914, employees of the British United Shoe Company were treated to their eighth annual staff dinner at the Grand Hotel, on which occasion, a presentation was made to their employer, Charles Bennion in recognition of 'the cordial relations existing between employers and employees'.¹³ In 1913, 2500 workpeople from Corah's textile works assembled on the occasion of Mr Jack Corah's wedding to sing 'For he's a jolly good fellow' and present him with a silver tray with tea and coffee services'.¹⁴ Twenty years on in the 1930s, the Leicester newspapers detailed many staff parties, dances or dinners held at popular town venues such as the Palais de Danse or the Oriental Hall, often showing photographs of the various groups of employees grouped together in a 'family' like atmosphere.¹⁵ Obviously not all employees subscribed to these expressions of solidarity, it is clear, however, that many were willing to go along with it.

¹¹ D. Reeder, 'Preface' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), xii.

¹² *Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 14 May 1903.

¹³ *Leicester Mail (LML)*, 28 Mar. 1913.

¹⁴ *LML*, 22 Jul. 1914.

¹⁵ Throughout January 1939 there are examples of this in the *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*.

While associational life and harmonious work relations may have helped underpin local solidarity in Leicester, it is generally agreed that during the twentieth century there was fragmentation of local culture in provincial towns, a decline in a sense of urban unity, although commentators differ in their timing of this decline. Gunn, for example, suggests 1914 as a decisive turning point, while Morris traces a decline in the 1920s and 1930s with obvious change by 1950.¹⁶ Trainor, however, does not see really decisive change until the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.¹⁷ The central argument here is whether change in terms of social fragmentation or continuity in sustaining civic and local culture dominated in the interwar years. In the case of Leicester, the successful staging of the Pageant indicates continuity. Gunn's argument that there was a collapse by 1914 depends on his identification of provincial urban culture with a narrow urban elite. As has already been discussed, Gunn characterises the civic ceremonies of the late Victorian period as rituals of exclusion and authority practised by this elite, rituals that could not and did not survive.¹⁸ His view implies that irreconcilable social conflict rather than potential consensus lay at the heart of urban life.¹⁹ However, this has to be balanced against Morris's view that urban associational life diminished conflict and that, as the various urban interest groups imitated each others practices, a workable consensus was achieved. Morris focuses on meeting culture and the rituals of democracy, which symbolised the ideal of wider participation as means of recognising the contribution of all groups and building greater social cohesion.²⁰ Wide participation can be seen as a characteristic of the Leicester Pageant, supported by a widespread associational life. In Leicester, as was evidently the case in Northampton as well, the spectacular civic ceremonies had not disappeared.²¹ Instead they had mutated to become more inclusive. Their function being to both celebrate and mend cracks in the social cohesion they celebrated.

¹⁶ S. Gunn, *Public Culture* (Manchester, 2000), 181; R.J. Morris, 'Structure, culture and society in British Towns' in M. Daunt (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 423.

¹⁷ R. Trainor, 'The middle class' in M. Daunt (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 713.

¹⁸ See introduction to thesis.

¹⁹ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 182.

²⁰ R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 395-493.

²¹ Dickie, 'Town patriotism', 109-18.

In relation to Leicester, Gunn's timing of the collapse of local urban culture seems premature. However, while his perspective leaves unanswered questions about the continued success of civic ceremony, during the interwar years in Leicester, and also in other smaller towns such as Northampton, his emphasis on the production of space as a historical constituent usefully raises the question to as what extent the changing geography of cities, through the reconstruction of the town centres and suburbanisation, affected perceptions of civic unity.²² An emphasis on spatial change in towns and cities is also the focus of another strand of urban historiography, which emphasises the effects of suburbanisation in creating a polarisation between suburbs and slums.²³ Residential location and housing became a marker not only of status but of a morally acceptable way of life.²⁴ Rodger, for example illustrates how this ideological dimension helped confuse town planning priorities in the interwar years resulting in missed opportunities to draw council tenants into the wider urban culture.²⁵ This raise questions as to what extent, in Leicester, suburbanisation may have affected civic identity by creating new local neighbourhood identities.

Public and private

Before considering the effects of suburbanisation some terminological clarification is necessary. In the preceding discussion of the Leicester Pageant, civic ritual was contrasted with privately organised events. The term private implies its opposite public and the public/private distinction occurs frequently in urban historiography. However, while the term civic is sometimes used interchangeably with public this is not always the case. Weintraub identifies four common ways in which the distinction

²² Gunn, *Public Culture*, 60-83 and S. Gunn, 'The spatial turn: changing histories of space and place' in S. Gunn and R.J. Morris (eds), *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850* (Aldershot, 2001), 1-14.

²³ H.J. Dyos and D.A. Reeder, 'Slums and suburbs' in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* vol. 1 (London, 1973), 359-81.

²⁴ R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), 38-44 and G. Davison 'The suburban idea and its enemies', (unpublished paper).

²⁵ R. Rodger, 'The built environment' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 10-13.

between private and public is drawn in social and political analysis.²⁶ These different approaches relate to differing underlying images of the social world; they are driven by different concerns, raise different issues and can throw light on the conflicting conclusions that are sometimes produced by historians. The first approach is the frequent equation of public with the statutory authorities and the private with the market and citizenship. This distinction becomes relevant when discussing, for instance, the provision of social amenities as, for example, in connection with the public provision of housing in the interwar period. As this model relegates citizenship to the private sphere the distinction also becomes relevant to public provision of social welfare by the local or national state and private provision by voluntary associations. A second approach equates the term public more with the political community and citizen participation. This model takes in the world of free discussion and collective decision making associated with the polis in Antiquity and the public sphere of Habermas in the modern period.²⁷ In line with its historical origins, Weintraub terms this the ‘republican virtue’ model. In the context of urban history, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this is, of course an influential approach and it relates to the importance which historians such as Morris and Trainor place on the concept of civil society and the role of voluntary associations in urban governance.²⁸ The third model can be shorthanded as the ‘sociability’ model. This approach, associated with the work of writers such as Richard Sennett sees the public realm as ‘a sphere of fluid and polymorphous sociability’ and seeks to analyse the cultural and dramatic conventions that make it possible.²⁹ It is an approach seen in the work of Gunn who characterises the reconstructed city centres of nineteenth century towns as stages for a public culture of social display.³⁰ In the fourth model, the term private is

²⁶ J. Weintraub, ‘The theory and politics of the public/private distinction’ in J. Weintraub and K. Kumar (eds), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago, 1997), 7-34.

²⁷ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 1989).

²⁸ R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor, ‘Preface’ in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), ix-xii and R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor ‘Governance: two centuries of urban growth’ in *ibid*, 1-14.

²⁹ See, for example, R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1978). Words quoted from Weintraub, ‘Theory and politics’, 20.

³⁰ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 60-83.

associated with the family and home. It sometimes overlaps with the ‘sociability’ model and is influential in historical or cultural studies where gender is a driving concern, as in the work of Davidoff and Hall.³¹

At a more general level, an examination of the imagery underlying the paired opposition of public and private provides insight. Two main sets of imagery are evident which are irreducible though at times overlapping. On the one hand, there is emphasis on what is visible as opposed to what is hidden or withdrawn. On the other hand, there is an emphasis on what is collective as opposed to what pertains to only part of a social collectivity.³² In the following discussion, the public/private distinction, in this more general sense, will be used to analyse the role of the local press and also the effects of suburbanisation on the perception of a shared Leicester culture. The public/private divide, in the sense of visibility, is emphasised by Gunn when he discusses the public and impersonal sociability of the middle class, shopping and attending concerts and functions on a ‘stage’ for all to see.³³ However, this focus on visibility is also relevant in considering the role of the local newspapers, what constituted news and which associations and individuals were highlighted over the period. It also relates to a style of life, the extent to which suburbanisation encouraged townspeople to withdraw significantly from public sociability in favour of a home-centred lifestyle. The public/private distinction between what is collective and what pertains to only part of a social collectivity is relevant in considering group loyalties within the urban environment, including the extent to which suburban dwellers retained a sense of civic identity over the period.

Suburbanisation and civic loyalties

A distinction between private and public was at the heart of the suburban ideal as lived out by provincial urban elites throughout the period. While at home, the emphasis for this privileged group was clearly on withdrawal rather than visibility.

³¹ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987).

³² Weintraub, ‘Theory and politics of the public/private distinction’, 4-7.

³³ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 3.

Residential zoning which amounted to class segregation, became a characteristic of Leicester as it was of other provincial towns and cities and a social geography was clear by 1870.³⁴ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the wealthier suburbs of Stoneygate and Knighton to the south east of the city were firmly established.³⁵ The drift by the urban elite in this direction had been evident from the eighteenth century onwards with the establishment of the earlier New Walk suburb to the south of the city.³⁶ Stoneygate, which developed along the main Harborough road, already had ten properties by 1846. In 1858, more land became available for development and side roads were laid out.³⁷ As the population of the town expanded from 68,000 in 1861 to 209,000 in 1901, the suburb expanded too.³⁸ Likewise, suburban development in Knighton was substantial enough by 1877 to justify a horse drawn tram from Leicester to Knighton Road and by the 1880s suburbia had begun to encroach on the old village of Knighton.³⁹ The Stoneygate /Knighton area offered elegant villas set in grounds or terraced housing with generous gardens and it housed a large number of the town's wealthy industrialists. A guide to Leicester for 1905 tellingly describes it as Leicester's 'chief' suburb'.⁴⁰ The exclusive housing and privacy offered ample opportunity to pursue the ideal of suburban life with its celebration of beauty and seclusion. Here was the opportunity to avoid, outside business hours, the grittier side of urban life namely dirt, disease, crime and the ugliness of industrialisation.

This separation of the spheres of work and home has also, of course, been much associated with the gender division by which middle class women of the period, based in the suburban villa, became associated with private life. However, the notion of the isolated woman alone in the suburban villa, although important, should not be

³⁴ Rodger, 'The built environment', 6.

³⁵ C. Jordan, *Leicester Mercury: the Illustrated History of Leicester's Suburbs* (Derby, 2003), 10.

³⁶ G.R. Potts, 'The development of New Walk and the King's Street area' in A.E. Brown (ed.), *The Growth of Leicester* (Leicester, 1972), 55-62.

³⁷ Jordan, 'Leicester Mercury: Illustrated History', 136-37.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 107.

⁴⁰ G.C. Nuttall, *Guide to Leicester and Neighbourhood* (Leicester, 1905), 25.

exaggerated.⁴¹ For example, in the late Victorian period upper middle class women were involved, as they had been throughout the Victorian period, in church work and voluntary charity work. In the late 1890s, for example, women in Leicester, frequently with up-market suburban addresses, were taking part in the local branch of the National Union of Women Workers, known from 1919 as the National Council of women, an organisation which coordinated Leicester-based charity work.⁴² Attitudes to women, of course, relaxed significantly between 1870 and 1939. The extension of the franchise and the opening up of greater educational and professional opportunities enlarged the horizons of many, especially in the interwar years. However, although women had increasingly more opportunities to escape the home, the ideal of suburbia, of course, did not decline. On the contrary, increased opportunities for home ownership in the 1930s encouraged further suburbanisation throughout the middle classes. This is evident in Leicester where building programmes offering semi-detached houses at affordable rates meant that a non-manual worker of modest income could follow the ideal, albeit on much reduced scale.⁴³ It has been argued that this new wave of middle class suburbanisation did confine many women to a predominantly private life and that ‘the claustrophobia of middle class housewives’ was less of a Victorian malaise and more ‘a product of the interwar spread of anonymous suburbia and the encroachment of salaried social workers, particularly in health care and visitors on the voluntary sphere’.⁴⁴ However, without diminishing these issues, not everyone was dissatisfied. Indeed this type of suburban living was

⁴¹ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: a Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London, 1988), 253.

⁴² See Record Office for Leicester, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR), 16 D 58/1, *National Council of Women Annual Reports*, Leicester Branch, 1897-1939. The names and addresses of members are listed in the reports. There is more detailed discussion of this in Chapter Six. Another association which brought women from the more exclusive suburbs together was the Belmont House Society. See ROLLR, 18 D 57/17, records of the Belmont House Society 1886-1938. In the 1880s and 1890s, the society held meetings on ‘improving’ topics ranging from English Literature to cookery and members were also involved in a range of philanthropic projects. The membership overlapped with the membership of the National Union of Women Workers/National Council of Women. Another hub of activity, again with an overlapping membership, was a women’s reading group which ran from 1869-1930, the history of which is recorded in G. Ellis, *The Leicester Ladies’ Reading Society* (Leicester, 1932). This group is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁴³ Rodger, ‘The built environment’, 18.

⁴⁴ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 253 see also R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), 82-3 for a discussion of the isolation of middle class women in suburbia in the interwar period.

the lifestyle of choice and a proud badge of class identity and respectability for at least some lower middle class women. This is illustrated by A.F.C. Harrison's account *Scholarship Boy* of family life in a semi-detached house in Byway Rd, Leicester during the interwar years. This was a newly-built 'semi' which the family bought in 1936 after moving from a Victorian terraced house. His mother, as was the custom, did not work, did not know her neighbours and, in his memory, 'happily spent her mornings washing, dusting, polishing and vacuum cleaning'.⁴⁵ One reason, however, why Harrison's mother seems to have survived this ordeal so happily is because she ensured that the family did not move very far away from the old and more sociable Victorian suburb in which they had previously lived. Thus, she was able to attend the same church and continue to take an active part in all the social activities that were organised around it. It is likely that Leicester's relative geographical compactness, as illustrated by this story, helped it to maintain its social cohesion for longer.⁴⁶

The cult of domesticity relates to the public/private distinction in terms of what was visible and what was withdrawn. However, in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period a home-centred lifestyle did not prevent the urban elites of provincial towns from being in the public eye, for at least some of the time outside business hours. Gunn has emphasised the visibility of middle class social life in the newly constructed town centres.⁴⁷ In addition to this, middle class participation in voluntary associations was also highly visible through the reporting of the local newspapers. The link between the local press and a sense of urban unity is emphasised by Morris.⁴⁸ He suggests that between 1840 and 1920, provincial towns and cities, because of their increasing size, could no longer be directly experienced as a unit. However, through the medium of the local newspapers residents could conceive of

⁴⁵ J.F.C. Harrison, *Scholarship Boy: a Personal History of the Mid-Twentieth Century* (London, 1995), 50.

⁴⁶ B.M. Doyle, 'The structure of elite power in the early twentieth century city: Norwich, 1900-35', *Urban History*, 24, (1997), 179-99. Doyle comments on the compactness of both Norwich and Leicester in his article suggesting that the proximity of the suburbs to the centre encouraged the urban elites to remain involved in public life.

⁴⁷ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 71.

⁴⁸ Morris, 'Structure, culture and society', 423.

the town as a unity. Central to this was the publicity given to the social leadership of the town, the dominant upper middle class group which had used provincial urban places as a base for developing power and influence. He describes this leadership as the 'knowable' community of the town. This was an elite that expressed itself in the regular meetings and programmes of voluntary societies and municipal government. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, rhetoric and ritual took on a marked civic emphasis and the achievements of this leadership, manifested in the improved amenities and conditions in provincial towns, were celebrated as the achievements of a unified urban community. Associations, civic officials and leading citizens who took an active role became symbols of the town and its progress. Their role as the 'knowable community' depended, to a great extent, on publicity in the local newspapers. These newspapers, which were identified with the town, 'erected a basis of common knowledge for drawing-room and neighbourhood',⁴⁹ Local Leicester newspapers of the period provide an example of this. Detailed accounts of the meetings of voluntary associations and the Town Council were regularly published in which the opinions of participants were recorded. Individual personalities were important. In the 1890s, for example, the Leicester periodical, *The Wyvern*, ran a series of competitions asking its readers to vote for their favourite philanthropist, clergyman, government official etc and they received an enthusiastic response from their readership.⁵⁰ These personalities were not directly known by the majority of town residents but they were 'virtually' known through the press and so were public figures.

The content of the Leicester newspapers in the interwar period could suggest that the activities of the prominent middle class, town based associations had become less public in the sense that press reports on these activities were less detailed and less regular. There had been a tendency to this in the Edwardian period but in the interwar years it became marked. Reports tended to provide a short summary of meetings rather than a verbatim account and they also tended to cover unusual or

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 433.

⁵⁰ *The Wyvern* ran this feature for over ten years from the early 1890s and profiled more than 700 local personalities.

important meetings rather than the routine.⁵¹ However, representation of leading middle class personalities as celebrities still continued in the local press. What is noticeable is that side by side with this, more prominent coverage was given to the activities of smaller less pretentious groups, for example, drama groups based in local churches, Scout and Guide activities, or neighbourhood sports teams. Thus it can be argued that the 'knowable community of the town widened and became more inclusive. These smaller groups became more visible and therefore more public through the medium of the press. This was particularly accentuated by the increased use of photography in the local newspapers from the late 1920s onwards.⁵² In view of this, Trainor's proposal that the interwar years saw 'as much a reshaping as a diminution of the public involvement of the urban middle class' has particular resonance.⁵³ He argues that the early twentieth century marked a growing integration of the various strata that formed the middle classes. The lower middle classes, had always played a significant, if secondary, part, in urban life, taking on roles such as Sunday school teacher and from the late-Victorian period onwards their involvement gradually became greater.⁵⁴ In the interwar years, their contribution in local charities and organisations such as the Rotary Club was notable.⁵⁵ In recreational pastimes, as in the case of J.F.C. Harrison's mother, they were also at the forefront, participating in activities such as the women's groups, sports and drama clubs that were often based at suburban churches.⁵⁶ Harrison, significantly, also recalls the great interest with which his parents read *The Leicester Evening Mail*. He writes: 'There was always the thrill of seeing the name of someone we knew or had heard about 'in the paper' even if it was only a list of mourners at a funeral or the organisers of a church

⁵¹ This was the case in both the *Leicester Mercury* and the *Leicester Evening Mail*, the two leading Leicester newspapers during the interwar years. This change in reporting style is discussed further in Chapter Five.

⁵² See Chapter Five.

⁵³ Trainor, 'The middle class', 710.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 701.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 712. This was evident in Leicester with the involvement of helpers in local charities such as the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind. In Chapter Five this is discussed again with particular reference to the increased integration of the various strata of the middle classes in Masonic lodges in Leicester in the interwar years.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 711.

outing'.⁵⁷ To lower middle class families such as the Harrisons, the newspaper, in the interwar period, continued to provide a 'knowable community' and one that had become less socially distanced from the wider circle of readers.

It has been observed that, as late as the 1950s, many of Leicester's social leaders were still drawn from family business dynasties with long held roots in Leicester life.⁵⁸ As has been suggested, the public/private distinction can be linked not only to visibility but to allegiance to a collective identity, in this case a civic identity. Mumford criticised suburban living on the grounds that withdrawal into the suburbs meant a withdrawal from civic spirit.⁵⁹ However, this criticism seems very much overstated when applied to the inhabitants of Leicester's exclusive suburbs during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. Certainly, the residents of Stoneygate and Knighton had allegiances to other social subgroups within the city. Residence in a villa in these suburbs was an expression of middle class identity. Moreover within the area, a diversity of religious loyalties was maintained, with a choice of Anglican or Non conformist churches

Although denominational difference to some extent divided the area, attendance at church or chapel could mean increased contact across the class barriers and at times the maintaining of ties with a different neighbourhood. For example, in the later decades of the nineteenth century a number of Stoneygate residents were connected with the Non-conformist, Melbourne Hall in the older and more socially mixed suburb of Highfields.⁶⁰ Further, with the growth of mass party organisations, a partisan identity could be expressed by attendance at the local Liberal or Conservative clubs. At times over these decades there is also some evidence of a neighbourhood identity and loyalty. For example, during the Edwardian years and when one of Leicester's the most celebrated city fathers, Israel Hart, was elected mayor in 1893 a

⁵⁷ Harrison, *Scholarship Boy*, 60.

⁵⁸ Reeder, 'Introduction', xii.

⁵⁹ L. Mumford, *The City in History* (Harmondsworth, 1961), 556 and also Davison, 'The suburban idea and its enemies' (unpublished paper) in which the writer revisits Mumford's assertion.

⁶⁰ The names of those associated with the founding of Melbourne Hall are inscribed on the wall of the building.

dinner was given in Knighton to celebrate the victory of, specifically, the Knighton Liberals.⁶¹ However, despite sectarian and partisan difference and attachment to the immediate locality, the significant numbers of Stoneygate and Knighton residents who were members of civically orientated, town based associations such as the Leicester 'Lit and Phil', also suggest a commitment to civic identity. In 1900, the great majority of 'Lit and Phil' members lived on the south side of Leicester, in Stoneygate, Knighton, Clarendon Park, New Walk and Highfields and about ten percent of the membership were concentrated in half a dozen exclusive suburban streets in Stoneygate and Knighton.⁶²

Involvement in public affairs by comfortably off suburbanites continued during the interwar period and beyond.⁶³ Thus the perception that, during these years, the middle classes withdrew to their suburbs does not correspond with events in Leicester. In the interwar period, local business men continued to stand for election to the Town Council, and participate in leading associations.⁶⁴ In the 1930s the membership roll of the 'Lit and Phil' remained around 300 but it had mutated to include subscribers from a wider variety of districts in Leicester. Despite this, many subscribers still had addresses in Stoneygate and Knighton and approximately ten percent of the membership was still concentrated in a few roads in those areas.⁶⁵ During the interwar years, members of the 'Lit and Phil' continued to place an emphasis on public spirited activity, participating in projects that included the establishment of University College, working in partnership with the Rotary Club to

⁶¹ *LDP*, 14 Nov. 1893.

⁶² University of Leicester Library (ULL), *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society Reports*, 1871-1880 and *Transactions of Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 1881-1937. From 1900 onwards, the records for each year include the Society's annual report which lists the addresses as well as the names of subscribers. There were 332 members in 1900 including honorary and associate members.

⁶³ See Chapter Five for a discussion of this.

⁶⁴ Although in the interwar years fewer of the most prominent and wealthy business men stood for the Town Council. P. Jones, 'Politics' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 92-102.

⁶⁵ ULL, *Transactions of Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 1881-1937. In 1935 there were 298 members of the 'Lit and Phil'. Taking five suburban roads in Stoneygate and Knighton as an example, it can be seen how a concentration of members were still clustered there: Knighton Drive, six members in 1900, six members in 1935; Ratcliffe Road, six members in 1900, seven members in 1935, Stoneygate Road, six members in 1900, four members in 1935; Springfield Road, nine members in 1900, six members in 1935; Clarendon Park Road, five members in 1900, three members in 1935.

acquire Swithland Wood for the benefit of town residents and monitoring the maintenance of historical remains in the city.⁶⁶

Exclusive suburbs, such as Stoneygate and Knighton were, of course, only one face of the suburbanisation process. The range of suburbs that developed in towns and cities during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries demonstrates the difficulties in making generalisations about suburban life. Differences in class composition, type of housing, level of amenities and location had an impact on the type of social life that developed locally which, in turn, contributed to the way suburbanites viewed their own communities and their relationship with the city as a whole.

As regards class identity it is difficult to characterise the less exclusive suburbs for they did not represent a homogeneous mass.⁶⁷ The Victorian suburbs which developed in Leicester during the second half of the nineteenth century exemplify this. Some areas, for example, Clarendon Park and Westcotes, offered extensive terraced housing, much of which was occupied by skilled artisans.⁶⁸ Lower middle class people also lived in this type of housing. J.F.C. Harrison's family, for example, lived in a very unpretentious terraced house in Highfields before moving to their 'semi' in 1936.⁶⁹ Small differences in the style, size and ornamentation of terraced houses reflected the many layers of subclasses within the class hierarchy and defied generalisation.⁷⁰ Moreover, in Westcotes, Clarendon Park and Highfields larger houses were also built reflecting the social mix of these suburbs which ranged from upper middle class to working class. Areas such as Newfoundpool also offered

⁶⁶ ROLLR, 14 D 55, records of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, 14 D 55/11 minutes of 'Lit and Phil' council meeting, 21 Sept. 1925. A fund raised to help finance the acquisition of Swithland Wood was mentioned at this meeting. At the same meeting, the need to make representations to the City Council about the condition of the Roman pavement under Grand Central Station was also discussed.

⁶⁷ It cannot be said either that exclusive suburbs such as Stoneygate were a homogeneous mass although they did have a marked middle class identity. There was some limited terrace housing, for example, in Stoneygate in addition to the suburban villas.

⁶⁸ Rodger, 'The built environment', 6.

⁶⁹ Harrison, *Scholarship Boy*, 50.

⁷⁰ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 174, makes the point generally of how ornamentation of housing reflected small gradations in the class hierarchy.

terraced housing and had an extensive working class population. However, while the housing in Newfoundpool would not have been not attractive to the upper strata of the middle class, the population of the area was not homogeneous. Local directories at the turn of the century show that those who lived in the terraced houses included shopkeepers and clerks and other individuals who could be described as lower middle class, as well as skilled workers and factory hands.⁷¹

While lower middle class families and individuals may have aspired to the suburban ideal of privacy, the terraced housing of these humbler suburbs, brought neighbours into close, physical proximity with each other. This provided more likelihood of casual, neighbourly sociability than the villas of Stoneygate/Knighton. Moreover, busy shopping streets developed to serve the suburbs. Town directories show that in the first decade of the twentieth century Queens Road in Clarendon Park and Fosse Road North in Newfoundpool both had a good selection of shops giving further opportunities for contact and the development of a sense of place.⁷² The part played by shops and other amenities such as churches and schools in creating a sense of place was clearly appreciated by developers of two innovative local housing projects towards the end of the nineteenth century. The industrial suburb of North Evington, developed from the 1880s, was planned as a community with factories, shops and social amenities integral to the design. Likewise, the garden suburb at Humberstone, developed by the Anchor Boot and Shoe Productive Society on cooperative principles and opened in 1908, provided a wide range of facilities.⁷³ Compared to the careful planning in these two projects geared to promote a sense of community, the interwar public housing projects made a sad contrast.

In Leicester, a sense of territorial identity seems to have particularly emerged in certain areas. Leicester's West End was an example of this. This was a busy largely working class/lower middle class area of the town with schools, churches and extensive shopping provision on the Narborough Road. The boundaries of the West

⁷¹ See, for example, *Wright's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland* (London, 1904).

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Rodger, 'The built environment', 7-8.

End, as far as the perceptions of its inhabitants were concerned, seem to have been blurred. Some times it was perceived to have been centred on Westcotes and Narborough Road area; at other times it was perceived to take in other districts such as Newfoundpool.⁷⁴ There does not seem to have been any particular sense of hostility to other parts of the town. However, a collection of oral history records drawing on memories dating back to the late nineteenth century more than once recalls a popular saying of the area ‘West End ...Best End’ suggesting a cheerful combativeness.⁷⁵ Some institutional representation of this local attachment is shown in the success of the West End Adult School, which took on the name of the district, and was a very successful local social centre from the Edwardian period onwards, hosting regular socials and dances.⁷⁶ Possibly some of this territorial solidarity arose from the zoning effect of the River Soar which separated the West End from the districts of Leicester on the other side of the river. A sense of territory may also have especially arisen in those areas which had had a village identity before being incorporated into the town. Newfoundpool, for example, was incorporated in to Leicester in 1892 together with five other new suburbs and whether it was regarded as part of the West End or not it also retained its own identity. The area was known by its residents as ‘The Pool’. A resident whose family had lived there from the 1890s recalled the area up until the late 1930s. He remarked on the shops which were all family concerns and on the post office which was a hub of activity and where the postmistresses knew much of the private business of residents. He commented that ‘Basically ‘the Pool’ was a village community even though it was part of the city.’⁷⁷

It may then be supposed that for the population of the less grand suburbs, with more limited funds and transport to venture into the town centre, the immediate locality could offer a meaningful separate identity. Terraced housing which brought neighbours into close proximity, a local sense of place and a range of amenities offered a casual public sociability based on district. However, there is no particular

⁷⁴ K. Barrow (ed.), *West End as I Remember it* (Leicester, 1985), pamphlet with unnumbered pages.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, for example, Mr Clarke’s memories.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, Mr Lenton’s memories.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, Mr F.H. Williams memories.

evidence to show that because of this residents lost interest or their loyalty to the town as a whole. A resident, whose family owned a family butcher's shop in the West End remembers that during the Leicester Pageant of 1932 'the various shops were set out'. Her father placed in his window 'a clock and a telephone number made out of sausages and the City of Leicester Coat of Arms made out of coloured suet' and he won an award for this effort.⁷⁸ The mention of the award suggests that this initiative on the part of neighbourhood shops was not entirely spontaneous. However, even so, it shows that people in the West End were certainly prepared to enter into the spirit of the occasion.

The churches in the Leicester suburbs stood out as landmarks. Religious identity remained important throughout the period 1870 to 1939 and, as was the case with the Harrison family, suburban churches and chapels could provide a circle of friends. In the West End and Newfoundpool, for example, the Church of the Martyrs, the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist church, and the church of St Augustine were all thriving social centres.⁷⁹ The church building projects of the second half of the nineteenth century revived the influence of the Anglican Church, and the transformation of churches into leisure centres had occurred by the 1890s. Morris argues that this trend had begun to run out of steam by the Edwardian period but in Leicester, as has already been mentioned, the interwar newspapers were awash with the reports of church based leisure activities.⁸⁰ Not only did the drive to be published in the Leicester press suggest an awareness of the wider community but there is evidence that in the suburban churches clergy actively promoted loyalty to the city. For example, the congregations contributed money to powerful symbols of the town, such as the Leicester Royal Infirmary and other favourite local charities.⁸¹ Some parishes were

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, Mrs Fitzgerald's memories.

⁷⁹ ROLLR, St Augustine and Church of the Martyrs Parish Magazines. For Robert Hall see Barrow, *West End*, Mr Taylor's memories.

⁸⁰ Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', (1990), 422. Activities on offer at St Barnabas, St Augustine and Church of the Martyrs during the interwar years included, drama societies, football clubs, choir, Scouts and Guides, Lads Athletic Club, Girls Friendly Society, Mothers Union, parish garden parties, socials and bazaars. ROLLR, St Barnabas, St Augustine and Church of the Martyrs parish magazines.

⁸¹ ROLLR, St Barnabas and St Augustine parish magazines.

even more active in performing civic duties for instance, in sending the church choir to sing at the City's mental hospital.⁸² More symbolic links with the city were also arranged. During the interwar years, the fashion of inviting leading citizens to open church events increased. In November 1919, the Vicar of St. Barnabas in New Humberstone made a telling comment that gives insight into the nuances of class and suburban and urban identity of the period. Three prominent local personalities were due to open the St Barnabas bazaar, the Mayor, Lady North the wife of a leading shoe manufacturer and Mrs Corah, wife of a well-known textile manufacturer. Anticipating this, the Vicar wrote in the parish magazine 'The big people are not us but they are celebrities and they are from a place that we have loyalty to'.⁸³

In terms of overt and organised clashes between the public interest of the town as a whole and the more private interests of a local area, there seems to have been little evidence of this in the late Victorian and Edwardian years. However, in the interwar period there were clashes between the residents of certain suburbs and the municipal authorities. This has already been mentioned as part of the backdrop to the Leicester Pageant of 1932. It reflected an important and new phase of suburbanisation resulting from new opportunities for owner occupiers. Homeownership was given a particular boost by the lowering of mortgage interest rates from 1931 onwards.⁸⁴ However, by 1930, ratepayers groups were already very vocal in their complaints. In January 1930, under the headline 'The Woes of Suburban Dwellers', The *Leicester Mercury* reported that 500 residents in private building estates on the Narborough Road had formed a ratepayers association to protest against bad roads and to fight a building project, the 'New Inn Plan', which they saw as threatening the value of their property.⁸⁵ In the same week a bad-tempered and unruly ratepayers' meeting had taken place at Wigston where the main speaker had 'viewed the ever increasing expenditure by councils and municipalities all over the country with grave

⁸² ROLLR, St Barnabas parish magazine. A parish choir visit to mental hospital reported in Jan. 1925.

⁸³ ROLLR, St Barnabas parish magazine, Nov. 1919.

⁸⁴ Rodger, 'The built environment', 13.

⁸⁵ *LM*, 21 Jan. 1930.

apprehension'.⁸⁶ Wigston was outside the city boundary and subject to its own urban council, however, it is likely that on reading this report the owner occupiers of Narborough Road identified as much with the owner occupiers of Wigston as they did with the City of Leicester. The 1930s saw a continuation of this trend. In 1935, several new suburbs were brought into the city by a new boundary extension. A rise in the rate assessments for these new areas in April 1939 resulted in a mass protest by residents. By this time, protestors were much more organised than they had been at the time of the 'New Inn Plan' protest in 1930. The Leicester Federation of Owner Occupier Associations had been formed and this group were linked to a National Union of Ratepayers through a Midlands Provincial Council. Rather than identifying with the city, the protestors were, in the words of The *Leicester Mercury* 'beginning to regret their citizenship'.⁸⁷ Ratepayers' associations, on these occasions, showed an emphasis on private rather than civic identity with residents foregrounding the interests of the immediate locality rather than the public interest of the town as a whole. However, while the rates caused division, a perception of shared class identity linked suburban ratepayers, to local middle class political leaders. Trainor observes that along with a growing routine allegiance to the Conservative Party, in the face of the rise of Labour politics, growth in owner occupiership was an important element in integrating the outlooks of the upper and lower strata of the middle classes during the interwar years.⁸⁸ Given that there was still a substantial middle class leadership in the town it seems unlikely that the ratepayers groups were fighting against civic identity so much as fighting for their local rights and position within it. Housing was linked with values and status.⁸⁹ The middle class suburban ideal was supposed to offer beauty and seclusion from everyday life and the extent to which a family achieved this ideal was a measure of their success. Thus when the Narborough Road ratepayers fought against 'The New Inn plan' they were no doubt crusading against a perceived degradation of the area that would not only threaten the value of their property but their self esteem.

⁸⁶ *LM*, 22 Jan. 1930.

⁸⁷ *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 3 Apr. 1939.

⁸⁸ Trainor, 'The middle class', 698 and McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 96.

⁸⁹ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, 38-43.

Clashes between middle class suburban owner occupiers and Leicester's municipal authorities were examples of new local identities that had been driven by the process of suburbanisation and supported by the establishment of formally organised associations. With regard to Leicester's working classes, as has been noted, a different sense of priorities that placed class interest above civic identity could be found among those who formed a socialist associational network in the town. However, this was, by no means the whole story. In the interwar years, there was an expansion of Working Men's Clubs in the Victorian suburbs, each club bearing the name of the suburb in which it was situated. However, while retaining a local and class identity these did not set themselves up in opposition to a wider civic identity. On the contrary, they tended to demonstrate a public spiritedness in terms of the town. As was the case with the local Friendly Societies, the activities of these groups were recorded in the mainstream Leicester press. For example, during the 1920s and 1930s regular columns appeared in the local Leicester papers showing club members' enthusiasm in raising money for local charities and for taking part in activities with a civic orientation, for example, St John's Ambulance training courses, a popular choice during the interwar period.⁹⁰

For the middle class social leaders of the city, the public spiritedness of the Working Men's Clubs can be seen as a success in building consensus, a sign that both local and class identities could be united under the umbrella of civic identity. Civic ceremony, such as the Leicester Pageant, under these circumstances, could be seen as having genuine foundations in and support from local communities that were working well in their own right. In these conditions, it can be argued that civic ceremony had the function of reflecting and maintaining consensus as much as imposing authority. However, the challenge which faced the municipal authorities and wider leadership in the development of council estates during the interwar period was not easily met. The Victorian suburbs had grown organically with little public intervention. The development of council estates, on the other hand, led to an attempt to impose community from above, seemingly part of a misguided belief that community could

⁹⁰ See Chapter Five for further discussion of this.

grow if public health in the form of clean and more spacious housing was provided. In Leicester, the 1920s saw the first of two phases of council estate development. The Park/Saffron Lane Estate and the Braunstone Estate were built on the peripheries of the town. The utopian principles of the town planners can be seen in efforts to build in accordance with garden suburb principles. However, the lack of basic amenities such as transport facilities and shops meant that the sense of community that had grown in the older suburbs was curtailed from the outset.⁹¹ Obstruction by temperance advocates on the council to establishing a Working Men's Club on the Park/Saffron Lane Estate illustrates how the link between moral values and housing persisted, with the anxiety that 'slum' values would be brought to the new suburb. In addition, it demonstrated the blindness of a section of the city leadership to the public spiritedness of the Working Men's Club network throughout the city. Resentment at this is illustrated by the indignation of members of the Aylestone Working Men's Club, the nearest established club to the estate, who when the clash with the temperance issue arose, protested at being associated with an unrespectable lifestyle.⁹² The Aylestone Club's own commitment to a civic identity was underlined later in the year by the holding of a successful benefit concert in aid of the Leicester Infirmary.⁹³ Further, the Aylestone Club made their own efforts to bring estate residents into the wider urban circle. A provisional club had been formed on the estate, even without purpose built accommodation. In July 1928 it was reported that 'the staff band from the Saffron Lane Club paid a visit to Aylestone and...a jolly time was spent.' A Labour councillor commented that 'those who predicted an animosity between the two clubs proved very wide of the mark'.⁹⁴ This incident can perhaps be seen as a creditable attempt by residents of a neighbouring district to prevent the stigmatisation of the estate that the interference and mistakes of the public authorities seemed to be encouraging.

⁹¹ Rodger, 'The built environment', 11-13.

⁹² *LEM*, 23 Jan. 1928.

⁹³ *LEM*, 27 Jul. 1928.

⁹⁴ *LEM*, 27 Jul. 1928.

A further example of this type of stigmatisation, caused by misguided intervention and lack of planning foresight can be seen in the second phase of estate building in the 1930s. This was a slum clearance programme in which a number of estates including North Braunstone, Northfields and New Parks were built to relocate people away from the city centre. Again the estates were not adequately supplied with amenities and were cut off from the town.⁹⁵ Part of the New Parks Estate close to Newfoundpool was built on Freakes Ground, an open area which had originally been part of Leicester Forest.⁹⁶ Thus Newfoundpool residents were at the same time deprived of a certain 'rus in urbe' status as well as being landed with neighbours who had been labelled as unsalubrious. The type of positive attitude that had been shown by the Aylestone Working Men's Club to community building was not shown by everyone. The comments of a Newfoundpool resident who remarked that 'New Parks' will always be known to the inhabitants of Newfoundpool as 'Freaks' Estate'⁹⁷ give a flavour both of the lack of foresight on the part of the town planners and the extent to which housing and residential location even in relatively unpretentious areas, was linked to self-esteem and class aspiration.

Some attempts to foster civic awareness on the estates were attempted in a 'top down' manner. Taking civic/religious ritual from the city to the suburb was one method used. An example, of this can be seen in the ceremony held to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of St Christopher's Church Hall on the Park/Saffron Lane Estate in the summer of 1928. The procession was composed of Anglican dignitaries and did not include any civic officials. However, it was led by the Bishop of Leicester, who had a civic as well as a religious function, and representatives from a wide range of Leicester churches, as if to emphasise the connection between the estates and other districts of the city. Moreover, a part of the ceremony involved placing copies of both the national and Leicester newspapers under the foundation stone as though to

⁹⁵ Rodger, 'The built environment', 15.

⁹⁶ Jordan, *Leicester Mercury: Illustrated History*, 125.

⁹⁷ Barrow, *West End*, Mr F.H. William's memories.

remind estate residents of their links both to Leicester and the nation as a whole.⁹⁸ The event received coverage in the local press thus stressing the hoped for inclusion of council estate affairs in the mainstream of Leicester life. This event contrasts with the staging of the Leicester Pageant. The Pageant was underpinned by associational life in the city. The foundation stone ceremony, on the other hand, although it may well have had the support of local church members, seems more of an attempt to create community in a place where community, in any real sense had not had much chance to grow.

This chapter has considered the perceived trend towards fragmentation in provincial towns and cities from the late Victorian period through the interwar years and the extent to which this threatened perceptions of civic unity. In relation to this, it has been discussed whether or not the emphasis moved away from civic ritual to privately and/or locally organised activity and the effect this had on social identities. Leicester has been used as an example and the section has focused on the Leicester Pageant of 1932, a detailed account of which is given in the next chapter. While part of the reason for organising the Pageant may have been tensions in the social fabric, the spectacle was staged successfully and with widespread participation. It has been argued that two reasons for this success may have been the ability to mobilise interest through the urban associational network and the existence of relatively harmonious and personalised relationships in the workplace. It is also suggested that the format of civic ritual had mutated to reflect a greater level of social inclusion. The success of the occasion implies that the urban population could still conceive of themselves as a united entity and the relevance of civic ritual had not passed. One of the biggest challenges to perceptions of civic unity could have been, suburbanisation, the physical fragmentation of the city, and greater part of the chapter has analysed some of the effects of suburbanisation in relation to civic identity from the later decades of the Victorian period to 1939. The varying connotations of the terms private and

⁹⁸ *LEM*, 24 Jul. 1928. See also R. Rodger 'The "common good" and civic promotion: Edinburgh 1860-1914', in R. Colls and R. Rodger (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800-2000* (Aldershot, 2003), 153-4, for a discussion of ceremonies for laying foundation stones in outlying parts of a town to promote civic awareness.

public have been acknowledged and then the public/private distinction has been used as an analytical tool to highlight some of these effects. The main conclusion drawn is that, despite changes in the geography of the town a continuity, as well as a reshaping of associational life, helped maintain perceptions of civic unity. This was supported by the style of reporting and content of the local newspapers. While the urban elites, from the late nineteenth century enjoyed a home-centred life in the more exclusive suburbs of the town, they retained a public involvement in civically minded, town-based associations showing a continued, if less publicised, commitment to local urban life. There was, however, a reduction of coverage of this in the local press, which made their contribution less visible. At the same time there was increased publicity for lower middle class and socially mixed activities as well as more specifically working class events, events that took place, both in the town and the suburbs. With regard to the less exclusive Victorian suburbs, some had a reasonably strong territorial identity but there is no significant evidence that this was set in opposition to the city. These suburbs had their own neighbourhood life and associational lives based around clubs and societies, often attached to churches, chapels and educational institutes. However, links with the city were maintained. It was the suburbanisation of the interwar period that produced the more marked challenges as public housing provision produced council estates with inadequate amenities and some of the new owner occupiers of the lower middle class became enraged ratepayers, However, this, as the success of the Leicester Pageant shows, had not caused things to fall apart. Civic ceremony, on this occasion, was not faced with the impossible task of creating a sense of community from scratch. It could draw on and bolster a sense of solidarity that was already there. It has been said that Leicester's history has been characterised by a steady and continuous adaptation to changing circumstances and opportunities.⁹⁹ This seems true of the city's response to the effects of suburbanisation until 1939 and into the post war period

⁹⁹ Reeder, 'Introduction', x.

Chapter Two.

Representing the city: the continuing popularity of civic ceremony in Leicester in the interwar years

Civic ceremony was used by urban elites to raise the profile of provincial cities during the late Victorian and Edwardian decades.¹ However, there is a perception that the popularity of civic processions and other large scale civic celebrations declined after this period, partly because of the growing emphasis, in Britain on the national at the expense of the local. It is argued that, at worst, the enthusiasm for civic ceremony collapsed after 1914 while, at best, it had lost some of its initial dynamism.² Evidence from the East Midlands, however, gives some grounds for reappraisal. A study by Dickie of the Northampton Pageant of 1928 suggests that in Northampton, during the interwar years, enthusiasm for civic ceremony was not lacking in fresh motivation.³ The evidence from Leicester is still more striking and a comparison between the ceremony surrounding the royal visit and opening of Leicester's Abbey Park in 1882 and the Leicester Pageant celebrations of 1932 demonstrates this. In 1882, the one day royal visit with its civic processions and celebrations was well-attended by cheering crowds, with the symbolism of the

¹ D. Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain: the Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, 94 (1982), 107-130. In Cannadine's account of civic ritual in Colchester, the heyday of civic ritual was between the 1880s and the First World War. From 1919 to 1938 'the ceremonial elaborated in this earlier period was perpetuated, consolidated and extended', 108.

² See S. Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture in the English industrial city' c.1835-1914 in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), 226-41 and also S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Classes: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000). In both these texts Gunn argues that the importance of civic ritual was in decline from the 1880s onwards and in 'freefall' after 1918.

³ M. Dickie, 'Town patriotism in Northampton, 1918-1938: an invented tradition', *Midland History*, XV11 (1992), 109-18.

ceremonies conveying unity and pride in the local, coupled with loyalty to the national. Leicester was represented as a town which deserved national recognition, a place where local responsibilities for the welfare of the townspeople were met to a sophisticated level. The Leicester Pageant and the related civic rituals of 1932 were, however, even more upbeat. The celebrations continued for nearly two weeks and Leicester was represented not as just deserving recognition but as a model for the rest of the nation. Maximum attention was drawn to the city's relative commercial prosperity despite the backdrop of economic depression and, at the same time, an 'invented tradition' of Leicester as 'the birthplace of democracy' was promoted to emphasise the public-spiritedness of Leicester people. The mass participation of the townspeople, which drew on a rich associational life, indicates that these civic celebrations were not just an attempt by the authorities to maintain the social fabric but mirrored a genuine sense of civic identity.⁴

The Leicester Pageant and related ceremonies of 1932 were staged successfully and with widespread participation. This was possible because the format of civic ceremony had developed to reflect a greater social inclusiveness while at the same time a confident image of Leicester was marketed, portraying the city as a commercial model for the nation. This chapter looks more closely at the form, symbolism and organisation of events. By comparing the form of the events of 1932 with the royal visit to Leicester and the opening of Abbey Park in 1882, the similarities between the two occasions and the changes which were developed are explored. These are examined by considering a number of overlapping aspects. They include, for example, the means by which the relationship between the local and the national was represented, the depiction of the relationship between the city and the county, the individuals and associations that were mobilised to represent the city on the civic stage and the symbolic content of these spectacles and how this was used to convey values and beliefs.

⁴ The descriptions of the opening of Abbey Park Ceremony in Leicester are made with reference to the *Leicester Daily Mercury (LDM)*, 1882 and the *Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 1882. The descriptions of the Leicester Pageant and related celebrations are made with reference to the *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 1931 and 1932.

Use of the term ritual

The term 'civic ritual' has been increasingly used to describe large civic spectacles.⁵ Unfortunately, the word itself is a source of linguistic confusion which causes some difficulty in discussion. In an overview of approaches to ritual, Muir characterises it as a social activity that uses symbolism and is repetitive and standardised.⁶ To characterise occasional large-scale civic spectacles as ritual is, therefore, problematic as there is not the regularity involved that is commonly associated with the term. Kertzer provides some way out of these linguistic difficulties by suggesting that ritual is not an entity to be discovered but an analytical category that 'helps us to deal with the chaos of human experience and put it in a coherent framework' ...There is, he argues 'no right or wrong definition only one that is more or less useful'.⁷ In comparing the two Leicester civic occasions Kertzer's own characterisation of ritual as 'action wrapped in a web of symbolism'⁸ is useful. By foregrounding symbolism rather than repetitiveness, this approach allows us to group ceremony and pageantry under a loose definition of civic ritual for the purposes of discussion. The notion of ritual as a regular rather than an occasional activity, however, is only to be shelved temporarily and will be returned to in Chapter Four. Underlying the mutation of big civic spectacles to a more inclusive model, was the local culture of associational life. The small private events that comprised this provided a repetitive pattern, the rhythms of which shaped an annual calendar. It was by drawing on this culture that the successful occasional spectacle could be organised while the events themselves furthered the sense of social cohesion, the foundations of which already lay in associational life.

Some semantic connotations of the term ritual can also confuse efforts to analyse civic spectacles. Harrison suggests that the word ritual is used because no other word so well conveys 'the element of formalism and the public display of symbols of

⁵ See D. Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain', 107-30 and S. Gunn, *Public Culture*.

⁶ E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), 1-12. Although Muir's book deals with the early modern period, his book gives a useful general overview of anthropological approaches to ritual.

⁷ D. I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (London, 1988), 8.

⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

power'.⁹ Arguably then, the use of the words ritual or rites,¹⁰ where another commentator might use the less 'loaded' term ceremony, can indicate an underlying image of the world driven by a particular concern with the repressive use of power. Despite this perceptual link between ritual and repressive power, the function of ritual has, in fact, been subject to two different schools of thought. Both originally derive from Durkheim¹¹ and acknowledge ritual as a form of social control, however, while one stresses the use of ritual to reflect and promote social consensus¹² the other stresses the use of ritual to assert power and represent the views of a dominant culture.¹³ The Leicester events of 1882 and 1932 could be used to provide evidence for both these points of view, arguably, because the events fulfilled both functions. Kertzer emphasises that an important aspect of ritual is its ambiguity.¹⁴ Part of its effectiveness is that it can mean different things to different people. Bearing this in mind, an interpretation which claimed to be definitive would be unconvincing. The civic rituals of 1882 and 1932 can reasonably be identified as means by which the civic authorities sought to legitimate their power. However, at the same time, the development of civic ritual in Leicester between 1882 and 1932 to involve far larger numbers of participants with a greater depth of involvement also highlights the potential of such events both to reflect and promote social cohesion.

Beyond this debate, a third function of ritual is evident in both the Leicester events of 1882 and 1932, the use of ritual to inculcate values and beliefs.¹⁵ The symbolism of the events defined local and national relationships in a particular way, thus shaping as

⁹ M. Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), 264.

¹⁰ See S. Gunn, *Public Culture*, 163-185, Chapter Seven which focuses on civic processions is entitled 'The rites of civic culture'.

¹¹ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London, 1915).

¹² For example, E. Shills and M. Young 'The meaning of the coronation', *Sociological Review*, 1, (1953), 61-81.

¹³ For example, S. Lukes, 'Political ritual and social integration', *Sociology: Journal of the British Sociological Association*, 9 (1975), 289-308.

¹⁴ D I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (London, 1988), 11.

¹⁵ E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: inventing traditions' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1984), 1-14. The invention of tradition is cited both as a means of legitimating status and authority and as a means of promoting social solidarity. A third function, the use of invented tradition to inculcate values and beliefs is also cited.

well as reflecting attitudes.¹⁶ The core values promoted in 1882 and 1932, especially the value of unity, remained essentially the same. However, differences in emphasis reflecting a changed social context, underline the importance of a historical perspective in analysing civic ritual.¹⁷

The opening of Abbey Park, 1882-outline of events

The symbolism incorporated into the 1882 and 1932 events in Leicester, represented the image of both a national and local community and their interactions. In 1882, the ideal presented was loyalty to the national while a strong sense of an independent and local identity was maintained. In 1932, the sense of connection to the national and indeed the international, in the form of Empire, was maintained, as was the image of the united local community. However, a more ambitious image of the city was projected in 1932 as a model for the rest of the nation. At the same time, the manner of participation in the project, as reported in the local press, represented to local people a model of democratic decision making, the skilful coordination of large numbers of participants, and cooperation between various subgroups of the town and between town and county.

The decision to mark the opening of Abbey Park with a royal visit was made in January 1882. The initial arrangement was made with Buckingham Palace over a matter of days. The Prince stopped at Leicester a week later on a Monday evening on his way to stay with the Earl of Stamford and was presented at the station with an address of loyalty and a formal invitation to open the Park in May. On this first occasion, the royal carriage drove through the centre of town while thousands of spectators gathered, seemingly spontaneously, to cheer. A limited number of illuminations had been organised by the Town Council while railway station officials and shopkeepers, on their own initiative had provided flags, Masonic symbols and

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz is a prominent voice of the 'defining of reality' approach to ritual. See C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973). See C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 1992), 171-81 for a discussion of the different approaches to ritual.

¹⁷ This is a major point made in Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain', 107-130.

other decorations.¹⁸ The Prince and Princess of Wales returned on 29 May, the Whitsun holiday, for the opening of the Park.¹⁹ A formula for royal visits had already been developed in other industrial towns, for example, Manchester in 1851 as described by Gunn, and Leeds in 1858 as described by Briggs.²⁰ Much of this was copied by Leicester. The royal couple were received formally at the station by the Mayor, Mayoress, members of the Corporation and the Leicestershire Regiment. The royal couple then processed with the civic authorities, representatives of the wider urban community and the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, The Duke of Rutland, through the newly constructed town centre. Shops and other buildings were elaborately decorated and triumphal arches had been specially erected which the royal visitors passed under en route. Subscriptions of over £3000 had been raised to pay for the public decorations.²¹ An extended stop was made in the Market Place for a ceremony led by the Freemasons of the Leicestershire and Rutland Province and over 6000 schoolchildren from voluntary and board schools accompanied this ceremony with patriotic songs. The climax of the day was an opening ceremony in Abbey Park itself. The Mayor invited the Prince to open the park, presenting him with a golden key and the Prince, accordingly, declared it open. The Princess was then invited to plant a tree and was presented with a silver spade by the Lady Mayoress on behalf of the 'ladies of Leicester'. This was followed by a luncheon, provided by a local caterer and councillor, for selected guests. The programme included speeches from the Mayor and a programme of toasts proposed by the Prince and a variety of aldermen, local justices of the peace, military representatives and county dignitaries. The royal couple then took a formal departure from the station and the evening was given over to the enjoyment of spectacular fireworks and illuminations which crowds of townspeople thronged to watch.

¹⁸ *The Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 14 Jan. 1982.

¹⁹ *LDP*, 30 May 1982. The account of the 1882 celebrations given in this section is mostly based on the account given in *LDP*, 3 Jun. 1882, cross-referenced to the *Leicester Daily Mercury (LDM)*, 3 Jun. 1882.

²⁰ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 139-84; Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture', 227-39 and Gunn, *Public Culture*, 163-85.

²¹ Borough of Leicester, *The Opening of Abbey Park* (Leicester, 1882), 37-4 gives the list of subscribers.

The Leicester Pageant and related celebrations, 1932: outline of events

The 1932 civic celebrations and Pageant were, in comparison, a much more complex affair. Instead of being a one day event, it was a series of events scheduled over ten days, and then, when the Pageant consistently drew large crowds, an extension of three more days was announced to give as many townspeople as possible the chance to attend.²² The events consisted of a series of themed days including: Civic Day, Day of Industry, County Day, Day of the British Empire, Pageant Sunday, Shops Display Day and Children's Day. The outstanding events were the Pageant itself, the Industrial Exhibition, the Trades' Procession and the Civic Procession. The Pageant, which was directed by a professional Pageant Master,²³ Frank Lascelles, involved 4000 performers and traced a history of Leicester through seven episodes starting with the arrival of the Romans and concluding with the 1882 opening of Abbey Park by the Prince and Princess of Wales. Performances were staged every evening and on a number of afternoons in a specially built amphitheatre in Abbey Park.²⁴

The Industrial Exhibition was held in the municipal concert hall, the De Montfort Hall, and was opened by Lady Snowdon.²⁵ It remained open throughout the Pageant period. Fifty city and county firms representing the hosiery, boot, engineering and a range of other industries took stands and the Trades' Procession, which took place the next day, was still more comprehensive, including tableaux from ninety Leicester and Leicestershire industries and firms.²⁶ The procession, which drew great crowds and which was nearly twelve miles long, included marching groups of trade associations and trade unions. With the encouragement of the Mayor of Leicester, workers' organisations had invited national trade union leaders and representatives of the TUC to the event. These were entertained by the Mayor to a civic lunch at the municipal

²² *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 25 Jun. 1932.

²³ There was no equivalent to the 1932 Pageant Master in 1882.

²⁴ *LEM*, 16 Jun. 1932-30 Jun. 1932. See also F. Shakespeare Herne (ed.), *The Historical Pageant of Leicestershire: Official Souvenir* (Leicester, 1932).

²⁵ *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932.

²⁶ *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932.

art gallery along with representatives of the Industrial Relations Department, the Ministry of Labour and the Leicester Chamber of Commerce.²⁷

For the procession on Civic Day a half day's public holiday was declared.²⁸ The Lord Mayor of London and the mayors of thirteen other provincial towns accepted an invitation to the event. After a civic lunch, again at the municipal art gallery, they processed, with the Leicester civic authorities, through the town, past streets lined with spectators to Abbey Park. Full ceremonial dress was worn and the 400 year old Leicester city mace was carried. The Mayor of London brought up the rear in his ceremonial coach, while the procession was led by the 4000 Pageant performers, in full costume and forming a column a quarter of a mile long. At a ceremony in the centre of the city, the Mayor of Leicester invited the Mayor of London to open the recently constructed Charles Street. The Mayor did this, cutting a silken cord with silver scissors, near to an archway which was formed by the City Fire Brigade's fire escapes. The ceremony completed, the procession continued on its way to Abbey Park. Here, the Mayor drove around the Pageant arena to the tumultuous applause of those in the amphitheatre. Then all settled to watch a performance of the Pageant.

Pageant fortnight included many other events. Displays from youth associations such as the Scouts, a carnival, variety performances and the transformation of Leicester Market into an Elizabethan Market with stall holders in full Elizabethan costume all formed part of the programme.²⁹ In the last days of the fortnight, a large number of children's street parties were held in the rundown Wharf Street area of the city.³⁰ When Pageant fortnight closed it was amid reports of financial success and hailed as a demonstration of the public spiritedness and civic awareness of those who had taken part.³¹

²⁷ *LEM*, the Mayor had been granted a £500 hospitality grant for the Pageant.

²⁸ *LEM*, 21 Jun. 1932.

²⁹ *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932 and 24 Jun. 1932.

³⁰ *LEM*, 24-30 Jun. 1932.

³¹ *LEM*, 30 Jun. 1932.

Representing the City: the events of 1882 and 1932 compared and contrasted

The choice of honoured guests was, of course, a matter of symbolic significance in both the 1882 and 1932 Leicester civic rituals. In 1882, the motivation to invite the Prince and Princess of Wales to open Abbey Park was not made explicit at the January Town Council meeting where the decision was made.³² However, a precedent for inviting royalty to attend celebratory occasions in industrial towns had been set from a royal visit to Manchester in 1851. This in turn had set in train a series of royal visits to industrial towns which, as commentators have observed, had a competitive edge.³³ Against this backdrop, local leadership perceived a royal visit as conveying an expression of confidence in the town, an obvious way to raise Leicester's profile on the national map.

The choice of a royal visit was also in step with the contemporary support by both private and public institutions for 'invented tradition'.³⁴ This, it has been argued, provided a counterbalance in a time of rapid social change.³⁵ The rise of the organised working class was perceived to be increasingly dividing society on class lines while the expansion of the franchise had brought with it the emergence of mass political parties. These issues were of significance at both a national and local level and the identities of the national and the civic provided an alternative to both partisan and class loyalty. Moreover, a shift in the centre of gravity away from the provincial towns to London, with wealth and status increasingly centred on the capital, meant that the local was increasingly envisaged within a national framework.³⁶ From 1870 onwards, royal presentation changed and there was a more ceremonial approach. With the monarchy now removed from any real political power, it was no threat to the national state to present the Royal Family in splendour and by means of public spectacle to emphasise a sense of tradition.³⁷ Likewise, from a local point of view,

³² *LDP*, 2 Jan. 1982.

³³ Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture', 228-9.

³⁴ Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: inventing traditions', 1-14.

³⁵ Dickie, 'Town patriotism in Northampton', 109.

³⁶ J. Harris, *Private Lives Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1993), 1-38.

³⁷ D.N. Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the invention of tradition c.1820-1977' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1984), 101-164.

loyalty to the monarchy provided a relatively neutral way of representing a local community within a wider national one. The seeming ease and speed with which the royal visit to Leicester was arranged suggests that there was now a general consensus both at national and local level, as well as with the Royal Family themselves, that this type of spectacle was a desirable way to promote local and national allegiances.

At the 1882 opening of Abbey Park in Leicester, ceremonial splendour showcased the perceived traditions of both monarchy and Leicester itself.³⁸ Both a national and local identity were celebrated and represented as being in partnership rather than polarised, suggesting that overlapping identities were possible and that diversity within unity was the ideal. This aligning of the two identities, national with civic and local, separate but united in partnership was made evident in many ways. Prior to the royal visit, a local newspaper emphasised the valuable unifying role that the Prince was able to play, remarking that he had proved himself to be non-partisan and ‘a representative of the country at large’.³⁹ Unity was physically demonstrated in the procession which linked the Prince, the Leicester civic authorities and also the chief symbol of the county, the Duke of Rutland. The image of national and local in partnership was also expressed in the toasts offered at the luncheon in Abbey Park. First, loyal toasts were made to the Royal Family and then to the Mayor and Corporation and the prosperity of the town of Leicester. Later toasts included ‘the House of Lords and Commons’ but also ‘our municipal institutions’.

Partnership was further represented in the decorations that bedecked the town. Buildings and triumphal arches bore symbols of the Borough of Leicester, the Borough Arms and the Wyvern but were also emblazoned with heraldic symbols representing the Prince of Wales. On one arch the unity of nation, counties and towns was depicted by the allegorical figures: Britannia, Commerce and Agriculture. The keynote of the partnership portrayed was loyalty combined with civic pride. Loyalty was represented by the first arch through which the Prince passed, an arch composed

³⁸ The discussion in the following three paragraphs refers to the description of the royal visit given in *LDP*, 30 May 1882.

³⁹ *LDP*, 30 May 1932.

of the evergreens of fir and yew, and it was echoed by the many mottos of welcome displayed on shops and buildings, while the parade through the civic centre to the park demonstrated pride in the achievements of the local state.

The use of heraldic symbols was one of a variety of ways in which a sense of historical and traditional reference was created. The day chosen for the event was also symbolic. The 29th of May was Oak-Apple Day, the traditional anniversary of the Restoration, and whether this was fortuitous or not, it was commented on by the press. In addition, the Princess of Wales planted an oak as part of the opening ceremony, a possible further reference to the day as well as a reminder of a traditional national symbol. Historical symbolism also served to highlight Leicester's heritage as well as that of the monarchy. While the procession through the new centre of town was seemingly a celebration of progress, the new park, named after Leicester's medieval abbey, the place of Cardinal Wolsey's death, was a clear reminder of the town's historical past. This was underlined again by the memento given to the Prince of Wales of the opening ceremony, a gold key 'massive in character and designed in the Gothic style' as being suitable to the ancient abbey.⁴⁰ Historical reference was also used as a creative inspiration for the design of a number of the triumphal arches in the town. For example, a Renaissance arch presumably celebrated the rebirth of Leicester as a modern industrial town, while an old English arch suggested deep historical roots and enduring tradition.

The same ideal of partnership between national and local was projected in the civic celebrations and Leicester Pageant in 1932 but this time the representation of civic identity was even more upbeat and less deferential.⁴¹ The Pageant had two main guests, the Mayor of London who attended the 'Civic Day' and was accompanied by the mayors of a number of other provincial cities, and Lady Snowdon, who opened the industrial exhibition. At a time when, in social welfare, national Government increasingly dictated policy while burdening local authorities with the responsibility

⁴⁰ *LDP*, 30 May 1882.

⁴¹ *LEM*, 16-30 Jun. 1882.

of implementation, it is not perhaps surprising that a representative of civic government was invited as an honoured guest.⁴² The choice of the Mayor of London gave the occasion a national dimension but it was the value of localism that was emphasised. Welcoming the Mayor of London, the Mayor of Leicester exalted local government proclaiming ‘Your presence is a... symbol of the value of civic life and local government which means more to the homes and lives of our people than anything.’⁴³ Next, promoting invented tradition by referring to the local connection with Simon de Montfort, he represented Leicester itself as the model for government, referring to the city as ‘the birthplace of freedom and civic government’.⁴⁴ Lady Snowdon was not a first choice to open the Industrial Exhibition. The organisers, with their characteristic confidence, had hoped for the higher profile Lloyd George.⁴⁵ However, as wife of the ex-Labour Chancellor Philip Snowdon, it was likely thought that she had a relevance to industry while symbolising an approach to labour organisations which highlighted partnership rather than class conflict. Again, at the opening of the exhibition, the Mayor of Leicester represented the city as a model for the nation emphasising its relatively easy progress though the depression and hailing its success as a manufacturing and producing centre as the most fortunate in the country and probably, for a town of its size, the most fortunate in the world. This success he attributed to the excellent choices made by the forefathers of the city.⁴⁶ The hyperbole, seems to have been a little too much for Viscountess Snowdon who, while she congratulated Leicester on its achievements, chose to reinforce a more national sense of identity asking the audience to remember that citizens of Leicester ‘were also Britons and citizens of the world.’⁴⁷

However, while localism was played up, the focus on a wider community was also emphasised by the organisers. The celebrations of Pageant fortnight significantly included an Empire Day at which the press reported trade representatives from the

⁴² J. Davis, ‘Central government and the towns’ in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 261-86.

⁴³ *LEM*, 21 Jun. 1932.

⁴⁴ *LEM*, 21 Jun 1932.

⁴⁵ *LEM*, 4 May 1932.

⁴⁶ *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932.

⁴⁷ *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932.

Dominions were present. Moreover, while the local was represented as a partner of the national, there was a sense that the role of the local as a junior partner should not be over-emphasised. For example, letters of congratulation from the prime ministers of South Africa, Australia, Southern Rhodesia and New Zealand were read out at the end of the Civic Procession on 21 June, suggesting that Leicester could hold its own as a trading centre within the Empire.⁴⁸

The Mayor of Leicester, councillors, aldermen and borough officials were of course at the heart of the celebrations both in 1882 and 1932. It has been argued that a primary function of civic ritual was to legitimate the status and authority of town corporations and there are convincing reasons to suggest this even if it was not the only motivation for staging such events.⁴⁹ In the case of the 1882 Abbey Park event, there were certainly reasons for the Leicester Corporation to seize an opportunity to proclaim their fitness to govern. From 1870 onwards, the Corporation had built on an undistinguished record and could now boast of a range of achievements. For example, significant advances had been made in supplying an adequate sewage system, flood works had been scheduled, the Corporation had bought out a local gas company and a municipal fire brigade had been set up.⁵⁰ Alongside these basic amenities, the more prestigious project of the 'Peoples' Park', authorised by the Leicester Improvement Act of 1876,⁵¹ gave the impression that the Corporation was providing facilities to a sophisticated level. The impressive park and the elaborate ceremonial that accompanied its opening possibly went some way to obscuring the fact that, while strong advances had been made at a basic level, essentials such as the sewage system were still 'work in progress'. Moreover, at the initial stages of planning, there had been objections incurred at the proposed expense in creating the park.⁵² A grand ceremonial opening, which celebrated the Corporation's achievements, also presumably helped to downplay these disagreements. Likewise, in 1932, the opening

⁴⁸ *LEM*, 21 Jun. 1932.

⁴⁹ Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture', 227-39 and Gunn, *Public Culture*, 163-85.

⁵⁰ R.H. Evans, 'The local government of Leicester in the nineteenth century' in A.E. Brown (ed.), *The Growth of Leicester* (Leicester, 1972), 71-7.

⁵¹ J.S. Phipps, *Leicester in Parliament* (Leicester, 1988), 96.

⁵² J.S. Simmons, *Leicester: Past and Present*, vol. 2, *Modern City 1860-1974* (London, 1974), 38.

of the prestigious new road, Charles St, authorised by the Leicester Corporation Act 1925, distracted attention from problems encountered by the Corporation in slum clearance and establishing new council estates.⁵³ As in the case of the Abbey Park project there had been initial opposition, this time, during the 1920s, to road widening and road construction schemes.⁵⁴ Again a grand opening helped justify the project and banish memories of the initial disagreements.

However, despite the elaborate nature of the 1882 celebrations, there was no exaggerated show of ceremonial dress on the part of the Mayor. While the civic authorities may have wished to assert their authority on this occasion it was not done visually with a display of official robes. A line drawing of the opening ceremony shows the Mayor simply wearing his chain of office.⁵⁵ The break between the old and reformed administration in 1836 had been so bitter that all the civic paraphernalia was considered symbolic of corruption and was disposed of.⁵⁶ A compromise was reached in 1867 with the acquisition of a new mayoral chain,⁵⁷ however, it is clear that in 1882, the traditions associated with mayoral costume were still not ones that the civic authorities wished to be associated with. In contrast, in 1932, the Mayor and visiting mayors dressed in full ceremonial costume and the town mace was displayed. Possibly, this was a renewed assertion of authority or possibly, with the electoral principle now firmly established, it was now acceptable to use costume as just another theatrical contribution to the invention of tradition.

A parallel interpretation of ritual, as has been observed, is that it functions to establish and build on social solidarity. In 1882, a cross section of townspeople, who held no official civic position, also took a formal part in the celebrations. One group were individuals, who were not members of the statutory authorities but who were influential locally. This group included clergymen, ministers, manufacturers, military

⁵³ Phipps, *Leicester*, 65.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 65-7.

⁵⁵ W. Kelly, *Royal Progresses and Visits to Leicester* (London, 1884), 600.

⁵⁶ See note on James Windram's grave discussed on website:

http://www.geocities.com/welford_rd_cemetery/wl.htm, last accessed 30 Mar. 2009

⁵⁷ Information given by the Lord Mayor's Office, Leicester. The date 1867 is engraved on the back of the chain.

figures and top railway officials. A small number took part in the procession itself but more attended the opening ceremony and the celebratory luncheon in the park.⁵⁸ On the occasion, no official reason was given for their presence and it is impossible to know the individual agendas that participants may have had. However, a reasonable explanation lies in the argument that Victorian towns were not only governed by the statutory authorities but a wider circle of the urban elite.⁵⁹ The presence of these individuals at the event can be seen as a symbolic acknowledgement of this. To claim that civic ritual, on this occasion, mirrored complete consensus among urban elites, of course, is not convincing given the different partisan and denominational loyalties involved. However, variations on the 'social solidarity' approach to ritual, for example, the 'channelling of conflict' thesis,⁶⁰ which suggests that the function of ritual is not to produce total unity but to promote solidarity where there is agreement, is as plausible as claims that civic ritual functioned purely to legitimate a display of power. Loyalty to the Monarch and Prince of Wales, and by implication the nation, provided just such an opportunity for presenting a united civic front and creating feelings of solidarity among participants.

Beyond the inclusion of community leaders in the 1882 event, the wider body of the associational networks was also drawn on. Both Gunn, when describing the royal visit to Manchester in 1851, and Briggs, when describing the opening of the town hall in Leeds in 1858,⁶¹ comment on the inclusion of working class associations in the ceremonial processions. In the case of Gunn, working class participation is treated rather as a token symbol of unity.⁶² While there is undoubtedly some truth in this stance, the numbers of Friendly Society representatives who took part in the Abbey Park celebrations, 900 in all, and by far the largest group in the ceremonial procession,⁶³ make it difficult to dismiss their presence as purely token. The

⁵⁸ *LDP*, 30 May 1882.

⁵⁹ R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris, 'Preface' in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond Since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), ix-xii and R.J. Morris, 'Governance: two centuries of urban growth' in *ibid*, 15-27.

⁶⁰ V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, 1967), 30.

⁶¹ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 139-84.

⁶² Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture', 227-39 and Gunn, *Public Culture*, 163-85.

⁶³ *LDP*, 30 May 1882.

associations which took part were: the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, who represented 4420 members and 20 lodges in Leicester, the Ancient Order of Foresters, who represented 3500 members and 35 courts in Leicester and Leicestershire, the Nottingham Imperial Order of Oddfellows with 3000 members members and 35 courts in Leicester and Leicestershire, and the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes who had 12 lodges in Leicester and Leicestershire.⁶⁴ These numbers suggest that a significant proportion of the working class population were agreeable to opting into the civic ideal, while those members, who were based in the county, were also willing to give their support.

Although the Friendly Society representatives did not attend the luncheon given at Abbey Park, the ceremonial toasts offered by the urban elites, on this occasion, were in line with the values and beliefs asserted at private Friendly Society functions. These were frequently reported in some detail in the Leicester local press. An anniversary dinner of a Foresters Court at ‘the Marquis of Granby’ Castle Street, in 1871, was typical: ‘the party sat down to a spread that did much credit to the host and hostess...the cloth having been drawn, the chairman gave the usual loyal and patriotic toasts’.⁶⁵ In 1884, the format had not changed. At a lodge anniversary dinner of Oddfellows, a dinner was held at the Cherry Tree Hotel, Bond St. ‘An ‘excellent repast’ was enjoyed by 80 members, after which the ‘customary loyal toasts’ were offered.⁶⁶ The formula was, therefore, that when the real community of members gathered together they acknowledged their allegiance to the ‘imagined’ community of the nation headed by the Monarch. Allegiance to the civic community was demonstrated by fundraising for local causes that were also represented by the associational and institutional network. For example, in 1871, the combined lodges of the Foresters organised a benefit for the Leicester Blind Institution,⁶⁷ while in 1884, the Vicar of St Matthews Leicester preached a special annual sermon to the combined lodges of Oddfellows, after which, members contributed to a collection for

⁶⁴ Record Office of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR), *Wright’s Directory of Leicester, 1882* (Leicester, 1882). The full membership numbers of ‘the Buffaloes’ are not given.

⁶⁵ *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury (LCLM)*, 22 Jul. 1871.

⁶⁶ *LCLM*, 17 May 1884.

⁶⁷ *LCLM*, 15 Apr. 1871.

the Leicester Infirmary.⁶⁸ Drawing on the resources of the Friendly Societies, with their banners and regalia,⁶⁹ was obviously a good way for the organisers of making a show at a ceremonial procession, as well as suggesting that notions of civic unity predominated over class loyalty. However, evidence of the numbers in attendance and the nature of private ceremony at Friendly Society functions does not give reason to suggest that their participation was anything but whole-hearted.

Another associational network, though with a strong middle class profile, played a central role in the ceremonies of 1882. These were the Masonic lodges which had both a town and county presence. In 1882, there were three town lodges and six in the county.⁷⁰ Each lodge had an independent profile⁷¹ but came under the auspices of the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland. Lodge membership, of course, overlapped with the membership of other influential voluntary associations, for example, the Leicester Chamber of Commerce. In the 1882 town directory, the names of 28 officials were listed for the Chamber of Commerce. Cross reference with Masonic records shows that 25 per cent of these were also members of the three Leicester lodges.⁷² Moreover, Freemasons, as well as participating in private associational life, were frequently to be found among the ranks of councillors and aldermen. The office of mayor was occupied twice by a mason in the 1870s and four times by a mason in the 1880s.⁷³

At the 1882 event, the Freemasons, in full ceremonial dress, performed their own ceremony within the main event. The ceremony demonstrates the effectiveness of

⁶⁸ *LCLM*, 4 Oct. 1884.

⁶⁹ Kelly, *Royal Progresses*, 654. Kelly observes that members of the Friendly Societies processed, each wearing a rosette and medal and preceded by the banners of their order.

⁷⁰ *ROLLR, Wright's Directory of Leicester*, 1882 (Leicester, 1882).

⁷¹ J. Hamill, *The History of English Freemasonry* (Aldershot, 1994), 69-85.

⁷² A membership list of John of Gaunt Lodge is included in Freemasons' Hall Leicester (FHL), A.J.S. Cannon, *The History of John of Gaunt Lodge No 523: One Hundred Years 1846-1946*, 1946, 266-84, centenary booklet. A membership list of the Albert Edward Lodge is included in a centenary booklet, FHL, *The Albert Edward Lodge no 1560, 1875-1975*, 1975. A membership list of St John's Lodge is an appendix in FHL, A.N. Newman, *The History of St John's Lodge No 279 Leicester 1790-1990*, 1990, centenary booklet.

⁷³ Information taken from a list of Freemasons who have served as mayor of Leicester displayed at Freemasons' Hall.

ritual in depicting a delicate balance of identities within the civic and local context. The overt reason for this separate ceremony was Prince Albert Edward's position as Grand Master within the national framework of Freemasonry. The Masonic procession of lodges of Leicester and Leicestershire was led by the most recently established lodge, the Albert Edward Lodge with the Provincial Grand Lodge and the Provincial Grand Master, the Earl Ferrers, at the rear. The Earl Ferrers presented the Prince with a loyal Masonic address. A draft copy of this had been sent privately, by the Provincial Grand Secretary, for checking, prior to the event.⁷⁴ The separate ceremony and private arrangements suggest that the Freemasons were asserting their right to an autonomous identity apart from the civic, with a separate relationship to a national framework as represented by the Prince of Wales. However, this autonomous identity was not set up in opposition to civic identity. The Masonic ceremony was carefully choreographed as a separate element within the larger event. It did not clash with any other arrangement and it was supported by the musical accompaniment of Leicester school children who represented the wider civic community. Thus, the event could be seen as a depiction of the mutual recognition of private and public with acknowledgement of each others sphere of influence and mutual interdependence.

Mutual interdependence was also represented between the town and county. This was clear from the inclusion of the Duke of Rutland in a prestigious position in the civic procession. The representation was in contrast to the political events of the earlier part of the earlier decades of the century when the municipal reforms of 1836 had swept away a corrupt county-led administration and replaced them with the first elected members of the Borough.⁷⁵ The Masonic lodges with their county as well as town profile were able to represent this desired sense of partnership in symbolic form. This had already been done on previous occasions. For example, in 1853, in a ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of a new statue of the Duke of Rutland in Leicester's Market Place, the Masons had symbolically delivered the statue into the

⁷⁴ FHL, *The Albert Edward Lodge no.1560, 1875-1975*.

⁷⁵ Evans, 'The local government of Leicester in the nineteenth century', 71-78.

formal keeping of the Mayor and Borough.⁷⁶ The 1882 event was, therefore, one in a series marking reciprocity between town and county. The inclusion of the Leicester Rifle Volunteers, who were part of the Leicestershire Regiment by 1882,⁷⁷ and the Friendly Societies with their inter-town and county connections also symbolised unity. The Freemasons, however, with their membership drawn from both the middle class and landed gentry were perhaps in a particularly strong position to symbolise cooperation between Leicester and Leicestershire.

The active participation of townspeople, outside the civic authorities, was significant in 1882. The 1932 celebrations, however, were marked by a significant increase in this participation. This was the major contrast between the 1882 and 1932 events. The numbers involved were one aspect. The extension of the celebrations over a far greater length of time of course gave greater scope to the organisers, as did the elaborate range of events organised from the Pageant with its 4000 performers to the Civic Day and trades' processions to the displays from schools and youth associations. However, what was also notable, was the depth of involvement by those involved. This was particularly evident in the production of the Pageant itself which was facilitated by the mechanisms of the city's associational network.

The growth of urban associational networks during the nineteenth century contributed to a meeting culture, which typified civil society. This had its own procedures which could be characterised as rituals, for example, the formation of committees, reports, debate and decision making through voting.⁷⁸ At one level, these were a pragmatic way of doing business, but at another they symbolised the ideal of wide participation and inclusiveness within society and could be characterised as the rituals of democracy. By 1932, at a national level, universal franchise had been implemented, further institutionalising this ideal. At a local level, urban growth and

⁷⁶ FHL, Cannon, *The History of John of Gaunt Lodge No 523*, 187-89.

⁷⁷ G.A. Stepler, *Britons to Arms! the Story of the British Volunteer Soldier* (Stroud, 1992), 95.

⁷⁸ R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), 161-203 and R.J. Morris, 'A year in the public life of the British bourgeoisie, in R. Colls and R. Rodger' (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800-2000* (Aldershot, 2004), 121-43.

suburbanisation in Leicester had not dissipated the associational network but had extended it.⁷⁹ The forms of meeting culture were manifest, in 1932, in the display of democratic practice and coordination in the lead-up to the Pageant. This was so intensively covered by the local newspapers that the process could be justifiably considered as part of the spectacle itself. Public meetings were a hallmark of this process. For example, there was an initial public meeting which representatives of the associational network attended ‘en masse’. This was described by the *Leicester Evening Mail* as ‘a meeting of the citizens of Leicester attended by representatives of almost every social, industrial and religious movement in the city and county.’⁸⁰ Other meetings that followed included ones to appoint a Pageant Master and delegate work to committees and to embark on the task of drawing up a full list of local societies and associations from which performers could be drawn.⁸¹ There were also meetings to ensure that county cooperation could be relied on in this city-led project⁸² and also to report on work in progress.⁸³

In the organisation of the Pageant, the choice of leading committee members was significant. For a position on the committee important qualifications were, apparently, contact with associational life, or people with influence in the county as well as practical talents, financial or artistic skills (See appendix A). Press reports showed how the committees organised small communities at ‘grassroots’ level to prepare for the Pageant, sometimes placing very diverse groups together. For example, in April 1932, it was reported that plans for Episode One of the Pageant had been implemented.⁸⁴ The organisations involved were: the Catholic parishes of Leicester, the British United (Shoe Company) Drama League, the Glen Parva Army Barracks and the Leicester Women’s Athletic Club. A further committee was organised, including representatives from each of these organisations, with the headmistress of Sacred Heart Catholic School as the committee secretary. This committee was to

⁷⁹ See Chapter One.

⁸⁰ *LEM*, 15 Dec. 1931.

⁸¹ *LEM*, 19 Jan. 1932.

⁸² *LEM*, 25 Apr. 1932.

⁸³ *LEM*, 11 Apr. 1932.

⁸⁴ *LEM*, 15 Apr. 1932.

work with an assistant stage manager and two assistants, cooperating with the Pageant Master to produce the episode. Self-reliance and economy were to be practised, with each player responsible for buying his or her costume from a range of approved costumes, chosen by an expert with a view to historical accuracy, and obtainable at a modest expense. Thus, unlike the Abbey Park event in 1882, the Pageant of 1932 involved sustained hard work over months and expense for large numbers of people. This was not just a matter of transposing associations like the Freemasons, Friendly Societies and the Rifle Volunteers, who already had ceremonial props, such as banners and insignia or uniforms, into a procession. Producing the Pageant required preparation and cross communication between separate associational communities. The successful staging of the Pageant, by these means, seems to show that meeting procedures were not empty symbols of participation and demonstrates both the capacity of democratic practices to facilitate social cohesion and the capacity of a big city spectacle at this time to mobilise these forms to produce a convincing display of civic community.

It is, of course, impossible to say why so many people were willing to commit themselves to this depth of involvement over a substantial period of time. The city authorities of course, from the outset, promoted the official reasons of public spiritedness, civic awareness and the advertising of Leicester both nationally and internationally throughout the Empire.⁸⁵ On the other hand, amateur dramatics were fashionable in Leicester at the time and the chance to socialise seem as likely a reason for taking part as any.⁸⁶ The very nature of pageantry, however, enabled maximum use to be made of ‘the invention of tradition’ and it may well be that alongside the more prosaic reasons for participation the performers were inspired by the narrative of Leicester history presented by the Pageant. The connection of Simon de Montfort with the city, in particular, permitted a notion of Leicester as ‘the birthplace of civic

⁸⁵ For example, *LEM*, 19 Jan. 1932 and 11 Apr. 1932.

⁸⁶ *LEM*, 9 Apr. 1932 in an article entitled ‘Helping on the Pageant’, the journalist observed that there were very many organisations in the city with dramatic societies and that there might not be enough principal parts to go round. Readers were urged to remember that ‘a minor character in a crowd’ could be just as important as a principal character.

freedom and local government' to take hold.⁸⁷ As well as being a means by which Leicester could be marketed as a leader and a model within the nation, it may also have promoted the desired feelings of local pride and loyalty. Moreover, the city managed to obtain the services of Frank Lascelles a 'top' professional Pageant Master to produce the event and so it is very likely that his expertise had a motivating effect. A fashion for civic pageants had been established since the turn of the century and Lascelles had already produced a great many. These had included a very ambitious and successful Pageant of London with 15,000 performers, as well as huge extravaganzas in South Africa and India.⁸⁸ The excitement of taking part in a professionally produced event, coupled with Lascelles' ability to keep momentum going probably produced both enthusiasm and feelings of social solidarity among the cast which may have in turn manifest itself as a communal sense of civic identity.

Besides the Pageant, the older form of civic ceremony, the procession, used in 1882, was also used in 1932, with adaptations. Hobsbawm observes that a characteristic of 'the invention of tradition' has been the use of old models for new purposes.⁸⁹ The 1882 civic procession, with its combination of royalty, civic authorities and marching Friendly Society members, seemed to represent a society with class divisions working in partnership. However, the ordering of the procession with the Friendly Society groups in the least prestigious position at the front stressed a definite class hierarchy. In 1932, a different effect, more suitable to the growing sense of egalitarianism in society, was achieved by substituting a consciously working class element with Pageant performers in full costume, at the front of the procession. A group in theatrical costume could be seen as a classless representation of the people and a symbol of civic unity representing an undivided civic identity with roots in the past and continuing into the present. This was, moreover, a way of incorporating into the event representatives of voluntary societies, who while they had their own rituals in

⁸⁷ *LEM*, 21 Jun. 1932. These words were actually used by the Mayor at the opening of Charles Street. However, the theme was a recurrent one.

⁸⁸ *LEM*, 11 Feb. 1932 and *The Surrey Advertiser*, 24 Jun. 2005. The article in *The Surrey Advertiser*, was in response to a recent exhibition in Guildford about the careers of professional pageant masters in the early decades of the twentieth century.

⁸⁹ Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: inventing traditions', 1-14.

the form of meeting procedures, did not have a ceremonial style, which they could bring to a procession to enhance the spectacle.

The increased mobilisation of voluntary associations for the 1932 celebrations also incorporated substantial numbers of women into the events. The Victorian style of civic celebration has been characterised as entirely male dominated.⁹⁰ In the 1882 event women were represented in small numbers both at the opening ceremony and at the celebratory luncheon. Moreover, both the Mayoress and the Princess of Wales played leading roles. In addition, women as well as men were spectators. However, the 1882 civic procession was almost exclusively male and the more active aspects of the day were male dominated. In the 1932 event this imbalance was adjusted. Women were extensively involved in both the preparation of and the performance of the Pageant. Moreover, while the councillors and aldermen who participated in the civic procession were almost exclusively male, the inclusion in the parade of the Pageant performers and the Mayoresses of visiting towns as well as the Mayoress of Leicester assured a more balanced representation.

The trades' procession, like the Civic Day procession, used symbolism to model beliefs and values. As the *Leicester Evening Mail* reported, the display 'drove home, as the written word could not' the success and further potential of Leicester's industry.⁹¹ Marketing Leicester as a commercial success had been a major argument for staging the rituals of 1932 and the trades' procession as well as the industrial exhibition was part of the process of 'talking up' the city as a business leader nationally and also within the Empire and beyond. While the broad based nature of Leicester's economy had no doubt given it an easier ride through the depression than many other cities there had also been room for anxiety. In January 1932, an editorial in the *Leicester Evening Mail* had stated that 'Leicester's industrialists are showing their courage. Things seem better all round this year but conditions of trade are

⁹⁰ Gunn, *Public Culture*, 191.

⁹¹ *LEM*, 18 Jun. 1932.

generally far from ideal'.⁹² A belief that civic ritual could create a positive profile of the city that would attract business was a driving force behind the event. At the initial meeting called to discuss the proposed celebrations, the Mayor and other supporters of the cause had pointed to neighbouring Northampton. It was said that Northampton's pageant had made it 'the hub of the commercial universe for a week',⁹³ despite the industrial depression. Likewise, a Bradford pageant had received extensive international advertising as flyers were left 'in every British consulate and travel office and in leading hotels, steamships and railway offices all over the world'.⁹⁴ All this, it was said, was possible for Leicester and it was the diversity of its trades that was to be the main selling point. The trades' procession with its tableaux of ninety Leicester and county industries, was one way in which the point was made. Arguably, the audience for this display was mainly the local community itself who formed the great mass of spectators on the actual day. However, this dovetailed with a second driving belief behind the celebrations, that the self-belief embodied in a strong sense of civic spirit could help bring the city prosperity.

The Trades' Procession also satisfied the need to represent the separate identity of 'Labour' and its contribution to the city. The civic procession avoided representing distinctions of class in hierarchical form. The trades' procession, in turn, emphasised the products of 'Labour', representing both industrial and agricultural workers as integral partners in the production of wealth rather than emphasising an inferior class identity. The incorporation of the Trade Unions into this parade further played down any suggestion of class conflict and militancy. Moreover, the attendance of Trade Union leaders at a civic luncheon alongside members of the local Chamber of Commerce and representatives of the Ministry of Labour completed the image of partnership between employer and employee.

The inclusive style of the 1932 events was also evident in the approach to those who did not play a leading part in the proceedings. In the 1882 celebrations for the

⁹² *LEM*, 4 Apr. 1932.

⁹³ *LEM*, 15 Dec. 1931.

⁹⁴ *LEM*, 15 Dec. 1931.

opening of Abbey Park, there was little formal means of participation for spectators beyond cheering and waving and making decorations. However, in 1932, efforts were made to involve spectators to a greater degree. This was partly done by advance preparation. For example, in the six months prior to the events, a series of lectures was organised in relation to the Pageant.⁹⁵ A Leicester resident, Laurie Pears, remembers that there was a sense of great anticipation and excitement fostered in schools long before the Pageant fortnight. The Pageant song, which also showcased Leicester's history, was taught to schoolchildren in advance and special Pageant badges were distributed.⁹⁶ Moreover, the historical scenes to be portrayed were extensively described and explained by a very supportive local press ensuring that many who attended the performances arrived with minds that were already involved and receptive to the narrative that was related.

The use of photography in reporting the 1932 celebrations was also a means by which a deeper level of involvement on the part of spectators was suggested. The 1882 newspaper reports, working only with words, largely conveyed the crowds as a homogeneous mass. However, in June 1932,⁹⁷ the *Leicester Evening Mail* reports focused extensively on photographing the audience as well as the performers. The faces of those seated in the amphitheatre are easily picked out in newspaper photographs. No doubt this was a good way of selling papers, tempting Leicester's residents to try and 'spot' themselves as well as friends and neighbours. However, it also had the effect of suggesting that those attending were not an anonymous mass but a group of individuals who were willing to support the way the city was being marketed.

An increased level of spectator interaction was also introduced by some of the supporting events arranged during the Pageant period. There were, for example, several occasions of massed singing by schoolchildren in the Pageant amphitheatre⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *LEM*, 27 Jan. 1932.

⁹⁶ ROLLR, L. 394. 5, Letter from Laurie Pears to Mr Stevenson L 394. 5.

⁹⁷ *LEM*, Jun 18-30. This was general feature of the *LEM* during this period.

⁹⁸ F.S. Herne, *The Historical Pageant of Leicestershire*, 46-47 and *LEM*, 17 Jun. and 24 Jun. 1932.

School choirs had also been featured in 1882 but in 1932 their participation was extended. Moreover, while in 1882 the singing had been used as an accompaniment to the Freemasons' ceremony, in 1932 it was an event in itself. There was also a massed inter denominational religious service in the amphitheatre on Pageant Sunday creating the impression of a united religious community.⁹⁹ A further important interactive event, was the transformation of the city centre market into an Elizabethan market where people could shop and chat to costumed characters apparently from Leicester's past.¹⁰⁰ Again the city's long history was showcased, with the opportunity to participate being extended to still more people.

The Pageant was successful in that events were staged without any disasters, prestigious visitors were welcomed to the city and the occasion mustered enough local support to attract large audiences and cover itself financially. The celebrations were reported in *The Times* with a favourable review of the Pageant stating that 'The Pageant is worthy of the communal exhilaration it has produced'.¹⁰¹ The projected image of the city as a united and prosperous community which deserved to be recognised as a substantial player within the nation and the empire went largely unchallenged. Moreover, the strength of the local economy, which was made so much of during the Pageant period was to a great extent confirmed by the League of Nations statistics of 1936 which rated Leicester as the second most prosperous city in Europe.¹⁰² However, the ambitious and sustained nature of the project meant that inevitably a ragbag of obstacles arose which, although dealt with, indicated some underlying weaknesses in the façade. For example, the organisers attempts to have Lloyd George open the Pageant failed.¹⁰³ The opening day was grandly named 'Statesman's Day'. While Lady Snowdon was a national figure, her presence perhaps did not bestow the 'first league' recognition that the organisers were seeking to convey. Other obstacles that arose were squabbles about the level of recognition

⁹⁹ Herne, *Historical Pageant*, 46-7 and *LEM*, 20 Jun. 1932.

¹⁰⁰ Herne, *Historical Pageant*, 46-7 and see *LEM*, 17 Jun. 1932 and 24 Jun. 1932.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, Jun. 16 1932. See also *The Times*, 22 Jun. 1932 where there is also a favourable report of the Lord Mayor of London's visit to Leicester on Civic Day.

¹⁰² D. Reeder, 'The local economy' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 54.

¹⁰³ *LEM*, 4 May 1932, the suggestion here that Lloyd George would attend seemed to 'fizzle out'.

given to the county¹⁰⁴ and an argument with Catholic Church leaders about an offending verse in the Pageant song, which almost resulted in Catholic performers being forbidden to participate.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, a significant number of businessmen objected to the three day extension of the Pageant, claiming that the events were drawing their customers away.¹⁰⁶ However, although disruption was caused, these problems were resolved through negotiation suggesting that there was strong drive among the parties involved to present a united local front. Two other incidents, however, showed disaffection among subsections of the population. First, on the Saturday night of the first Pageant week, youths fought with police at the Clocktower. It was reported that ‘these were the types who habitually hung around the town jeering at Pageant performers returning from their rehearsals’.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, a plan to disrupt the Civic Day procession was discovered and stopped. A sign saying ‘Welcome to the Slums’, put up in a poor area of town was removed.¹⁰⁸ In both cases police action was taken. It is difficult to fully assess the significance of these disruptions. Some voices, however, were clearly not being heard. The numbers of people involved, however, seem minor in comparison to the 4000 people who took part in the Pageant, the show of organised labour at the trades’ procession and the 100,000 people who bought Pageant tickets.¹⁰⁹ Generally, it seems the civic project was a success and was welcomed by the majority of the city’s population.

This chapter has compared the Leicester civic rituals of 1882 and 1932, exploring how these spectacles were used to raise the profile of the city. Particular attention has been paid to form, organisation and symbolism showing how events were staged to define local relationships and therefore shape the relationship between local and national and, at times, imperial identity. The use of the term ritual has been discussed and the term has been acknowledged as useful, although linguistically problematic. Some different perceived functions of ritual have also been considered. By

¹⁰⁴ *LEM*, 19 Jan. 1932.

¹⁰⁵ *LEM*, 20 May 1932.

¹⁰⁶ *LEM*, 24 Jun. 1932.

¹⁰⁷ *LEM*, 20 Jun. 1932.

¹⁰⁸ *LEM*, 20 Jun. 1932.

¹⁰⁹ *LEM*, 30 Jun. 1932.

comparing the two events, fifty years apart, but in the same city, a historical perspective to civic ritual has been foregrounded. The comparison has emphasised the ways in which civic ritual was adapted to convey a message appropriate to the social context of time. There were similarities between the two occasions. In both cases, partnership between the local and the national were stressed as well as local unity and a positive relationship with the county. However, in 1932 the commercial prosperity of Leicester was particularly showcased, suggesting that this, combined with a long civic heritage, fitted the city to be a model within the nation and a leading player both nationally and internationally.

In the case of form, there were similarities between the two occasions, notably honoured guests from London were invited and there was a civic procession. In both cases invented tradition, symbolism, suggesting a continuity between past and present, was used to define local and national identity. Both occasions also drew on the membership of voluntary associations for active participants. However, there were also major contrasts between the events. First, the 1932 celebrations were far longer, a fortnight rather than a one day event and involved a much wider variety of activities most notably a pageant, an industrial exhibition and a trades' procession. Second and most strikingly, the level of participation on the part of the wider population, although significant in 1882, was far greater in 1932 both in numbers and depth of involvement. The need for inanimate symbols, such as elaborate decoration, was perhaps less as the wider and active participation of the townspeople became a greater focal point. The decisions to hold the Pageant and the methods of organisation were made by the civic authorities in conjunction with the voluntary associations and were a demonstration of meeting culture and democratic practice. Voluntary associations were called upon to provide performers and coordinated with each other to produce the Pageant episodes. All this was covered by a highly supportive press and was a spectacle in itself. The 1932 event was also generally more inclusive. Women, as Pageant organisers and performers, were more fully represented by the event and efforts to both include and accommodate the views of the Catholic minority in the city were evident. Meanwhile, the trades' procession provided an opportunity

to play down class division and represent industrial workers as partners in the production of wealth. Spectators also had a more active role in the 1932 occasion. The organisation of more interactive events increased the scope for this. Local newspaper coverage also played an important part both by keeping up momentum over the six month preparation period and by using photography, during Pageant fortnight to focus on spectators as well as performers. At the heart of both occasions, however, there was a particular similarity, the symbolic act of an opening ceremony was performed. In 1882, a gold key was presented, a tree was planted and Abbey Park was opened. In 1932, a silk cord was cut and Charles Street was opened. The ritual itself was doing some thing, creating a new context as well as reflecting it. Although the social context had changed between 1882 and 1932 the enthusiasm for civic ritual had not disappeared, it had been adapted.

Chapter Three.

The growth of associational life in Leicester, 1870-1939. A study of selected town directories.

While civic culture may have been in decline in the industrial north by the end of the nineteenth century, a significant presence of civic and local initiatives can be traced in Leicester up to 1939.¹ The opening of Abbey Park was part of a drive by the Corporation from 1870 onwards to provide the town's residents with both improved utilities and facilities for 'rational' recreation. This placed the municipal authorities at the centre of the stage. At the same time, the town directories also showed a significant growth in the numbers and variety of voluntary associations in the town. The numbers and range of associations continued to grow over the seventy years between 1870 and 1940 (see Fig.1, p.86), although the pattern of associational life varied. Some of these variations reflected responses to challenges as they arose, including potential and actual class conflict and increased national influence. Others reflected responses to opportunities for extending organised social life, providing an environment that encouraged better social cohesion. For instance, improved facilities and increased leisure time supported an explosion of interest in participatory sport. The proliferation of small sports clubs, grouped under umbrella associations and developed into a network of leagues, is one example of how associational life built bridges between small groups and promoted a unified local identity.

¹ R. Rodger and D. Reeder, 'Industrialisation in the city economy', in M.J. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 585. Rodger and Reeder comment that while civic culture was an ideology under siege in larger cities during the interwar period, in others it was still viable.

Commentators have long highlighted the link between associational life and urban centres. Weber, identified voluntary associations as a major characteristic of the city² and a more recent strand of commentary has particularly focused on the development of voluntary associations in modern Britain. Clark, for example, has traced the evolution of voluntary associations in the urban setting in Britain in the eighteenth century³ and Morris, with particular reference to Leeds in the early and mid nineteenth century, has explored the role played by associational life in the formation of an urban middle class and in creating a specific urban culture.⁴ There is also a longstanding link perceived between associational life and the development of liberal democracy in the Anglo-American world. De Tocqueville, for example, observed the American tendency to organise voluntary associations to debate and manage community issues and commented on the flexibility of associational life in comparison to government.⁵ These narratives relate to the concept of civil society, a further tool for analysing both the management of towns and the development of democratic practice. Morris, for instance, characterising civil society as the gap between family and state where relations are non prescriptive, argues that voluntary associations functioned productively within this social space. Against a backdrop of urbanisation and expansion of the franchise, they ‘provided an arena for making choices, for reasoned informed debate and for the consumption of services in an open and pluralistic manner’.⁶ Morris and Trainor also explore the concept of urban governance, significantly extending the more traditional notion of local government and arguing that governance of the town was managed not only by the statutory authorities but also by the circle of associations formed by urban elites.⁷ Harris highlights the many conflicting approaches to civil society that cloud the debate.

² M. Weber, *The City* (eds), D. Martindale and G. Neuwirth (New York, 1958).

³ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 1985).

⁴ R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990) and R.J. Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’ in F.M.L Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 395-443.

⁵ A. de Tocqueville, in (ed.), R.D. Heffner, *Democracy in America* (New York, 1956), 201.

⁶ R.J. Morris, ‘Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850’, *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 289-301.

⁷ R.H. Trainor and R.J Morris, ‘Governance: two centuries of urban growth’ in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (eds), *Urban Governance Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000).

However she argues that an exploration of different aspects of British social, intellectual and institutional life, with the concept of civil society in mind can produce valuable insights.⁸ In the spirit of this approach and the existing body of work referred to, this chapter explores aspects of associational life in late Victorian and early twentieth century Leicester.

The aim of the chapter is to provide a more specific profile of voluntary associations in Leicester, during the decades between 1870 and 1939 than has been given in previous chapters. The main primary sources supporting this profile are town directories of the period with their lists of associations. These give insight into the level of participation in associational life and highlight some of the group identities that Leicester residents adhered to, including civic, national, class and religious identity. Membership details, where they are listed, have been a useful source of information, sometimes showing overlapping memberships that suggest interaction between groups. Subscription rates have also been informative, indicating the likely social status of members. In addition, the listed locations of headquarters or meeting places of various associations have also been of interest, giving an indication of how groups saw themselves, their geographical proximity to other groups and how they fitted into the wider pattern of associational life.

The format of the Leicester Town directories

The town directories used in this research were more than a compendium of facts about the town and this was borne in mind in interpreting the material collected. Like local newspapers, they were a medium through which the town was represented as a community. During the nineteenth century, directories countrywide, led by large firms such as Kelly's, had developed a format which was of interest and use to both commercial and general readers.⁹ From the 1880s, Leicester directories conformed to this format. In addition to lists of traders and residential addresses, a local history

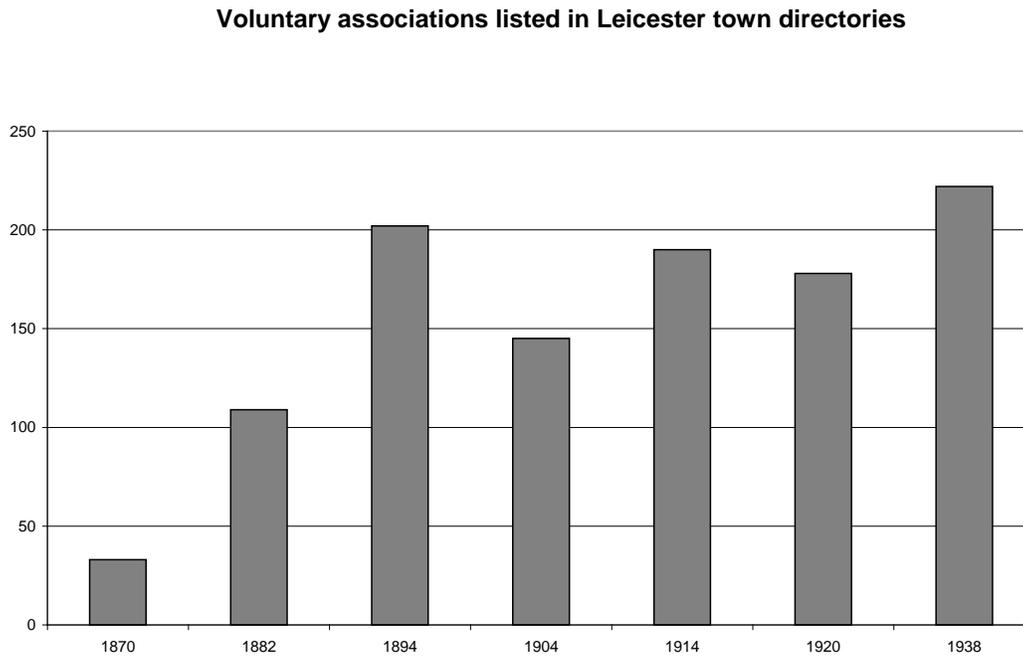
⁸ J. Harris, 'Introduction: civil society in British history: paradigm or peculiarity?' in J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History* (Oxford, 2003), 1-12.

⁹ G. Shaw and A. Tipper, *British Directories Published in England and Wales: a Bibliography and Guide to Directories Published in England and Wales (1850-1950) and Scotland (1773-1950)* (London, 1997), 17-24.

section was frequently included, as well as miscellaneous information on public institutions, charities, transport, schools, churches and also voluntary associations. With its local history/geography section and details of local authorities, the directory depicted Leicester as a geo-political unit. The inclusion of trades and municipal information as well as information about voluntary associations, all together in the same volume, suggested a partnership between the local authorities, business and the wider population. Moreover, the lists of religious institutions that included both churches and chapels suggested a general religious tolerance and cooperation, while social unity was implied by the inclusion of both middle class and working class voluntary associations.

The directories represented the town as an independent unit, however, the world beyond the municipal boundaries was also apparent. For example, a strong relationship with the hinterland was indicated by the inclusion of county associations such as the Leicestershire Agricultural Society that were based in or had a connection to the town. The directories also had a national as well as a local dimension. Before the 1870s, a miscellany of publishers produced local directories for Leicester and Leicestershire, then from the mid-1870s directories produced by the Leicester based firm of Wright's and the London based firm of Kelly's dominated. Until 1900, Wright's produced the town directories of Leicester while Kelly's covered Leicestershire and Rutland. Wright's were a local firm that produced directories for other towns in the East Midlands as well as Leicester and their products were same type of general interest directories that Kelly's were producing and thus were linked in concept. From 1900, Kelly's took over production of the town directory, although the name *Wright's Directory of Leicester* was kept until 1920. Thus in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Leicester town directory was linked, at least in concept, with directories that were being produced in other parts of the country and from 1900 onwards it was actually produced from London. It can be argued that Kelly's directories, as a series, supported at national level an image of Britain as a network of county, town and village communities and at local level an image of community supportive to the civic ideal.

Fig. 1.



Source: based on Leicester directories held at Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR) and Leicester University Library (ULL).

Methodology

The procedure followed in this project involved extracting and recording all entries for voluntary associations from a selection of town directories from the period 1870-1939 and sorting this database into types of association. Thus continuity and change in the numbers and pattern of associational life over the seventy year period were highlighted and open to analysis. The project has been necessarily influenced by the numbers of Leicester town directories that have survived, as well as the considerable length of the period reviewed.

It was decided to use the specialised town directories, one per decade for the years 1870-1939. The county directories regularly included a large section on Leicester, however, the numbers of voluntary and voluntarily run institutions listed were fewer than those in the town directories and so yielded less information. It was aimed to keep the intervals between directories used as close as possible to ten years. The first

set of data was taken from an 1870 directory of Leicester produced by the Leicestershire Trade Protection Society (LPTS).¹⁰ From the early 1880s to 1914 it was possible to collect data, spaced at approximately ten year intervals, from the Wright's series of town directories. For the interwar period, the Wright's directory for 1920 and the Kelly's directory of Leicester for 1938 was used. Because the gap between 1920 and 1938 was so large, the *Leicester Mail Yearbook, 1925* published by the *Leicester Evening Mail*, which listed voluntary associations, was used to retrieve some supplementary information.

The information extracted from the directories and discussed in this chapter does give an indication of the evolving pattern of associational life in Leicester between 1870 and 1939. However, the data should be regarded as a guide only; there is no claim that this research provides an accurate and exact reflection of Leicester's associational life over this period. The main reason for this is that the information listed in the directories was in itself incomplete, something that was evident from the local newspapers where, throughout, the period the names of associations could be found that were not in the directory. The success of the directory depended on the cooperation of the public¹¹ and what was finally entered in the directory was presumably also a mixture of editorial choice, and practical matters such as the efficiency in getting information submitted before publication deadlines.

Shaw and Tipper make the point that town directories over-represented the middle classes.¹² In the directories published prior to the First World War this is reflected in the information given about voluntary associations. For example, in pre-war Wright's directories of Leicester, although Freemasons and Friendly Societies were listed

¹⁰ ULL, *The Leicestershire Trade Protection Society: Street, Alphabetical and Trade Directory of Leicester, December, 1870* (Leicester, 1870). Despite the obvious commercial interests of the compilers this directory did give general information about the town.

¹¹ Shaw and Tipper, *British Directories*, 23. According to Shaw and Tipper, compilers initially often met with suspicion from less educated people who thought that they were prying for the government. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, people were also often annoyed by directory compilers because they were pestered so much by them for information.

¹² *Ibid*, 23.

together there was more detail given about the Masonic lodges. An acknowledgement from Kelly's at the beginning of *Wright's Directory, 1904* gives insight into an element of the compilation process. It reads 'they (the compilers) have again to return their thanks to those clergymen, public officials and other gentlemen, who have assisted their agents when collecting information for the present issue'. Kelly's clearly depended on cooperation between their London office and social leaders in Leicester to make the directory a success however, the social status of those whom they consulted was likely to encourage a middle class perspective. By the interwar period there was a more general lack of detail about all associations which made this type of over-representation less obvious.¹³

It is perhaps also significant that *Wright's Directory, 1904*, published shortly after Kelly's took over the publication in 1900, is a smaller volume than all the others apart from the *LPTS Directory, 1870*. This is reflected in Fig.1 which shows a dip in the number of voluntary associations listed. While there were other plausible reasons for this dip, for example, the tendency in the union movement to amalgamation, it also seems likely that at least initially it was more difficult for agents from the London based Kelly's to collect information than the locally based firm of Wright's.

There were some constraints in extracting and interpreting the information from the directories. First, the lists of voluntary associations were mixed with other material. The Wright's directories organised bodies under headings, for example, land and building, trade and commercial and medical and benevolent. While voluntary associations did, in fact, comprise the bulk of the list the practice was, particularly in the medical and benevolent and miscellaneous sections, to list other organisations as well. For example, in the medical and benevolent section, public facilities such as the borough lunatic asylum and charity hospitals funded from medieval trusts were listed alongside more modern philanthropic voluntary associations and their related

¹³ This tendency to summarise is discussed in more detail below.

institutions.¹⁴ Likewise, in the miscellaneous section, institutions such as: the Town Cemetery, public and Turkish baths were listed alongside the Parliamentary Debating Society and the Kyrle Society.¹⁵ Thus, extracting information from these sections was in itself a sorting exercise and at times involved making a decision, based on scanty information, on whether or not to count an entry as a voluntary association. A second difficulty was that over the period there was the increasing tendency to summarise information. In the directories used from the pre-First World War period, voluntary associations were listed in a general information section. In the interwar period a different layout was adopted. In the 1920 and 1938 directories there was still a general section which included the most prominent voluntary associations, however, new sections had been added to the 'trades' directory labelled 'societies and associations' and 'clubs' which listed the majority of the groups. Land and building societies had also been placed in a separate part of the 'trades section' by this time. With this change in layout, those entries that were listed in the trades section of the directory, in particular, lacked the detail of the entries in the pre-war directories, often giving just the name of the association and contact details. In addition, a single entry was often made representing many groups. There had always been examples of this but as the overall number of associations grew the tendency increased.¹⁶ Thus a modest entry could mask widespread activity. This was often the case, for example, with sports clubs. In the pre First World War years single entries of this type that represented multiple groups frequently gave further details about the numbers involved. However, by 1938 this detail had gone. Leicester Football Association, for example had a single entry in the directory with no further description of how many teams and leagues were affiliated to it. Because detailed information was not consistently provided throughout the period, the figures used in the illustrative charts in this chapter refer to the number of entries in the relevant directory rather than the actual number of groups. Where this method of recording seems to distort the

¹⁴ Examples taken from ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1882* (Leicester, 1882), 271-3 and 279-89.

¹⁵ These examples are taken from ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1882* (Leicester, 1882), 271-9.

¹⁶ For example, the network of groups affiliated to Friendly Societies.

perception of the level of activity involved as, for example, in the case of sport, this is identified and discussed in the text.

There were also some constraints involved in categorising associations for the purpose of analysis. Categories used in this project, for example: medical and benevolent, trade and commercial and educational and literary, were an adapted version of the categories used by Wright's and Kelly's before the First World War.¹⁷ With regard to the information taken from these particular pre-war directories the categorisation already made by the compilers was an invaluable guide. However, this was not followed slavishly and when it seemed an entry would be logically best put in a different section this was done. One of the most difficult aspects of categorising was, in fact that voluntary associations could often fit into more than one 'box'.¹⁸ In the 1870 directory, categorisation by the compilers was minimal; while in the interwar directories although there was categorisation, quite a large number were lumped together without distinction under the heading 'Associations and Societies'. In both cases, the sorting process was carried out by using the categorisations developed from the pre-war Wright's directories, so as to facilitate comparison between the directories in different decades.

1870: an 'autonomous, intimate and highly visible' urban arena.¹⁹

The Leicestershire Trade Protection Society: Street, Alphabetical and Trade Directory of Leicester, 1870 was published from the office of the society in Horsefair Street in the town centre of Leicester and printed by a local company.²⁰ It was a slim volume, an undeveloped production in comparison with the Wright's directories of the 1880s and 1890s and lacked a local history/geography section. However, despite

¹⁷ One adaptation made was that a professional category was created, so as to group together bodies such as the Law Society and the Leicester Medical Society.

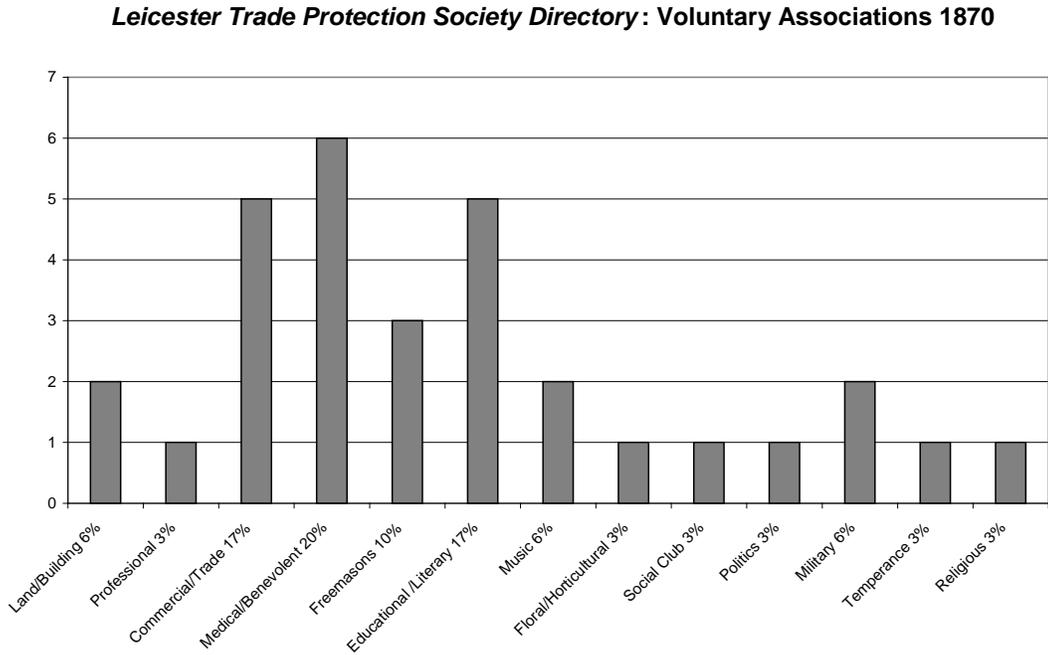
¹⁸ For example, should a medical and benevolent association sponsored by a Friendly Society be categorised under Friendly Societies or placed in the medical and benevolent category? In this project I chose to categorise this type of association under the classification Friendly Societies and related groups.

¹⁹ J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-80* (Manchester, 1983), 26.

²⁰ All references to the 1870 town or LPTS directory refer to *The Leicestershire Trade Protection Society: Street, Alphabetical and Trade Directory of Leicester* (Leicester, 1870), especially 5-11.

this, the intention was clearly to provide a town directory as well as a trade directory. This was implied by the provision of some information of interest to the general reader, such as the details of 33 voluntary associations.

Fig. 2.



Source: ULL, based on information in *Leicester Trade Protection Society: Street, Alphabetical and Trade Directory of Leicester, 1870* (Leicester, 1870).

The range and pattern of these associations is summarised in Fig. 2. This chart reveals that medical and benevolent associations and trade and commercial associations comprised the largest number of entries (37%) and an even larger proportion (46%) if professional and land/building associations are counted under the trade and commercial umbrella. Other prominent categories were educational societies which had (17%) and the Freemasons (10%) with the other ten categories, as illustrated, making up the rest of the numbers. The chart is for the most part self-explanatory, however, some points should be clarified with regard to the entries for the Freemasons and the military associations where, in both cases, single entries represent more than one group. The three entries shown for the Freemasons include

one entry which stood for all eight local Masonic lodges including two which were based in Leicester. The other two entries were for orders that were related to Freemasonry.²¹ With regard to the military entries, the two associations charted are the Yeomanry and the Rifle Volunteers. Although the Yeomanry were primarily a county concern, they were listed and were officially based in Leicester and so they have been included. The Rifle Volunteer corps, which had by this time had been incorporated in to the Leicestershire Regiment, were composed of nine groups, four Leicester corps and five corps from the other county towns.²²

The middle class bias of the directory was marked and contributed to the incompleteness of the listings. While the leading middle class associations of all types, such as the 'Lit and Phil', the Chamber of Commerce, the Infirmary and the Freemasons were all listed with accompanying details, the Friendly Societies of the town were completely omitted from the list. The only working class-led association included and, in fact, the only political association included, was the Working Men's Conservative Association. The omission of the Friendly Societies, in particular, was in contrast to the local newspapers, which in the early 1870s, reported on Friendly Society functions as though they were of public interest to the town as a whole.²³ It seemed, however, that at this stage, the directory compilers lagged behind the newspapers, maintaining a narrower view of what comprised the public face of the town. The lists provided by the 1870 volume make an interesting contrast to the more socially inclusive directories of the 1880s and a new approach can in fact already be seen in the second issue of the LPTS directory published in 1875, which includes the Friendly Societies. A watershed had been passed and the directory thereafter represented a more unified image of the town.

²¹ These were the Order of the Royal Arch and the Order of Mark Masters, both of which had a town-based group.

²² G.A. Stepler, *Britons to Arms! The Story of the British Volunteer Soldier* (Stroud, 1992), 95. In 1860, the Leicester and Leicestershire Rifle Volunteer companies became, collectively, the 1st Administrative Battalion Leicestershire Rifle Volunteers. Their headquarters was in Leicester.

²³ Some examples of these are referred to in Chapter Two. For example, the anniversary dinner of a Foresters' Court at the 'Marquis of Granby', Castle Street in 1871, *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury (LCLM)*, 22 Jul. 1871.

Morris describes the ‘subscriber democracy’ as the institutional form characteristic of middle class voluntary associations in early nineteenth century Leeds. The 1870 directory showed the continued popularity of the model with associations across the range supported by subscribers and managed by an elected committee. Examples from the main fields included: the Chamber of Commerce, the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’ and the Leicester Widows and Orphans Society. The Chamber of Commerce, for instance, was described as having 130 subscribers, with a hierarchical scale of subscription which linked to different levels of voting rights. Members met quarterly, but an inner core of thirty elected officials and directors could be convened at any time. These core members were listed by name and this was one way in which prominent individuals remained visible to the public. The subscriber democracies, however, were only one type of association listed and they contrasted in style and structure with other associations in the directory such as the Masonic lodges and the various corps of the Rifle Volunteers.

In his descriptions of mid–nineteenth century Salford, Bolton and Rochdale, Garrard characterises town life as an ‘autonomous, intimate and highly visible urban arena’.²⁴ Associational life in Leicester, as depicted by the 1870 LPTS directory, to a great extent resonates with this description. The information given shows an associational life with associational offices and meeting places based on a limited geographical area, with a local focus and a close-knit group of businessmen playing a highly visible role.

These characteristics were evident across a range of associations listed including trade and commercial, philanthropic and educational groups. The confined centre of Leicester meant that the headquarters of the various groups were in close proximity to each other. Some were actually in the town centre, but even when groups or institutions were based a little further out, for example, the Infirmary or the ‘Lit and Phil’, they were still in walking distance from the centre of the town.

²⁴ See footnote 21.

The trade and commercial associations, professional associations and land and building societies, most of which had been established in the previous twenty years, were clustered together round a few streets in the commercial centre of Leicester. The Chamber of Commerce, the Leicester and Leicestershire Freehold Land Society and the Permanent Benefit Building Society were all situated in Friar Lane. The headquarters of the Leicester Law Society, the only professional association listed and which held an indispensable law library of 650 volumes, was also conveniently based there. Horsefair Street, the base of the Trade Protection Society, was five minutes walk away, while the offices of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, the only group listed representing a specific trade, were nearby in Gallowtree Gate. The directory records that there were significant overlaps among those with a management role in the Chamber of Commerce, the Trade Protection Society, the Leicester and Leicestershire Freehold Land Society and the Permanent Benefit Building Society (see Table 1). This, together with the close proximity of offices indicates the 'intimate' or close-knit quality of business culture in Leicester at this time.

Overlapping memberships extended to voluntary associations beyond the business world. For example, from the list of Chamber of Commerce directors and office-holders given in the directory, overlaps can be seen with the committees of voluntary associations in other fields, such as the 'Lit and Phil', the Newsroom and Permanent Library, the Leicester Temperance Society and the weekly board of the Infirmary. The directory also shows that eleven directors of the Chamber of Commerce, were members of the Town Council and that seven were magistrates, an indication of the extent to which leading businessmen sought public office. These overlaps indicate that leading associations formed a network that also connected with the statutory authorities. The use of other sources, in addition to the directory, serves to convey this point more powerfully. In Table 2, the directory list of Chamber of Commerce directors has been cross referenced with fuller 'Lit and Phil' and Masonic membership lists, as well as a list of subscribers who attended the Leicester Infirmary

Table 1.

	Chamber of Commerce	LPTS	Permanent Benefit Building Society	Leicester and Leics Freehold Land Society
T.T. Paget	Treasurer	President		
J. Roberts	Director	Hon Secretary	Director	
T.W. Hodges		Vice President		Director
C. Harding		Committee		Director
A. Burgess	Vice President			Trustee
G. Stevenson	Director			Director
J.J. Preston	Committee			Trustee
W. Baines	Commitee			Trustee
W.H. Chamberlin		Manager	Director	
W. Grey		Committee		surveyor
J. Baines	Vice President			Trustee
S. Davis			Manager	Secretary
J.H. Ellis	Director	Commitee		
E.S. Ellis			Trustee	Trustee

Source: ULL, based on information in the *Leicestershire Trade Protection Society Directory, 1870*, (Leicester, 1870).

annual meeting in 1871. Details of magistrates and members of the Town Council listed in the directory have also been used to give a fuller picture. One aspect of the table that stands out is the very significant overlap of membership between the Chamber of Commerce and the ‘Lit and Phil’ showing that although the two associations were concerned with different aspects of local life, there was a high level of integration between the two.

Garrard uses the word ‘autonomous’ as well as ‘intimate’ to describe the mid-Victorian provincial setting. Certain groups listed in the directory, however, cannot be described as completely autonomous because they had national connections although a strong emphasis on the immediate locality was retained.²⁵ Local

²⁵ Morris also makes this point about early nineteenth-century Leeds in Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’, 413.

temperance activists, for example, were part of the national temperance movement but the Leicester Temperance Society stressed its local provenance by using the town name in the title of the society.²⁶ In the case of Freemasonry, all lodges belonged to a structured national network, which was headed by Grand Lodge, the London-based governing body,²⁷ However, a subordinate Masonic governing body, with wide powers, also existed at local level and Leicester Freemasons emphasised their local commitment in the 1870s, a commitment that was illustrated by the leading role they played in the ceremonies for the opening of the new Leicester Town Hall in 1876.

With regard to the relationship of Leicester with its hinterland, the directory listings show that county influence in town associational life was quite marked at this time. A county presence in town-based associational life took a number of different forms. There were associations that included both town and county groups, such as the Freemasons and the Rifle Volunteers. In both these cases, a county identity was shown by the title under which the associations were listed. The Freemasons were listed as The Freemasons' Society in Leicestershire and Rutland, although local details of all the lodges were given, including the fact that the Leicester town lodges met at Freemason's Hall in central Leicester. The Rifle Volunteers were listed as the First Administrative Battalion of the Leicestershire Rifle Volunteers and a county identity was further underlined by the fact that county dignitary, Sir Henry John Halford, was listed as Lieutenant-Colonel. On the other hand, a town identity was also retained, for the Battalion was based in the centre of the town and the corps comprised of Leicester volunteers were specifically referred to as the Town Corps.

In the business world, ties between county and town were also apparent in a group such as the Leicestershire Trade Protection Society. In this case, the affiliation 'Leicestershire' was adopted but the society was based in the town centre, with agencies in the other county towns. The Society was also headed by Leicester banker T.T. Paget and two of its three vice-presidents, T.W. Hodges and G. Baines, were

²⁶ B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (Keele, 1994), 21-38.

²⁷ J. Hamill, *The History of English Freemasonry* (Plymouth, 1994), 87-97.

alderman of the Town Corporation. Moreover, at its annual meeting in 1871 the Society met in the Mayor's Parlour at the Town Hall.²⁸ In contrast to this, the Leicestershire Agricultural Society, although also based in the town centre, was led by the county, with the Duke of Rutland listed as president, and with no well-known town names mentioned in support. This was described as 'the leading society of the kind in the county' with a membership of 500 and an annual show. While the society was county-led, the show, which was held just outside Leicester on the racecourse, did bring elements of the town and county together socially. In August 1871, the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* reported that 'on the first day of the show the ground was thronged with the elite of the county and town, notwithstanding the high temperature and almost overwhelming heat of the sun'.²⁹

There was also a county influence in the educational and literary sector of associational life where there were two leading associations, one with a town and one with a county identity. The directory listed the 'Lit and Phil', a town-led association that had been established since 1835, and also its county-led counterpart, the Architectural and Archaeological Society, which was established later in 1855. Both associations were described as having memberships of about 200. The 'Lit and Phil' met in the Town Museum in New Walk, which it had played a major part in founding.³⁰ It was a subscriber democracy, and as has already been illustrated, it numbered many of the town's business and political leaders among its membership and office-holders. The Architectural and Archaeological Society also had its elected committee and annual meetings, and the use of a base in the centre of Leicester. However, from the beginning its business was dominated by the county gentry.³¹ The directory, in fact, recorded little about the management of the group though it was noted that the Society was 'under high patronage,' and that phrase, in combination with the absence of any familiar town 'names' in the details, confirmed its county provenance. However, despite the different identities of the two societies, it should

²⁸ *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury (LCLM)*, 4 Mar. 1871.

²⁹ *LCLM*, 12 Aug. 1871.

³⁰ See Chapter Four.

³¹ A. McWhirr, *The Leicestershire Archeological Society 1855-1955*, 25 Jun. 2005. <http://www.le.ac.uk/lahs>, last accessed 30 Mar. 2009.

not be thought that county people did not join the town-led society and vice versa. For example, the names of three county dignitaries, the Duke of Rutland, Sir Henry St John Halford and William Perry Herrick all appeared on the membership list of the 'Lit and Phil' for 1870. William Perry Herrick was in fact a founder member of the county-led Architectural and Archaeological Society and the overlap of membership no doubt helped to maintain cordial relationships and a spirit of partnership rather than competition between the two societies. Herrick, in fact, went out of his way to be supportive to the town group, which can be seen from an 1871 newspaper report which records how he welcomed 'Lit and Phil' members on to his Beaumanor Estate on the occasion of their annual summer excursion.³²

Voluntary associations often built useful bridges between towns and their hinterland.³³ The county, as was apparent from the 1870 directory, was an important influence in the associational life of Leicester at the time, suggesting that bridges were already built but had to be maintained. However, in the case of medical and benevolent institutions this had not been entirely successful. The 1870 directory shows that county influence was particularly strong in the medical and benevolent field. County dignitaries were part of the management of several voluntary-run institutions in the town including the Infirmary where the Duke of Rutland was president, the Earl Howe was a vice president and Sir Arthur Hazlerigg was chairman of the weekly board.³⁴ The Infirmary was an important shared town and county resource and its income was derived from subscriptions, donations, legacies and from collections in churches and chapels. In 1871, when the hospital ran into financial difficulties, accusations of undemocratic management at the expense of town subscribers were made. In July 1871, the editorial of a local newspaper observed:

³² *LCLM*, 24 Jun. 1871. This was a report of the 1871 'Lit and Phil' meeting at which the success of the 1870 excursion to the Beaumanor Estate was discussed.

³³ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 448.

³⁴ The 1870 directory showed that there was county involvement, for example in the Female Orphan Asylum and the Infant Orphan Asylum. The directory also recorded that the Duke of Rutland was the president of the Provident Dispensary and that Sir Arthur Hazlerigg was the chairman of the Weekly Board of the Infirmary. It surprisingly, omitted to record that the Duke of Rutland was president of the Infirmary and that Earl Howe was a vice president, information which is confirmed by E.R. Frizelle and J.B. Martin, *Leicester Royal Infirmary 1771-1971* (Leicester, 1971).

Table 2. Overlaps in membership among prominent associations and the Town Council.

Name	Chamber of Commerce	Leicester 'Lit and Phil'	Attended Infirmary AGM, 1871	Freemason	Member of Town Council	Magistrate
J.D. Harris	President				Alderman	Yes
R. Angrave	Vice President		Yes			Yes
J. Baines	Director	Member	Yes		Alderman	
A. Burgess	Director	Member			Alderman	
T.T. Paget	Director					
J. Stafford	Director	Member	Yes		Mayor	
J. Thompson	Director	Committee Member		John of Gaunt Lodge		
J.H. Cooper	Director					
G.S. Harris	Director		Yes (board member)			
J. Latchmore	Director	Member				
S. Stone	Director	Member	Yes			
R. Walker	Director	Member				
G.Baines	Director	Member	Yes		Alderman	Yes
A. Hudson	Director	Member				
J.H. Ellis	Director	Member	Yes			
S. Viccars	Director	Member				
W. Hunt	Director	Committee Member	Yes (auditor)			Yes
T.F. Johnson	Director	Member				
J. Roberts Jun..	Director	Member				
W Billson	Director	Member	Yes			
W.H. Walker	Director	Member				
J.Y. Crofts	Director			John of Gaunt Lodge		
T.W. Hodges	Director	Member			Alderman	Yes
W. Kempson	Director	Committee Member			Councillor	
W. Rowlett	Director	Member	Yes	John of Gaunt Lodge	Alderman	
S. Viccars	Director	Member			Alderman	
J. Biggs	Director					Yes
G. Stevenson	Director	Committee Member	Yes(auditor)		Alderman	Yes
G.H. Hodges	Director	Member		John of Gaunt Lodge	Alderman	
T.A. Wykes	Director			John of Gaunt Lodge(Fr 1872)		

Source: based on information in ULL, *Leicestershire Trade Protection Society Directory, 1870*, (Leicester, 1870) *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*, 15 Apr. 1871; Freemasons Hall, Leicester (FHL), A.J.S. Cannon, *The History of John of Gaunt Lodge No 523: One Hundred Years 1846-1946*, centenary booklet, 1946.

‘There are now 350 or 360 subscribers whose right to take part in management is coolly ignored and the governing body... is still essentially narrow and exclusive in its spirit.’³⁵ In October, bad feeling was still rife as the newspaper commented on plans for the erection of a new smallpox hospital, ‘The feeling of town versus the county will gain in yearly strength...it would have been better for the Infirmary had its committee considered the interests of the many rather than deferred to the prejudices of the few’.³⁶ However, while the partnership of county and town in managing the Infirmary showed strain at this time it did not collapse, an indication that voluntary associations had a capacity to contain conflict.

The profile of Leicester associational life, as represented by the 1870 directory, focused on a narrow group of participants. Working class associations were barely represented and women hardly featured at all, for although they participated in associations such as the ‘Lit and Phil’ they did not hold official positions at this time. In terms of the participants who were represented, the profile resonates with Garrard’s description of the urban setting as an intimate and highly visible arena. It was thought important to list the names of those who were office holders or committee members of prominent associations, and from these lists it could be seen that there were overlapping memberships.

In terms of town autonomy, however, it was clear that county influence was still significant. The two contrasting identities that stood out most from the directory listings, in fact, were on the one hand, the urban business elite, and on the other hand, the representatives of the county. The directory shows that in associations which managed shared resources, for example, the Leicestershire Trade Protection Society and the Infirmary, the two groups worked in partnership. However, as the 1871 newspaper reports on the Infirmary illustrate, while this partnership survived, under pressure it was sometimes fragile as a result of conflicting bids for influence and it needed nurturing in the same way as shared material resources.

³⁵ *LCLM*, 15 Jul. 1871.

³⁶ *LCLM*, 14 Oct. 1871.

Into the 1880s: asserting ‘urban pride and identity in a widening variety of cultural expressions.’³⁷

It has been claimed that in Victorian provincial towns from the 1850s onwards ‘urban pride and identity were asserted in an increasingly assertive series of public squares and statues as well as in a widening variety of cultural expressions’.³⁸ This pattern was apparent in Leicester, but the onset was later than 1850. The first attempts to redesign the town started in the 1860s with improvements in traffic circulation and the building of the Clock Tower in 1868.³⁹ Later, between the years 1870 and 1882, a range of initiatives allowed a more impressive urban identity to ‘take off’ and this was reflected in the 1882 town directory.

*Wright’s Commercial and General Directory of Leicester, 1882*⁴⁰ was a more extensive volume than the LPTS directory of 1870. In terms of trade and residential addresses, this reflected the growth in population by approximately 27,000 and the addition of approximately 5000 houses.⁴¹ Moreover, the 1882 directory catered for a wider area, described on the frontispiece as ‘Leicester and six miles round the market place’.⁴² However, the directory did not just provide more extensive lists of addresses, it was also more elaborate in terms of supplementary information. A six page general description of the town was given which included a report on the achievements of the Corporation during the previous decade. With regard to the built environment, there was a detailed description of the new municipal buildings. Other recent projects included flood prevention measures, bridge building, the provision of public baths and the new Abbey Park. The last quarter of the century was also the period in which Leicester made a full transition to a factory-based manufacturing economy. In the hosiery industry, the change had already begun shortly before 1870

³⁷ R.J. Morris and R. Rodger, ‘An introduction to British urban history, 1820-1914’ in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (ed.), *The Victorian City: a Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914* (London, 1993), 8.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

³⁹ J. Simmons, *Leicester: Past and Present*, vol. 2, *Modern City* (London 1974), 48-9.

⁴⁰ All references to the 1892 directory refer to ROLLR, *Wright’s Commercial and General Directory, 1882* (Leicester, 1882), especially 226-80.

⁴¹ Simmons, ‘*Leicester: Past and Present*’, 151. Simmons provides a table of information derived from census figures. Between 1871 and 1881 the population of Leicester rose from 95,220 to 122,376 and the number of houses rose from 19,800 to 24,973.

⁴² *Wright’s Directory of Leicester, 1882* (Leicester, 1882), x.

with the opening of the Corah's hosiery factory in 1865, where new steam power technology was employed; while in the footwear industry, the full transition to factory production occurred only after 1890.⁴³ The 1882 directory, however, already conveyed local excitement at growth in the industry, reporting that 'the boot and manufacture, introduced in 1861, has by the adoption of ingenious mechanical appliances increased rapidly and attained vast proportions'.⁴⁴ These positive advances enabled the directory compilers to represent Leicester as a modern and successful town.

One of the cultural expressions of the town was its voluntary associations and, in the early 1880s, the numbers listed had increased and the range of groups had widened. In the 1882 directory, there were 109 voluntary associations listed compared to 33 in the 1870 directory. The range and pattern of the associations listed in 1882 is summarised in the chart labelled Fig. 3. and illustrates some of the changes that had taken place since 1870. This 1882 chart includes four new categories, Friendly Societies, Working Men's Clubs, sport and a miscellaneous category, representing the different types of groups that were emerging⁴⁵ There were also increases in each of the categories of associations that had been included in the 1870 directory. Medical and benevolent and trade and commercial associations continued to be leading categories, though, because of the greater range of associations, they comprised a smaller percentage of the total. The growing number of entries for Friendly Societies, for example, almost equalled the number of entries for trade and commercial groups. What stands out particularly from the chart is the emerging, dominant category of

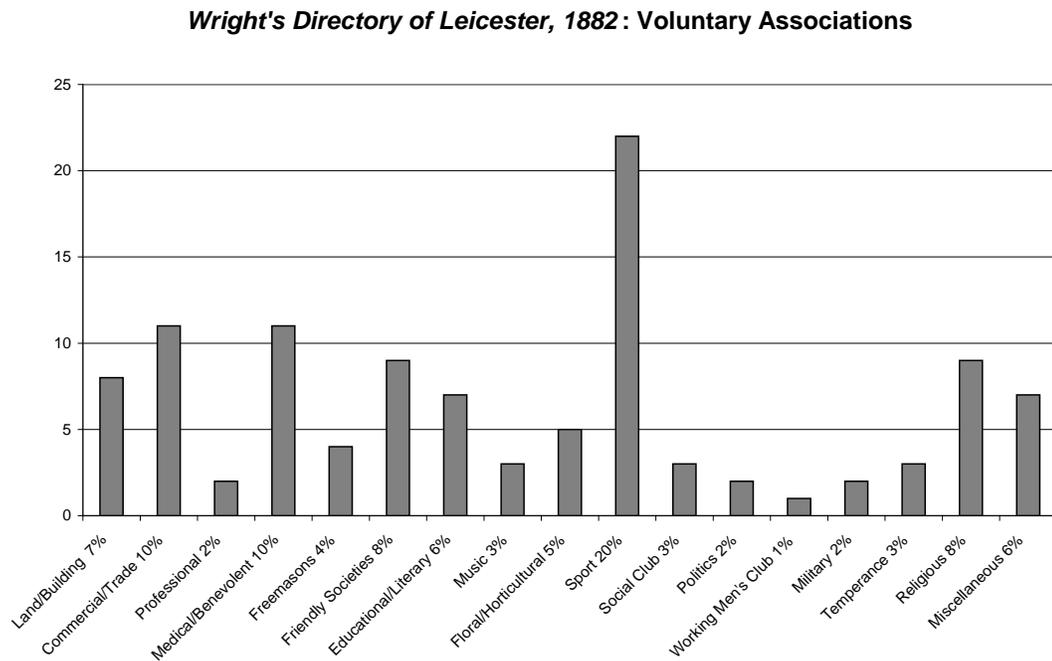
⁴³ R.H. Evans, 'The local government of Leicester in the nineteenth century' in A.E Brown (ed.), *The Growth of Leicester* (Leicester, 1972), 65.

⁴⁴ *Wright's Directory, 1882*, 10.

⁴⁵ In the directory itself the Friendly Societies were listed alongside the Freemasons and Leicester Working Man's Club was included in a general section (see discussion in the following paragraph.) However, for the sake of a more informative chart, two separate categories for Friendly Societies and Working Men's Clubs have been created. For the same reason, the Liberal Club and the Leicester and Leicestershire Conservative Club have been separated from the general list of clubs and placed in a politics category. The directory had its own miscellaneous section, but the miscellaneous items shown on the chart do not correspond exactly to this. Some entries were moved either in or out of this section as seemed more appropriate. For example, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was moved to the medical and benevolent category.

sport which comprises 20 per cent of the total, double the entries for medical and benevolent associations, the next largest category.

Fig. 3.



Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1882* (Leicester, 1882).

Some points should be borne in mind in analysing the chart. The large number of sports entries conveyed correctly the growing popularity of participatory sport in Leicester at the time. However, although the Temperance and Friendly Societies had fewer entries than sports associations, their membership numbers were far greater. For example, the membership of the sports clubs listed ranged between 25 and 70, whereas the Band of Hope alone had 10,000 juvenile members in town and county, although the proportion of those in the town of Leicester itself is uncertain. The Friendly Society entries comprised seven different societies including youth groups plus three related welfare societies and the combined membership of just six of the

societies, excluding the Buffaloes, was nearly 10,000.⁴⁶ Again, it was unclear how many members were in the town and how many were in the county. The clearest breakdown was for the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows where, with 4420 members and 33 lodges in total, almost two thirds of the lodges were in the town.

It has already been suggested that the directories, like the local press, were a medium through which the town was represented as a community and the inclusion of working class societies in the directory promoted a public image of class consensus that was necessary if a shared urban identity was to be represented convincingly. The way the lists of voluntary associations were arranged in the 1882 directory facilitated this. Unlike the 1870 directory, the 1882 directory presented the associations in headed sections according to interest, for example: trade and commercial, temperance, religious etc. This emphasised the interests that townspeople had in common rather than highlighting such differences as class and religious denomination. Working class associations were not listed separately but were integrated with the other entries under the various headings. Thus, the National Union of Boot and Shoe Riveters was listed alongside manufacturers organisations under the heading Trade and Commercial, and the upmarket Leicestershire Club was listed alongside the Working Men's Club. Likewise, Freemasons and Friendly Societies were categorised together in a section headed, Freemasons, Oddfellows etc. A hierarchy of status was of course still evident, for instance, a greater amount of space and detail was given to describing the Freemasons than was given to the Friendly Societies, and the name of the Working Men's Club and the low subscription level certainly distinguished it from the Leicestershire Club. However, despite this, the arrangement of associations under 'interest' headings represented them as being part of a shared way of life rather than being in opposition to each other.

A similar picture of a hierarchical but shared way of life was conveyed by the sports club section. The 22 entries related to 22 separate town clubs and the range of sports

⁴⁶ The Manchester Unity, the Widows and Orphans Society (Manchester Unity), the Nottingham Imperial Order, and the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, the Druids, the Foresters, the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.

and games included cricket, football, cycling, athletics, bowling and chess. Cricket, however, was dominant comprising two thirds of the entries. The Corporation had encouraged cricket by providing facilities at Victoria Park where many of the teams played.⁴⁷ Added to this, the Leicestershire Cricket Association had acquired a new ground at Aylestone and had raised interest in the game locally.⁴⁸ The largest of the town clubs was called the Leicester Cricket Club and the names and origins of the rest were a mixed bag. Club names included workplace, church, place and street names, together with a variety of other titles including 'Half-Holiday' and 'Temperance'. Subscription levels, club officials' names and contact details indicated that the membership of the different clubs contrasted in economic means and social status. The more upmarket clubs included the Banks' Club and the Landsdowne Club. Thomas Paget of Paget's Bank was the president of the Banks' Club and the five other local bank managers were the vice-presidents, while contact details for the Landsdowne Club referred enquirers to a smart villa on prestigious Granville Road, the home of a local architect. The subscriptions for both these clubs were 10s 6d per annum. The Half Holiday Club, however, provided a cheaper option at 5s per annum and the contact details were a terrace house in the much less grand Berners Street, part of the Highfields area, the occupier of which was the manager of a coal merchant's store. These details reflected the social segregation that had emerged with residential zoning. Despite the varied of identities that cricket club names and contact details indicated, the use of the town's public parks by most of the clubs linked them to the town as a whole. The presentation in the directory suggested that, although options varied according to income, many local people were engaged in the same sort of leisure pursuits throughout the town.

Although sport was growing in popularity and there was a range of subscription options available, even the lowest annual subscriptions were not cheap in relation to some workers' wages and would have excluded those on a very low income. The

⁴⁷ *Wright's Directory, 1892, 227.*

⁴⁸ This information comes from Simmons, *Leicester: Past and Present*, 36. Although the Aylestone cricket ground is referred to, the Leicestershire Cricket Association was not actually listed in the directory and so is not counted in the 22 entries.

lowest amount quoted for football and cycling as well as cricket was 5s; while the cheapest subscription on offer was 3s 6d for the Chess Club, which played at the Granby Cocoa and Coffee House. According to official statistics, the highest paid boot and shoe workers in 1879 received 28s per week, while some of the lower paid only received £1.⁴⁹ In 1884, a local newspaper printed a letter from a reader with a wife and two children who earned £1 a week. A breakdown of weekly household expenses showed that after buying food and other essentials, not including clothes, he was left with 3½d. The typical sports club subscription of 5s per annum was the amount he paid for his weekly rent.

A cheaper leisure pursuit than sport, which had also grown in popularity, was gardening, and it was also an interest that the Town Council built on to promote a shared urban identity. The floral and horticultural section of the directory included four associations: the North, East, West and South Leicester Floral and Horticultural societies. The names suggest that although each society catered for a different area, a town as well as a neighbourhood identity was maintained. Each society was listed as holding an annual show and reports of these in the local newspapers confirmed their popularity. For example, in 1882, the North Leicester Society show was held in central Northgate Street in 1882 and was described in the *Leicester Daily Mercury* as attracting ‘thongs of visitors’.⁵⁰ The entries were not overambitious. Items grown in a window box could be submitted and children could enter bunches of wild flowers. This approach fitted with the annual subscription fee of the Society, a relatively modest 2s 6d. In 1886, the Town Council drew on this widespread interest to launch the Abbey Park Flower Show which remained an annual town ritual until the 1930s.

The 1882 directory showed many new local associations, though national influence was also more apparent than in 1870, with branches of national associations becoming a feature of the listings. There was still only one national workers’ union listed, but the medical and benevolent section included the St John’s Ambulance

⁴⁹ B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism, Leicester Working Class Politics, 1860-1906* (Leicester, 1987), 31-3.

⁵⁰ *Leicester Daily Mercury (LDM)*, 31 Jun. 1882.

Association and the National Life Boat Association, while in the religious section names such as the Church Defence Association and the Christian Knowledge and National Societies had appeared. The integration of branch associations into the directory under the different interest headings, however, suggested that local and national were complementary rather than oppositional. Leading figures from both the town and the county were listed as participants in branch as well as local associations reinforcing this sense of a complementary relationship between local and national.⁵¹

As well as change, the 1882 directory showed continuity with the associational life depicted in the 1870 directory. In the business world, for example, there was personal continuity with 12 of the 28 directors at the Chamber of Commerce still 'in situ' and TT Paget still the treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce as well as president of the LPTS. There was also continuity of directorship in the Leicester and Leicestershire Freehold Land Society and the Leicester Permanent Building Society, and familiar names from the same circle were also involved in the Leicester Temperance and General Building Society, established in 1875. However, although this close-knit circle continued and a core of offices was still concentrated in the Friar Lane area, associational life had become more compartmentalised. Alongside the coordinating and general interest associations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the LPTS, specialised employers associations for the major Leicester industries, the Leicester Boot Manufacturers Association and the Leicestershire Hosiery Manufacturers' Association, had been formed. There were also some new influences from outside Leicester in local commerce, with two building societies that were not locally based, the 'Starr-Bowkett' Benefit Building Society and the Liberator Society, conducting business from Leicester premises.

In 1882, Leicester businessmen continued their active role in the civic and social leadership of the town; ten directors of the Chamber of Commerce were on the Town Council and six of them were magistrates. The numbers who were subscribers to the

⁵¹ For example, T.T. Paget of Paget's Bank was the treasurer of the National Lifeboat Association and Major Burnaby a county figure who was involved with the Rifle Volunteers was chairman of the St John's Ambulance Association.

Leicester 'Lit and Phil' had reduced to 11.⁵² However, the range of associations had widened and amongst the directors from the Chamber of Commerce, one director, J.D. Harris, was president of both the Leicester Cricket Club and the Leicester Bicycle Club; T.T. Paget was the President of the Banks' Cricket team and National LifeBoat Association, William Barfoot was the president of the Liberal Club and the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce; and T.A. Wykes, was a director of the Leicester Orchestral Union. County influence continued to be very strong in local institutions in the medical and benevolent field, with, for example, the Duke of Rutland holding the presidency of five institutions: the Infirmary, the Provident Dispensary, the Association for the Blind, the Female Orphan Asylum and the Home for Penitent Females with members of the county gentry taking other leading positions. However, town and county were still working in partnership and the directory showed that the Provident Dispensary, which had a separate county board, was a particularly popular body with businessmen at this time, with five directors of the Chamber of Commerce, sitting on the committee.

Leading businessmen, especially those with political ambitions, were expected to show a sense of public service. However, they were not alone in this. The regeneration and growth of Leicester at this time was accompanied by some displays of citizenship in the wider community, suggesting that the promotion of a shared urban identity was not just a management exercise by the civic authorities and leading citizens. One initiative, established in 1880 was the Kyrle Society, the leading lights of which included headmaster and clergyman James Went and local artist Edith Gittens. This was 'a mixture of philanthropic organisation, expression of civic pride and leisure outlet for the middle classes'⁵³ Its aim was to beautify the town environment for the benefit of everyone but, in particular, 'the poor' and to this end members helped to decorate interiors and encouraged the cultivation of plants and

⁵² ULL, *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, Reports and Transactions*, Leicester 1880-1886, these include the report of the Council of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, 1982, 2-8.

⁵³ D. Nash, 'Organizational and associational life' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 163.

gardens.⁵⁴ Public spiritedness was also shown elsewhere on the social scale. The directory entry for the St John's Ambulance Association, for example, showed that 120 men including 20 policemen and 20 railway servants had been successfully instructed during the year in skills that were clearly intended to benefit the urban community as a whole. While there may have been a range of motivations for taking this training, it seems reasonable to assume that acting for the public good was one of them. It was through active citizenship and voluntary work that many women were to find an entry into public life.⁵⁵ Although it is clear from the directory that almost all the office-holders in associational life were still men, the St John's Ambulance Association and the Kyrle Society were exceptions, showing signs that perceptions of women's role were starting to change.

The description of Leicester in the 1882 directory reflected civic pride in the growth of local industry and the improvements made to the town. The number and range of voluntary associations had increased and the lists were more socially inclusive. In addition to new local associations there were a number of new branch associations. The directory presentation emphasised similarities between groups and conveyed a sense of shared urban identity despite the apparent differences in social status. Sport was an important new category of association enjoyed by townspeople from a variety of backgrounds between 1870 and 1882. There was continuity as well as change; business associational life remained close knit although it became more compartmentalised, business leaders continued to take up public office as well as participating in associational life and town and county representatives continued to work together in important institutions. Civic pride was accompanied by a new

⁵⁴ ROLLR, 17 D 51, records of the Kyrle/Civic Society, 17 D 51/1, minute books 1880-1885 record the activities of the society including the gardening competitions and decorating projects. In 17 D 51/3, the minute book for 1908-1917, the mission of the society is quoted thus 'the object of the society shall be to bring the refining and cheering influence of natural and artistic beauty into the homes and resorts of the poor of Leicester'.

⁵⁵ See, for example, J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1993), 23-32; P. Thane, 'Women, liberalism and citizenship' in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), 45-66 and P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in Local Government 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1987).

emphasis on active citizenship and exemplified in the activities of groups such as the Kyrle Society and the St John's Ambulance Association.

A continuation of the old in the context of new influences 1890s-1914

The presentation of *Wright's Directory of Leicester 1894* was similar to that of 1882. The same format was still adopted, including the general outline of the town and the lists of voluntary associations divided into sections according to field of interest. Home grown initiatives and branches of national associations, middle class and working class groups, were integrated into these sections and listed alongside each other. It was a format that continued to be used in the 1904 and 1914 directories⁵⁶

However, while the presentation of the 1894 directory was similar to the 1882 volume, important changes had taken place in the town. By 1894, the population had increased by at least 50,000 with over 4000 new houses built and there had also been a significant boundary extension in 1891. Employment in the footwear industry had doubled to over 24,000 and hosiery employees had increased by approximately a third to nearly 13,000.⁵⁷ Against this backdrop, the number of voluntary associations listed had risen from 109 to 202. In fact, for most types of association numbers remained fairly stable (see Fig. 4). The most notable contrast between the entries for 1894 and 1882 was the significant increase in entries in the trade and commercial and sports sections.

One of the new influences which had a nationwide impact was the 'growing working class consciousness through the labour movement'.⁵⁸ Combined with the local development of industry, this had made striking changes to the content of the trade and commercial section of the town directory (see Fig. 4). In 1882, only one union

⁵⁶ Three directories referred to in this section are: ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1894* (Leicester, 1894), ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1904* (London, 1904) and ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1914* (London, 1914).

⁵⁷ See Simmons 'Leicester: Past and Present', 151. The population was 122,376 in 1881 rising to 174,624 in 1894. In 1881, there were 24,973 houses and 29,228 in 1891. The number of employees in the footwear industry was 13,055 in 1881 and 24,159 in 1894. In the hosiery industry, the numbers rose from 8,335 to 12,667.

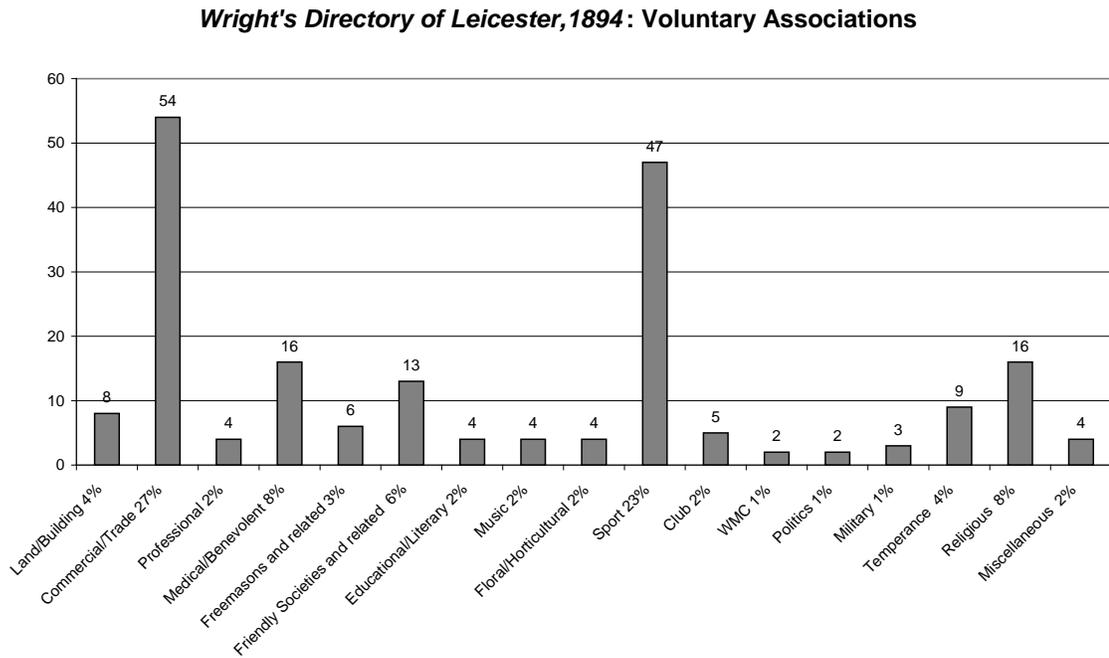
⁵⁸ Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', 420.

had been included in the directory while in 1894 there were forty trade union related entries: the Leicester Trades Council and the 39 workers' unions that were affiliated to it. The largest of these, the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, (NUBSO), had over 10,000 members, about one quarter of the national membership, while the Amalgamated Hosiery Union had 3,500 members. The rest were smaller, a mix of branches and national unions together with some local groups; some represented particular areas of the shoe or textile industry, while others ranged from branches of railway workers' unions to small, highly specialised groups with only 25 members. The majority met fortnightly or monthly at town centre pubs, often on a Saturday or weekday evening. Typical examples were the engineers, 150 in number who met at the Red Cow in Belgrave Gate on alternate Saturdays, and the 77 woolsorters who met at the Red Lion in Highcross St. This regular schedule of meetings was clearly a way of life for trade unionists, separated in their particular occupational interests but linked by class identity.

Many historians of different ideological persuasions have identified the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a period in which 'the tentacles of class became all-embracing'.⁵⁹ Certainly the regular schedule of union pub meetings and the affiliation of separate union groups to the Trades Council was an illustration of how working class consciousness and solidarity manifested itself in Leicester in the early 1890s. However, as well as being linked by class identity, trade unionists were also linked by their Leicester identity by virtue of meeting in a string of public houses in the centre of town. The inclusion of the information in the town directory arguably also suggested a common citizenship with Leicester people, as well as class identity. At the very least, the choice to convey as public information, the meeting times, meeting places and number of participants in the unions suggested that trade union activity was legitimate and unthreatening.

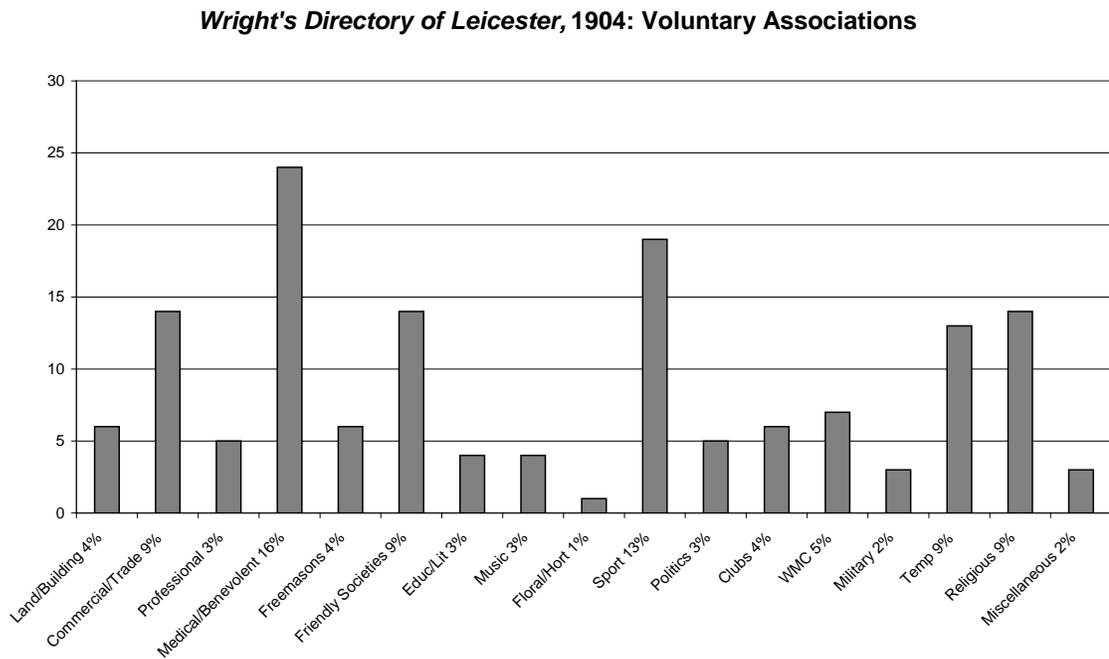
⁵⁹ Harris, *Public Lives, Public Spirit*, 6.

Fig. 4.



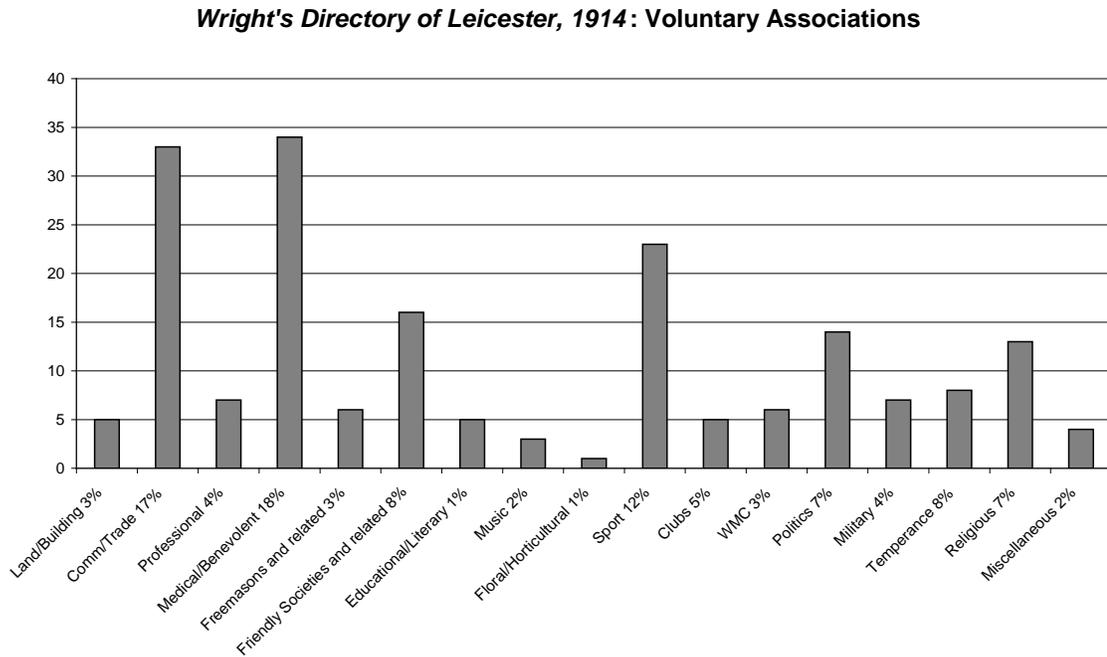
Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1894* (Leicester, 1894).

Fig. 5.



Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1904* (London, 1904).

Fig. 6.



Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1914* (London, 1914).

As tension within the footwear industry increased in the early 1890s leading to a national lock-out in 1895, in which Leicester participated, claims of a genuine shared local identity between manufacturers and trade unionists were undermined. Problems had arisen in the industry under the threat of increased American competition; the workforce showed resistance to new forms of mechanisation, while manufacturers argued that adaptation was necessary for the survival of the industry. Despite growing intransigence on both sides, national confrontation was headed off between 1892 and late 1894 largely as a result of Leicester influence. This was achieved by a continuing dialogue kept open by Leicester Manufacturer and Alderman Thomas Wright and William Inskip secretary of NUBSO and previous secretary of the Leicester Working Man's Club, who was also a well-known Leicester personality. Much here depended on a sense of personal contact; personal appeals by Wright to

the shoe workers and Inskip's personal following in the union.⁶⁰ However, the joint efforts of Wright and Inskip to prevent an open clash failed. The footwear manufacturers, including those in Leicester, had joined forces in the Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers of Great Britain. The federal structure of the association meant that the Leicester group retained autonomy and because of this Wright was able to pursue his conciliatory approach with the unions for nearly two years. However, eventually, pressure from non-Leicester employers caused Wright to withdraw from involvement. This in turn reduced Inskip's control over the more militant unionists and open confrontation ensued. In April 1885 the lock out started and was settled within six weeks to the advantage of the manufacturers.⁶¹

The trade and commercial entries ten years later in the *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1904* were very different (see Fig. 5). Entries were reduced from 53 to fifteen and the only union related entries were the Leicester Trades Council and the Amalgamated Hosiery Union. It is only possible to speculate why so few trade union details were entered on this occasion. One possibility has already been mentioned, the directory for 1904 was altogether a smaller volume and while this may have been an editorial decision to summarise, the production of the directory had just been taken over by Kelly's whose London agents no doubt found it more difficult to collect information. Nevertheless, while the omission of small groups is understandable, the total omission of trade unionists in the footwear industry is surprising, even though

⁶⁰ A. Fox, *A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1874-1957* (Oxford, 1958), 147-8 and 177-8. Wright also made more general efforts to promote the notion of local identity over class conflict during this period. For example, in September, 1893, he financed and organised a fancy dress party for 6000 local children in Abbey Park where each individual child was welcomed with a ceremonial handshake and every child's name was printed in the local newspaper the next day. See *LDP*, 1 Sept. 1893.

⁶¹ Fox, *History of the National Union*, 219-20. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (London, 1982), 90-103 and 331-342 refers to the 1880s and 1890s as the time when, in Lancashire and Yorkshire the double effect of increased trade union activity and socialism seriously eroded the old order of deference and paternalism. The decline of the family firm between 1870 and the First World War is also seen as crucial to this. Thomas Wright's activities can be seen as an effort to maintain the 'community' relationships between employer and employee in Leicester during this period. Despite the eventual confrontation, the build-up to the 1895 lock-out shows that employer and employee relationships in the shoe industry were more harmonious than in other parts of the country. Moreover, family firms continued to be a characteristic of Leicester into the twentieth century and throughout the interwar years which supported a continuance of harmonious work relationships and a sense of local solidarity.

the decade since the lock-out had seen both a decline in the footwear industry and in union membership.⁶² In the *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1914*, however, there was more detailed coverage of the unions. Twelve entries were listed, far less than the 1890s, but this was mainly because amalgamation had reduced the number of separate entries (see Fig. 6). The more institutionalised face of trade unionism was now also evident with five of the unions based in centrally situated office accommodation and only four unions recorded as meeting in pubs. In line with national trends, the unions were by this time enjoying a period of strength.⁶³ NUBSO had reversed its decline while membership levels in the Amalgamated Hosiery Union in Leicester were recorded as 4000, a thousand more members than recorded in 1894. The unions thus continued to involve significant numbers of people in Leicester in associational life.

A further influence on associational life in the 1890s was increased leisure and rising incomes. The 1882 directory had shown a new local enthusiasm for sport and by 1894 the number of directory entries had more than doubled (see Fig. 6). Commentators have detailed the rise of football as spectator sport in the 1890s especially in the north and the midlands.⁶⁴ This was illustrated by the popularity of the Fosse Football Club, later to become Leicester City Football Club, which was based at its own Filbert Street ground. Despite charging an annual subscription fee of 7s 6d the club had 1100 members in 1894. One way of reducing the fee was to buy a joint annual 'lady and gent' subscription for 7s 6d, an offer that showed football was not purely a male interest at this time. Meanwhile spectator rugby was offered by the Leicester 'Tigers' Football Club which had a membership of 1000 and there was also the more expensive option of the Leicester County Cricket Club where members paid a yearly subscription of £1.1s.

⁶² *Ibid*, 219-20.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 219-20.

⁶⁴ See, for example, D. Reid, 'Playing and praying' in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 773-76.

The popularity of spectator sport was matched by an enthusiasm for participatory sport. The 1894 directory showed increased entries for all the types of sports listed in 1882 with additional entries for swimming and rowing. By the 1890s, small amateur sports clubs had become so numerous that single entries for multiple clubs had become common. Thus the 47 entries listed do not represent the actual number of sports clubs in Leicester at the time, the numbers of which were much higher. For example, there were only five entries listed for football, but one of them was the Leicestershire Football Association to which 55 clubs throughout the town and county were affiliated. Although these clubs were not listed by name in the directory, they were referred to in local newspaper sports reports and their names show that many were highly localised in origin, most frequently attached to a church, neighbourhood or street, or sometimes to a pub or association. In a typical Saturday sports report in 1893, club names mentioned included: Elbow Lane, St Margaret's, YMCA and The Blue Boar.⁶⁵

Cricket was also very popular and many of the small clubs listed in the 1882 directory had survived while new ones had also emerged. They were still the same mixed bag in origin with a spectrum of membership subscriptions. However, like football, the number of clubs was far higher than the number of entries in the directory list. Newspaper reports of Saturday cricket showed that many churches and chapels also had teams and indeed one of the entries listed in the directory represented the multiple clubs in the Nonconformist Cricket League.⁶⁶ Thus playing in a team became accessible to even those on a low income. Cycling clubs, frequently affiliated to pubs were also a popular and affordable option for working people. This was illustrated by the cycling club at the Leicester Working Man's Club which boasted a membership of 100.

It is clear from the 1894 directory that the growing number of sports clubs, evident in 1882 had not only multiplied but had become a major aspect of social life throughout

⁶⁵ For example, *Leicester Daily Post (LDM)*, 27 Nov. 1893.

⁶⁶ For example, *LDM*, 4 Sept. 1893.

the town and suburbs, available in some form to all classes. Although the clubs often had very localised identities, they were, by 1894, increasingly linked into organised leagues, while the use of the public parks and the corporation baths continued to link sport to civic space. Moreover, members of the civic authorities now involved themselves *ex officio* in the overall coordination of sport in the town. The same manufacturer Alderman Thomas Wright, who between 1892 and 1894 sought to head off industrial conflict, was also the president of the Leicester Football Association, while the Mayor Israel Hart was president of the Leicester and County Amateur Swimming Association and Humane Society to which more than 25 clubs were affiliated. Again the listing of clubs in the directory as well as an increasing volume of sports reporting in the press gave a sense of unity, continuing to suggest that sport was part of a Leicester 'way of life'.

It was a 'way of life', moreover, which not only had a town identity but which was a channel for sustaining a wider local identity where town and county could make contact in friendly competition. Local newspaper sports reports show that by 1904 there were specific Leicester 'town' leagues; a specific town sports identity was formally acknowledged alongside the highly localised identities and a wider shared identity with the county. Townspeople continued to form and join sports clubs in increasing numbers up to 1914. The actual number of separate entries dropped (see fig. 8), but this was because in cricket, cycling, football and swimming clubs were grouped under umbrella associations, though, within these umbrella associations, numbers were growing. In 1904, 200 football clubs were affiliated to the Leicestershire Football Association, while the Leicester County Cricket Association included 46 town clubs and by 1914, football club numbers had risen to 250. This was a vigorous associational culture linked explicitly to local identity.

Growth in the power of the state was an aspect of the 1890s and pre-First World War period.⁶⁷ The extent to which this encroached on local social collectivism has been a

⁶⁷ Morris, '*Clubs, societies and associations*', 420.

matter of debate.⁶⁸ Regarding the voluntary provision of social welfare, the Wright's town directories between 1882 and 1914 indicate that voluntary medical and benevolent associations, far from going into decline in Leicester, had increased significantly (see Figs 5, 6, 7 and 8). In the 1882 directory, 10 per cent of associations listed were medical and benevolent, but by 1914 they comprised 18 per cent, and were the largest category. Growth in numbers between 1882 and 1904 was largely due to an increase in the number of branch societies listed. By 1894 more national names such as the RSPCA and the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society had joined the list and by 1904 ten of the 23 names listed were local branches of associations. Between 1904 and 1914 there was a significant new cluster of local initiatives listed and in the 1914 directory local associations outnumbered branch associations by 20 to 13, a ratio of 3:2. The new local groups were preoccupied with new objects of charity. While in the 1880s 'fallen women' had been a particular concern spawning three different voluntarily run institutions, the preoccupation in the late 1890s and 1900s was the care of the disabled and the guidance of young people. Thus, names such as the Leicester Guild of the Crippled, the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind, the Girls' Social Guild and the Leicester Young Men's Institute and Boy's Guild became active organisations in the social welfare of the city.

The most dramatic changes in the pattern of voluntary associations between 1882 and 1914, were in the trade and commercial, sport and medical and benevolent categories. Figs 3, 4, 5, and 6 illustrate that the entries in other categories either went through smaller increases or decreases or remained relatively static. Some of these movements, although less dramatic, require some further explanation. In the land and building category, Building Societies were affected by national influences including legislation and the value of property. In 1882, the number listed was boosted by branches of Building Societies that were not of Leicester origin. This was also the case in 1894 although the names of some societies had been replaced by others. Insecure property values and inadequate regulation of practice had led to volatility, one notable casualty of which was the Liberator Society which had crashed

⁶⁸ Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, 13-14.

dramatically in 1892.⁶⁹ In the 1904 and 1914 directories, the number of Building Societies declined, with only five listed in 1914. The 1894 Building Societies Act of 1894, had outlawed the practice of ‘balloting for advances’ used by a number of societies and this had reduced the number of societies countrywide.⁷⁰ Although national influence had been imposed on all societies by the 1894 Act, the effect in Leicester was to make the profile of building societies more local again. In the 1914 directory, the list consisted of the Leicester Temperance and General Building Society, The Leicester Permanent Building Society, the Leicester Cooperative Society and two other local Cooperative groups.

Friendly Societies were also subject to national influence. With the introduction of the state insurance scheme in 1911, they were used as part of the administrative machinery of the new system. Despite the change, membership levels in Leicester rose significantly during the period. As in 1882, the number of entries in the directories of 1894, 1904 and 1914 disguised the true extent of membership. The number of actual societies remained fairly constant with eight different societies entered in 1894 and nine in 1914. The number of members, recorded, however, had escalated from 28,323 in 1882 to 48,000 in 1914.

National government policy also changed the nature of the military volunteers. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, provincial volunteer soldiers had been brought increasingly under government control and aligned more closely with the regular army. In 1908, reforms initiated by the Secretary of State, R.D. Haldane, resulted in the amalgamation of Rifle Volunteer Corps and Yeomanry into a new territorial force. To administer the new force, fourteen county territorial associations were established, which were intended to provide a link between the military and local communities.⁷¹ Thus in the 1914 directory, the Territorial Force and the

⁶⁹ See E.J. Cleary, *The Building Society Movement* (London, 1965), 116-50. and P.H.J.H. Gosden, *Self-Help: Voluntary Associations in the 19th Century* (1973), 143-89. The Building Societies Act of 1874 proved inadequate and there were a number of high profile crashes, including the Liberator Building Society.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Stepler, *Britons to Arms!*, 110.

Leicestershire Territorial Force Association were both listed. Although the Rifle Volunteer Corps of Leicester and the county towns had been officially linked since 1860, the new reforms had brought the town and county even closer. Representatives from town and county councils and the army worked in partnership under the presidency of the Duke of Rutland in the new Territorial Association. Meanwhile, at the level of the drill hall, some familiar names from Leicester's business and professional community, such as Wykes and Fielding Johnson appeared in the lists of infantry commanding staff, highlighting another link in the associational network. Other new military entries included a Scout troop, an indication that the Scout movement, launched in 1908, was commonly perceived as a military organisation at this time.⁷²

Harrison suggests that by the 1900s the temperance movement was beginning to lose its momentum with high profile critics such as Hobson arguing that 'the drink problem' was closely connected with other social questions.⁷³ This analysis is reflected to an extent in the directory entries for temperance 1894-1914, although in some parts of the temperance movement in Leicester there were increases of membership at the end of the period. In 1882, there had been three entries consisting of the Band of Hope, the Leicester Temperance Society, and a pseudo-masonic group called the International Order of Good Templars that had 28 lodges in the district. By 1894, the Church of England Temperance Society, the British Women's Temperance Association, various Rechabite groups and a railway employees group were also included and in 1904 the number of entries peaked at 13 although by 1914 the number had declined to eight. However, in 1914, those groups which particularly favoured regalia and ritual, the Good Templars and the Rechabites, recorded an increased membership, that together totalled approximately 7000 members in the

⁷² Literature such as R. Baden Powell, *Marksmanship for Boys* (London, 1915) must have encouraged this perception. The pamphlet discusses how to win the red feather, the red feather being an award to those Scouts who could show they were training to defend their country.

⁷³ B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 367-83. Harrison also discusses the cracks in the alliance between the temperance movement and the spokesmen of the working class that were becoming evident by this time.

district, excluding youth groups.⁷⁴ Moreover, the Band of Hope, which had recorded a membership of about 10,000 in town and county, in 1882, claimed a membership of 21,000 by 1914 and their directory entry described a full schedule of activities including lectures, conferences and music festivals.

In the case of both the Working Men's Clubs and political clubs and associations, the increase in entries over the period reflected the spread of associational life to suburbia.⁷⁵ In 1894, there were two Working Men's Clubs listed which were based in the town centre, while in 1914 six of the clubs listed had suburban addresses. These local developments also reflected both a general expansion of Working Men's Clubs countrywide and a time of greater national coordination with provincial clubs organising into local branches of the Club and Institute Union⁷⁶ As for political clubs and associations, the increase in entries between 1894 and 1914 was also largely because suburban clubs, in addition to central ones, were listed. In the 1870s, entries for political clubs were very sparse, with only three centrally based clubs: the Leicester and Leicestershire Conservative Club, and two Liberal clubs. By 1904, there were still only four entries with one suburban Constitutional Club added to the original list of three, though by 1914, the list had expanded to fourteen. These new entries included the Leicester ILP and the Social Democratic Federation, a reflection of the growing strength of the Labour movement, but the increase was mainly due to the addition of seven new suburban Constitutional and Unionist clubs anticipating a strand of suburban social life based around conservatism that flourished in the interwar period.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ In 1894, the Good Templars were recorded as having 30 to 40 lodges plus youth groups in Leicestershire, in 1904 they were recorded as having 1400 members and in 1914 this had increased to 2300 members and 45 lodges. The Rechabites were listed for the first time in 1894 when they had 500 members and seven 'tents'. In 1904, this had increased to 800 members and 11 tents and by 1914 there were 45 'tents' and 4700 adult members plus 33 juvenile 'tents'.

⁷⁵ B. Hareling, *The Good Old Days, 1881-1981: One Hundred Years of Working Men's Clubs in Leicester* (Leicester, 1986), 14. Hareling refers to the 'steady growth' of smaller less central clubs in Leicester at this time.

⁷⁶ G. Tremlett, *Clubmen* (London, 1987), 109. The Leicester branch was established in 1911.

⁷⁷ See the last section of this chapter and also R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), 84-6.

There were continuities as well as changes during the period. Those associations which had been leading middle class associations in 1870, for example the Leicester 'Lit and Phil, and Freemasons were still active. In 1914, for example, the membership of the 'Lit and Phil' was about 300, in comparison to 200 in 1870 while the number of Masonic lodges in the town had increased from two to eight.⁷⁸ By 1894, the directory compilers had stopped listing in full the names of the directors of the Chamber of Commerce and the Committee of the 'Lit and Phil' making this part of associational life, at least for the directory user, less of a visible arena. However, the main office holders were still listed and, in 1914, the president and treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce were both members of the 'Lit and Phil', together with other well known names from Leicester business such as the shoe manufacturers Harry Simpson Gee of Stead and Simpson, Sir Edward Wood of Freeman Hardy and Willis and a wider membership that included medical professionals, architects and clergymen.⁷⁹ Newer middle class associations, established in the 1880s were also still active and continued to provide opportunities for members of the business and professional elite to mix. The Kyrle Society was an example of this. The 1914 directory entry shows that the society was now headed by a member of the Gimson family, Leicester based engineers, and Dr C.K. Millard, the medical officer of health and public analyst, and was accompanied by an enthusiastic write up, recounting the success of the society's 'back garden improvement scheme' which encouraged gardening in the poorer parts of the town. Meanwhile, two new music societies established in the late 1880s continued to flourish, both with memberships of over 300.

By 1914, Leicester businessmen were still standing for public office and were a solid presence on the Town Council. Although their numbers had declined since the

⁷⁸ The chart representing 1914 shows only six entries relating to the Freemasons. This is because the craft lodges were represented by a single entry in the directory although this entry did give some details of the separate lodges. Thus, for the purposes of the chart, one entry represents the craft lodges and the other five entries are for related orders such as the Order of the Royal Arch. For further details of the Freemasons at this time see Chapter Five.

⁷⁹ ULL, *Transactions of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 1914-1922. The 1913-1914 annual report lists members' names and addresses.

1880s,⁸⁰ they continued, as the 1914 directory shows, to take a leading role in benevolent causes, including participation in the management of the Leicester Royal Infirmary, which still entirely depended on voluntary subscriptions and donations.⁸¹ The county presence in the medical and benevolent institutions based in the town was less marked than it had been in the 1880s, though the Duke of Rutland headed two rather than five institutions, one of which was the Infirmary. However, the vice presidency was not now entirely in the hands of the gentry. While Earl Howe was one vice-president, the other three were C.J. Bond, a surgeon at the Infirmary and two Leicester manufacturers Sir Edward Wood and Thomas Fielding Johnson.

As far as women's role in associational life was concerned, the 1914 directory reveals that the overwhelming majority of office holders in the associations listed were still men. Women's names feature mainly in the medical and benevolent, religious and temperance entries. In the case of the medical and benevolent entries, five of the 34 secretaries listed were women, however, there were only two women presidents and there were no women treasurers. The philanthropic associations in which women most featured were those which specifically catered for women and children's needs, and in some of these, as with the Stoneygate 'home' for fallen women and the Female Orphan Asylum, 'ladies' committees were listed in 1894 and this was still the case in 1914. In the case of religious and temperance groups, the directory shows that women ran those associations that were specifically meant for women such as The Bible and Domestic Women's Mission and the British Women's Temperance Associations. The directory, however, masked the real level of women's participation in associational life by omitting the names of voluntary associations in which women were involved. For example, in 1897, a Leicester branch of the National Union of Women Workers was formed, which became known as the National Council of Women in the interwar period. This was an association for women who were

⁸⁰ P. Jones, 'Politics', in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 90-120. Jones records that the business interest on the Town Council fell from about 60 per cent in the 1880s to about half at the turn of the century and about one third in 1931, though reviving again in the immediate period after the Second World War. See also discussion in Chapter Five.

⁸¹ Sir Edward Wood, chairman of the board of governors obtained the title of 'Royal' for the Infirmary in 1912. Frizelle and Martin, *Leicester Royal Infirmary*, 188.

‘engaged or interested in religious, educational social and philanthropic work’. The group aimed to coordinate and extend social welfare work in Leicester and invited local projects to affiliate for this purpose. The annual reports listed the affiliated local groups and this not only showed the dense network that was being built but also revealed that there were many local associations run by women which were not listed in the directory such as the Mothers’ Union, and the Brabazon Society. Neither was the National Council of Women Workers itself ever listed, although by 1914 it had 161 members many of whom were women from well known Leicester business families or the wives of prominent local professionals.⁸²

In Leicester, the pattern of associational life between 1894 and 1914, as reflected in selected town directories, showed both continuity and change. The range of associations listed had increased between the publication of the 1870 directory and the 1882 directory to include a more comprehensive range of associations such as sports clubs, Friendly Societies and Working Men’s Clubs. This format was then established and changed little by 1894 or indeed by 1914. However, while the range of associations listed remained similar, it was clear that a denser pattern of associational life emerged at this time. In the context of new influences, there was a rapid expansion of certain types of association. There was a proliferation of trade unions in the 1890s and sports clubs increased in number and type throughout the period. The formation of sports associations, moreover, bound individual sports clubs into networks linking different parts of the town including geographical areas, churches and workplaces. Between 1894 and 1914 the membership rolls of certain associations that were already part of networks such as Friendly Societies and Temperance groups and Masonic lodges also significantly expanded.⁸³ These increases changed the pattern of associational life that had been set by involving and connecting so many more participants. The geographical spread of some types of associations for example sports groups, Working Men’s Clubs and political groups

⁸² ROLLR, 16 D 58, records of the National Union of Women Workers/National Council of Women. See more detailed discussion of the National Union of Women Workers and the National Council of Women in Chapter Six.

⁸³ For a study of the Masonic network, see Chapter Five.

reflected the spread of suburbia, particularly by 1914. However, associations from all these categories were also based in the town centre, and those centrally based and civically minded associations which had included among their membership leading businessmen and professionals, for example the 'Lit and Phil', the Kyrle Society and the Freemasons, in the 1880s were still active and retained a prestigious membership in 1914.

National influence on the local also increased during this period and this was reflected in the effects of legislation on the organisation of Building Societies, Friendly Societies and military volunteers. It was also reflected in the number of branch societies that were established in the medical and benevolent field during the period. However, despite this, an increase of distinctly local benevolent associations in the Edwardian years indicates that local identity had not been submerged by the national. Moreover, the most prominent local medical and benevolent institution the Leicester Royal Infirmary, despite the addition of 'Royal' to its name, remained a very local institution was still dependent entirely on voluntary contributions and raising money for the hospital was an activity that brought local people together and continued to do so in the interwar decades.

The interwar period

In the period between the wars there continued to be a balance between the local and national in associational life and aspects of both the medical and benevolent and the trade and commercial associations, which are discussed in this section, serve to illustrate this. Moreover, while the neighbourhoods of the city continued to provide options for leisure, for example, sports clubs, Adult Schools, Working Men's Clubs, political clubs, temperance groups⁸⁴ and social life based round the churches, there were still opportunities to celebrate a shared city identity, for example through sport

⁸⁴ Some temperance groups continued to retain a significant, if diminished, number of groups in the interwar years. See, for example, ROLLR, records of the Independent Order of Good Templars. DE 2524/1-127, quarterly guides to the order. These guides give an indication of activity in the interwar years. The Templars had a local network of groups and these guides indicate that there were at least 26 lodges in 1928-1929 although it is not clear how many of these met within the city boundary. The

or to contribute to public welfare through voluntary work. The opportunities for both working class people and women to serve in public office also increased during this time and these opportunities were taken, with the interwar years seeing a number of working class mayors and the first women councillors. Women's associations however, still were still under represented in the town directories, although the women's pages in the local newspapers between the wars started to report extensively on these and on the civic work in social welfare done by women in Leicester at this time.⁸⁵

Despite the trauma of the 1914-1918 war, the depiction of associational life in the *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1920* was more remarkable for its similarities with 1914 than its differences, although the format of the directory itself had been altered giving generally less detailed coverage.⁸⁶ There was an overall drop in entries from 190 to 178 in 1920 but by the time, *Kelly's Directory of the City of Leicester, 1938* was published, the numbers had risen again to 222.⁸⁷ Although the total number of associations listed had decreased in the 1920 directory, the numbers had not gone down in all categories (see Fig. 7). The number of trade and commercial associations, for example, had slightly grown, and the number of professional groups had also expanded, their numbers swollen by various nursing associations, which now represented over half of the groups listed in this category. There was also growth of associations that reflected new leisure interests, such as the Leicester Philatelic Society, the Leicester and Leicestershire Photographic Society and the Leicester Automobile club. By 1938 (see Fig. 8), there had been a significant increase in trade and commercial associations as well as Working Men's Clubs and political clubs. In

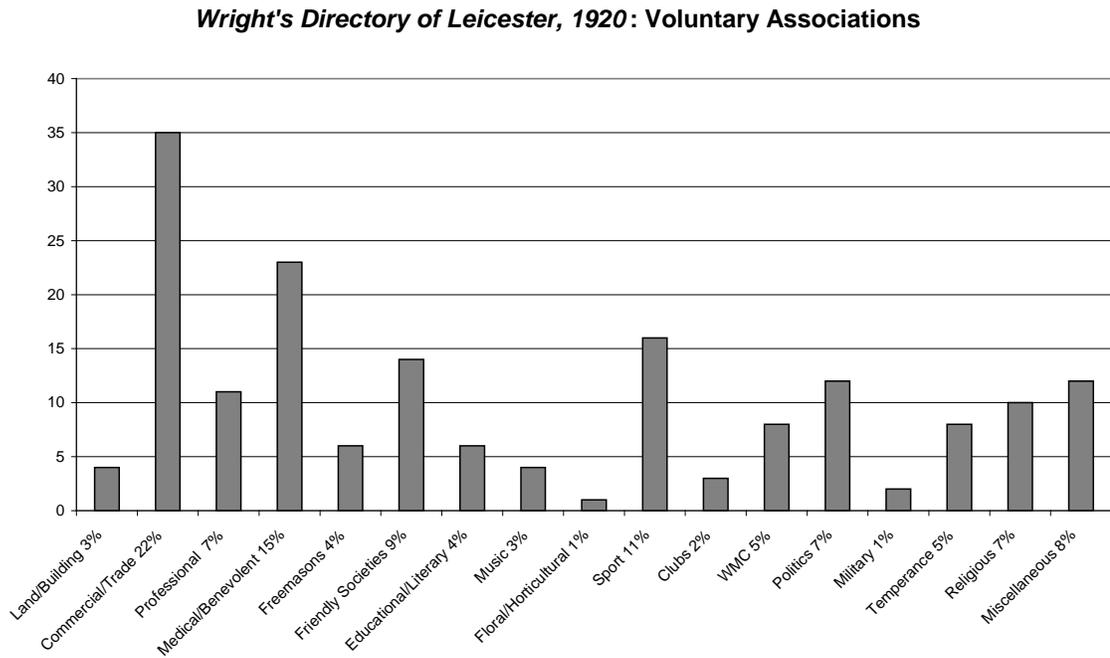
lodges visited each other and there were instances when they all came together. In 1928, for example, there was a Leicester city convention of lodges held.

⁸⁵ Suzanne Harrison's daily page in the *Leicester Evening Mail*, in the 1930s, is an example of this. See Chapter Six for more detail.

⁸⁶ ROLLR, *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1920* (London, 1920). All references to the 1920 directory, in this section, unless otherwise stated, relate to pages 499-502, where the majority of societies and associations are listed, or pages 517-23, where information on some of the leading medical and benevolent associations is recorded, and pages 417-18, where sports and social clubs are listed.

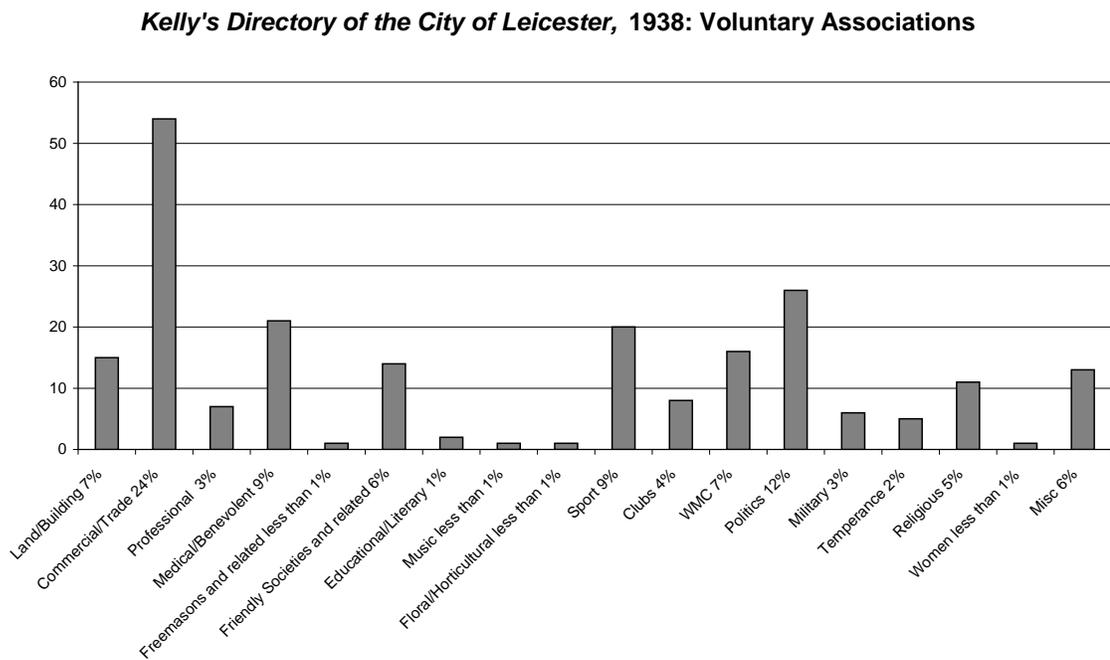
⁸⁷ ROLLR, *Kelly's Directory of the City of Leicester, 1938* (London, 1938). While this increase in numbers does show that enthusiasm for associational life had not waned, it should also be borne in mind that Leicester itself increased in size during this period with a boundary extension in 1935.

Fig. 7.



Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1920* (London, 1920).

Fig. 8.



Source: ROLLR, based on information in *Kelly's Directory of the City of Leicester, 1938* (London, 1938).

the case of the political clubs, although all three parties were represented, the list was again dominated by Conservative bodies, especially Constitutional Clubs, continuing the pre-war strand of suburban life based around Conservative politics. With regard to the Freemasons, the entries in both directories are misleading as single entry is given for all lodges and orders. These, in fact, were years of expansion, with the number of Masonic lodges in the town growing from eight to 28.⁸⁸

The most marked change in the 1920 directory listings from those in the 1914 directory was a drop in the medical and benevolent entries by about a third. Some associations were omitted temporarily. These included the Charity Organisation Society and the Discharged Prisoners' Society, both of which later reappeared and were still listed in 1938. On the other hand, some longstanding local institutions, redolent of an earlier age, such as the refuges for 'fallen women' disappeared permanently from the lists.

National influence, however, had by no means swamped the local groups and institutions. Although the number of entries representing purely local institutions and groups had decreased, they still comprised more than 50 per cent of the total listed and some of those that remained were to be extremely high profile in interwar period and the focus of a great deal of public-spirited activity. Some examples were the Leicester Summer Camp for Poor Boys and Girls, the Leicester Guild of the Crippled and the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind. These were also identified with particular Leicester individuals and their families which gave the cause a personal dimension and accentuated the local quality of the association. The Leicester Summer Camp for Poor Boys and Girls was associated with the Rolleston and Faire families and the Leicester Guild of the Crippled was associated with the Groves, all of them Leicester manufacturers. The names Rolleston and Groves still appeared as office holders in 1938. Associations of this type not only provided businessmen but also the wider population with an opportunity to demonstrate civic spirit, but also the wider population. Records of the Wycliffe Society for the Blind in the early 1920s

⁸⁸ See Chapter Five for case study of the Leicester Masonic lodges.

show that there were many less 'grand' voluntary helpers, for example women who lived locally in the socially mixed area of Highfields near the Wycliffe Society building. Financial contributions also came from a wide variety of groups including churches, chapels, sports clubs, adult schools, co-ops, workplaces and pubs.⁸⁹

The uniformed youth movements in the post war period also provided new opportunities both for recruits and leaders to demonstrate public-spiritedness. The early 1920s, was to see significant growth in the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guide movement and while many troops and companies were attached to churches, the movement was non-denominational and promoted civic and patriotic values. The Scouts and Guides were organised at national and county level, however, there was also a specific town/district identity and the *Leicester Mail Yearbook, 1925* records that there were over a thousand Scouts in Leicester as well as 25 Guide companies. The Leicester and District Boy Scouts Association is listed in the 1920 directory and both Scouts and Guides are listed in the 1938 directories but with little detail. However, the minutes of the Scouts AGM in 1919 show that local shoe manufacturers were involved, with both Percy Gee of Stead and Simpson and Jonathan North of Freeman Hardy and Willis elected as officials.⁹⁰ The intention to promote the Leicester Scouts as a civic identity was clear, the meeting was held in the Council Chamber and the Mayor who was chairman, expressed his view that scouting would be 'good for the town' and a decision was made to start a fund in aid of a new Scout Headquarters.⁹¹

Sports activity also provided opportunities to promote a civic identity. The directory entries for 1920 suggest that, unsurprisingly, sports teams these had been disrupted by the war. It difficult to assess the extent of this, because of the lack of detail in the 1920 directory with regard to membership levels or the number of clubs affiliated to the various associations. The listings for certain sports such as bowling, were

⁸⁹ ROLLR, DE 2730/106/1-13, *Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind Annual Reports*, 1921-2 and 1923-4.

⁹⁰ ROLLR, DE 4283/23/1. Minutes of AGM of the Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1919.

⁹¹ See Chapter Six for a more detailed account of Scout and Guide activity in Leicester in the interwar years.

relatively unchanged to those in 1914. However, the fact that there were no entries at all for rugby, for example, suggests clubs were experiencing difficulties. By the mid 1920s, however, sports associations were thriving again. *The Leicester Mail Yearbook, 1925* lists 65 sports related entries, many of which were associations and leagues representing multiple numbers of clubs. In football alone, there were seven leagues listed, one for town of Leicester alone, three for 'Leicester and District' and four leagues using the county name but based in Leicester at suburban addresses.⁹²

The 1938 directory had only twenty entries for sports, but this should not be taken as a sign of decline because, for very popular sports such as swimming and football, there continued to be single entries for multiple clubs, without any accompanying detail to show the extent of interest. The list however, was informative in that it reflected interest in some new sports. Bowling remained popular but there were also new lawn tennis clubs and added to the list were squash, bridge and golf. Although the directory lacked detail, the newspapers of the 1930s showed that sports and games leagues of all types were flourishing and linked groups from all over the city. The local press helped make these competitions public events by extensive coverage of final competitions and by photographs of trophy presentations. For example, on just one day in May 1939, the *Leicester Evening Mail* reported, among other events, the St John's Ambulance League cricket final played on Victoria Park, the presentation of the Working Men's Club Cup for billiards and the victory of the Wyvern Arms Darts team over the Windsor Castle team.⁹³ The Town Council also made certain presentations into civic occasions-in this same month, in 1939, the Mayor awarded, the prizes at the Leicester City Football League presentation and was photographed by the *Leicester Evening Mail* sitting at a table loaded with trophies.⁹⁴

The trade and commercial associations formed the largest category 1920 but by 1938 the number of had been boosted again partly because the number of trade unions had also increased from twelve in 1920 to twenty in 1938. The unions, as well as the

⁹² *The Leicester Mail Yearbook, 1925* (Leicester, 1925), 181-94.

⁹³ *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 11 May 1939.

⁹⁴ *LEM*, 13 May 1939. See Chapter Five for an account of the mayoral annual schedule.

employers associations, were mixed in terms of local and national affiliation. In the case of the unions, national influence and class identity, still existed side by side with a sense of the local. While most of the unions listed were branches of a national union, the associations representing the hosiery industry, the Leicester and Leicestershire Hosiery Union and the Leicester and Leicestershire Hosiery Trimmers Trade Union, retained specifically local names and character. Moreover, in the footwear industry, as had been the case in the late nineteenth century, the Leicester and Leicestershire branches of NUBSO, also retained a strong local identity. It was only, in fact, in 1939 that power was fully centralised in the union and this eventually had to be passed in the face of significant resentment and opposition from the Leicester branches.⁹⁵ The employers associations in the hosiery and footwear industries were part of national federations but the 1938 directory shows that they were also connected to the hinterland by a network of local groups. For example, in the footwear industry there was a range of associations that linked manufacturers at a town, town and district, town and county, as well as at regional level.

The trade and commercial entries had also risen in number because the number of specialist trade associations had increased, making business life still more compartmentalised. In the 1930s, Leicester was promoted as a city of many trades and industries and along with the trades came the trade associations, such as the Leicester and District Master Bakers Association and the Leicester and District Wholesale Fruit and Potato Merchants Association, fourteen of which were listed alongside the workers unions and the manufacturers' associations of the hosiery and footwear industry. However, while the continuing growth of the town and the compartmentalisation of the various trades may have made the commercial culture of Leicester less intimate, the compact city centre still helped preserve this to a certain extent. Granby St, in the city centre, continued to be a popular location for manufacturers and other trades associations, with eight different groups based there. Number three, Granby St, in particular, now housed the Chamber of Commerce as well as the British Federation of Elastic Web Manufacturers, Leicester and District

⁹⁵ Fox, *A History of the National Union*, 493-4 and 593-7.

Timber Trades Association, a hosiery manufacturers group and the National Association of Belt, Brace and Suspender Manufacturers. The secretary for all these, including the Chamber of Commerce, was a local freemason, Harry Purt. Friar Lane was also still a favoured location and housed at least six different associations, three of which also shared a building and a secretary. With common buildings as well as common secretaries, there were obvious opportunities for communication between groups.

Other aspects of the associational life of the 1880s and even 1870 were also recognisable. The Infirmary was still dependent on voluntary contributions and still run by the town and county in partnership, if more democratically. As in 1914, other associations that had been prominent in the 1870s, the Freemasons, the 'Lit and Phil' and the Leicestershire Archaeological Society maintained their memberships. In 1937, for example, the 'Lit and Phil' still had approximately 300 members. Many of these had joined in the 1920s and 1930s but, there was also some personal continuity with the past as there were still eight members who had become subscribers in the Victorian period, the most longstanding of whom, had joined in 1874. The membership list of the society also shows that leading Leicester businessmen and their families were still members with the well-known names of Gimson, Gee, Ellis and Oliver, for example, listed alongside clergymen and leading professionals. Moreover, the Society, still clearly saw itself as fulfilling civic duties and one of its priority projects in 1937 was preserving the Jewry Wall, part of Leicester's Roman remains, for the benefit of the city. Moreover, although it was not listed in the 1938 directory, the Leicester Philharmonic Society had also survived. In the 1920s, music in Leicester had been boosted when Sir Malcolm Sargent formed the Leicester Symphony Orchestra in 1922, and the Philharmonic Society had gained prestige from association with orchestra. The late 1930s saw a short lull before the Society was launched into another successful period in 1941 with Leslie Woodgate as the conductor.⁹⁶ At the level of the wider population, however, voluntary musical and educational activities had also gradually developed a much higher level of

⁹⁶ *Leicester Philharmonic Society, 1886-1946* (1946), 5-6, diamond jubilee booklet.

participation since the end of the nineteenth century even if not to the same level as sport. The Adult School Union for example in 1925 had 4000 members⁹⁷ and from 1919 onwards saw the annual Leicester competitive musical festivals took place in which amateur musicians and choirs from all over the city took part.⁹⁸

An analysis of Leicester's associational life between 1870 and 1938, based mainly on town directories of the period, shows that voluntary associations over the decades drew in growing numbers of townspeople, encouraging them to participate actively on the urban stage rather than leaving them as spectators of the Town Council and a small number of elite societies. The 1870 directory represented an associational life that resonated with Garrard's description of the provincial town as a small 'highly visible' arena for those with social and political ambitions to perform on.⁹⁹ The main players were the leading businessmen of the town, who were often town councillors as well. They participated in a close-knit business culture during the work day but also met each other in other associational contexts such as the 'Lit and Phil', the Freemasons or at meetings of the Infirmary where working in partnership with county dignitaries could at times be challenging. Improvements in Leicester's built environment in the 1870s and 1880s were accompanied by an 'urban pride and a widening set of cultural initiatives'.¹⁰⁰ These initiatives included a growth in associational life. New associations were established, for example, leading citizens founded the Kyrle Society to promote a more beautiful environment, and at a less elevated level, suburban floral and horticultural societies were established, and new sports clubs, from a variety of origins, used the new civic parks for matches. A further initiative was the production of a town directory, which promoted a more confident and inclusive identity by describing the recent achievements of the town and by listing working class associations such as the Friendly Societies in addition to groups run by the urban elites.

⁹⁷ *Leicester Evening Mail Yearbook, 1925* (Leicester, 1925), 31.

⁹⁸ *LM*, 12 Oct. 1919.

⁹⁹ Garrard, *Leadership and Power*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Morris and Rodger, 'An introduction to British urban history', 6.

Between the 1890s and 1914 the new initiatives, in particular sport, continued to thrive and clubs were organised into leagues which linked the different areas of town and helped maintain a unified identity. However, from the 1890s national influences impinged more on local associational life. The growth of the Labour movement resulted in increased levels of union activity and local manufacturers became involved in national federations, and this together with difficulties in the shoe industry resulted in industrial conflict in the 1990s. National influence was also evident in the increased numbers of branch societies, for example the NSPCC and the National Life Boat Society which established themselves in Leicester at this time, although in the Edwardian period, these were complemented by new local benevolent associations.

The immediate post war period saw no sharp break in the continuity of associational life, moreover, this was a period in which townspeople seemed particularly willing to show civic spirit by, for example, supporting local benevolent associations and local Guide and Scout troops and, in 1932, by supporting the Leicester Pageant. The leading businessmen of Leicester and their families still offered leadership in charitable work, although a much wider group of the population also volunteered help and contributed money to the range of good causes available. In 1938, some of the leading associations of the Victorian period, for example the 'Lit and Phil' and the Freemasons were still thriving.¹⁰¹ However, the generally increased level of participation by townspeople in associational life meant that they were now less at the centre of the stage

¹⁰¹ See more detailed discussion in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four.

The annual calendar of associational life in the 1870s and early 1880s: voluntary associations and social cohesion.

Civic and associational life in Leicester in the 1870s and early 1880s was depicted in the local press as an annual and repetitive calendar of public and privately organised meetings and events. This representation of the Leicester year, when read now, conveys a sense of shared local identity and a way of life, shaped by the rhythms of the year. As well as conveying that impression of unity, however, the newspaper coverage is also a powerful reminder that in Leicester, as in other provincial towns, there were alternative identities to the local identity, including those based on class, gender, religious and political allegiance. These were identities that had the potential both to bring town residents together in groups and to divide them from others. However, differences did not necessarily mean opposition, and there were often marked similarities as well as differences in the way groups conducted themselves. Moreover, links between groups, though sometimes tenuous, suggest that associations were not merely functioning in isolation but that there was a level of social cohesion which made Leicester more than an ‘imagined community’¹ created by the press.

This chapter is in three sections. The first section, using the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury (LCLM)* as the main primary source, outlines and comments on the annual calendar of events that the newspaper represented to its readers as Leicester life. The second section, again using reports from the *LCLM*, is a discussion of the form of some of the most common types of meeting that were

¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Leighton Buzzard, 1991).

shared across a range of associations. Finally the third section looks beyond the form of the yearly calendar and meetings and, taking a group of educational associations as an example, analyses what, in addition to form and procedure, held memberships together, and discusses ties groups had with each other and the civic authorities. The primary sources used here are a combination of newspaper reports from the *LCLM*, archival records of the associations including accounts and histories written by members of the associations discussed.

1. An annual calendar

In January 1875 the *LCLM* published for the first time a ‘local chronology’ of the events of the preceding year. This feature then became a regular item for the next ten years providing, annually, a retrospective diary of the year which had passed. A comparison of the first two chronologies 1874 and 1875 shows disparities of detail but at the heart of both is an account of a repetitive annual pattern of events.² Thus each chronology, as well as providing a diary for the past year, was also a guide for the year to come and was in effect a local calendar. Provincial towns of the period used a variety of cultural expressions to assert urban pride and civic identity.³ With regard to Leicester, two instances of this have already been discussed. The opening of Abbey Park in 1882, where the civic authorities paraded and town residents amassed to celebrate local achievement was one representation of the civic ideal.⁴ A further example was the town directory, which characterised Leicester as a geopolitical unit and detailed its history and achievements, its civic authorities, businesses and widening range of voluntary associations as one united package.⁵ In addition to these, the local newspaper was a third and arguably the most powerful channel for representing a strong civic identity as well as unity with the hinterland. The regular coverage of civic and both middle class and working class meetings on the same pages made it a powerful instrument for creating an impression of social

² The chronology for 1874 as published in the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* (*LCLM*), 7 Jan. 1875 and the chronology for 1875 on 8 Jan. 1876.

³ R.J. Morris and R. Rodger, ‘An introduction to British urban history, 1820-1914’ in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City: a Reader in British Urban History 1820-1914* (London, 1993), 6.

⁴ See Chapter Two.

⁵ See Chapter Three.

solidarity. At the same time, the ongoing nature of newspaper reporting captured the seasonal rhythms of the year, civic events such as the municipal elections, and the privately organised rituals of associational life from annual meetings and dinners to summer outings. This regular cycle gave greater meaning to the occasional spectacular civic ritual such as the royal visit of 1882, for it suggested that such an event was not purely a management exercise on the part of the Town Council but did, in fact, reflect a collective way of life.

The ordering of time in the form of a calendar and the events linked to the calendar can be used to establish, affirm or alter collective schedules and a range of studies have explored the role of calendars especially in connection with the medieval and early modern periods.⁶ However, in the modern context, a strand of scholarship, which explores the role of voluntary associations in eighteenth and nineteenth century British towns, has also highlighted how a calendar of activities helped to shape the urban year. In his discussion of eighteenth century clubs and societies, Clark draws attention to calendrical rhythms of activity related to these bodies and, moving into the first half of the nineteenth century, Morris examines public life in one particular year in Leeds, 1829 and analyses the significance of meetings that were reported in the local newspaper during that year.⁷ Here the focus is on the 'public sphere' and the effectiveness of urban associational life, with its 'culture' of meetings, in the 'organisation of order' in towns; an order established in the face of potential conflict between interest groups. One aspect traced is the seasonality of meetings. The rhythms of the 'meeting' year are analysed with the months showing clusters of different types of meeting depending on the concerns of the group as well as the social status of participants.

⁶ For example, C. Pythian Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry' in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (London, 1972), 238-64; D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells* (Stroud, 2004), 1-50 and J. Le Goff, in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980), 29-42. A useful overview is provided in E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), 55-80.

⁷ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1500-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), 238-40; R.J. Morris, 'A year in the public life of the British bourgeoisie' in R. Colls and R. Rodger (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800-2000* (Aldershot, 2004), 121-43.

A recurring theme in the study of calendars and the localities to which they relate to is that where a variety of groups with different interests co-exist, there will also be a range of different calendars in operation. A few obvious examples of separate time schedules in late Victorian Leicester were those followed by local government, churches and chapels, the courts and voluntary associations. However, despite this variety, what is particularly apparent in the annual cycle outlined in the 'local chronologies' is the way in which the calendars of the different bodies either fell into similar patterns, or else interleaved in a similar manner to produce an overarching common calendar. The detail of the Leicester chronologies for 1874 and 1875 gives an opportunity to trace and analyse these patterns.⁸

Outline of the annual cycle

The activities of the Town Council formed a backbone to the annual cycle depicted in the two chronologies, with a regular beat of council meetings recorded, for the most part, once a month. Meetings of other statutory groups: the Board of Guardians, the School Board and the Highway Board were also included on a monthly basis. The official new year for the civic authorities began in the autumn and nominations for the municipal elections started in early October with meetings in the various wards of the town. The municipal elections then took place in the first week of November, followed by the installation of the new mayor in the second week of the month.

Besides the meetings of the civic authorities, a range of other meetings were prominent in the chronologies. A few of these were events organised by commercial organisations, but more numerous were the meetings organised by voluntary associations. Some of these were formal business occasions, for example, annual meetings while others were social events such as soirees, dinners, tea parties and outings. Lecture meetings were also important components, as were concerts, floral and horticultural shows and chapel and church bazaars.

⁸ All references to activities in the Leicester urban cycle in the following pages 3-7 are based on information given in the local chronology for 1874 published in the *LCLM*, 7 Jan. 1875 and the local chronology for 1875 published in *LCLM*, 8 Jan. 1876, except where indicated.

Just as the municipal new year began in the autumn, so did a general associational year for the wider local society. An annual meeting, when new officials were elected and accounts scrutinised, marked the individual New Year for many groups. Different associations held their annual meetings in different months throughout the annual cycle. In July and August, however, this tailed off making these all but dead months for this type of meeting. A new cycle was then launched again in September with several high profile meetings and the annual round began again. One important September meeting recorded in both chronologies, was the annual meeting of the Leicester School of Art, held a few weeks before the School opened in October. This would have been a good networking opportunity with which to start the year. The meeting was chaired by the Mayor who was, *ex officio*, a member of the governing committee. The rest of the committee was composed of prominent local clergymen and leading members of the Chamber of Commerce and the Trade Protection Society, many of whom doubled as councillors and aldermen. The School of Art was a shared town project involving representatives from church, council and business and such occasions as this annual meeting made the boundaries between groups permeable creating opportunities for building a collective identity.⁹

After the opening of the yearly cycle in September, the timing of other annual meetings, as recorded in the chronologies, fell into a pattern showing that in particular months there were clusters of meetings held by groups with similar interests. There was, for example, a concentration of annual meetings related to alcohol sales in the autumn months. This encompassed both sides of the temperance debate with the annual meetings of the Temperance Society and the Licensed Victuallers' Association in September.¹⁰ A Band of Hope annual festival in October was then closely followed by the annual meeting of the Leicestershire Beerhouse Keepers Association in early November. Annual meetings of groups with an educational theme also featured in the autumn months. In addition to the School of Art, the Leicestershire

⁹ *The Leicestershire Trade Protection Society: Commercial and General Directory and Red Book of Leicester and Suburbs, 1975* (Leicester, 1875). A description of the School of Art and the names of the governors, showing the mix of businessmen, councillors and clergy is shown here.

¹⁰ September may well have been chosen to coincide with the court calendar as the 1875 chronology shows that the Brewster Sessions were held in this month.

Architectural and Archaeological Society held their meeting in September and the combination of religion and education was highlighted in November with the annual meetings of the Sunday School Union and the Leicestershire Archdiaconal Board of Education.

The greatest numbers of annual meetings, recorded in the chronologies, were held between January and June. This busy period began early in the New Year with an emphasis on finance, suggesting that banks balanced their books in December, making the start of the year an appropriate time for annual meetings. The annual meeting of the Leicester Savings Bank was in January and the Pares Leicestershire Banking Company and the Leicestershire Banking Company followed in February. Annual meetings of some Building Societies and a Friendly Society were recorded at this time too, suggesting that these months were widely regarded as a meeting season for financial bodies. April was also a busy month for annual meetings with some, though fewer, in March and May, with the end of the tax year a likely reason for popularity of April meetings. This cluster of spring activity was the season for leading philanthropic and medical bodies including the Leicester Infirmary, the Infant Orphan Asylum, the Home for Penitent Females and the Institution for the Blind. The end of the six month period, June, had a religious theme, featuring the annual meetings of a number of local branches of church associations: for example, the Church Missionary, Church Extension and Church Building Societies. Nonconformist gatherings were also part of this cluster, with the Leicester and Rutland Congregational Union and the Association of Baptist Churches holding annual meetings in district and county locations at this time.

In his discussion of the annual cycle of meetings in Leeds in 1829, Morris observes that a peak of annual general meetings relating to elite societies took place in January, while a peak of benefit society and radical meetings took place in July.¹¹ In the mid 1870s in Leicester the compilers of the local chronologies depicted a different set of meeting rhythms, less linked to social status and more connected to broad, general

¹¹ Morris, 'A year in the public life of the British bourgeoisie', 126.

aspects of town life such as: education, health, temperance, finance, land and building. These aspects corresponded generally to the categories which compilers of the town directory were beginning to use, from the mid-1870s onwards, to organise lists of local voluntary associations and institutions.¹² Therefore, in the same way that Friendly Societies were starting to be listed in the directory alongside more elite financial organisations, so a general financial season occurred at the beginning of the year during which it was as appropriate for a Friendly Society to hold their meeting as a bank.

The round of annual business meetings was, of course, only one part of the yearly cycle. In mid-1870s Leicester, shortly after the autumn phase of annual meetings began, a social and cultural season got underway. This resembled the autumn 'season' that Morris describes in Leeds in 1829, characterised by lectures and concerts.¹³ The chronologies recorded what the compilers perceived as the most important events. The music strand of the season was represented as a series of concerts staged by the Leicester Musical Society between November and March, although, outside this series, there were a few other concerts recorded, especially around Christmas when churches and schools produced events.

It was lecture meetings, however, more than any other type of gathering that dominated the autumn months in the chronologies. October to March were 'the lecture months with the heaviest concentration of events between November and February. The backbone of this season was the series of lectures run by the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' at the Town Museum. Between November and February, a second series of fortnightly lectures also took place at the Museum. These talks were free and open to the general public and were organised by the Town Council although 'Lit and Phil' members were consistently involved. Apart from these regular events, there

¹² See discussion in Chapter Three.

¹³ Morris, 'A year in the life of the British bourgeoisie', 126.

were a number of independent lectures given at a variety of venues by visitors to the town.¹⁴

In Leeds in 1829, autumn lectures started at both the Leeds Philosophy and Literature Society and the Mechanics Institute.¹⁵ While the social status of those who attended these lectures would obviously have been different, the similar timing of the lecture schedules suggests that there was a general sense of collective activity. In Leicester, in the mid-1870s, moreover, this was still more marked by the choice to stage both the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' lectures and free public lectures on alternate weeks in the same civic venue. However, although there was a sense of collective activity there was also a clear sense of hierarchy. The 'Lit and Phil' lectures were given by both local speakers and visiting lecturers, some of whom were professional academics. On the other hand, the free lectures, were almost exclusively given by members of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil'. As well as linking the two sets of events, this underlined the elevated status of the 'Lit and Phil' lectures in comparison to the free ones. This superior status was also emphasised by the more sophisticated content¹⁶ of the 'Lit and Phil' lectures while a more highbrow tone was enhanced by including a far greater number of literary topics.¹⁷ Hierarchical distinctions apart, the topics chosen were as a rule non-contentious. Clearly the 'Lit and Phil' rule which banned discussion of religious and political topics was being applied to both series of lectures, playing down obvious sources of divisiveness and permitting lecture attenders to be linked by a shared desire for self improvement and by their shared identity as Leicester citizens meeting in a prominent civic venue¹⁸

¹⁴ F.B. Lott, *The Centenary Book of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society* (Leicester, 1935), 100. The president of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' for 1868-9 observed in his inaugural speech, recorded here, that free lectures organised by the Town Council had been established for 'some years'.

¹⁵ Morris, 'A year in the life of the British bourgeoisie', 126.

¹⁶ In his inaugural speech for 1868-9, the president of the 'Lit and Phil' compared the lectures of the 'Lit and Phil' with the free lectures saying 'their object is the diffusion of popular information, ours the discipline of scientific thought', see Lott, *Centenary Book*, 100.

¹⁷ This was particularly evident in 1875, when 50 per cent of the 'Lit and Phil' lectures were literary including such titles as: 'Aristophanes', 'King Lear' and 'Thomas Carlyle', while the free lectures offered no literary subjects at all, with the time given over instead to more practical topics such as 'Magnetism' and 'The weather instruments at the museum'.

¹⁸ This was a formal rule. See Lott, *The Centenary Book*, 255-6.

After the autumn months, Christmas brought town residents of all denominations together in a shared sense of celebration. One feature of the season was an annual concert given at the workhouse. In the 1870s this was a privately organised affair given by well-known local residents. However, the public nature of the venue and the publicity given in the newspaper gave it a civic as well as a charitable aspect and the event can be seen as a forerunner of mayoral Christmas visits to the workhouse in later decades. Although not recorded in the chronologies, press reports show that the seasonal goodwill continued in the post-Christmas period in a range of privately organised philanthropic events. January 1871 was typical with, for example, the customary treat at All Saints Open Mission Room where 60 old men sat down to roast beef and plum pudding,¹⁹ an annual dinner at Carley Street Ragged School for 200 poor children, and an invitation by the lessee of the Theatre Royal to the workhouse children to see the Christmas pantomime free and have buns and milk.²⁰

Christmas was also a dividing line between two phases of the cultural and social season, from January to Easter, although lectures and concerts continued to be important, there was also an increase in other types of social gathering. January and February were months in which prestigious balls took place. Both the Leicester Infirmary Ball and the Licensed Victuallers' Ball were fixed occasions in January and the Leicestershire Rifle Volunteers' Ball was held in February. January to March was also a season for annual dinners, this included official town bodies such as the Borough Police and Fire Brigade, professional trade associations such as the Chemist Assistants and Apprentices Association and the Leicester and Leicestershire General Building Trades Society and a range of interest groups from the Leicester Debating Society to Leicestershire Angling Preservation Society. This was also a popular period for Nonconformist churches and chapels to hold tea meetings for their congregations. Easter brought an end to this season with the Easter weekend and bank holiday marked by special festivities including special services, entertainments and excursions. This was a time for bazaars, as was the Whitsun holiday, Harvest and

¹⁹ *LCLM*, 7 Jan. 1871.

²⁰ Both recorded in *LCLM*, 21 Jan. 1871.

Advent. A number of these were reported in 1875 and 1876 chronologies, with the majority organised by Nonconformist chapels, though there were also Anglican and Catholic events.

With Easter over, a new season of outdoor events began: fairs, sports and military reviews and excursions. In May, in the period between Easter and Whitsun, cattle, cheese and pleasure fairs took place. The cricket season also began after Easter and, from April through to August, a number of matches, featuring a Leicestershire side against visiting teams, were recorded in the chronologies. The series of military activities began after Easter as well, starting with a review of the Yeomanry in April and followed by further reviews of the Militia in June and the Rifle Volunteers in August. Finally, there were the annual excursions of certain high profile local societies. Examples of those reported were the outings of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' and the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society.

A season of horticultural and flower shows, which began in July and continued to the end of August, was also an important feature of the summer. The Leicester and Leicestershire Horticultural Show opened in the first week of July and after this a range of similar events took place in both town and county. In the town of Leicester, the South and East Leicester flower shows were organised by allotment societies, while on a smaller scale the All Saints Open Mission room organised a window plant show. The Leicestershire towns of Loughborough, Hinckley and Melton had their own shows, as did all individual villages. Towards the end of August the emphasis began to move from flower to agricultural shows. Leicester Agricultural Society held their show in Leicester towards the end of August and in the first weeks of September there were shows at other county centres.

The Leicester annual cycle of the 1870s, outlined in this section shows how a number of calendars-religious, traditional and national-interleaved with Leicester civic and associational programmes to form the local calendar. Weather conditions, which had dictated the traditional calendar, continued to have an important effect by dividing the

cycle into an autumn and winter season which offered a greater range of indoor activities and a spring and summer season which offered a wider variety of outdoor activities. The Christian calendar also continued to be influential with religious holidays, in particular Easter, marking seasonal boundaries and also bringing together local people in shared celebration. This was reinforced, and a national dimension added, by new legislation which established bank holidays at the Christian holiday times of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun. A further instance of national influence was the financial year, with the dates of the tax year apparently affecting the timing of some annual meetings. What gave the Leicester calendar its markedly local character, however, were the details of civic and associational meetings, celebrations and other events which filled out the framework of the calendar, were repeated regularly with each annual cycle and which were relayed to readers of the local newspaper.

A common meeting language

While the seasonal pattern of annual events provided the architecture for a shared Leicester calendar, the individual meetings themselves were also patterned. Morris argues that, in the early nineteenth century, the use of similar meeting procedures in voluntary associations created a common ‘meeting language’ and helped create and sustain social cohesion among different sections of the middle classes. One type of meeting, which developed a standardised format across the board, was the annual business meeting.²¹ As already illustrated, annual meetings were an equally important part of the Leicester annual cycle in the 1870s, receiving regular detailed coverage in the press and comprising a substantial section of the annual chronology published by the *LCLM*. When the annual meetings of various associations and institutions, with their similar details, were reported all together in the Leicester

²¹ R.J. Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’, in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 414; R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), 174-77, illustrates how the similarities of procedures developed by the different missionary societies gave some point of contact for these associations when groups were so divided they could not even work together on ad hoc initiatives.

newspapers, this reinforced the impression of the shared local and civic identity that was already created by the annual calendar.

The procedure followed at these meetings was the same format that had been developed in the first half of the century, the most important part being the annual report, including the all-important accounts and the election of officials. These were intertwined with affirmations of group objectives from leading members and votes of thanks. Morris has characterised these meetings as rituals and the symbolism, as well as the repetitive choreographed nature of proceedings, fits with this characterisation.²² The 'Lit and Phil' annual meeting of 1871 was typical.²³ The event, which took place in the Town Museum, was recorded extensively in four full columns of small print in the newspaper. It was a report which showed that the various stages, from reports to elections, were worked through as efficiently as a well rehearsed piece of theatre. The procedures were a symbolic enactment of democratic values: the reports reflected accountability and transparency while the election of officials and contributions made by speakers reflected collective participation and decision making. That this was a symbolic rather than a functional enactment of practical democracy was apparent for ironically the lack of spontaneity in the meeting did not encourage genuine democratic exchange of opinion. Practically the only people who verbally contributed were committee members and officials and on the one occasion when an ordinary member tried to speak he was called to order for irrelevance. This was not really an occasion for proffering new points of view; it was more a set ceremony through which the society affirmed with its membership and the local newspaper-reading public a set of values and ideas of what constituted good practice. The Leicester 'Lit and Phil' gave a polished performance of this type every year, as did the other voluntary associations and institutions of all types including, for example: the Philharmonic Society, the Working Men's College, the Leicester Infirmary the Chamber of Commerce and the Leicestershire Trade Protection Society.

²² Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, 184-89.

²³ *LCLM*, 24 Jun. 1871.

The Leicester newspapers of the 1870s also illustrate how the meeting procedures established by middle class associations had been taken up by working class groups, with Friendly Societies enacting more or less the same formula at their annual meetings. The 1871 annual meeting of the Leicester branch of the Archdeacon Lane Friendly Society was an example of this. All the same ingredients were there: the general and financial reports, the election of officers and the votes of thanks. The venue, a neighbourhood schoolroom, was far more humble, and the coverage was only allocated a few inches of newsprint, however the similarities were unmistakable. It was apparent that participation in civil society had led working class groups to develop skills and attitudes compatible with liberal democracy,²⁴ and by highlighting this, the press represented a level of cohesion, not only horizontally within the middle classes, but also vertically between the local middle and working classes. The hierarchy of status was clear but the procedural similarities and the inclusion in the local paper implied to readers that there was a shared Leicester identity.

Newspaper reports also showed that, as well as the annual business meetings, the more festive annual dinners, celebrated by many associations from philanthropic to business groups, followed a standard format. In this case, the ritual was the shared meal followed by a series of toasts and speeches which were, in turn, followed by music, often provided by a local glee club or band. Reports of Friendly Society dinners showed that, with some variation, these also followed the same format, illustrating again that meeting styles could be shared across the class barriers. In Spring 1871, for example, both the influential Leicestershire Trade Protection Society and the Leicester lodge of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows held a dinner for their members that followed exactly this formulaic procedure.²⁵ In both cases, the shared meal offered an opportunity for diners to celebrate a collective sense of belonging to their association. At the same time the toasts provided the occasion to declare loyalty

²⁴ J. Garrard, *Democratisation in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (Basingstoke, 2001), 183-216. Garrard makes this point and stresses that this incorporation of middle class procedures was well developed before working men were first included in the franchise in 1867. See also J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-80* (Manchester, 1983), 133-147.

²⁵ Leicester Trade Protection Society Meeting, *LCLM*, 4 Mar. 1871. Manchester Unity of Oddfellows' dinner, *LCLM*, 4 Mar. 1871.

owed to other overlapping identities or attachments. The toasts offered at the Leicester Trade Protection Society specifically honoured the nation and monarch, the county and the town. In the case of the Oddfellows' dinner, the nation and monarch were toasted but the local toasts were narrower and focused on the officers and achievements of the Oddfellows' branch itself.²⁶ By the early 1880s, however, toasts 'to the town and trade of Leicester', were reported at Friendly Society dinners too, illustrating that this was now a common way at both middle and working class occasions of acknowledging a shared civic identity. This perceived sense of shared civic identity was also emphasised on the rare occasions when individuals from a very mixed class background came together to celebrate the ritual of an annual dinner. Examples of this were the dinners of the town corps of the Rifle Volunteers, which also received substantial press coverage in the early 1880s. Typical was the dinner of the Fourth Corps on in April 1879.²⁷ At this officers and men went through a list of toasts together which included toasts to the town and the civic authorities. On this occasion, the attendance of the Mayor, as an honoured guest, also underlined the civic loyalty that the diners expressed.

The development and widespread adoption of formulaic meeting styles such as the annual meeting and the annual dinner, suggesting certain shared values and assumptions, downplayed the differences between groups and highlighted the similarities. For those town residents who read the repetitive newspaper reports of meetings and dinners week in and week out throughout the winter and autumn season, this would have been apparent. Neither was it, of course, just the annual business meetings and dinners that were standardised to a predictable pattern, the same applied to other types of event from church and chapel tea meetings to flower shows, bazaars and summer outings. As in the case of the annual meetings and dinners, the grandeur of these events depended on context. For example, the 'Lit and Phil' excursion to nearby Swithland when party members were reported to have 'sat on the summit of

²⁶ At the St Andrew's Lodge dinner of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, reported in the *LCLM*, 6 May 1871, the members showed their attachment to the town of Leicester in a different way. After the dinner and toasts they gathered in a procession with their band and marched to the market place in the centre of town symbolically marking out the territory.

²⁷ See *Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 2 Apr. 1879.

the lofty crag enjoying the beauty of the scene and a little poetic and philosophical chat'²⁸ was considerably more pretentious in character than humbler equivalents such as 'All Saints Discussion Group' annual walk to Swithland.²⁹ However, in both cases the outline of the day was, in fact, very similar with both parties going to the same venue, listening to a lecture on their surroundings, enjoying refreshments together and coming home. The tone and social status were different but the two occasions belonged to the same local 'way of life'.

This meeting culture therefore generally enabled the local newspapers to represent Leicester society as reasonably harmonious and cohesive, though this was less easy to do in the face of overt conflict. This was the case with the Licensed Victuallers' Association and the Leicester Temperance Society who were in bitter disagreement in the 1870s, when temperance campaigning had led to legislation restricting the drinks trade. In this situation, the choice of meeting styles frequently served to highlight differences rather than similarities. For example, the Licensed Victuallers' Association held an annual dinner while the Leicester Temperance Society held an annual tea; and while the Licensed Victuallers 'drank their way enthusiastically through a long series of toasts and spoke about English liberties, the Temperance Society sipped tea while listening to speeches on self denial'.³⁰ The two groups had almost nothing in common. However, even in this situation some similarities could be found. For example, both groups held annual business meetings that followed the usual standard format, and both groups held an annual summer picnic, which in 1875 was even at the same picnic venue. The coverage of these similar activities in the newspaper, seemed to diminish the gap between the two camps, making them seem more like quarrelsome members of the same family than arch enemies.

²⁸ During the 1870s and 1880s, the 'Lit and Phil' frequently went to Swithland for their annual excursion. This quote comes from *LCLM*, 21 Jun. 1884.

²⁹ The All Saints Discussion Group organised an annual summer walk to Swithland throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. See for example *LCLM*, 5 Aug. 1871.

³⁰ See for example Leicester Temperance Society annual New Year's tea meeting *LCLM*, 10 Jan. 1874.

Associational life: bonding and bridging

The argument so far has been that local newspapers of the period represented a Leicester annual calendar composed of civic and associational meetings and that press coverage also foregrounded the common meeting language adopted by voluntary associations. Both these factors helped to highlight and reinforce a way of life that had developed within local civil society. This section takes one strand of this associational life and drills deeper to explore further what was going on in terms of social cohesion. Some issues considered are the various identities which pulled individuals together in groups, but also could set up social barriers between those groups which, in the interests of a cohesive local society needed to be bridged. Some other issues that are considered are approaches to and displays of citizenship and the efforts of leading individuals to build a social network, efforts that were facilitated by associational and institutional frameworks.

The concept of social capital is a useful tool in exploring associational links. In literature dealing with this concept it is argued that a combination of active participation in associations, resulting in interdependence between both individuals and groups, helps sustain the social fabric and encourages a sense of citizenship among those involved. It is these benefits that have been shorthanded by commentators as ‘social capital’.³¹ ‘Bonding’ and ‘bridging’ are further useful concepts used in connection with the notion of social capital. ‘Bonding social capital’ is conceived of as inward-looking, derived from the re-inforcement of exclusive identity in a homogeneous group, whereas ‘bridging social capital’ results from connecting people across the boundaries of social division. Although ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ contrast with each other they are not mutually exclusive in the context of associational life, as a group can be inward-looking in one aspect and outward-looking in another.³² In the context of Leicester associational life, the concepts of ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ are useful instruments for analysing group activities at

³¹ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York, 2000), 1-28.

³² Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 22-3. A further term ‘linking social capital’ has been used to specifically to describe the benefits of vertical links made between classes. See J. Field, *Social Capital* (Abingdon, 2003), 65-7. For the sake of simplicity, however, the term ‘bridging’ here is used to denote connections across class barriers as well as other social divisions.

particular points of time, highlighting on the one hand what common identities and values held successful voluntary associations together, while on the other hand, highlighting instances where connections were made across social divisions and between groups.

In Chapter Three an analysis of the town directories of the 1870s and 1880s demonstrated the close-knit world of Leicester middle class associational life at this time. Members of the business elite, as well as serving as councillors, held overlapping memberships and official positions in leading town associations and institutions of all types, such as the Leicester 'Lit and Phil', the Chamber of Commerce and the Leicester Provident Dispensary. Recent research has also shown that many members of leading Leicester associations, in the later decades of the nineteenth century, came from an elite circle of about fifty business and professional families.³³ This direction of work emphasises the participation of the middle class elite in multiple associations and the content of this chapter section is also concerned with this, but it has a slightly wider focus. The town directories, as has been observed, started in the later decades of the century to classify town life into different broad aspects, for example, land and building, medical and philanthropic and educational etc. This chapter takes one of those categories, education, and looks at a number of groups that successfully organized educational activities for adults in Leicester. In the autumn and winter season of 1871 and throughout the 1870s, a range of contrasting options were open to town residents, who wished to attend a lecture or discussion class and many of these were publicised in the local newspapers. These options included the fortnightly meetings of the 'Lit and Phil', regular Saturday lectures sponsored by the Town Council, discussion classes at the Working Men's College and Institute and All Saints Open Discussion Class run by the Unitarian Domestic Mission and the Secular Society. There was also a women's group called the Leicester Ladies Reading Society, which was not publicised in the newspaper at all. These groups, which are used as examples in this section, all functioned regularly

³³ C. Wessel, 'Associational life in late Victorian Leicester', University of Leicester M.A. thesis, 2003, 14.

in the 1870s and early 1880s. They were all middle class inspired but, obviously, not all had an elite clientele. Different groups held varying objectives and involved participants from different levels of the class hierarchy. As well as discussing what made these groups bond internally, the section also explores whether they functioned only in their own orbit or whether they linked in an educational network that made class and gender barriers more permeable.

Educational examples have been chosen for a number of reasons. In this period of national, educational innovation and reform, education was at the forefront of public interest and, locally, educational events, from the meetings of the School Board to the lecture programmes of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' were a dominant and well publicised feature of the Leicester annual calendar. Moreover, educational activity provides a rich resource for analysis, taking place, as it did, in different contexts, with social class and gender of participants affecting the form of events. Associations concerned with the education of adults, particularly working class adults, are also of especial interest because education and hopes for greater social cohesion were linked. With regard to this, Rodrick has recently illustrated the importance of adult educational activity in mid to late Victorian Birmingham, arguing that the nineteenth century ideal of self-improvement was powerful enough to unite men and women across class lines into a caste defined by their aspiration.³⁴ Rodrick's argument, though convincingly illustrated with regard to Birmingham, where, for local reasons, there was particular emphasis on the educational ideal, is perhaps rather overstated in relation to Leicester.³⁵ Nevertheless organised opportunities for self-improvement were an important part of Leicester associational life and these certainly, at least connected men and women across the class barrier even if they did not always unite them.

³⁴ A.B. Rodrick, *Self Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham* (Aldershot, 2004), 49-132.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Rodrick explains that, in the first half of the century, Birmingham's 'Municipal feudalism' deterred many middle class residents from seeking service with the Corporation and instead time and energy was particularly channelled into cultural improvement. The ideal of education became synonymous with civic progress and led to the founding of Mason College, an Arts and Science college for the working classes, in 1871.

The two largest and most high profile providers from the group of Leicester educational associations chosen for discussion were the 'Lit and Phil' and the 'Working Men's College and Institute. The contrast in the social class of the membership of these two bodies was clear. While the 'Lit and Phil' provided for 'leisure time cultivation of scientific interests by the professional and employing classes' the Working Men's College supplied 'institutional instruction for artisans',³⁶ although the College, encouraged active participation and free expression of ideas in their discussion group. Despite their differences, the two groups also had elements in common, they were both voluntarily run and both had a not dissimilar annual calendar which included the rituals of an annual general meeting and an annual outing in addition to regular lectures on the part of the 'Lit and Phil' and classes on the part of the College. In addition, both bodies were listed in the town directory, and received coverage in the local newspapers, although the 'Lit and Phil' was mentioned more regularly and more extensively, reflecting its more elevated position in the social hierarchy.

These two associations also both had an ethos which overtly sought to bring people together. In the case of the 'Lit and Phil', bridging social divisions among the local middle classes had always been a priority. Morris has demonstrated how, in the first half of the century, active participation in associational life helped various disparate middle class groups to attain a more coherent middle class identity and consolidate social influence in provincial towns.³⁷ In the same way, the founding members of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' who included surgeons, doctors, bankers and local employers, strove to make this type of social capital. In the first presidential address in 1835, Dr George Shaw expressed a twofold objective. First, that the society would lead to the formation of literary and scientific taste in the town and, secondly, that 'Lit and Phil' activities would help to allay the 'strife and bitterness' in Leicester that had arisen from partisan and sectarian difference. By setting a rule that theological and political

³⁶ J.F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living, 1790-1960: a Study in the History of the English Adult Education Movement* (London, 1961), 4. Harrison was not in fact referring to Leicester here but his descriptions also fit with the Leicester context.

³⁷ Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, 161-203.

issues could not be discussed and another, that Society presidents of Conservative and Liberal persuasions would serve in alternate years, the founders created an opportunity for different groups to come together.³⁸ Forty years later, by the 1870s, the bridges built to combat sectarian and party divisions had been sustained with membership including both Anglican and Nonconformist clergymen³⁹ and, as illustrated in Chapter Three, a powerful group of local business men and town councillors. With divisions bridged, members were free to bond around their intellectual interests, middle class status and elite position in town affairs.

In the case of the Leicester Working Men's College, which was run on Christian Socialist principles, promoting social cohesion was as much a *raison d'être* for the project as was the education offered to students.⁴⁰ The College had been founded in 1862 by the Revd David Vaughan, the Anglican vicar of the centrally situated St Martin's Church, and was modelled on F.D. Maurice's London Working Men's College.⁴¹ Both colleges were examples of the increased focus on mutual obligations between the classes and collective responsibility for social welfare that mid century Christian Socialism had introduced.⁴² Vaughan conceived of the new college as a

³⁸ Lott, *Centenary Book*, 1-13.

³⁹ ULL, *Report of the Council of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 1871, 1-7. The list of officers and members of the 'Lit and Phil' for the session 1870-1871, shows that that there were Anglicans, Congregationalists and Baptists both among the officers and membership. The denominations of the clergymen are not given in the reports but have been checked by cross referencing with the list of church and chapel incumbents in *The Leicestershire Trade Protection Society, Street, Alphabetical and Trade Directory of Leicester, 1870* (Leicester, 1870), 186.

⁴⁰ The background information about the Leicester Working Men's College comes from Revd E. Atkins (ed.), *The Vaughan Working Men's College, Leicester 1862-1912: its History and Work for Fifty Years* (Leicester, 1912) and A. J. Allaway, *Vaughan College Leicester 1862-1962* (Leicester and Amsterdam, 1962). The Revd Edward Atkins was a teacher and administrator at the College from its establishment in 1862 and was elected president after Vaughan's death in 1905. His history of the College comprises a number of first person accounts, including his own, of the work of the College. Allaway was also involved with Vaughan College later in the twentieth century, however, his history is the work of a professional historian, not a memoir.

⁴¹ When Maurice died in 1872, Vaughan said at a College committee meeting that if it were not for Maurice's 'noble and inspiring example' the College in Leicester would 'never have come into existence'. See Atkins, *The Vaughan Working Men's College*, 8.

⁴² G. Parsons 'Social control to social gospel: Victorian Christian social attitudes' in G. Parsons (ed.) *Religion in Victorian Britain, vol.2, Controversies* (Manchester 1988), 49. Mid-nineteenth century Christian socialism is generally seen as having a brief but significant peak in the 1840s and 1850s and then enjoying a revival in the 1880s and 1890s. The ethos of Christian socialism at the Leicester Working Man's College under Vaughan's directorship, however, retained its influence, without a break, from the mid-century onwards.

community where students had enrolled as individuals would bond through their desire for self improvement, fraternal cooperation and Christian conviction. According to Edward Atkins, who was associated with the college from its initial meeting, Vaughan's approach was summed up in the motto 'Sirs ye are all brethren'.⁴³ Vaughan employed a number of methods to bind students to the college body and bridge social division. Students, for example, were invited to participate in the college management and by 1863, apart from the positions of chairman, secretary and treasurer, the management committee of eight was entirely composed of working men.⁴⁴ Vaughan also challenged sectarianism by opening the college to all denominations.⁴⁵ In addition, he involved students' families by inviting them to social occasions.

In terms of creating a community, Vaughan's efforts at binding the students to the college were successful enough to persuade former students to return as teachers, organisers and administrators⁴⁶ and, with regard to sectarian division, he successfully established an annual united religious service for the College.⁴⁷ Moreover, his own presence seems to have created an atmosphere of goodwill. In the 1890s, a former student of the college wrote to the local periodical *The Wyvern* expressing his regard for Vaughan saying: 'I had found an educational home, but more than this, I have developed a faith in the goodness of those in the higher walks of life.'⁴⁸ Although the both this and Atkins' history of the college have a somewhat hagiographical tone, the rising membership rolls do prove at least that Vaughan had made the college an attractive place to attend. In the 1870s, membership was extended both up and down the social scale, with classes for young businessmen as well as free Sunday classes

⁴³ Atkins, *The Vaughan Working Men's College*, 121.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 48 and Allaway, *Vaughan College*, 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 46-7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

⁴⁷ Atkins, *The Vaughan Working Men's College*, 61-2. Atkins says that on 5 Nov. 1876 a large number of students processed to the church for the first united annual service. The next year it was repeated and was considered to have become a regular annual ritual.

⁴⁸ *The Wyvern*, 16 Jun. 1899, quoted in Allaway, *Vaughan College*, 36.

for the very poorest, while in 1881 a women's department was opened. By 1882 the number of students had trebled from 500, as it stood in 1870, to 1574.⁴⁹

In the 1870s and early 1880s the 'Lit and Phil' and the Working Men's College were both leading educational bodies in the town but they were divided from each other by the social status of their members. However, the two did not function purely in separate orbits, there were connections between them. One way in which they were linked was by a small but influential group of middle class individuals who held official positions in both associations. The Revd David Vaughan the president of the College, was one of these individuals, as was Thomas Cotchett Lee, a local manufacturer who was the College treasurer for some years in the 1870s. Both of these men were not only 'Lit and Phil' members but were re-elected year after year to the 'Lit and Phil' Council.⁵⁰ Moreover, they were very longstanding members of both the College and the Lit and Phil, continuing their work into the early years of the twentieth century. The link provided by Vaughan and Lee to the 'Lit and Phil' worked at both a personal and institutional level. As individuals their personal standing, dedication and length of involvement promoted personal continuity and a stable though informal link between the two groups for more than forty years. The fact that they also occupied official positions in both associations reinforced this social capital and made the connection between the two bodies part of custom and practice. Vaughan, in addition, served on the School Board during the 1870s, thus creating a further bridge, this time between leading voluntary and statutory educational bodies in the town.⁵¹ This was the way in which an 'institutional fabric' was woven in which civil society and the statutory authorities combined to manage town life, with a local focus that balanced national influence.⁵² The newspaper image

⁴⁹ Atkins, *The Vaughan College Working Men's College*, 68-69.

⁵⁰ This is evident from the annual reports of the 'Lit and Phil' which listed the elected officials for each year. See *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society Reports*, Leicester, 1871-80.

⁵¹ See, for example, the School Board meeting reported in *LCLM*, 22 Apr. 1871 which records the Revd David Vaughan as chairman of the School Board.

⁵² See R. Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), 5. As Rodger observes, the checks and balances that local activity created can be appreciated by considering the anti-democratic effect of the dismantling of the institutional fabric in contemporary Britain. See R.A.W. Rhodes 'Understanding governance: ten

of the town was of a local community, and personal and institutional links of this type, helped bridge division and promote a social cohesion that gave some practical substance to this perception.

Consciously held ideals of active citizenship, by those participating in civil society, also promoted social cohesion. This sense of public duty was indicative of the ideological shift away from the *laissez faire* of the first decades of the century and was given room for expression by the expansion of civil society⁵³ One way in which the 'Lit and Phil' had responded to the civic ideal was by helping to establish a town museum open to everyone in Leicester. The Society had accumulated a collection of exhibits and they successfully prevailed on the Town Council to provide a museum building to house this. The museum was opened in 1849 with a formal civic ceremony at which the links between the Town Council, 'Lit and Phil' and the wider population were underlined. At this the Society president presented the exhibits to the Mayor declaring that it should be 'held by the Town Council for the general benefit of the community'.⁵⁴ The museum, as well as being a source of civic pride, was also an expression of the middle class mission to civilize the people. However, class hierarchy apart, this was a project that attempted to bridge social division by establishing a facility that all town residents could use, a civic facility that suggested the existence of a united civic community. In the 1870s and early 1880s, it was a facility that was well used. In addition to the regular use of the museum lecture hall, town residents took the trouble to go and view the museum exhibits. In spring 1884, for example, the press recorded that 2387 visitors attended the Town Museum on the Easter Monday bank holiday.⁵⁵

A particular concept of active citizenship was also embedded in the ideology of the Working Men's College and manifested itself in an assertive commitment, in college life, to free and open discussion about public affairs. This was in accordance with

years on', *Organization Studies*, 28 (2007), 1243-48 and D. Marquand, *Decline of the Public* (Cambridge, 2004), 1-167.

⁵³ See, for example, Marquand, *Decline of the Public*, 6-37.

⁵⁴ Lott, *Centenary Book*, 35-40.

⁵⁵ *LCLM*, 19 Mar. 1884.

F.D. Maurice's belief that working men could not take on the role of citizens or feel part of a community if they could not discuss the subjects of most interest and relevance to them.⁵⁶ At the weekly Friday discussion class there was for example, no bar on religious and political discussion, as there was in the 'Lit and Phil' and had been in the Mechanics Institutes, and generally contentious subjects were not avoided. In January 1871, for example, it was reported that at the weekly discussion class of the Working Men's College, there was a 'long and animated' discussion about the School Board during which 'the parsons' came in 'for a large share of hard knocks'.⁵⁷ This seems to show a genuine tolerance of free discussion, especially as the Revd David Vaughan sat on the School Board himself.

The same tolerant approach to free debate was also taken by another high profile group in the town, the All Saints Open Discussion Class. This class had been founded in 1850 for the benefit of a group of working men by Joseph Dare the missionary at the Unitarian Domestic Mission.⁵⁸ In 1870, the discussion class was one of a range of activities for men and women run by the Domestic Mission including: Sunday school, sewing classes, tea gatherings and window box competitions.⁵⁹ At the January planning meeting of the discussion class for 1871, which received detailed press coverage, the speakers conveyed that it was the free exchange of ideas and the encouragement for all to participate which bonded the membership and had resulted in the success of the class. One spoke of his satisfaction at the 'perfect freedom' members enjoyed where 'any subject might be introduced whether political or religious and discussed, without let or hindrance', while another stressed that 'all were desired to take part, composing a paper or speaking in turn'. Praising the longevity of the class, a further member remarked that the class had been so long in existence that it reminded him of Tennyson's brook: 'Men may come and men may

⁵⁶ This viewpoint was argued in a paper by F.D. Maurice that was read by Revd T.W. Barlow at a 'Lit and Phil' meeting in 1862. See *LCLM*, 25 Feb. 1862.

⁵⁷ *LCLM*, 21 Jan. 1871.

⁵⁸ The class had been started by the well known local missionary, Joseph Dare when the Mechanics Institute, was found to be 'too restricted intellectually for enquiring minds'. See *ROLLR*, 10 D 68/17 F.J. Gould, *History of the Leicester Secular Society* (Leicester, 1900), 8. By the 1860s, the Mechanics Institute was more or less defunct.

⁵⁹ *ROLLR*, L.288, *The Leicester Domestic Mission Annual Reports*, 1872.

go but I flow on for ever'.⁶⁰ Enthusiasm for the class also led its members to write poetry themselves and in 1873 a poem was published celebrating the twentieth summer outing of the group and the long friendships of those who took part in it.⁶¹ In terms of outside social contacts, as a branch of the Domestic Mission, this class was far from isolated. The offices of president, secretary and treasurer at the Mission and several committee members were all 'Lit and Phil' members 'wearing a different hat', and one third of Mission subscribers also held membership of the 'Lit and Phil'.⁶²

Middle class initiatives to provide adult education for the working classes in the first half of the nineteenth century often became devitalised because the education provided was too crudely directed to strengthening the social fabric rather than educating the individual. Bridging the class divide could only be more successful when a synthesis of middle class and working class expectation was attempted.⁶³ In Leicester, the decision to involve students in the running of the Working Men's College and the commitment to free debate in both the College and the All Saints Open Discussion Class indicates a recognition of this. A certain mutual accommodation between classes regarding adult education is also suggested by the good attendance in the 1870s at the free Saturday museum lectures put on by the Town Council and the 'Lit and Phil'.⁶⁴ It cannot be known, of course, who exactly

⁶⁰ *LCLM*, 21 Jan 1871.

⁶¹ ROLLR, CRO pamphlets, 45. G, Robson *The Twentieth Walkout of All Saints Open Discussion Class and Other Poems* (Leicester, c.1872).

⁶² For lists of subscribers to the Domestic Mission see ROLLR, L.288, *Leicester Domestic Mission Annual Reports*, 1871-1872 and the list of subscribers for 1871-2 in ULL, *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society Reports*, 1871-1880.

⁶³ Harrison, *Learning and Living 1790-1960*, 91.

⁶⁴ The attendance at the free lectures was reported on in the local newspaper. For example, *LCLM*, 28 Jan. 1871: 'On Saturday evening last an address on 'Money, Ancient and Modern' was delivered in the lecture room at the Museum by Mr F. Drake, there was good attendance' and *LCLM*, 11 Feb. 1871, Mr G. Hodges gave the free lecture at the Museum on 'Voyage from England to San Francisco...there was very good attendance'. While the free lectures were a success not every project to encourage the working classes to attend lectures was successful. The 'Lit and Phil' started to engage professional as well as local speakers from 1870 and the public were allowed to buy tickets to attend the professional lectures. For five years the society offered a number of free tickets for working class people. However, in the 1875 annual report it was noted: 'It was...decided that the issue of free tickets having failed to attract the working classes, should be discontinued' See 'Report of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society', 14 Jun. 1875 in ULL, *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society Reports*, 1871-1880, It seems likely that those who were comfortable attending free lectures felt less

attended these lectures or where they stood in the class hierarchy between the business and professional elite and those at the bottom of the social scale. However, it seems likely that as the All Saints Class and the Working Men's College had connections with the 'Lit and Phil', working class and lower middle class students from both these sources could have attended. Probably members of other local discussion groups attended too. At the 1871 annual planning meeting of the 'All Saints Open', one speaker referred to the many similar groups that had recently 'sprung up' in Leicester.⁶⁵ It seems probable that whether or not these classes had contacts with the 'Lit and Phil', some enthusiastic members would have taken advantage of the free lectures, thus making these a central occasion that linked up a range of self improvement groups, and in turn linked these with the Town Council and the 'Lit and Phil'.

In the 1870s, discussion groups and free lectures provided a vehicle for Leicester's middle class leaders to bridge class division, engage with those lower down the social scale who were receptive to ideas of self improvement, and promote a stronger sense of local solidarity. The numbers involved in these activities were, of course, small in relation to the size of the town population. At this time the number of town residents numbered about 100,000 while the capacity of the museum lecture hall where the free lectures were held was 200.⁶⁶ However, although this was a modestly sized network, it was enough to create a central focus for the newspapers to report on and also provided a base and interest for further development for more ambitious projects over the following fifty years, most especially the creation of a local university.

While adult education for the working classes was seen by advocates such as Vaughan as way of promoting social cohesion, it could also be a stimulus for challenges to the religious and social order.⁶⁷ Although religion was deeply embedded in the social life of this period and was linked to many adult educational

comfortable with attending a 'Lit and Phil' lecture as a subsidised minority, sitting among the town's middle classes.

⁶⁵ *LCLM*, 21 Jan. 1871.

⁶⁶ Population figures and figures for the capacity of lecture hall given in Lott, *Centenary Book*, 36.

⁶⁷ Harrison, *Learning and Living*, 90-172.

initiatives, another strand of adult education was linked to secularism. At a national level, secularists met with considerable hostility not only for religious reasons but because unbelief was associated with radicalism and the potential threat to private property.⁶⁸ In Leicester, a secular society was established from the mid-1860s, providing opportunities for attending lectures and debate, and in 1881 increased its local profile very significantly when the Secular Hall, a handsome, custom built meeting place, was opened in the centre of town,⁶⁹ a venue that was used not only for lectures but also for a thriving social club. The outspoken views of the Leicester Secular Society naturally caused some local concern, unsurprisingly, among the clergy. Vaughan, for example, was hostile for despite his encouragement of free speech and sympathy for trade unionism he regarded religion as a necessary ingredient of community and thought irreligion a serious threat to class cooperation.⁷⁰ The Leicester Secular Society did provide a forum in the late Victorian decades that included socialists of varying degrees of militancy,⁷¹ however, generally the group did not court local conflict. At the opening ceremony of the Secular Hall, which was given detailed coverage in the local newspaper, Annie Besant, in fact related secularism to social cohesion emphasising that informed public opinion and good citizenship relied on rational debate.⁷² Moreover, from the outset the Leicester society espoused a strand of secularism that promoted self improvement and social reformation through rational morality rather than exhibiting aggression towards Christians or preaching revolution. An exchange between the London secularists and the president of the Leicester society on the pages of *The Freethinker* gave a flavour of this as well as an indication that the Leicester group claimed a strong local identity. The London editors acidly offered the Leicester Secular Society ‘a piece of advice’ suggesting that a little respectability might be exchanged for a little free thought, to this the Leicester president replied that it was possible to discuss secularism ‘without endlessly hammering away at God and the Bible...or so we think in Leicester’.

⁶⁸ S. Budd, *Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850-1960* (London, 1977), 63.

⁶⁹ See ROLLR, 10 D 68/17, records of the Secular Society, Gould, *The History of Secular Society*, 12.

⁷⁰ J. Simmons, *Leicester, Past and Present, vol. 2: Modern City* (Leicester, 1974), 35.

⁷¹ B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism. Leicester Working Class Politics 1860-1906* (Leicester, 1987), 86-8.

⁷² *LDP*, 7 Mar. 1881.

Moreover he remarked, if respectability means ‘ability to claim respect’ ‘I hope we may increase not decrease our share of it’⁷³

Such attitudes make it easy to see how the Leicester Secular Society could fit into the social landscape of the town adding difference without undue disruption. In fact, the Secular Society can be said to have actually contributed to social cohesion, because it bridged class division by drawing membership from both the working and lower middle classes as well as a number of leading local manufacturers.⁷⁴ This social mix in turn created connections with other associations in the town. Josiah Gimson, first president of the Secular Society and the force behind the building of the Secular Hall was the proprietor of a well known engineering firm. Moreover, he and his extended family continued for decades to be leading members of the ‘Leicester Lit and Phil’. There was also a connection with the Open All Saints Discussion Class as Gimson and several other middle class secularists had participated in this class in the 1860s. In the 1870s it is notable that the names of two of them, Gimson and Thomas Coltman, still appeared on the list of subscribers to the Unitarian Domestic Mission.⁷⁵

Class and religion were not the only social dividers in mid to late Victorian Leicester, there was also, of course, the issue of gender. In 1870, women’s roles and rights were prominent in national public debate and although women had not been enfranchised, some headway had been made in improving opportunities for their secondary and higher education.⁷⁶ Male domination of local intellectual life in Leicester, however, remained unchallenged. At the ‘Lit and Phil’ women had attended lectures as visitors since the 1830s but were not allowed to become members. Some breakthrough was made in 1870 when women were allowed to join as associate members, but the Lit and Phil’ ‘Transactions’ show that, in 1871, only ten women took up this

⁷³ *The Freethinker*, Apr. 1890, see cuttings in ROLLR, 10 D 68/6, records of the Secular Society, scrapbook of printed matter issued by the Society, 1873-1908.

⁷⁴ ROLLR, 10 D 68/5, The membership book of the Secular Society for 1886 shows that members included both men and women. Moreover, as well as the middle class members such as Gimson, many addresses from working class areas of town such as the Wharf Street district appear.

⁷⁵ ROLLR, L.288, 1871-1872 show subscribers to the Domestic Mission.

⁷⁶ J. Harris, *Public Lives, Public Spirit* (London, 1993), 23.

opportunity.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, behind the scenes the Leicester Ladies Reading Society was established. The source of information about this society is an account of the group's activities over sixty years written by a longstanding member Gertrude Ellis, in 1930, when the society was finally wound up.⁷⁸

The Leicester Ladies Reading Society, which in 1871 numbered fifteen members, differed from the other educational associations discussed so far in this section in that it was a more private group. There was no publicity in the local newspaper, there were no subscriptions and the group met in each others' private homes. In addition to these private meeting arrangements, the group was exclusive in social status with a membership that included women from some of Leicester's most well-known leading business and professional families, for instance, Corah, Gimson, Ellis, Paget, Clephan and, again, Gimson. Two obvious factors which bonded the women were social status and class, but a further bond was clearly the intent to undertake serious study, for members committed themselves to active membership producing regular papers on historical and literary topics. This desire for active membership was most likely the reason why, in the 1870s, these particular women did not take up the option of becoming associate members of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil', for the role offered to lady associates was passive with no opportunity to sit on the organising council or give a paper. The Ladies Reading Society, on the contrary, gave the women a chance of genuine involvement and this attraction sustained the society over many decades. Ellis conveys the bonding effect that this continuity had on members saying that 'the meetings came round as regularly as the winters themselves and wove themselves into the fabric of life through youth and maturity, marriage and bereavement to old age.'⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See list of subscribers for 1871-2 in ULL, *Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society Reports* 1871-1980.

⁷⁸ G. Ellis, *The Leicester Ladies' Reading Society* (Leicester, 1930). All the information on this society in the following two paragraphs comes from this booklet by Gertrude Ellis.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

Recent commentary has emphasised that the gendered ‘separate spheres’ of Victorian Society were often less rigidly separated than is commonly assumed.⁸⁰ In the case of the ‘Leicester Ladies Reading Society’, the private arrangements suggested an inward-looking association; however, certain aspects of the group equally indicated that members looked out to the wider society at both a national and local level. In her memoir, Ellis, herself a member, linked the reading group to national trends referring to its establishment as a ‘small local development’ in a countrywide ‘stirring of life in the education of women’, implying that the founder members were consciously aware of their contribution to a national pattern.⁸¹ Meanwhile, at a local level, strong personal links connected the ‘ladies group’ to those involved in other local associations. It is clear, for example, from a comparison of membership lists that most members of the reading society were the wives and daughters of the business men and professionals who were members of the ‘Lit and Phil’. Also notable was the choice of the ‘*Leicester Ladies Reading Society*’, as the name of the group. It was a name that expressed an identification with the town itself and implied that despite the private nature of the Society’s activities, there was an aspiration on the part of the membership to be considered part of local public life. Finally, the formal manner in which the society was organized had overtones of a more public association. Each year, for example, a president and secretary were appointed and an end of season meeting, at which a programme for the New Year was organized, was an annual fixture. This framework echoed accepted methods of organisation for those associations that were more in the public eye.

This chapter has explored some aspects of Leicester life that contributed to local social cohesion at the beginning of the period 1870 to 1939. The first section highlighted the annual cycle depicted in the local newspapers, a calendar of civic and associational meetings and events which helped to shape the urban year. Although local associational life was composed of a variety of groups with different interests and concerns what was marked was the way the calendars of different bodies fell into

⁸⁰ S, Morgan, *A Victorian Woman’s Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2007).

⁸¹ Ellis, *Leicester Ladies Reading Society*, 2.

similar patterns and interleaved to produce a cycle that could be convincingly represented as a communal local calendar. In the second section the focus moved from the rhythms and overarching shape of the annual cycle to the structure of individual meetings and events that comprised the yearly calendar. These associational meetings and events, for example, the annual meetings and annual dinners, generally followed a set formula that, with some variation, was used by working class as well as middle class groups. The repeated use of this common 'meeting language' had a ritual quality and the regular and detailed press coverage of these events enhanced the representation of an active local culture. Finally, The third section explored some aspects of social cohesion among some of the very different and, with the exception of the Leicester Ladies Reading Society, well publicised educational associations in the town. It has been argued that associational life promoted a strong social fabric, by encouraging interdependence between individuals and groups. All the associations discussed here added to social cohesion by bringing individuals together in groups. Moreover, successful efforts had been made in the case of the 'Lit and Phil' and the Working Men's College, to create associations that cut across sectarian division. The clientele of the different associations discussed were socially differentiated and segregated in terms of class and gender, but there were important links between the groups which pulled them into a network. Leading Members of the 'Lit and Phil' were involved in different ways in the Working Men's College, Domestic Mission and Secular Society, and a substantial number had relatives in the Leicester Ladies Reading Society. It has been argued that the Victorian ideal of educational self improvement could connect participants across class barriers. However, the Victorian middle class drive to educate and civilise the wider population could not work unless the objects of their zeal cooperated with enthusiasm. By the 1870s, an approach which welcomed working class debate and opinion as active citizenship and as contribution to the democratic ideal, rather than regarding it with fear, had borne fruit and the growing rolls of the Working Men's College had replaced the failed Mechanics' Institute, while the free lectures put on by the combined forces of the 'Lit and Phil' and the Town Council were well attended and were a regular feature of the winter season. Associational life provided a positive

environment for building links between individuals and interest groups. The social capital that associational ties generated, underlay the annual Leicester calendar that was packaged in the local press and gave it substance, a substance that indicated that Leicester was more than an 'imagined community' and which provided the foundations for a more inclusive and integrated local society to develop.

Chapter Five.

Changes and continuities in the Leicester calendar between 1880 and 1939: the emergence of mass participation in local and civic culture.

Gunn highlights ‘the regular, formalised and often ceremonial appearance of the rich and powerful in the city centre’ as a key characteristic of the public culture of provincial, industrial towns in the mid and late Victorian decades¹ On such occasions which included concerts, social gatherings and, in particular, civic parades, wealth and authority were made visible to the wider urban population. It is argued that this emphasis on display, which linked visibility to power, helped in the end to weaken public culture. Women, the poor and ethnic minorities were not represented and once demonstrations of workers and suffragettes had been seen on the streets, the illusion of a unified city community as portrayed, for example, by a civic parade, no longer remained credible. Gunn’s argument suggests that because the rituals of public middle class culture could not convincingly demonstrate social cohesion, they became doomed to irrelevance. Urban life was not unified it was fragmented and the major reason for this was the marginalisation of those groups whose interests were not considered and who did not participate in public life.²

A depiction of late Victorian provincial urban culture, dominated by the male middle class and characterised by display, is certainly recognisable in Leicester social life of the period and the civic parade which celebrated the opening of Abbey Park in 1882.

¹ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), 1.

² *Ibid*, 182.

However, the portrayal of an increasingly fragmented town life from the late Victorian period onwards, where the working classes, women and ethnic minorities became divorced from civic life and became interested only in their own events and ritual is less convincing in the Leicester context. The years between 1880 and 1939 in Leicester can rather be depicted as a period when those members of groups that were marginalised worked within voluntary associations, where possible stood for election to the statutory authorities and generally used the local arena and the perception of a communal Leicester culture to demonstrate active citizenship and claim an equal role in the management of the town. Moreover, this was also a period where an increasing number of men and women from across the class spectrum were drawn in to an organised social life through a range of voluntary associations, from literary societies to football clubs, a network which worked against fragmentation by bringing individuals together and helping to bridge the boundaries between groups

The case of the Leicester Hebrew Congregation from the 1880s to 1939 makes an interesting entry point to this discussion because the history of this minority group shows how, rather than developing a sense of exclusion from public culture, they cultivated a strong civic sense and a commitment to the town as a united urban community.³ This had its roots in the 1880s and 1890s, when Israel Hart, a leading member of the Hebrew Congregation and also a prominent business man in the local tailoring trade, not only served four times as mayor but also paid for an elaborate fountain to be constructed in Leicester's Town Hall Square, the opening of which was accompanied by significant civic ceremony.⁴ Neither was the generosity between the town and the community only one way. As the Hebrew Congregation struggled to raise money for a new synagogue in the mid 1890s, contributions were made by local non-Jewish businessmen and aldermen of the borough. In the tradition of Hart, the community continued to contribute to public life. For example, the congregation made regular contributions to the Leicester Infirmary and each year they held a special Hospital Sunday service for the purpose of raising funds, a custom which

³ A. Newman and P. Lidiker, *Portrait of a Community: a History of the Leicester Hebrew Congregation* (Leicester, 1998), 21-2.

⁴ *Leicestershire Chronicle and Mercury (LCLM)*, 27 Sept. 1879.

continued throughout the interwar years.⁵ They were prominent also among fundraisers at a bazaar organised by leading associations in the town to raise money for the new University College in 1922.⁶ Alongside this commitment to civic life, the Hebrew Congregation sustained their own privately organised ritual, which consisted of a religious and community life centred on the synagogue in Highfields, a community life which, like that of the suburban churches and chapels, included the meetings of a range of societies.⁷ This record of events does not bear out the pattern of a group excluded from the rituals of public culture seeking compensation in private ritual. It seems rather that a healthy balance was maintained between an active private community life and a positive approach to the public life of the town. It has been pointed out that while the governance of Victorian towns was in the hands of socio-economic elites, these were not the oligarchies of the period previous to incorporation. Generally, social prominence had to be earned by political and economic effort⁸ Hart's success, despite his being a social outsider, is an example of this. His achievement, both in gaining civic honour for himself and helping to establish a stable basis for the Jewish Community in Leicester, indicates that the public culture of the town was not impermeable. It rather suggests that the road to recognition, a definite social identity for those who found themselves outside the mainstream of public culture, was through active citizenship.

The wealth derived from Hart's successful business career, of course, opened doors that were not available to others outside the urban middle class elite. Gunn's argument, that the sight of underpaid or unemployed workers demonstrating on the streets in the 1890s and 1900s destroyed the notion of unified urban communities, is convincing in that such events certainly highlighted social inequalities and class conflict. However, too much emphasis on the social division illustrated by such

⁵ Hospital Sunday was observed by Christian churches all over Leicester in October from the 1880s onwards. The synagogue were following this custom but held their service in March.

⁶ Newman and Lidiker, *Portrait of a Community*, 21-2. See also J. Simmons, *New University* (Leicester, 1958), 89 and *Leicester Daily Mercury (LDM)* 15 May 1922 for reports of the bazaar. See also Chapter Six for further discussion about the bazaar.

⁷ Newman and Lidiker, *Portrait*, 60-69, examples of associational life based at the synagogue were the Jewish Literary and Drama Society and the Leicester Maccabi Youth Club.

⁸ J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-1980* (Manchester, 1983), 5.

events perhaps hides more than it reveals. The case of a demonstration of unemployed shoe workers in Leicester in 1904, as they departed on a protest march to London, supports this. The participants assembled peacefully in the market place before a crowd of 80,000 and were led by a working class activist, called Amos Sheriff, who was also a newly elected Poor Law guardian. Among their number were Labour councillors and a local vicar who played a leading role and as they left the square they sang 'Lead Kindly Light'⁹ Firstly, it is clear that the leaders of the demonstration were themselves active in the public culture of the town. Moreover, the peaceful assembly in the market place suggests identification with the town itself. In addition, the singing of 'Lead Kindly Light' seems more an appeal to a common culture of Christian values than a statement of class antagonism. This was not revolution but rather citizens expressing a grievance, in an orderly way, to others who were part of the same civic community.

The election in 1922 as mayor, of the same Amos Sheriff, leader of the shoe workers march, further illustrates that rather than retreating from public affairs, working class activists sought a greater level of inclusion in the public culture that had been established by the middle class elite. It has been suggested that by the 1890s, the working classes in Britain had generally accepted the need to come to terms with the power relations of industrial capitalism. At the same time there was an increasing interest in the possibilities of socialist reform which gathered strength in the early decades of the twentieth century alongside the growth of the Labour party.¹⁰ The expansion of the franchise culminating in the introduction of manhood suffrage in 1918 gave further impetus to this and active participation led to a more pluralist model of municipal politics. During the interwar period in Leicester, Labour activists made significant inroads into municipal politics campaigning especially on social welfare issues, for example, unemployment, housing, health and education.¹¹ The

⁹ B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Co-operation and Socialism in Leicester Working Class Politics, 1860-1906* (Leicester, 1987), 176.

¹⁰ R.J. Morris, 'Clubs and associations' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 421 and 425.

¹¹ P. Jones, 'Politics' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 92-102.

period saw an increasing number of working class councillors and aldermen ¹²and alongside this, in the wider field of governance, labour representatives, took part in the management committees of various local charities ¹³

One important aspect of the years between 1880 and 1939, which permitted a higher level of working class participation in associational life and civic affairs, was the rise in real incomes for those in or supported by regular employment, combined with reductions in working hours. Nationally, average real incomes more than doubled over the decades leading up to the First World War meaning that, by 1900, more working families had a small amount of disposable income above basic subsistence, an improvement which helped to fuel consumerism.¹⁴ Working class standards of living, of course, depended on a number of factors including region and the impact of the economic cycle on the fortunes of local industry. In Leicester, although there was unemployment in the boot and shoe industry in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, the local economy strengthened during the Edwardian years and in the interwar period there was relative prosperity. This was reflected in working class associational life. Working Men's Clubs, for example, expanded in number and flourished and members were in a position to regularly raise money for causes that were not just working class causes but charities such as the Leicester Royal Infirmary that benefited the town as a whole. This type of active citizenship was highlighted in the local press. In the interwar years, the *Leicester Evening Mail* ran a weekly Working Men's Club and Institute column which reported a range of club activities, including fundraising efforts and other public spirited projects that the clubs were

¹² Leicester of course was not the only city to see Labour representation on the local town council. By the mid 1920s there were a number of Labour controlled local authorities. See Morris, 'Structure culture and society in British towns' in M. Daunt (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 419; in London there had been a spread of Socialist/Fabian representation to the LCC in the 1890s. See S. Pennybacker, '“The millennium by return of post” reconsidering London progressivism, 1889-1907' in D. Feldman and G. Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London* (London, 1989), 129-162.

¹³ See ROLLR, DE 2730, records of the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind, D730/106/1-13 annual reports 1914-1933 and D730/106/14-17 annual reports 1934-1937. The annual reports of the 1930s show that there were representatives from the Trades Council and the Cooperative Societies on the organizing committee.

¹⁴ R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780-1914* (Basingstoke, 1989), 63 and J. Benson *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1939* (London, 2003), 52-6.

engaged in, such as participation in the St John Ambulance Corps. Unlike the 1870s and early 1880s, in the interwar years working people were just as likely to be represented by the press as contributors to charity, then as objects of charity.

Changes and continuities in the annual urban calendar from the 1880s to 1939

In the years from 1880 to 1939, the Leicester newspapers continued to represent a local calendar of civic and associational occasions, and the range of reported events expanded, reflecting the growth in the number and variety of civil associations in the town. The 'end of year' chronology feature was dropped from the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* without explanation in the mid 1880s.¹⁵ This was possibly because the feature had lost its novelty value and because the readership was now thoroughly aware of the shape of the annual cycle. The chronology, however, had only been a selection of the most important meetings and events which had been reported in the local press during the year. Adopting the chronologers' approach, the particular changes and continuities in the local calendar picked out in this section for discussion are mostly derived from a newspaper study. This was approached by reading and selecting material from local newspapers, spaced at approximate ten year intervals from the 1880s to the late 1930s¹⁶

One constraint in detecting and interpreting changes to the Leicester annual cycle from local newspapers is the change in journalistic style which took place over the decades from the 1870s to 1939. In line with national trends, the increasing tendency in journalism to commercialism, which favoured shorter reports and placed more emphasis on the sensational, meant that the detailed reports of regular meetings were reduced.¹⁷ This was evident in the Leicester press from the 1890s onwards and in the interwar period the change became overwhelming. Both the *Leicester Mercury* and the *Leicester Evening Mail*, the two local newspapers of the interwar years were

¹⁵ The chronologies published in the *LCLM* are discussed fully in Chapter Four.

¹⁶ The newspapers consulted in detail were: *LCLM*, 1884, *Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 1893, *LDP*, 1902, *LDP*, 1903, *Leicester Mail (LML)*, 1913, *LML*, 1914, *LML*, 1920, *LML*, 1928, *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 1939.

¹⁷ R.C.K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford 1968), 311-16. The launch of *The Daily Mail*, a nationwide catalyst in the more commercial and sensational approach to journalism, took place in 1896.

produced in tabloid style with many headlines, short snappy articles and, by the 1930s, many photographs. However, although this new format detracted from written coverage of routine associational life, for example, annual and ordinary business meetings in the main body of the papers, there were compensations in more specialised sections. For example, a regular 'Camera News' feature in the 1930s *Leicester Evening Mail*, which was paralleled by a similar feature in the *Leicester Mercury*, gave a rich pictorial record of the many social events arising from associational life including: dinners, dances, amateur dramatics, bazaars and sports occasions. In fact, any event that provided a good opportunity for a photograph was included. In addition, the women's pages, particularly in the 1930s, provided a valuable record of important aspects of associational life in Leicester at this time including both business and social events, and this material is used for a discussion of the integration of women into public life in Chapter Six.

The outline of the annual cycle developed rather than radically changed from the 1880s to the 1930s. During these decades, the urban year retained its basic shape, as indeed it does today. There continued to be an autumn start to the cycle followed by a season of mainly indoor activities, divided midway by Christmas and continuing until Easter; after this, the summer season with its greater emphasis on outdoor activities began. It was within this familiar framework that change occurred. First, the increase in numbers and range of voluntary associations, with the many events they generated, complicated the Leicester calendar, blurring some of the clear monthly characteristics that had been evident in the 1870s. Secondly, against a nationwide backdrop of increased incomes, better educational provision, and a growing lower middle class of white collar workers, the local social life as portrayed in press, showed an expanding middle ground.¹⁸ From the late Victorian decades onwards, for example, the gap between middle class elite activities and working class

¹⁸ See F.M.L Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: a Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), 68-9 for discussion about the increase in white collar workers during this period. In B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom* (Oxford, 1982), Harrison comments that 'the idea of an expanding middle to society rather than of social polarisation' was common among Victorian thinkers, 185. See also G. Crossick, 'The emergence of the lower middle class in Britain a discussion' in G. Crossick (ed.) *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1977), 11-60.

activities filled out, as a greater number of unpretentious, ‘middle of the road’ socials, dinners, concerts and other events were reported. A further change from the 1890s, which helped integrate civic and associational life, was a more developed annual mayoral schedule of functions and visits to local institutions and associations. Finally, additions to the national calendar also had an impact on the local calendar. Bank holidays, which had been introduced in the 1870s, became an occasion both for local holiday attractions and travel outside Leicester. In addition, Empire Day, celebrated at the end of May, became important during the Edwardian period and Armistice Day was an important marker in the interwar decades.¹⁹

The local chronologies of the 1870s to 1880s had represented the activities of the civic authorities and formed the backbone of the annual year, with a regular focus on Town Council meetings.²⁰ However, the popularisation of the press from the late nineteenth century onwards affected this focus. Throughout the period, the municipal elections continued to be held at the beginning of November, with ward meetings for the selection of candidates in October. The elections were always covered by the press but reports of routine council meetings followed the general trend and became conspicuously less regular between the turn of the century and 1914.²¹ During the interwar years the approach became still more marked and by the late 1930s town council meetings generally only received very detailed coverage if something out of the ordinary happened.²²

However, although coverage of Town Council meetings in the newspapers was reduced over the period, the focus on the civic authorities was maintained in a different more symbolic way. The office of mayor was enhanced during this time by progressively more attention to ceremony, which resulted in the addition of several regular occasions to the urban cycle, all which were reported in the press. Ceremony

¹⁹ Armistice Day, Empire Day and St George’s Day are discussed further in Chapter Six.

²⁰ See Chapter Four.

²¹ For example, in 1902-03, in the newspapers consulted, five Town Council meetings were reported in detail over the year, whereas in 1913-14 only one was given this extensive attention.

²² An example of this was the detailed press coverage of the Town Council meeting at which Amos Sherriff, the ex-mayor and leader of the shoe workers march to London, gave his retirement speech, *Leicester Evening Mail (LEM)*, 1 Jan. 1939.

showcasing the mayor at election time was more emphasised by the 1890s, and in autumn 1893, the Town Council started to give an annual civil banquet in honour of the outgoing mayor.²³ By the turn of the century, the November mayor-making ceremony for the incoming mayor was also being increasingly highlighted by the local newspapers.²⁴ Another mayoral tradition, established at the turn of the century, was an annual civic reception held each January, to which a mix of employers and those involved in associational life were invited.²⁵ These innovations were continued throughout the interwar period, as was the tradition of an annual civic procession and service at the church attended by the mayor.²⁶ The prestige of the mayor also received a boost in 1928, when the office of the Leicester mayor was elevated, by the Home Office, to lord mayor as consistent with Leicester's promotion to city status in 1919.²⁷ These ceremonial practices and functions, supported by press coverage, ensured that representation of the civic ideal was kept in the foreground.

Outside the activities of the civic authorities, the business meetings of voluntary associations continued to fall in seasons, giving a communal shape to the urban year. The main season for annual meetings continued, in the decades following the 1870s, to be between January and June, with a sprinkling of meetings in the autumn months. There was also continuity in the specific timing and clustering of some annual meetings. Until the early Edwardian years, temperance and licensed victuallers' meetings were a recurrent feature of September. Moreover, until at least 1914, the New Year remained a favoured time for the annual meetings of financial bodies,²⁸

²³ *Leicester Daily Post (LDP)*, 10 Nov. 1893. This first banquet was given at the Leicester Assembly Rooms for the departing mayor, Alderman Underwood and was presided over by the new mayor Alderman Hart. The proceedings included a toast to the Queen and the singing of the national anthem. The banquets were a regular annual event after this.

²⁴ See, for example, *LDP*, 11 Nov. 1902 and *LEM*, 9 Nov. 1939.

²⁵ See, for example, *LDP*, 30 Jan. 1903, *Leicester Mail (LML)*, 14 Jan 1914, *LML*, 19 Jan. 1928 and *Leicester Mercury (LM)*, 14 Jan. 1930.

²⁶ *LEM*, 1 Jan. 1939 shows a photograph of leading members of Leicester City Council processing to the Charles Street Baptist Church, the Mayor is dressed in full ceremonial dress.

²⁷ J. Beckett, *City Status in the British Isles, 1830-2002* (Aldershot, 2005), 89. Beckett observes that the Home Office noted the rivalry between Leicester and Nottingham and that it was significant that both Leicester and Nottingham mayors received this promotion at the same time.

²⁸ January meetings reported in detail in 1914 included the annual meetings of Leicester Permanent Building Society, *LML*, 27 Jan 1914 and the Leicester Savings Bank, *LML*, 20 Jan. 1914, which the Mayor attended.

though by the early 1890s, January and February had also become the most popular months for political clubs, both Liberal and Conservative to hold their meetings.²⁹ However, as the numbers and range of associations grew, these patterns became looser and more blurred. For example, even by the early 1890s, January and February, in addition to being the meeting season for financial bodies and political groups, was also a time when a miscellany of other local groups held their annual meeting including associations as diverse as: the Leicester Footpath Association, the Master Builders' Association, the Charity Organisation Society and the Leicester Photographic Society.³⁰

Despite this blurring of the schedule and the reduction in the press coverage of annual meetings, a cluster of spring annual meetings, held by philanthropic and medical bodies, did continue to stand out. The annual meeting of the Leicester Royal Infirmary, which had always been the focus of communal interest, was consistently treated as an occasion of great importance and as late as 1928, against the journalistic trends of the time, a very full, almost verbatim report of the Infirmary meeting was published in the main pages of the press.³¹ Coverage of the meetings of other philanthropic bodies depended on the period, some of these were branch societies, but these in no way overshadowed the home-grown Leicester groups. In the 1880s and 1890s, the spring annual meetings of the Leicester Provident Dispensary and the Leicester Ragged School were highlighted³² and by the early years of the twentieth century, with changing attitudes to social welfare, new groups were established and publicised. In the spring of 1903, for example, against a backdrop of concern for national efficiency and 'the desire to protect the children of the nation',³³ the annual meeting of a new Leicester association, The Poor Boys and Girls Institute and

²⁹ For example, *LDP*, 31 Jan. 1893, the Leicester Women's Liberal Association annual meeting and *LDP*, 30 Jan 1893, the Harborough Division Conservative Association annual meeting.

³⁰ These were just a sample of the annual meetings reported in the *LDP* during January and February 1893.

³¹ *LM*, 25 Apr. 1928. Two full columns were devoted to a description of the Leicester Royal Infirmary annual meeting.

³² For example, *LCLM*, 5 Apr. 1884, annual meeting of the Leicester Provident Dispensary and *LDP*, 30 Mar 1893, annual meeting of the Leicester Ragged School Mission.

³³ Hay, J.R., *The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906-1914* (London, 1975), 44.

Summer Camp, was attended by the Mayor and given detailed publicity.³⁴ From the turn of the century, there was also an increased focus in Leicester on the annual meetings of local groups which supported the disabled, such as the Leicester Guild of the Crippled and the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind.³⁵ In the interwar period, although the details of annual meetings of philanthropic groups were more likely to be found in the women's pages at this time, the social events of these leading groups were still often found in the main body of the paper or else pictured in the 'Camera News' section.

The cultural and social 'season' which also began in the autumn months and which in the 1870s had featured many lectures and concerts, also saw both continuity and change. The local press continued to report on the free lectures at the Museum and also the fortnightly lectures of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil', although by the 1890s the tendency was to less intensive reporting. The new pattern was to report on the inaugural lecture of the 'Lit and Phil' at the beginning of the October to March season and then to pick out a selection in the rest of the series for coverage. Generally, the expansion of associational life meant that the pages of the press accommodated new events so that reports of the 'Lit and Phil' lectures did not appear so dominant.

Many of the new events that were reported in the newspapers in the late Victorian period were less highbrow social activities. While societies such as the Leicester Philharmonic Society still provided 'serious' musical entertainment, informal concert parties which featured a more undemanding, middle of the road, musical programme were also frequent.³⁶ In the early 1890s, newspaper accounts showed that a pool of local singers was called upon to sing at a range of such events. Concerts were linked by this feature and had much in common with each other, contributing to a shared specifically Leicester experience. In December, 1893, for example, there was an

³⁴ *LDP*, 28 Mar 1903.

³⁵ See, for example, *LML*, 1 Apr 1914, for coverage of the annual meeting of Leicester Guild of the Crippled, followed by the annual meeting of the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind, *LML*, 20 May 1914.

³⁶ After the first war, the Leicester Competitive Music Festival was introduced which invited competitors from school children to local choirs to participate in 'serious music'. See *LM*, 12 Oct 1919.

overlap of performers at the People's Dispensary Concert, the Leicester Football Club annual smoking concert as well as the Borough Asylum Christmas entertainment.³⁷ One such performer was James McRobie who performed songs such as 'The Jovial Beggar' and 'Little Sue'. The fashion continued and the autumn of 1913 saw press coverage of a variety of concert parties organised by a cross section of local residents. Some of these occasions were for the members and friends of high profile recreational groups such as the Leicester Ivanhoe Cricket Club and the Leicester Amateur Music and Dramatic Society. However, newspaper publicity was also given to the concert parties organised by the less powerful and prominent, including lesser known women's groups such as the Oxford Street Women's Meeting and a specifically working class groups such as the Leicester Working Men's Cycle Club.

In the second half of the season, from January to March, annual dinners continued to be popular. Again the trend for participation from a wider cross section of society was evident, with new groups of different types, often sports groups or new trade groups, establishing an annual dinner tradition. Employees associations with a link to public service, such as the Fire Brigade and the Police already had a regular annual dinner in the 1870s. By 1913, however, this category had expanded to include other groups such as the Leicester Municipal Officers Association and more obscure groups, with a quasi public role and elaborate titles, for example, the Midland, London and North-West Passenger and Clerical Staff Association, were holding dinners that were deemed important enough to be covered by the local press.

Between the 1870s and 1914, the publicity given to new associations in the press, as well as the increasing list of groups included in the town directory, indicated that organised social life was expanding in Leicester. However, it was the press photography of the interwar period, which underlined and brought to life the density of this social life. From the end of September, 1938, for example, the 'Camera News' page of the *Leicester Evening Mail*, was loaded with photographs of dances and

³⁷ The People's Dispensary annual concert: *LDP*, 8 Dec 1893; the Leicester Football Club annual smoking concert *LDP*, 21 Dec. 1893; the Christmas Borough Asylum entertainment *LDP*, 23 Dec. 1893.

socials and between January and March this became particularly intense, with the Leicester Palais de Danse, the Bell Hotel and the Grand Hotel constantly booked as leading venues for these events. The groups involved were a mix. One innovation was that many firms now held an annual dance for their staff and for many of these, the occasion was organised by the firm's 'sports and social club', suggesting an ongoing and regular social life within the firm. Other events were organised by independent trade and employees associations and frequently by local sports clubs, though there were groups of an entirely different type that also followed the pattern. For example, in November 1938, Leicester Peace Council held a dance at the Leicester Palais for its members,³⁸ while later in the month St Saviour's church congregation also went to the Palais for their annual church dance.³⁹ While the groups involved were privately organised, group behaviour courted city wide publicity. There seemed little inclination to stay hidden in the clubhouse or the church hall. On the contrary, the vogue was to go as a group to the city centre, enjoy the facilities of a leading commercial venue and be photographed doing so by the local newspaper. Commercial entertainment has often been seen by commentators as the enemy of self made leisure. However, the use of commercial venues for associational outings shows that commercial entertainment and self-generated group activity were not always in opposition to each other but could intertwine.⁴⁰ It seems, however, that there were some who were directly involved had misgivings about mixing the two. For example, after a successful parish dance was organised by the Church of St Barnabas at the Leicester Palais in 1938, a report in the church magazine commented that, despite the many predictions of naysayers, the function had, in fact been a resounding success.⁴¹

³⁸ *LEM*, 1 Nov. 1938.

³⁹ *LEM*, 24 Nov. 1938.

⁴⁰ H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and culture' in F.M.L Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1990), 330 and 305. Cunningham observes that both historians and voluntary organisations have seen commercial entertainment as the enemy of self-generated leisure; while not completely denying this he cites examples such as the pub, where self-made and commercial activity have frequently combined.

⁴¹ *ROLLR*, *St Barnabas Parish Magazine*, Jan. 1939.

Cunningham observes that the popular view of the 1930s as a time of ‘unbroken deprivation and decay’ has often been overstated and that ‘photographs suggest a people, even a working class, better dressed than their parents and grand parents before the first war’, illustrating the benefits that the rising standard of living had brought.⁴² Obviously, the press photographers who took pictures at these social events in 1930s Leicester looked for shots which would convey a positive impression. Nevertheless, it is clear that many people participated on these occasions and although at some events, for example the parish socials and the works parties, some were dressed quite plainly they were well enough dressed not to look out of place at a hotel or dance hall. The style of photography also frequently emphasised the large numbers of people involved in these events. Crowd shots were popular, for instance, a ‘sea of upturned faces’ shot over the balustrade of the Grand Hotel.⁴³ Photographs were also used to convey a sense of community and comradeship, for example, guests were photographed joining in a group activity such as dancing ‘the Palais Glide’ or performing actions to ‘Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree’.⁴⁴ By showing many different groups doing much the same thing at roughly the same time, newspaper coverage played an important part in representing this mass of social activity as a unified local ‘way of life’ in a prosperous Leicester.

As in the case of the autumn and winter season, the representation of the summer months in the local press showed some continuity between the 1880s and 1939. However, it was again an increasingly complicated calendar which reflected the growth in voluntary associations over the period and the greater numbers of people involved. In the late Victorian decades, military camps, reviews and inspections continued to attract participants and provide entertainment. In the early 1890s, for example, the regular Rifle Volunteers’ August camp, at Bradgate Park, attracted over 800 volunteer soldiers from the various city and county corps as well as crowds of

⁴² S. Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain 1918-1939* (London, 1983), 1-2.

⁴³ *LEM*, 1 Apr. 1939, ‘Camera News’ section, annual dance, at the Grand Hotel, of the staff of N. Corah and Sons Ltd, St Margaret’s Works.

⁴⁴ *LEM*, 1 Jan. 1939. Staff of J. Lulham and Co. Ltd. do actions to ‘Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree’ at a party at the Victoria Hotel. *LEM*, 9 Feb. 1939 members of the Stoneygate Rugby Football Club ‘do the Palais Glide’ at their annual dance at the Leicester Palais de Danse.

spectators and was covered in detail in the local newspapers. In the early years of the twentieth century other annual parades and displays had replaced the Rifle Volunteer camp. During the years preceding the 1914-18 war, the annual parade and inspection of the Leicester St John's Ambulance Corps on Victoria Park, in the presence of the Mayor and councillors, was an annual spectacle that drew the crowds.⁴⁵ Although the St John's Ambulance Brigade was a national organisation the civic ceremony surrounding the annual parade underlined the local identity of the Leicester corps. Such events also brought together the individual groups that formed the network of corps in all parts of the town and district, groups which had been developed as subsections of existing civil associations, such as the YMCA and the Leicester Working Men's Club⁴⁶ or else were attached to various workplaces.⁴⁷ The St John's Ambulance Corps, moreover, gave women a new opportunity to take part in civic ceremony. A report of the 1913 parade and inspection observed that 'the men and ladies in their smart and neat uniforms'⁴⁸ gave an impressive display of first aid work. The emergence of uniformed youth organisations, in particular the Boy Scouts in 1908 and the Girl Guides in 1920, also contributed various regular summer outdoor spectacles to the local calendar with parades, displays and camps all receiving generous press coverage in the interwar period.⁴⁹

In addition to the parades organised by uniformed groups, during the interwar years there were also parades and outdoor displays in aid of, or staged by, philanthropic institutions and associations. A popular way for a club to show local patriotism was to raise money for the Leicester Royal Infirmary. In 1902, for example, the Leicester Branch of the National Cyclists' Union held a large fancy dress parade which made

⁴⁵ See, for example, *LML*, 5 July 1913.

⁴⁶ This was the name of the first of many Working Men's Clubs in the town

⁴⁷ *LCLM*, 29 Nov. 1893 carried a report describing the formation of a St John's Ambulance group at the Leicester Working Men's Club. At least 650 people showed an interest and attended the meeting. In 1884-85, classes were started at Leicester Working Men's College and were described in the annual report as 'exceedingly popular'. See A.J. Allaway, *Vaughan College Leicester, 1862-1962* (Leicester, 1962) 22-3. In *LDP*, 13 May 1902, there is a report of a prizegiving event at King's Hall presided over by the Mayor, in which the YMCA, Leicester and Wigston rail workers' groups and a group attached to the Leicester CWS Wheatsheaf (shoe)Works all received commendation.

⁴⁸ *LML*, 5 Jul. 1913.

⁴⁹ See Chapter Six for a discussion of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides which were national associations but like the St John's Ambulance Corps had strong local and civic roots.

its way through the town centre accompanied by an army of ‘street collectors’ and the Leicester Town and Excelsior brass bands, while in the interwar years the student rag group at University College held an annual horse and motor parade through the town in aid of the Infirmary.⁵⁰ Another yearly summer event in the 1920s and 1930s was the town send off given each year to the annual outing for Leicester blind people organised by the Wycliffe Society. In 1922, the press reported that crowds gathered in the Municipal Square to wave off ten charabancs carrying, in the words of *The Leicester Mercury*, ‘the blind of the city’ and in 1925 a newspaper described this regular occasion as ‘a triumphant procession through the town’.⁵¹ The organisation of this type of event was facilitated by the network of links built between different civil associations and the civil authorities. In the case of the 1922 Wycliffe Society outing, the Motor Coach Owners’ Association helped with the transport, and town councillor Frank Toone entertained the day trippers to tea in his garden at the end of the day. Councillor Toone was also the president of the Imperial brass band, who provided musical entertainment for the tea party guests.⁵² The entire occasion highlighted cooperation between the civic authorities and voluntary associations, and it aroused enough local patriotism among town residents to make many come each year and give the outing an enthusiastic send off.⁵³

⁵⁰ *LDP*, 21 Jul. 1902, National Union of Cyclists Parade; *LM*, 29 May 1928. Seventh annual horse and motor parade during Student Rag.

⁵¹ *LM*, 17 Jul. 1922 for the 1922 outing of Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind and *LM*, 1 Jul. 1925 for the 1925 outing. The annual outings continued unabated throughout the 1930s. A very well-attended one in 1937 took 450 blind people and their guides to Ashby de La Zouch, see D. Seaton, *Light Amid the Shadows* (Leicester, 1994), 68. Supporting the Wycliffe Society gave large numbers of people from across the class hierarchy the opportunity to contribute to social welfare in the city. The annual outing was just one item in a year long programme of highly publicised socials and outings and several leading councillors increased their local profile by organising annual parties for the Wycliffe Society, at their own expense. See ROLLR, DE 2730/122, records of the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind, scrapbook of press cuttings. Moreover, a range of firms and voluntary associations, for example, the Cooperative Society and the Imperial Typewriter Co., forged links with the Wycliffe Society by organizing socials for them on their own premises. See Seaton, *Light Amid the Shadows*, 68.

⁵² *LM*, 17 Jul. 1922.

⁵³ The examples given here are only some of the regular parades in the interwar years. In 1939, for instance, some other parades included: *LEM*, 2 Jun. 1939, the Old Contemptibles’ parade, attended by the Mayor; *LEM*, 1 Jun. 1939, the Leicester City Police parade; 27 Apr. 1939, Leicester Cadet Sea Corps annual inspection; and *LEM*, 6 May 1939, the send-off for children departing for the Poor Boys’ and Girls’ Summer Camp from London Road station. All these parades involved a display of local patriotism.

From the 1880s to 1939, August and early September continued to be a season when the various flower and horticultural societies put on their shows. In 1886, the popularity of gardening encouraged the Town Council to launch a regular August bank holiday event, the Leicester Abbey Park Flower Show, which ran successfully until 1932. From initial, low key success the flower show had mushroomed by the 1890s into an elaborate annual civic ritual with a grand opening ceremony, an official luncheon with speeches and toasts to the town, entertainment from brass bands, a water sports gala and fireworks.⁵⁴ The Town Council Parks Department were responsible for the event but it was, in fact, managed in partnership with various voluntary associations. The Leicester Rowing and Swimming Clubs organised the aquatic sports, local brass bands provided the music, Leicester and Leicestershire Beekeepers' Association provided a bees and honey exhibition, St John's Ambulance were on hand to provide first aid and the regular activities of the allotment societies supported a substantial number of entries for the 'cottagers class' of the show. The given reason why the Town Council had sponsored the show in 1886 was to pay for music in the parks during the summer months and this remained an objective until the show closed in 1932.⁵⁵ However, it was soon apparent that the show brought other advantages too. At the 1902 show, the Mayor commented on the large number of entries from cottagers.⁵⁶ At a relatively low point in the shoe industry, working class entries to the show were high, suggesting a symbolic civic unity at a time of potential class division. At the other end of the scale, the show was attracting entries from well-known horticulturalists all over the country and railway companies were providing excursion trains to the flower show, all of which clearly brought prestige to the town. After the 1893 show the *Leicester Daily Post* reporter smugly commented

⁵⁴ See, for example, *LDP*, 9 Aug. 1893. This same format was sustained with minor changes until the 1930s. As illustrated by the press reports *LDP*, 6 Aug. 1902, *LML*, 9 Aug. 1913, *LML*, 8 Aug. 1920, *LEM*, 7 Aug. 1928 and *LEM*, 2 Aug. 1932.

⁵⁵ The 'music in the parks' project, as well as providing concerts also led in the Edwardian years to a fashion for open air dancing in the parks on summer evenings, which added a new swathe of social occasions to the summer calendar. These dances were apparently popular with young people, no doubt because they were cost free and, in these pre-dance hall years gave a new freedom to meet and mix. The music was also part of a mission to bring culture to the masses, Mayor Edward Wood in his speech at the Abbey Park Show civic luncheon observed that the 'music in the parks' project was improving public taste, from which it can be speculated that the bands played 'light classics', see *LDP*, 6 Aug. 1902.

⁵⁶ *LDP*, 6 Aug. 1902.

on the visitors saying ‘It is to be hoped that the sight of such an admirable civic possession stimulated their envy’ and then added that ‘it is perhaps permissible for Leicester people on such an occasion to indulge in a feeling of local patriotism and self righteousness’.⁵⁷

The flower show retained the same format, with only very minor alterations, until its demise and it continued to be supported by the local population. It was suspended during the First World War but, by 1920, was returned to its former glory with the original programme all intact. 1928 was recorded as a particularly profitable year, but then disaster struck and three years of bad weather seriously affected the takings. Additionally, after the success and innovation of the Leicester Pageant in 1932, some influential voices among the social and business leaders of the city suggested that the old format looked stale.⁵⁸ The event came to an end, not because the Leicester residents had lost enthusiasm for an annual civic event, but because they believed the city deserved an updated programme. Accordingly, after the final show in 1932, the idea of an annual civic event was not lost but was returned to the local calendar after the second war, revamped and rebranded as ‘The City of Leicester Show’.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, interest in gardening was sustained at neighbourhood level by privately organised clubs. Again the local press packaged and represented these local efforts as a combined Leicester event and a regular date for the calendar. When five suburban societies staged their fetes and flower shows on one Saturday in August 1939, the *Leicester Evening Mail* covered all the events, headlined the ‘Camera News’ page ‘Leicester’s many fetes and shows’ and commented that ‘the annual flower show and fete season is in full swing in Leicester’.⁶⁰ The Abbey Park Flower Show ran for almost the entire fifty years between two exceptional civic ceremonies in Leicester, the opening of Abbey Park by the Prince of Wales in 1882 and the Leicester Pageant

⁵⁷ *LDP*, 9 Aug. 1893.

⁵⁸ *LEM*, 4 Aug. 1932.

⁵⁹ See ULL, City Council minutes, *Minutes of Proceedings of the Council*, 9 November 1946 to 22 October, 1946, 121-122. A proposal by J.W. Wale of the Parks and Recreation Grounds committee to revive the Abbey Park Flower Show, with the first show to be held in 1947 was passed. ROLLR, L.712, a programme for the event shows that in 1947 the first City of Leicester Show and Festival was held at Abbey Park and opened by the Mayor.

⁶⁰ *LEM*, 19 Aug. 1939.

in 1932. While it was the exceptional occasions that drew the most publicity, it was most likely the regular rhythm of the annual civic show, supported by voluntary associations, with its ability to draw crowds year after year that contributed just as much to sustaining a local civic identity.

As previously discussed, the growth of sports associations from the 1880s drew in members from across the class spectrum into a hierarchy of clubs, and in the interwar period catered for the growing participation of women in sport.⁶¹ Correspondingly, an increasing number of regular sporting events became an important part of the annual urban cycle. These included the local football league matches of the winter and the cricket league and bowling contests of the summer in addition to the full range of other sports and games which had gained popularity in the city. Just as the newspaper photography of the 1930s brought alive the dances and socials of the winter, so the photographers brought alive, not only the sport itself, but the prize giving events and the parties arranged by winning clubs. For winter season sports these celebratory occasions tended to be arranged in May and in local newspapers, throughout that month, the familiar pictures of tables loaded with trophies and champions sitting down to dinner were an ongoing theme.⁶² At the end of the summer the process was repeated with the trophy presentations resulting from the summer sports.⁶³ There was also widespread sporting activity in the summer months outside the specialist sports clubs. In June 1939 the press carried many photographs of school sports days and some trade associations, firms and institutions also had annual sports occasions.⁶⁴ Photographic images of these activities concentrated in the local newspapers conveyed an image of sport as a shared activity that was bringing Leicester people together throughout the city.

There were obvious continuities in the Leicester annual cycle over the years between the early 1880s and 1939. Religious, civic and associational calendars, as well as the

⁶¹ See Chapter Three.

⁶² *LEM*, 'Camera News', 5 May 1939 is an example of this.

⁶³ See, for example, *LEM*, 'Camera News' 15 Sept. 1938.

⁶⁴ Examples of these in were Imperial Typewriters Ltd., see *LEM*, 12 Jun. 1939, *LEM*, 16 Jun. 1939 Leicester Credit Drapers Association, and the Leicester Royal Infirmary, *LEM*, 1 Jul. 1939.

dictates of weather conditions continued to combine in shaping the outline of an overarching local calendar. Moreover, some monthly patterns, such as preferred times for annual meetings remained the same though the patterns were less clearly delineated, while the programmes of some longstanding societies remained constant, though less dominant. A major change, however, was apparent in the growth and range of organised events and the increased numbers of people who participated in these occasions, a change which corresponded to the increase in numbers and range of civil associations and which gained its own momentum with the emergence of a more democratic polity and improved standards of living. The Leicester calendar of 1939 differed from the calendar of the 1870s and early 1880s because, for a large number of people, it represented a more participatory local culture. Town residents were no longer just invited to spectate or be instructed instead they actively contributed to urban life, they voted, raised funds for charity, and when they opened a Leicester newspaper, as well as reading about their social and political leaders, they also had a good chance of reading an account or seeing a photograph of the activities of their own recreational club.

The mayor's annual schedule of visits.

The coverage of associational events in the local newspapers suggested a social coherence in Leicester life and conveyed a perception that the town was 'not a mere formless collection of inhabitants...but a place with a character and identity of its own'.⁶⁵ A further strand of activity which shaped the yearly calendar and gave it a particular civic stamp, however, was the mayor's annual schedule of visits which traced a map of civic institutions and leading voluntary associations in the town. The ritual of the mayor's visit symbolised the link between the civic authority and the institution or groups visited, stressing the importance of those involved to the life of the town. Moreover, the programme of visits, by implication, connected all those included in the schedule to each other, representing them as key elements of a diverse

⁶⁵J. Beckett, *City Status in the British Isles, 1830-2002* (Aldershot, 2005), 4. This description of urban life was part of the 1907 Home Office criteria for city status, see PRO HO 45/10103/B24512, quoted by Beckett. City status was a prize that Leicester civic authorities were striving for from their first unsuccessful application in 1889 to their last and successful application in 1919.

but harmonious local community. The publicity given to mayoral visits by the press further conveyed this message to a wide audience of town residents.

Towards the turn of the century, the prestige of the Leicester mayoralty had been enhanced not only by increased ceremony but also by the election of a series of high profile and active mayors who were leading employers in the town, the most notable of whom were Israel Hart, Thomas Wright and Edward Wood, who all took office more than once during the 1880s and 1890s and added new items to the mayoral schedule. By the early Edwardian period, for example, a regular mayoral visit to the Leicester workhouse on Christmas Day had become an ‘invented tradition’ which, in the nature of such traditions, was an opportunity to convey particular values and beliefs.⁶⁶ The Christmas workhouse visit gave the mayor a symbolic opportunity to act out communal responsibility for the poor of the town. This corresponded not only with Christian ideals appropriate to the season but also with the more collectivist approach of the New Liberalism that accompanied the changing national attitudes to social welfare at this time.⁶⁷ This innovation was continued and developed, with the programme expanding to include hospitals and other care homes and if by 1938, the workhouse had officially disappeared, the mayor still conducted a Christmas civic visit to the poor and sick, a visit that had grown to cover eleven different institutions municipally and voluntarily run institutions.⁶⁸ Newspaper photography of the late 1930s again gave the opportunity to drive home a point, with pictures of the mayor inspecting patients’ Christmas food and joining a group of nurses round the piano for carol singing, the images conveying a message of civic concern for the unfortunate and the value of communal bonds.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction’ in (eds), E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 1-15. Edward Wood and the Mayoress made a typical Christmas workhouse visit in 1902, greeting inmates and approving the special food and privileges granted for the holiday, *LDP*, 26 Dec. 1902.

⁶⁷ See, for example, S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1979), 107-13.

⁶⁸ *LEM*, 27 Dec. 1938.

⁶⁹ See for example, *LEM*, 27 Dec. 1938.

In the Edwardian and pre-war years, in addition to the Christmas visits, there was a full and ongoing programme of mayoral visits which continued throughout the annual cycle. This was not just a public relations exercise imposed by the civic authorities. A book of correspondence belonging to Charles Lakin, who was mayor during 1909-10, shows that he received a constant stream of eager invitations from all types of voluntary institutions and associations including commercial, educational, philanthropic and sporting groups as well as from churches, chapels and schools.⁷⁰ These bodies clearly welcomed the ritual of a mayoral visit, their enthusiasm demonstrating their support for the civic ideal and their aspiration to be integrated into the network of local associational culture. Lakin's replies show that he accepted a heavy schedule and that he put Leicester invitations first, underlining the importance placed by the civic leadership on keeping contact with and honouring the various groups in the town. The range of his acceptances also shows that he valued contact with a wide variety of groups, recognising all sorts of social activity as a valuable part of urban life. In the case of interest groups, impartiality was maintained as an incident involving a temperance group illustrates. Lakin had agreed to attend a meeting of The Good Templars. However, his acceptance was withdrawn with some annoyance when the group publicised the meeting as being chaired by the Mayor. Attendance was one thing, taking the chair was another⁷¹ In cases where groups promoted a divisive political agenda, the mayor had to appear to remain detached, assuming the same unifying role locally that royalty assumed at national level.

Although Lakin visited a comprehensive range of voluntary institutions and groups during the year, particular importance was placed on mayoral attendance at the events of leading local philanthropic institutions and associations. Thus in the arrangement of his schedule, an invitation to the Leicester Glee Club or the Rovers' Bicycle Club dinner could be regretfully turned down if necessary, but events organised by an association for disabled people such as the Leicester Wycliffe Society for Helping the

⁷⁰ ROLLR, DE 2838/3811, a book of letters belonging to the Mayor, Charles Lakin.

⁷¹ ROLLR, DE 2838/3811, letter dated 10 Jan 1910.

Blind or the Leicester Guild of the Crippled were routinely accepted.⁷² Despite the first steps to greater state intervention, local voluntary associations were still the leading actors in the management of local social welfare. Raising money for Leicester projects was a unifying factor among town residents and gave an opportunity for working class people to feel a greater sense of ownership and involvement with important local institutions.⁷³ In this way philanthropic institutions and associations helped support the civic ideal and the preferential treatment they received by the mayor reflected this.

In the interwar years the informal and voluntary sector retained their importance in the provision of social welfare services. Although public welfare services had increased they were not extensive enough to displace voluntarism and in many urban areas, they were ‘increasingly intertwined’.⁷⁴ The Leicester mayor’s annual programme of visits in the 1920s and 1930s continued to reflect the importance placed by the mayor on visits to philanthropic associations. This was illustrated by an argument that erupted in January 1928 between the serving mayor James Thomas and Thomas Crew, president of the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind. Thomas Crew failed to notify James Thomas in time of the date of an annual tea in which the mayor customarily participated and this resulted in the embarrassment of Mayor Thomas as he missed the occasion. The Mayor’s displeasure at this error was pointedly reported in the *Leicester Mail*, as was Mr Crew’s subsequent apology.⁷⁵ The Wycliffe Society was an example of a body that had become ‘increasingly intertwined’ with the local state by accepting responsibility for administering services under the provisions of the Blind People’s Act, 1920. Given that the society held this formal position the civic authorities clearly took the attitude that public

⁷² ROLLR, DE 2838/3811.

⁷³ J.V. Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society: a History of Hospital Development in Manchester and its Region 1752-1946* (Manchester, 1986), 1-7. Pickstone comments on the growth of the perception of voluntarily-run hospitals as ‘major symbolic institutions of local solidarity from the mid nineteenth century onwards’, 7. By the interwar years, voluntary hospitals, especially in industrial towns had largely come to be supported by the local men and women who used them. The NHS inherited the goodwill that came from the perception of such hospitals as community institutions.

⁷⁴ M. Dupree, ‘The provision of social services’ in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1750-1950 (Cambridge, 2001), 378.

⁷⁵ *LEM*, 4 Jan. 1938.

demonstrations of partnership between the two bodies should be scrupulously maintained. A decade later in 1939, press photographs of a party at the Wycliffe Society, a party that did run to plan, showed the Mayor, Thomas Gooding, wearing his chain of office but serving a blind guest from a jug at the same time.⁷⁶ The message conveyed was both one of authority and service as well as partnership with the members of the Wycliffe Society who were hosting the event.

For a while, during his time as mayor, James Thomas wrote a diary feature for the *Leicester Mail* which reviewed the most important civic engagements of his month.⁷⁷ This gives further insight into which events were prioritised by the civic authorities at a point almost midway in the interwar years. For example, in the review for March 1928 the Mayor selected eight out of thirty engagements for special mention. These included: an annual ceremony where schoolchildren presented purses of money to the Wycliffe Society, the annual meeting of the Saturday Hospital Society,⁷⁸ and a Scouts' rally. In addition to this there were three occasions in aid of the Infirmary: a performance of Ruddigore, by the Leicester Music and Dramatic Society, a brass band festival, featuring 52 different bands, and the Hospital Sunday service at the Jewish Synagogue. Also listed were the final of the English Cup at the Leicester City Ground between Arsenal and Blackburn Rovers, which the Mayor attended as 'first citizen'; and, finally, the opening of an elementary school on the newly-built Park council estate.⁷⁹ The range of events in this civic programme was varied although again the emphasis on social welfare was clear, with five of the events concerned with local causes and in particular, with the Infirmary. The cultural activities included in the programme were part of the efforts to raise money for the Infirmary but also contributed in other ways to promoting social cohesion. The Leicester Brass Band Festival, for example, although hosted by the town, brought county and town bands together in a friendly competitive setting building links between the individual

⁷⁶ *LEM*, 5 Jan. 1938.

⁷⁷ This project only seems to have lasted for two months after which it 'fizzled out' without explanation.

⁷⁸ This was a society which collected regular contributions from working people to the Leicester Royal Infirmary, which entitled them to treatment.

⁷⁹ *LML*, 4 Apr. 1928.

bands in a way that echoed the activities of the various local sports' leagues, while the Leicester Musical and Dramatic Society was a role model for the many amateur dramatics groups that brought people together in church and school halls throughout the town. Of the remaining items on the Mayor's agenda, hosting the cup final was a opportunity for promoting the city to outsiders, while the civic visit to the Leicester synagogue and the school opening on the Park council estate symbolised bonds with a sizeable ethnic minority and a working class housing estate where the danger of social exclusion from the rest of urban life was high.⁸⁰

Freemasonry: the continuing involvement of businessmen and professionals

The argument so far has been that between 1870 and 1939, the number of voluntary associations increased in Leicester as did the range of people involved in associational life. Alongside this, significant numbers of professionals and successful local businessmen, some with longstanding family roots in Leicester, maintained their involvement in the voluntary associations which had been at the heart of the more elitist public culture of the nineteenth century.⁸¹ This aspect of Leicester was in contrast to certain other provincial and industrial cities, where the departure of the middle class from the cultural institutions of the city from the late Victorian years onwards, has been highlighted.⁸² Because of this, a distinctive local feature of the culture created by the urban elites in the nineteenth century was sustained and because these longstanding associations also contributed to civic and public affairs, they remained influential. One example of this was the Leicester 'Lit and Phil'. Members of the Society played an important role in the establishment of University College in 1921 and throughout the interwar decades, membership lists included well-

⁸⁰ See Chapter One.

⁸¹ See D. Reeder, 'Introduction' in D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stoud, 1993), xii. Reeder observes that during the interwar years 'the characteristic pattern of Leicester commerce was that of the family business' and this exercised a profound influence in maintaining a close-knit middle class society. See also C. Wessel, 'Associational life in late Victorian Leicester: the making of a new civil society', University of Leicester M.A. thesis, 2003. Wessel argues that in the 1880s a group of 50 families emerged in Leicester, which formed a new urban elite. The majority of these families ran family businesses. New family businesses were added to these in the pre-first war and interwar years, both in the staples of hosiery and footwear but also in new trades and industry as the local economy began to diversify.

⁸² See Gunn, *Public Culture*, 187-197.

known manufacturing names such as Gimson, Gee and Corah as well as leading professionals.⁸³ Other examples of continuity were the Leicestershire Archaeological Society and the Leicester Kyrle Society, reborn in 1928 as the Leicester Civic Society. This section, however, focuses, in particular, on the Leicester Masonic lodges for which these decades were a time of increase. Several aspects of Freemasonry over the period are highlighted. These aspects include the growth in lodges and membership, the links among different business areas and professions which Freemasonry both reflected and contributed to, and the active citizenship of Freemasons during the period. Freemasonry throughout the period 1870 to 1939 was an association which attracted members from the middle classes. The membership lists from the late Victorian period were comprised of businessmen and professionals, for example textile and footwear manufacturers, surgeons, solicitors, clergymen and members of the local regiment. In the interwar years Freemasonry continued to attract local businessmen and professionals and had also expanded to include more individuals from the lower strata of the middle classes, for example white collar workers and teachers.⁸⁴ The popularity and growth of Freemasonry in Leicester over these decades reflected and contributed to the continued existence of a cohesive local middle class.

Growth in the range of civil associations and changes in the style of journalism meant that the longstanding associations of the urban elites received less publicity by the end of the period than they had at the beginning. Local Freemasonry seemed to court

⁸³ See Chapter Six for more extensive discussion about the founding of University College. The establishment of University College created a new and professionalised intellectual leadership in Leicester. However, the 'Lit and Phil' worked in partnership with staff at the College and the Leicester School of Technology and continued to be productive during the 1920s and 1930s. Specialist sections within the Society had been fully developed since the 1880s and the Geology and Botany section, in particular, engaged in ambitious and extensive research. See F.B. Lott, *The Centenary Book of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society* (Leicester, 1935), 188-251.

⁸⁴ The membership lists are included in the annual publication *The Freemasons' Calendar and Directory for the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*, copies of which are held at Freemasons' Hall, Leicester (FHL)

In FHL, A.N. Newman, *The History of St John's Lodge, no. 279, Leicester 1790-1990*, centenary booklet, appendix B, 35-87 gives the occupations of membership of St John's Lodge. After the First World War, managers of various types, for example, 'departmental manager' and 'insurance superintendent' are more frequently listed than before the war. In a recorded interview on 15 Jan. 2008, Professor A.N. Newman confirmed that the Flaming Torch lodge, established in 1926, had a large membership of teachers. The flaming torch symbol represented education.

publicity in the late Victorian decades, when, for example, Freemasons as a group had taken part in ceremonies to mark the opening of the Town Hall Square in 1876 and the Royal Visit in 1882.⁸⁵ It has been observed that, nationally, by interwar years, a greater reticence had set in and that the days of Masonic participation in civic processions had passed,⁸⁶ and it is true that Freemasons were not a visible presence in the Leicester Pageant, the biggest civic spectacle of the interwar decades. However, there were some occasions in Leicester when Masonic ritual was performed in a civic context during the interwar years. In 1919, Leicester Freemasons subscribed £5000 for the building of a new orthopaedic department at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. The laying of the foundation stone was marked by a Masonic procession and a ceremony including ‘the strewing of corn, the pouring of wine and oil and the sprinkling of salt’. This was done in the presence of the Mayor who afterwards gave a speech of thanks and the occasion was fully reported on the front page of the *Leicester Mercury*.⁸⁷ In 1927, another event was staged when St Martin’s Church in recognition of Leicester’s promotion to city status was hallowed as a Cathedral. This time the press reported that a procession of 800 Masons in regalia had marched to the Cathedral to take part in a special service.⁸⁸ Both these occasions showed that local Freemasons continued to identify themselves with civic life.

A further occasion which attracted public attention, was the funeral of Sir Frederick Oliver in August 1939.⁸⁹ Oliver was the Provincial Grand Master of the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland and although this was a privately organised event, the large number of mourners who represented both the civic authorities and a wide range of voluntary associations gave the occasion the quality of a local state funeral. In addition to his Masonic position, Oliver was well-known in the city and county for many other reasons. He was a member of a leading family firm of shoe manufacturers, and a member of the Leicester Chamber of Commerce. He had also

⁸⁵ See Chapter Two.

⁸⁶ J. Hamill, *The History of English Freemasonry* (Addlestone, 1994), 94.

⁸⁷ *LM*, 28 Jul. 1919.

⁸⁸ *LM*, 25 Feb. 1927.

⁸⁹ The details given here about Sir Frederick Oliver and the ceremony and guests at his funeral are taken from accounts in the local press. See *LM*, 11 Aug. 1939 and *LEM*, 11 Aug. 1939.

served as Lord Lieutenant of the county, was a lay canon at the Cathedral, an honorary lieutenant colonel in the Leicestershire Regiment and a governor of the Leicester Royal Infirmary. Among the mourners were the Mayor and Mayoress of Leicester and 28 aldermen and councillors, the Bishop of Leicester, a military party from the regiment and representatives of at least twenty city-based civil associations including commercial, philanthropic, educational, musical, sports and horticultural groups with which Oliver had a connection. There was substantial Masonic input to the occasion. A group of Freemasons kept an overnight vigil in the Cathedral before the funeral and 300 attended the service where, dressed in black frock coats and white gloves, they ‘formed a solid square’. At the burial in Knighton churchyard, they filed past the grave where they threw sprigs of acacia on to the lowered coffin, according to Masonic custom. Public interest in the funeral was demonstrated by the thousands of town residents who crowded the roads around Leicester Cathedral waiting to catch sight of the funeral cortege, while the local press gave extensive coverage of the event, with photographs of the Freemasons attending the service and the Masonic ceremony at the graveside.⁹⁰ The personality and funeral of Frederick Oliver mirrored aspects of Freemasonry as an association. The special graveside ceremony, the vigil and clothes worn by Freemasons in attendance, reflected the importance of private Masonic ritual as a bond within the association, while the range of guests and the Cathedral venue illustrated the more outward looking aspects of Freemasonry, the participation in city life and the interests and loyalties and that were common among members. A partnership of national and local loyalty was symbolised at the funeral. Inside Freemasonry, Frederick Oliver had been the leading local representative in a national association. Likewise, in the outside world, as Lord Lieutenant, the King’s representative in Leicestershire, he had also combined national and local identities. The military party and the leading clergy who attended the funeral were additional symbols of combined national and local loyalty and their presence, moreover, mirrored the membership of local lodges which included clergymen and members of

⁹⁰ W.W. Glover, *The Final Tribute: the Masonic Funeral Service and its Decline within the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland* (undated pamphlet), 50, relates that ‘this public demonstration of a Masonic tribute of fraternal affection to a respected brother was the last such occasion within this Province to be recorded’.

the Leicestershire regiment. As well as a personal tribute to Frederick Oliver, the Mayor and party of councillors at the funeral reflected the support that Freemasons gave to the civic ideal, by donating money to public causes and standing for the Town Council. The Mayor, Thomas Gooding was himself a Freemason who held membership of one of the town lodges.⁹¹ In addition to this, the large number of representatives from civil associations at the funeral was also a reminder of the participation by masons in wider local civil society. The occasion again underlined that, despite the private aspects of Freemasonry, Freemasons were integrated into city life through their participation in other local institutions and groups.

The large turnout of Freemasons at Sir Frederick Oliver's funeral highlighted the continuing popularity of Freemasonry in the late 1930s. The years between 1870 and 1939 had been years of growth locally, both in the number of lodges established (see fig. 9) and membership numbers. Freemasonry was headed by Grand Lodge in London while the rest of the country was divided into Masonic provinces, the local one being the province of Leicestershire and Rutland. This structure ensured that although Freemasonry was a national, indeed international association, there was also a strong local identity. The local province had its own Provincial Grand Lodge, Grand Master and officers and within the province were the craft lodges.⁹² The growth of membership and increase in lodges can be traced from *The Freemasons Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland* which was issued annually and included details of all lodges including lists of members.⁹³ In the mid-nineteenth century there had been a general revitalisation of Freemasonry outside London and in Leicestershire and Rutland several new lodges had been founded in

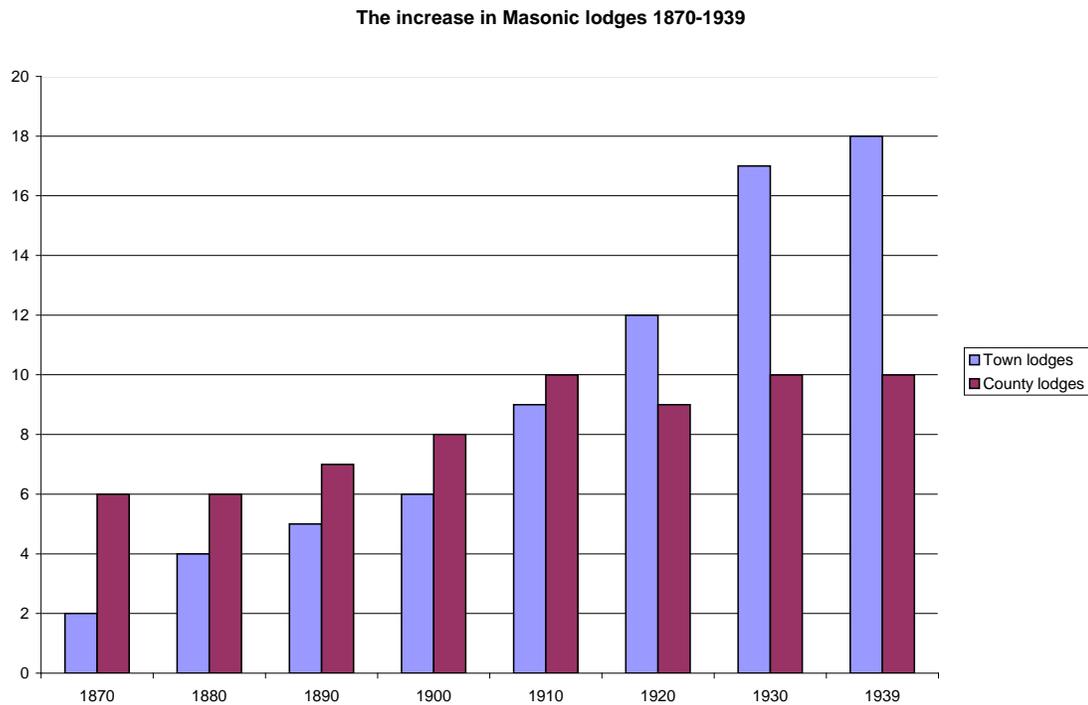
⁹¹ Thomas Gooding was a member of Golden Fleece Lodge, see lists of lodge masters on wall at Freemasons Hall in Leicester and FHL, *The Freemasons Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*, 1939.

⁹² See Hamill, *English Freemasonry*, 47-68 for a description of the Grand Lodge system in London and the Masonic Provinces.

⁹³ The copies of FHL, *The Freemasons Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*, used in this research were 1873, the first available calendar, and 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1939. The information given here about numbers of lodges and members is derived from these.

the various county towns,⁹⁴ although by 1870 there were still only two lodges in the town of Leicester: St John's Lodge, which had been established in 1790 and John of Gaunt Lodge which had been founded in 1846.

Fig. 9.



Source: FHL, based on information in the *Freemasons' Calendar and Directory for the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*

However, the number of town lodges steadily grew in the last decades of the century and in the immediate pre war period there were ten town lodges, all of which held their meetings at the new Freemasons Hall in Leicester, which had been opened in 1910. After the war there was further expansion and by 1939 there were eighteen lodges in Leicester. Between 1870 and 1939 the combined lodge membership in Leicester rose from 137 to 1530. This reflected the increase in town population and a

⁹⁴ The revitalisation of local Freemasonry was largely due to the efforts of one individual William Kelly, who was involved in establishing nine lodges between 1846 and 1884. See W. Kelly, *Fifty Years of Masonic Reminiscences* (Leicester, 1888), 1-41.

general growth in associational life, but it also showed that despite the many new clubs and societies on offer Freemasonry retained its attraction.

The concept of ‘social capital’ and related notions of ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ were used in Chapter Four to analyse ties within and among a particular group of associations. This terminology is also helpful in highlighting both the ties which linked individuals and groups within Leicester Freemasonry as well as the involvement of Masons with city life. To recap, the term ‘social capital’ has been used to describe the benefits of interdependence among individuals and groups.⁹⁵ It has been argued that participation in voluntary associations promotes this type of interdependence and that this both strengthens the social fabric and encourages active citizenship among those involved. ‘Bonding’ refers to the ties which create identity in an exclusive group, while ‘bridging’ is more outward looking and refers to the connections made across social boundaries and among different groups. The two however are not mutually exclusive as associations, including Freemasonry, can be inward looking in some ways, but outward looking in others. With regard to ‘bonding’ within Leicester Freemasonry, common aspects which linked the membership throughout the period 1870 to 1939 included social class, shared locality, Masonic fellowship and principles, and the annual calendar of Masonic meetings. With regard to bridging, the association brought different occupational groups within the middle classes together, in addition, no religious groups were excluded and by the interwar years a Temperance Lodge had been established. Moreover, Freemasons frequently bridged boundaries and demonstrated active citizenship by serving on the Town Council and by participation in other leading voluntary associations such as the ‘Lit and Phil’, the Chamber of Commerce and, during the interwar years, the Rotary Club.

At a general level, Masonic life linked all Masons in a brotherhood. Each Mason had the shared experience of the ceremonies that accompanied initiation and passing from the first to the third degree. Moreover, Masonic ritual taught ‘a system of morality,

⁹⁵ R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York, 2000), 1-28.

veiled in allegory and illustrated in symbols' to which all Masons were exposed.⁹⁶ More specifically, the lodge system developed in the organisation encouraged individuals to bond in groups. The local Leicester lodges shared an important identity of belonging to the same Masonic province, but each lodge also had its separate identity. Lodges were sustained by a regular diary of meetings and the shape of this calendar was very similar in 1939 to how it had been in the 1870s.⁹⁷ St John's Lodge, for example, had nine to ten meetings a year, with a break over the summer months and the installation of a new lodge master and the annual festival at the end of each year. Meetings included business concerning the administration of the lodge, but the main focus of the meeting was the ritual work involved in the making of new masons, or the annual installation of the new master. Meetings were always followed by a formal dinner, regarded as an important expression of fellowship. In addition to the bonding encouraged by these activities, the identity of each lodge was supported by the lodge history and traditions and symbols such as the lodge banner and badge.

The Masonic lodge was a self-contained unit, but boundaries between lodges were bridged in a number of ways creating a cohesive network. One way was through the coordination provided by the Provincial Grand Lodge which notified lodges of information they needed to know or shared events they needed to attend. As membership grew and lodges became overpopulated, members of established lodges founded new lodges, and were quite likely to retain membership of the old lodge as well as the new. In 1890, about six per cent of Masons in town lodges were members of more than one lodge in the Province while in 1939 this had risen slightly to about seven per cent.⁹⁸ In 1892, the establishment of a new lodge, the Lodge of Research also contributed to a bridging of boundaries between lodges. The aim of the lodge

⁹⁶ Hamill, *The History of English Freemasonry*, 25.

⁹⁷ In 1873, for example, St John's Lodge had nine meetings with a break from July to October and the installation of the new master in December. In 1939, St John's had ten meetings with a break from June to September, with the installation of a new master in January.

⁹⁸ All the information given in this paragraph is derived from the membership lists of the lodge given in FHL, *The Freemasons Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*. See note 10.

was to research aspects of Freemasonry and to produce and present related papers.⁹⁹ However, from the outset this lodge also became a meeting place for senior members from a range of lodges in both the town and county. Every individual who joined the Lodge of Research was already a member and generally a past master of another lodge. Even if it was not the particular intention of the founders of the Lodge of Research, arguably the lodge strengthened communication and coordination between lodges in the Province, creating a stronger network. Although the proportion of Masons in town lodges with membership of more than one lodge increased only slightly from the late Victorian decades the pattern of membership changed. At the beginning of the period the town lodges in Leicester generally included a number of Masons who held dual membership with one of the county lodges. By the interwar years, with the exception of the Lodge of Research, where there continued to be a balance of town and county representatives, this became less common. town lodges during these later years were more likely to overlap with other town lodges, forming a denser network in the urban area. In this way the development of the town Masonic lodges reflected the general development between 1870 and 1939 of a denser associational life in the city.¹⁰⁰

A lodge could provide a meeting place where there was considerable opportunity for Masons to bridge occupational boundaries, and meet different types of people. This was the situation in St John's Lodge where between 1870 and 1939, approximately 500 new members joined representing well over 150 occupations. Within this mix there were, of course, blocks of members from the same professional or business occupation which meant there was also the opportunity to reinforce existing networks. Patterns in the development of local industry were reflected in the membership, with an influx of boot and shoe manufacturers in the 1890s and engineers in the 1900s, while in the interwar period an increased number of managers

⁹⁹ See Hamill, *The History of English Freemasonry*, 81, for a description of the goals and practice of the Lodges of Research.

¹⁰⁰ Membership of orders related to Freemasonry such as the Order of the Royal Arch also brought members of different lodges together. For example, from the 1870s onwards the Fortitude chapter of the Royal Arch was attached to St John's Lodge but members from a cross section of lodges became members of the Chapter. See FHL, Membership register for chapters of the Royal Arch.

among the entrants reflected the growth in white collar jobs.¹⁰¹ A survey of records, from the turn of the century shows that only about one quarter of new candidates in this lodge were, in fact, proposed or seconded by a colleague in their own or in an obviously related occupation, suggesting that candidates had not necessarily met their sponsor through work.¹⁰² This serves as a reminder of the variety of ways in which town residents could make contact, for example, through church and chapel or through membership of the other clubs and societies in the town.

Masonic life offered opportunities for members of different occupations to meet, however, a shared profession was a bonding factor within some lodges. One notable example of this was Albert Edward Lodge, founded in 1875 which from the late Victorian period until 1939 and beyond was characterised by the large number of members who were either in or connected to the medical profession. When the lodge was first established, one quarter of the sixteen founding members were surgeons. By 1900 this had risen to one third and by 1930 two thirds of the 55 lodge members were health professionals.¹⁰³ This proportion declined a little by 1939, but still remained over half the total membership. Records over the period 1899 to 1940 show that, in all but a handful of cases, health professionals proposed and seconded each other for lodge membership, indicating that the lodge reinforced rather than created this particular network.¹⁰⁴

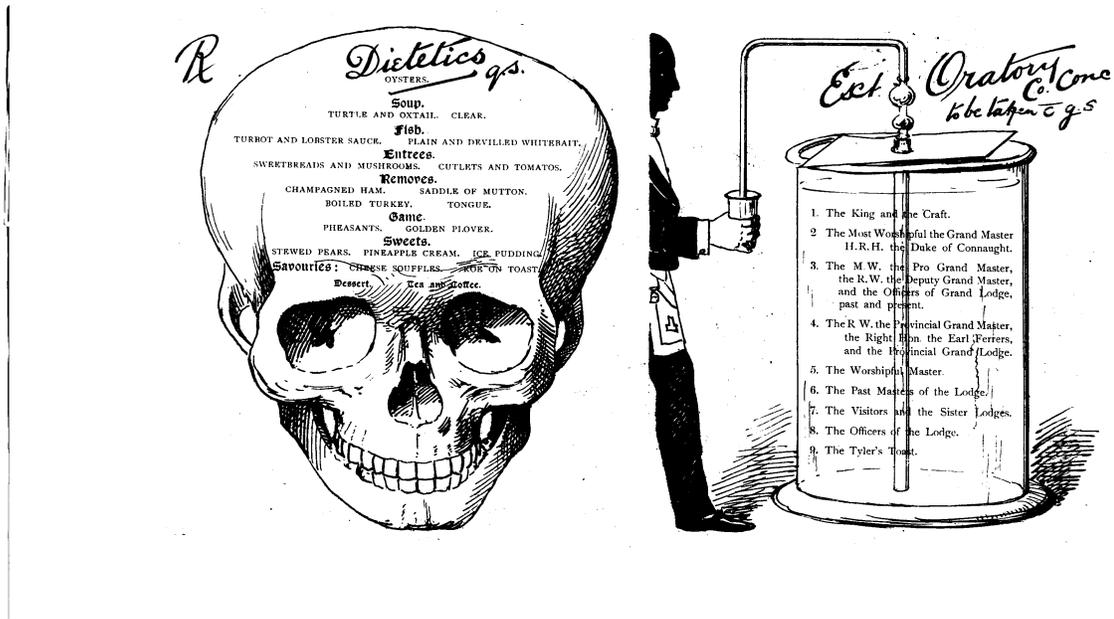
¹⁰¹ Information taken from membership list in FHL, Newman, *The History of St. John's Lodge*, appendix b, 35-87.

¹⁰² FHL, Summonses to meetings at St John's, Semper Eadem and Albert Edward lodges between 1890 and 1940. Before lodge meetings masons were issued with a summons giving outline details of the meeting including any details of candidates for initiation together with a proposer or seconder from the lodge. A survey was made of summonses to three lodges: St John's, Semper Eadem and Albert Edward, between 1890 and 1940, recording at approximately five year intervals the proposers and seconders for candidates during that year.

¹⁰³ Although the membership lists in FHL, *The Freemasons' Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland* did not list occupations, the qualifications of the medical professionals were listed, making it possible to estimate what proportion they formed of Albert Edward Lodge.

¹⁰⁴ See footnote 100.

Fig. 10.



A menu card from Albert Edward Lodge, 1905, with images of a skull and medical paraphernalia. The master of the lodge was a medical professional as were a large proportion of the membership.

Commentators have observed the increasing integration of the different strata of the middle class during the interwar years.¹⁰⁵ Reflecting this, the occupational status of the health professionals who joined the lodge became less exclusive during the 1920s and 1930s. Before the First World War, those who joined Albert Edward lodge were almost exclusively surgeons. However, between 1920 and 1930 there was an influx of doctors and also a number of dentists. Over two thirds of the 36 members who joined Albert Edward lodge during these ten years were health professionals and, among these, the doctors outnumbered the surgeons by approximately two to one.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ R. Trainer, 'The middle class' in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1750-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 698 and R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), 96.

¹⁰⁶ The large number of Scots names among the medical practitioners and dentists joining the lodge after the first war also suggest that for this group, Freemasonry may have been providing a club for

It has been argued that associational life encourages active citizenship and certainly Leicester Freemasons, throughout the period 1870-1939, involved themselves in public and civic affairs. The 1890s were a particular highpoint when three of the most memorable mayors of Victorian Leicester, who were also Masons, took office. These were Israel Hart from St John's lodge and Thomas Wright and Edward Wood from John of Gaunt lodge, all of whom served as mayor more than once. However, this was not a highpoint followed by a decline. On the contrary, seven of the mayors in the period 1900 to 1913 were Freemasons as were seven of the mayors in the interwar decades.¹⁰⁷ Six of the seven Freemasons who served as mayor during the 1920s and 1930s were local businessmen while one was a solicitor, illustrating that it was still the custom for business men as well as Freemasons to seek mayoral office. The proportion of town councillors, who were also businessmen, had dropped from about 60 percent in 1880 to about one third by 1900, but this proportion remained steady until 1939 and was to rise again to about half after the Second World War.¹⁰⁸

It was also the case that the most prominent and wealthy businessmen were no longer so active in municipal politics although a few 'giants' were left on the aldermanic bench in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰⁹ One of these was George Hilton, chairman of 'Hilton Shoes' a firm with multiple branches. Hilton, who served as mayor, was also a Freemason.

The Freemasons who served as mayor between 1870 and 1939 were from a range of lodges. There was, however, one lodge founded in 1906, where members demonstrated their collective interest in civic affairs by choosing the motto of the town 'Semper Eadem' as the name of the lodge. Several founder members were already prominent in public and civic affairs when the lodge was established. These included the serving mayor Stephen Hilton, two previous mayors, the Chief Constable, the Borough Engineer and the same Sir Frederick Oliver, future Lord

newcomers to town. One new entrant in 1920, Alexander Macleod, is later given in *Leicester Evening Mail*, in 1939, as the president of the Leicester Caledonian Society. *LEM*, 1 Dec. 1938.

¹⁰⁷ Mayors of Leicester who were also Masons are listed on the wall of Freemasons Hall in Leicester.

¹⁰⁸ P. Jones, 'Politics', 92.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

Lieutenant of the County whose funeral was described at the beginning of this section. The most notable years for 'Semper Eadem' lodge were the years leading up to the First World War. In 1907, members of the lodge formed approximately one fifth of the Town Council and in 1909 and 1913 two further members served as mayor. During the interwar years, the lodge continued to produce councillors and there was only one year when there were no members of Semper Eadem on the Town Council.¹¹⁰ About three quarters of the members who joined Semper Eadem Lodge between 1906 and 1939 were local business men, and about half were from the hosiery and footwear industries.¹¹¹ Their activities again showed that significant numbers of local businessmen involved themselves in both Freemasonry and public life.

In addition to serving on the Town Council, Freemasons, as previously observed, were active in other key civil associations. They were prominent, for example, among the office holders of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1890, approximately 100 firms and individuals were members of the Chamber of Commerce and about one third of the thirty elected officials were Masons. By 1939, membership of the Chamber had increased to nearly 1000 and there were 62 office holders, of which one third were still Masons.¹¹² Significant numbers of masons also took up membership of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' comprising about one seventh of the membership at the turn of the century and approximately one fifth in 1939. During the interwar years, Rotary Club membership was another popular choice with Masons. Established in Leicester in 1916, the Rotary Club had overtly civic aims with a constitution that stated that its object was to 'cooperate with others in civic, social and industrial development'.¹¹³ In the early 1920s, the Rotary Club was called upon to help soothe a row that erupted between Leicester and Nottingham over an ill fated plan to join

¹¹⁰ This information is derived from cross-referencing ULL, Leicester Town/City Council minutes entitled *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council*, 1906-39, with membership lists in *The Freemasons' Calendar and Directory for the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland*.

¹¹¹ See note 100. These are rough estimations are based on the survey described in this note.

¹¹² ROLLR, DE 2334/24 and DE 2334/29, records of the Leicester Chamber of Commerce, *Leicester and County Chamber of Commerce annual reports*, 1890 and 1939.

¹¹³ ROLLR, 21 D 69, rules and regulations of the Leicester Rotary Club adopted 25 Jul. 1916.

forces in an East Midlands University.¹¹⁴ Rotary also took the lead in 1931 in acquiring Swithland Wood for the enjoyment of Leicester residents and, in 1932, Rotary Club members contributed to the Leicester Pageant.¹¹⁵ Masons were involved in Rotary from the outset and in 1939 comprised just under one third of the membership.¹¹⁶

The continuing growth and success of the Leicester Masonic lodges during the interwar period illustrates a strand of cohesive middle class life in the town at the time. Of course, the middle class nature of the membership, although it had been extended to a wider stratum of the middle class, also highlighted the class division which characterised local and British society as a whole. The associations in Leicester at the time, which had a working class history, had their own traditions to offer. Socialism apart, the Friendly Societies and the Cooperative movement, for example, had always promoted mutual help and this was publicly celebrated. One notable occasion was in 1920, when large numbers of Leicester residents flocked to a very public arena, the city's De Montfort Hall to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Cooperative movement in Leicester and to reaffirm their commitment to cooperative values. The attendance of Leicester's first working class mayor, Jabez Chaplin, turned the occasion into a civic event.¹¹⁷ However, although social status and separate traditions divided Freemasons from associations with a more working class history, the fraternal style of Freemasonry and the use of ritual and regalia was mirrored by associations such as the Oddfellows, Foresters and the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. Just as a common language of annual meetings and other meeting procedures linked civil associations across the classes, so the use of quasi Masonic ritual by the Friendly Societies foregrounded the similarities between these groups and Freemasonry, despite the social divide.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ J. Simmons, *New University* (Leicester, 1958), 75.

¹¹⁵ B. Thompson, *Rotary in Leicester: a History of the Rotary Club of Leicester, 1916-1980* (Leicester, 1980) 15-18.

¹¹⁶ ROLLR, 21 D 69/16, membership list of Leicester Rotary Club, 1939.

¹¹⁷ *Leicester Pioneer*, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹¹⁸ The meetings of Friendly Societies were regularly reported in the press. A report in 1928 on the lodge meetings of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes shows that they, like the Freemasons, had a 'Semper Eadem' lodge. See *LEM*, 26 Apr. 1928.

In terms of fundraising for local charitable causes, Freemasons, the Working Men's Clubs and Friendly Societies also mirrored each other across the class divide. At the beginning of the interwar period in 1919, the Masonic lodges had donated money to build a new orthopaedic block at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, while at the end of the period in 1939, the network of Working Men's Clubs, including a 'Buffaloes' club conducted a fundraising drive which raised over £1000 for facilities at the Infirmary.¹¹⁹ Both sides of the divide, treated the support of local causes as a priority and in this way local identity and active citizenship cut across class differences. As far as civic office was concerned, the mayors who came from a background of Freemasonry were mirrored by mayors on the other side of the divide who came from a trade union background. While political differences may have been sharp, both mirrored each other in their commitment to local affairs and the civic ideal. In addition, despite the dividing lines of class, political attitudes and association did not always follow the stereotype. Unsurprisingly, five of the businessmen who were Freemasons and served as mayor during the interwar years were Conservatives. However, two of them, Thomas Walker and Harry Hand were not. Both were self made men who had been educated at Vaughan Working Men's College and Harry Hand, in particular, who was mayor in 1929, defied stereotype. He was a leading member of the Labour party, was involved in the Working Men's Club movement and was also a Freemason, thus demonstrating that social barriers were not as impermeable as they seemed.¹²⁰

This section has focused on the growth of Freemasonry in Leicester during the period 1870 to 1939. The purpose of this has been to show the continuity of this strand of middle class associational life over these decades and to illustrate some ways in which Masonic life both reflected and contributed to social cohesion among local professionals and businessmen. A further point that has been highlighted is that

¹¹⁹ See *LEM*, 5 Nov. 1938 and *LEM*, 29 Oct. 1938.

¹²⁰ See, <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/about-leicester/lordmayororcivic/roll-of-mayors>, last accessed 30 Mar. 2009 which gives employment details and political allegiance of Leicester mayors. See also *The Good Old Days, 1881-1981: One Hundred Years of Working Men's Clubs in Leicester* (Leicester, 1896), 18. which refers to Harry Hand in connection with Working Men's Clubs. The records of the Leicester Constitutional Club, ROLLR, DE 1574, show an overlap with the membership of Semper Eadem lodge in the Edwardian years and 1920s.

although Freemasonry had its secret aspects, it also had a public face. In terms of actual publicity this was considerable at the beginning of the period and there were still occasions in the 1920s and 1930s when Masonic ceremony was still combined with a civic occasion. With regard to involvement in public life, Freemasons were active throughout the period, both by serving on the Town Council and participating in leading voluntary associations which played a part in the management of town life.

In this chapter it has been argued that the perception of a unified overarching Leicester identity was still entirely plausible in 1939. Despite obvious differences among town residents, including class and ethnicity, the tendency was for the less powerful groups to seek inclusion through active citizenship, a trend which encouraged better integration. Improvements in the standard of living permitted many people to become involved in the expanding civil society through an ever increasing number of voluntary associations from interest groups to recreational clubs. Alongside this growth in associational life, several of the older leading associations survived and, in the case of Freemasonry, increased in popularity and membership. In this particular strand of associational life a line of connection with the elite local culture of the Victorian period was sustained which reflected and contributed to the continuation of a cohesive middle class in the city. However, the general growth of associational life, which involved large numbers of the wider population, meant that the exclusive groups were less at the centre of the stage. Newspaper reports and, in the interwar period, press photography helped to sustain the impression of a regular and vibrant annual calendar of events in which there was mass participation. At the same time, an increased focus on civic ceremony from the late Victorian years and the turn of the century kept the civic ideal in the foreground, with the Mayor's annual schedule of visits, in particular, helping to shape the mass of activity into a recognisable form and give it a civic stamp. The integration of women, however, the largest marginalised group in the 1870s, has only so far been touched on, and this will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Women and youth: promoting the civic ideal in the interwar years

It has been argued that suffragette demonstrations in provincial cities and towns contributed to the disintegration of local public culture in the years before 1914, and that protest marches by women demanding the vote were a display of conflict which visibly contradicted the message of civic unity conveyed by civic parades and celebrations.¹ In Leicester, between 1907 and 1914, there was an active branch of the Women's Social and Political Union which held demonstrations and well-attended public meetings and which was strong enough, by 1910, to open a permanent shop in the town centre.² The activities of the suffragettes, however, were only a short episode in Leicester, in comparison with the activities of the non-militant women's movement. The Leicester branch of the National Council of Women,³ for example, from the 1890s onwards and throughout the interwar years, promoted women's participation in public culture.⁴ They sought acceptance by showing solidarity with the civic ideal rather than challenging it and by demonstrating 'commitment to the locality' in a range of practical, social projects.⁵

¹ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2001), 1.

² See R. Whitmore, *Alice Hawkins and the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian Leicester* (Derby, 2007), 1-156.

³ This association was known as the National Union of Women Workers in the pre-First World War period but the name is misleading as they were a middle class not a working class association

⁴ Women's Library, London Metropolitan University (WL), 10/3. This scrapbook of news cuttings on suffrage includes many relating to the campaign in Leicester. It contains a letter to the *Leicester Pioneer*, 16 Mar. 1912 from members of the National Union of Women Workers of Women saying that that they, as non-militant suffragists, holding membership of the Leicester and Leicestershire Suffrage Society were also going to open an office in the centre of town to promote 'the citizenship of women in broad and constitutional lines.'

⁵ See H. Meller, 'Women and citizenship: gender and the built environment in British cities, 1870-1939' in R. Colls and R. Rodger (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain*

This chapter discusses women's associational life in the interwar years, the increased acceptance of women as important contributors to local public and civic affairs and the way in which this was represented in the local Leicester press. It begins by discussing two important public events which were organised by women during this period: the 'ladies bazaar' organised in 1922 to raise money in aid of the new Leicester University College, and the national conference of the National Council of Women, which was held in Leicester in 1935. The chapter sets women's activities in Leicester in the context of national developments in the women's movement and then goes on to illustrate how the women's columns in the local Leicester newspapers, in particular during the 1930s, helped sustain and publicise the link between women and citizenship. Women's participation in all aspects of public life was covered in detail on a daily basis, and this coverage of associational meetings and events helped keep the shape and regular rhythms of the Leicester calendar in the public eye, albeit from a particular angle. The chapter concludes with a section on youth and citizenship in the interwar decades, in relation to the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations, which enjoyed great popularity and proved a useful resource for local civic spectacles during the 1920s and 1930s. The Girl Guide Association, which was especially popular, by treating girls as apprentice citizens provided them with a new unprecedented public status which echoed the emphasis on women and citizenship in the adult women's movement.

There is a particular focus in this chapter on the National Council of Women and the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations, all three organisations formed national networks and had headquarters in London. Discussion of the importance of these groups in Leicester, during the interwar period, again highlights a recurring theme in this thesis, the relationship between the national and the local. The argument has been so far that, in the interwar years, there was still a strong sense of local identity in Leicester and that the national and local were not seen in opposition but as complementary identities. This was the message of the 1932 Leicester Pageant which

1800-2000), 173-201. Meller uses the phrase 'commitment to the locality' in connection with the activities of the non-militant women's movement of this period.

was supported by thousands of local residents.⁶ Moreover, in terms of associational life, there was still a healthy balance of local and national associations listed in the Leicester town directories in the interwar decades.⁷ This balance permitted both a local and national identity to be expressed, on a regular basis, in the activities of local civil society. In addition to this, a focus on the National Council of Women and the Scout and Guide Associations, shows that national networks themselves could be structured in a way that nurtured rather than suppressed local identity. This could be achieved either by adopting a federal structure or by maintaining a strong element of decentralisation.

The focus in this chapter on the National Council of Women and the Guides and Scouts also highlights the social cohesion encouraged by these strands of associational life during the interwar years. In Chapter Four, the concept of social capital was used to explore links within and among educational associations in the 1870s and 1880s and here in the interwar context, the concept is equally relevant. To recap, commentators argue that participation in civil associations and interdependence among associations strengthens the social fabric and stimulates a sense of citizenship, and these benefits have been termed ‘social capital’.⁸ Two related concepts ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’, also used in the previous discussion, are also relevant. Bonding social capital refers to the reinforcement of exclusive identity within a group, while bridging social capital refers to the links made across social divisions. As observed previously, bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive, as members of a group can be inward looking in some ways and outward looking in others.⁹ These concepts are useful way of analysing group activity at a particular time and highlighting where links were made across the boundaries of social division and among different associations. Bridging among educational associations in the 1870s and early 1880s tended to be sustained by the individual efforts of the office

⁶ See Chapter Two.

⁷ See Chapter Three.

⁸ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York, 2000), 1-28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-3. As noted in Chapter Four, A further term ‘linking social capital’ has been used to specifically describe the benefits of vertical links made between classes. See J. Field, *Social Capital* (Abingdon, 2003), 65-7. For the sake of simplicity, however, the term ‘bridging’ here is used to denote connections across class barriers as well as other social divisions.

holders of the groups. Generally, however, from the late Victorian decades, formal contact among groups became common and more systematic. An obvious example of this was the organisation of sports teams into local leagues. Both the National Council of Women and the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations also placed considerable importance on maintaining formal networks of groups, which maximised opportunity for communication and the coordination of activities.

Women as citizens: raising money for the new University College, 1922.

The immediate post-war years were important in the civic life of Leicester. Not only was the town granted city status after a royal visit in 1919, but plans for the new University College gathered momentum, with the proposal that the College should be dedicated as a local war memorial.¹⁰ There was little sign that civic pride was on the decline, on the contrary, the substantial funds raised locally to support the new University College showed that town residents were still ready to support a civic cause and women were at the forefront of this.

In 1922, the contribution of local women to the university project was showcased when a highly publicised 'ladies' bazaar' raised over £15,000 in aid of equipping and furnishing the University College. The bazaar was an elaborate event, held over six days in mid May, open from morning until late evening during one week and proclaimed by its publicity material as 'the social event of the year'. As well as a large number of stalls, each appropriately named after a university, there were drama performances, musical entertainment and dancing, and the week culminated in a grand ball. Lady Diana Cooper was invited to open the bazaar on the first day and during each of the succeeding days, it was opened by a different well-known Leicester woman.¹¹ This public event was organised by coordinating the voluntary efforts of a large number of women in the town and hinterland and much was made, from the outset, of the fact that women were in charge. Typical of the press coverage

¹⁰ J. Simmons, *New University* (Leicester, 1958), 57-81.

¹¹ See reports in *Leicester Mercury* (*LM*), 15-21 May 1922 and there is also a short account in Simmons, *New University*, 89. See also programme of the University bazaar, University of Leicester archives, ULA, D2/1.

was the *Leicester Mercury* headline which proclaimed ‘Well done ladies’.¹² Taking place against the backdrop of the first extension of the franchise to women in 1918, the occasion illustrated a widespread acknowledgement that women had a role to play in the public life of the town.

Associational life underpinned both the drive to establish a University College and the grand bazaar which was organised to equip it. The idea of a university college had been floated first in 1880 by the Leicester ‘Lit and Phil’, and in 1912, the new president of the ‘Lit and Phil’, Dr Astley Clarke reintroduced the idea in his inaugural lecture.¹³ In the following years, another ‘Lit and Phil’ member Thomas Fielding Johnson provided a suitable building, while a third member Jonathan North, who was mayor throughout the first war, also gave active support. Meanwhile, the suggestion to make the University College a war memorial, originated from an editorial in the *Leicester Daily Post*. Clarke was a well known physician, Fielding Johnson a textile manufacturer and North, as well as being a leading member of the civic authorities, was a shoe manufacturer.¹⁴ Just as the ‘Lit and Phil’, in the mid nineteenth century, with its links with the Town Council and local industry, was successful in promoting the idea of a museum,¹⁵ the ‘Lit and Phil’ in the early twentieth century, was able, with the help of a positive reception from the press, to use the association to promote the University College project.

A range of schools, religious bodies and civil associations joined forces to support the University College bazaar which was packaged from the beginning as a women’s project. Alderman North and Astley Clarke invited a large group of middle class women to the Town Hall for a meeting. The group included National Council of Women members, wives of local employers, ex-mayoresses and women who had sat

¹² *LM*, 21 May 1922.

¹³ See *LM*, 15 Oct. 1912 for report of Dr Astley Clarke’s speech. See F.B. Lott, *The Centenary Book of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society* (Leicester, 1935), 76, for reference to Revd Joseph Wood’s presidential address in 1880 expressing hopes for the foundation of a local university. See also Simmons, *New University*, 57-9.

¹⁴ Simmons, *New University*, 57-81.

¹⁵ See Chapter Four.

on statutory bodies.¹⁶ A bazaar committee, headed by Mrs Astley Clarke was elected and this committee commandeered individuals and organisations into providing stalls, help, funds and entertainment for the bazaar. A women's column in the *Leicester Mail*, written by reporter Mary Maitland, highlighted how this process worked and the amount of time and effort involved. She wrote that she sympathised with any local mother who had children at more than one school because then both schools would require her assistance for the bazaar effort. In addition, the woman would find her church asking for help and then 'some society or organisation or possibly a friend responsible for a stall imploring harder than any of them.'¹⁷ Clearly, it was predicted that a large number of bodies would be involved. In the bazaar programme, schools and churches apart, thirteen different associations are mentioned as stall holders, entertainers, or donors. These included employers, professional, recreational, and women's associations. Where the group in question was male dominated, as for example in the case of the Cricket Club, members' wives and daughters fronted the stall. The associations listed, however, were not the only groups involved. There were others, without the financial resources to support a stall pledged to raise £250, who played a supporting role. Women members of the extensive Adult School network, for example, took on the responsibility of selling bazaar entry tickets, while the Girl Guides sold the tickets for the special attractions.¹⁸ The range of associations involved ensured that, although the arrangements were middle class led, a cross section of the public was involved.

In order to plan and run the bazaar successfully and mobilise local women, the organisers required ready access to a wide network of contacts. In view of this, the election of Mrs Astley Clarke was a practical choice as she was a leading member the Leicester branch of National Council of Women. This association had formal contacts with over thirty local philanthropic, educational and religious groups, influential groups which were either comprised of women or in which women were

¹⁶ ULA, AD/B3/1, copy of the letter sent out by Astley Clarke and Jonathan North. See *LM*, 1 Jul. 1921, for reports of the meeting.

¹⁷ *LM*, 5 Jul. 1921.

¹⁸ *LM*, 22 Apr. 1922 records the involvement of Adult School members and *LM*, 16 May 1922 records the involvement of the Girl Guides.

active.¹⁹ She was, therefore, in a position to exploit the social capital that this particular strand of associational life engendered. The presence of the National Council of Women members during the week of the bazaar was substantial. Not only did the branch run its own high profile stall, but members were involved in helping on at least half of the other 37 stalls, showing the extent to which the membership of the local branch were entwined with other social networks in the town.²⁰ The extensive local connections of the National Council of Women enabled the association to bridge the gaps between different groups and bring them together for the occasion under a shared civic identity.

The success of the University College bazaar highlighted the willingness of a large number of local women in Leicester to spend time and effort on a civic project. It also illustrated how the members of an important association in the women's movement, the National Council of Women, rather than separating themselves from male dominated local public culture, instead sought to promote women's position by embracing the opportunities to demonstrate citizenship and local patriotism. This strategy was successful in gaining acknowledgement from the Town Council of the local importance of the association. One occasion on which this public acknowledgement was given was in 1935, when the annual, national conference of the National Council of Women was held in Leicester.

A civic welcome: the annual conference of the National Council of Women, 1935.

The response of the civic authorities to the 1935 conference showed the importance they placed at this time, on the work of women's associations. It also demonstrated the intention of all concerned to represent the national and gender identities promoted by the National Council of Women as complementary to, rather than in opposition to,

¹⁹ ROLLR, 16 D 58, *National Council of Women Annual Report*, Leicester branch 1921-1923. Mrs Astley Clarke was a Vice President in 1921 and 1922 and became president of the branch in 1923. Each annual report concludes with a list of associations affiliated to the branch.

²⁰ Members of the National Council of Women are listed in the association's annual reports, ROLLR, 16 D 58. The names of women helping on the stalls are listed in the bazaar programme, ULA, D/1. By cross-referencing the lists it can be seen how many members were helping at the bazaar.

civic identity. Nearly 1000 delegates came from all over Britain to the five day conference which was held in Leicester's civic venue, the De Montfort Hall. The delegates were given a civic welcome and entertained by the civic authorities with a programme that included a reception in the Lord Mayor's room, a dedicated service at the Cathedral attended by the Lord Mayor and Mayoress, and a special performance put on by the Leicester Drama Society.²¹ An editorial in the *Leicester Mercury* on the 16 October 1935 commented:

'The revolution has, of course, long been accomplished and the women of Britain, are now in the position of a victorious army consolidating their gains to the great advantage of the whole community. Having no longer to spend their energies in establishing their 'rights', women have been able to take an increasing share in directing the affairs of the world and in these widened spheres of work and influence their contribution is found to be of supreme value and importance.'²²

As the editorial suggested, the interwar period had seen a demise in the more militant sector of the women's movement, with less emphasis thereafter put on equal rights and more put on public service.²³ This was arguably because of the gains that had been made. Not only had the two acts of 1918 and 1928 given women the franchise, but a catalogue of other reforming legislation which affected women's lives had been enacted by the mid-1920s.²⁴ However, while the emphasis on public service was in contrast to the more militant activities of the suffragettes in the immediate pre-war period, there was a direct line of continuity between the non-militant women activists of the 1930s and the non-militant women activists of the nineteenth century and pre-war period. Limited local government suffrage had been in force since 1869 and in the last decades of the century women were elected to local public office in various forms, most notably on School Boards and as Poor Law Guardians where they

²¹ ROLLR, 16 D 58/8, scrapbook of news cuttings, programmes and photographs recording the conference of the National Council of Women in Leicester in 1935.

²² *LM*, 16 Oct 1935.

²³ S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (Basingstoke, 1999), 78-91 gives a good overview of this.

²⁴ M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959* (Basingstoke, 1993), 82. Pugh covers the considerable amount of legislation affecting women between the 1918 and 1928 acts. He makes the point that this mostly concerned women as wives and mothers, but the highlighting of women's causes meant that politicians were more willing to listen to women's demands.

brought with them ‘a long tradition of philanthropic work’ and showed themselves as ‘preoccupied as much with collective obligations as with personal rights’.²⁵

The National Council of Women, founded in the 1895 under its original name of the National Union of Women Workers, was an association very much in this tradition.²⁶ The goal of the association in the 1890s was to form a common centre for all women and associations engaged in religious, educational, social and philanthropic work, and this remained its objective in the 1930s.²⁷ The national association was a federation of individuals and associations already involved in various fields of work and the branch in Leicester was therefore composed of women who were already working at various local projects.²⁸ The Leicester branch retained firm links with the national executive and involved itself in shared campaigns, appointed representatives to serve on sectional committees and welcomed outside speakers in Leicester. However, the branch also had a very local orientation providing a meeting place and a means of coordinating work in Leicester for a range of groups and institutions. By bridging group boundaries, the branch created a well connected network of activity. In 1920, the 34 groups affiliated included branches of other national associations such as the YWCA and the NSPCC, as well as purely local concerns, such as the Leicester Health Society and the Leicester Infant Orphan Asylum.²⁹ Affiliations did drop off over the interwar years. A range of factors could have helped cause this, including the increase of municipal health provision and the fact that certain societies had

²⁵ A Summers, *Female Lives, Moral States, Religion and Public Life in Britain 1800-1930* (Newbury, 2000), 18. See also P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local government 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1987), 461-2.

²⁶ Typically Frances Fullager a Unitarian and a founder member of the Leicester branch of the National Union of Women Workers was Leicester’s first woman representative on the Board of Guardians.

²⁷ See ROLLR, 16 D 58, *National Union of Women Workers Annual Report*, 1897, and the subsequent annual reports of National Union of Women Workers and National Council of Women, 1898-1950. These are the annual reports of the Leicester branch. The association changed its name to National Council of Women in 1918.

²⁸ D. Glick, *The National Council of Women of Great Britain: the First One Hundred Years* (London, 1995), 9-17 gives an account of the formation of the federation. ROLLR, 16 D 58, the Leicester annual reports of the National Union of Women Workers/National Council of Women from 1897 onwards give details of the local projects affiliated to the association.

²⁹ See ROLLR, 16 D 58, *National Council of Women annual report*, Leicester branch, 1920.

become outdated.³⁰ However, by 1935 when the Mayor welcomed the conference delegates there were still 21 groups affiliated to the local branch and substantially increased number of individual members.³¹ Given this active participation and coordination in the public sphere, which had been functioning for nearly forty years in Leicester for the good of the town, local members may have felt somewhat rueful that the Mayor had suggested that energies until recently had been mainly focused on establishing rights. However, despite this, it was clear that the current perception was that the association was now making a particularly substantial contribution to the communal good of the city.

The federal structure of the National Council of Women enabled affiliated associations to retain control of their internal affairs. In the case of societies and institutions that were rooted in provincial towns, this system allowed them to retain control over their own affairs and avoid domination from the centre while still enjoying the benefits of a national network. In the 1890s, the federal principle was also adopted in other areas of associational life. In industry, for example, the Leicester Boot Manufacturers' Association was affiliated to the Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers, a loose union within which the local society could retain its independence.³² A further aspect of the National Council of Women, which prevented domination by London, was the democratic process used to decide policy. This was done, not by the national executive alone, but by resolutions at a yearly national conference to which delegates from all branches and affiliated

³⁰ The Workhouse Visitors was an example of one outdated society that disappeared from the list, and by the mid-1930s the Brabazon Society, associated with workhouse as well as hospital visiting, had also gone. Increasing municipal provision in no way supplanted the voluntary sector, volunteers, for example, helped run the municipal infant welfare centres, see C. Brown and D. Reeder, 'Municipal provision: education, health and housing' in (eds) D. Reeder and D. Nash *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 129. The changes however would have no doubt affected the organisation of voluntary help.

³¹ ROLLR, 16 D 58, *National Council of Women Annual Report*, Leicester branch, 1935.

³² The *Oxford English Dictionary* in tracing the use of the word federal, refers to use of the word in 1894 to describe a non-political association of quasi-autonomous units. The example given is American, but this new use of the word reflects that federation was a model of organisation that was also becoming popular in Britain at this time. See <http://dictionary.oed.com>, last accessed 7 Apr. 2009.

societies were invited.³³ In addition to this, the conference was held in a different town or city each year, and in 1935 it was the turn of Leicester to host the national conference. In this way, the branches and affiliates in provincial towns retained not only their local identity but a sense of partnership in, rather than subordination to the national network.

One reporter who covered the events of the 1935 conference was a local journalist, called Suzanne Harrison. She wrote a daily column entitled 'Woman's World' for the *Leicester Evening Mail* and was an obvious person to cover the conference, as her column linked women and citizenship and highlighted women's participation in public life. Harrison's column exemplified the way in which a widespread perception of women's contribution to public life had taken root by the 1930s. Although women had long been contributing to local welfare work, this had been under-represented in the local press. In the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, a series of women's columns in the Leicester newspapers failed to convey much sense of this work. In the 1880s, for example, a columnist with the pen name 'Penelope' wrote a relatively infrequent 'ladies' column' in the *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury* which concerned itself with domestic matters, fashion and London events, especially exhibitions at the London art galleries. At times, an interest in social work was shown but again this had a London rather than a local orientation. There was, for instance, in March 1884, a commentary on the foundation of a club in Soho for working girls.³⁴ In the 1890s and early 1900s a column in the *Leicester Daily Post*, penned under the name 'Aurora' continued in much the same vein, adding also to the repertoire some commentary on the doings of British and continental royalty. During the pre-war period, the seeds of change were evident. In the *Leicester Mail*, a columnist called Kitty Clive began to comment in a limited way on local clubs and associations. In a typical column in the summer of 1913, for example, she reported on the activities of the Scouts and the Boys' Brigade and

³³ Glick, *The National Council of Women of Great Britain*, 1-48.

³⁴ *Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury (LCLM)*, 22 Mar. 1884.

covered local garden fetes.³⁵ However, it was in the interwar period that the character of the women's column showed a real change. In the 1920s, Mary Maitland in the *Leicester Mercury* and an individual known as L'Estrienne in the *Leicester Evening Mail* had daily columns which covered women's meetings and events on an everyday basis. From these grew the more fully developed model written by Suzanne Harrison in the 1930s.³⁶

The content of Suzanne Harrison's column did not in any way seek to undermine women's traditional domestic role indeed much space was given to the arts of homemaking as well as to beauty and fashion. However, the message conveyed was that women should and did combine a private and public role, and large amounts of column space were also devoted to reporting the involvement of women in associational life. These echoed the 'citizenship for homemakers' approach of the Women's Institutes and Townswomen's Guilds and the belief expressed by the first editor of *Woman* magazine in 1937 that content directed by the media at women readers ought to deal with social problems as well as flower arrangements. However, while this approach was seen to fail in national weeklies such as *Woman* with editors soon dropping broader concerns in favour of more purely domestic, fashion and beauty content,³⁷ it was an approach maintained on a daily basis, throughout the thirties, by Harrison in the *Leicester Evening Mail*. The difference between Harrison's column and the national weeklies and what presumably retained the readers' interest was, of course, that Harrison reported on local women and familiar local issues and events. It was a focus on women's activities that was set within a general awareness of the civic environment, the health, education, religious and social life of the city. Women were depicted as making a positive input to Leicester and events organised by or involving women, which the Mayor, Mayoress or councillors attended, were recorded with particular interest. The women's associations on which reports were written often coincided with those groups that were affiliated to the

³⁵ *Leicester Mail (LM)*, 15 Jul. 1913.

³⁶ There was also an equivalent women's column in the *Leicester Mercury*.

³⁷ C.L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London, 1970), 112, referred to in M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, 216. The editor of *Woman*, John Dunbar lost thirty per cent of his sales when he included too many serious articles in the magazine.

National Council of Women. Harrison's column had a lighter touch than the drier annual reports of the National Council of Women, but the underlying message was the same and the column was a vehicle by which that message was brought to a more widespread audience.

Unlike the Leicester newspapers of the mid to late Victorian and Edwardian period, the main pages of the 1930s local press were not organised in a way that drew attention to the regular urban cycle of events. Lengthy columns recording almost verbatim the exact procedure of annual meetings and other regular events, had been replaced by a more disparate presentation with shorter pieces on local and international news, reports of crime, accidents, social functions and other incidents all mixed together. Within the paper, the daily block of text, that was Suzanne Harrison's column, stood out as a contribution which gave insight into a vibrant strand of local civil society, written from a woman's perspective but of communal interest. This daily chronicle of events thus provided, over the annual cycle, a diary which encouraged women to take part in civil society and support the civic ideal and which reported on their efforts to do so.

Women's activities and the Leicester annual calendar. A survey of Suzanne Harrison's column, 1938-39.

A short survey of Suzanne Harrison's column over one year, September 1938 to August 1939, highlights the shape of the local yearly calendar for women's associations and activities at this time. Women's activities overlapped with and were often an integral part of other strands of civil society. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the rhythms of the wider Leicester calendar shaped by the civic authorities and the broad range of civil associations, schools and churches were echoed in Harrison's outline of the year. In this way, Harrison's column illustrated not only the variety and chronology of women's events but also gave a glimpse of the wider picture. Her column provided a gendered parallel to the conventional calendar. In Chapter Four, the shape of the Leicester calendar in the mid 1870s was traced. This survey of Harrison's column illustrates that many of the contours of the earlier calendar

remained at the end of the 1930s and that for the most part the events and meetings of women's associations blended in with these rhythms.

September remained the real beginning of the associational year in the late 1930s, just as it had been in the 1870s. In early September 1938, Harrison noted in her column that associational life was getting back into gear after the summer break and observed that

‘By this time of year secretaries of various associations all over Leicester are busily preparing for the Winter season’...‘there is definitely an autumnal feeling in the air and this is proved by the large post I am getting each morning, with invitations to social events which always mark the season.’³⁸

Her interests for the month included the tail end of the summer season as well as the oncoming autumn and winter season, and one event she reported, typical of the occasions she covered, was the nurses' tennis tournament and swimming gala at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. This, obviously, was a women's event, but in addition to this the Infirmary was a symbol of communal interest for both the town and the county. Underlining the civic importance of the gala, she reported that it was attended by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and was the third gala they had attended in the last eight days.³⁹ Many swimming galas, in fact, took place throughout Leicester in September and this particular event was part of this rhythm. The civic ideal, the contribution of women as nursing professionals and the participation of women in sport were all showcased on this occasion, giving Harrison ample opportunity to represent women as active citizens, contributing to both the work and the recreation of the civic community

As in the 1870s, the municipal elections were held in November and in the weeks leading up to them in October, Suzanne Harrison reported on the ward meetings held by both the Conservative and Labour Party associations. Unlike the earlier period,

³⁸ *LEM*, 22 Sept. 1938.

³⁹ *LEM*, 22 Sept. 1938.

women were involved in this, with the different local branches of the Women's Conservative Association particularly active at this time.⁴⁰ The autumn months also continued to be a time for lectures and musical programmes with the main season continuing until March. The lecture series of the 'Lit and Phil' and the free lectures at the Museum, which had been an important feature of the season in the 1870s, remained central to this rhythm. Harrison's column, however, drew attention to various newer lecture series, put on by women's organisations during the winter and autumn season, including those organised by the Leicester Personal Health Association, the Leicester Women's Luncheon Club and the Soroptimists. The subject matter was far from the literary and historical concerns of the Leicester Ladies Reading Society.⁴¹ The lectures of these newer groups, instead, emphasised the role of women as citizens, focusing on social policy and other public affairs, with lecture titles such as 'Women Police' and 'Health in Industry.'⁴² Lecture programmes of this type provided a women's alternative to the lectures put on by the Rotary Club, an association which was launched in Leicester in the immediate interwar period.⁴³ With regard to the Leicester music season, Harrison did not have the same scope to highlight women's events. Her strategy, therefore, was to report on concerts with some civic significance such as the first night of the Leicester Choral Society season or any performances attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, thus continuing to emphasise the importance of the civic to her readership.⁴⁴

October to December in the late 1930s was also a season of bazaars. These events of which women had long been active organisers, had formed an important element in the 1870s calendar. By the 1930s there was a particular concentration of bazaars during the autumn months and Harrison visited and reported on a great many. In

⁴⁰ *LEM*, 5 Oct. 1938.

⁴¹ See discussion of the Leicester Ladies Reading Society in Chapter Four.

⁴² These titles are taken from the programme of the Leicester Personal Health Association reported in *LEM*, 7 Sept. 1938.

⁴³ The Rotary Club held regular lectures on social and political topics. See *ROLLR*, 21 D 69/13, scrapbook of press cuttings 1918-1923 and 21 D 69/14 a further scrapbook of press cuttings, 1934-37. Lectures included one on 'Citizenship' in Feb 1922 by Dr Rattray the new principal of the University College.

⁴⁴ *LEM*, 5 Oct. 1938.

October 1938, she prepared her readers for this saying: 'Church bazaars are here again, there will be many autumn fairs in the next few weeks and the next thing will be the Christmas markets'.⁴⁵ The bazaars and other sales were usually fundraising events for churches and chapels though often a leading local citizen was invited to open the event and so added a civic dimension. Typical was the Salvation Army Christmas sale in early December 1938 opened by the Deputy Mayoress.⁴⁶ Bazaars gave Harrison an opportunity to highlight women's ability as efficient fundraisers. However, by the 1930s, women's fundraising far exceeded the occasional bazaar; in the autumn months there were also numerous fundraising whist and bridge drives, and a fairly constant stream of these were reported in Harrison's column until the end of June, The women's committees of a range of associations including occupational, sporting and political groups, frequently arranged events to boost associational funds.⁴⁷ However, there was also an emphasis on public causes, with events organised to raise money for local charities, such as certain boys' clubs or the Leicester Deaf and Dumb Mission.⁴⁸ A local flag day, Daisy Day in aid of the blind, generated a host of activities. The flag day itself was in May, but in the winter months there were whist drives, in March a ball and in the summer a garden fete.⁴⁹ These events not only highlighted women's participation in civic causes but also clearly provided a constant source of social life giving individuals opportunities to bond in groups and become part of a social network.

From December through to March, Suzanne Harrison covered a number of annual high profile social occasions.⁵⁰ One of these occasions was the first of a series of civic receptions, exclusively for women, which highlighted the contribution of women to public affairs in the city. This was hosted by the new Lady Mayoress at the

⁴⁵ *LEM*, 7 Oct. 1938.

⁴⁶ *LEM*, 9 Dec. 1938.

⁴⁷ These included groups as different as the Leicester Commercial Travellers Association, *LEM*, 7 Oct. 1938, the Women's Conservative Association, *LEM*, 14 Dec. 1938 and the Scraftoft Golfing Club, *LEM*, 9 Dec 1938.

⁴⁸ For example, Leicester boys' clubs *LEM*, 13 Oct. 1939, Leicester Deaf and Dumb mission *LEM*, 21 Oct. 1939 and a local branch of the NSPCC, *LEM*, 9 Dec. 1938.

⁴⁹ *LEM*, 13 May 1939. Here, Harrison describes the annual cycle of events connected with Daisy Day.

⁵⁰ January to March had also been a period of important social and civic events in the 1870s and by the 1930s this period had expanded to include December.

Leicester Museum, and echoed the civic receptions given for leading citizens each January by the Mayor, a tradition which had been established at the turn of the century. Harrison commented on the large numbers of guests that attended, among whom were former lady mayoresses, women councillors and members of women's organisations, as well as 'the wives of civic representatives, leading Leicester businessmen and professionals.'⁵¹ Two other annual civic and social events, were the Maternity Hospital and Leicester Royal Infirmary dances, both of which were held in the January and were attended by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress. In the 1870s, the Leicester Infirmary Ball, had been a regular January occasion, and these 1930s events followed in that tradition. The Leicester Royal Infirmary, as previously observed, was always a source of communal interest, while the Maternity Hospital, which had been established as a result of campaigning by the National Council of Women, was a symbol of the civic achievements of women's voluntary associations in Leicester.⁵²

In the Christmas and New Year period, Harrison also highlighted children's events. In the 1870s, charity teas and parties for poor children were often reported at this time of year and this type of event continued to be important in the 1930s. A typical Christmas occasion reported by Harrison was, for instance, a tea for 350 poor children organised jointly by four churches in the Belgrave district.⁵³ In Harrison's column, however, children did not just receive coverage as objects of charity, school activities and other youth activities such as those of the Girl Guides were also reported on. At Christmas, for example, many local schools organised parties, not for charity but just to celebrate the season and the importance of the school community.

⁵¹ *LEM*, 7 Dec. 1938. Although the invitation to 'wives' suggested that it was a woman's role to support her husband's contribution to public life, the membership lists, of the National Council of Women show that many of these women were active in their own right. See *ROLLR*, 16 D 58, Leicester branch, 1930-1939.

⁵² Gunn associates Victorian public culture with visual display. In the 1930s formal occasions were still an opportunity for guests to show off their good taste. As well as emphasising the civic aspect of occasions such as the hospital dances in January or the Daisy Day ball in April, Harrison also gave a great deal of column space to describing the elaborate dresses of important women guests. Women such as Mrs Charles Bond, who was both the wife of a leading local surgeon and a member of the National Council of Women.

⁵³ *LEM*, 14 Dec. 1938.

Harrison visited a range of these parties and then reported on them in some detail in her column, thereby helping to turn a series of small local events into a ‘school party’ season of citywide interest. Before the First World War there had been public debate about the role of schools in creating future citizens and the Newbolt Report in 1921 had formalised this idea.⁵⁴ Harrison’s reports on school activities were indicative of the elevated importance given in the interwar years to young people, their schooling and their future as citizens. This perception of schools as important contributors to the civic community was also evident in the ‘Camera News’ section of the *Leicester Evening Mail* and its counterpart in the *Leicester Mercury*, where extensive coverage was given to school activities, in particular, speech days, some of which took place in December and others at the end of the summer term.

In the first week of January 1939, Suzanne Harrison placed a greater emphasis on the domestic affairs commenting that this was a particularly busy week for women, with all the clearing up to do after the seasonal festivities and compounded by the effort to get to the sales for bargains.⁵⁵ These observations illustrate well the double role, both private and public that the woman citizen of the 1930s fulfilled. However, beyond this short domestic break, there was little let up in the schedule of public events.

Besides the continuing round of social activities, the first six months of the year was also the time when many annual meetings were held. This had been the case in the 1870s and Harrison’s reporting showed that, in 1939, this tradition was alive and well. It was a pattern that was more detectable in Harrison’s column than in the main pages of the newspaper, where the regular habit of reporting associational business meetings in lengthy detail had been abandoned. The annual meeting of the Leicester Branch of the National Council of Women, was held in December, anticipating the season, but the meeting of the Women’s International League was a January event. Likewise, the annual meetings of the various divisions of the Women’s Conservative Associations were held in January, following a tradition that had emerged in the late

⁵⁴ A.B. Rodrick, *Self-Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham* (Aldershot, 2004) 210-11.

⁵⁵ *LEM*, 3 Jan 1939.

nineteenth century of holding the annual meetings of political party associations in the New Year. Another major wave of annual meetings came in April and May and, as in the 1870s, many of these spring meetings were held by philanthropic bodies. During the spring of 1939, Harrison's coverage included the annual meetings of the St Mary's Home for Girls, the Maternity Hospital and the YWCA, all of which were affiliated to the National Council of Women.⁵⁶ Her reports also covered the spring annual meetings of the Leicester Guild of the Crippled and the Leicester Poor Boys and Girls' Camp and Institute, showing that the pattern of holding annual meetings in the spring was not just a tradition maintained by women's associations, but a wider phenomenon.⁵⁷

On a lighter note, Easter still signalled the start of an outdoor season in the city, with summer sports, including women's summer sports beginning at this time. As already noted, swimming and tennis were popular sports with women and the opening of the women's cricket season was heralded by the annual meeting of the Leicester Ladies' Cricket Club which Harrison reported on in April 1939.⁵⁸ One sport which received a great deal of attention was women's bowls. In April 1939, the Women's World column reported the summer opening of the 'ladies' bowling clubs and their activities were constantly referred to during the following months.⁵⁹ However, despite the seasonal emphasis on sporting activities, the summer saw no relaxation in 'good works' in aid of the city, on the contrary, some sports' clubs made a point of demonstrating their civic awareness. One annual summer occasion for each 'ladies' bowling club, was a 'cot day' in which a hospital bed, bought from club members contributions, was donated to the Leicester Royal Infirmary with a ceremony held at the hospital to mark the occasion.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *LEM*, 11 May 1939, St Mary's Home and *LEM*, 17 May 1939, Maternity Hospital and YMCA.

⁵⁷ See *LEM*, 4 May 1939 report of the Leicester Guild of the Crippled and *LEM*, 4 May 1939 report of the Leicester Poor Boys' and Girls' Camp and Institute.

⁵⁸ *LEM*, 19 Apr. 1939.

⁵⁹ *LEM*, 26 Apr. 1939, for report on opening day of the 'ladies' bowling clubs.

⁶⁰ *LEM*, 28 Jun. 1939.

June and July were months in which Harrison took the opportunity to highlight some of the activities of girls' schools, and thus gave them a higher profile in the city. June, as it had been in the 1870s, was for many groups and institutions a month of excursions, and these included and school day trips such as Harrison Road Girls' school trip to London which received coverage in the 'Women's World' column.⁶¹ With the end of term in sight, the column also made a point of representing girls as future members of the work force with advice to girl school leavers on the correct approach and clothes for job interviews.⁶² Finally, in July there were the 'end of year' speech days, where guidance was often offered to girls and, in particular, to school leavers on how to view their future. Typical of these was the Moat Girls' School speech day, where the headmistress emphasised the role of women as citizens. To reinforce the message, Harrison summarised the main points of the speech in her column the next day, underlining its importance for the city as a whole.⁶³

The summer months were also a time for garden fetes and parties hosted by churches, voluntary associations and municipal institutions. These received coverage in the 'Camera News' pages of the newspaper and Harrison reported on a selection, most often when they involved a civic visit. One such occasion was a garden fete at the St Mary's Home for Girls while another was a garden party for inmates at the former Leicester workhouse in Swain Street.⁶⁴ In August, the round of flower shows began, and some of these also provided material for Harrison's column. The Highfields and District Horticultural Show in August 1939 was opened by Elisabeth Frisby, one of Leicester's first women councillors and a member of the National Council of Women. By reporting on this Harrison was able to showcase Councillor Frisby as a role model for other women in Leicester.⁶⁵ Late July, August and early September were not the

⁶¹ *LEM*, 9 Jun. 1939.

⁶² *LEM*, 28 Jun. 1939.

⁶³ *LEM*, 4 Jul. 1939, Moat Girls School speech day.

⁶⁴ *LEM*, 27 Jun. 1939.

⁶⁵ See *LEM*, 21 Aug 1939 for report on the Highfields and District Horticultural Societies' show opened by Councillor Elizabeth Frisby. Frisby had also been a Suffragette and seems to have been the only prominent figure in the Leicester National Council of Women who had also been a Leicester WPSU member in the pre-war period. See Whitmore, *Alice Hawkins*, 95.

quiet months they had been in the 1870s, but it was still the holiday season and the end of an annual cycle which would begin again with the onset of Autumn.

The items described in this survey are only a sample of the many events that packed Suzanne Harrison's 'Women's World' column in the *Leicester Evening Mail* from September 1938 to August 1939. The account, however illustrates the variety and density of women's activities in Leicester at the time and the emphasis placed on citizenship and working for the common good of the city. The yearly schedule included the activities of associations and institutions which specifically focused on women and girls. In addition to this, it also highlighted the many other areas of associational life in which women were involved. This included their work as active campaigners in the municipal elections and as energetic fundraisers for a variety of bodies including churches, recreational and political associations as well as charitable and civic causes. From the women's local calendar depicted in Suzanne Harrison's column, it is possible to trace the outline of the general local and civic calendar within which women's activities were largely integrated. This local calendar had become more complex since the 1870s, expanding to include a wider range of events and, during the interwar decades, placing added emphasis on the activities of women and youth groups which had been more marginalised in the pre-war years. Despite this the basic rhythms of the annual cycle of the 1870s were still recognisable; the calendar had grown and developed rather than radically changed.

Youth and citizenship: the Scouts and Guides.

In 1935, the same year as the Leicester conference of the National Council of Women, 2000 Leicester Girl Guides gathered in Abbey Park to celebrate the jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, and to present to the city of Leicester an ornamental birdbath for the park. The design decorating the birdbath underlined the public role attributed to young people for it was surmounted by 'a lead figure of Peter Pan, symbolising Youth, the hope of the future'.⁶⁶ The gift, which was draped in the

⁶⁶ ROLLR, L.369.443, booklet entitled: *History of Girl Guide Movement in Leicester and County over the Past 50 Years*. No author or date given but the 50 years covered are 1912-1962.

Union Jack, was unveiled by the Bishop of Leicester and accepted, on behalf of the city, by the Lord Mayor of Leicester Alderman E. Grimsley.⁶⁷ In the interwar decades, as had been the case with women, young people were brought more into the public eye, under the banner of citizenship. As already observed, the Newbold Report in 1921 had stressed the importance of introducing school children to the ideals of citizenship. However, there were also voluntary associations, most prominently the Baden Powell Scout and Guide Associations, which had taken up this cause. The birdbath ceremony in Abbey Park was an example of how the Guides and Scouts, combined with the municipal authorities in ceremonies, parades and displays, to represent youth in the role of apprentice citizens, loyal to both town and nation.⁶⁸

This section looks at aspects of the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations, the two most popular uniformed youth groups in Leicester during the interwar decades, and examines the contribution of these two associations to civic and local culture at this time. The Scouts and Guides were primarily patriotic organisations, but civic loyalty was also highlighted and a positive perception of a harmonious and complementary relationship between the national and the local was promoted. The birdbath ceremony in Abbey Park was a special occasion, but there was also a regular calendar of parades and displays throughout the year, which were often attended by the Mayor, and which provided the civic authorities with a useful resource for combined civic and patriotic expression. As well as this, the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Associations provided a local network which created social capital, bringing individuals and different groups together. Scout troops and Guide companies were rooted in neighbourhoods where they were based in schools and churches. The troops and companies gave many children new and approved opportunities for bonding in groups and the network permitted them to bridge group boundaries and make wider social

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 6

⁶⁸ D.M. Pomfret, *Young People and the European City: Age Relations in Nottingham and Saint-Etienne, 1890-1940* (Aldershot, 2004), 153-227. Pomfret discusses the introduction of uniformed youth groups as a focal point for urban festivals in the years previous to the First World War and observes that these groups allowed the civic authorities to 'forge a clear association between young people, urban ritual and national greatness', 198. However, he gives less attention to the activities of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in the interwar decades, apart from referring to their camping activities in the context of the 'return to nature' enthusiasms of this period.

contacts both in the neighbourhood and throughout the town. In addition, Scouting and Guiding offered previously unavailable activities such as camping which for girls, in particular, presented new opportunities for independence from home. Moreover the role of ‘apprentice citizen’ brought with it a certain public status. Members were not just seen as passive recipients of adult instruction or charity, a role which voluntary associations had often allocated to children. On the contrary, they were seen as the ‘the rising generation’ on which the future of the country and the empire depended.

The Boy Scout Association, which was the first of the two associations to be established, was launched in 1908, and was a model in terms of ethos and organisation for the Guides. From the pre-war period, Leicester Scouts had a strong local identity that was encouraged by the way the association was organised. The London headquarters, under Baden Powell, decided policy and held the ultimate authority - this was not a democratic institution. On the other hand, the association worked through delegated responsibility and this permitted local identity to flourish, County Commissioners, appointed by London, delegated authority to District Commissioners and autonomous local associations, while these, in turn, oversaw the Scouting and Guiding activities in their own area.⁶⁹ Through this system, which was intended to encourage active participation at every level, Leicester had its own local association and, while it did not have full independence from London, it had the freedom to interpret and organise in accordance with local conditions. The local prestige of the movement was boosted in Leicester when, from an early stage, leading citizens took up the opportunity to involve themselves in the movement. By 1913, both the Mayor and the Bishop of Leicester were vice presidents of the local Scout Association while many other well known names from the Leicester world of business and professions, including Corah, Bennet, Astley Clarke and Gee, appeared in the list of association members.⁷⁰ In the interwar years, the annual meeting of the

⁶⁹ H. Collis, F. Hurl and R. Hazlewood, *B-Ps Scouts: an Official History of the Boy Scouts Association* (London 1961), 48-52.

⁷⁰ See ROLLR, DE 4283/49, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1909-1988, register of the Leicester District Local Association, 1913-1915.

Leicester Boy Scout Association was held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall demonstrating the level of civic support for the movement.⁷¹

In terms of ideology, when the Scouts were launched, the preoccupations of the movement reflected public concerns which were at the forefront during the Edwardian period: imperialism, national efficiency and a belief in the spiritual and health benefits of outdoor activity. In the interwar period the leadership skilfully reacted to widespread anti-militarism by associating the movement with a peace-seeking, internationalist approach, similar to that of the League of Nations.⁷² Patriotism, however, remained of the utmost importance and this was reflected in the Scout promise in which recruits pledged themselves to 'do my duty to God and the King'. However, in addition to the importance placed on empire and the nation, Baden Powell also preached civic awareness and Scouts were encouraged to show 'civic spirit' by familiarising themselves with enough local knowledge, past and present, so that they were equipped to act as local guides to visitors. Moreover, Scouts were to be prepared to take part in 'civic action' if the need arose by, for example, forming a first aid detachment or giving organised assistance to the local police.⁷³

During the 1920s and 1930s an increasing emphasis on the national as well as the local was reflected in the Leicester civic calendar with the regular festivals that accompanied Armistice, St George's and Empire Day. In the ceremonies enacted on these occasions, symbols of both the local and the national were celebrated together, indicating a link of mutual reinforcement between town and nation. The Scouts with their combined local and national profile were used to demonstrate this link. In the interwar years, the Scout network was coordinated by monthly orders from headquarters in New Walk in the centre of Leicester, where meetings for Scouters

⁷¹ See, for example, ROLLR, DE 4283/49, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, Leicester District Association minutes, DE 4283/23/1, minutes of AGM, 30 Jan. 1919.

⁷² R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations' in F.M.L Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain: 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 423.

⁷³ R. Baden Powell, *Scouting and Youth Movements* (London, 1929), 48. Scouts were mobilised to help the local police during a visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Leicester in 1928.

from all troops were also regularly held.⁷⁴ This system ensured that Scout troops could be easily mobilised for shared events or civic spectacles. In 1925, at an important ceremony to mark the unveiling of the main Leicester war memorial, an occasion which aptly encompassed both national and local sentiment, the Leicester Scout troops and Guide companies took part alongside the military and the religious and civic leadership of the town.⁷⁵ This participation was repeated annually at the Armistice Day ceremonies where Scout troops and Guide companies assembled at the Municipal Square and then marched to their separate churches and chapels.⁷⁶ Scouts also paraded in the presence of the Mayor on St George's Day and although Empire Day was more generally associated with celebrations in schools, there are records of scouts participating in Empire Day church parades, when the day fell on a Sunday.⁷⁷ On public occasions, Scouts and Guides carried both the national flag and the troop or company flag which was designed with the name of Leicester and the number of the group.⁷⁸ In this way, loyalties to both nation and town were acknowledged on a regular basis.⁷⁹

Becoming an apprentice citizen: the view 'from below'.

The role of the uniformed youth movements in reinforcing social conformity and teaching solidarity across class divides, at a time when middle class anxiety about

⁷⁴ For examples of monthly orders detailing meetings and events see ROLLR, DE 4283/8, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1909-1988: records of John Cartwright, Leicester County Secretary.

⁷⁵ ROLLR, DE 4383/8, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1909-1988: records of John Cartwright, Leicester County Secretary, press cutting, *LM*, 5 Jul. 1925.

⁷⁶ ROLLR, DE 4283/8, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1909-1988: records of John Cartwright, Leicester County Secretary, monthly orders show arrangements for Scouts on Armistice Day. Oral history interview with Joyce Pearson, 3 Sept, 2004, Joyce Pearson remembers the Guides taking part in Armistice Day ceremonies.

⁷⁷ ROLLR, DE 4287/8, records of the Boy Scout Council and Leicester District Boy Scouts Association, 1909-1988: records of John Cartwright, Leicester County Secretary, monthly orders show Scout parades on St Georges Day and Empire Day. For Empire Day celebrations in schools see newspapers, for example, *LEM*, 25 May 1928.

⁷⁸ Oral History interview with Joyce Pearson, Sept, 2004. All information here about Joyce Pearson's experience in the Guides is derived from this interview.

⁷⁹ On a more occasional basis, the Scout and Guide movements attracted prestigious royal visits to Leicester, which the civic authorities could then share in the glory of. This happened, for example, in 1925 when the Prince of Wales attended a Scout matinee in Leicester. See *LM*, 26 Jan 1925, and in 1931 when the Princess Royal attended a Guide parade and inspection. See ROLLR, L.369.463, booklet entitled *History of the Girl Guide Movement in Leicester and County over the Past 50 Years*, author of booklet not given, years covered are 1912-1962.

class conflict was widespread, is evident.⁸⁰ However, viewing the movement solely in terms of social control does not account for the popularity of Scouting and Guiding among adolescents themselves.⁸¹ Information derived from an interview with Joyce Pearson who joined a Leicester Guide company in 1927 gives some insight ‘from below’.⁸² It is evident that Joyce Pearson did not regard the uniform or the ethos of the movement as something unwillingly to be accepted in exchange for opportunities to take part in camping and other excursions. On the contrary, she remembers that being a Guide provided her with a new and exciting public identity and she enjoyed the uniform and the parades. In addition, joining the movement opened up the possibility of a wide circle of new social contacts at company, neighbourhood and town level. The Girl Guide Association was organised from a local headquarters in the same way as the Boy Scout Association, and the information given by Joyce Pearson brings to life the extensive social interaction that this well coordinated network of local groups generated, encouraging a sense of local community as well as national loyalty.

The Guide company which Joyce Pearson joined was the ‘12th Leicesters’ and was attached to St Hilda’s Anglican Church in Highfields, the church which she and her family regularly attended. The Scout and Guide Associations were non-sectarian but because most troops and companies were attached to churches and chapels, a young person who joined the movement tended to do so within a specific religious community. With regard to bonding at company level, the Guides of the ‘12th Leicester’s’ met regularly each week at the church hall for games, uniform inspection, learning new skills in preparation for various Guide badges and campfire songs. Outside the weekly meetings, there were also regular sports and socials and, in the

⁸⁰ This aspect of the movements has been discussed by many commentators. See, for example, J. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London 1977), 121-26 and P. Wilkinson, ‘English youth movements’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4 (1969), 3-23.

⁸¹ T.M. Proctor, ‘(Uni)forming youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Britain, 1908-39’, *History Workshop Journal*, 45 (1998) 103-134. Proctor explores this point in her article underlining the sense of independence that girls enjoyed in the Guides. A new sense of self sufficiency, as well as a sense of service were among ideals associated with girlhood in the early decades of the twentieth century. See K. Cowman and L. Jackson, *Women and Work Culture: Britain 1850-1950* (Aldershot, 2005), 12-13.

⁸² Oral history interview with Joyce Pearson, 3 Sept. 2004.

summer, camping. In addition to these regular activities, Joyce Pearson attributes successful bonding in the company to a number of factors. One of these was the patrol system which divided the company of approximately thirty girls into four or five patrols, each of which was led by a guide appointed as patrol leader. This was a non-threatening and effective way of integrating individuals into a body, encouraged younger children to participate, while giving older ones the prestige of being in charge and acting as intermediary with the captain. The Guide identity, as expressed by the Guide promise, laws and uniform was also a bonding factor, and one which, according to Joyce Pearson really did help to bridge the class divide. The mix of class backgrounds that characterised the district was reflected in the company, which included both the daughters of professionals and factory workers. Joyce Pearson does not remember this as being an issue. Everyone wore the same uniform and there were systems in place to help families who could not afford the full cost of this. Joyce Pearson said that she enjoyed all the activities and took the Guide promise ‘to do my duty to God and the King’ very seriously. One of the most exciting things, she said, about joining the Guides was that she suddenly ‘felt part of things, part of what was going on in the country’. It has been suggested that adolescents who joined the Guides and Scouts were attracted by the activities and not the ideology. The interview with Joyce Pearson suggests that at least, in her case, both were an attraction.⁸³

While the shared Guide identity helped bridge class difference within the company, sports and social activities with other Guide companies in the Highfields area built bridges between the youth of the different religious communities. In addition to Joyce Pearson’s company at the Anglican church of St Hilda’s in Melbourne Road, there was a company based at Sacred Heart Catholic church in Mere Road and another at the non-conformist chapel in Saxby Street, there were also other Anglican companies close by at St Philip’s and St Peter’s Church. Joyce Pearson described

⁸³ It is possible to speculate that girls, who generally enjoyed less attention than boys, were likely to be interested in something that gave them a respected identity. Joyce Pearson’s positive memories obviously do not prove that this was the experience of all Guides. However it is telling that Joyce Pearson and several of the Guides who joined the ‘12th Leicesters’ with her in the 1920s were still active in 2004, nearly 80 years later, in the adult Guide association, the Trefoil Guild.

how the Guides from all these companies used to meet in nearby Spinney Hill Park for sports and then go back to each other's halls. In addition, companies would organise shared parties and older age groups also became involved in this social life as parent associations formed, members of which made refreshments and supported events. In this way the Guide movement contributed to social cohesion by drawing members of the separate religious congregations into a network.

As well as building stronger links in the neighbourhood, and encouraging a sense of national belonging, Joyce Pearson said that Guiding also gave her a sense of being part of a town community. The geographical boundaries of the town were bridged by the regular events that brought the Leicester companies together for activities. These included Guide and civic parades, such as those on Armistice Day but also less serious occasions such as jointly produced plays at Leicester's civic venue, the De Montfort Hall and competitions of all types. Joyce Pearson remembers a typical occasion when the city companies all met at the playing fields in Evington where Guides, lit fires, cooked meals and had inspection. In May 1939, Suzanne Harrison described a very similar event to this in her daily column in the *Leicester Evening Mail*.⁸⁴ Through these activities a sense of town solidarity was promoted among the Guide companies and presumably, by association, among the many churches and chapels to which those companies belonged.

This chapter has illustrated that, in the interwar years in Leicester, involvement in voluntary associations that embraced the civic ideal, helped women and young people to integrate into public life. To demonstrate this, the activities and structure of the

Joyce Pearson's account contrasts with an account given by Jack Bradshaw, in an oral history interview given on 6 Mar. 2005, of his experience in a Leicester branch of the Young Britons in the 1930s. The Young Britons were also a patriotic association as well as forming a youth section of the Conservative party. Jack Bradshaw joined because his mother was active in a local branch of the Women's Conservative Association and because 'it was either that or Sunday School'. He found the meetings with their lectures and slide shows about aspects of the Empire enjoyable, but his account does not convey the same level of enthusiasm. He did not, for example, mix with other members outside meetings. The Guide movement encouraged a deeper involvement by offering recruits a 'total' lifestyle.

⁸⁴ *LEM*, 13 Mar. 1939.

Leicester Branch of the National Council of Women and the Boys Scouts and Girl Guides Associations have been discussed. The National Council of Women was a meeting place and coordinating group for women involved in a range of socially important projects in the city and members of the association were active in mobilising local women to participate in a major civic event in 1922, a bazaar to raise funds for the new University College in Leicester. In 1935, the annual conference of the National Council Women was organised in Leicester by the local branch and, on this occasion, the local press and civic authorities acknowledged the public spirited contribution made by women's associations. This representation of women as active citizens was apparent also in the women's columns of the local newspapers, where a column such as Suzanne Harrison's Women's World sustained this perception on a daily basis. The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, although primarily patriotic associations, also subscribed to the civic ideal and both regularly participated in public ceremonies and parades attended by the civic authorities. In this way, membership of the movement rewarded young people with a form of public status which in the case of girls, was a particular novelty. A further issue discussed in relation to both the National Council of Women and the Scouts and Guides was the relationship between the national and the local and it has been argued that, although all three were national associations, the Leicester branches had a strong local identity. This was encouraged by the way the groups were structured. The local branches of the National Council of Women were not dominated by London because the association was a federation and policy was decided by democratic processes. In the case of the Scouts and Guides, policy was decided in London, but the implementation of orders was decentralised with decision making on how to carry out policy delegated to district level. The chapter also illustrated the social cohesion generated by these associations. All three associations created institutionalised and extensive networks which bridged social and geographical boundaries. This provided members and their families with a new range of opportunities for social contact and also meant that groups could be coordinated for a public event easily and efficiently.

The chapter has been a response to the argument that the failure to integrate women into public life in provincial towns contributed to fragmentation of interests and a serious decline in the credibility of a united civic identity in the interwar years. It has been argued that the women's movement during the 1920s and 1930s, rather than turning inwards, emphasised the role of women as citizens, and their role in local public life and that, in Leicester, perception of women's active contribution to the life of the city was encouraged by the civic authorities and the press. In the same way, youth associations which emphasised citizenship, helped to bring young people in from the margins and gave them a new public role in local city life.

Conclusion

This study opened with a brief description of the Leicester Pageant of 1932. It was an occasion which was sponsored by the civic authorities but its success depended on the voluntary associations through which local residents were mobilised to take part. The thesis has explored the contribution of voluntary or civil associations to a perception of local and civic unity in Leicester during the decades between 1870 and 1939. It has shown that despite social divisions among town residents participation in voluntary associations helped promote social cohesion and sustain a perception of civic unity as well as expressing difference.

The manner in which local newspapers, throughout the period, represented the Leicester annual cycle encouraged a sense of local unity. Focusing on the 1870s, it has been shown how the press depicted a calendar of civic and associational events, the regular rhythms of which helped to shape the urban year. Within this calendar the events of the different bodies interleaved according to season and also blended in with other time schedules that were operating in the town such as those of the courts and churches. The ordering of time in the form of a calendar can be used to establish, affirm and alter collective schedules and a recurring theme in the study of calendars is that where a range of groups with different interests co-exist then competing calendars are established. What is marked, however, about newspaper representations of the Leicester annual cycle of this period is that because they depicted events as falling into shared patterns and rhythms, a sense of complementary rather than competing activity was conveyed and because of this the combined range of events could be perceived as an overarching, communal, local calendar. In this

way, newspaper coverage helped create an 'imagined community' for readers to relate to.

A sense of communal activity was also conveyed by the shared style of the associational events that comprised the annual calendar and contemporary news reports have been used to illustrate this. The many annual meetings stood out with their standard 'meeting language' and procedures as did the annual dinners with their regular format of toasts. Other events also tended to fall into a common formula, something that was evident, for example, from the accounts of associational summer outings. Newspaper reports have also been used to illustrate that in the 1870s the meetings of a cross section of the town population were reported, although accounts of the activities of leading middle class societies were regularly reported in far greater detail. The reports of events and activities of groups outside this elite circle show, however, that with some variation, these standard formats had been taken up by groups of both a high and lower social status, creating an impression of cohesion despite the obvious class difference.

The continuities and changes in this local calendar of meetings and events have been traced over the decades between the 1870s and the 1930s. The basic shape and rhythms of the cycle remained the same but the calendar became denser and more complicated as well as more inclusive. A survey of town directories has demonstrated that, during these decades, the numbers and range of associations listed increased and this was reflected in the growing density of meetings and events that comprised the calendar. By 1914, a greater number and variety of people were taking part in an organised and publicised social life than had in 1870 and in the interwar years this trend accelerated. In the 1930s, press photography, in particular, sustained the impression of a vibrant and extensive local calendar of events in which there was popular participation. While the programmes of certain long established elite associations such as the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' remained constant, they dominated the calendar far less as groups representing a wider social spectrum received more publicity. At the same time, regular specialized columns including those for women,

youth groups and Working Men's Clubs, highlighted schedules of events for particular sections of the population that in the 1870s had been marginalised. It was a growth of activity that had gained momentum with the emergence of a more democratic polity and a higher standard of living. The 'imagined community' depicted by the local press in the 1870s had expanded in scope by the 1930s. The majority of town residents were no longer cast as spectators of an elite group of civil associations, instead they were represented as active participants of local public life. They took part in the democratic process, raised funds for local charity and members of any small local club had the chance of seeing their picture in the newspaper

On the one hand, this study has highlighted how newspaper representation of an annual Leicester calendar, in the years between 1870 and 1939, helped to create an 'imagined community.'¹ The meetings and social occasions that were reported in the press comprised a shared public life in that coverage of the events made them visible to all who read the newspaper. On the other hand, the study has also looked behind the image to see if there was other evidence of social cohesion in the town. There have been two approaches to this. One has been to analyse groups in terms of the social capital that they generated, how individuals bonded in groups because of social similarity, but also how the framework of associations provided a means of bridging the boundaries of social and geographical difference. The other has been to highlight the link between associations and active citizenship, the commitment to the common good of the town that often went hand in hand with the bonding and bridging of associational life.

The social capital generated among leading middle class associations at the beginning of the period 1870 to 1939 has been emphasised. These were at the forefront of local business and social life and they included trade and commercial, philanthropic and educational and cultural societies. They were either exclusively male or male dominated and professionals and leading employers from local family firms were prominent members. To underline the cohesiveness of this group, town directories

¹ See discussion in introduction to thesis.

and associational records have been used to highlight how the memberships of the different associations overlapped. This elite section of the town population had their social class in common but to promote cohesion, bridges needed to be built across the boundaries of religious and party allegiance and these leading voluntary associations helped further this by adopting a shared town identity. The Leicester 'Lit and Phil' has been used frequently as an example of this in the thesis, with its use of the well known rule proscribing political and religious debate and its practice of having alternate Liberal and Conservative presidents. Other examples were the Leicester Chamber of Commerce, the Kyrle Society, and the Leicester Charity Organisation Society.

In addition, this study has also highlighted how associational life in Leicester contributed to a sense of local solidarity by generating more extensive social capital across class and, in some cases, gender divisions. Although some leading associations in the town had an exclusive membership there were others throughout the period that involved individuals from a cross section of classes. In the Victorian and Edwardian decades these included the Rifle Volunteers and the Temperance Societies. Towards the end of the period, in the interwar years, townspeople from a variety of class backgrounds were involved in prominent charitable associations such as the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind, while the membership of some of the more exclusive associations, for example the Freemasons, extended to include at least a wider range of the middle classes. A further pattern evident from the beginning of the period onwards were emerging hierarchies of societies in various fields, for example education and sport. One of the case studies in this thesis has looked for example, at five contrasting educational associations that were functioning successfully in Leicester in the 1870s and 1880s the Leicester 'Lit and Phil', the All Saints' Open Discussion Group at the Domestic Mission, the Leicester Working Men's College, the Secular Society and the Leicester Ladies' Literary Society. Although the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' was at the apex of the hierarchy with its high subscription rate and elite membership, it was not isolated from the other groups but rather connected by a series of personal and institutional links. In the case of sport,

from the 1880s onwards, there was an expansion of sports clubs, the varying subscription levels and contact details of which indicated the contrasting economic means and social status of the memberships. By the 1890s, multiple leagues had been formed connecting the different clubs and coordinating associations established some of them headed by leading local employers who were also well known aldermen on the Town Council. In this way, boundaries were bridged and a cohesive local sports life established. The network continued to expand in the twentieth century with teams and leagues for women's sport helping to swell the numbers in the interwar years.

It has been argued that a further way in which social cohesion was promoted was by bridging geographical boundaries. The physical fragmentation of the town as a result of suburbanisation was a challenge to perceptions of local unity. However, although the exclusive suburbs of Stoneygate and Knighton became the home to many professionals and local business men, a middle class involvement in town based associational life was sustained throughout the period. Even by the interwar years the membership list of the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' retained the names of well known and longstanding business families and a case study of the Freemasons included in this thesis has shown that membership expanded and the number of town lodges increased in the 1920s and 1930s. More generally there were networks of associations which helped to bridge neighbourhood boundaries that expanded or developed during the 1870 to 1939 period. The network of sports clubs was one of these but there were other coordinated associations that had a string of branches in the various suburbs of the town. These included branches of popular Friendly Societies and Adult Schools affiliated to the Adult School Union both of which increased in numbers in the Victorian and Edwardian years. By the interwar years other prominent and coordinated networks that had expanded in the suburbs were the Conservative Clubs, the Working Men's Clubs affiliated to the Club and Institute Union and the Baden Powell uniformed youth groups. A case study of the Scouts and Guides in the interwar decades in Leicester has demonstrated the involvement of leading Leicester professionals and employers in the local Scout Association and has illustrated how

the Leicester Scout troops were managed with regular monthly orders issued by headquarters in the town centre and the weekly activities of the individual neighbourhood groups balanced by less frequent but regular communal activities.

This study has been concerned with the relationship between associational life and the civic ideal. Voluntary associations have been depicted as complementary to the statutory authorities because the bonding and bridging of associational life not only connected town residents, it also encouraged active citizenship and perceptions of a unified civic identity. The 1870s and 1880s were the time when municipal culture gathered impetus in Leicester with the rebuilding of the town centre and the provision of new amenities. Although this might have seemed a move away from voluntarism, voluntary associations continued to play a supportive role to the Town Council. Voluntary associations were privately organised but they frequently had a public dimension. This was true of many groups in the sense that the local newspapers publicised their events. Some, however, also claimed a public profile by characterising themselves as representatives of the town as a whole or by helping to manage some aspect of town life, or by fundraising for a civic cause.

One such society was the Leicester 'Lit and Phil' which has been used extensively in the thesis to demonstrate the ethos of active citizenship which imbued middle class associational life in the late Victorian decades and early twentieth century. From the 1870s to the interwar years the 'Lit and Phil' numbered town councillors and aldermen among its membership and engaged in projects with a civic dimension. The society saw itself as under an obligation to contribute generally to the educational life of Leicester. It joined with the Town Council in running the Town Museum and providing regular courses of free lectures for the general public, it sponsored university extension courses, maintained links with local adult education and promoted the idea of a local university. In the early 1920s it was the material support given by certain members that allowed University College to be established as a local war memorial. Service to the town was seen by the membership as part of the 'Lit and Phil' mission. It was not only the membership of the 'Lit and Phil' which carried

the sense of civic mission into the interwar period. The 1920s were the decade in which the Kyrle society was revived as the Leicester Civic Society and during these years the Masonic lodges financed extensive building work at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and Cathedral, while the Leicester Rotary Club, established in 1916, for local business men also engaged in civic projects such as acquiring Swithland Wood for the benefit of the townspeople of Leicester. Also at the forefront, at this time, were popular charities with a strong civic profile such as the Leicester Guild of the Crippled, the Wycliffe Society for Helping the Blind and the Leicester Poor Boys and Girls Summer Camp all of which, in the interwar years still had the active support of local manufacturers.

Public spiritedness was also a feature of associational life in Leicester further down the social scale and became more evident during the period 1870 to 1939 against the backdrop of the extension of the franchise. An example of this from the late Victorian decades onwards was the St John's Ambulance Association. This recruited local townspeople for training in skills that were intended to benefit the urban community as a whole and which annually held a public inspection on Victoria Park in the presence of the Mayor. By the interwar years branches of St John's Ambulance were embedded in Working Men's Clubs throughout the city. Leading local charitable associations also had working class as well as a middle class input in the 1920s and 1930s. The organizing committee of the Wycliffe Society, for example, included representatives from the Cooperative Societies, Trades Council and Working Men's Clubs as well as representatives from the City Council and local employers. Moreover, groups all over the city including a cross section of clubs, church groups and adult schools raised money for the Wycliffe Society on a regular basis alongside other popular local causes such as the Leicester Guild of the Crippled and the Leicester Royal Infirmary. This involvement of a wider cross section of social classes in agencies concerned with the welfare of Leicester townspeople accompanied the emergence of a more inclusive polity. It contributed to social cohesion and added credibility to the notion of a local identity shared by town residents.

Women were also able to find a path into public life by participating in associations that embraced active citizenship. A case study of the Leicester branch of the National Council of Women has been used in the thesis to illustrate this. This branch of the national association which was formed in 1897 was a meeting place and coordinating group for women involved in a variety of youth, educational and social welfare projects in Leicester. Here was another example of a local network created by building bridges between groups and, by the early 1920s, there were 34 groups affiliated to the branch. Some were branches of other national associations such as the NSPCC and some were home-grown Leicester groups and institutions but all were involved in local projects. At a National Council of Women's Conference hosted by the Leicester branch in 1935, the delegates were accorded a civic reception and the contribution of women to social welfare in the city was acknowledged.

In the same way associational life also enabled young people to take a place in civic life. The case study of the Baden Powell Boy Scouts and Girl Guides has illustrated how civic awareness as well as patriotism was part of the group ethos and this was acknowledged by the attendance of the Mayor or civic representatives at displays that involved an assembly of groups from across Leicester. It was also acknowledged by the inclusion of Scouts and Guides in occasions of local importance such as the hallowing of Leicester Cathedral in 1927 and events with both a national and civic dimension, such as the establishment of the Leicester war memorial and the annual Armistice Day remembrance parades and service. Both the case studies of the National Council of Women and the Baden Powell youth groups illustrate how membership of some voluntary associations offered opportunities for greater social inclusion to previously marginalised groups and, by doing so, contributed to a more cohesive local society and perceptions of civic unity.

The civic authorities also played an important part in showcasing associational life and giving it a civic stamp. One way in which this has been illustrated has been by highlighting the Mayor's annual schedule of visits to voluntary associations and institutions. This schedule became more developed from around the turn of the

century and was a full and ongoing programme throughout the Edwardian period and into the 1920s and 1930s. The yearly ceremonial round of visits symbolized the links between the civic authorities and the associations and institutions visited. Mayor Charles Lakin's book of correspondence for 1908-1909 shows that these visits were not imposed by the civic authorities, on the contrary a great many invitations were received from a wide range of societies requesting a visit, so many that numerous invitations had to be declined. Both before the First World War and the interwar years leading local philanthropic associations were prioritised on the schedule, but sport, cultural educational, temperance and religious interests were among the other areas of local life acknowledged. The schedule of visits also provided a way of symbolically including minorities, as was demonstrated by the practice of a Hospital Sunday visit to the Leicester Synagogue. As well as the annual schedule of mayoral visits, the yearly programme of the civic authorities also included civic receptions such as the regular reception held each January to which many representatives from associational life were invited. Another important annual event sponsored by the Town Council and accompanied by civic ceremony was the August Abbey Park Flower Show which was held annually, with the exception of the war years, between 1886 and 1932 and to which various voluntary associations provided an input. Although the show lapsed in the 1930s, this was temporary as it was revamped and reintroduced after the Second World War as the City of Leicester Show.

Factors external to Leicester and their effect on perceptions of local culture have also been considered. The period 1870 to 1939 is generally seen as a time when national influence increasingly encroached on the local independent culture of provincial towns and in doing so posed another challenge to civic and local solidarity. The review of town directories, included in this thesis, has indeed shown that, from the late Victorian decades, a greater number of branch associations that belonged to national networks appeared in the listings alongside purely local groups and institutions. However after the First World War, local associations and institutions still comprised over 50 percent of the total entries, indicating that associational life was able to retain some local character. Moreover, membership of a national network

did not necessarily mean that the provincial branch lost its local identity. The case studies of the National Council of Women and the Baden Powell Scouts and Guides show them as national associations which, by the way they were structured, encouraged both a local and national identity to be maintained. The local and national aspects of these organisations were seen as complementary rather than in opposition. In the case of the National Council of Women, the network was organized in accordance with the federal principle which meant that the Leicester branch retained considerable control over its own affairs and had an input to national policy. In addition, the main preoccupations of the branch were Leicester projects which meant that a civic as well as a gender and national identity was preserved. Another example of a loose network of this type, also dating from the 1890s, was the Leicester Boot Manufacturers Association which belonged to the National Federation of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers. A further longstanding network was the Club and Institute Union to which Working Men's Clubs could affiliate. In the case of the Baden Powell youth groups the authority to decide policy lay with London headquarters, but at the same time responsibility for interpreting policy was delegated to district commissioners and autonomous local associations which permitted the local as well as national and youth identities of the association to flourish.

As well as national networks there were also links between town and county. Although Leicester formed a separate geo-political unit, the town shared historical, cultural and commercial links with the county and associational life helped to bridge the boundaries between the two. Throughout the period 1870 to 1939 these included a range of associations connected with trade and industry, voluntary military associations, medical and benevolent institutions, in particular the Leicester Royal Infirmary, as well as the network of Masonic lodges. From the late Victorian decades onwards sport also helped maintain links between the two with the formation of various sports leagues in which both town and county participated.

It has been argued in this study that the success of the Leicester Pageant in 1932 was symptomatic of a still vibrant local and civic culture that was sustained in interwar

Leicester. This culture has been depicted as underpinned by an associational life that regularly brought individuals together in groups and helped bridge boundaries between those groups. Moreover, the regular calendar of events and the image of local solidarity represented in the Leicester press conveyed to townspeople a perception of themselves as a unified whole. At the same time interaction between the civic authorities and voluntary associations, civic receptions and the ceremonial round of mayoral visits, together with the ethos of active citizenship adopted by certain leading associations, served to give perceptions of local solidarity a civic profile. Cooperation among associations and between associations and the Town Council was the ingredient that made such an ambitious project as the Pageant workable and it reflected a cooperation that was already well established and well oiled. It was an achievement that indicated that there was substance to the 'imagined community' depicted in the press.

While the main focus in the thesis has been the contribution of voluntary associations to sustaining civic and local identity, it has also stressed that aspects of local industry also supported a sense of solidarity rather than aggravating division. The positive effect of small and intimate workplaces on interclass relations has been demonstrated by historians and small to medium sized firms were characteristic of Leicester.² Moreover, the diverse nature of the local economy provided security and encouraged stability. The male dominated footwear and engineering industries were balanced by Leicester's other staple, the hosiery industry which offered employment opportunities for women. Further stability was ensured by more diversification in the early twentieth century. This led to relative prosperity in the interwar years, allowing Leicester to escape some of the worst excesses of the economic downturn.

² See R.J. Morris and R. Rodger, 'An introduction to British urban history, 1820-1914' in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City: a Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914* (London, 1993), 28. See A. Briggs, 'The background to the English parliamentary reform movement in three English cities', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, X (1950-52), 293-317. For a description of the effect of small-scale workshops in Birmingham on inter-class relations see also D. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914* (London, 1982). Smith provides a comparison of inter-class relations in Sheffield and Birmingham. In Sheffield, where employees had little contact with their employers relations were poor.

In Chapter Two of the thesis two Leicester spectacles: the opening of Abbey Park in 1882 and the Leicester Pageant of 1932 were compared. The symbolism of the two occasions shared some similarities but there were also differences that reflected changes in local society over the period. One similarity was that both events conveyed a strong sense of civic and local identity, but at the same time the notion of partnership between national and local was also conveyed. In addition, on both occasions partnership between town and county was symbolically represented. The difference between the 1882 and 1932 events was that, by 1932, the symbolism had mutated to represent a more democratic and inclusive model of local society. A far greater number of townspeople actively participated in the 1932 occasion, as opposed to merely being spectators and the depth and length of preparation they contributed was also far greater. The Pageant and related activities and ceremony also made symbolic statements about social inclusion with regard to class gender and minorities. In addition to the civic procession, there was a trades' procession which represented the Leicester working people as partners in the production of wealth and national labour leaders were invited to attend. Women were involved in the acting and production of the Pageant and, like all the 4000 Pageant performers, took part in the civic procession alongside the civic authorities. Minorities, for example the Catholic congregations in Leicester, also took part. Moreover, decision-making about the Pageant was a model of democratisation involving large public meetings with representatives of the Town Council and voluntary associations, all covered extensively by the local Leicester press. In these ways, the Leicester Pageant of 1932 both reflected and reinforced the civic ideal, this combined a perception of civic unity and popular participation in public life which was acted out, on a more regular basis, through the events that comprised the civic and associational calendar of the town.

The intention in this study has been to shed light on the ways in which urban associational life operated in Leicester between 1870 and 1939 and how it contributed to social cohesion. It has set out to build on current scholarship concerned with the centrality of voluntary associations to public life in provincial towns, from the

eighteenth century onwards, for example the work of Clark,³ Hennock⁴ Garrard,⁵ Trainor⁶ and, especially, Morris.⁷ It has, in particular, sought to build on Morris's exploration of meeting culture and how this shaped an annual local calendar in Leeds in the early nineteenth century. Transferring the context to Leicester in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when municipal culture had become established, it explores the idea of an annual local calendar underpinned by associational life and publicised by the Leicester press which supported the civic ideal.

The study has depicted a growth in associational life between 1870 and 1939 that gained impetus in the 1880s and continued on an upward trend during the interwar years. New types of groups emerged as the social context changed, with a wider and more socially inclusive associational life publicised in the Leicester newspapers and town directories at the end of the period. The overview of associational life outlined fits better with a model of gradual evolution from the late nineteenth century onwards than one which argues that the First World War brought cataclysmic change in its wake.⁸ The changes to associational life in Leicester in the interwar years are more

³ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1500-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000).

⁴ E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (London, 1973).

⁵ J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-1880* (Manchester, 1983) and J. Garrard, *Democratisation in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (Basingstoke, 2001).

⁶ R.H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites* (Oxford, 1993); R.H. Trainor, 'The middle class' in M. Daunton, (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 673-713; R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris, 'Preface' in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (ed.), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond Since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), ix-xii.

⁷ R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850*, (Manchester, 1990); R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 395-443; R.J. Morris 'Civil society and the nature of urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25 (1998) 289-301; R.J. Morris, 'Governance: two centuries of urban growth' in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), 1-14; R.J. Morris, 'Structure, culture and society in British towns in Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol.3, 1840-1950 (Cambridge, 2000), 395-246; R.J. Morris, 'A year in the public life of the British bourgeoisie' in R. Colls and R. Rodger (eds), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain* (Aldershot, 2004), 121-143 and R.J. Morris 'Urban associations in England and Scotland, 1750-1914: the formation of the middle class or the formation of a civil society?' in G. Morton, B. de Vries and R. J. Morris (eds), *Civil Society, Associations and Urban Places: Class, Nation and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Aldershot, 2006), 139-158.

⁸ See, for example, the arguments in A. Marwick, *The Deluge* (Basingstoke, 2006).

convincingly seen as an acceleration of pre-war trends than really radical change. In line with this, as has also been shown in a recent study of Norwich,⁹ there was no sudden withdrawal of the upper middle class from the public life of the town in the interwar years, although the wider cross section of participants in public life made the participation of the wealthy employing class appear less 'centre stage'. The encroachment of the national on the local is also an influence that can be seen gradually evolving in Leicester associational life from the late nineteenth century onwards with a growing number of national networks emerging. However, because there remained a balance between the numbers of national and local associations into the war years and because Leicester branches of prominent leading associations retained a local identity there was no sudden change, no collapse of local culture.

The success of the Leicester Pageant and the vigorous civic and associational life in Leicester during the interwar years indicated that there was still widespread belief in the civic ideal and that local culture had not become irrevocably fragmented. This is not to deny that there were groups locally that most certainly preferred to look primarily to a different identity, for example a class identity. However, this did not mean that they had abandoned their commitment to the locality the two identities were not mutually exclusive. Moreover, balancing these groups there were others, previously marginalised, that openly embraced a civic identity, and to which active citizenship and civic causes had provided a route out of powerlessness. While there is general agreement that during the twentieth century there was a trend to fragmentation of civic and local culture in provincial towns there is debate over the timing of this. Leicester fits best with Trainor's position that, in some towns, fragmentation may not have set in decisively until the post Second World War period with, possibly, the really marked changes occurring as late as the 1980s.

⁹ B.M. Doyle, 'The structure of elite power in the early twentieth century city: Norwich, 1900-35', *Urban History*, 24 (1997), 179-99.

This study has also been stimulated by Gunn's work on civic ritual and Morris's use of the metaphor of ritual in relation to associational life.¹⁰ The view taken has been that in trying to understand the success of the 1932 Pageant it is helpful to consider the role of ritual or ceremony in expressing social solidarity as well as authority. The regular rhythms of the civic and associational calendar and the rituals of associational life created a level of social cohesion which permitted a 'one off' spectacular such as the Leicester Pageant to be staged successfully, with the popular support and direct involvement of large numbers of local townspeople. While this thesis has specifically focused on Leicester, it seems likely that other towns which celebrated Pageants in the interwar years, as for example Northampton in 1928 or Stoke on Trent in 1930 may also have drawn support from a vigorous local associational life that continued to fuel a perception of civic unity.

¹⁰ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), 163-186 and S. Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture in the English industrial city, c.1835-1914, in R.H. Trainor and R.J. Morris (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), 226-39. Morris 'A year in the life of the British Bourgeoisie', 121-43, and Morris 'Clubs, societies and associations', 395-443.

Appendix A
Examples of Pageant committee members and their connections with voluntary associations.

Name	Committee	Connections
F.S. Hearne	Press, Publicity and Publications	Leicester Parliamentary Debating Society
Councillor C.E. Gillot	Executive	Leicester Parliamentary Debating Society Liberal Association Abbey Park Flower Show
Mrs C.F. Oliver	Designs and Costumes	Girl Guides Conservative Association Leicester Ladies Hockey Club Leicester Ladies Swimming Club National Council of Women
Councillor Mrs Swainston	Designs and Costumes	Parents Association
Mr W. Golland	Shops Display Trade and Commerce	Chamber of Trade National Road Walking Association Midland Road Walking Association Leicester Schools Rugby Union
Mr Hedley Briggs	Trade and Commerce	Chamber of Trade Leics Aero Club
Mr W.H. Riley	Amphitheatre Costume and Designs	Freemason Leicester Amateur Music and Dramatic Society
Captain S.L. Nathan	Performers	Leicester Rotary Club Alexandra Rose Day
Mr A.P. Groves	Costumes	Leicester Guild of the Crippled Rotary Club
Mrs M. Roberts	Costumes	Leicester Ladies Shakespeare Society Leicester Drama Society
Mr G. S. Inglis	Properties	Leicester Society of Artists
Mr Peter Dobie	Press, Publicity and Publications	Leicester Publicity Club
Mrs M Hampson	Costumes and Materials	Women's Institute Glenfield Parish Council
Major L.V. Wykes	Music	Leicester Symphony Orchestra Leicester Orchestral Union Oadby Adult School
Mr W.F. Curtis	Music	Leicester Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society
Mr Herbert Pochin	Performers	Leicester Drama Society West End Adult School
Mr J.H. Cartwright	Amphitheatre	Boy Scouts
Capt H.G. Riley	Lectures	Freemason Leicester City Amateur Dramatic Society

Mr M.A.H. Davy	Performers	Rotary Club Leicester Annual Tennis Tournament Leicester Drama Society
Mrs Pritchard	Performers	League of Pity
Mrs F.M Rose	Costumes	Women's Conservative Association Federation of the League of Industry
Mr L. Kershaw	Properties	Rotary Club Principal of College of Technology
Mr W.W. Waddington	Music	Leicester Yeomanry (Bandmaster) Leicester Territorials (Conductor)
Mr E.A. Burley	History	National Rifle Association
Rev. B. Uffen	Executive	Free Church Council
Mr James A. Hartopp	Finance	Governor of Leicester Royal infirmary. Local football and cricket teams
Mrs T.J. Gooding	Costumes	Women's Conservative Association
Mr W Grocock	Music	Leicester Brass Band Festival
Mr Charles Lyle	Ampitheatre	Leics Rural Community Council

Source: based on a series of features in the *Leicester Evening Mail* between February 1932 and May 1932 'The men (and women) behind the Pageant.'

Appendix B

The location of some of Leicester's suburbs

Source: a British Geological Society map published in H. Boynton, *Desirable Locations*, (Leicester, 1996), 19.

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