

URBANIZATION AND THE MIDDLE SORTS IN DERBYSHIRE
MARKET TOWNS: ASHBOURNE AND WIRKSWORTH 1660—1830

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

Catherine Nora Dack MA (Leicester) BSc (Leeds)
Department of Historical Studies
University of Leicester

October 2010

URBANIZATION AND THE MIDDLE SORTS IN DERBYSHIRE MARKET
TOWNS: ASHBOURNE AND WIRKSWORTH 1660—1830

by Catherine Nora Dack

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates ways in which towns with populations well below 5000 contributed to England's remarkable urbanization in the eighteenth century, developing functions which enabled them to facilitate and benefit from fundamental change. Ashbourne became a minor gentry resort for over half a century, when its upper echelons participated fully in the urban renaissance. Its middling sorts organized and embodied the high-order functions and trades which created unprecedented wealth in the latter half of the eighteenth century, through enterprise, expertise, ingenuity and changes in the organization of labour and resources. The town's previous history as a nursery of skill and a thoroughfare town with good connections with London were relevant in its transformation. The middling sorts were the chief consumers of the enormous variety of goods which became available, even in such small towns, but it is argued that most of the population eventually participated in the 'consumer revolution'. The industrial revolution is seen as fulfilling, but also creating, demand. The success of Wirksworth's lead industry led to a derogation in its urban status when it was overwhelmed with migrant workers. However, a rise in the price of lead encouraged the Duchy of Lancaster (the owner of the mineral rights) and a local landowner to upgrade the town to attract investors. This was successful, leading to the establishment of good shopping facilities when upper-middling sorts built an enclave of Palladian houses. The demand for cloth and shoes enabled middlemen in both towns to gain unprecedented wealth from domestic industry, to which they applied a new commercial discipline. This revitalized the towns for two or three generations, however some legacies of their heydays remained. Arkwright's enterprise had an enduring effect in the county, including the fortuitous discovery of coal and iron reserves near the Cromford canal.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Rosemary Sweet, for her invaluable assistance, advice and generosity with her time. Her expertise on eighteenth-century culture was essential for the background of my research, which would otherwise have lacked a firm historical context. I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the English Local History Department who steered me through my master's degree and widened my historical perspective: Professors Christopher Dyer and Keith Snell and Drs Graham Jones and David Postles (who interested me in probates and first suggested the middling sorts as a subject of research). I thank my fellow student Dr Christine Seal for her support, John Palmer for permission to quote from his unpublished research on Wirksworth and Adrian Henstock for his advice and supply of documents relating to Ashbourne. I thank the staff of the Lichfield Record Office for their assistance beyond the call of duty, and those of the Derby and Derbyshire Local Studies Libraries, the Derbyshire Record office and the National Archives.

This work would have been difficult to complete without the care and assistance of my husband, Michael Dack, to whom I dedicate it. He on numerous occasions met trains at unsocial hours, put up with inconvenience and displayed a talent for cooking.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Title Page</i>	1
<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>Table of Contents</i>	4
<i>List of Tables</i>	5
<i>List of Figures</i>	7
<i>List of Plates</i>	8
<i>Abbreviations</i>	9
Chapter 1 Introduction	10
Chapter 2 The establishment of urban credentials	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Issues of demography 1664–1821	23
2.3 Occupational structure c. 1660–1770	32
2.4 The development of the built environment	50
2.5 Conclusion	59
Chapter 3 The fortunes of the middling sorts 1700–1770	63
3.1 Introduction	63
3.2 Wealth and occupational status	69
3.3 The upper-middling sector	73
3.4 Liaisons and associations	79
3.5 ‘Dirty but prosperous’ lower-middling sorts	84
3.6 Consumerism	89
3.7 Shopping	97
3.8 Conclusion	108
Chapter 4 Ashbourne in its heyday 1770–1820	116
4.1 Introduction	116
4.2 ‘The minor metropolis’	122
4.3 Leisure activities	12
4.4 Wealth creation and social mobility	141
4.5 ‘An assiduous attention to business’	146
4.6 The industrial revolution	155
4.7 Female middling sorts	165
4.8 Conclusion	177
Chapter 5 Wirksworth and the industrial revolution c.1755–1830	185
5.1 Introduction	185
5.2 Topography and shopping	190
5.3 Wealth creation	195
5.4 Could there be urban renaissance in Wirksworth?	205
5.5 Associations and status	214
5.6 Wirksworth as a microcosm of the industrial revolution	219
5.7 Lead mining	227
5.8 Conclusion	236
Chapter 6 Conclusion	242
<i>Appendix</i>	256
<i>Bibliography</i>	275

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.21: A comparison of hearth tax data in some east Midlands towns	24
Table 2.22: Chargeable hearths in Wirksworth and Ashbourne in 1664	25
Table 2.23: A summary of the poll tax statistics (1689)	26
Table 2.24: Householders paying excesses in the poll tax (1689)	28
Table 2.25: The redistribution of population within Wirksworth parish 1673—1800	29
Table 2.31: Guest beds in six representative counties (1685)	35
Table 2.32: Occupational statistics for Ashbourne Town 1660—1700	37
Table 2.33: Ashbourne's occupational organization 1706—15	39
Table 2.34: Occupational change in Ashbourne c. 1660—c. 1715	41
Table 2.35: Some occupational statistics for Wirksworth 1660—c. 1720	42
Table 2.36: Wirksworth bridegrooms' occupations 1754—70	45
Table 2.37: Occupational categories in Ashbourne and Wirksworth before 1770	46
Table 2.38: Changes in the occupational structure of Ashbourne and Wirksworth 1700—70	49
Table 3.21: Sampled male probates in Ashbourne and Wirksworth 1700—1770	70
Table 3.22: Occupations of probators leaving personal estate over £100 in Ashbourne and Wirksworth (1700—69)	71
Table 3.23: Cash bequests of upper-middling testators ranked by status 1700—69	74
Table 3.51: Maximum personal estates of lower-middling Ashburnians compared with lower middling Wirksworthians 1700—69	86
Table 3.61; Inventory values in 1700—50 and the difference with 1660—99	90
Table 3.62: The ownership of 'new' artefacts mentioned in probate inventories	91
Table 3.63: Key items in Ashburnian probate inventories compared with other 'small' towns 1660—1725	94
Table 3.71: Select tradesmen's inventories 1688—1747	98
Table 3.72: Edited inventory of Thomas Bagueley jun. mercer of Ashbourne (1688)	99
Table 3.73: Edited inventory of Richard Booth mercer of Wirksworth (1701)	100
Table 3.74: Fabric sold by Thomas Holmes mercer of Wirksworth (1706)	101

Table 3.75: Groceries kept by Robert Getliffe chandler of Ashbourne (1747)	103
Table 3.76: Items sold by Edward Buxton ironmonger of Wirksworth (1736)	106
Table 4.21: The topography of occupations in Ashbourne township (1780)	127
Table 4.41: Changes in the personal estate of male Ashburnians 1770—1820	141
Table 4.51: Ashbourne tradesmen's accounts paid by Fitzherbert (1807)	151
Table 4.61: Ashburnians willing to accept banknotes in 1797	157
Table 4.62: Leather merchants of Ashbourne 1770—1820	163
Table 4.71: The founder members of Ashbourne's Female Friendly Society (est. 1806)	165
Table 4.72: Business women of Ashbourne compared with others 1770—1820	172
Table 5.31: Personal estates of male probators 1700—1820	195
Table 5.32: Male probate estate related to occupational status 1770—1820	196
Table 5.33: Occupants of premises paying house tax of 5s or more in 1780	200
Table 5.51: The commerce of a Wirksworth grocer (1838)	203
Table 5.52: Contributions to the war effort in 1798 by the élite of Wirksworth	215
Table 5.61: Wirksworthians willing to accept banknotes in 1797	226
Table 5.71: Membership of the Society for the Encouragement of Mining in the Wapentake of Wirksworth (1771)	227
Table 5.72: Tax paid by Wirksworth lead-miners on real estate in 1780	233
Table 5.73: The personal estate of a sample of parish lead-miners 1700—1820	234
Table 5.74: The real property of a sample of parish lead-miners 1700—1820	234
Table A1: A selection from the stock of George Buxton ironmonger of Ashbourne (1714)	271
Table A2: Edited inventory of Robert Getliffe chandler of Ashbourne (1747)	272
Table A3: Edited inventory of Thomas Bagueley mercer of Ashbourne (1688)	273

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 3.61: Key items listed in Ashbourne's male probate inventories 1660 —1754	92
Fig. 3.62: Change over time in the percentage of inventories containing certain artefacts in Ashbourne's male probate inventories 1660—1754	93
Fig. 3.71: Professionals and retailers who left a probate 1700—1759	107
Fig. 4.61: Ashburnian testators' links with other places 1700—1769	158
Fig. 5.31: A comparison of land tax paid by resident proprietors in Ashbourne and Wirksworth townships (1780)	199
Fig. 5.32: Land tax changes in Wirksworth 1780—1810 (resident proprietors)	199
Fig. 5.51: Subscribers to the Wirksworth Society for the Prosecution of Felons	218
Fig. 5.71: The annual value of tithes on ore mined in the parish of Wirksworth 1740—1840	230
Fig. 5.72: Prices of pig lead per fodder (ton) 1740—1840	230
Fig. 5.73: Men with title to a mine compared to the price of lead 1745—1795	232
Fig. A1: Vital statistics of Wirksworth parish 1660—1800	256
Fig. A2: Vital statistics of Ashbourne parish 1660—1800	256
Fig. A3: Ashbourne and Wirksworth	257

LIST OF PLATES

Pl. 2.41: Part of Wirksworth's parliamentary enclosure plan (1806)	58
Pl. 4.21: Ashbourne market place in 1849, a section of the tithe plan	124
Pl. 4.22: Ashbourne tithe plan (1849)	125
Pl. 5.21: Wirksworth market place and churchyard in 1848, a section of the tithe plan	191
Pl. 5.22: The Dale and Greenhill from the tithe plan (1848)	192
Pl. A1: Map of Ashbourne (1547)	258
Pl. A2: Section of 'A View of Ashborne', E. Dales & Sparrow (1795)	259
Pl. A3: Section of 'Ashbourn', J. Farrington, esq., R.A. (1817)	259
Pl. A4: 'Ashbourn' c. 1839	260
Pl. A5: The Grey House, Ashbourne (façade c.1760)	260
Pl. A6: The Mansion, Ashbourne (restored c. 1763)	261
Pl. A7: Compton House, Ashbourne (1760s)	261
Pl. A8: The Duchy Steward's House, Wirksworth (built 1752—3 with later annexe)	262
Pl. A9: The Red Lion, Wirksworth (restored c. 1768—70)	262
Pl. A10: Joseph Bradley's advertisement (1783)	263
Pl. A11: Theatre Bill at Ashbourne (1801)	264
Pl. A12: Richard & William Etches' advertisement (1777)	265
Pl. A13: Wirksworth tithe plan, main settlement (1848)	266
Pl. A14: Duchy of Lancaster plan of Wirksworth (1821)	267
Pl. A15: Section of Wirksworth (1817)	268
Pl. A16: Enlarged section of 'A Prospect of Wirksworth' (1863)	268
Pl. A17: Postcard of Wirksworth Hall c. 1920 (built c. 1780)	269
Pl. A18: Long-case clock by Samuel Harlow Ashbourne (c. 1790)	269
Pl. A19: Wirksworth china (c. 1770)	270
Pl. A20: Banknote of Arkwright's Bank (1829) founded by John Toplis in 1780	270

ABBREVIATIONS

TNA	The National Archives
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock
LRO	Lichfield Record Office
GRO	Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff
DLSL	Derby Local Studies Library
Derbyshire LSL	Derbyshire Local Studies Library, Matlock
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
GSC	Ashbourne Grammar School Corporation
FFS	Female Friendly Society, Ashbourne
ECCO	Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, Gale Group*
VCH	<i>The Victoria County History for Derbyshire</i> (1905)
Oxford DNB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004)*
UBD	<i>The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture</i>

*Accessed by licence (University of Leicester)

Lichfield Probates: The reference BC/11 applies to all probates and has been omitted in footnotes. The location (e.g. Ashbourne or Wirksworth) has been omitted where it is obvious.

The Boothby Archive: Abstracts kindly supplied by Adrian Henstock (County Archivist for Nottinghamshire, retd).

Websites

aim25.ac.uk	The London Metropolitan Archive
ahsoc.demon.co.uk	The Antiquarian Horological Society
bgs.ac.uk	The British Geological Survey
derby-porcelain.org.uk/porcelain	Derby Porcelain International Society
derbyshiredales.gov.uk	<i>English Heritage</i> listed buildings
johnsmedley.com	History of John Smedley Ltd
pdmhs.org.uk	The Peak District Mines Historical Society
wirksworth.org.uk	John Palmer's Local History website

Chapter 1: Introduction

During the long eighteenth century Britain underwent a process of urbanization which ushered in the modern era in advance of the rest of the world. The aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to a growing body of research regarding the significant participation of small towns in processes which historians have most frequently researched in provincial capitals. Smith's study of Nottinghamshire towns has shown that their size did not prevent them from being influenced by Borsay's 'urban renaissance' after a delay to allow for economic development.¹ Towns like Ashbourne, which would not rank in the first, second or third orders of Stobart's demographic hierarchy in the north-west at the beginning of the century, then had specialisms and first order functions which were of significance within the trading nexus.² By including such towns in urban typography the tipping point when over fifty percent of the population lived in towns arrived earlier than it would have done. This was appropriate, considering the extent to which they and other small towns participated in a culture of enterprise and, in aggregate, formed a significant percentage of the manufacturing base in the previous century. Although urbanization may not have been the 'first cause' of the industrial revolution, Corfield considered that it fostered it through the concentration of craft skills, capital and entrepreneurial talent.³

It has been recognized that a fundamental indicator and determinant of change was the marginalization of agricultural occupations in towns, which specialized in

¹ C.A. Smith, *The Renaissance of the Nottinghamshire Market Town 1680—1840* (Chesterfield, 2007), pp. 2-3.

² J. Stobart, 'The spatial organization of a regional economy: central places in north-west England in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), pp. 147-154, p. 152.

³ Corfield, *English Towns*, p.98. For instance, Nottingham's bankers financed Richard Arkwright and the Butterley engineering company (discussed below). Later, they invested heavily in the automation of lace-making, invented in the city. J.V. Beckett & J.E. Heath, 'When was the industrial revolution in the east Midlands?' *Midland History*, 13 (1988), pp. 77-94, p. 86.

services and the processing of the produce of the hinterland, to which they added value. According to Wrigley, urbanization promoted the security of property and ‘allowed capitalism to develop at the expense of customs which restricted personal freedoms’.⁴ Towns harboured an increasing variety of skilled manual occupations which developed through incremental technological advance and the division of labour. There remained a requirement for traditional occupations to provide the necessities of life to the urban population, through small-to-medium scale enterprise, including malting and tanning. These expanded in the late eighteenth century to cater for increased national demand and created additional wealth for the towns. The complexity of the occupational structure, comprising high-status professionals and merchants, traders, managers, manufacturers and artisans developed over time and indicated the rise of the middle orders of society, which form the focus of this study.

Plan and content

In chapter two the question of the towns’ urban credentials is addressed and it is argued that demography was important, but not crucial. Ashbourne and Wirksworth were not small in 1700 in relation to the average town, England being in the early stages of its phenomenal urbanization, but during the long eighteenth century the historic market towns of Derbyshire grew to only a modest extent, to be surpassed by industrializing towns on the coalfield in the nineteenth century. Wrigley and Rule are among those who insist on a minimum population of 5000 for a credible town of the period, which was slightly larger than either town achieved, so arguments have been put forward to privilege the towns’ higher-order functions. Well into the twentieth century these continued to include superior retailing, professional and educational services,

⁴ E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 8-9.

banking, entertainment and manufacturing. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the development of the service functions which differentiated towns from villages proceeded at different rates, and not necessarily in the direction of progress, a number of fortuitous factors coming into play. But, eventually, the wealth of an upper-middling élite allowed towns like these to emulate the refined architecture of local country houses and the county town. The infrastructure of a town then advertised its status.

The identity of the middling sorts before 1770, their functions and lifestyles are considered in chapter three, where it has been assumed (with Earle) that middling sorts owned property, therefore the likelihood that they left probates was high. The feasibility of classifying a quarter to a third of the urban population (the fraction which filed a probate) appeared daunting, but promised an insight into the ways in which the towns functioned and how they related to the rest of the urban system. The middling sorts were not an incoherent mass of people, they formed a social hierarchy, and the aim at this point was to discover as much as possible about this. Historians have differed on the factors which determined middling status, since the term itself was hardly ever used, but taken for granted. French has queried whether such a categorization is a self-fulfilling prophesy rather than a description of concrete reality, but this has not prevented him from specializing on the history of the middling sorts.⁵ It is easy to provide examples of the species, more difficult to define the genus, but they were the forerunners of the middle classes. The latter first became ‘class-conscious’ in the early nineteenth century, according to Morris, and were defined by Wahrman as an élite which appropriated significant public offices, adopted the ‘conventions of bourgeois

⁵ H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600—1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 13.

probity' and formed a 'polymorphous provincial culture', as opposed to the national culture of the upper class.⁶ The first and last characteristics were applicable to middling sorts, many of whom were geographically mobile within their province. Long before 1800, entrepreneurs, professionals, merchants, managers and master craftsmen formed a hierarchy of status groups in every town.

Historians are agreed that middling sorts were not class-conscious, which would be anachronistic, but the consumer revolution was driven by the purchase of status symbols, which contemporaries were well able to read. So that which people consumed was a form of classification largely dependent on wealth.⁷ Despite the cynical overtones, wealth was therefore fundamental to middling status (as Earle recognized), being given marked respect in the *Derby Mercury* for the benefit of its middling readership.⁸

The lead and cheese merchants of the two towns were rich men who traded with London in the late seventeenth century, as a result of which a plethora of exotic groceries and textiles were returned to the towns, many having been imported by the East India company after the Restoration. Such activity initiated a cultural shift throughout the nation, as Weatherill has shown, and which could perhaps be described as a 'consumer revolution within the middling sector'.⁹ This was well before the era for which McKendrick coined the term to describe a 'mass' phenomenon which

⁶ R.J. Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution 1780—1850* (London, 1979). D. Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 17 (1992), pp. 43-72, pp. 47, 55, 43.

⁷ C. Shammas, 'Change in English and Anglo-American consumption for 1550—1800', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 197.

⁸ The *Derby Mercury* always mentioned the significant fortunes of brides.

⁹ L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660—1760* (London, 1988).

accompanied the industrial revolution, to be considered in later chapters.¹⁰ Probates confirmed the participation of these small towns and the effect of fashion on furniture, which Weatherill did not address, but French has repaired the omission.¹¹ It was possible to gain information about the sale of cloth and groceries from retailers' inventories, which are not covered in probates in general.

During the period 1770 —1820 both towns enjoyed an economic heyday, during which the effects of urban renaissance (a 'cultural revolution') and the industrial revolution became apparent. The former phenomenon has been observed in many small towns of the period, being a reflection of the gradual accumulation of wealth in the higher echelons of town societies (some imported by well-heeled migrants), which bore fruit during the classical industrial revolution. Marshall memorably described it as 'a dynamism unprecedented and never afterwards recaptured'; however, he added that 'the pejorative sense of stagnation was uncalled for' in towns which failed to grow.¹² Large-scale enterprises, notably tanning, malting and domestic weaving, blossomed, only to die away in the mid-nineteenth century, but this did not prefigure the cessation of work-shop and other manufacturing, while urban institutions of an improving nature continued to develop and flourish, as did the civic infrastructure.

Chapters four and five are case histories of Ashbourne and Wirksworth in which earlier considerations are revisited and developed in the context of urban renaissance, consumerism and the industrial revolution. The last has undergone some rehabilitation in the historiography, following criticism by Berg and Hudson of the fragmentary sources and selective choice of industries which informed the statistics of

¹⁰ N. McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982).

¹¹ French, *Middle Sort of People*, pp. 36-7.

¹² J.D. Marshall, 'The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660—1900', *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209, pp. 169, 200.

‘pessimists’ like Crafts.¹³ The revisionists proposed that novel work-shop practices and the intensification of work, through changes in organization, may be considered to be revolutionary in themselves, particularly the unprecedented employment of women and children in factories.¹⁴

Methodology

Assessments of town population were derived from three sources: the hearth tax of 1664, a count of households conducted by a clergyman in 1789 and the early nineteenth-century censuses. Five-year moving averages of vital statistics from the parish registers provide the only evidence of demographic change during the ‘silent’ century before 1789, but are of limited use because they refer to the parish rather than the town; however, only in Wirksworth was there evidence of a change in the rate of increase of the population after 1740, as more generally noted by Wrigley and Schofield.¹⁵ The town then housed roughly two-thirds of the parish population.

The occupational structures of the towns and their change over time were examined in sampled probates. This was adequate for most purposes, allowing comparisons to be made, although it gave no idea of the composition of the property-less artisanal population and the question of status labels had to be addressed. There were three periods during which the parish registers assigned occupational or status labels to what have been assumed to be the skilled and ‘leisured’ populations. (There is some debate about this, but it did not affect the argument which was put forward).¹⁶ Although the data referred to the parishes, townsmen were identified by the vicars. The

¹³ S. King & G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution :English economy and society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2001), p. 111. Daunton listed Craft’s omissions: M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700—1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 127-9.

¹⁴ M. Berg & P. Hudson, ‘Rehabilitating the industrial revolution’, *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 24-50, p. 27.

¹⁵ Graphical representation reproduced in Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 391.

¹⁶ J.G. Rule, *Albion’s People: English society 1714—1815* (London, 1992), pp. 103-4.

majority of male decedents and fathers living in the town were recorded for a sufficient number of years (around a decade) to amount to a roll-call of current, skilled occupations. It was possible to compare the situation in Ashbourne in c. 1660 with that in c. 1715, but such records existed for Wirksworth only in the marriage registers after 1754, tailing off after 1760. Although it did not compare chronologically with Ashbourne's data, this was a most convenient time since it marked a turn in the town's fortunes and a formative period is evidenced from other sources. For instance, the marriages of the clothier Jonas Heap and twenty-five woolcombers were recorded, examples of the fact that the rising generation of men working in textiles and other occupations outnumbered lead-miners. Although the previous half century has been described as a miner's heyday by Slack, and Burt thought their wages were at a peak, perhaps two-thirds of their families gained no lasting benefit. They lived on little more than a subsistence while the industry was generating large profits for merchants and gains for shareholders, including the more fortunate yeoman-miners.¹⁷

There was more evidence of the economic activities of women during the towns' heydays than earlier. They were hardly ever accorded an occupational label in wills and never in the parish register, but in 1783 Bailey's *Directory* included both towns and provided detailed evidence about the occupational status of men and women with middling status or higher. The probates of both men and women provided useful information about gender relations and evidence of women gaining control over a greater proportion of the wealth of the town than formerly.

As regards the towns' built environments, a history of the period 1725—1825 has been published for Ashbourne by local historians under the guidance of a

¹⁷ R. Burt, *The British Lead Mining Industry* (Redruth, 1984), p. 163. R. Slack, *Lead-Miner's Heyday: the great days of mining in Wirksworth and the low peak of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield, 2000).

professional archivist, Adrian Henstock, providing a detailed description of the town's urban renaissance, with numerous anecdotes.¹⁸ No coherent work has been done on Wirksworth's built environment, the complexities of which could not be analysed to the same extent, owing to time constraints and relatively uninformative sources. English Heritage listings of extant buildings were invaluable, together with topographical, architectural and local history sources for evidence of important buildings which have been demolished. The nineteenth century tithe maps were the first accurate ones for the towns and essential for context and determining the use of urban space.

Strong evidence was found for the derogation of Wirksworth to a mining village during the period c.1720—c.1750 as a result of the attraction of poor migrants from its hamlets to the town, including the building of cottages and the in-migration of market traders. The consequent depletion of the upper-middling sector (the presence of which was previously attested by probates, a poll tax and a listing of traders) was underlined by the absence of polite building, such as occurred in Ashbourne from the 1720s, a scarcity of probates and notices in the newspaper of business failures. Urbanization resumed in mid-century when worsted manufacturing was introduced, the harbinger of a mixed economy and the revival of the lower-middling sector outside mining (which had a variegated social organization). The consequent development of the town to include some aspects of urban renaissance involved the intervention of the gentry.

Probates proved in Lichfield and London (at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury) were the most substantial primary sources for every aspect of the research, denoting economic, social and cultural change. They were supplemented from parish registers, newspaper reports, taxation records, quarter sessions records, trades

¹⁸ A. Henstock (ed.), *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825* (Ashbourne, 1989—1991), 2 vols.

directories, family records and material indexed with relation to the towns at the county's three record offices and the National Archives. Invaluable genealogical and occupational data for Wirksworth families derived from Ince's unpublished 'Pedigrees', deposited at Derby by the Devonshire archive. Compiled in the early nineteenth century by a Wirksworth attorney from legal records, memorials and interviews, it has been transcribed from the original in the Derby Local Studies Library by the local historian John Palmer and his team and placed online.¹⁹ Only a fraction of the material could be examined and was found to be rich and reliable for the eighteenth century (when checks were possible). Other primary sources included topographical histories. Glover's *Gazetteer of Derbyshire* (1831-33) was particularly informative on industries and less often quoted in the historiography than Pilkington.²⁰

¹⁹ wirksworth.org.uk

²⁰ S. Glover, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby...* (Derby, 1831-33).
J. Pilkington, *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire ...* vol.2 (Derby, 1789).

Chapter 2: The establishment of urban credentials

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter it is argued that a sufficient population, a complex occupational structure and the built environment were the defining characteristics of a credible town. They developed during the protracted urbanization process which took place largely during the long eighteenth century. In later chapters the ‘higher order service functions’ which accompanied economic development to drive cultural change will be considered in greater depth.¹

During the long eighteenth century England became the most highly-urbanized country in the world (excepting the Netherlands).² Outside London the majority of townsfolk lived in small to medium-sized market towns before 1750, which provides a rationale for including them in the urban history of the period.³ The limiting population of a viable town remains controversial, but those with as few as 2,500 inhabitants in 1801 have been regarded by Corfield as the ‘predominant components of the urban network’.⁴ She carefully excluded smaller places, the inward-looking market towns which had no other function than the ‘pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life’, like Hardy’s fictional Casterbridge.⁵ Wrigley, de Vries and Rule have argued for a higher limit of 5000 as being necessary for a ‘truly urban experience’, but Clark has controversially disregarded population, adopting the criteria of specialist

¹ J. Langton, ‘Town growth and urbanization in the Midlands from the 1660s to 1841’, in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840* (Leicester, 2000), pp.7-8.

² E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 24.

³ P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700—1800* (Oxford, 1982), p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵ E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 257.

J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981), p. 18.
Corfield, *English Towns*, pp. 1-2.

functions, a complex social structure and distant trading contacts as more important than demography for defining a town of the period.⁶ In his review of the work in which Clark expressed this view, Phythian–Adams strongly disagreed, dismissing ‘toy towns and Trumpingtons’ as lacking all the attributes of a credible town and remarking that most urban historians concentrated on large towns and cities for good reason.⁷ It will be argued here that small towns like Ashbourne and Wirksworth deserve recognition as urban centres because, unlike villages, they were part of the social, cultural and economic upheavals which characterised what Rule has termed ‘the vital century’ when modern society emerged. Towns with populations well below 5000 possessed significant characteristics in common with towns in general, which Phythian–Adams has denied, referring to them as ‘weekly shopping centres’ with ‘the fainter tinctures of urbanism’.⁸ But if the population fell much below Corfield’s limit, it is hard to see how Clark’s criteria could be fulfilled.

There is a consensus that the long eighteenth century was a period of growth and modernization, but little work has been done on the ways in which small towns participated in wider change, or the growing sophistication of their social and commercial structures.⁹ Wrigley argued that the urbanization of England was signified by changes in towns’ occupational structures, in which a rapid development of secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (service) occupations was the fundamental

⁶ P. Clark, ‘Small towns 1700 – 1840’, in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol.2, 1540–1840 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 734-6. P. Clark & P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 4-5. J.M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680–1840* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 12.

⁷ C. Phythian–Adams, ‘“Small-scale toy towns and Trumpingtons”? Urbanization in Britain and the new *Cambridge Urban History*’, *Urban History*, 28 (2001), pp. 256-268, pp. 261-3.

⁸ Italics added. Phythian–Adams, ‘Toy towns and Trumpingtons’, p. 261.

⁹ C.A. Smith, *The Renaissance of the Nottinghamshire Market Town 1680–1840* (Chesterfield, 2007), p. 12.

urban marker.¹⁰ The corollary was that settlements might be excluded from urban typology only if they lacked these features.¹¹ Even in 1835, when Dyer took Ashbourne's township population of c.2000 to be the extent of the town, he found that 'most adults were self-employed tradespeople'. He therefore ignored the suburb of Compton, but the town's exceptional services and 'competitive edge' were remarkable, a situation which had not occurred overnight and endured.¹² It must be admitted that there was no *prima facie* case on these grounds for elevating Wirksworth from an industrial village, considering that mining is a 'primary' occupation, associated with the countryside and poverty. Although Langton has earmarked large coal-mining towns as specialist exceptions to Wrigley's typology, the in-migration of labourers to Wirksworth reduced the tenuous urban credentials it had possessed in the late seventeenth century, which could have become a permanent demotion.¹³ The phenomenon formed evidence for labourers being driven out of farming by improved agricultural efficiency to take up urban employment (Wrigley argued that town labourers were unlikely to be engaged in agriculture except for harvesting).¹⁴

In addition to their demographic and socio-economic credentials, the outward appearance of towns distinguished them from large villages, as more affluent

¹⁰ E.A. Wrigley, 'Country and town: the primary, secondary and tertiary peopling of England in the early-modern period', in P. Slack & R. Ward, *The Peopling of Britain: the shaping of a human landscape* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 218-9.

¹¹ Wrigley, 'Country and town', pp. 224-5.

¹² Dyer found 300 tradesmen in Ashbourne, having neglected the 500 residents of Compton. A. Dyer, 'Small towns in England, 1600—1800', in P. Borsay, P. Proudfoot & J. Lindsay (eds.), *Provincial Towns in Early Modern England and Ireland: change, convergence and divergence*, Proc. of the British Academy, 108 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 58-9.

¹³ J. Langton, 'Prometheus prostrated?' in P. Slack & R. Ward, *The Peopling of Britain: the shaping of a human landscape* (Oxford, 1999), p. 246.

¹⁴ Although the pros and cons of the existence and timing of the agricultural revolution cannot be argued here, Overton has made out a strong case for such a movement during the early decades of the century. M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy 1500—1850* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 8. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p. 151. The number of farm labourers slightly increased by 1851, but proportionally far below the rise in other occupations.

inhabitants replaced vernacular buildings of timber and thatch with the geometric precision of Palladian brick and tile, making efficient use of expensive land by adding a third storey. This was characteristic of Borsay's urban renaissance. He noted that the classical revival, which began in London in 1666, expanded rapidly into provincial towns in the late 1720s, when a flood of pattern books appeared with full building details.¹⁵ The extent to which the fashion drove out traditional building in small towns was variable, but French observed that innkeepers were in the vanguard of fashion. In Ashbourne and Wirksworth inns were rebuilt in Palladian style in anticipation of turnpiking and competed to accommodate the coaching trade in comfort.¹⁶ As a thoroughfare town Ashbourne felt the impact more than most, but Wirksworth had far more hostleries than a mere village and two coaching inns by mid-century.¹⁷

Smith's study of Nottinghamshire showed that its market towns had a previously unappreciated level of urbanization, eventually sharing most aspects of urban renaissance with larger towns. East Retford, population 1,948 in 1801, was 'the principal post and staging town in north Nottinghamshire' and shared many other characteristics with Ashbourne.¹⁸ Although Jones and Falkus have dismissed urban renaissance in 'most' northern market towns, said to have specialized in production rather than trade and to have had poorer inhabitants than their southern counterparts, the work of Ellis, Smith and Marshall implied that some aspects of it may be considered universal in any credible town.¹⁹

¹⁵ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660—1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 45, 49.

¹⁶ H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600—1750* (Oxford, 2007), pp.182-3.

¹⁷ Smith, *Nottinghamshire Market Town*, p. 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 132-3. I.E.L. Jones & M.E. Falkus, 'Urban improvement and the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: a reader in English urban history 1688—1820* (London, 1990), p.144. Ellis, *Georgian Town*, pp. 2, 12, 21, 62.

2.2 Issues of Demography 1664–1821

There was no head-count in the towns before 1801 and it is necessary to go back to seventeenth-century tax records for demographic information on most small towns. A sophisticated analysis of parish registers by Wrigley and Schofield made estimates of population which refer to the parish; in the case of Wirksworth, three-quarters of the parishioners lived in ten dispersed farming and mining hamlets in the seventeenth century.²⁰ Moreover, the government taxed heads of household, so statistical multipliers (informed guesswork) have to be used to estimate populations. Unwin's figure of 4.25 was adopted, following Smith's practice.²¹ The chief difficulty was the lack of recognized town boundaries. Wirksworth township had wide acres of commons and farmland, while Ashbourne town straddled at least two adjacent townships, with very roughly ten percent of the population living in two different hundreds (major county divisions which formed the tax boundaries).²² The use of figures for the townships only was the only feasible approach, but overestimated Wirksworth's and underestimated Ashbourne's urban populations.

The hearth tax of 1664 was the only one which listed every household in the hundred of Wirksworth, including those in Ashbourne township. The estimated populations were 970 for Ashbourne (229 households) and 1,900 for Wirksworth (447 households). These figures may be roughly compared with similar towns in Nottinghamshire, although Smith's data referred to parishes (table 2.21). East Retford's

J.D. Marshall, 'The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660–1900', *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209, 159, 162-9.

²⁰ E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981).

²¹ C.A. Smith, 'The renaissance of the English market town: a study of six Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680–1840', unpub. Ph.D. thesis (University of Nottingham, 1997), p. 37.

²² Estimated for the early nineteenth century from a map of 1830–31 reproduced on pp. 14-15, in A.Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725–1825*, vol. 2, 'Architecture' (Ashbourne, 1991).

parish was only 118 acres in total, an area comparable with Ashbourne township (53 acres). Such small areas limited the proportion of residents engaged in agriculture, which increased a town's prosperity (shown by lower excusal rates). Wirksworth township had a large acreage of commons and farmland, while Worksop had a huge rural parish of 17,000 acres. In the early eighteenth century both towns attracted poor migrants from the countryside, Worksop doubling its size between 1687 and 1754, while Wirksworth's share of its parish population increased from a quarter to two-thirds in the same period.²³

Table 2.21: A comparison of hearth tax data in some east Midlands towns

	<i>households</i>	<i>excused %</i>	<i>mean hearths/house</i>
Ashbourne township	229	36.8	1.61
E.Retford parish	210	29	
Wirksworth township	447	48.3	1.32
Worksop parish	358	50	

Sources for Derbyshire: TNA, E179/94/402 (207628). C.A. Smith, 'Population, growth and economic change in some Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680—1840', *Local Population Studies* 65 (2000), pp. 29-46.

Those excused the tax can be equated to labouring households, but most were not wretchedly poor as some historians have assumed. Wood used the tax to categorise the Peak Country as 'one of the poorest regions in England', whereas the 'low peak' was good sheep-farming country.²⁴ The figures lie within the national norm of 30-50% exemptions and Arkell has estimated that not more than one sixth of the population

²³ Smith, *Nottinghamshire market town*, pp. 15, 75, 77.

²⁴ A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country 1520—1770* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 19.

could be described as ‘poverty-stricken’.²⁵ Wrightson insisted that only the ‘chronically poor’ were excused in 1673 in Terling (Essex), but the tax threshold was high, being personal property worth £10 (twice the minimum for making a will) or a rent of £1 p.a.²⁶ As regards the idea that one hearth invariably meant a cottage, Hanson Mount, a large house of the period in Church St, Ashbourne, retains its original, central chimney stack, typical of medieval domestic architecture.²⁷ Modernization lagged behind the south and some taxed on one hearth had sufficient wealth to place them in the middling sector, illustrated by 81 inventories relating to one-hearth households in Nottinghamshire (average value £84) and 61 in Alstonfield, nr Ashbourne (average £73.8).²⁸

The numerical distribution of multiple hearths nevertheless provided information about social stratification, which corresponded to a striking extent between the towns, the numbers in higher social categories being virtually identical (table 2.22).

Table 2.22: Chargeable hearths in Wirksworth and Ashbourne in 1664

HEARTHES	1	2	3	4	5	6-7	8+
Ashbourne	74	39	19	5	5	3	3*
Wirksworth	158	36	22	4	5	5	1

* Counting old Ashbourne Hall (21 hearths), then among the largest houses in the county and situated just over the township boundary.

Wirksworth had roughly double the number of taxed one-hearth households, which may be attributed to small farmers, in its extended township, and yeomen-miners. A decade

²⁵ T. Arkell, ‘Interpreting probate inventories’, in T. Arkell, N. Evans & N. Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 24, 32, 74.

²⁶ K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525–1700* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 34-5. K. Schürer & T. Arkell (eds), *Surveying the People: the interpretative use of document sources for the study of population in the later seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 39-40.

²⁷ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 92.

²⁸ Smith, ‘English market town’, p. 49. C.N. Dack, ‘The distinguishing features of a rural middling sort: a socio-economic and cultural study of Alstonfield, Staffordshire c.1660–1740’, unpub. M.A. dissertation (Leicester, 2004), p. 17.

later (1673) Richard Blome thought Wirksworth wealthier than Ashbourne, referring to it as ‘pretty large and prosperous and begins to be well-built in stone’. He described Ashbourne equivocally as:

A pretty large town, and hath a market on Saturdays, which of late is much decayed, many families being extinct, or removed; some may have reason to be through the many attorneys thereabouts residing, and its being within the Peverel Courts; but let the reason be what it will, through its declension Wirksworth is now become considerable’.²⁹

Ashbourne’s vital statistics revealed a temporary depression, from which the town made a remarkable recovery over the following twenty years with rising marriages and births well in excess of burials. Ironically, Wirksworth almost immediately suffered a damaging mortality crisis affecting infant children.³⁰

More precise evidence of social stratification in the taxed populations derived from a poll tax of 1689, a generation later (table 2.23).

Table 2.23: A summary of the poll tax statistics (1689)

	<i>Wirksworth</i>	<i>Ashbourne</i>
Taxed town population >15 years	588	707
Taxed householders	294	266
Taxed male householders	268 (91.2 %)	233 (87.6%)
Male householders with a living wife	150 (56.0 %)	161 (69.1 %)
Households with youths >15	41 (13.9 %)	98 (36.8 %)
Households with at least one servant	45	39
Households with at least one apprentice	nil	18
Mean no of household occupants >15	1.63	2.64
Average no of progeny >15 in families	1.80	2.02
Est. population of <i>taxpayers</i> ’ households	1,250	1,140
Estimated population *	2,400 (?)	1,800

Source: DRO, D258/24/10/47-52. * If the exemption level was unchanged

After the ‘Glorious Revolution’ the unpopular chimney tax was repealed, but the progressive poll tax, currently levied on the property of the rich, was extended to collect

²⁹ R. Bloom, *Britannia or A Geographical Description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* ... (London, 1673), pp.74, 77.

³⁰ *Appendix*, Figs A1, A2, p. 256.

1s from most subjects over the age of fifteen.³¹ The disparity of wealth between the towns is evident from the taxed populations, as is Ashbourne's more urbanized character. The town had large working households with no shortage of dependents, including 29 youths indentured to 18 master craftsmen, an indication of its role as a nursery of skill. This contrasted with the lack of references to apprentices in Wirksworth, which had fewer prosperous artisans, although it did not lack a servant-keeping stratum. Both towns prospered between 1664 and 1689, the number of taxed households in Ashbourne increasing by 18.0% and in Wirksworth by 27%. Wirksworth's improvement occurred in spite of the mortality crisis in 1669, which appeared to have resulted in a shortage of young adults, but the town's estimated population is dubious because there was currently a cyclical depression in the lead industry.³²

The record supports equal numbers of upper-middling or gentry households in the towns, agreeing with deductions from the hearth tax (table 2.24). They were surcharged for servant-keeping, capital assets, high income and honorifics (including the titles of Mr and Mrs).³³ The élite numbered 19.5% of Ashbourne's taxed householders (an estimated 13% of the population) and 18.0% of Wirksworth's (perhaps 9% of the population).

³¹ The rules were complicated and repeatedly modified, but it seemed reasonable to assume that hearth tax exemptions applied. Schürer & Arkell (eds), *Surveying the People*, pp. 142 ff.

³² *Appendix*, Fig. A1, p. 256. The excess of burials over baptisms in a single month in 1669 was 70. Wood, *Politics of Social Conflict*, pp. 102-3. R. Slack, *Lead-Miner's Heyday: the great days of mining in Wirksworth and the low peak of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield, 2000), p. 76.

³³ Eleven women were so taxed in Ashbourne and four in Wirksworth. Despite Blome's comments, only two attorneys were taxed in Ashbourne and three in Wirksworth.

Table 2.24: Householders paying excesses in the poll tax (1689)

	ASHBOURNE	(52)	WIRKSWORTH	(53)
Tax > £5		1		0
Tax £1-£3		3		5
Tax 10s –19s 11d,		8		1
Property-holders styled Mr /Mrs *		19		13
Others with servants or apprentices		21		34

Source: D.R.O. D258/24/10/47-52. * Double counting is avoided.

Exactly a century later, in 1789, the Revd James Pilkington counted 480 houses in Ashbourne and Compton combined and 486 houses in ‘Wirksworth town’ as such, with 162 houses situated outside the town (a total of 648). This showed conclusively that the nucleated towns were of almost identical size, as the topography later suggested.³⁴ The estimated town populations were 2170 (Ashbourne) and 2197 (Wirksworth). Wirksworth’s township population was 2930 (est.), representing at least a 20% increase in the century (attributable largely to the growth of the mining enclave of Bole Hill), but Ashbourne appears to have grown hardly at all.

The main cause of demographic change in Wirksworth was migration from the hamlets to the township (table 2.25). The revival of the lead industry, combined with an improvement in agricultural productivity promoted out-migration to the town and its mining hamlets (Middleton and Cromford). The statistics were derived as follows. In 1673 and 1725 the church wardens recorded the rates payable by the town and each hamlet, a note in 1673 mentioning that assessments were in proportion to population. There was no revaluation in 1725, possibly because the migrants had no fixed abode and were squatting on the commons. A considerable, permanent transfer of population had occurred by mid-century, when bridegrooms’ addresses were recorded in the proportions shown. Palmer’s analysis of the vital statistics in the last two decades suggested some readjustment in favour of the hamlets. Lead production was then

³⁴ J. Pilkington, *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire ...* (Derby, 1789), vol.2, pp. 282, 300.

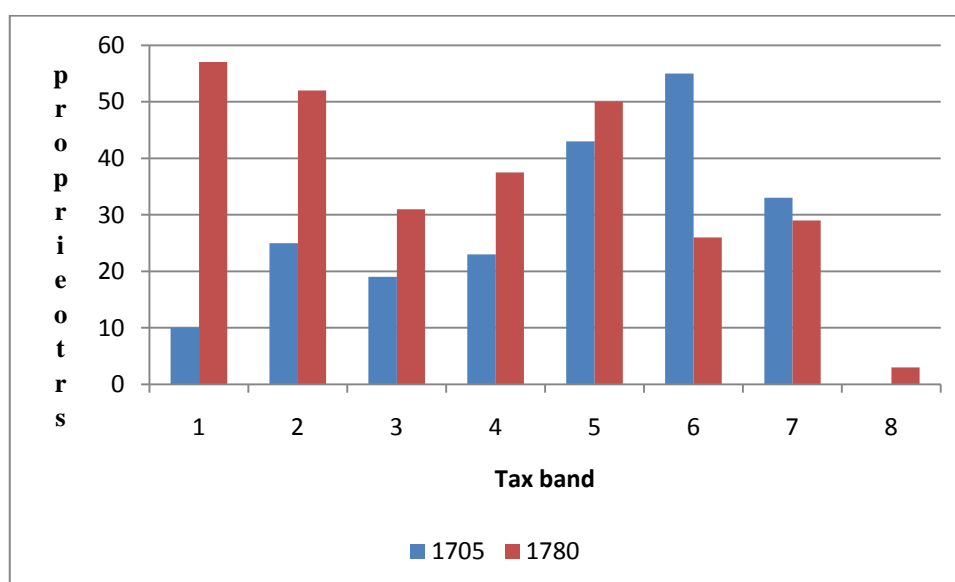
stagnant and domestic weaving was growing in the countryside. Further evidence for in-migration to Wirksworth derived from land tax records, which showed that small houses had been built on small-holdings at some period between 1705 and 1780 (fig. 2.21).

Table 2.25: The redistribution of population within Wirksworth parish 1673–1800

	Wirksworth	Cromford	Middleton	Other hamlets	
1673-1725 (church rates)	23.3	7.5	7.5	61.7	%
1754-1770 (bridegrooms)	63	10	12.4	14.6	%
1780-1800 (p. registers)	58	13	12	17	%

Sources: DRO, Wirksworth P.R., 1673, 1725 and 1754 – 1770. J. Palmer, www.wirksworth.org.

Fig. 2.21: A comparison of the land tax assessments for Wirksworth in 1705 and 1780



Tax Band	Tax Range
1	< 1s
2	0.99s < R < 2s
3	1.99s < R < 3s
4	2.99s < R < 5s
5	4.99s < R < 10s
6	9.99s < R < £1
7	19.99s < R < £5
8	> £5

Sources: DRO, D258/24/9/24; Q/RE. Note: The assessment gives no indication of the value of a property, but from the evidence of probates small cottages were worth about £20.

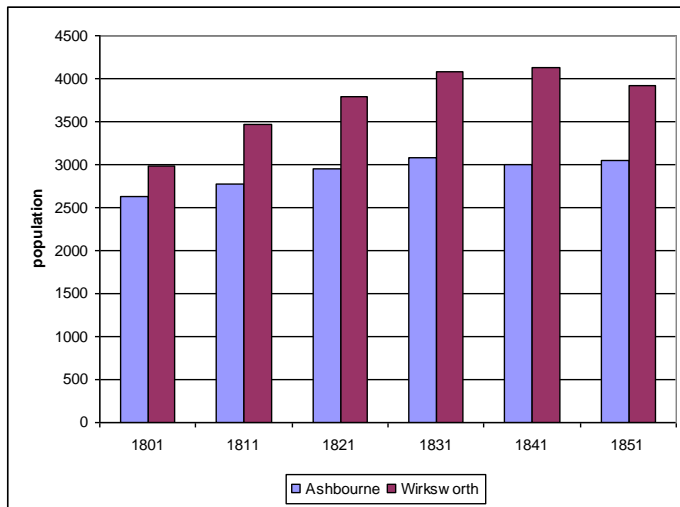
An odd land tax record for 1705, found in family papers, was compared with the first of a continuous series from 1780 deposited in the quarter sessions archive. The quota was unchanged but the distribution of tax between small-holders and householders had altered.³⁵ Tax bands have been arbitrarily chosen in relation to types of property, ranging from small cottages with negligible land (band 1) to larger houses and land up to band 5, small-holdings (band 6) and estates of several hundred acres (band 8). There was a very large increase in proprietors paying tax on small houses in bands 1 and 2 while the increased tax paid by the largest landowner suggested that his predecessors built cottages for rent on Bole Hill. A dramatic reduction in small-holdings (band 6) was the apparent source of building land. Yeoman-miners' wills referred to small groups of cottages which they owned for rent, perhaps built on their ancestral land, but considering that resident proprietors in the town increased from 207 to 284, some of the incomers may have purchased land and built their own.

Ashbourne parish had a steeply-rising marriage rate up to 1730, but there was no corresponding rise in the birth-rate after the late seventeenth century and marriages declined in mid-century.³⁶ This suggests an out-migration of young adults, unable to find work in the countryside or to set up in the town after completing their apprenticeships. Competition in the town was minimised with relatively few duplicated specialisms; those moving into the town tended to be mature *rentiers* or the purchasers of available businesses. Such exchange was the direct opposite of what occurred in Wirksworth as a result of the influx of poor. The nineteenth-century censuses continued to blur the urban boundaries, but the uncertainty in the urban population was proportionally less (fig. 2.22).

³⁵ The tax collected in 1705 was £246.88 compared with £247.48 in 1780.

³⁶ *Appendix*, Fig. A2, p. 256.

Fig. 2.22 Census statistics for Ashbourne and Wirksworth 1801–1851



Source: DRO, Abstracts of the nineteenth-century censuses for Derbyshire.

Wirksworth's spare land was becoming utilized for industrial use, including cottages for mill-hands near the two cotton mills, one and a half miles south of the town centre, and even a small colliery. Large tracts of farmland remained after parliamentary enclosure in 1806, but only a very small percentage of the total population were farmers.³⁷ The sizeable mining settlement at Bole Hill was about the same distance north of the town, near the most profitable mines and the smelting works. In Ashbourne, Compton was enumerated with the small neighbouring hamlet of Clifton, but as an integral part of the town for centuries it had to be included and Clifton's farmers ignored.

Figure 2.22 shows that Wirksworth grew much faster than Ashbourne at the beginning of the nineteenth century, attributable both to lead-mining and textiles. The loss of the lead industry in 1830 caused stagnation, rather than decline, and it seems likely that the loss of hand-weaving in mid-century, before a replacement industry was found, had a greater effect. Textiles could have expanded more in the steam age. At a crucial time in the late-eighteenth century the power of the river Ecclesbourne was

³⁷ Land tax, 1810 (DRO, Q/RE).

reduced (see chapter five) limiting the number of mills on it to two, despite the use of a steam pump, and later investment was mostly unforthcoming (the availability of labour would be a factor). Ashbourne's slow population growth reached an equilibrium in the 1830s, when its mixed economy was set fair for the foreseeable future.

2.3 Occupational structure c. 1660–1770

Braudel has referred to 'inflated villages with high populations which will never become towns,' because the true town dominates its hinterland by 'imposing' its shops and other amenities upon it, 'agriculture being the function of the supply chain'.³⁸ Wrigley has roughly differentiated the economies of country and town thus: the countryside produced raw materials, including food, fuel and other necessities, which were processed in towns (secondary occupations) to produce 'decencies', while tertiary services and professions in towns promoted 'luxuries'.³⁹ This appears to be contradicted by the growth of rural domestic industry and (later) by the situating of industrial plant in the countryside. But it may first be noted that these arrangements often had a limited lifetime, but urbanization was permanent; second that domestic industry was controlled from the town and expanding industries themselves generated towns (for instance, on the coalfield). In any event, occupational *diversity* was intimately associated with urbanization, with the S-sector rising to c. 50% in towns, accompanied by rising real incomes which ultimately enabled the T-sector to dominate. It may be supposed that the presence of lawyers, merchants and their household servants was symptomatic of urban status, irrespective of demography.

³⁸ F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century*, vol.1, 'The structures of everyday life, the limits of the possible' (Paris, 1979), tr. S. Reynolds (London, 1985), p. 481.

Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p. 255.

³⁹ Wrigley, 'Country and town', pp. 217-8.

Blome mocked Ashbourne as a town of lawyers in 1673 and by 1770 it resembled Varzy in France, described by Braudel as ‘definitely a town with its own bourgeoisie’ despite having barely 2000 inhabitants, where ‘there were so many lawyers that one wonders what they found to do, except that they were landowners’.⁴⁰ According to Wrigley lawyers formed clusters, less-specialised attorneys being found in small towns of 5000 inhabitants, but rarely in ‘villages’, while barristers lived in larger towns (nearly 70% lived in London in 1841).⁴¹ Ashbourne, pop. c. 2,000, was home to a variegated legal cluster during its late-century heyday, when a barrister, Edward Leigh, and a Master Extraordinary of the High Court of Chancery, Joseph Dean, lived there, together with numerous attorneys, including the county treasurer, John Chatterton, and Francis Beresford esq.⁴² Several had landed estate and one or two of the occupants of country houses, including Tissington and Mayfield Halls, were trained lawyers. Wirksworth had several attorneys at all times; three were taxed in 1689 and the Duchy Steward was a considerable landowner.⁴³

Professionals, merchants, wholesaler-retailers and innkeepers were the earliest providers of élite services and for most of the eighteenth century their social standing was elevated by the participation of minor gentry families. The trades of merchant, mercer-draper and ironmonger were confined to freeholders by statute in 1562 and they remained exclusive, upper-middling occupations.⁴⁴ Their status was enhanced by high capital investment and the need for acceptance in the national trading nexus, in which

⁴⁰ Braudel, ‘Structures of everyday life’, p. 482.

⁴¹ Wrigley, ‘Country and town’, p. 221.

⁴² In the 1770s there were ‘not less than five justices of the peace’, according to Mark Noble. A. Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725–1825*, vol. 1, ‘Fashionable Society’ (Ashbourne, 1989), p.14. Joseph Dean was appointed in 1762. *Derby Mercury*, 30 July, 1762.

⁴³ Theoretically, the King’s Field included Ashbourne. During the civil war the Duchy Steward (Edward Manlove) preferred to live at Ashbourne Hall, its lawful occupant having been ousted (Sir Aston Cokayne).

⁴⁴ Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, p. 32.

good breeding and land-holding were valuable assets. In 1673 Blome wrote that Wirksworth was ‘the greatest lead market in England’ adding for good measure that lead was ‘more plentiful here than in any part of the known World’.⁴⁵ Turbutt refuted the primacy of Wirksworth’s market, referring to Derby and Chesterfield as entrepôts for the metal, and Elliott considered that Derby’s economy was partly founded on the success of lead mining in the Peak ‘at its height between 1600 and 1750’.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Wirksworth’s merchant-smelters were in a very considerable way of business, their receipts rising to a historical peak in the late seventeenth century.⁴⁷ Sir John Gell of Hopton Hall traded directly in London, Francis Bunting left a fortune of £16,423 10s in 1695 and William Beardsley significantly set up house in Derby, building a ‘five-bay, Dutch-gabled house in brick with stone dressings’.⁴⁸ Lead was heavily in demand for roofing and glass manufacturing during the ‘great rebuilding’ of London and country mansions, including Chatsworth House (c. 1686).

The hospitality trade was very important for both towns, as was clear in a government survey of ‘beds and stables’ in 1685 (table 2.31).⁴⁹ In a sample of six counties Derbyshire’s facilities were better than expected and Wirksworth and Ashbourne ranked highly. Ashbourne’s importance as a post town on the road linking London to the north-west produced a ranking of 12th for beds (135) and 11th for stables (279) out of 1,672 settlements in six counties (second after Derby in the county). Wirksworth, which rated 4th in the county after Chesterfield for beds (80) and a close 3rd for stables (266), was an entrepôt for packhorses, being situated just south of the

⁴⁵ Blome, *Britannia*, pp. 75, 77. Since England was the major contributor to world trade in lead this was not an extreme claim. R. Burt, *The British Lead Mining Industry* (Redruth, 1984), p.2.

⁴⁶ G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire* (Cardiff, 1999), vol. 3, p.1167. P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009), p.18.

⁴⁷ G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire* (Cardiff, 1999), vol. 3, p.1167.

⁴⁸ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol. 3, pp. 1172-3, 1191.

⁴⁹ TNA, WO 30/48.

notoriously hazardous high peak. The horses carried salt from Cheshire (returning malt from Derby) and lead and millstones to the east coast, negotiating terrain memorably described by Defoe in the 1720s as ‘a waste and howling wilderness’, from his viewpoint above Chatsworth.⁵⁰ So the towns dominated their hinterlands and were engaged in the national and regional trading nexus.⁵¹

Table 2.31: Guest beds in six representative counties (1685)

County	Derbys	Notts	Staffs	Northants	Suffolk	Essex
No. of centres	393	218	175	266	309	311
9-49 beds	30	18	17	21	36	42
50-99 beds	2	0	8	3	1	7
> 100 beds	3	3	2	3	4	4

Source: TNA, WO 30/48. Derbyshire outshone the neighbouring counties and had facilities not far short of Suffolk, where Ipswich was a major port.

It was necessary to demonstrate a wide range of occupations to satisfy Wrigley’s definition of a town. Ashbourne’s parish registers recorded men’s occupations in 1656—1663, and again in 1706—1717, long enough to supply two snapshots of the occupational structure about half a century apart. From the demographic evidence virtually every male householder received an entry on both occasions. First, almost all men other than servants married and set up a household.⁵² Second, the number of households in 1660 was known from the hearth tax and the vital statistics suggest that the poll tax estimate in 1689 was appropriate in 1710. Although some men were not accorded an occupational or status label this did not detract from the evidence of secondary and tertiary occupations. This was in spite of the fact that status labels obscured some occupations. Freeholders, down to those with the minimum qualification

⁵⁰ D. Hey, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads: trade and communications in north Derbyshire and south Yorkshire* (Ashbourne, 2001), pp. 8, 124. As late as 1809 William Hutchinson referred to ‘a dreadful steep pass, nearly two hundred feet perpendicular’, which still deterred wheeled traffic. *Ibid*, p.8.

⁵¹ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p. 264.

⁵² P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost, further explored* (London, 3rd edn, 1983), p. 113.

for sessions jurors, merited the honorific 'Mr' and the term 'yeoman' was a status label of similar significance. Those with more substantial wealth, who were not gentlemen by birth, were labelled 'gent' (designated by historians as 'town gentlemen'). Among the last-named, attorneys and merchants could often be identified as such, but most were probably *rentiers*.

Multiple-occupation (or none given) was not a problem, because even in 1660 the urban status of Ashbourne was sufficiently indicated by the number of different occupations recorded for separate individuals (table 2.32). Their quantity and quality appeared outstanding for such a small town. Undisclosed agricultural employment is often considered to be rife in early-modern towns, which could have undermined the existence of an agricultural revolution. But Wrigley has argued that the number of townsmen actually described as farmers (or their equivalent) declined so much that the deficit could not be compensated by part-time husbandry.⁵³ Licensees not designated as innkeepers were difficult to identify from this source because most gave a minority of their time to the business, being referred to by a secondary skill (if they had one). However, their names were recorded by the licensing authority.

The parish register record of occupations covered most of the current working population, with the exception of labourers (given no label) and non-householders not earning an independent living. Probators were representative of Earle's middling sector, considering that only 30 - 40% of men who died in the parish at this period left a probate).⁵⁴ A search made between 1660 and 1700 for the wills of those mentioned in 1656—63 discovered that an even smaller proportion of the 292 townsmen recorded

⁵³ Wrigley, 'Country and town', pp. 230-1.

⁵⁴ 159 probates were proved in the period, heavily dominated by men, and roughly 400 funerals of male householders took place (the recorded burial total divided by 4.25).

with occupational or status labels in the register left one (20%), perhaps owing to in-and-out migration. The 61 probators shared only 20 occupations, compared with 51 recorded by the vicar.⁵⁵ In table 2.32 ‘yeomen’ (a status label notionally assigned to agriculture at this date) formed 21% of probators; farmers comprised only 11% of the householders recorded by the vicar.

Table 2.32: Occupational statistics for Ashbourne Town 1660—1700

<i>Occupational Categories</i>	<i>Probates 1660 -1700</i>	<i>% probates</i>	<i>Parish 1656 - 1663</i>	<i>Register % registered</i>
Agriculture	13	21.3	32	11
Building & construction	4	6.6	9	3.1
Clothing & footwear	4	6.6	52	17.8
Food, drink & lodging	11	18	23	7.9
Iron & Steel	3	4.9	7	2.4
Leather (other than clothing)	4	6.6	17	5.8
Non-ferrous metal			1	
Professional	2	3.3	12	4.1
Retailing	3	4.9	6	2.1
Textiles	4	6.6	27	9.2
Trading & dealing	5	8.2	5	1.7
Transport			2	
Woodworking			8	2.7
‘Gent’	5	8.2	5	1.7
Other	1	1.7	11	3.8
None given	2	3.3	75	25.7
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>61 (36.6%)</i>		<i>292</i>	

Sources: DRO, Ashbourne P.R.; LRO, BC/11, Ashbourne.

Occupational categories: Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp. 166-9.

⁵⁵ ‘Most towns had 20-30 different trades’ before 1700, according to Clark & Slack. *English Towns in Transition*, p. 5.

In categories where the percentage of probators was higher than it was among households in general the sector appeared more profitable than when the opposite was true. Likewise, groupings with few probators were poor on average (clothing and footwear being the outstanding example), whereas the rest of the leather trades and textiles were more profitable. Apart from innkeeping, the town specialized in leather trades, reflecting local pastoral agriculture (dairy farming). Nearly a fifth of households were involved, assisted by the sixteen butchers. Master shoemakers had apprentices and journeymen; overall there were 5 curriers, 5 tanners, 5 skinners, 33 shoemakers, 10 glovers, a fell-monger (dealer in hides) and a saddler. One man made heels (for riding boots), an early example of the division of labour. Such a concentration of one speciality was a notable urban trait.⁵⁶ Twenty years earlier, William Titterton, a 'yeoman-shoemaker', representing the more prosperous arm of his trade, had several resident apprentices and belonged to a shoemakers' association. When he died he left quantities of calf leather, 76 pairs of shoes, 117 lasts and six pairs of boots, in standard sizes 1 – 12.⁵⁷ Shoes were exported to the hinterland via markets, being sold in bulk on a 'standing of stalls' in Ashbourne in 1675, the year Sir William Boothby bought the manor and reserved the toll on shoes for himself, suggesting that it was considerable.⁵⁸

The textile industry was a necessity which generated few records, owing to its predominantly poor makers, but it became a barometer of change. At this period, the élite in the trade in Ashbourne comprised three broad-loom weavers, specializing in woollen coverlets and blankets, together with several shearmen and four dyers

⁵⁶ Stobart, 'The spatial organization of a regional economy: central places in north-west England in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), pp. 147-159, p. 147.

⁵⁷ LRO, William Titterton, 17 February, 1642/3. Contracts for Cromwell's army specified shoe sizes, implying that the adoption of standardization produced a better fit for those unable to afford bespoke service. J. Styles, 'Product innovation in Early-Modern London', *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 124-169, p. 160.

⁵⁸ GRO, Boothby papers, P/DF Bo/16.

providing finishing trades to town and hinterland. The ubiquity of the craft and the consequent variability of skill were illustrated by the fact that paupers were set to weave in the workhouse to defray its expenses.⁵⁹

The occupations of 309 men mentioned half a century later in the same source appear in table 2.33, Stobart's and Wrigley's higher functions of towns being evident.⁶⁰

Table 2.33: Ashbourne's occupational organization 1706–15

ELITE		FOOD, LODGING		LEATHER		RETAIL	
apothecary	1	baker	10	currier	2	chandler	3
attorney	3	butcher	9	saddler	1	grocer	1
excise officer	4	innkeeper	3	skinner	1	mercier	4
schoolmaster	1	cook	1	tanner	2	tobacconist	3
musician	1						
physician	1						
clergyman	2						
gent/Mr*	11						
TOTAL	24		23		6		11
TEXTILES		BUILDING, WOOD		CLOTHING		OTHER	
clothier	1	bricklayer	2	glover	12	barber	2
dyer	2	carpenter	3	hatter	5	basket maker	2
weaver	10	cooper	3	hosier	1	chimney sweep	1
woolcomber	1	glazier	5	shoemaker	17	coachman	1
		joiner	4	tailor	7	cobbler	1
		mason	2			farmer	1
TOTAL	14		19		42	gardener	1
						painter	1
						postboy	1
METAL						soldier	7
blacksmith	8					tow seller	2
clock/watch	2					wheelwright	2
cutler	1					labourers (?)	128
gunsmith	1					TOTAL	150
hardware	1						
ironmonger	4						
whitesmith	3						
TOTAL	20	GRAND TOTAL	309				

Source: DRO: Ashbourne parish registers, 1706–5 *including yeomen

⁵⁹ In 1666 Edward Pegge left £6 to provide stock for the indigent to weave for the 'Good and Benefit of the fair Town', LRO, Edward Pegge, 23 April, 1666. It seems surprising that weavers' skills were often unappreciated and ill-rewarded. Rule, *Experience of Labour*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Stobart, 'Spatial organization', p. 154. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p. 261.

To the staple wool and leather trades had been added skilled metalwork with high added value, which accessed raw materials from some distance. Clock- and watch-making was then a prestigious trade, with a high entry premium, while a gunsmith manufactured and/or repaired guns (gun catches were sold by an ironmonger). Excise men and an organist also figured and troops were billeted in the town as a result of the survey in 1685. Rebuilding had begun in brick (there was now a brickyard in Compton) and builder-joiners were consulting pattern books and hiring bricklayers; *vice versa* a bricklayer acted as the clerk of works and employed joiners.⁶¹ It seems likely that the chests of drawers, oval tables and chairs upholstered in leather, which graced major inns and the houses of prominent townsmen, were made in the town (the leather trade still employed one in nine skilled households, including a saddler).

In table 2.34 all the parish register data is collected to demonstrate change over time. The steep increase in those not assigned a trade suggested migration from the countryside.⁶² Attorneys and physicians now described themselves as gentlemen but the vicar distinguished them from esquires by using the honorific Mr. The number of categories had risen, but the net increase in occupations was slight (52 to 54). This was only to be expected in a stagnant population in which the more progressive were abandoning traditional for new trades; thus, textiles were in a state of transition, moving in the vanguard of fashion. Lighter, cheaper fabrics (linen mixtures and worsted) were displacing expensive broadcloth and some finishing trades declined.⁶³ In 1720 ten weavers' shops either made worsted (hence the woolcomber) or linen, the latter indicated by large supplies of flax, hemp and indigo dye in an ironmonger's inventory

⁶¹ Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 2, pp. 49, 60.

⁶² It can be argued that a 'blank' entry simply meant that the vicar was unaware of a man's trade, but in such a small town he would certainly have known all the small masters.

⁶³ There were four dyers in 1660, two in 1715 and only one in 1770 when the owner advertised the fact. *Derby Mercury*, 13 April, 1770. Fulling mills existed in the earlier part of the century.

in 1714.⁶⁴ Probate inventories suggested that the demand from middling sorts for pure linen sheets, towels and table napkins had approached a temporary plateau, but the fibre was combined with wool (fustian), silk and cotton for outerwear, as well as being a necessity for shirts and shifts.

Table 2.34: Occupational change in Ashbourne c.1660—c. 1715

<i>Occupational Categories</i>	<i>1656-63</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1706-15</i>	<i>% change</i>
	<i>n</i>		<i>n</i>	
Agriculture	32	11.0	2	-10.3
Armed forces			7	+2.3
Building & Construction	9	3.1	12	+0.9
Cart & coach-building			2	+0.7
Clothing & footwear	52	17.8	42	-3.8
Estate work			1	+0.3
Food, drink & lodging	23	7.9	23	-0.3
Gentleman (urban)	5	1.7	11	+2.0
Gunsmith			1	+0.3
Instrument maker			2	+0.7
Iron & Steel	7	2.4	5	-0.7
Leather (not clothes)	17	5.8	6	-3.8
Non-ferrous metal	1	0.3	3	+0.7
Professional	12	4.1	9	-1.1
Public service			4	+1.3
Retailing	6	2.1	11	+1.6
Rope-making			1	+0.3
Services			4	+1.3
Straw & rush			1	+0.3
Textiles	27	9.2	13	-4.9
Trading & dealing	5	1.7	3	-0.7
Transport	2	0.7	3	+0.3
Woodworking	8	2.7	7	-0.4
Other	11	3.8	7	-1.5
None given	75	25.7	128	+16.8
TOTAL	292		301	

Source: DRO Ashbourne Parish Registers. Categories: Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp.166-9.

Wirksworth's Tuesday market was said to be 'as great as most fairs' by William Woolley, a local historian from Derby.⁶⁵ In 1693 a Duchy official ordered 103 market traders (including 12 women) to present their weights and yardsticks for checking and

⁶⁴ Indigo was used in small quantities to brighten whites. *Appendix: Table A1*, p. 271.

⁶⁵ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, p.1167. Woolley was a gentleman lead merchant who traded with Spain, before retiring on an estate at Darley Abbey in 1709. Elliott, *Derby Philosophers*, p.19.

the constable's roll fortuitously survives. In table 2.35 the details have been supplemented by a sample of 77 probators. There is some overlap, because it was of interest to trace the probates of the market traders.

Table 2.35: Some occupational statistics for Wirksworth 1660—c.1720

OCCUPATION	Probate sample 1660–1720	Constable 1693	Poll Tax 1689	OCCUPATION	Probate sample 1660–1720	Constable 1693
alehouse		37		innkeeper		3
apothecary	1	2		ironmonger	2	4
attorney			3	none given	5	
applemonger		2		lead merchant	2	1
baker		2		lead-miner	14	
blacksmith	2	6		mercier	5	
butcher	3	6		millier	1	2
carpenter	1			pedlar		4
chandler	1	2		saddler	1	
clergy	1		1	salter		1
clothier		1		shearsman		2
currier	1			shoemaker	1	
dyer		2		softmonger		3
feltmaker	3	2		tailor		10
gent	7			tobacconist		3
grocer	1	5		weaver	3	3
husbandman	6			yeoman	16	
TOTALS					77	103

Sources: LRO, BC/11 Wirksworth; J.C. Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals*, vol. 2, pp. 199-200.

The number of occupations was far short of Ashbourne's, but there was obvious bias since not all traders sold goods in the market, and alehouse keepers had other employments. But the figures show the town to have had all the usual occupations of a market town of the period.

The title of innkeeper was reserved for élite landlords and it is significant for the current status of the town that there were three. Wirksworth's upper-middling sector was about the same size as Ashbourne's, both towns having ironmongers, mercers and grocers who kept warehouses, owned shops and employed hawkers to carry goods to

country markets.⁶⁶ The grocers (including the widowed Mrs Wigley) probably sold pipe tobacco on market day, as Thomas Turner did at a later date.⁶⁷ Sugar and tea were then too expensive. Elite merchants bought stock in London and sent it up the east coast to Gainsborough (the *Derby Mercury* eventually reported weekly consignments of groceries). Considerable fortunes were made. Anthony Bunting, a mercer-grocer related to the smelter, left property worth over £1000 in his will, proved at the PPC in 1685; Thomas Holmes left £686 in 1704 and John Wigley, who succeeded his parents, was worth £740 in 1712, including over £500-worth of unspecified 'stock-in-trade'.⁶⁸ Four men had the prestigious occupation of ironmonger, a large number for a small town.⁶⁹

Only one currier was found in the sampled probate records but numerous horses belonging to miners (who needed them to cart ore to the smelter), carriers and hawkers needed leather harness and saddlebags. The population had to be shod and, as Defoe reported, a Wirksworth miner in the 1720s presented 'a most uncouth spectacle ...cloathed all in leather'. Accordingly, the mercer Thomas Holmes sold leather as cloth.⁷⁰ One man was a saddler (the best-regarded leather trade and comparatively rare in small towns) but boot- and shoe-makers were virtually invisible in this source, almost all being too poor. They traded at the market but evidently their standards were not checked. The list included three 'softmongers' who were peripatetic traders specializing

⁶⁶ Warehouses were mentioned by appraisers in several wills and Bagueley referred to 'carry cloth'. LRO, John Alsop, 26 April, 1717; Thomas Holmes, 6 October, 1706 (mercers). Holmes had groceries 'in the warehouse', appraised *en bloc*.

⁶⁷ D. Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754—784* (Oxford, 1984), p. 22.

⁶⁸ TNA, PROB 11/380, Anthony Bunting, 24 May, 1685.

⁶⁹ William Stout of Lancaster concentrated on the retail trade, buying stock in London and Sheffield, but the Wirksworth men may have been putting out work to nailers. J.D. Marshall (ed.) *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665—1752* (Manchester, 1967), pp. 89, 96.

⁷⁰ G.D.H. Cole and D.C. Browning (eds), D. Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 1726* (London, 1962), vol.2, pp. 158-9, 163.

in earthenware, most likely from Ticknall, an industrial village situated twenty miles away. Blome noted that ‘Ticknel sent its earthen potts to Boston’ (for transmission to London) and they were carried all over the Midlands by hawkers; butter was exported from Ashbourne and Uttoxeter to London in Ticknall crocks of statutory weight.⁷¹

Derbyshire lead-mining rose to a peak of profitability in the mid-eighteenth century, having adopted a number of technological advances to increase production.⁷² Poor migrants were encouraged by landlords hoping to profit from their labours. German Buxton, heir to a dynasty of ironmongers and mercer-grocers, saw the writing on the wall and correctly thought more of his prospects in Ashbourne, having just married the sole heiress of a Chesterfield grocer.⁷³ The in-migration brought in its wake a crowd of pedlars and hawkers catering for rural tastes and small incomes. By 1746 Wirksworth had 16 licensed market traders ‘far more than any other place in Derbyshire’.⁷⁴ There followed a dearth of substantial retailers’ wills and the long-established mercer, Peter Brown, was among those whose businesses closed precipitously. He sold up in 1741 and in 1754 Francis Stones was forced to sacrifice his substantial mercer’s business and his home.⁷⁵

This was the year when the vicar began to record bridegrooms’ occupations, continuing until 1770 and creating an authoritative source for the current occupational structure of the town (table 2.36). Few had élite trades, however, the prosperity of the town is suggested by the large number of butchers. Bridegrooms resident in the town

⁷¹ Blome, *Britannia*, p. 75. J. Spavold & S. Brown, *Ticknall Pots & Potters from the late fifteenth century to 1888* (Ashbourne, 2005), p. 80.

⁷² Burt, *Lead Mining Industry*, p. 44.

⁷³ DLSL, Ince ‘Pedigrees’, p.088c (274,302,H929.2/-); p.088b (273,301,H929.2/273).
www.wirksworth.org.uk.

⁷⁴ Hey, *Packmen*, p. 135.

⁷⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 3 September, 1741.

numbered 300 between 1754 and 1770, of whom 113 declared themselves to be lead-miners (37.7%), being in the minority and therefore signifying change.

Table 2.36: *Wirksworth bridegrooms' occupations, 1754—70*

ELITE	<i>n</i>	FOOD & DRINK	<i>n</i>	LEATHER	<i>n</i>	RETAIL	<i>n</i>
excise officer	1	baker	5	breeches-mkr	3	chandler	4
wool stapler	1	butcher	10	currier	2	grocer	2
ironmaster	1	innkeeper	3	saddler	1	mercier	1
vicar/ clerk	1			shoemaker	22		
gent/ Mr	2			fellmonger	1		
				tanner	1		
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>7</i>
%	2	%	6	%	10	%	2.3
TEXTILES		BUILDING		CLOTHING		OTHER	
flaxdresser	3	carpenter	1	hatter	2	farmer	16
woolcomber	25	bricklayer	1	hosier /FWK	9	joiner	1
		brickmaker	1	tailor	9	miner	113
		glazier /plumber	3			pedlar	2
		mason	4			red lead	1
		slater	1			maker	
						unknown	40
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>173</i>
%	9.3	%	3.7	%	6.7	% unknown	13.3
						% miners	37.7
METAL							
blacksmith	5						
whitesmith	2						
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>7</i>						
%	2.3						
<i>GRAND TOTAL</i>	<i>300</i>						

Source: DRO, Wirksworth Parish Registers.

The bridegrooms represented the younger generation, heralding a resurgence of the town's lower-middling sector. Two developments had followed changes in fashion: the sudden rise of woolcombing and of building in brick (although stone was cheaper and there was considerable expertise in its use). The woolcombers arrived as a result of the institution of worsted manufacturing, seemingly on a grand scale, by Jonas Heap of Yorkshire, a woolstapler who also married in the town. Woolcombers were skilled men

described as the ‘artisanal élite of the worsted industry’, by Smail and by Daunton as the providers of central services.⁷⁶ The presence of 25 implied such huge numbers of spinners, weavers and knitters that domestic industry must have been established in a very short time over a very wide hinterland.⁷⁷

It was instructive to analyse occupational listings from parish registers in terms of primary (P), secondary (S) and tertiary (T) occupations, considering that Wrigley regarded tertiary occupations as typical of *bona fide* towns and largely absent from villages (table 2.37).⁷⁸

Table 2.37 Occupational categories in Ashbourne and Wirksworth before 1770

	ASHBOURNE				WIRKSWORTH			
	<i>occs</i>	<i>men</i>	% <i>occs</i>	% <i>men</i>	<i>occs</i>	<i>men</i>	% <i>occs</i>	% <i>men</i>
primary	2	2	3.8	1.2	2	129	5.9	50.0
secondary	29	121	54.7	71.2	22	112	64.7	43.4
tertiary	22	47	41.5	27.6	11	19	32.4	7.0
TOTAL	53	170	100.0	100.0	34	258	100.0	100.0
<i>none given</i>		128				40		
<i>leisured</i>		11				0		

Sources: parish registers. Wrigley’s analysis of trades in *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp.198-200.

Ashbourne’s figures related to half a century earlier than Wirksworth’s, yet the percentage of tertiary occupations was higher than in the mining town and the percentage engaged in them four times higher. In contrast, 50% of Wirksworthians in named occupations claimed to be miners and only 7% had tertiary occupations by 1770, although these comprised 32.4% of occupations. The case for Wirksworth as a ‘truly

⁷⁶ J. Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire 1660—1780* (N.Y., 1994), p. 79. M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700—1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 165.

⁷⁷ Rule quotes 1000 spinners and weavers per 6 woolcombers. J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981), pp. 23, 65, 164. Five woolcombers left personalities of £68—£200 with a mean value of £110.

⁷⁸ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp. 307-8.

urban' settlement seemed weak, but it depended on the extent to which miners followed other employments, of which little written evidence was found. Weaving and ale-house keeping were certain, but yeoman-miners also used their small capital to engage in petty enterprises, such as market-trading.

The anthropologist, James Scott, has written that mining culture was so strong that miners were a class apart, often living in enclaves, which was generally true of Wirksworth.⁷⁹ However, while all miners had a certain *esprit de corps*, there was a sharp social divide between small proprietors and waged miners. Proprietors ('free miners') often owned a cottage or more in the miners' enclave in the town, but did not necessarily live there themselves; land tax records suggest that such men constituted up to a third of miners. Some had identifiable, urban by-employments and they bought fractions of mining shares to spread the risk of unproductive mining. There is anecdotal evidence of better-off miners acting as middlemen in textile trades from the late seventeenth century, so miners were no strangers to the weaving trade. James Wingfield was a prosperous, but abstemious, miner who died in 1687. He left £215, of which £162 was invested in bonds, and owned six houses in the Dale. At his death he had 38 pairs of linen sheets in his possession, in a four-roomed house. Thomas Bradshaw (d.1673), who had title to mines and land, had flax, woollen yarn and cloth on his premises when he died.⁸⁰

Despite the fact that Vincent found 'miners and agricultural labourers to be largely illiterate' an astonishing 71.4% of miner-bridegrooms signed the marriage register in mid-century.⁸¹ This was an indication that their enforced leisure, owing to the

⁷⁹ H.R. French & J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500—1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 12.

⁸⁰ LRO, James Wingfield, 22 September, 1687; LRO, Thomas Bradshaw, 7 July, 1673;

⁸¹ D. Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: reading and writing in modern Europe* (Malden MA, 2000),

strenuous nature of the work and its seasonality, was used productively. Basic literacy was an advantage because they traded with smelters, while waged miners bargained to take some of the risk in return for a share of the profits. Estabrook has referred to the ‘centrality of the ability to read and write’ for social spheres beyond the parish as being more common in urban-dwellers.⁸² In other respects, miners were atypical town-dwellers because they did not aspire to creature comforts, having become inured to discomfort.

A comparison of large probate samples in the towns portrayed the changing fortunes of the middling sorts over time (table 2.38). The percentage of professionals in each town was roughly comparable in the first period, but later collapsed in Wirksworth while continuing to rise in Ashbourne.⁸³ Wirksworth’s specialized retail trades almost disappeared and chandlers and ironmongers’ stock moved down-market, while Ashbourne had at least a dozen mercers and grocers in the period. Although the number of town gentlemen was increasing in both towns, there was little evidence that the upper echelons of Wirksworth were looking to the town to provide luxuries. In contrast, there was an early introduction in Ashbourne of trades which catered, at least initially, for the rich, including instrument-making, peruke-making, coach-building and landscape gardening. The town was well in the lead in the services sector and in extending its manufacturing base.

p. 64. D. Cressy, ‘Literacy in context: meaning and measurement in early-modern England’, in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 317.

⁸² C. Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England: cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces 1660–1780* (Manchester, 1998), p. 226.

⁸³ Leacroft was the only lawyer to build a substantial residence in Wirksworth before the 1770s, compared with five or six in Ashbourne. Dr Gresley, a physician, migrated from Wirksworth to build St John’s House in Ashbourne before this date, probably when he married for the second time.

Table 2.38: Changes in the occupational structure of Ashbourne and Wirksworth 1700–1770, derived from probates

<i>Occupational or Status Categories</i>	<i>ASHBOURNE</i>			<i>WIRKSWORTH</i>		
	<i>1700—1734 %</i>	<i>1735—1770 %</i>	<i>% change</i>	<i>1700—1734 %</i>	<i>1735—1770 %</i>	<i>% change</i>
Agriculture	3.6	4	0.4	8.3	5	-3.3
Building*	3.6	13.7	10.1	1.9	3.8	1.9
Clothing	8.9	4.8	-4.1	9.3	5	-4.3
Coach/ cart building	0.9	?				
Dealing	0.9	0.8	-0.1	3.7	3.8	0.1
Estate work		0.8	0.8			
Food, drink & lodging	15.2	11.3	-3.9	14.8	15	0.2
‘Gent’ or yeoman**	15.2	19.4	4.2	16.7	20	3.3
Gentleman	6.3	3.2	-3.1	0.9	1.3	0.4
Instrument maker		0.8	0.8			
Iron & Steel		2.4	2.4	1.9		-1.9
Leather***	7.1	10.5	3.4	2.8	6.3	3.5
Non-ferrous metal	2.7	1.6	-1.1	18.5	21.3	2.8
Other /lab.	8	0	-8	4.6	3.8	-0.8
Professional	6.3	9.7	3.4	5.6	1.3	-4.3
Retailing	15.2	12.9	-2.3	7.4	8.8	1.4
Services	0.9	0.8	-0.1	0.9		-0.9
Textiles	5.4	3.2	-2.2	2.8	5	2.2
<i>Probates</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>124</i>		<i>108</i>	<i>80</i>	

Sources: LRO, BC/11 Ashbourne and Wirksworth; TNA, PROB/11. * includes woodworking; ** not considered to be farmers. *** excludes clothing. The coach-building business remained but the proprietor lived elsewhere.

The developing building, textile and leather trades may be briefly compared. The first indicated the modernization (or otherwise) of the infrastructure, the leather trade was notably prosperous in both towns and textiles were on the brink of far-reaching change, being ultimately instrumental in restoring Wirksworth's fortunes. Building had taken off in Ashbourne very early in the century, soon after the first brickyards appeared, and the result was clear for all to see in 1770. The figures showed a doubling from a low base in Wirksworth, where the trade was about to gain momentum, illustrated by the fact that some bridegrooms were skilled in the use of brick, in the stone-built town. But, as yet, demand seemed low. The state of textiles is not adequately represented by probates, but Wirksworth registered an increase. Men categorised as mercers reaped high rewards in both towns during the last three decades of the century, because domestic industry was reorganized on a more commercial scale, in terms of numbers of households and business practice. This was pioneered by Wirksworth's worsted trade (it may be assumed) and was later adopted by curriers putting out work to shoemakers and skimmers putting out work to tailors (leather breeches-making generated large fortunes for skimmers in both towns). Leather breeches survived the reported change in the fashion to textiles for three decades, coexisting with cotton nankeen woven near Ashbourne c. 1800.⁸⁴

2.4: The development of the built environment

Ashbourne was a planned market town and appears never to have looked back from the date it received its market charter in 1257. A bird's eye view of the town in 1547 depicted its superior status: two crosses marked upper and lower market places

⁸⁴ The styles coexisted in the 1780s and presumably later. J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007), p. 39.

and the infilling known as the Middle Cale (middle market) was prominent.⁸⁵ A row of tall merchants' houses faced the market place on its eastern side (later Market St). The town's three stone bridges were shown, impressionistic houses lined all the main streets (the largest arrayed along Church St), while the church and old Ashbourne Hall figured prominently. About forty years later the town began to acquire secular civic buildings.

In 1585 some London merchants presented a petition for a free grammar school, referring to their native town as 'the Chiefest Market Towne' in the county, with '40 and odde "townes" and villages within fyve myles,' stating that 'for want of scholes the youth would cleave to Papistrye'.⁸⁶ The argument struck home and the school received a royal charter, enabling the trustees to call themselves a corporation and Ashbourne town to blur the edges of its status, in comparison with corporate towns like East Retford. Thereafter, the town had a *de facto* governing body of higher consequence than its vestry and a spate of further charitable bequests came under its control. In 1714 Nicholas Spalden, a former shoemaker's apprentice who had made a fortune in London making coach harness, sought to remedy the fact that the school's humanist curriculum assumed basic literacy, denying entrance to the 'poor boys' referred to in the charter. He founded free elementary schools for 30 boys and 30 girls (a considerable percentage of the population) and made the most generous endowment in the grammar school's history, seeing it as a conduit to university for promising boys from his elementary school.⁸⁷ Having already financed the town's third range of almshouses, he left funds in his will for 'four neat and pretty houses' to be built for poor clergymen's widows. His

⁸⁵ *Appendix*, Pl. A1, p. 258.

⁸⁶ N.J. Frangopulo, *The History of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ashbourne, Derbyshire 1585—1935* (Ashbourne, 1939), p. 27.

⁸⁷ TNA, PROB 11/538, Nicholas Spalden, 21 February, 1714. Boys were to be taught 'untill they be fitt to goe to the Free School' and girls were 'to be instructted to sow knit and read up to the age of twelve years and no longer' (stockings were hand-knitted). Charity schools 'swept the country in the early eighteenth century.' Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 110.

instructions were obeyed after a protracted law suit fortuitously ensured that they would be built in the elegant style of the mid-century, adding more lustre to the town. In 1800, another expatriate, John Cooper, a London liquor merchant born in Ashbourne's poor quarter, endowed a Calvinist chapel and manse in Compton, with almshouses reserved for its adherents.

Ashbourne's transformation to brick and tile moved in fits and starts from the late seventeenth century, when Dr Taylor's attorney grandfather built the Mansion, near the church, in a vernacular style. In 1712, William Woolley referred to Ashbourne as 'an extraordinary good market town much improved in buildings, which makes it well inhabited by gentry'. It therefore possessed an up-market reputation and he remarked that it was famous for horse fairs.⁸⁸ Woolley's favourable comments referred to three-story vernacular houses with dormer windows on the attic floor, of which about half a dozen survive.⁸⁹ The renaissance style was adopted by gentlemen and *avant-garde* attorneys after 1720; the earliest example, with seven windows per floor, was acquired by John Beresford esq.⁹⁰

The turnpiking of the London-Manchester road through the town in 1738 caused innkeepers to up-grade their facilities. The landlord of the largest inn (the Talbot in the market place) acquired a 'new coach and six' for hire, which he sold in 1743 when he retired.⁹¹ Nine years later this inn had stables for a hundred horses and a post chaise for hire (the ultimate in coaching luxury), but in that year the anonymous owner (probably Sir Brooke Boothby, 4th bt) advertised that he wished to sell it 'for any

⁸⁸ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, pp. 1167-8. In October Ashbourne held a 'nine nights fair for black colts and other cattle (bloodstock)'. *Derby Mercury*, 8 September, 1752.

⁸⁹ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, pp. 92-101. This volume is the major source for dates and construction details of buildings in Ashbourne; other references derive from *English Heritage* listings,

⁹⁰ Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 2, p.33.

⁹¹ *Derby Mercury*, 19 May, 1743.

purpose other than an inn'.⁹² Boothby was considering (or currently rebuilding) a worthy rival to The Green Man, a large coaching inn built c. 1750 by John Hayne esq. of Ashbourne Green Hall, in St John's St.⁹³ Boothby's rebuilt Blackmoor's Head was practically a replica of its Palladian competitor and situated almost next door. Both inns had three storeys and seven bays and Boothby's must have had a similar archway leading to stables, space for vehicles and a paddock conveniently adjacent to the town brook.⁹⁴ By 1761 Boothby's lessee was advertising for 'a groom who can drive a post chaise well'.⁹⁵

Sweet dates urban improvement in most towns to the end of the Seven Years War (1763) when it was already underway in Ashbourne.⁹⁶ In 1761 fireworks were banned from the coronation celebrations to protect thatched houses, but at least nine Georgian houses graced Church St, where a new house was advertised the same year.⁹⁷ Provincial towns possessed architectural idiosyncrasies, most houses being built by men who did not slavishly emulate London but demonstrated their local affinity.⁹⁸ However, Derby was an aristocratic resort and Ashbourne's professionals came under its sway.⁹⁹ Attorney John Alsopp held the purse strings for the Clergy Widows Almshouses, designed in 'the forefront of architectural taste' in 1768-70, three storeys high, with a low-pitched roof and parapet and standing on three sides of a tiny square.¹⁰⁰ Speculative

⁹² *Derby Mercury*, 5 June, 1752, 13 December, 1754. The Boothby papers refer to the Talbot. GRO, D/D F Bo/ 4.

⁹³ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 33.

⁹⁴ Ashbourne Green Hall is situated in Offcote & Underwood, not far from Ashbourne Hall. County society favoured the baronet's inn.

⁹⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 23 October, 1761.

⁹⁶ R. Sweet, *The English Town, 1680—1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), p. 254.

⁹⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 30 September and 13 February, 1761.

⁹⁸ Sweet, *English Town*, p. 260.

⁹⁹ Defoe called Derby a town of gentry rather than trade. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, pp.35, 61. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p.51.

builders subsequently catered for the upper-class taste of the incomers who leased houses in the best parts of town.

Dr Taylor at the Mansion and his neighbour opposite at the Grey House, Brian Hodgson, had the means and the temerity for outright imitation of their betters and they employed Derby's leading architect, Joseph Pickford. Having trained under the cosmopolitan Sir William Chambers, he was responsible for Derby's Friar Gate, several country houses and Wirksworth's courthouse, built 1773.¹⁰¹ Hodgson had retired from keeping some of the most prestigious inns in the region when he moved into the Grey House in 1754, and may be assumed to have been one of French's 'stereotypes of gentility'.¹⁰² Built about 1750, the house was 'well sash'd with marble hearths and chimney-pieces' and had walls decorated with 'wainscot and paper hangings', a revealing indication of the living standards of the upper-middling élite.¹⁰³ Pickford remodelled it about 1763 in an ultra-fashionable style, with a Diocletian-Venetian window combination, monumental porch, polygonal bow-windows and a balustrade. Hodgson chose ashlar instead of brick, regarded by Borsay as 'acceptable in limestone areas and used for superior town houses'.¹⁰⁴

The façade of the Mansion echoed Pickford's attentions to the Grey House in a minor key, but the rest of his work for Taylor was more striking. He designed an octagonal drawing room to close the gap between the rear wings of the house, crowned with an opulent copper dome (Borsay's 'acme' of mid-eighteenth century taste) and

¹⁰¹ E. Saunders, 'The villas and town houses of Joseph Pickford of Derby 1736—1732', *Architectural History*, 27 (1984), p. 309. The *nouveau riche* Taylor's ostentatious lifestyle earned him the mocking soubriquet 'King of Ashbourne'. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 40. But his grasp of educated taste enhanced his status. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 225.

¹⁰² He was sometime landlord of Buxton's premier inn and the George, Stamford. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 56. French, *Middle Sort of People in Provincial England*, pp. 182-3.

¹⁰³ *Derby Mercury*, 18 October, 1754. Hodgson's predecessor was the legal agent of Mr Okeover of Okeover Hall.

¹⁰⁴ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 57. Appendix, Pls A5-6, pp. 260-1.

rococo plasterwork.¹⁰⁵ Inspired by a visit to Kedleston Hall as a tourist (with Dr Johnson) Taylor later installed an imposing entrance hall rising two storeys, with a marble staircase and a landing supported by fluted Ionic columns.¹⁰⁶ These, and other houses belonging to the cream of Ashbourne society, had adjoining coach-houses and extensive pleasure grounds with summer houses, Taylor's being monumental with Doric columns. His eight acres of grounds, laid out during the rebuilding, contained wandering deer and an ornamental lake, fed by the brook, stocked with edible fish and enhanced by a waterfall. It was difficult to outdo the man, but Sir Brooke Boothby, 6th bt, managed it in the late 1780s, when he modernized and extended his grounds on rebuilding Ashbourne Hall.¹⁰⁷

Fashionable buildings of the 1760s sported monumental entrances and Venetian windows, the 'obligatory motifs of the decade'.¹⁰⁸ They were less prominent in Compton House, a 1770 copy of Pickford's own house, No. 44 Friar Gate, Derby, but in ashlar.¹⁰⁹ The first floor has a much higher ceiling than the side wings and the moulding which emphasizes the windows also suggests a *piano nobile*, which featured in some subsequent houses. By 1785 the fashion was for a plain façade, whose only ornamentation was an elaborate entrance to a ground floor elevated above a semi-basement and approached by a flight of steps, with iron railings to the frontage.¹¹⁰ Borsay's comment that the simplicity of Georgian architecture gave the impression of a

¹⁰⁵ Saunders, 'Pickford of Derby', p. 311. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 232. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ Lord Scarsdale of Kedleston dined with Dr Taylor in 1775, surely an interesting experience. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 26 March, 1788. J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. ... vol.2* (Dublin, 1792), p. 53. The grounds of Ashbourne Hall and the Mansion may be compared in a town plan of 1830—31, reproduced in Henstock, *Country Town*, vol.2, pp. 14-15, 87-8.

¹⁰⁸ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁹ Saunders, 'Pickford of Derby', pp. 309-10. *Appendix*, Pl. A7, p. 261.

¹¹⁰ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 253

uniform terrace applied, since adjacent buildings have variable roof heights but are juxtaposed without a visible gap.¹¹¹ The effect is heightened because Church St is particularly broad and straight. It had pavements for pedestrians, begun in 1607 and repaired in 1727—32 with cobbles excavated from the river Dove.¹¹² Paving was a '*sine qua non* of a civilized eighteenth-century town' and some flagstones survive from the period in the market place; overall, there is ample evidence that well-to-do Ashburnians followed the London fashions in architecture which Borsay found in provincial towns.¹¹³ The progression of style is observable in 124 extant (listed) Georgian town houses, out of a total of 443 habitations recorded in 1801.

The winding streets of Wirksworth's town centre contrast with Ashbourne's geometrical plan and are characteristic of *ad hoc* development in Saxon times around the curvilinear burial ground of an important church.¹¹⁴ The plan was more typical of a village than a town, since none of the streets were level, unlike Ashbourne's main thoroughfares. The absence of a single lord of the manor in this Duchy stronghold had led to a *laissez-faire* attitude to encroachment (lead-mining was permitted in the town itself). Before 1770 the virtual lack of elegant houses and a shortage of specialist shops characterized Wirksworth as a down-market settlement, which did not encourage competitive display by the small proportion of men with the wherewithal to indulge. Town gentlemen were wealthy from investments in land and lead mines and/or through professional administrations to the élite, but they apparently kept themselves aloof from the town and socialized in Derby.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹¹² Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 57.

¹¹³ Sweet, *English Town*, p. 80. *English Heritage* listings, www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk

¹¹⁴ *Appendix*, Pl. 5.21, p. 191.

Most houses built before 1770 were plebeian cottages. Stone was plentiful and houses were built in vernacular coursed-limestone rubble with gritstone masonry. Expensive brick had occasionally been used for extensions, for instance John Alsop, a mercer who died in 1717, left his widow a bed in the ‘brick chamber’.¹¹⁵ Innkeepers were more adventurous. In 1739 the King’s Head was sold as a ‘good large brick house (i.e. inn)’, but with no mention of sashed windows and by 1745 it had become ‘two brick houses’ of uncertain fate.¹¹⁶ The date of their sale suggests they were incorporated into the pioneering Crown Inn, finished and dated in 1747. It was contemporary with Ashbourne’s Green Man and built in a similar, plain Palladian style with an archway to admit coaches. It was not until 1756 that an act authorized the turnpiking of the ‘ruinous’ road to Derby and the Ship Inn, situated off the turnpike, underwent a gracious alteration in 1758, refurbished with a full-height stair window. In 1759 other turnpikes linked Wirksworth to Ashbourne, Nottingham and Manchester, but it took ten years before the venerable Red Lion was refurbished on its medieval core.¹¹⁷

Soon after the completion of the Crown Inn (whose ownership was not discovered) Thomas Leacroft, the Duchy Steward, built his gritstone mansion of three storeys and five bays, in the prevalent geometrical format but without external pretension, almost adjacent to the Red Lion. In its commanding position at the head of the market place it was, and remains, an impressive statement of power and authority, the most striking extant domestic building in the town after the secluded Gatehouse.¹¹⁸ Its luxurious interior decoration included chimney-pieces of Hopton stone and

¹¹⁵ LRO, John Alsop, 26 April, 1717. He probably had gentry origins, since he possessed a sword and pistols, a quantity of silver plate and two violins, suggesting membership of a private social round.

¹¹⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 16 August, 1739; 8 February, 1745.

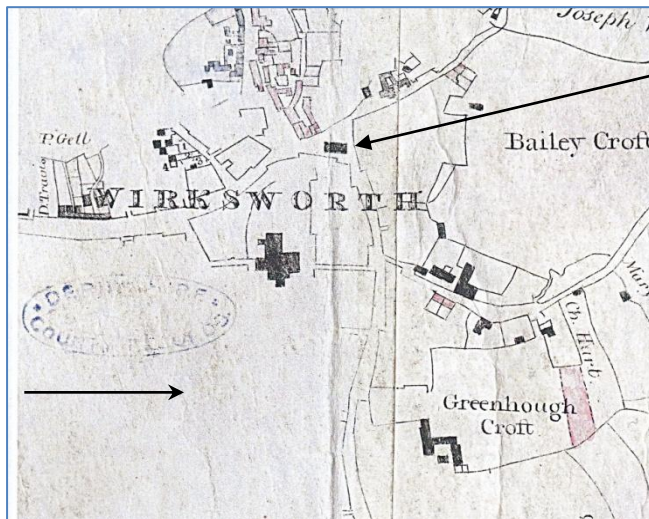
¹¹⁷ *Appendix*, Pl. A9, p. 262.

¹¹⁸ *Appendix*, Pl. A8, p.262. Derbyshire’s historian singled out ‘elegant Georgian houses in Wirksworth and especially Ashbourne’ for favourable mention, remarking that the county’s second town, Chesterfield, ‘has very few’. Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, p. 1313.

Derbyshire marble.¹¹⁹ Ten years later, in a nod to fashion, Leacroft built on the adjacent plot an attached one-bay, two-storey annexe in brick, with higher ceilings than the rest of his house to accommodate two Venetian windows.

The building of the courthouse (1773) in front of the recently rebuilt Red Lion and Leacroft's house, converted the head of the market place into an urbane and civic focal point. Commissioned by the Duchy from Pickford, the building combined the functions of a town hall and miners' court. It appeared in the enclosure plan of 1806, but was sadly demolished ten years later for reasons unknown (plate 2.41).

Plate 2.41: Part of Wirksworth's parliamentary enclosure plan (1806)



Moot Hall
(courthouse)

Source: DRO, Q/RI, 107

Ever sensitive to his clients' tastes, the architect produced 'a near copy' of Chambers' Lutheran Chapel for the Savoy, the insignia of lead-mining being carved in low relief on escutcheons beneath twin finials in the entablature.¹²⁰ The building had space for market traders under the arches which supported the courtroom itself. The Gate House, in the

¹¹⁹ Building accounts, DRO, D769 B/12/11.

¹²⁰ Saunders, 'Pickford of Derby', p. 309. The escutcheons languish on the façade of the Moot Hall's insignificant successor, the insignia having been adopted as the emblem of the town. The plans survive in the Duchy of Lancaster archive, TNA, DL42/175, f.124, 176, f. 86.

vicinity of the land labelled P. Gell in plate 2.41, remains as a major gentleman's residence. In similar fashion to the Red Lion it was remodelled around its medieval core in the late eighteenth century.

2.5 Conclusion

To place demography in context, Corfield has written that less than 20% of the population in 1700 lived in towns with more than 2500 inhabitants and in 1800 it had risen to about 30% (including London).¹²¹ Only the latter figure is reliable and it shows that Ashburnians and Wirksworthians were in this minority. Earlier estimates are subject to uncertainty owing to the indefinite boundary of a town and the unknown average size of households. As has been seen, figures relating to parishes can seriously over-estimate the size of a town. From the estimates made for 1689, which must be regarded with caution, Wirksworth's township population increased by about 20% during the century, but its core by only 6%, while Ashbourne's was almost unchanged so far as the township was concerned; any expansion took place in Compton. The figure of 2,500 inhabitants has been derived from an assumption that Compton should be included; in spite of heavy infilling of the back yards of the township, its population was only c.2000 in 1830. But any notional demographic disadvantage was outweighed by the more significant factors of commercial and professional functions and the sophisticated development of the infrastructure. In contrast, Wirksworth was the 23rd largest town in the Midlands in the late-seventeenth century, but its urban credentials were lessened by the domination of lead-mining.¹²²

¹²¹ Corfield, *English Towns*, p 2.

¹²² J. Langton, 'Town growth and urbanization in the Midlands from the 1660s to 1841', in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840* (Leicester, 2000), p. 23.

Ashbourne was found to have an exceptional number of distinct occupations for its size in 1660, while the presence of 29 apprentices in 1689 was a significant attribute, considering that it was not a corporate town.¹²³ The town's workshop industry remained remarkable and continued to advance well beyond the timescale of this study. Wrigley's insistence on higher demographic qualifications for urban status was even more questionable in 1720, when the range of the town's activities had grown to cater for its developing function as a genteel resort. Over time, entrepreneurs seized every opportunity for commercial advantage from the patronage of the rich, building polite houses for them to lease and catering for changing fashions in dress and furnishings. As early as 1710 there was a market for clocks and watches from the gentry of the hinterland and professionals and merchants in the town.

By 1770 the town was half way through an architectural transformation usually found only in more important towns, which set the scene for further 'cultural urbanization' when the institutions of urban renaissance were in place.¹²⁴ It then possessed an unusually large middling sector with a wealthy top slice, able and desirous to emulate the style of the gentry. Pevsner's judgement that Ashbourne's Church Street was 'one of the finest in Derbyshire' seems sufficient comment on its 'correct' architectural style.¹²⁵ Pickford was engaged by its most affluent residents and others were familiar with the haunts of the upper-class (Richard Hayne and Richard Beresford, owners of two of Ashbourne's town houses, died in Bath).¹²⁶ As a result,

¹²³ Langton, 'Town growth and urbanization', p. 43. In the case of the clockmakers of the eighteenth century indentures have been confirmed in records kept at the National Archives and there is no reason to suppose that the other apprenticeships were unofficial. D. Moore, *British Clockmakers' and Watchmakers' Apprenticeship Records 1710—1810* (Ashbourne, 2003).

¹²⁴ Langton, 'Town growth and urbanization', p. 7.

¹²⁵ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1314.

¹²⁶ R. Sweet, 'Topographies of politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 355-374, p. 360. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 45.

the chronology of metropolitan fashion, as described by Borsay, was replicated in the town's housing stock.

It is hard to argue a similar case for Wirksworth in 1760, which had few obvious characteristics to distinguish it from a large village, other than the somewhat negative attribute of numerous ale houses and hostelries. This was despite the fact that in the late seventeenth century the upper ranks of society were comparable in both numbers and status to Ashbourne's; in fact, lead merchants were much richer than cheese merchants. But the town's élite retail trade disappeared when the rural poor overwhelmed the town with their plebeian culture. Gentlemen lead-merchants and their upper-middling associates did not begin to rebuild their houses in the fashionable style before the 1770s. The middling sector within the mining industry was not notably urbanized, except that it was literate (from its inception in 1732 the *Derby Mercury* was sold in the town). Yeomen-miners retained the attitudes of the farming community from which they sprang, spending their surpluses on parcels of real estate and living frugally (disregarding diet). Estabrook has found that yeomen farmers living near Bristol might have assets of £400 but lived in the kitchen, which housed their most prized possession: a long-case clock.¹²⁷

Wirksworth's urban credentials chiefly resided in its importance as a lead producer, particularly during the seven years' war when 22 roads were turnpiked in Derbyshire to facilitate the transport of lead and iron to the east coast,¹²⁸ and in its domination of an exceptional hinterland, consisting of its large parish, the lead-mining

¹²⁷ Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England*, p. 129.

¹²⁸ E. Pawson, *Transport and Economy: the turnpike roads of eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 152.

township of Matlock and large mining villages, including Brassington and Bonsall.¹²⁹ According to Defoe, miners travelled 10-15 miles to trade in ore on market day, so it comprised perhaps 350 square miles.¹³⁰ He approved the town's remarkable Tuesday market, which had impressed William Woolley a decade earlier.¹³¹ It was also significant that Wirksworth enjoyed the prestige of hosting the miners' court twice a year. In 1750-52 the Duchy Steward, a landowning lawyer of consequence in Derbyshire, chose to express his affinity with the no-nonsense town through an absence of classical references in his new mansion, built like a *palazzo* to face the street directly. In the late 1760s Borsay's motifs of the decade (Venetian windows) appeared on one or two prestigious buildings, including Leacroft's curious annexe. Overall, it was a credible industrial town, but a neglected one which presented a down-market appearance to the rare casual visitor (even in the years of its prosperity, as referenced in chapter five). From the evidence of probates it had reached a crossroads and could not afford to lose more of its key urban attributes.

¹²⁹ Langton, 'Town growth and urbanization', p. 7.

¹³⁰ Defoe, *A Tour*, vol.2, pp.158-9. Most of the lead field lay west and north of the town.

¹³¹ Turbutt, *Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1167.

Chapter 3: The fortunes of the middling sorts 1700–1770

3.1 Introduction

An advanced occupational structure enabled a level of wealth creation which surpassed the capabilities of an agricultural economy. The functions assumed by individuals positioned them within a more complex economic order than existed in the countryside, most of the town's wealth and freedom of action being invested in the middle orders of society. Towns fostered artisanal trades which were more skilled and various than the ones in villages, where only innkeepers were not fully occupied in agriculture or its subsidiary trades in the late seventeenth century.¹ This chapter is concerned with placing the middling sorts in Ashbourne and Wirksworth into coherent socio-economic groups and examining some features of their wealth and lifestyles before what may be seen as a watershed in 1770, after which they adopted some of the institutions of urban renaissance.²

The upper-middling sorts' supposed lack of consciousness of their status seems surprising, since they lived a life of luxury, advertised their standing with symbolic purchases and attracted respect in the region. This was roughly defined by the catchment area of the *Derby Mercury*, which extended into all the contiguous counties to some extent. Middling sorts in general were conspicuous through their employment of labour. Historians have applied a number of criteria to group them meaningfully, namely wealth, 'bourgeois collectivism', occupational status and consumption patterns.³

¹ K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525–1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 103.

² C.A. Smith, *The Renaissance of the Nottinghamshire Market Town 1680–1840* (Chesterfield, 2007), p. 3.

³ H.R. French, 'Social status, localism and the "middle sort of people" in England 1620–1750', *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), pp. 66–99, p. 70.

No such scheme can adequately account for human variability and the ideal would be one which produced a minimum of exceptions. A middling life-style required a minimum income, which has to be deduced indirectly from other signifiers of wealth. Earle attributed an all-consuming interest in self-improvement to London's 'middle-class' during the first half of the eighteenth century, calculating that a minimum income of £50 p.a. could allow accumulating profits and a comfortable life.⁴ According to Langford:

Economic expansion had the effect of stretching the social fabric in its middle and upper regions... all those who by enterprise, skill or good fortune succeeded in raising themselves above the ruck of the 'labouring poor' were getting richer'.⁵

Langford pitched the minimum income somewhat lower at £40 p.a., a sum calculated by Joseph Massie to be 'twice as much as was thought necessary for mere subsistence' and supposedly achieved by 40% of the population in 1759.⁶ Suggesting three tiers of middling sorts, Langford quoted a memorandum from Whitechapel (1724), which referred to parish middling sorts as : first, 'gentlemen of fortune' and 'tradesmen of good credit...the élite of Whitechapel'; second, 'tradesmen of lower degree who did occupy parish offices'; third, a 'large unruly herd...substantial enough to be ratepayers' who were 'the terror of the parochial vestry'.⁷ This depicted the élite as avoiding the burden of parish offices, whereas French thought that the chief inhabitants of small towns monopolized them, constituting a small *coterie* which did not form a viable

⁴ P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: business, society and family life in London 1660—1730* (London, 1989), p. 4.

⁵ P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727—1783* (Oxford, 1992), p. 68, referring to the changes taking place after 1688.

⁶ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 62-3. P. Matthias, 'The social structure in the eighteenth century: a calculation by Joseph Massey', *Economic History Review*, 10 (1957), pp. 30-45, pp. 42-43, pp. vi-vii.

⁷ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 75.

upper-middling sector.⁸ Langford's inclusion of all ratepayers provided a readily-determined boundary for the middling sector, with ratepayers perhaps qualifying for the vestry and able to put pressure on the officers (as in Ashbourne). But was it pitched too low?

The middling sorts' acquisitiveness has been emphasized. De Vries attributed their industriousness to the lust for fashionable goods and also to their desire to transmit wealth to their descendants (a notable middling trait).⁹ Stobart and Owens argued that 'material goods and the wherewithal to acquire them' insulated middling sorts from hardship and constituted a dividing line with poor artisans.¹⁰ The minimum household income implied by de Vries was high, since his middling sorts not only equipped their houses for socializing within the group, but employed house servants to ensure the comfort of all concerned. He contrasted them with poor artisans and labourers, forced to socialize outside homes which lacked comforts and to send their children into service.¹¹

Barry considered that Earle placed excessive weight on money-making as a defining characteristic of middling sorts; some were content with the wealth they had and social status did not altogether depend on it.¹² His 'bourgeois collectivism' defined and differentiated middling sorts through the associations which naturally arose in the propinquity of the town.¹³ His upper-middling élite gained its self-image from membership of the most prestigious and exclusive town societies, while a 'middle

⁸ H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600—1750* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 127, 185.

⁹ J. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: consumer behaviour and the household economy 1650 to the present* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 10, 52.

¹⁰ J. Stobart & A. Owens (eds), 'Introduction', *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town 1700—1900* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 9.

¹¹ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 52-3, 126, 178.

¹² J. Barry, 'Consumers' passions: the middle class in eighteenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 207-216, p. 214.

¹³ J. Barry, "'Bourgeois collectivism"? Urban association and the middling sort', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550—1800* (London, 1994), p. 89.

rung', classified as *lesser* merchants, professionals and shopkeepers and (master) craftsmen, had sufficient leisure and means to assume parochial responsibilities (agreeing with Langford). Through their associations, middling sorts gained mutual support, business opportunities and the chance to resolve conflicts of interest. But he controversially included struggling artisans, although small masters in overstocked trades fought a losing battle against derogation into the waged masses.¹⁴ The theory has the potential to stratify town society if such associations had left membership lists, but these are rare, even in cases where there was a formal structure.

As in this case, occupational standing is often referred to as a status indicator and it has recently been regarded as a more useful organizing principle for ranking middling sorts than wealth alone, since familial, commercial and social affinities developed in occupational groups within which there could be some disparity of wealth with no loss of status. French has suggested that urban freemen (members of guilds) formed the bulk of the commercial middling sorts in a corporate town, equivalent to an English bourgeoisie.¹⁵ Within such a broad grouping a hierarchy of occupations can be discovered, with social credentials coming into play. The untitled sons of gentlemen were involved in a select few, which thereby acquired the highest status. The prospect of wealth was important, since such men were motivated in their choice of career by a desire to reinstate their children in landed society, but they avoided 'dirty' trades, however lucrative.

Occupational descriptors can be imprecise and have to be examined in context in order to position men within socio-economic networks. Before 1800, in a small town, this did not present the problem which the 1,081 descriptors used by respondents in the

¹⁴ Barry, 'Bourgeois collectivism?', pp. 103-4.

¹⁵ French, *Middle Sort in Provincial England*, p. 253.

1851 census might present to the uninitiated.¹⁶ However, two unpublished theses referred to by French have used advanced statistical techniques to derive *clusters* of occupations within which there was strong association through marriage and apprenticeship. It was headed by ‘professionals and overseas merchants’, followed by ‘clean’ retail trades, including innkeeping, then ‘dirty’ but prosperous occupations and, finally, the ‘poorly-capitalised artisanal trades’ which could barely qualify as ‘middling’.¹⁷ This has been found to be the most useful way to categorize the middling sorts in Ashbourne and Wirksworth, correlating well with wealth differentials deduced from probates.

The increasing wealth of middling sorts between 1675 and 1725 was reflected in the changing consumption patterns revealed by Weatherill’s study of probate inventories. ‘Novelties’ figured more frequently over time, being referred to by de Vries as ‘new luxuries’.¹⁸ The participation of the middling sorts of Ashbourne and Wirksworth in the new consumerism has been investigated from the same source. It was found that the inventories of town retailers questioned central place theory, since the few items which had to be purchased in Derby were élite luxuries which gentlemen might well have bought in London. The extent to which novelties trickled down into the households of lower-middling sorts was of interest, since Rule has argued that ‘non-essential goods’ did not go far down the social scale ‘even in the bequeathing classes’.¹⁹

Affordable novelties became more desirable within all classes than expensive heirlooms, according to McCracken, who accepted contemporary propaganda that

¹⁶ E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 132.

¹⁷ H.R. French, ‘The search for the “middle sort of people” in England 1600—1800’, *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 277-293, p. 283.

¹⁸ L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660—1760* (London, 1988).

De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 44.

¹⁹ J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 261.

‘explosive emulation’ was undermining social hierarchy.²⁰ His critics have asserted that consumers developed their own tastes; however, luxurious fabrics (Holland linen, lace and satin) and gold watches were not easily affordable. In Ashbourne there was strong evidence that upper-middling sorts chose to emulate the taste of the gentry, but few had aspirations for assimilation because of the cost of the lifestyle as a whole. The tastes of individuals were heavily influenced by the social milieu to which they belonged, or to which they aspired; however, in a small town the alternatives were limited.²¹

Probate inventories give ‘little idea of the tremendous range’ of goods from which people could choose and were almost silent on dress design.²² Having researched a wider variety of artefacts than Weatherill, French could only make a tentative suggestion that expensive articles represented a ‘conscious effort at social differentiation’.²³ Weatherill’s conclusion that the upper-middling élite consumed more novelties than gentlemen appeared dubious, because she failed to examine probates from the prerogative courts where the latter normally proved their wills.²⁴ Shamma has shown statistically that wealth over-rode all other considerations governing levels of consumption.²⁵

²⁰ G. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: new approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities* (Bloomington, 1988), 2nd edn, pp. 19, 21. This implies that sumptuary laws in dress (for example) were previously effective, which seems unlikely.

²¹ Dutch bourgeois were influenced, but not wholly controlled, by élite fashion, and Nenadic found an ‘antithesis of fashion and custom’ in Edinburgh and Glasgow, where some emulated upper-class fashion, but conspicuous parsimony was affected by intellectuals. De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 127-8. S. Nenadic, ‘Middle-rank consumers and domestic culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720—1840’, *Past & Present*, 145 (1994), pp. 122-156.

²² J. Styles, ‘Product innovation in early-modern London’, *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 124-169, p.127.

²³ French, *Middle Sort*, pp.180-192, 175.

²⁴ L. Weatherill, ‘The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England’, in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 210.

²⁵ H.R. French, ‘“Ingenious and learned gentlemen”: social perceptions and self-fashioning among parish élites in Essex 1580—1740’, *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp.44-66, p. 45. C. Shamma, ‘Change in English and Anglo-American consumption for 1550—1800’, in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), pp.192, 197.

Pennell argued for a change in emphasis in consumer theory, from what was consumed by the élite to the motivation of consumers in general, a theoretical approach which is currently influential. She considered that ‘spatiality is crucial’, an aspect of shopping elaborated by Stobart, Hann and Morgan.²⁶ It refers to the topography of towns and shopping precincts, the interior design of shops and of places where goods, once acquired, might be displayed. Cox researched the interiors of retail premises in the late-seventeenth century and noted an early sophistication in shop-fittings, ‘which many writers have denied, particularly in small towns’, together with an explosive increase in the range of stock-in-trade.²⁷ The symbiotic relationship between supply and demand had fostered a divergence of taste.

The spatial reorganization of towns during the urban renaissance followed earlier London practice in encouraging shopping as a leisure activity. This was the time when Ashbourne’s half-timbered town hall on arches was cleared away and part of the market place was paved. Stobart noted that browsing was a daily routine for some, a ‘non-trivial activity shaping status and identity’.²⁸ Craftsmen catered for a multiplicity of tastes and pockets and de Vries unhesitatingly backed ‘demand’ (personal taste) as the engine of the ‘consumer revolution’.²⁹ However, intricate ‘novelties’ (or ‘toys’) and new fabric designs were continually created to stimulate it, so the jury is out.

3.2 Wealth and occupational status

A large sample of men’s probates enabled the occupations of decedents to be correlated with their moveable wealth at death, provided that an inventory survived

²⁶ S. Pennell, ‘Consumption and consumerism in early-modern England’, *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 549-564, pp. 552-6. De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 20. J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: leisure and shopping in the English town, c.1680—1830* (London, 2007).

²⁷ J. Stobart, *Spend Spend Spend! a history of shopping* (Stroud, 2008), p. 57.

²⁸ N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550—1820* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 12, 8.

²⁹ Stobart, *Spend Spend Spend!* pp. 14-15, 41.

²⁹ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 25.

before c.1750, or a valuation for tax purposes thereafter. Between 1700—1770, 33% and 49% of the sampled probates for Ashbourne and Wirksworth respectively included a valuation, not including real estate (table 3.21).

Table 3.21: Sampled male probates in Ashbourne and Wirksworth 1700-1770

	<i>parish total</i>	<i>sample size (town)</i>	<i>with valuation¹</i>	<i>occupation stated</i>
Ashbourne	325	239 (73.5 %)	107	229
Wirksworth	310	188 (60.6 %)	152	180

Sources: LRO, BC/11; TNA, PROB 11 (no valuations). ¹ Personal estate only.

The percentages of probators leaving personal estate in particular bands is displayed in fig. 3.21, showing two overlapping groups in both towns. The more numerous group comprised small artisans (or miners) about a third of whom left £20 or less. Around the £50 mark there was the beginning of a skewed bell curve covering men in more lucrative occupations. In both towns the most likely personalty in this notional grouping was about £150 but Ashbourne had a higher percentage of probators in higher bands. Occupational categories showed a range of personalties, but when they were ranked by the maximum wealth found the resulting hierarchies were similar in both towns and roughly in accordance with the theory mentioned by French (table 3.22).³⁰

³⁰ Owing to small numbers, averages were not very informative .

Fig. 3.21: The percentage of males who left personal estate in various bands in wills proved at Lichfield Consistory Court 1700—1769

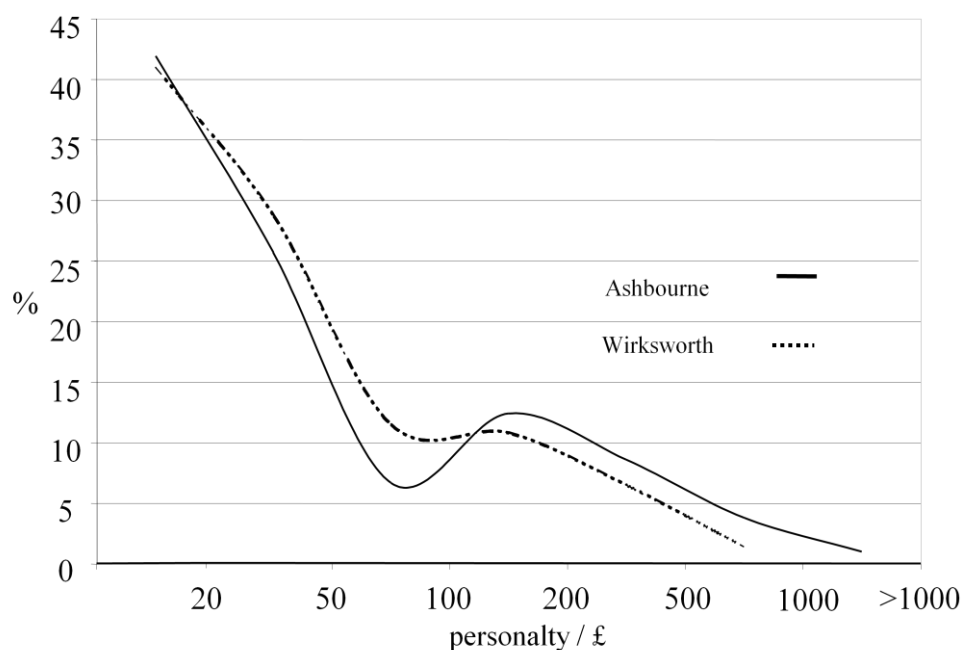


Table 3.22: Occupations of probators who left personal estate over £100 in Ashbourne and Wirksworth (1700—69) ranked by maximum wealth

ASHBOURNE		WIRKSWORTH	
<i>potential wealth</i>	<i>frequency >1</i>	<i>potential wealth</i>	<i>frequency >1</i>
1. mercer	gent 3	1. mercer	gent 5
2. chandler	innkeeper 3	2. gent	mercier 5
3. skinner	ironmonger 3	3. clergyman	yeoman 3
4. tanner	mercier 3	4. apothecary	attorney 2
5. ironmonger	tanner 3	5. yeoman	innkeeper 2
6. attorney	brazier 2	6. attorney	ironmonger 2
7. gent		7. tanner	
8. nurseryman		8. innkeeper	
9. innkeeper		9. lead merchant	
10. chapman		10. cordwainer	
11. currier		11. woolcomber	
12. brazier		12. farmer	
13. cordwainer			
14. builder			
15. hardwareman			
16. miller			
n = 27		n = 26	
mean £336 , max £1,007		mean = £233, max £740	

Source: LRO, BC/11.

In the probate sample, those occupations occurring more than once with personalties over £100 were found to be ‘clean’ trades, except for tanning. The wills of the richest frequently lacked a valuation, partly because the chaotic recording of PPC inventories was very time-consuming to research with no guarantee of success. But, for some unexplained reason, only one out of seven Ashbourne attorneys’ wills proved at Lichfield included an inventory. Attorneys were among those expected to have costly household effects and it may be supposed that their inventories were retained in cases where wives had the use of household effects only for life and for ‘fair use’. No wills were found for the much rarer physicians before 1786, but their presence was attested in other wills. Francis Sleigh was attended in 1737 by Dr Chancey in Ashbourne, and Robert Lissett paid 10 gn for the attentions of Dr Gell in Wirksworth in 1738.³¹ These men appeared to be university-educated and were the sons of gentlemen.³²

Tanners, curriers and skimmers had higher personalties than some men with clean trades because of the value of their stock, and they became wealthier still when they put out pre-cut leather to shoemakers. Skimmers also employed a leather-cutter, evidence for work put out to tailors. Ashbourne’s builders were becoming richer and a nurseryman, who landscaped the gardens of the rich, also sold timber for roofing, flooring, stairs and wainscoting.³³ A few independent shoemakers and tailors had large businesses employing several journeymen and sold bespoke clothes to the rich.

³¹ LRO, Ashbourne, Francis Sleigh, 26 April, 1737; Wirksworth, Robert Lissett, 20 April, 1738. Dr Chancey briefly lived at the Mansion but moved to Derby where his attempt to inaugurate a spa in 1733 failed, owing to competition in the Peak. P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009), p. 23.

³² Dr Erasmus Darwin attended the University of Edinburgh after Cambridge. In 1786 Robert Docksey, physician, had an extensive landed estate near Ashbourne and another in Leicestershire. LRO, Robert Docksey, 1 May, 1786. Dr Gell was a member of the Wirksworth gentry and Dr Gresley the grandson of a baronet.

³³ The nurseryman Charles Sandys held an auction of forest trees for builders in 1758 and his widow Ann held one in 1767. *Derby Mercury*, 27 October, 1758; 30 October, 1767.

3.3 The upper-middling sector

Earle's 'middle class' Londoners had an average personalty of £1000 - £2000 before 1730, implying a standard of living which was 'an incredible contrast to the lives of the poor'.³⁴ Even his lower-middle classes had wealth near the surtax boundary of £300, which enabled them to eat well, to possess stylish furniture and to employ a servant.³⁵ Only one of the sampled inventories for Ashbourne and Wirksworth reached £1000 in 1700-1730, but Londoners' personal estates were swollen by their leasehold property (the monetary value of unexpired leases was included), for only the upper echelons owned real estate.³⁶ In contrast, the upper-middling sorts in Derbyshire possessed inherited and acquired freeholds and usually owned their houses, as did many lower-middling households, apparent from wills and land tax (after 1780). They bought land as the depository for their savings; the attorney Richard Goodwin bought some to pay the portions of children born after he drew up his will.³⁷ This was largely owing to the absence of safe havens for money, rent being the interest and mortgages the means of withdrawal, but if a creditor was not in a hurry for cash a bond could be issued for which the land was collateral.

Real estate was unquantifiable, but an estimate of a testator's minimum worth, including land, could be made by evaluating cash legacies charged on land, considering annuities as capital paying 5% p.a. (table 3.23). The heir-apparent customarily either mortgaged land to pay these obligations, or redirected rents for a time. The debt was paid off over time with interest, from the profits of the business and perhaps his wife's dowry; if he lived long enough he would begin to accumulate more land. Premature

³⁴ Earle, *Middle Class*, pp. 14-15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁶ Eighty percent of London probators with personalties of £1000-£1999 possessed no real estate. Earle, *Middle Class*, pp. 156-7.

³⁷ LRO, Richard Goodwin, Ashbourne, 4 October, 1743.

death was the worst threat, Earle commenting that longevity had contributed to the immense wealth of some Londoners.³⁸ Contrary to Wood's opinion that there were no middling sorts with substantial wealth in the Peak, thirty-nine such households were found in the sample.³⁹ Although it also covered the early decades when the town was more socially mixed, the Peak country was dotted with substantial yeomen.⁴⁰ Enough data was found for Ashbourne to show close agreement with the occupational hierarchy mentioned by French.

Table 3.23: Cash bequests of upper-middling testators in Ashbourne and Wirksworth ranked by status 1700-1769

occupation	ASHBOURNE			occupation	WIRKSWORTH		
	wills	maximum	median		wills	maximum	median
town 'gent'	19	£4,840	£760	attorney	2	£2,636	£2,312
cheesemonger	1	£3,420		town 'gent'	16	£2,560	£387
attorney	5	£2,500	£474	tanner	1	£800	
grocer	3	£2020	£1380	mercier	5	£740	£387
maltster	2	£1985	£165	yeoman	12	£730	£168
mercier	5	£1,007	£711	chandler	2	£500	£300
innkeeper	1	£878		apothecary	1	£253	
coal master	1	£720					
chandler	3	£612	£50				
ironmonger	8	£560	£380				
tanner	5	£510	£400				
yeoman	11	£434	£110				
whitesmith	1	£300					
total	65				39		
mean		£1,522				£1,174	

Sources: LRO, B/11; TNA, PROB 11.

The most striking feature of table 3.23 is the preponderance of town gentlemen in both towns, who supposedly had no occupation and so were ignored by French. Most were money-lenders and active investors, rather than drones, and some had unidentified

³⁸ Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 141.

³⁹ Wood asserted that the peak country 'lacked an affluent middling group' before 1770. A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country, 1520—1770* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 19.

⁴⁰ In 1734, 800 freeholders joined a ride which had set off from Chapel-en-le-Frith in the High Peak to Derby, in order to cast their votes for Lord Cavendish. V.S. Doe (ed.), *The Diary of James Clegg of Chapel en le Frith 1708—1755* (Matlock, 1978), pt 1, p. 196.

professions and commercial interests. Yeomen formed an intermediate class with less wealth, being urbanized members of dynastic families who lived on rent or unidentified businesses. A number of town gentlemen had some claim to gentility, the most prominent being the Dales. Senior and junior branches of the family lived in the town, the former being armigerous magistrates and the latter mercers and grocers (before 1800). Robert Dale was a retired London grocer whose kin, mentioned in his will, included one of the landlords of the Blackmoor's Head and a number of other London merchants.⁴¹ His bequest of £100 to the poor in no less than three high peak parishes was a manifestation of the Dales' ancestral landed interests (on one of which the head of the family remained) and *noblesse oblige*. Robert's first cousins, John and Francis Sleigh, were the sons of an Ashburnian mercer whose widow, Marie, inherited the business in the mid-seventeenth century and issued tokens, depicting both her name and her arms.⁴² John Sleigh married the gentlewoman Elizabeth Hurt of Ashbourne Green Hall (whose family relocated to Wirksworth, see chapter five). Francis, d. 1737, owned the best buildings in Ashbourne market place, in its pre-Georgian incarnation, including 'shops, cellars, orchards, gardens, warehouses, yards, barns ...', and he built a row of five plebeian dwellings and workshops off it.⁴³ Like Hugh Fletcher, d.1772, who was the grandson of an Ashburnian ironmonger, the Sleigh brothers lived on their inherited property as *rentiers*.

Pluralist clergymen, including the Revd Dr John Taylor, were prominent town gentlemen in Ashbourne where they constituted a rich and well-educated élite. The Revd William Newton owned parts of several manors in Derbyshire and Leicestershire

⁴¹ LRO, Robert Dale, 26 April, 1751.

⁴² G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire*, vol.3 (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 1167-8. Boothby papers, GRO, D/D F Bo/18.

⁴³ LRO, F. Sleigh, 26 April, 1737.

and the advowson of the vicarage of Church Langley (worth £3000), while the Revd Thomas Bedford, a non-juring Anglican who preached at the town's dissenting chapel, lent £2000 to Sir Brooke Boothby senior and had wealth described as 'substantial' when he died, in 1773, his will being proved at the PCC.⁴⁴ Among other *rentiers*, Dr Taylor's brother and uncle died in the period, the latter living off the ancestral farm north of the town, while his brother was probably an attorney. Although of humble origins, Nicholas Spalden was perhaps the richest town gentleman in 1714; another man, William Peach, who had likewise returned after making a much more modest fortune in London as a hatter and hosier, left bequests totalling £760.

French's comment on the non-viability of an upper-middling sector in small towns therefore did not apply to Ashbourne. The relatively-poor showing of Wirksworth would be even greater if the first two decades of the century were excluded; however, town gentlemen remained *in situ* having allowed a plebeian culture to overwhelm the town as a trade-off for the profits they were making from lead.⁴⁵ A *coterie* whose social lives focused on Derby, they included the Duchy Steward and several members of the armigerous Gell clan who were lawyers and physicians. One of the 'chief inhabitants' displayed the same concern for the well-being of Wirksworth that the grammar school corporation had for Ashbourne. In 1734 William Greatorex left £60 to fund apprenticeships for youths 'without a strict settlement', a more constructive approach than the whipping post for irregular migrants.⁴⁶

Six out of sixteen town gentlemen in Wirksworth for whom informative probates were found left bequests worth over £1000, Thomas Leacroft leaving £2,350

⁴⁴ LRO, William Newton, 8 June, 1748; Boothby papers, GRO, D/D F Bo/32; R. Sharp, 'Bedford, Thomas (1707—1773), nonjuring Church of England clergyman and historian', Oxford DNB.

⁴⁵ Their wills did not diminish in number after 1730, unlike those of elite retailers.

⁴⁶ LRO, William Greatorex, 6 November, 1734.

for his three daughters' dowries and presumably not stinting his two sons. As in Ashbourne, town gentlemen left more luxuries than others and some symbols of rank. Half possessed silver (valued over £20 in one case and £37 in another), four had guns, three had swords and the same number left watches. Most owned books, which were four times more likely to be owned by 'upper-wealth' groups, according to Weatherill.⁴⁷ In 1701 William Wingfield's library was worth £17 10s, while George Beighton of Greenhill House left 54 pewter plates in 1704 (then uncommon), 12 leather chairs and window curtains.⁴⁸ They possessed real estate in the county and Thomas Hutchinson, a lead-smelter who may also have lived at Greenhill House, was the son of an Irish bishop and possessed land in Ireland.⁴⁹ In 1717 John Alsop, described as a 'gent and mercer' had £40-worth of lead in his house so was probably also a smelter.⁵⁰

Town gentlemen had a function which should not be underestimated, circulating their capital though money-lending and investing in the infrastructure of trade and its arteries throughout the long eighteenth century, including cotton mills, mine-drainage, turnpikes and canals.⁵¹ Their activities were strategically important for the prosperity of the region and also for the promotion of urban renaissance. As Dauntton noted, agricultural rents were high for many decades and had a clearly discernible effect on investment in new houses and the industrial infrastructure. In a reference to Wirksworth, he marked the success of local investment in the Cromford canal, which incidentally

⁴⁷ L. Scammell (ex-Weatherill), 'Town versus country: the property of everyday consumption in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in J. Stobart & A. Owens, *Urban Fortunes*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ LRO, George Beighton, 4 April 1729. This house is no. 460 on the tithe map (Pl. 5.22).

⁴⁹ LRO, Thomas Hutchinson, 22 July, 1746.

⁵⁰ LRO, John Alsop, 26 April, 1717.

⁵¹ Hodgson invested in mines in Anglesey. TNA, PROB 11/ 1125, Brian Hodgson, 14 January, 1785.

transported materials essential to the mining industry.⁵² However, investors shrewdly diverted capital to cotton mills when they perceived no future for lead-mining.⁵³

Neither the demonstrable economic importance of town gentlemen nor their social credentials have generally been credited by historians. Berg considered that ‘*rentiers* siphoned off the agricultural surplus to the towns’ and squandered it in ‘unproductive expenditure and conspicuous consumption’.⁵⁴ This view of *rentiers* ignores their productive investments in commerce and industry, already mentioned, and their buying habits stimulated luxury trades which increased the profits of manufacturers and distributive trades all over the country. This was particularly applicable to Birmingham, the ‘hardware capital of the world’, whose artisans thereby enjoyed the ‘highest wages in Europe’.⁵⁵ Everitt has contemptuously labelled town gentlemen as ‘pseudo-gentlemen’, implying that their chief concern was to rise above their station. Indeed, many had kinship links with the gentry, yet the term has passed into the historiography.⁵⁶ Dismissed by Earle as ‘delightfully unacademic snobbery’ the epithet has been considered unduly disparaging by D’Cruze, Ellis and Smith.⁵⁷ But outside the region town gentlemen ran the risk of ridicule and advisedly dressed the part of a gentleman, but kept a low profile.⁵⁸ The Londoner, Mrs Thrale, unkindly referred to

⁵² M.J. Daunt, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700—1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 55, 197, 247, 258, 269-271.

⁵³ L. Willies, ‘Derbyshire lead-mining in the 18th and 19th centuries’, *The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 14 (1999), pp. 31-33, p. 31.

⁵⁴ M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700—1820: industry, innovation and working in Britain* (London, 1994), 2nd edn., p. 84.

⁵⁵ J.G. Rule, *Albion’s People: English society 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 173.

⁵⁶ A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London, 1985), pp. 27, 167-8.

⁵⁷ Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 87; S. D’Cruze, ‘The middling sort in eighteenth-century Colchester: independence, social relations and the community broker’, in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550—1800* (London, 1994), p. 186; J.M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680—1840* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 72. C.A. Smith, ‘The renaissance of the English market town: a study of six Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680—1840’, unpub. Ph.D. thesis (University of Nottingham, 1997), p. 159.

⁵⁸ French, ‘Social status, localism’, *Past & Present*, 166 (2000), pp.66-99, p. 98.

Dr Taylor's dinner guests in her diary as 'such as the county affords ... very poor creatures both women and men.' Such prejudice was not universal, since James Boswell, Dr Johnson's Scottish biographer, referred to the same men as 'good civil gentlemen who seemed to understand Dr Johnson very well'.⁵⁹ Within the institutions of urban renaissance town gentlemen associated easily with men of higher social class, for example in the Derby Philosophical Society, but Wahrman's theory seems apposite: those who eschewed metropolitan culture were not taken seriously in upper-class circles.⁶⁰

3.4 Liaisons and associations

David Hume referred to the urban organizational culture of the 'middling ranks' and related it to socio-economic improvement.⁶¹ Barry's 'bourgeois collectivism' encapsulated this, while Hume's further remark that middling sorts 'flocked to towns' where they could 'shew their wit or breeding (and) their taste in conversation, living, clothes or furniture' explored the motivation for their associations.⁶² But all forms of associational behaviour were fissured by wealth, conserved in upper-middling families through arranged marriages. In addition to providing their children with dowries and portions which lower-middling sorts could rarely match, the upper echelons attended exclusive public and private events with high subscriptions and expensive dress codes, which also functioned as marriage markets.⁶³ Eighteen upper-middling testators with unmarried daughters in Wirksworth and thirty-eight in Ashbourne bequeathed dowries

⁵⁹ A. Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol. 1, 'Fashionable Society' (Ashbourne, 1989), p. 50.

⁶⁰ D. Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 17 (1992), pp. 43-72, pp. 43-44.

⁶¹ Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 58.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶³ Earle noted that the customary dowry in London was calculated to double a trader's wealth when he was setting up in business. Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 141.

rising to over £1000, the medians being £175 in Ashbourne and £250 in Wirksworth. Daughters' portions were usually stated in wills only if the testator died young, but were even rarer in lower-middling wills and much smaller, ranging from £10 to £40 (Ashbourne) and £10 to £80 (Wirksworth). Even these amounts created a social division with struggling artisans, who could not afford cash bequests but also had positions to maintain, tending to marry within their own social milieux. The dowry system accounted for the fact that 87 % of the 'middling' brides in 106 marriages apparently found a husband in the same upper- or lower-middling sector.

The social status conferred by 'middling' professions and businesses *per se* was enhanced by marriage and apprenticeship customs. Just over 13% of women in the Ashbourne sample married a man whose occupation was identical to her father's and a further ten percent one in a closely-related occupation. The heir-apparent to a business customarily married a wife from within the trade, thickening a web of dynastic families in the dominant leather and innkeeping trades. The apprenticeship system conflated a narrow, occupational training with education. It was followed by the rite of passage into the adult world as a journeyman or master craftsman, often at the age of 21 after seven years in indentures. Only then was he allowed to marry. Premiums paralleled dowries as an exclusion mechanism; overall there was considerable pressure for a middling youth to be content with his station in life. The choice of occupation widened over time (novel occupational labels included confectioner, builder, auctioneer, farrier and millwright), but tradition ruled many. When an Ashbourne saddler died leaving his youngest son a handsome premium of £60 to 'choose the trade he likes best', the youth elected to follow his three adult brothers into the highly-regarded trade he *knew* best.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ LRO, John Etches, 3 April, 1749.

The most prestigious association in Ashbourne was the grammar school corporation (GSC), a self-perpetuating committee chaired by a baronet, or more usually his deputy. The rare survival of its minute books provided evidence for a micro-hierarchy in which occupations assumed notable importance.⁶⁵ Positions were held for life, the executive governors consisting of town gentlemen and professionals.⁶⁶ From 1700—1770 only thirteen men were elected to replace those who had died or left. The positions of their assistants were filled from more than half of the town's identified attorneys and town gentlemen, five out of 14 mercers, three out of 11 ironmongers and one or two innkeepers and merchants. Divisions of rank and property apparently weakened the vertical ties fostered by such associations, as noted by French but minimized by Barry.⁶⁷

Grammar school trustees constituted the *de facto* governing body here and in other non-incorporated towns, including Lyme Regis and Sherborne (Dorset), where they came from 'the highest echelons of society,' but they were not prominent in Wirksworth, owing to the divided manorial rights.⁶⁸ Charitable trusts symbolized the expression of civic values, being 'very rare in the countryside but ubiquitous in urban conditions,' the major responsibility of the GSC being the oversight of estate bequeathed to the town.⁶⁹ In consequence, they came to build and administer four sets of almshouses and three schools, paid lecturers to deliver regular sermons at the bequest

⁶⁵ Kept by the Grammar School Trust.

⁶⁶ N.J. Frangopulo, *The History of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ashbourne, Derbyshire 1585—1935* (Ashbourne, 1939), pp. 119-120.

⁶⁷ Barry, 'Bourgeois collectivism?', p. 287. H. French & J. Barry (eds), 'Introduction', in *Identity and Agency in England 1500—1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 28.

⁶⁸ Wirksworth grammar school had no charter but was referred to as a corporate body in the Gell manorial roll. D163/15/1. French, *Middle Sort*, p. 170.

⁶⁹ Barry, 'Bourgeois collectivism?' p. 99.

of the deceased and subsidized the poor rate in emergency. The responsibility for organizing its work fell heavily on the honorary treasurer, usually an attorney.

The absence of an equivalent body to Ashbourne's GSC in Wirksworth seemingly did not remove the need for one which could deal with situations requiring exceptional resources and authority. In 1824 a group of landed gentlemen met with the vicar and several churchwardens (who were men of standing in the town and its hamlets) to discuss major alterations to the church, which the former had authorized and financed themselves.⁷⁰ They headed voluntary subscription lists, including donations to the war effort in the late eighteenth century (no record was found for Ashbourne in this instance) and donated coal, beef and potatoes to the poor in winter to subsidize the rates.⁷¹

Ashbourne's vestry appeared to be a model of Barry's cooperative, middling associations. Records survive from the latter half of the eighteenth century when tradesmen served in rotation for short periods, all signing the minutes. Innkeepers were keen attendees, because of their numbers and their high contributions to the rates, but not necessarily at church, since some were fined for serving ale during divine service.⁷² Vertical ties were fostered by the vestry's corporate responsibility for the welfare of the poor, which created a distance between vestrymen and non-rate-payers. However, the higher-ranking officers who signed the authorizations to levy the church rate met as a sub-committee. Ashbourne was usually well-placed to deal with emergencies without the intervention of landed gentlemen. But in 1791 there was a surge in the death-rate,

⁷⁰ DRO, D3105, A/PV1/1.7

⁷¹ F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor or an history of the labouring classes...* (London, 1797). p. 135. Disbursements from the rates rose from £481 (1775) to £830 (1794) owing to inflation. pp. 131ff. Note: beef was cheap at 4d /lb.

⁷² *Derby Mercury*, 20 October, 1791. In 1825 the premier inns paid £68 and £80 in rates, while sixteen others paid £15 or more. A. Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol. 2, 'Architecture' (Ashbourne, 1991), p. 16.

probably because of severe weather and the high price of food. The vestry was packed with unaccustomed gentlemen as it dispensed £100-worth of oatmeal and coal to folk not already receiving benefits, and an additional £260 from the Spalden charity to 177 householders (40% of the population). Aid was even claimed by struggling artisans listed in the *Universal British Directory*.⁷³

Wirksworth's vestry records are mostly missing; even in 1795 Eden reported their accounts to be 'scattered all over the township'.⁷⁴ But one fragment detailed the well-organized system for putting out 89 parish 'apprentices' as servants to substantial parish rate-payers (farmers, gentlemen and prosperous householders) during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The town had appointed a salaried overseer before 1795, assisted by an innkeeper who held the intimidating post of High Constable of the hundred. Premiums up to £11 were paid to masters living as far away as Sheffield to take children off the books if they caused repeated trouble.⁷⁵ Some were sent to weavers and framework knitters, but only one to a cotton mill, in Ashbourne, since Richard Arkwright junior and (presumably) Wirksworth mill-owners refused parish apprentices.⁷⁶ Orphans thrown on the parish were mostly from an underclass of penniless or vagrant families and sometimes presented problems of socialization. Others had kin who could afford maintenance and were accordingly pursued.

When the Charity Commissioners nominated the rising mill town of Belper for the headquarters of a Poor Law Union in 1840, instead of the ancient hundredal capital of Wirksworth, the vestry was understandably aggrieved. It despatched a petition to

⁷³ The names of all the recipients were printed in the newspaper next to a sum of money ranging from 5s to 4gn. *Derby Mercury*, 7 July, 1771. Spalden had left the residue of his fortune 'for the public benefit of the town of Ashbourne'. TNA, PROB 11/538, Nicholas Spalden, 22 February, 1714. Dr Taylor customarily gave £100 for the subsidized sale of oatmeal to the poor annually but had died in 1788.

⁷⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, p. 131.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131. DRO, D3105PO1/1.

⁷⁶ R.S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights: spinners of fortune* (Manchester, 1989), p. 152.

emphasize the efficiency with which its affairs were conducted, ‘drawing no complaints.’ A population of ‘over 20,000 living within five miles who regard Wirksworth as their market and post town’ was claimed, but to no avail.⁷⁷ Wirksworth was perceived in London as a town in decline and (incorrectly) lacking in natural resources, its varied social structure not being taken into consideration. It was a bitter pill when Ashbourne was nominated for its own region and held a celebratory dinner.

3.5 ‘Dirty but prosperous’ lower-middling sorts

In the previous section it has been argued that upper-middling sorts, defined by wealth and occupational standing, cohered into an exclusive social group, largely, but not entirely, isolated by its marriage and apprenticeship customs. Ashbourne’s lower-middling sorts often married within groupings which had reciprocal commercial links, for instance, the innkeeping fraternity was close-knit through blood and trade relationships, as were families engaged in the town’s leather trades. But since probates provided most of the data (including the identities of marriage partners) the claims of most of the artisanal population could not be investigated. The designated upper- and lower-middling sectors were divided by extremes of wealth, which precluded close association. This was reflected in hierarchical associations, in which upper-middling sorts (occasionally gentlemen) had executive positions and lower-middling sorts knew their place.

Innkeepers and tanners were difficult to categorize as upper- or lower-middling on the given criteria. Tanners had a dirty trade but were sufficiently prosperous to promote family members through advantageous marriages, so can be placed in the lower slopes of the upper-middling sector. In fact, Dr Taylor had two second cousins

⁷⁷ TNA, MH12/1840, 1841. (Informant, Christine Seal).

politely described by Boswell as ‘eminent tanners’, who were invited to dine at the Mansion with Dr Samuel Johnson, while, in the 1790s, a Wirksworth tanner married the granddaughter of a minor gentleman who brought him a dowry of £800 and considerable real estate in Derby to add to his patrimony.⁷⁸ The landlords of the best coaching inns (owned by landed gentlemen) were indubitably upper-middling, since the expensive leases could only be afforded by men of means, some of whom stemmed from the minor gentry.⁷⁹ These innkeepers were obliged to refurbish the premises to a high standard, to provide up to a hundred horses and vehicles for hire at their own expense and occasionally to serve the aristocracy, the more ambitious relocating to a better trading position whenever the opportunity arose.⁸⁰ A second tier were owner-occupiers who had the resources to combine the trade with malting when a market for malt arose in Burton-on-Trent. Nevertheless, only the landlords of the two major inns were invited to sit on the GSC.

Some idea of the wealth of the lower-middling sorts in the towns may be deduced from a probate sample, with the proviso that even a large sample can only supply a small number of examples of men who followed less-profitable, or rarer trades (table 3.51). The preponderance of innkeepers in both towns and of miners in Wirksworth were the most obvious features. The extent of the respectable licensed trade (excluding ale houses) implied that the situation revealed by the government survey in the late seventeenth century was essentially unchanged. The packhorse trade at Wirksworth continued to flourish during the second quarter of the century because lead

⁷⁸ See chapter 5. J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. comprehending an account of his studies and numerous works*, ... vol.2 (Dublin, 1792), p. 479.

⁷⁹ They included Mr Dale, at least, in Ashbourne. A. Everitt (ed.), ‘The English urban inn 1560—1760’, *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), p. 103.

⁸⁰ In 1777 Dr Johnson and James Boswell saw the Duke and Duchess of Argyll changing horses at the Blackmoor’s Head. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 1, p. 52. Everitt, ‘English urban inn’, p. 122.

production was high and, as mentioned, the town was a central point for pedlars taking goods to markets. The miner-probators represented the lower-middling stratum of a very numerous and poorly-rewarded occupation (in middling terms). The probators were not as poor as they seemed, since a minimum of £20 should be added to account for the value of the cottage which all such men possessed, often in addition to small parcels of land.

Table 3.51: Maximum personal estates of lower-middling Ashburnians compared with lower-middling Wirksworthians 1700-1769

	<i>Probates</i>		<i>Personalities</i>	
	A	W	A _{max}	W _{max}
baker	1	2	£31	£50
butcher	6	6	£67	£20
farmer	2	6	£56	£105
hatter	2	6	£4	£99
innkeeper	16	17	£207	£138
joiner	7	3	£32	£33
pewterer	1	2	£12	£38
shoemaker	7	4	£150	£126
tailor	2	1	£38	£9
weaver	5	1	£85	£20
builder	7		£126	
chapman	1		£195	
miller	1		£107	
saddler	4		£52	
woolcomber		4		£108
fellmonger		3		£23
miner		32		£30
<i>average</i>			<i>£83</i>	<i>£61</i>
<i>total</i>	62	48		

Source: LRO, BC/11.

Men in artisanal occupations were generally no better off than these miners, with the exceptions of woolcombing and hatting in Wirksworth. The shoemakers in this company were the élite of their trade and quite unrepresentative of a very large number of struggling artisans (as appeared from Ashbourne's parish registers). In Ashbourne three of the seven probators left under £7. Among those with a reasonable cushion of

wealth were a few master weavers, bakers, butchers (who often owned land) and the few bespoke shoemakers and tailors.

Ashbourne had a wider range of profitable trades, the prominence of the building trade being very apparent. Building in brick and tile dated from c.1691, when Benjamin Taylor described the Mansion as ‘new’ in his will, seventy years before his grandson transformed it.⁸¹ During the first decade of the eighteenth century Thomas Barnes, a joiner, excavated a brickyard on his land in preparation for the building of Spalden’s almshouses in 1710 and by 1743 he had made money and was styled ‘gent’.⁸² The renaissance style was later imported to the town by bricklayers, masons and joiners who built from pattern books after honing their skills on country houses. The opportunity to build expensive houses to order attracted men with superior skills, who often settled in the town and left wills. But by 1759, when the newcomer Bill Chaplain left ‘books of architecture’ and ‘instruments for drawing plans’, many local men had taken up the trade.⁸³ George Harlow bequeathed ‘all my messuages, houses and buildings’ to his family in his will, having retained them to lease or rent to well-heeled migrants.⁸⁴ The profits empowered some builders’ families to move into a clean, or more prestigious, trade including Samuel Eglington, a mason-turned-grocer, and George Harlow’s grandson Samuel, who, having been apprenticed in the town, founded a dynasty of clock-makers and brass-founders with a branch in Birmingham. The eventual heir of the builder John Smith was a wealthy breeches manufacturer who left a PCC will, in which his portfolio of inherited houses was left to his extensive family.⁸⁵ In a small town there was often little competition within specialist trades and the Pidcock

⁸¹ LRO, Benjamin Taylor, 7 September, 1691. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 58.

⁸² LRO, Thomas Barnes, 19 April, 1743.

⁸³ LRO, Bill Chaplain, 2 April, 1759. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 2, pp. 44-5, 62

⁸⁴ LRO, George Harlow, 30 October, 1765.

⁸⁵ TNA, PROB 11/1236, John Smith, 10 August, 1793.

family appeared to have held a monopoly of plumbing and glazing for 140 years. They were rich by 1800 and had descendants in the Victorian middle class. Two became respectively a vicar and the headmaster of a grammar school, while the Misses Pidcock employed seven staff in 1851 in a boarding school they had established in 1817.⁸⁶ The family of the novelist George Eliot (Marian Evans) expanded out of the carpenter's shop she fictionalized in *Adam Bede* to found a substantial building firm which employed over a hundred in the mid-nineteenth century, its headquarters still in Ellastone, the setting of the novel.⁸⁷

New building trades were slow off the mark in Wirksworth for lack of patrons, vernacular houses in coursed-stone rubble being the norm. Although some minor building in brick occurred before 1720 the example of the Crown inn (1749) was scarcely followed until much later. Little was discovered about the town's builders (a research project in itself) but in the years when the new houses and Halls were being built the demand for multi-storey mills also stimulated the trade, including Arkwright's Masson and Haarlem mills, the former built in expensive local bricks in 1783 for reasons of prestige.⁸⁸ The names of the local men who built Leacroft's stone mansion in 1750—2 survive, showing that he employed the painter-decorator William Brown. In later life Brown was an Ashbourne printer, but his will showed that he still owned a paint works in Wirksworth, utilizing lead, like the type employed in his new career.⁸⁹

3.6 Consumerism

The Restoration followed years of monochrome, puritanical austerity and the light and colourful imports of the East India Company were peculiarly attractive to

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Pidcock, a spinster, left £1,635. TNA, PROB 11/1117, May 17, 1784. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 85; vol. 2, p. 50.

⁸⁷ G. Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London, 1857), ed. S. Gill (London, 1980), p. 7.

⁸⁸ Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 81.

⁸⁹ See chapter 4.

those who could afford them, while exotic groceries from the same source were to alter the British diet for good. There was a parallel movement in furniture design towards lighter pieces offering a greater degree of comfort, while innovations in cooking and table setting indicated changed table manners, initially in major inns and the houses of the élite. Weatherill, French and de Vries used probate inventories to chart the introduction of these novelties over time, a procedure used to discover evidence for their first appearance in Ashbourne and Wirksworth. Rich townsmen were motivated to purchase fashionable goods for competitive display within their houses, to be admired, envied, and perhaps copied by their guests. Not all of the novelties chosen by Weatherill could be said to be affordable lower down the social scale. Tea and coffee were expensive in her period, so utensils for their use were restricted to the wealthy (and often made of costly silver or china). Retailers helped to form taste, buying what they had first seen in the houses of gentlemen to sell to the aspiring élite, including Ashbourne's lawyers, who emulated the architecture and interior design of country houses. More generally, the taste of upper-middling sorts derived from visits to relations in provincial towns, or on business trips to London. But it must be said that little can be deduced from probates about individual taste; only generic descriptors normally appear.

A display of wealth invited trust, so was of commercial advantage, but self-gratification was uppermost. The range and variety of items listed in inventories increased over time; however de Vries found that, although each generation of decedents in 1650-1800 'left more and better possessions', valuations decreased.⁹⁰ He believed that people were making sacrifices to buy 'socially strategic commodities'

⁹⁰ J. de Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early-modern Europe', in Brewer & Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, pp. 99-100.

which then depreciated faster than earlier heirlooms.⁹¹ Inventories decreased in value in Ashbourne and Wirksworth also (table 3.61). But while the ‘new luxuries’ were cheaper and depreciated faster (being of lighter construction and less durable), households had to find money for the new groceries and more rapid changes in fashionable dress.⁹² Even so, middling sorts had a surplus to invest in land, so they were not having to make sacrifices.⁹³

Table 3.61: Inventory values for Ashbourne and Wirksworth in 1700—1750 and the difference with 1660—1699

	WIRKSWORTH		ASHBOURNE	
Mean personalty	£65.8	-£44.2	£91.6	-£29.4
Median	£21.5	-£5.5	£26	-£40
STD	£117.4	-£64.6	£170.3	-£56.7

Source: LRO, BC/11 (men only)

Ashbourne’s probate inventories showed very similar characteristics to those researched by Weatherill, indicating that the novelties which she itemized had found their way into the backwoods (table 3.62).⁹⁴ But Wirksworth’s probators failed to reach Ashbourne’s 1724 levels of consumption by 1760, which was attributable to miners’ disinclination to participate in a consumer revolution. Nationally, almost all novelties were bought by only a minority of probators, the rarest scarcely figuring before Weatherill’s cut-off date of 1725. Change in Derbyshire was discernible after 1725, but the extent of it was not reliably discovered in Ashbourne, where probates had become scarce.

⁹¹ De Vries, ‘Purchasing power’, p. 100.

⁹² Shammas, ‘English and Anglo-American consumption for’, p. 178.

⁹³ Richer households spent less on consumption and more on savings. *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁹⁴ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 76.

Table 3.62: The ownership of ‘new’ artefacts mentioned in probate inventories

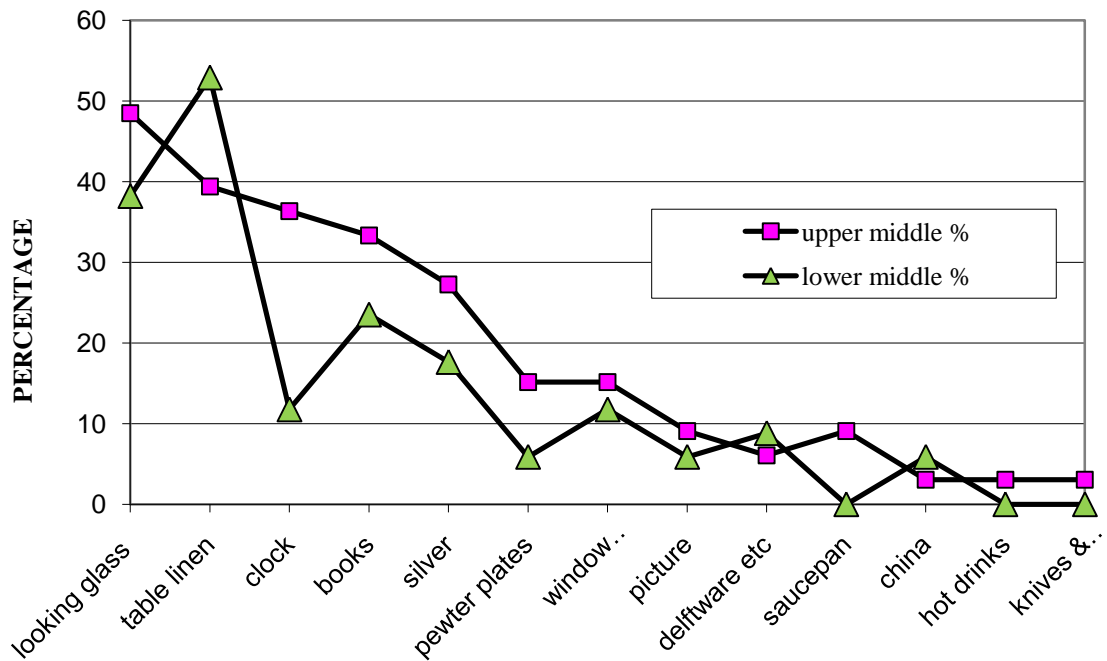
	WIRKSWORTH		ASHBOURNE	
	1700-24 <i>n</i> =64	1725-60 <i>n</i> =46	1700-24 <i>n</i> =25	1725-60 <i>n</i> =14
looking glass	20	33	60	57
table linen	13	15	36	29
clock	9	30	44	43
book	16	20	20	36
silver	16	22	20	14
pewter plates	5	26	16	50
curtains*	9	13	16	14
picture	3	30	8	29
earthenware	3	9	12	14
saucepan	0	11	12	21
china	0	2	0	0
hot drinks	2	13	4	0
knives & forks	2	2	4	0
Percentage of inventories				

Source: LRO BC/11 *for windows

The data for Ashbourne was sufficient to consider how far down the social scale different artefacts penetrated and the global change over the period (fig. 3.61). As in the case of Weatherill’s data, no more than 10% of probators possessed items in the six rarest categories. So far there is agreement with Rule, however, only utensils for hot drinks, clocks, books, silver and pewter plates were disproportionately owned by the wealthy. Weatherill found that clocks were eight times, and books four times more likely to be bought by wealthier groups.⁹⁵ The ratios were about 3 and 1.5 respectively in Ashbourne (clocks were made in the town in 1710). Table linen became unquantifiable when linen was appraised *en bloc*. It may have fallen in value and therefore less worthy of close attention.

⁹⁵ Scammell (Weatherill), ‘Town versus country’, p. 29.

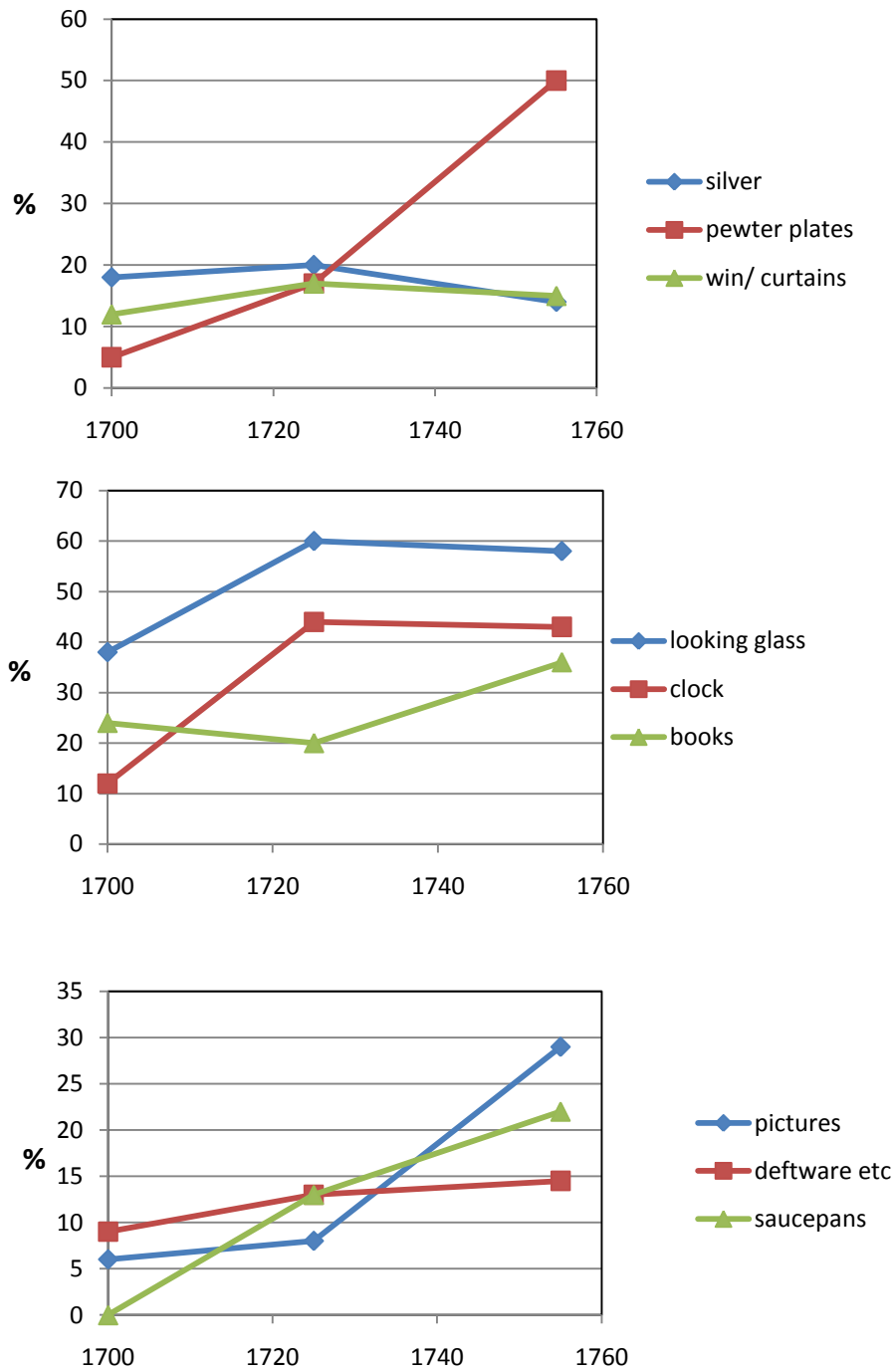
Fig. 3.61: Key items listed in Ashbourne's male probate inventories 1660—1754



Source: LRO, BC/11. Sample numbers: upper-middle 33, lower-middle 36.

With reference to change over time, looking glasses (60%), clocks (42%) and window curtains (c.15%) perhaps reached saturation levels by 1725, with a proviso that only fourteen inventories were found after that date (fig. 3.62). Purchases of china and silver eventually rose in connection with tea- and coffee-drinking to become the new heirlooms, while pictures and books figured more prominently after 1725, when there was a bookseller in the town. Pewter plates then showed the steepest rising trend in both towns, recorded in 50% of probates in Ashbourne by 1754. Together with the growing popularity of saucepans they confirmed permanent changes in eating customs at this level of society.

Fig. 3.62: Change over time in the percentage of inventories containing certain artefacts in Ashbourne's male probate inventories 1660—1754



When close comparisons are made with Weatherill's figures it is clear that the modernization of taste in Ashbourne was delayed in respect of the rarest items (table 3.63). Otherwise, it was broadly in accord with the national average for smaller towns.

Table 3.63: Key items in Ashburnian probate inventories compared with other 'small' towns 1660—1725.

Key items *	LG	TL	CI	B	S	WC	PP	DW	P	Sau	Ch	HD	KF
% inventories	50	47	25	23	18	15	12	12	8	6.5	3	1.5	1.5
% nationally	50	55	20	23	37	15	37	39	23	10	7	3	4

*See table 3.51; n=60.

Sources: LRO BC/11; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 44, 76.

As regards Weatherill's often-quoted deduction that élite middling sorts bought more novelties than gentlemen, town gentlemen possessed as many as their upper-middling fellows, moreover, the inclusion of a retailer's stock-in-trade with his belongings was a possible source of confusion. Heavy silver was a badge of gentility which graced the upper-class dining table and upper-middling sorts possessed only token amounts: a few silver spoons, a cup or a tankard before 1725, the only exception being a seventeenth-century mercer who had 55 oz of silver plate in 1709.⁹⁶ Andrew Greensmith esq. of Wirksworth was a rare pukka gentlemen whose will was proved at Lichfield, his son being High Sheriff in 1715.⁹⁷ His clock was worth £4 6s, about four times the average value, he had guns and pistols and displayed an interest in scientific novelties (a weather-glass).⁹⁸ His was the earliest record of knives and forks in either town and his wife left 72 pewter plates (giving an idea of the scale of their entertaining), tea canisters and 'chinah ware', 4 'mapps', printed (wall)paper, a 'portmantua trunk'

⁹⁶ LRO, Wirksworth, John Wigley, 12 April, 1709

⁹⁷ Only four 'real' gentlemen's wills were found in Ashbourne, all before 1700. Their inventories contained more of Weatherill's novelties than those of lesser men, except for items which became fashionable later, including knives and forks and pewter plates.

⁹⁸ He was in the vanguard of a rage for scientific instruments sold 'for ornamental and practical purposes' in the late eighteenth century. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 57.

for travelling and window curtains in every room.⁹⁹ As this suggests, the quantity and style of possessions were important considerations. Weatherill's scheme did not distinguish one book from a library, or a china teapot from a dinner service, neither did she list upper-class status symbols, such as swords and jewellery. Changes in design were also significant and French included chests of drawers, cane chairs, oval tables, coordinated décor and hangings as well as musical instruments and guns in his survey, agreeing with Overton that the gentry were the pioneers and town gentlemen 'disproportionate consumers'.¹⁰⁰

French referred to innkeepers as 'stereotypes of gentility' and found inns with furnishings of greater value than those in the houses of the wealthiest townsmen.¹⁰¹ When he died in 1701, James Foljamb of Ashbourne was identified by the vicar as the landlord of the Blackmoor's Head (owned by Sir William Boothby). Among his extensive cooking utensils were the earliest-recorded saucepans and pewter plates. Every bedchamber possessed a chest of drawers, window curtains and a looking glass, while the best chamber, used for feasts and meetings, had a fireplace, tables and a suite of thirteen leather chairs.¹⁰² There was an 'old brasse clocke' in the house place and the inn had 'fine' table linen and sheets. In 1693, Valentine Jackson's inn parlour was furnished with cushioned benches. Long (trestle) tables remained on the first floor, and wooden trenchers were in use, but window curtains, an oval table, a glass display case, a chest of drawers and a looking glass were also listed.

⁹⁹ LRO, Andrew Greensmith, 16 October, 1713; Elizabeth Greensmith, 7 April, 1715. Women's wills have not been included in probate statistics, men's wills being prioritized for their occupational data.

¹⁰⁰ French, *Middle Sort*, Table 3.2b, pp.146, 157-8, 186.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 182.

¹⁰² His unusual surname derived from a north Derbyshire gentry family. Leather upholstery was probably made in the town.

These innkeepers were close to the gentry. Jackson possessed a sword and buckler and Foljamb and his successor Thomas Grammar, d.1708, were elected to the GSC.¹⁰³ All three were linen mercers, then an élite preserve. Foljamb had a weaving shop on the premises, while Jackson left worsted & linen yarn and 40 yards of linen cloth. So, before putting-out by mercers became prevalent, these men were employing their own weavers close at hand, but also sold fine Holland linen to gentlemen. Grammar was described as a ‘mercier tavenor’ in his will and left personal estate approaching £900, of which £538 19s 4d was the value of his goods-in-trade (not itemized). In 1719 Robert Law, also a tavenor, had £40-worth of liquor and his parlour furniture comprised cane-bottomed, ‘Dutch’ and leather chairs and oval tables.¹⁰⁴

Eleven inventories of well-furnished houses were found and compared with six inns dating from 1667 to 1725. Eighteen new-style artefacts were counted, including leather and cane chairs, chests of drawers, oval tables, glass cases, maps and musical instruments. Foljamb had 10 items against an average of 5.6 (innkeepers generally, 4.9). But Gilbert Swift, a hardwareman whose executors were county gentlemen and who was the proprietor (not the innkeeper) of the Red Lion, left 12 items in 1715, including knives and forks, a coffee grinder and two violins, used to lead dancing in private houses.¹⁰⁵ Innkeepers of the most important inns imitated the taste of the gentry in order to entertain them in the style to which they were accustomed.¹⁰⁶ When the exercise was repeated for Wirksworth on the same number of wills (five innkeepers) between 1666 and 1724, it was found that only one inn was (relatively) well-furnished.

¹⁰³ Grammar, who was related to the Dale family, came from Bakewell, an example of the migration of élite upper-middling sorts between the market towns of west Derbyshire, forming a cousinage on the fringes of the minor gentry.

¹⁰⁴ Earle dates cane-bottomed chairs from 1680 in London. *Middle Class*, p. 294.

¹⁰⁵ LRO, Gilbert Swift, 30 May, 1715.

¹⁰⁶ French, *Middle Sort*, p. 182.

With 6 items it compared badly with the house of the gentleman Andrew Greensmith (12 items). Other hostelryes catered for packmen and as late as 1724 three in the sample were poorly furnished, but the Crown inn (at least) made up for it later.¹⁰⁷

Few gentlemen had occasion to put up at Wirksworth's inns, for instance, in 1782 a traveller stayed overnight only because there was no room in Matlock Bath. He gave his grudging impression of the town as a 'village in a disagreeable bottom'.¹⁰⁸ The town is about half way down the slope of a hill, three miles long with variable gradients. If he put up at the Red Lion he would be facing a fairly steep downward stretch, by no means in 'a bottom'. Did he perhaps stay at Cromford?

3.7 Shopping

Clothing and food were people's most frequent purchases, fashion being most apparent in clothing, where turnover was fastest, accounting for at least 25% of regular expenditure in 'middling' households.¹⁰⁹ Cox argued that retailers were crucial to the new consumerism because they developed and sustained an interest in variety, novelty and 'correct' (metropolitan) taste.¹¹⁰ The current view, promulgated by de Vries and others, is that the wide choice they presented was driven by demand from consumers whose tastes were various, however, Ashbourne's élite favoured upper-class, London style. Mercers' stock included fashionable fabrics which underwent seasonal changes for *aficionados*, although styles of dress changed very slowly. Dress materials, groceries and ephemera feature in the inventories of retailers' stock, compensating to some extent for their absence in other probates. Georgian interiors were not as bare of clutter as inventories and genre paintings might suggest, for much of it had no second-hand value

¹⁰⁷ See chapter five.

¹⁰⁸ DRO, D395Z/Z1.

¹⁰⁹ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 112-136.

¹¹⁰ Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, pp. 60, 139.

while artistic licence eliminated it as indecorous. The inventories of the shopkeepers whose names are listed in table 3.71 were rare examples in which stock-in-trade was itemized in some detail. A single inventory found for Ashbourne in 1747 demonstrated a huge proliferation of items on sale in a chandler's shop compared with an ironmonger 40 years earlier, as will be seen.

Table 3.71: Select tradesmen's inventories 1688 – 1747

FIRST GENERATION				
Ashbourne	6 Oct 1688	Bagueley	mercier	£409
Ashbourne	5 Oct 1714	G.Buxton	ironmonger	£321
Wirksworth	3 Oct 1701	Booth	mercier	£168
Wirksworth	4 Oct 1706	Holmes	mercier-grocer	£686
SECOND GENERATION				
Ashbourne	27 Oct 1747	Getliffe	chandler	£594
Wirksworth	21 Apl 1736	E. Buxton	ironmonger	£100
Wirksworth	10 Apl 1739	Bocking	mercier	£387

Source: LRO, BC/11

Town mercers' inventories demonstrated a large choice of textiles in the late seventeenth century, when prices in London had fallen through over-supply (table 3.72).¹¹¹ Thomas Bagueley junior had 976 yards in total in 1688 in a wide range of fabrics and prices and supplied hawkers with 'carry cloth' showing that Ashbourne was a distributive centre for the hinterland.¹¹² Only the most popular fabrics are shown in table 3.72, headed by funeral crepe. Most were in the restricted colours typical of plebeian dress, but not as plain as they had been; red cloaks and striped 'stuff' petticoats were characteristic, but unfashionable in higher social circles. Worsted (serge) had replaced broadcloth in most people's wardrobes and Bagueley stocked almost four

¹¹¹ Shammas, 'English and Anglo-American consumption', p. 193.

¹¹² Elizabeth Bradshaw, a gentlewoman whose memoir appears in chapters 4 and 5, descended from the Bagueleys, who changed their name to inherit the ancestral estate.

times as much. The other common fabrics were linen (for shirts and shifts), together with silk ‘stuff’ and wool flannel used for petticoats worn as outer-wear: all cheap. Prices were close to the national average set in London, with added carriage charges. Everyday linen was produced more cheaply locally.

Table 3.72: Edited inventory of Thomas Bagueley jun. mercer of Ashbourne (1688)

<i>% of stock</i>	<i>item</i>	<i>yards</i>	<i>price/yd</i>	<i>av. price/yd (England)</i>	<i>colours</i>
16.2	‘crape’	158	8d- 1s		black
14.8	‘carry’ (sic)	144.25	10d– 3s 8d		black, brown coloured, cotton drab, gray, red mixed.
11.6	serge	113	1s 4d– 2s 8d	2s	plain, black, coloured, grey, mixed.
7.5	flannel	73	7d-1s	10d	red, plain, coloured.
7.4	linen	72.5	8d-10d	11d	plain, coloured, blue.
4.4	stuff	43	1s- 1s 6d	9d	figured, striped
4.3	shalloon	42	1s 2d- 2s 8d		lining material
3.3	broadcloth	32.25	5s- 9s	4s 10d	heavy wool
2.8	plain	27.5	10d- 1s 6d		plain, green, red, napped
2.8	sprigged	27	11d		plain, coloured
2.7	silk gauze	26	1s 4d		

Sources: LRO, BC/11, 6 October, 1688. Average prices in England from Shammas, ‘English and Anglo-American consumption’, p.192.

Not shown is Bagueley’s wide variety of expensive materials bought by richer folk, stocked in smaller yardages. They included more colourful cotton calicoes obtainable only from the East India Company, ‘kittermusler’, ‘alla mode’, ‘dillamont’, ‘blue Italian silk’ and Holland. His silk satin and taffeta cost over 4s a yard and were therefore exclusive dress materials. He also had a large selection of haberdashery (trimmings) included silver, gold and loop lace for hats, silver buttons and 1145 yards of silk ribbons and sewing materials, presumably so that the tailor who made up the clothes could match the thread, use a fine needle and have appropriate fastenings and

stiffenings.¹¹³ He sold items unrelated to his main trade, but typical of mercers' stock, tempting well-heeled browsers to make frequent purchases of luxuries, including cittern strings, a game of battledore and shuttlecock, ink and paper, children's books, sugar (hugely expensive at £1 7s a pound), dried fruit and spices. But tobacco in the form of snuff cost only a halfpenny an ounce and attracted the majority once the addiction took hold.¹¹⁴

From c.1685 to c.1712 the mercers' stock in Wirksworth was not inferior to that in Ashbourne. Anthony Bunting left a PCC will in 1685 which implied wealth well over £1000 and three other substantial mercer-grocers died before 1713, including John Wigley whose stock, worth over £500, was not inventoried.¹¹⁵ Richard Booth was a traditional mercer, specializing in cheap silk stuffs and ribbons (table 3.73).

Table 3.73: Edited inventory of Richard Booth mercer of Wirksworth (1701)

<i>yds</i>	<i>item</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>per yard</i>
	'habberdashery'	23	16	5	
	silk stuff (bolt)	21	5	6	c. 10d
	stuffs	8	6	0.5	
142.5	striipt (striped) half silk	5	17	3	10d
39.75	woollen cloth	4	14	5.5	2s 5d
	woollen drapery	4	13	3.5	
48.25	serge	3	16	1.5	1s 7d
11.75	broad cloth	2	12	3	4s 5d
	'linnen' drapery	2	1	5.5	
33.25	tammy	2	1	6.75	1s 3d
31	black Anthorino	1	12	3	9d
23.25	black shalloon	1	12	11	1s 5d
21.5	druggett	1	18	10	1s 10d
	flax, hemp	1	19	3	
18	flowered serge	1	7		1s 6d
17.25	pale collar (colour) Russell	1	11	7.5	1s 10d
20	red tammy	1	3	4	1s 2d
21	shalloon	1	9	9	1s 5d
32	spotted stuff	1	5	7.5	10d

Source: LRO, BC/11, Richard Booth, 3 October, 1701.

¹¹³ The chief inhabitants wore 'a gold-laced hatt to shew their worth money'. French, *Middle Sort*, p. 95.

¹¹⁴ *Appendix*, Table A3, p. 273.

¹¹⁵ TNA, PROB 11/380, Anthony Bunting, 24 May 1685. LRO, John Wrigley, 9 April 1712.

His stock was valued at a modest £168 in 1701, when poor women wore petticoats in a striped silk-linen mix; apart from broadcloth his materials were similarly priced to those which clothed paupers.¹¹⁶ When clothes are bought infrequently they have to last and even poor people bought good (but not the highest) quality. Booth had some exclusive items, including ‘a christening mantle of sky colour laid around with gold and silver lace’ which his mother-in-law bought from his executors to bequeath to her granddaughter.¹¹⁷

Thomas Holmes was a rich man from Wirksworth’s mercantile élite. In addition to cloth worth up to 40% more than Bagueley’s (but not recorded by length) he kept groceries worth £105 in a warehouse, unfortunately not itemised. (table 3.74).

Table 3.74: Fabric sold by Thomas Holmes, mercer of Wirksworth (1706)

<i>item</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>
crapes , stuffs	103	14	10
narrow cloths	100	6	6
serges, druggetts ¹	94	4	
broad cloth	45	16	
Scotch cloth and Holland	37	11	
ribbons silk and mohair	22	18	6
mantuas, alla modes etc	20	19	5
dimities ² , fustians ³	19	12	8
buck(ram) and canvas ⁴ , coloured linen	15	7	7
butts, mohair and mettle (metallic)	14	8	8
cambletts ⁵ single and double	11	19	5
leather	7	10	11
plains and flannels	5	8	
calicoes remnants	5	4	
remnants of shag, red and brown	2	5	
coloured and Dutch thread	2	10	
Alla mode ⁶	1	10	
remnants of kittermusler		14	

Source: LRO, BC/11, Thomas Holmes, 4 October, 1706. ¹ wool or wool and linen.

² stout, white cotton with a woven stripe. ³ coarse wool and linen mix. ⁴ stiffenings.

⁵ either a costly imported cotton fabric or its imitation in linen. ⁶ Thin, glossy black silk.

¹¹⁶ Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 284. Overseers spent 7d to 2s 4d a yard on woollens (Booth sold some for 2s 5d). J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007), p. 350.

¹¹⁷ LRO, Wirksworth, Isabella Toplis, 12 April, 1706. Isabella also owned a ‘white bed with wrought (embroidered) curtains’.

Holmes sold spectacles, inkhorns and cards, paper and books, as well as broadcloth and Holland for well-to-do clients, but catered mostly for the majority with serge, druggett, silk stuffs, dimity, fustian and leathers for miners. There was a newer selection of textiles than Bagueley's but a smaller quantity of luxurious fabrics (no taffeta or satin). However, he had ready-made mantuas, initially made of pleated and draped silk worn over stays and a petticoat, which had replaced heavy wool tailoring for women's clothes in London only about 1680. They became the prevalent style of the century, updated by changes of fabric and referred to as gowns (but not by the makers and sellers).¹¹⁸ Tailors profited from the trend to light, fashionable clothes bought more frequently, however, women of the middling sort soon encroached on the tailor's monopoly, setting up countless mantua-making businesses throughout the century. Benjamin Allsop, a mercer-tailor of Ashbourne had 'made linens' and 'aparel of silk, muslin, & flannel' as well as 'stamigers' (corsets) in stock in 1706.¹¹⁹

Ironmongers and chandlers supplied workers with stock and the tools of their trade, so aspects of the occupational structure were revealed in their inventories; the fact that they increasingly sold groceries, chemicals, drugs and cleaning materials indicated changes in the standard of living. In 1714 the ironmonger George Buxton of Ashbourne kept iron bars, locks, nails, hinges and gun catches, but also had flax and woollen yarn for weavers worth nearly £44.¹²⁰ At this period he was supplying the weavers' shops and had pairs of 'cards' for preparing the yarn used by broadloom weavers, a process not yet superseded by woolcombing (for worsteds). Sugar was still expensive at 9s - £2 2s 9d / lb and obviously out of the range of ordinary folk, although he sold 'sugar dust'

¹¹⁸ Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 282.

¹¹⁹ LRO, Benjamin Alsopp, 12 April, 1706.

¹²⁰ *Appendix*, Table A1, p. 271.

(price illegible) and honey at 4d /lb. Candles were unaffordable by labourers at 5d each (but essential for miners). Buxton sold tobacco and spices, but tea and coffee were then the preserve of mercer-grocers. In 1700 sophisticated shop-fittings were standard in these shops and were not cheap, for George Buxton's 'drawers, shelves and counters' (for the accurate measurement of length and weight) were worth £3 10s second-hand.¹²¹

It was very unusual for an inventory to survive as late as 1747, so the one left by chandler Robert Getliffe was a welcome discovery, supporting a huge qualitative and quantitative expansion in trade during the 30 years after George Buxton's death. Everyday artefacts had become available in a hugely-expanded range of designs, materials and sizes; expensive novelties, including an iron cooking range, were on sale.¹²² The consumption of sugar, tea and coffee by middling sorts had greatly expanded, considering that the specialist grocer, German Buxton, was Getliffe's competitor, but only sugar seems cheap enough for general consumption (table 3.75).

Table 3.75: Groceries kept by Robert Getliffe chandler of Ashbourne (1747)

SPICES	/lb	TEA/COFFEE	/lb	SUGAR	/lb	TOBACCO	/oz
cloves	11d	... tea	16s	Jamaica	4.5d	large	0.5d
aniseed	4d	green tea	7s 4d	lump	9.5d	snuff	1d
caraway	2d	Bohea tea	6s	loaf	7.5d	shag	0.5d
allium	1s 3d	coffee	5s 6d	first	?	pig tail	0.75d
coriander seeds	14s			brown	?	other	2.5d- 3.25d
turmeric	7d			white	?	dust	0.25d
nutmegs	8s 6d						
cinnamon	2s						
pimento	2s 7d						
malt	2s 6d						

Source: LRO, BC/11, 27 October, 1747.

¹²¹ Glennie and Cox have refuted the belief of earlier historians that shop-fittings were a much later development, but 'little work has been done on small towns'. Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, p. 12. Glennie, 'Consumption', p.187.

¹²² Compare Tables A1-A2, *Appendix*, pp. 271-2

Getliffe's chandlery shop would not have been out of place in a country town a hundred years later on account of the comprehensive range of merchandise and its sophisticated presentation.¹²³ He had a counting house, defined by Dr Johnson as 'a room appropriated to books and accounts', implying a high standard of management and a large clientèle. Some of his wares were displayed in tin canisters, others in a glass case and he had large quantities of paper bags. His counters were kept dust-free with special brushes (on sale to fellow shopkeepers); he was the image of the fastidious 'apron men of Ashbourne' who were mocked in the previous century by German Buxton's ancestor, a Wirksworth ironmonger. Little did he realise that his namesake descendant would reign supreme in this role.¹²⁴

A multiplicity of cleaning and cooking utensils and materials were sold in this shop, indicating high standards of housewifery and domestic service in some quarters, as well as ironmongery, and over 6 reams of paper, costing 2s 2d – 12s 8d a ream, compared with 0.4 of a ream in George Buxton's stock with no choice of quality. He had brass fittings for Palladian houses and their furnishings and special brushes and nails for every conceivable purpose, including cleaning coach harness and tacking upholstery. Getliffe's participation in cloth manufacturing was on a much larger scale than Buxton's and it seems that the putting-out industry, in which mercers generally engaged thereafter, was flourishing. As well as hemp, hurds and 1.25 tons (*sic*) of flax, the shop contained 129 yards of cloth, including 34 'ells of flaxen cloth' from an old-

¹²³ *Appendix*, table A2, p. 272.

¹²⁴ J.C. Cox, *Derbyshire Annals*, vol.2, p. 80. German Buxton, the Ashbourne grocer, left £2020 for the portions of his nine children, and his stock to his sons, one year before Getliffe died leaving just under £600. LRO, German Buxton, 14 October, 1746; TNA, PROB 11/915 John Buxton, 17 January, 1766 (his son and successor).

fashioned weaver.¹²⁵ Eleven linen-merchants and grocers then practised in the town, so the scale of business in this one shop suggests that linen shirts and shifts were universally worn and a considerable excess sold in the regional markets. No mercer's inventory survives, but 56 lb of hair powder and wig ribbons on Getliffe's shelves implied that Ashburnians were keeping up with fashion.

Sometime before 1720 the in-migration of poor to Wirksworth began to have a corrosive effect on permanent shops, foreseen by German Buxton before he moved to Ashbourne. Pennell's 'marginal consumers' and the miners who travelled 12-15 miles to the Tuesday market equally preferred to patronize hucksters and pedlars.¹²⁶ Upper-middling retailers left the town. Two of the four ironmongers recorded in 1693 died in the 1730s leaving informative wills. Robert Bowman possessed real estate and a collection of silverware and china, including a coffee pot and tea set denoting his upper-middling status, while John Slack also left real estate. Neither business continued, Slack having bequeathed his stock-in-trade to his nephew, John Longden, the richest ironmonger in Ashbourne. (As in the case of German Buxton, Wirksworth's loss was Ashbourne's gain). The sole survivor in the trade appeared to be Edward Buxton, German's uncle, who benefited from the reduced competition to make a small fortune selling necessities to miners (not troubling to obtain stock in distant markets) and putting out wool and flax to weavers (table 3.76). The range of goods was strikingly small, including stockings, metal wares, gunpowder and bellows manufactured in the town, tobacco from Ashbourne and scythes from north Derbyshire, plus candles which

¹²⁵ In 1761 Collyer advised mercers 'not to be imposed on by weavers.' Collyer, *Parent's and Guardian's Directory*, p. 190.

¹²⁶ Pennell, 'Consumption and consumerism', p. 556.

G.D.H. Cole & D.C. Browning (eds), D. Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1726), London, 1962, vol.2., p. 159.

he made himself. Ore sieves were used by the poor to extract ore from mining waste.¹²⁷ His wealth was symbolized by 672 parcels of materials for weavers, showing the large scale of the trade. (Anecdotal evidence revealed only small-scale enterprise by yeoman miners in the previous century, for what were then the lesser needs of the town and hinterland). His profits enabled him to give a dowry of £200 to his youngest child; as she was one of five, his outlay was probably £1000 at least and the business was inherited by his son, who had set up a business in Tideswell, north Derbyshire.

Table 3.76: *Items sold by Edward Buxton ironmonger of Wirksworth (1736)*

nails, horse combs, 'piercers'.
60 st 'undrest' flax
56 doz parcels of 'drest' flax, hemp, hurds, spun yarn
paper
pack thread, sacking, 'stock' cloth
locks, fire shovels, frying pans, hinges, glue, wire
tobacco, stockings, coffers, bed mats
pitch, resin, tar, ropes, horse hair
scythes
iron, steel, bellows
ore sieves, candles, gunpowder *

Source: LRO, BC/11, 21 April, 1736. * all essential for mining.

John Bocking, d. 1739, also took advantage of the new situation. He was clearly one of the peripatetic traders mentioned in chapter two, since he owned two mares, pack thread and saddlebags and was a stranger to the town.¹²⁸ He was supposedly a mercer, but only 6% of his inventory was cloth, cheap textiles supplemented by gaudy accessories: thirty-six girdles, yellow bodice laces, inkle tape and 'handkerchiefs' (kerchiefs). He perhaps ran a second-hand shop, since his large house contained a jumble of furniture and eccentric bric-a-brac. Interestingly he was a soap-boiler, having raw materials and six hundredweight of soap in stock, a very early reference to ordinary

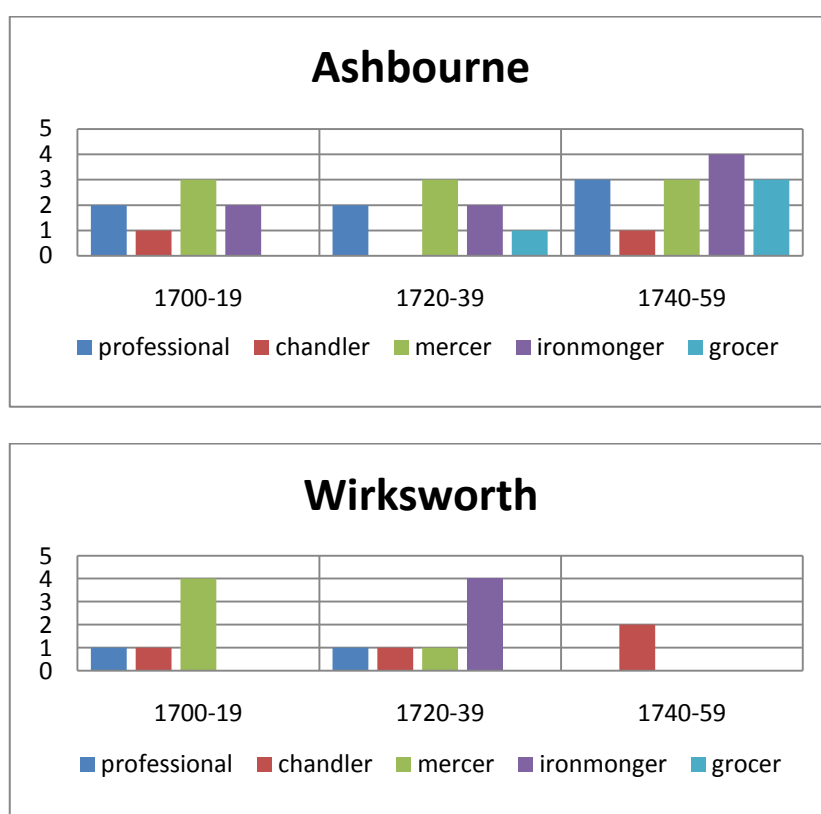
¹²⁷ A. Raistrick & B. Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines* (London, 1965), p. 74.

¹²⁸ LRO, John Bocking, 10 April, 1739.

people buying soap, which implied ‘high standards of neatness and cleanliness’.¹²⁹ Bocking also owned several sugar barrels, the price of sugar having fallen to levels affordable by the poor, but he was a poor credit controller since his irrecoverable book debts totalled £207 of his £377 estate.

The stock of these retailers suggested that the spending power of miners allowed them decencies, as well as ‘extraordinarily good’ provisions and ale.¹³⁰ But they undeniably had limited discretionary income, which did not encourage permanent shops. In comparison with Ashbourne there was a growing discrepancy in the probates of professionals and specialist retailers proved at Lichfield (fig.3.71).

Fig. 3.71: Professionals and retailers who left a probate 1700—1759



A number went bankrupt including Mr Killer, a mercer-upholsterer and interior decorator, who was perhaps attracted in mid-century by two major building projects: the

¹²⁹ Styles, *Dress of the People*, p. 68.

¹³⁰ Defoe, *Tour*, vol.2, p. 138.

Crown inn and Leacroft's mansion. This was a false dawn. In 1756 Killer threatened his (unnamed) creditors with prosecution, but nevertheless lost his house, his shop and a hopeful 23-year lease on a warehouse. After he had assigned his goods to his creditors there was a theft from his premises and the size of the reward (£50) intimated goods of considerable value.¹³¹ In 1767, Francis Stones junior sold off his mercery goods at cost price, only a few years after his father had sold their substantial house and shop. Even as late as 1775 a business equipped in 1770 with a new Chandler house, groceries and 'Birmingham, Sheffield and Rotherham goods' and glasses, failed and its successor lasted only three years. But the tide had turned for one or two men, who set up in the 1760s to put out flax to linen weavers and also sold tea (now affordable) and candles.¹³²

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the middling sorts have been presented as the principal agents of urbanization in the terms expressed by Wrigley, sharing characteristics with their counterparts in larger towns despite his dismissive view of such small places. But first there was the problem of definition. Earle has referred to the huge+ disparity of wealth in London's middle orders and the same was shown to be true (within lower limits) in these small towns, so they could not have cohered into a single social grouping. It was necessary to start by fixing a lower sector boundary which recognized the priorities of middling sorts: sufficient income to provide home comforts, a decent standard of living and endowments for children. This ruled out Langford's and Barry's suggestion that a liability to pay the poor rate was appropriate, because it included struggling artisans who could not aspire to these conditions, being indistinguishable for practical purposes from better-off labourers.

¹³¹ *Derby Mercury*, 3 September, 12 November, 10 December 24 December, 1756.

¹³² *Derby Mercury* 24 March 1775, 22 December 1775, 28 June 1778.

De Vries saw middling sorts as the employing classes (all supposedly kept a servant) and the rest as waged, while Earle insisted upon savings as the key indicator, used to endow children and to further social promotion.¹³³ Both of these views supported the choice of the ‘bequeathing classes’ (probators) as suitable representatives of the middle orders. The upper bound has been fixed as that which separated off substantive gentlemen (armigers) in agreement with Earle, who argued that ‘men of letters’ who relied on salaries were not considered true gentlemen. Urban gentlemen were in an intermediate position if they lived off the profits of a considerable landed estate, intermarriage with a superior class being a crucial indicator.¹³⁴

The adoption of occupational status as an indispensable component of social status refers to the research into associational behaviour described by French. It extends Barry’s definition of middling sorts to include intermarriage and apprenticeship links within their associational landscape; however, the four sub-groupings of the theory were too complex for a small town and have been amalgamated into two.¹³⁵ The upper-middling sector was as defined by French and Barry, possessing wealth, local political power, exclusive leisure preferences, an interest in modernization and a taste for conspicuous consumption; it was differentiated from socially-inferior groupings which ‘policed their own social, gender and behavioural definitions’.¹³⁶ Despite the current emphasis of the historiography on individualism, French and Barry accepted that ‘a person’s autonomy was heavily circumscribed’ by the group to which he or she was affiliated (in a large town there would be many such groups). It was feasible to consider

¹³³ ‘Petty capitalists’ who did not make a surplus were not in the middling station. Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁵ French, *Middle Sort of people in Provincial England*, pp.143, 253.

¹³⁶ H.R. French & J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500—1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 23-4.

that lower-middling groups were engaged in the ‘dirty but prosperous trades’ which upper-middling sorts held in contempt, or in prestigious artisanal occupations similarly beneath their notice, as ‘mechanical trades’.

In Ashbourne, gradations of rank which may be related to occupational status were observed in the membership of the exclusive GSC, which accepted élite retailers, but only professionals and town gentlemen were allowed on the executive. Rich leather merchants were not admitted until 1785, with a single exception made for a saddler (a prestigious trade, since horse-ownership did not pass far down the social scale).¹³⁷ Among the innkeepers, only the lessees of the major coaching inns, owned by landed gentlemen, were admitted, a practice suggesting lower-middling status for the rest.¹³⁸ The wealth and taste of the town’s upper-middling sector differentiated it to a very large extent from its social inferiors, despite its being a broader grouping than it would have been in larger towns.¹³⁹ A unity of taste was demonstrated by architectural survivals and reports of the interior decoration, furnishings and status symbols bought by gentlemen and superior tradesmen (discussed further in later chapters).

Sophisticated patterns of consumption were not the only barriers with which upper-middling sorts maintained their status; the dowry system deterred those of inferior rank from intermarrying with their families and high premiums from their taking up apprenticeships in the ‘clean’, lucrative occupations which at this period they dominated. Town gentlemen enjoyed the highest status, being supposedly men of leisure who were able to live on investments and rents, although professionals and the richest tradesmen assumed the label for themselves. Evidence from later probates

¹³⁷ Watch-making was a gentlemanly trade in the 1720s, when Mr Kirkland was a member.

¹³⁸ Circumstantial evidence that Boothby owned the Talbot (mentioned above).

¹³⁹ Professionals were admitted to Derby’s assemblies, but not tradesmen. They were unlikely to have been totally excluded in Ashbourne, although this has not been verified.

showed them to be capitalists bent on increasing their substance rather than passively enjoying and frittering it away. In mid-century the turnpike trusts offered a new type of investment for them to add to portfolios of land, mining shares, bonds (from money-lending) and town property (sometimes in distant cities, with which they had trading links). Government funds were very safe, but paid low rates of interest; however, they were favoured by trustees, since, despite being absolved from personal liability they did not wish to put it to the test.

The highest status in the lower-middling sector was taken by men in possession of large premises and land, as a result of which leather processors, publicans, maltsters, butcher-graziers, builders and millers formed an intermediate group just below the upper-middling sector (proprietors being differentiated from tenants). Irrespective of wealth the status of a 'dirty' trade seemed apparent through the practice followed by the more prosperous of promoting their children into a clean trade if they could. The licensed trade formed easily the largest grouping in both towns and had kinship and business tentacles which extended into the region. This fulfilled the expectations for a thoroughfare town and illustrated Wirksworth's continuing importance as an entrepôt for packhorses.

In both towns, artisanal trades formed a hierarchy of skill with differential rewards and entry premiums. While newer trades, such as coach-making, printing, brass-founding and clock-making attracted prestige, common trades, such as clothes-making and weaving, had equivocal status, usually being too poor to be middling. Dowries were not particularly significant but there was intermarriage between families with similar wealth and in similar occupations, because experience in trades such as innkeeping and leather production was a valuable skill in a prospective spouse. This had created a dense web of indigenous core families, which did not preclude their members

taking up an occupation of their choice if they had the *entrée*. Modernizing trades attracted the more ambitious, like the saddler William Etches. His membership of an innkeeping dynasty was useful when he switched to selling wines and spirits wholesale.

During the second quarter of the eighteenth century Wirksworth's upper-middling commercial sector virtually disappeared under a flood of poor migrants. The *coterie* of town gentlemen which then assumed parish responsibilities was similar to the chief inhabitants of some towns described by French, too small to constitute a viable upper-middling sector. They took no interest in developing the infrastructure, encouraging elite retail trades or socializing within the town and it decayed into a populous village. Meanwhile, Ashbourne's numerous elite advertised its high status by rebuilding houses in the neo-classical style, creating an ambiance which attracted genteel in-migration and the building trade snowballed. In Wirksworth, the most significant newcomers in mid-century were woolcombers and a merchant clothier, portents of urban regeneration through a more diverse economy. Middlemen were enriched by outworking and some textile workers received high wages. Nevertheless a deficiency of upper-middling sorts and high-class services seemed likely to continue at this stage.

The lead-miners of Wirksworth had a non-middling, ale-house culture, but this was not the whole story, since the industry had a layered social structure inherited from its venerable origins as a by-employment for husbandmen and yeomen. Yeoman-miners left a high percentage of probates at this time, but it was evident that most invested their profits in shares or in cottages to rent, giving a low priority to spending on comforts and fashion. The peripatetic traders and small retailers who catered for their needs were not poor, because the mining industry was enjoying its highest real rewards of the century. But the lack of investment in the infrastructure meant that Wirksworth no

longer gave the impression of a credible town, whereas in 1673 it had impressed Blome as more 'considerable' than Ashbourne.

The case for a consumer revolution among Ashbourne's middling sorts was made from a study of probate inventories. They rarely included clothing so those left by elite mercers with itemized stock were invaluable and all the more useful for their early date. The quality of Bagueley's stock in 1688 belied Daunton's supposition that permanent shops had not then appeared in country towns, that only a 'narrow range' of locally-produced supplies were sold and that local people were ignorant of London prices.¹⁴⁰ He described the distribution by pedlars visiting weekly markets, which was demonstrated, but not that they operated from the premises of small-town wholesalers. Changes in fashion over two to three decades were very apparent. Local consumers obtained colourful calicoes imported from India, which had created a revolution in the style of every women's dress after the mid-eighteenth century, but in 1688 were limited to the rich. By 1710 middling sorts in Wirksworth were wearing lighter clothing in the latest fashion and a wider range of colour and patterns than was evident in Ashbourne twenty years earlier. That decade saw the first intimation that light garments for women were being sold 'off the peg'.

The acquisition of novelties by Ashbourne's probators before 1725 matched Weatherill's statistics, which however showed that their consumption was far from universal in the country as a whole, the most frequently-owned item appearing in only half of her inventories while more than a quarter occurred in only 10%.¹⁴¹ However, Rule's suggestion that novelties 'did not pass far down the social scale of the

¹⁴⁰ M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 270.

¹⁴¹ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 44, 76.

bequeathing classes' was not entirely true.¹⁴² Clocks were indeed popular in the upper-middling sector but too expensive for the lower orders, however, the latter bought looking glasses and table napkins which indicated an interest in appearance (related to individualism in fashion) and table manners.

In the middle decades of the century probate inventories were virtually discontinued in Ashbourne, but a good number were found for Wirksworth, where the acquisition of novelties had lagged well behind Ashbourne in 1725. They showed increasing ownership of clocks and pictures and evidence for the consumption of tea and coffee. But the evidence of changed consumption patterns cannot compare with that obtained for Ashbourne from Getliffe's shop inventory of 1747, with its vastly increased stock of groceries, novelties and 'new luxuries' on current sale, compared with one from a generation earlier. Palladian houses had created a market for new furniture, fashionable accoutrements and requisites for servants to maintain high standards of household maintenance and cuisine. Town gentlemen and professionals bought expensive grades of paper, tea and perukes. Sales of white upholstery tacks and an iron cooking range symbolized the new tastes.

Weatherill did not investigate PCC wills so did not observe the keen interest which upper-class gentlemen took in scientific novelties (maps, globes, telescopes, barometers, watches) at an early date.¹⁴³ Andrew Greensmith was a substantive gentleman whose inventory outranked all the rest for the quality and quantity of his possessions, including travel luggage and guns. In both towns the rich owned expensive luxuries which the large majority had yet to enjoy, including books and silver (not

¹⁴² Rule, *Vital Century*, p. 261.

¹⁴³ P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009), p.57.

novelties for them), china and knives and forks. Metal-wares were among the most innovative and universally desirable items as soon as they became available, being typical of the modernizing trend documented by Berg. Sporadic inventories after 1725 showed pewter plates and saucepans becoming increasingly popular in Wirksworth (where they were manufactured) and in the 1790s the mining town had six hardware shops. The astonishing rise in the trade is well illustrated by the worth of two Ashburnian hardwareman a century apart. Gilbert Swift had an inventory worth £113 in 1715 while Thomas Smith's possessions were valued for tax at £6000 in 1816.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ LRO, Gilbert Swift, 30 May, 1715; Thomas Smith, 15 May, 1816.

Chapter 4: Ashbourne in its heyday 1770- 1820

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate ways in which almost all the usual features of urban renaissance took root in Ashbourne, signifying the ability and the desire of the upper-middling ranks of society to implement them. These men were capable of financing the rebuilding of the town, well under way by 1770, and able to participate in all the varieties of commercialized leisure which ensued, so an investigation into their wealth and its sources seemed important. McKendrick's 'consumer revolution' has been interpreted in different ways, but he made the point that the ability to spend on fashionable display was crucial to the forms which these leisure activities took, whether in public or in the domestic sphere.¹ Plumb went further in making 'aggressive consumption' the mark of bourgeois society.² At least in the upper ranks of society fashions changed annually, being 'quintessentially displayed in dress' and a man's wealth and standing were judged by it.³

The phenomenon has generated a number of historical questions which will be addressed, specifically the extent to which the rest of the population participated and its variability in different social contexts, but most contentiously in respect of the role of the industrial revolution. Although it can be seen merely as the supplier of the artefacts which people desired, as McKendrick, de Vries and Berg have emphasized, its importance went much deeper since people's livelihoods depended on it. As Wrigley

¹ N. McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), pp. 9, p. 23.

² J.H. Plumb, 'Commercialization and society', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), p. 316.

³ McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', pp. 52-3.

argued, the specific function of the town was to create wealth by means other than agriculture and the means were manufacturing and trade.

Wealth-creation was enhanced at this time by innovations in business practice and by work-shop technology, regarded by Berg and Hudson as neglected aspects of the industrial revolution.⁴ Towns were seen as sources of 'improvement, comfort and elegance diffused through commercial industry'.⁵ Plumb referred to the 'acceptance of modernity and a lust for improvement' which drove the consumer society and encouraged a rise in private commercial schools and 'scientific demonstrations as entertainment'.⁶ The last were symptomatic of the English Enlightenment, in which Derby was prominent throughout the century, initially owing to the work of the hydrologist Sorocold, who tamed the Derwent and erected the prototype of all textile factories (the silk mill) in 1721 for Lombe.⁷ The Philosophical Society inaugurated in c.1783 by Erasmus Darwin, 'a natural philosopher of world class', was of national significance until his death in 1799.⁸ There was an inevitable effect on Ashbourne.

McKendrick envisaged a consumer boom 'in the third quarter of the eighteenth century', arising through the middling sorts' emulation of the rich and so on down the social scale (the Veblen effect), conceiving the industrial revolution as 'a convulsion on the supply side'.⁹ This view is now dated. Pennell criticised it on the grounds that the material and semiotic aspects of consumption are distinct and cannot be treated with the

⁴ M. Berg & P. Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the industrial revolution', *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 24-50, p. 27.

⁵ J.M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680—1840* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 2.

⁶ Plumb, 'Commercialization and society', pp. 329-30.

⁷ P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 37-8.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 81, 269.

⁹ McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy' pp. 9, 11.

same methodologies.¹⁰ A reassessment of consumer motivation became imperative, the emulation of the élite (or the academy) being one choice among many, although Borsay claimed that people from ‘a wide social background’ appreciated ‘cosmopolitan values’.¹¹ The chronology of the change, the role assigned to the industrial revolution and McKendrick’s reference to ‘mass’ participation have all been questioned.¹² In a scathing review Holderness argued that ‘consumer societies’ were not new in the eighteenth (or any other) century, and change was gradual.¹³ Weatherill’s research suggested this, but that was back in 1725.

De Vries relegated the industrial revolution in favour of a preceding ‘industrious revolution’, being his explanatory mechanism for the apparent inability of most people to consume as much as they actually did. His artisanal households traded leisure for long hours producing for the market in order to buy what they desired, exercising individual choice.¹⁴ He agreed with McKendrick that the industrial revolution was the supply side, but pointed out that brightly printed calicoes, and the brightening of drab clothes with white linen, had developed much earlier as objects of desire (the consumption of linen almost tripled between 1710 and 1756).¹⁵

While de Vries emphasized long-standing, middle-class pressure on production, personified by the ‘self-fashioning individual’, Berg considered that the industrial revolution, conceived in terms of innovative workshop technology, promoted a ‘key

¹⁰ S. Pennell, ‘Consumption and consumerism in early-modern England’, *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 549-564, p. 551.

¹¹ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660—1770* (Oxford, 1989).

¹² J. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: consumer behaviour and the household economy, 1650 to the present* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 71.

¹³ B.A. Holderness, *The English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 122-125, p. 124. L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660—1760* (London, 1988).

¹⁴ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, pp. 7-9, 10, 45, 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 135-6.

shift’ in demand.¹⁶ She noted the creation of convincing imitations of expensive luxuries in cheaper materials (an enduring trend), which supported McKendrick’s references to Wedgwood.¹⁷ However, designers modified objects to appeal to different income levels, which does not appear to have been a one-way process; there was feedback between supply and demand.¹⁸ Lastly, historians have denied ‘mass consumption’ as ahistorical, although McKendrick appears to have meant simply an unprecedented number of consumers, since he did not include those below the status of a prosperous labourer.¹⁹

The propensity to consume and the form it took were related to leisure activities. Ashbourne had a polite image which stemmed from the presence of twenty or so landed gentlemen living within seven miles and its above-average population of professionals and town gentlemen. So, although the upmarket leisure activities associated with urban renaissance have been thought viable only in towns with more than 5000 inhabitants the conditions were ripe for it.²⁰ Langford considered that upper-middling *parvenus* might mix with their social superiors if they cultivated polite discourse and a display of deference; such associations encouraged Ashbourne’s upper-middling group to adopt ‘correct taste’, rather than their individual inclinations.²¹ Borsay admitted that urban renaissance was cohesive for the upper echelons, who were its main beneficiaries, but

¹⁶ M. Berg, ‘In pursuit of luxury: global history and British consumer goods in the eighteenth century’, *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), pp. 85-142, p. 92. Italics added.

¹⁷ M. Berg, ‘From imitation to invention: creating commodities in eighteenth-century Britain’, *Economic History Review*, 55 (2002), pp. 1-30, pp. 2-7. J. Styles, ‘Product innovation in early-modern London’, *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 124-169, pp. 125-7.

¹⁸ M. Berg, ‘Imitation to invention’, pp. 1-30.

¹⁹ McKendrick, ‘Commercialization and the economy’, p. 41. Styles, *The Dress of the People: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (London, 2007), p. 19.

²⁰ L. Schwarz, ‘Residential leisure towns in England towards the end of the eighteenth century’, *Urban History*, 27 (2000), pp. 51-61, p. 52. R. Sweet, ‘Topographies of politeness’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 355-374, p. 360.

²¹ P. Langford, ‘The uses of eighteenth-century politeness’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 311-331, p. 315.

otherwise divisive; however, he believed that ‘commercialization and a core of shared values’ generated economic resurgence and counteracted rigid polarization.²² It will be seen whether the commercial instincts of Ashburnians caused them to accept such disparities of wealth, happy to benefit from the patronage of the rich and to learn new skills in order to take up lucrative employment. In the process a debased form of ‘politeness’ descended the social scale.

During the industrial revolution British manufacturing permeated the market towns, as was evident from the growing intensity of inland trade marked by turnpiked roads and ‘canal mania’. The carrying trade expanded and the speed of mail coaches quadrupled between 1750 and 1815.²³ But however significant their manufacturing was for small towns, Trinder thought it insignificant on the national scale.²⁴ This would be correct if most of it was catering for local needs, but how true was it of the exported goods which balanced a town’s necessary imports?²⁵ A case might be made for their aggregate importance.

The contribution of women’s work to the towns’ economies was very considerable and they were important consumers of fashionable goods. It was decided to cover the topic of plebeian employment only in Wirksworth (in chapter five) and that of middling women in the current chapter, because the sources favoured this division. Little could be said about Ashbourne’s plebeians (although a high demand for domestic

²² Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 284, 311, 319.

²³ M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700—1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 196. S.L. Engerman & P.K. O’Brien, ‘The industrial revolution in global perspective’, in R. Floud & P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, ‘Industrialisation’ 1700 - 1860* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 453, 457, 461. Rule, *The Vital Century*, p. 223.

²⁴ B. Trinder, ‘Towns and industries: the changing character of manufacturing towns’, in J. Stobart & N. Raven (eds), *Towns, Regions and Industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands, c. 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2005), p. 104.

²⁵ R. Burt, *The British Lead Mining Industry* (Redruth, 1984), p. 2. R.G. Hughes & M. Craven, *Clockmakers & Watchmakers of Derbyshire* (Ashbourne, 1998).

servants may be assumed), but there was enough evidence to show similar experiences for middling women in both towns, although more anecdotal in Wirksworth.

Vickery has condemned 'separate spheres' as a prescriptive ideology of slight analytical power.²⁶ The wives of rich men had never contributed to the economy and Morris considered separate spheres as a given fact of middle-class life in the mid-nineteenth century, because such households could then manage without a woman's regular financial contribution.²⁷ Previously it was the norm for middling women below the élite to work in their husband's businesses, in roles which were not necessarily gendered (little research has been done). A debate centres on the degree of control which men exerted on women's enterprise and the extent to which women willingly did their bidding, for instance, Hunt referred to the 'crippling effect of misogynist ideologies'.²⁸ Against this, Erickson claimed that critics have failed to recognize women's legal rights and economic authority.²⁹ In her research of small towns in the Midlands, Lane found that the speciality of a small manufacturing town limited the employment options for men and likewise their wives.³⁰ She believed that widows were disadvantaged by the *de facto* inheritance customs, but nevertheless showed that many rose above them through their enterprise, conclusions which might be tested in Ashbourne.³¹

²⁶ A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 383-414, pp. 383-4, 398, 400, 409.

²⁷ R.J. Morris, *Men Women and Property in England 1780—1870: a social and economic history of family strategies amongst the Leeds middle classes* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 26.

²⁸ M.R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: commerce, gender and the family in England, 1680—1780* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 135, 138.

²⁹ A. Erickson, 'Common law versus common practice: the use of marriage settlements in Early Modern England', *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 21-39, 22. P. Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance: wealth creation and income generation in small English towns 1750—1835', in J. Stobart & A. Owens (eds), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town c. 1700—1900* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 173.

³⁰ Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance', pp. 172-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

4.2 'The minor metropolis'

Ashbourne was portrayed as an attractive market town of some consequence. A prospect printed in London in 1795 viewed the town from a distance, emphasizing its handsome houses and the recently re-built Ashbourne Hall in an idyllic setting complete with country folk.³² In a view taken in 1817 the hills of Dovedale were introduced, for the limestone gorge had become a well-known tourist destination, an antiquarian and topographical history referring to it as a 'place of romantic beauty and unbroken wilderness'.³³ When the Misses Parker put their boarding school for young ladies up for sale in 1815 they described Ashbourne as:

A remarkably agreeable Market Town on the great Road between London and Manchester, situated in an extremely picturesque Country, which abounds with beautiful Walks and good Roads'.³⁴

The town's history, published in 1839, carried an engraving of the grammar school, the Grey House and the Mansion at the head of a vista of Church Street as a continual run of Georgian houses.³⁵ Its author described the town as 'the minor metropolis of the surrounding villages and hamlets ... anciently equal in importance to Derby and Chesterfield' and the epitome of a polite town.³⁶ He focused on the landed gentry, their wealth and personal possessions. Seventeen estates in villages and hamlets within seven miles of Ashbourne generated incomes for their owners within the range £1603 to

³² *Appendix*, Pl. A2, p. 259. Ashbourne Hall on the extreme right.

³³ *Appendix*, Pl. A3, p. 259. Anon., *The History and Topography of Ashbourn, the Valley of the Dove and the adjacent villages* (Ashbourne, 1839), rpt 1978, p. 169.

³⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 14 October, 1815. A.Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol. 1, 'Fashionable Society' (Ashbourne, 1989), p. 84.

³⁵ *Appendix*, Pl. A4, p. 260.

³⁶ Anon., *History of Ashbourn*, pp. 4, 56. From his inside knowledge the author was probably Sir Oswald Mosley. He had written a monograph about Tutbury, Staffs (near his home) and he included his personal lineage in this *History*, which was scarcely relevant.

£9161 p.a. (median £3029).³⁷ At least twelve of the families, some titled, had supplied stewards for Ashbourne's assemblies and they probably patronized the tradesmen.³⁸

The first detailed map of the township was the tithe plan of 1849 (pls 4.21-2). There was social zoning with the élite congregating in Church Street, a level, wide and straight thoroughfare. In 1800 twenty professional or gentry families and six rich manufacturers lived there (three skimmers, two maltsters and a currier). A large percentage of its eighteenth-century town houses survives, many of their occupants between 1777—1825 having been identified by local historians from tax records.³⁹ The commercial centre of shops, workshops and inns was very considerable, housed in and near the market place and St John's St. Brick yards, builders' yards and several tanyards were accommodated in Compton. Plebeian craftsmen were banished to the periphery or squeezed into back yards. More space for shops and traffic was created when the half-timbered town hall on arches was demolished by Brooke Boothby c.1790. Having rebuilt Ashbourne Hall he excluded traffic from his grounds, forcing it to run through the area inconveniently occupied by the edifice.⁴⁰ Other arrangements had to be made to collect market tolls and new venues were found for public meetings and entertainments. When a classically-inspired town (or market) hall was eventually built in the Victorian period, it was inserted into the row of town houses in market street.

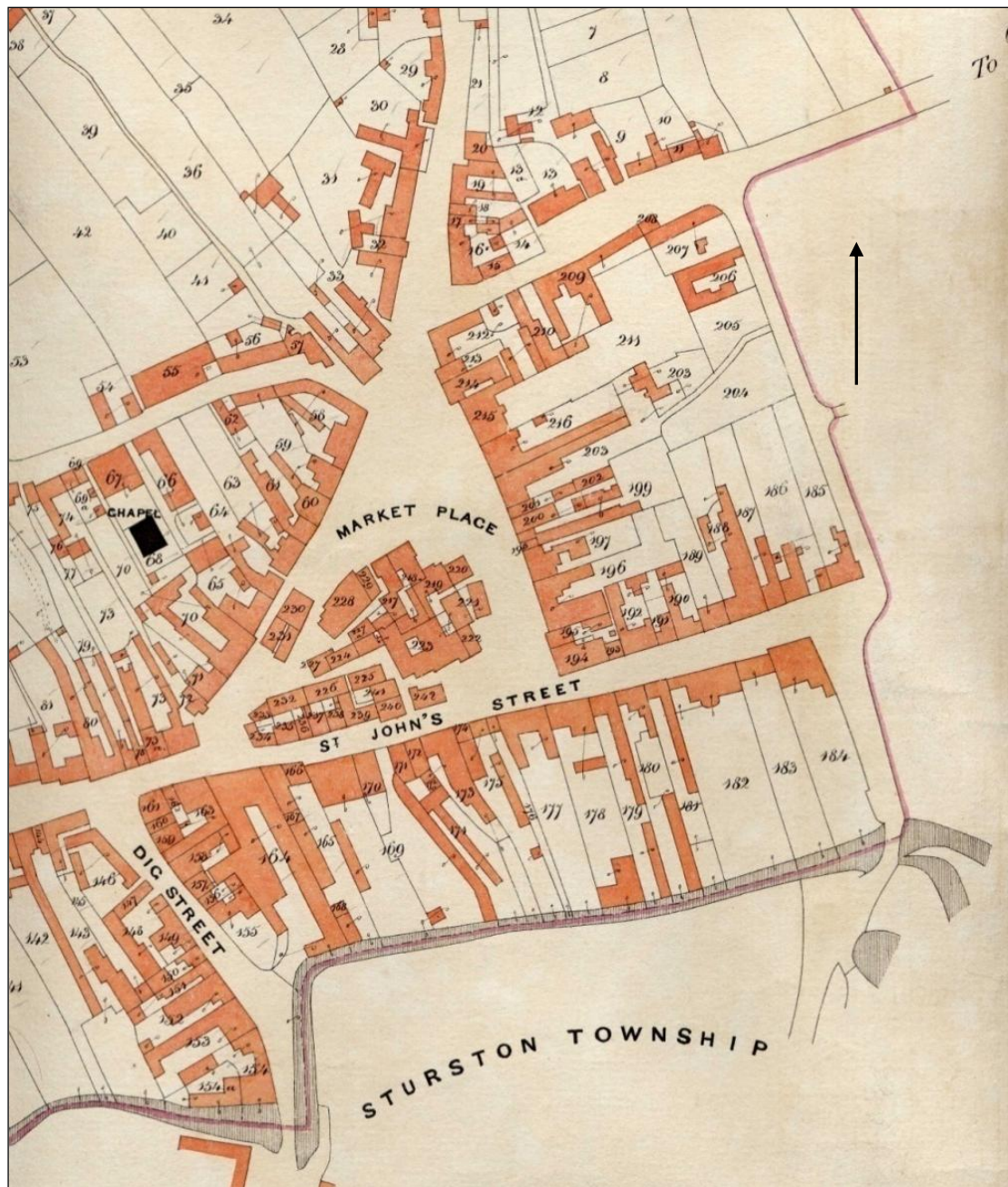
³⁷ Collated from sections throughout the work.

³⁸ Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 1, p. 79.

³⁹ A. Henstock (ed.) *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol. 2, 'Architecture' (Ashbourne, 1991), p. 92. A. Henstock, 'House repopulation from the land tax assessments in a Derbyshire market town, 1780- 1825', in M. Turner & D.R. Mills (eds), *Land and Property: the English land tax 1692-1832* (New York, 1986).

⁴⁰ Ashbourne Hall had magnificent grounds and a large artificial lake by the 1790s. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 2, p. 15.

Pl. 4.21: Ashbourne market place in 1849, a section of the tithe plan

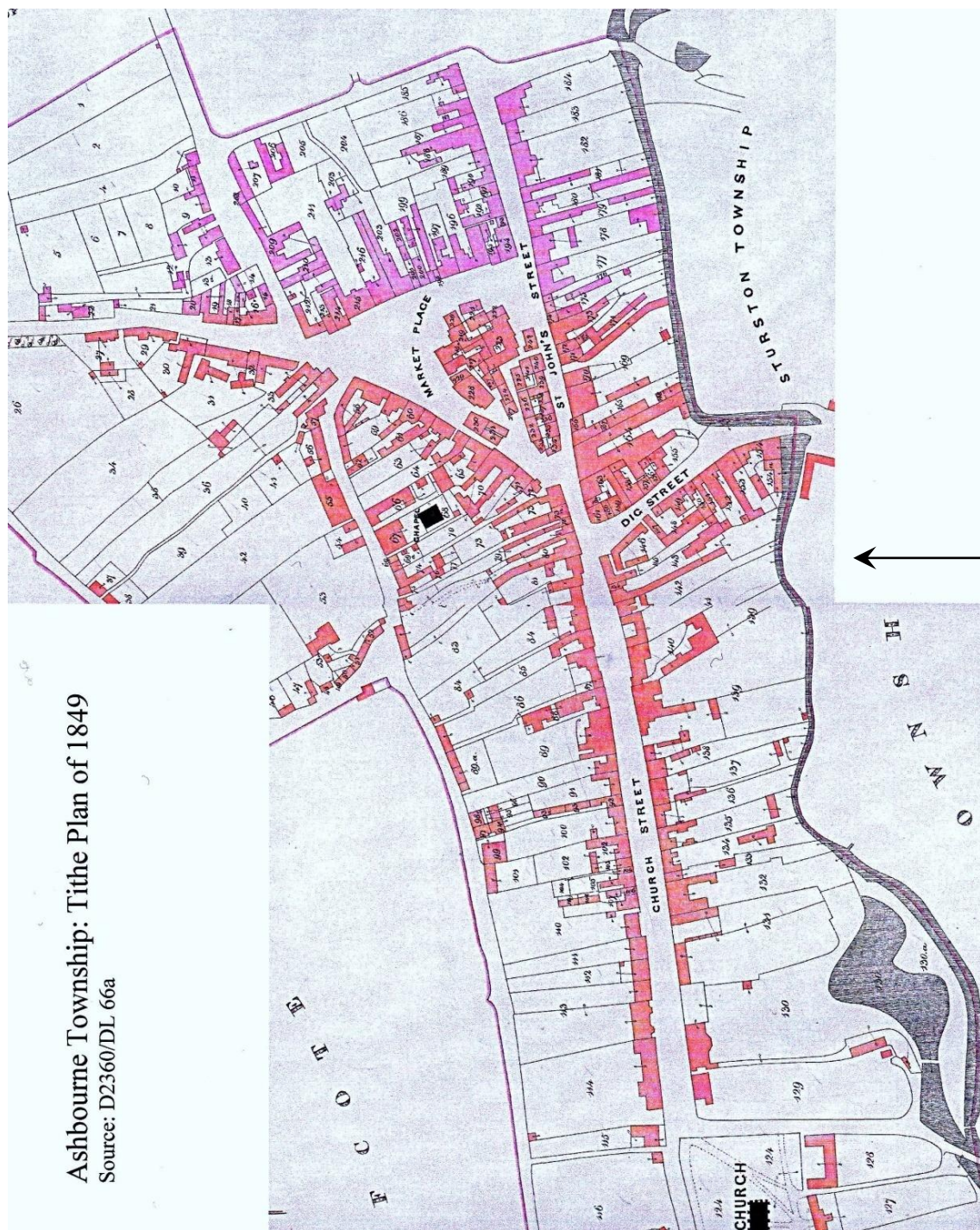


125

Source: Tithe Plan DRO, D2360/DL 66a.

Refs: Longden mansion (211); Parkers' school (184); Blackmoor's Head (169, undivided); Green Man (164); prime shops (234 - 242, Middle Cae (facing premier inns). Plots 220-2 made use of space left by the demolished 'market cross' (town hall).

Pl. 4.22: Ashbourne tithe plan (1849)



Source: Tithe Plan DRO, D2360/DL 66a. ⁴¹

⁴¹ Church St had very light infilling: The Mansion, with artificial lake (130), Grammar school (114), Grey House (113), Beresford mansion (132), Clergy widows houses (141) with John Alsopp's residence directly opposite (85).

An upgrading of the market place was indicated by the building of three-storey merchants' houses in Palladian style in the late 1770s on Market St, the main thoroughfare running along its eastern side to Buxton. Robert Longden's five-bay mansion dominated them, but another house built c. 1770—73 by a tobacconist-mercier (who shortly went bankrupt) was a close competitor. It had a *piano nobile*, four bays, two parlours and a walled garden with fruit trees, as well as a shop and two warehouses.⁴² Tobacconists currently manufactured their product from leaves using a rotary cutter, while merciers needed warehouse space to store raw materials for domestic industry and its produce, as well as their stock-in-trade. Some merciers were later described as chapmen, so the linens and cottons they manufactured were sold in regional markets.

Boothby's diversion of the road to Wirksworth created an up-market enclave in St John's St east, where the end property with a view over his park was snapped up by his friend, Erasmus Darwin, to house the Misses Parkers' exclusive boarding school (they were his natural daughters). The western part of this street held a large concentration of hostelries (the town had over 40 licensees) including the superior Green Man and Blackmoor's Head. The facing sites in the Middle Cale became the most desirable in town for retailers. One such shop was said to offer 'peculiar temptations to any Person desirous to introduce a new Establishment in a Wholesale or Retail line of business' when it was sold, after its long-standing occupant, the mercier Thomas Gould, was declared bankrupt in 1816.⁴³

In 1780 the town possessed a fine shopping centre spread out over several streets but concentrated in the market place (table 4.21). Most of the trades and professions of

⁴² *Derby Mercury*, 7 May, 1773.

⁴³ *Derby Mercury*, 15 February 1816.

the occupants have been deduced from an examination of land tax records (arranged topographically) in conjunction with occupational data from various sources.⁴⁴

Table 4.21: The topography of occupations in Ashbourne township (1780)

<i>occupation</i>	<i>Ch St</i>	<i>S John St</i>	<i>Dig St</i>	<i>Middle Cale</i>	<i>Mkt Pl</i>	<i>N of Mkt Pl</i>	<i>Total</i>
innkeeper	3	11	1	8	5	5	33
gent / gentry	11		1		5	1	18
building	3	1	2		3	6	15
butcher				6	4	1	11
attorney	4	3			1		8
grocer	3			2	2	1	8
currier / tanner / skinner	4	1		1	1		7
baker	2			2	2		6
blacksmith		1	1	2		2	6
woolcomber	2			2		2	6
mercier / draper		1		1	3		5
peruke maker				3	1	1	5
excise officer	1				3		4
gardener	2			1	1		4
maltster	2	1				1	4
brass foundry					3		3
wine & spirits		1		2			3
shopkeeper			2		1		3
surgeon / physician	2	1					3
clockmaker				1	2		3
bookseller				1	1		2
breeches makers					2		2
carrier	1					1	2
cleric	1				1		2
cooper			1		1		2
hatter		1		1			2
mantua maker				1	1		2
meal man / miller					2		2
saddler					1	1	2
staymaker				1	1		2
tobacconist					1		1

⁴⁴ There was insufficient documentation for Compton, which contained large manufacturing premises, including tanners (banished from the town by 1800). Its size in 1830 may be compared very roughly with the township from a map reproduced in Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol. 2, pp. 14-15.

<i>occupation</i>	<i>Ch St</i>	<i>S John St</i>	<i>Dig St</i>	<i>Middle Cale</i>	<i>Mkt Pl</i>	<i>N of Mkt Pl</i>	<i>Total</i>
bailiff		1					1
basket maker			1				1
brickyard			1				1
coach builder			1				1
collar maker			1				1
cordwainer		1					1
headmaster	1						1
ironmonger			1				1
organist	1						1
roper			1				1
upholsterer	1						1
yeoman	1						1
total	44	24	14	35	48	22	188
unknown	10	1	6	8	2	4	27

Sources: DRO, Q/RE; LRO, BC/11; TNA, PROB 11; *Derby Mercury*; DRO, Bailey's Directory (1785). Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol. 2, pp. 91-101.

Retail businesses and superior workshops crowded the market place, but a hidden multitude of poor shoemakers and tailors could not be placed because their landlords paid the tax in bulk (richer tenants and leaseholders were named). There would have been at least one unidentified bespoke tailor, because in the early nineteenth century Redfern was patronized by Fitzherbert and the Belfields of Wirksworth also had an establishment in the town.⁴⁵ In the period tailors are known to have sold cheap made-up and second-hand clothing.⁴⁶ Plebeian women could 'dress fine at weekends' and pawned the stuff on Monday, with watches, metal buttons and other accessories, while richer women bought clothes to measure from mantua-makers and stay-makers.⁴⁷

Innkeeping employed the largest numbers, having 33 locations in the township alone, but the combined households of town gentlemen and 14 professionals came to the same total, confirming the town as a minor gentry resort. Men in the building trades

⁴⁵ See chapter five.

⁴⁶ M. Lambert, "'Cast-off wearing apparell'", the consumption and distribution of second-hand clothing in northern England during the long eighteenth century'. *Textile History*, 35 (2004), pp. 1-26, pp. 4, 10.

⁴⁷ B. Lemire, 'Second-hand beaux and "red-armed belles": conflict and creation of fashions in England c. 1660—1800', *Continuity and Change*, 15 (2000), pp. 391-418, p. 412. J. Styles, 'Product innovation', p. 161.

had 15 premises (not counting Compton) and other specialized crafts and trades were represented by two saddlers, three clockmakers, a coach builder, an upholsterer, three purveyors of wines and spirits (there were four excise officers), five peruke makers, four market gardeners and two booksellers, one being a printer and the other a seller of musical instruments. Rare occupations were not often found in the probate samples, but a number of retailers were found to have left large personal estates (exclusive of real estate): six mercers left £500 - £10,000, a hardwareman left £6000 and others leaving £500 upwards included two grocers, a baker, butcher, peruke-maker, saddler, liquor-merchant, staymaker and tobacconist. Altogether, 16 grocers, tobacconists and mercers were counted and 19 butchers, bakers and millers.

Ashbourne was situated on the periphery of the north-west and west midlands regions, for which Stobart *et al* have compiled statistics for 22 selected urban trades.⁴⁸ Owing to the concentration of wealth the town had an exceptional number of these for its size, including those which targeted the upper-middling and gentlemen, for instance, Rule considered that only provincial centres made watches, saddles or coaches.⁴⁹ A minimum of 68% of Stobart's selected trades were present in Ashbourne in 1780, rising to 90% by 1795. Only 5% of other towns in the region had a musical instrument dealer and 12% a coach-maker.

4.3 Leisure activities

Before considering the commercialized leisure of the urban renaissance, it may be noted that ordinary folk enjoyed a respite from 'unremitting toil' on frequent market and fair days, free street entertainment (often of a brutal nature) being provided at the

⁴⁸ J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: leisure and shopping in the English town, c.1680 - 1830* (London, 2007), p. 34.

⁴⁹ J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 145.

latter. The gentry very occasionally orchestrated occasions when all ranks of Ashburnians asserted their common identity, which was necessary if the town were to function peaceably as a unit.⁵⁰ The patrons appealed to the three lowest common denominators: patriotism, alcoholic excess and a taste for blood sports.⁵¹ Major jollifications were promoted to mark the coronation of George III, celebrated by ringing the bells and feasting in the street, ‘a very powerful symbol’ of communal unity.⁵² Having provided liberal supplies of food and ale, gentlemen expressed their solidarity by their presence, but ostentatiously maintained their distance, parading in full fig and dining together *al fresco*.

An onlooker of the middling sort was :

‘honoured by the presence of several gentlemen and ladies of the most distinguished character and fortune in the neighbourhood, who dined in public at an elegant table ... not under the cover of booths.’⁵³

In 1798 Nelson’s victory of the Nile was celebrated with

‘splendid illuminations ... parties of Ladies and Gentlemen paraded the streets, accompanied with music, until a late hour and a large quantity of ale was distributed’.⁵⁴

Another traditional activity was cock-fighting, exclusively promoted by gentlemen and discontinued c.1790. Huge sums were wagered by the protagonists, who encouraged county rivalry, while spectators paid a charge of 1s and placed side bets, an activity accessible to almost all men from town and countryside. In 1754 a local landowner and famous huntsman, Hugo Meynell, fought thirty-three ‘battles’ against the rakish Sir Hugh Sedley of Nottinghamshire, the decider costing the loser 400 gns.⁵⁵ Worse cruelty

⁵⁰ R. Sweet, *The English Town, 1680 – 1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), p. 164.

⁵¹ The culture of the urban renaissance did not displace traditional forms. Stobart, Hann & Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 7.

⁵² J.E. Cookson, ‘The English volunteer movement of the French wars 1793 - 1815: some contexts’, *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867 - 891, p. 874.

⁵³ *Derby Mercury*, 25 September, 1761. Note the approval of wealth.

⁵⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 11 October, 1798.

⁵⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 2 May, 1755.

was paraded during the town's wakes week, when bull-baiting took place until the year it was outlawed (1835).⁵⁶ Such savagery had been ineffectually condemned by the *Derby Mercury* sixty-one years earlier, as 'a diversion every way disgraceful to a civilized people', and Ashbourne's historian asserted that 'the majority of inhabitants participated not in the brutal pastime'.⁵⁷ It was then an aberration although, by implication, Dr Taylor had enjoyed it in the previous century when the saintly Dr Johnson regarded himself an authority on the bulldogs which Taylor bred.⁵⁸

In comparison the leisure activities of urban renaissance were civilizing influences on the élite, strongly linked to conspicuous display as mentioned.⁵⁹ Public space was an arena where the polite mingled and displayed their taste in dress, if only to browse in fashionable shops; an exceptional shopping centre like Ashbourne's corresponded with above-average leisure facilities.⁶⁰ In Stobart's large sample of towns in the north-west and the west Midlands, over half had none of the activities associated with urban renaissance in 1770, and only one-fifth hosted horse-racing, assemblies, music societies and theatres.⁶¹ Ashbourne held only sporadic race meetings, but its musical tradition of concerts held at the grammar school dated from at least 1746 and formal assemblies were instituted at the Blackmoor's Head in 1767.⁶² Later in the century Sir Brooke Boothby provided a tree-lined walk around the perimeter of his

⁵⁶ Anon., *The History and Topography of Ashbourn, the Valley of the Dove and the adjacent villages* (Ashbourne, 1839), p. 95.

⁵⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 5 August, 1774.

⁵⁸ J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. comprehending an account of his studies and numerous works*, ... vol.2 (Dublin, 1792), p. 530.

⁵⁹ Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 27.

⁶⁰ H. Berry, 'Polite consumption: shopping in eighteenth-century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 375-94, p.379. Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Consumption*, p.6.

⁶¹ Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 28.

⁶² Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 67. *Derby Mercury*, 25 July, 1746; 18 December, 1767.

estate for polite perambulation, convenient for the pupils of the Misses Parkers' school and gratefully mentioned in their prospectus.⁶³

The 'market cross' (old town hall) was an earlier venue for informal 'assemblies and theatre performances' which continued elsewhere.⁶⁴ There were enough upper-middling and gentry families in the town and its environs to sustain assemblies directed with minute observance of precedence, at a high cost of 7s 6d for the series of four winter assemblies (reported in 1800).⁶⁵ Assembly-goers would have included eighteen households who paid the tax on menservants, people of similar and higher rank from the countryside and others from the upper-middling élite.⁶⁶ London fashions reigned supreme, illustrated by the fact that in 1789 Robert Blore advertised hairpieces and perfumes bought especially in the capital.⁶⁷ The three Misses Whitham had trained in fashion at 'an establishment in Pall Mall' and the eldest journeyed to London annually for six years to purchase a 'fashionable assortment of millinery and dresses'.⁶⁸ Between 1811—1820 assemblies attracted the particular support of Sir Henry FitzHerbert, his wife having instituted an annual summer ball in 1811 to celebrate the king's birthday.⁶⁹ Subscription dinners were events of similar exclusivity, held to celebrate significant national anniversaries and often chaired by a baronet. While on his youthful travels Lord Torrington lodged at the Blackmoor's Head, where he observed

⁶³ E. Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (Derby, 1797), p. 127.

⁶⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 8 September, 1775.

⁶⁵ Mark Noble mentioned the squabbles over social precedence in the 1770s. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 14. In 1813, the poet Tom Moore was disagreeably 'obliged to consult rank more than beauty' in his partners, when acting as patron. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 55. *Derby Mercury*, 30 August, 1765. Assembly fees at York had 'a common rate' of half a crown for 10 meetings in 1747, equivalent to 5s in 1800. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.

⁶⁶ In 1780 the tax on 18 menservants placed Ashbourne third in the county pecking order, after Derby (83, which was exceptional in the Midlands), and Chesterfield (26). Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 13. Schwarz designated Derby a 'leisure town' in 1777, when it ranked 12th in the country after Bath for menservants (the London area excepted). Schwarz, 'Leisure towns', p. 55.

⁶⁷ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 78.

⁶⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 25 April, 1810, 11 May, 1715.

⁶⁹ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 74.

the inn yard ‘crowded by chaises’ and recorded with acerbity that those attending were ‘overwhelm’d’ by extravagant dress for a night of excess in food and drink.⁷⁰ His aristocratic disdain for his social inferiors was apparent.

Occasional theatrical entertainments were presented by itinerant companies in Derbyshire market towns under the patronage of the gentry, the cheapest tickets (1s) afforded by the majority.⁷¹ The popularity of play-going was demonstrated by the collapse of the gallery ‘while the comedians at Ashbourne were performing to a polite and overcrowded audience’ in 1778, in the old town hall.⁷² The word ‘polite’ does not suggest total inclusion and a report from Cumbria that the ‘lowest classes of the people spent their last shilling’ at the theatre while ‘complaining of the high price of food’ may be doubted, but prosperous labourers and servants would have attended, under the quizzical gaze of the patrons.⁷³ The ‘new theatre’ of 1794 was a basic structure erected in a warehouse in Dig St, but it was the permanent headquarters of a company which gave performances three nights a week, fortnightly, in February and March, travelling during the other months.⁷⁴ In 1826 it was ‘under the patronage of Sir Henry and Lady FitzHerbert’ and a playbill of high quality survives, engraved by the town printer.⁷⁵ On another occasion a performance of *Bluebeard* typified the pot-pourri of romantic comedy, fairground horror and morality play which belonged to the popular tradition, involving special effects to amaze the audience.⁷⁶ In a nod to fashionable taste,

⁷⁰ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 73-4.

⁷¹ In his capacity as a magistrate, Dr Taylor licensed a Lichfield company to play in Ashbourne in 1776. Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol.2, p. 327.

⁷² Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 70-71. The theatre also collapsed at Bury in 1787. Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 31.

⁷³ J.D. Marshall, ‘The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660—1900’, *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209, p. 180. Permanent theatres were rarely found in towns without much of a middling presence. Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 31.

⁷⁴ G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire*, vol.3 (Cardiff, 1999), p. 1353.

⁷⁵ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town* vol.1, p. 73.

⁷⁶ *Appendix*, Pl. A11, p.264.

gentlemen patrons requested an admixture of Sheridan or bowdlerized Shakespeare. Sir Henry's grandfather, William FitzHerbert M.P. was fond of Italian opera at Covent Garden and described as 'a gentleman of fine taste in the polite arts, life and manners', so would scarcely have been in his element.⁷⁷

Classical concerts had an earlier history. In 1710 choristers from Lichfield and an organist from Nottingham performed with strings and trumpet for the inauguration of Ashbourne's church organ, the first in the county. With considerable hyperbole the vicar noted in the parish register that the church was 'filled with all the Neighbouring Gentry and 5000 others' and at night the performers gave a 'fine Instrumentall and Vocal' concert in the 'great parlour at the Blackamoor's Head'. The town thereby gained a professional organist and eventually had two, when Mr Okeover employed one for his private chapel at Okeover Hall. They promoted subscription concerts at the grammar school, the venue for exclusive entertainment of all types. There was a flurry of activity in the 1770s when M. Saizoi, Okeover's Flemish organist, published his compositions of church music, which drew a large enough audience to be performed at the Blackmoor's Head, while his colleague Mr King sold tickets in Derby for a concert at the grammar school in 1776, featuring instrumental music and singers from Lichfield and London.⁷⁸ The following year King's subscription concert was followed by a ball, advertised as far afield as Lichfield, Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, a clear indication of the rank of the audience.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Mary Fitzherbert's diary, DRO, D239M/F 10106; Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 20.

⁷⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 11 September, 1772; 4 October, 1776.

⁷⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 14 March, 1777.

‘Science as entertainment’ was an élite cultural form said to be ‘common in larger towns and spas’.⁸⁰ The phenomenon appeared in Ashbourne in imitation of Derby and was of equal quality, for instance, John Warltire made five recorded visits and performed his swansong in the town in 1809.⁸¹ He was an associate of the Lunar Society of Birmingham (where his chemistry demonstrations impressed Priestley) and he also demonstrated to the Derby Philosophical Society, being described by Sturges as ‘an outstanding lecturer of the day’.⁸² During his first visit to Ashbourne in 1771 he offered a course of ten subscription lectures, one of which coincided with a visit by Dr Samuel Johnson, who attended.⁸³ Mr Lloyd of London presented an ever-popular demonstration of planetary motion in 1800, perhaps attracting the town’s clockmakers thirty years after Joseph Wright of Derby had painted *A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery* (1764—1766).⁸⁴ In the mid-Victorian period, when the town possessed its own ‘Lit. and Phil.’, such diversions ‘defined bourgeois respectability’.⁸⁵ By that time, two lending libraries had succeeded the circulating library established in 1800.⁸⁶

Private socializing in houses bedecked with the owners’ tasteful ornaments and furniture was a feature of urban renaissance, in which only the richest possessed the facilities to entertain in style. Evidence from Elizabeth Bradshaw’s memoir suggests that town gentlemen, professionals and merchants had one exclusive social round and the richest tradesmen another.⁸⁷ There was some contact between the town gentlemen

⁸⁰ Plumb, ‘Commercialization and society’, pp. 317, 328.

⁸¹ H.J. Torrens, ‘Warltire, John (1725—1810), itinerant science lecturer’, *Oxford DNB*.

⁸² R.P. Sturges, ‘The membership of the Derby Philosophical Society 1783—1802’, *Midland History*, 4 (1979), pp. 212-229, p. 214.

⁸³ *Derby Mercury*, 5 July, 1771.

⁸⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 11 September, 1800. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 85-6.

J. Egerton, ‘Wright, Joseph, of Derby (1734- 1797), painter’, *Oxford DNB*.

⁸⁵ J. Stobart, ‘Leisure and shopping in the small towns of Georgian England’. *Urban History*, 31 (2005), pp. 479-503, p. 486.

⁸⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 23 October, 1800.

⁸⁷ DRO, D1491M/Z1.

and the upper class on shooting parties, eighteen townsmen having purchased gun licences in 1785 and their names being recorded in the newspaper.⁸⁸ They did not quite coincide with the eighteen keepers of menservants, for instance, Dr Taylor did not participate in the blood sport because, although he was the highest-ranking town gentleman not born to an armigerous family, he was nearing the end of his long life.

These cordial relations did not normally extend to private functions in each other's houses, William Fitzherbert esq. being censured by his peers for inviting 'persons of inferior rank' to dinner at Tissington Hall.⁸⁹ When the Revd William Leigh leased Ashbourne Hall, he maintained Boothby's social distance from all except the titled gentry of the neighbourhood. In the 1790s his niece, Elizabeth Canning, detailed their routine calls to country houses, amateur theatricals and concerts, and forays into the countryside. On one occasion the family processed regally through the town in two chaises and a coach for a family wedding (at which Leigh officiated), wearing the height of fashion and drawing spectators 'at every window'.⁹⁰

Brooke Boothby was hardly ever resident in Ashbourne, through a combination of his devotion to high culture and financial necessity (he leased the Hall and lived more cheaply at Lichfield). He enjoyed botanizing excursions with Erasmus Darwin and the exiled Jean Jacques Rousseau, with whom he necessarily conversed in French.⁹¹ A Francophile and an English *philosophe*, like his mentor Darwin, Boothby had radical sympathies during the early stages of the French Revolution, having observed at first hand the excesses of the aristocracy, a possible reason why there may have been no

⁸⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 8 December, 1785.

⁸⁹ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, vol.1, p. 76.

⁹¹ Rousseau lived at Wootton Hall, Staffs from 1766—7. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 46. Ashbourne's middling sorts confined their botanical interests to breeding cultivated plants, holding annual florists' feasts accompanied by shows of carnations, auriculas and polyanthus. *Derby Mercury*, 3 August, 1753, 21 August 1796 (etc).

collection for the volunteer infantry in Ashbourne in 1798.⁹² The execution of the king of France forced him to look into the abyss, but he did not favour war, unlike the Tory Fitzherbert. The latter took advantage of Boothby's absence to stir patriotic fervour in Ashbourne, for instance in the institution of the ball to celebrate the king's birthday.⁹³

The social élite of the town introduced prospective spouses to their children during their regular private dances. Elizabeth Bradshaw described one such occasion in 1816 in a house which could scarcely cope with the crush.⁹⁴ The guests were the children of army officers, cotton-mill proprietors and the headmaster, the Revd Paul Belcher. Elizabeth was keenly aware of rank and upper-class manners, her family being eligible to attend Derby's assemblies in the presence of the Duke of Devonshire (from which all below professional rank were excluded).⁹⁵ There was close emulation of the upper-class in her aunt's routine (she was the sister-in-law of a baronet), including polite visiting and picnics in Dovedale, while the custom of taking after-dinner coffee in the drawing room had been adopted by this stratum for some years, silver coffee pots being status symbols with the dual connotation of opulence and membership of an exclusive club.⁹⁶

The second tier of middling sorts, the rich tradesmen, inhabited large houses with contents of high quality. The mercer John Riddlesden, d.1810, possessed a magnificent bed with 'tall richly-carved bedposts' and expensive hangings, matching window curtains, mahogany chests of drawers inlaid with cedar and oak, a Brussels

⁹² Elliott, *Derby Philosophers*, pp. 90ff. No record was found in the *Derby Mercury*.

⁹³ Lady Fitzherbert instituted a ball to celebrate the king's birthday (see below).

⁹⁴ DRO, D1491/M/Z1, p.21.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Alsopp deferred passing hers to a friend so that her husband could enjoy it for life (he later received another from his sister), while the barrister Edward Leigh left his to his eldest son and a surgeon referred to the prized article. LRO, Edward Leigh, 30 April, 1810; Elizabeth Alsopp, 23 June, 1794; Mary Fletcher, 10 January, 1801; John Walker (surgeon), 7 July, 1775.

drawing-room carpet and a large looking glass in a gilt frame over his mantelpiece. As in London, the furnishings of the best bedroom particularly distinguished ‘wholesalers and mercers’ from the less genteel.⁹⁷ The furniture of John Armstrong, a miller and chandler, included a ‘high-toned harpsichord’, ‘Birmingham and Sheffield goods’, an eight-day clock and a house full of mahogany furniture; he also possessed a library.⁹⁸

In 1779 the Beresfords bought a piano and a harpsichord in Derby, which could be used to accompany dancing.⁹⁹ The same year an enterprising bookseller, William Walker, advertised musical instruments for sale along with textbooks and mathematical instruments. His new book-cum-music shop sold pianos for 36 years and had a bow window, said to be ‘a deterrent to those who could not afford the goods’.¹⁰⁰ The sale of educational perquisites followed the appearance of private commercial schools in the town, which blazed a trail for modern subjects. This was in emulation of Derby, where teachers of surveying, mathematics and commercial accounts advertised from 1728.¹⁰¹ The county town had eight commercial schools for about 10,000 inhabitants in the 1770s—80s, and a Derbeian opened the first one in Ashbourne.¹⁰² Twenty years later the town had acquired two high-class boarding schools for young gentlemen and young

⁹⁷ LRO, John Riddlesden, 17 May, 1810. P. Earle, ‘The middling sort in London’, in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550-1800* (London, 1994), p. 147.

⁹⁸ LRO, John Armstrong, 4 March, 1802.

⁹⁹ The Fitzherberts aspired to a Broadwood pianoforte, bought in London in 1806. Fitzherbert accounts, DRO, 239M/F6297.

¹⁰⁰ H. Berry, ‘Polite consumption’, p. 383. Derby’s music shop in the 1790s (if it had one) was not rated in the shop tax. I. Mitchell, “‘I had never seen better shops in a country town’: fashionable retailing in Hanoverian Derby”, *Derbyshire Miscellany*, 17(2005), pp. 82-90, p. 83.

¹⁰¹ Elliot, *Derby Philosophers*, pp. 41-2. P.P. Burdett’s map of 1767 made Derbyshire ‘one of the most accurately mapped counties’. *Ibid*, p. 62.

¹⁰² N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550—1820* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 150. *Derby Mercury*, 26 March, 1773.

ladies and a number of lesser establishments, attributes which tended to accentuate metropolitan taste.¹⁰³

The Misses Parker's school was a model of its kind, their concern for the health of their charges being accompanied by a demanding and modernizing curriculum. Standards were precise, for example, Miss Parker dismissed a native speaker of French (an ex-prisoner of war) in favour of a 'governess who speaks the language politely (sic) and can teach it grammatically.'¹⁰⁴ In the late 1790s, the Revd Paul Belcher succeeded a notoriously neglectful headmaster at the grammar school and received permission to take boarders.¹⁰⁵ He then concentrated on preparing boys for Eton, his *alma mater*, attracting well-born pupils.¹⁰⁶ Under his direction the finer points of Latin grammar and the rudiments of Greek were combined with optional classes in mathematics, drawing, dancing and French.¹⁰⁷ Peripatetic dancing masters from Derby found employment in the town, teaching the boarders and advertising classes in private houses and at the Green Man. The Green Man's 'assembly room' was surely used for balls of lower standing than 'official' assemblies, just as the tradesmen of Derby organized their own in the venue abandoned by their betters. In 1795 musicians were engaged for an evening ball for parents to show off the accomplishments of the scholars. 'A visitor from

¹⁰³ Marshall, 'Cumbrian towns', p. 172.

¹⁰⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 29 May, 1794. Darwin, *Female Education*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁵ William Dyott, an ex-pupil, recalled the school under the Revd William Langley as one which 'fitted youth for no pursuit in life beyond a retail shop board'. H.M. Stevens & R.T. Stearn, 'Dyott, William (1761 -1847), gentleman and army officer', *Oxford DNB*. Most likely, the usher who later opened a commercial school had been delegated to teach him by the indolent headmaster.

¹⁰⁶ Francis Beresford esq. recommended Belcher to Richard Arkwright junior in 1797: 'all the Boys in his School are instructed in the Eaton (sic) way, in which he was himself educated'. R.S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights: Spinners of fortune* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 262-3. Belcher's pupils were 'drawn from the minor aristocracy and gentry, many of them titled'. A. Henstock (ed.) *Early Victorian Country Town: A portrait of Ashbourne in the mid-nineteenth century* (Ashbourne, 1978), p. 22.

¹⁰⁷ A report to Richard Arkwright junior about the progress of his sons survives. Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 263.

Birmingham' observed that the children danced with 'elegant and easy deportment equal to that of the first academies in London'.¹⁰⁸

Ashbourne's social brilliance had passed its peak in 1813 when the Beresford matriarch died, severing the town's century-old connection with the senior branch of the family. Beresford house was partitioned and vanished from the social round; the music shop went bankrupt.¹⁰⁹ Other town gentlemen of consequence had died and their heirs moved on. Tom Moore, the charismatic Irish poet and friend of Byron, moved into the neighbourhood and was instantly lionized, his first impression of Ashbourne being 'this is a very gay place'.¹¹⁰ But after four years he also departed.¹¹¹ Recalling her visit in 1816 Elizabeth Bradshaw thought Ashburnians had 'very social tastes', but in her estimation they had 'mostly small means'.¹¹² Social decline was temporarily averted by the Fitzherberts' active patronage and the leasing of Ashbourne Hall to Richard Arkwright, a Tory M.P. and grandson of Sir Richard, in 1813. But the untimely death of Mrs Arkwright (Lady Fitzherbert's sister) in 1820, combined with the town's altered social profile, sounded the knell for formal assemblies attended by the élite.

4.4 Wealth creation and social mobility

The prerequisite for urban renaissance was wealth and middling sorts were much wealthier after 1770 than their predecessors, even allowing for inflation (Table 4.41).

¹⁰⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 17 December, 1795; 31 December, 1795. The reference to London by a man from Birmingham showed that metropolitan fashions in dance prevailed over the provincial taste of 'smoke cities' (with which Barker concurred). H. Barker, "'Smoke cities': northern industrial towns in late-Georgian England", *Urban History*, 32 (2004), pp. 175-90, pp. 175, 184.

¹⁰⁹ The stock in 1813 included a 'grand pianoforte and a hand-organ suitable for a small church' and the buyer optimistically enlarged the warehouse to store 'a large assortment of new Music and Musical Instruments from the first Warehouses in London', but he failed within two years.

Derby Mercury, 5 March, 1779; 22 December, 1814.

¹¹⁰ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 54-56.

¹¹¹ G. Carnall, 'Moore, Thomas (1779 – 1852)', *Oxford DNB*.

¹¹² DRO, D1491/M/Z1, p.21.

Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1249.

Table 4.41: Changes in the personal estate of male Ashburnians 1700 – 1820

<i>personalty</i>	<i>1700-1769</i>	<i>1700-1769*</i>	<i>1770-1820</i>
<i>limit</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
£100	2		
£200	10	2	9
£250	4		
£300	1		27
£350	2		
£450	2	10	2
£500	2	4	2
£600	2	1	16
£800	1	2	1
£1,000	2	4	9
£1,500		3	2
£2,000		2	4
£3,000			1
£3,500			1
£5,000			3
£6,000			1
£7,000			1
£10,000			1
<i>totals</i>		28	80
<i>limit £1000 +</i>		9	23
<i>%> £200</i>		23.9	63
<i>%> £1000</i>		7.7	18.1

Source: LRO BC/11 Ashbourne. * corrected to allow for inflation and to conform to tax bands

Inflation was negligible before 1770 but it has been estimated that the pound's value later fell from £16.5 to c. £8.7 at 1974 values (roughly halved).¹¹³ For fair comparisons another 'correction' was necessary. Exact valuations were attached to inventories during the first period but in the second the executor swore that the valuation did not exceed a tax-band limit. So inventory valuations from the first period (column 2) were doubled, to make a rough allowance for inflation, and then raised to conform to the appropriate tax limit.¹¹⁴ Although the valuations represent upper limits it is easy to see that the

¹¹³ R. Twigger, *Inflation: the value of the pound 1750-1998* (House of Commons, 1999), pp. 8, 11-12, 18.

¹¹⁴ Morris, *Men, Women and Property*, p. 86.

wealth of probators had increased considerably, in some cases immensely, with a notable increase at the lower end of the upper-middling sector (£300).

The number of probates seen was comparable for the two periods (117 and 127), but covered 70 and 50 years respectively. About a quarter in the first period had ‘corrected’ valuations of £200 or more, compared with almost two-thirds after 1770. More than twice as many in the latter group had valuations of £1000 or more and the difference is considerably understated, since 42 wills (including women’s) were then proved at the PCC by the wealthiest, including migrants to the town, such wills being excluded for lack of valuations.¹¹⁵ Female probators were much richer than they had been. Of 42 (*sic*) women’s wills in the sample proved at Lichfield in the second period, the same percentage as men left sworn limits for personal estate of £200 or more, a pattern which was ‘typical across capitalist commercial and industrial societies’, while 14% had personal estate with limits of £1000 or more, the maximum found being £5000.¹¹⁶

Transition into the ranks of the minor gentry via the magistracy was an option for men worth several thousand pounds and four individuals followed this route in the second half of the century. The Revd Dr John Taylor’s father was a rich country attorney of yeoman extraction who sent him to Lichfield Grammar School and Oxford. Taylor avidly pursued wealth and gentility, increasing his rich patrimony by speculation in property and accumulating plural livings to achieve a reputed income of £7000 p.a., including £1000 from the Church.¹¹⁷ Having left Oxford without a degree, he practised

¹¹⁵ For example, TNA, PROB 11/985, Thomas Bedford, 3 March, 1773, whose wealth was recorded as ‘considerable’. R. Sharp, ‘Bedford, Thomas (1707—1773), non-juring Church of England minister and historian’, *Oxford DNB*. He lent Sir Brooke Boothby senior £2000 on mortgage upon his marriage. Boothby Archive, GRO, D/D F Bo/32.

¹¹⁶ Morris, *Men Women and Property*, p.85.

¹¹⁷ Frangopulo, *Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School*, p. 117.

as an attorney, but returned to further his ambitions in middle age, graduating M.A. (1742) and LL.D (1752). He then remodelled the Mansion in a style appropriate to his new status, being described by Boswell as ‘a shrewd and diligent magistrate’.¹¹⁸ He acquired paintings, a harpsichord and a landscaped garden without equal in his lifetime.¹¹⁹ He ran a coach and four, employing a coachman and footmen as well as a bewigged butler, and he annually scattered largesse to the poor. But he never obliterated his roots, his friend, Dr Samuel Johnson, commenting that ‘his talk is of bullocks’.¹²⁰ Taylor was a generous host, once entertaining ‘80 of the principal inhabitants to a plentiful dinner’.¹²¹ More usually he invited town gentlemen and their ladies to dine at the Mansion and was welcomed at upper-class dinner tables when Dr Johnson was his guest. He was keenly aware of classical tastes in architecture and the arts (although Mrs Thrale suspected him of simulating his interest), entertaining Dr Johnson in 1777 with a professional ensemble of harpsichord, organ, hautbois and three violins.¹²² The Mansion fitted Borsay’s criterion of ‘a house built to impress, in which the hall stairs and landing occupied about a third of the interior space’.¹²³ Taylor’s heir, a second cousin, achieved the office of High Sheriff, usually the preserve of the knights of the shire, and lived at the Mansion, but his surviving son ended the family’s association with the town when he became a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 337.

¹¹⁹ W.P. Courtney & M. Bevan, ‘Taylor, John (bap. 1711, d. 1788)’, *Oxford, DNB*. Sir Brooke Boothby’s grounds covered an area equal to roughly half the size of the township. See map of 1830-1 in Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, pp. 14-15.

¹²⁰ Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 521.

¹²¹ *Derby Mercury*, 15 January, 1773.

¹²² Extract from Mrs Thrale’s diary, Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol. 1, p. 40. Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1349.

¹²³ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 208.

¹²⁴ TNA PROB 11/1989, William Webster, 14 November, 1843.

John Walker, J.P. was also Taylor's second cousin, both families being descended in their female lines from a wealthy coal-master, although he was the son of a humble tanner. His grandfather had promoted his two eldest children into the mercers' trade; thus his uncle Thomas was a town gentleman and his aunt married Job Peacock, a mercer of good family. The childless Peacocks adopted John, who subsequently made a fortune putting out cotton to weavers.¹²⁵ He left land inherited from Peacock, a miniature country estate where he could retire for leisure, several large houses in the market place, Hulland House (his residence near the Mansion) and a personal estate of £5000. His heir was his nephew, a clergyman who had escaped the taint of trade.

Robert Longden, d. 1810 and John Alsopp, d. 1805, were rich town gentlemen. Also second cousins, they were the products of a kinship web of west Derbyshire merchants and attorneys, representative of the interweaving of commercial and professional strands in the élite. The Longden family had been ironmongers in the Peak before migrating to Ashbourne around 1700, intermarrying with the Alsopps and diversifying into the cheese trade. Robert's father John traded with London, enabling him to become a gentleman in all but name. In his PCC will, proved in 1758, he left real estate in Ashbourne and Wirksworth to his heirs in strict settlement (the sign of an ambitious man), a dowry of £2000 to his younger daughter and portions of £1200 to two younger sons, so it may be assumed that his children's portions totalled up to £10,000 (equivalent to £20,000 in 1800).¹²⁶ His heir was appointed to the magistracy but did not relinquish his lucrative trade with London; as mentioned, his mansion dominated the market place to assert pride in the town and pole position among its

¹²⁵ One of John Buxton's executors was Thomas Evans of Derby, cotton-spinner. LRO, John Walker, 20 April, 1790.

¹²⁶ LRO, Robert Longden, 5 October, 1742. TNA, PROB 11/836, John Longden, 29 March, 1758.

merchants.¹²⁷ His elder son was the most eligible bachelor in the town, also being the residual heir of John Alsopp (see below), but he never married. Consistent with Wahrman's theory he chose to be acculturated into the gentry and went to Cambridge, where he became a fellow of Caius College.¹²⁸

John Alsopp, a third generation attorney, lived at Vine House (built by his father in the 1730s) and was already wealthy when he inherited property from his brother-in-law, Hugh Fletcher, a town gentleman.¹²⁹ Each man married the sister of the other, a device to keep wealth in the family, but ironically both unions were childless. Since the Fletchers were closely related to the Longdens, the landed assets from three families were concentrated on the cultivated Longden heir. Alsopp was portrayed by Dr Johnson's biographer as a hard-drinking country squire and he lived up to it by promoting the last-recorded cock fight in the town (he also sponsored the theatre).¹³⁰ He was a man of principle, shown by his honourable behaviour in the office of treasurer of the GSC, in which he assumed personal liability for a debt for which he bore no responsibility, and in his refusal to annex his wife's £1000 fortune, which she gratefully acknowledged in her will, when she predeceased him.¹³¹ He and Longden became deputy lieutenants, members of the county's élite, and Alsopp's cash legacies in 1805 totalled c.£8170, the residue of his land going to Longden's son as mentioned.¹³² Dr Taylor's class-consciousness apparently led him to nominate the pair as his executors

¹²⁷ TNA, PROB11/1515, Robert Longden, 20 October, 1810.

¹²⁸ D. Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 17 (1992), pp. 43-72, p. 45. TNA, PROB11/1602, Robert Longden, 21 March, 1818. DLSL, Ince, 'Pedigrees', p. 0.75a (237,265, H929.2/237). www.wirksworth.org.uk.

¹²⁹ LRO, Hugh Fletcher, 19 May 1772.

¹³⁰ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 24, 68.

¹³¹ LRO, Elizabeth Alsopp, 23 June, 1794. When the damages from a vexatious court case created a shortfall of £402 10s he paid it without hesitation, reimbursed after some delay. Frangopulo, *Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School*, p.114. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol. 2, p. 35.

¹³² TNA, PROB 11/1419, John Alsopp, 23 January, 1805.

rather than his cousin, John Walker, J.P. However, his will referred to a feud with the Beresford family in which Walker had sided with the enemy (Taylor forbade his heirs from marrying a Beresford). This may be put down to rivalry for the unofficial position of *the* chief inhabitant; Taylor had the money and Beresford the breeding.¹³³

The common features in these cases were the gradual accumulation of wealth over generations, which came to a head in the eighteenth century owing to judicious management, arranged marriages in which inbreeding was liable to cause infertility, and the departure of the fortunate beneficiaries, whose leisured lives contrasted with the lifelong endeavours of their ancestors and benefactors.

4.5 ‘An assiduous attention to business’

The words of an Ashburnian grocer in 1796 summed up a commercial society.¹³⁴ Middling men’s aspirations for their sons expressed themselves in ‘social and practical education for employment’, thus, in 1773 a mercer advertised for ‘a sober young man who can write a good hand and book-keeping a recommendation’.¹³⁵ Abraham Smith came from Derby to open a school for ‘young gentlemen’ offering subjects which the grammar school charter prohibited (book-keeping, writing and mathematics), but keeping Latin for prestige. He was joined by an usher who had previously offered ‘the best Method of writing Letters, Receipts, Bills, sufficient to qualify youth for trade’, and ‘Writing in all the usual Hands’.¹³⁶ Land surveying was well enough taught for schoolboys to make the first accurate map of the town in 1830.¹³⁷

¹³³ TNA, PROB 11/1164, Rev Dr John Taylor LLD, 13 March, 1788.

¹³⁴ ‘John Barnes hopes to merit the favour of customers by an assiduous attention to business’.
Derby Mercury, 21 July, 1796. See Plumb, ‘Commercialization and society’, p. 292.

¹³⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 26 March, 1773,

¹³⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 24 August, 1785.

¹³⁷ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, pp. 14-15.

Few outside its traditional recruiting ground aspired to the legal profession, which required a minimum of secondary education at the grammar school, followed by articles. Nearly two-thirds of lawyers nationally came from the lesser gentry, the rest from richer upper-middling families able to pay a premium of £100 (excepting attorneys' sons).¹³⁸ Miles insisted that 'lawyers were not pseudo-gentlemen' because their 'talents, knowledge and wealth' commanded universal respect.¹³⁹ During the town's social heyday in 1770—1820 a minimum of nineteen practised in the town, attracted by landowners' requirements for land-management, litigation and loans. They were appointed as trustees by well-to-do testators, charging fees for collecting debts, buying, selling or mortgaging land, securities and houses, disposing of businesses or employing temporary managers during the minority of the heir. They were also the intermediaries of money-lenders, occasionally offering loans in advertisements. Some inherited land from their families, married rich heiresses and proved their wills in London. Edward Leigh esq., a barrister, had married the daughter of Brian Hodgson, whose son was a Macclesfield banker. But this perhaps failed to reach expectation, since his autograph will stated that he was 'not entitled to any real or possessed of any personal estate as interest to make the formality of a Will at all necessary'. He left £600, a silver coffee pot and gold buttons.¹⁴⁰

From the mid-eighteenth century substantial yeomen took leading positions previously headed by families of superior standing.¹⁴¹ One such was William Gould, mercer, who owned 300 ancestral acres in the Staffordshire moorlands, realizing

¹³⁸ M. Miles, "'A haven for the privileged': recruitment into the profession of attorney in England, 1709—1792', *Social History* (London), 11 (1986), pp. 197-210, pp. 200-2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁰ LRO, Edward Leigh, 30 April, 1810.

¹⁴¹ Thurston and Tertius Dale (mercator and grocer) were the last sons of minor gentry to trade in the town, but the landed wealth of their successors in trade was often considerable: Riddlesden *père* had land in three counties. LRO, William Riddlesden, 12 August, 1801.

perhaps £2000 when he died.¹⁴² Shopkeepers became more specialized, a change considered by one historian to be ‘the most significant development in the history of retailing’.¹⁴³ They included at least twenty-one grocers and fourteen mercer/drapers over the half century. The latter were well aware of the implication which automated cotton-spinning had for hand-weaving, as well as the increased demand from England’s rising population for linens (an essential accompaniment to respectable dress). There ensued an explosion of putting-out for the market in the 1780s and 90s. As has been seen, it enriched John Walker; however, Thomas Adams left £10,000 in 1799 after only seven years in the trade.¹⁴⁴ Anthony Bradley was similarly successful, first describing himself as a banker and then forming a partnership to build a large cotton mill on the river Dove. Upward mobility from mercer to cotton spinner was a natural step to gain total control of cloth-making, but it was expensive and risky.

Most rich retailers appeared impervious to risk, hedging their bets by diversifying into property-dealing, insurance and informal banking with people they knew. As solid citizens of long-standing, they were nominated as trustees by men of their own ilk or slightly inferior, like the ‘community brokers’ described by D’Cruze.¹⁴⁵ They included John Armstrong, miller and Chandler, John Barnes and Joseph Bradley, grocers, William Sutton, Anthony Bradley and Edward Barnes, mercers and Robert Bowring, tobacconist and upholsterer. William Sutton snapped up Thomas Adams’ drapery shop after his premature death and sold it the same year to Edward Barnes.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² LRO, William Gould, 17 January, 1788.

¹⁴³ C. Fowler, ‘Changes in provincial retail practice during the eighteenth century, with particular reference to central-southern England’, *Business History*, 40 (1998), pp.17-54. p. 46.

¹⁴⁴ LRO, Thomas Adams, 26 September, 1799.

¹⁴⁵ S.D’Cruze, ‘The middling sort in eighteenth-century Colchester: independence, social relations and the community broker’, in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 194-5.

¹⁴⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 15 August, 1799; 26 September, 1799.

The following year Sutton inherited £600 from his brother and co-partner and survived the post-war depression of 1816 which bankrupted three colleagues. He was able to buy Thomas Gould's stock to sell at a 30% discount (bankruptcies were good news for the poor).¹⁴⁷ Some speculators made miscalculations. In 1779 a grocer bought 'a large quantity of plate and household goods' from a lawyer's estate, but the deal ruined him.¹⁴⁸

The dynastic Barnes family managed to remain in the trading élite for two or more centuries, moving from one lucrative trade to another in successive generations. John and Edward Barnes were the sons of a currier who set them up in their prestigious clean trades, and the great-nephews of Thomas Barnes, a joiner-builder who owned one of the town's first brickyards. 'Successful retailers were skilled credit controllers' in Ashbourne as elsewhere, advertising fixed prices in the newspaper and denying credit to all but their richest and most trusted customers.¹⁴⁹ Selling for cash was not the mark of a poor man, but of skilled operators on the make, like the Etches partnership which sold liquor to people they did not know in a twenty-five mile radius of the town 'for ready money only'.¹⁵⁰ Retailers effectively charged interest on the credit offered to gentlemen, since they gave discounts for cash. The growth of the plebeian market was signified by the sale of cheap lines in bulk from warehouses, the equivalent of modern discount stores. The up-market retailers John Barnes and Robert Bowring kept shops, but also sold (respectively) teas (1796) and tobacco (1792) directly from their warehouses.¹⁵¹ In another case, a middleman put out leather to shoemakers and sold their produce in this

¹⁴⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 6 June, 1816. LRO, Joseph Sutton, 21 April, 1801.

¹⁴⁸ John Johnson, *Derby Mercury*, 7 May, 1773; 9 April, 1779.

¹⁴⁹ Fowler, 'Retail practice', p. 48. *Appendix*, Pl. A10, p. 263.

¹⁵⁰ *Appendix*, Pl. A12, p.265.

¹⁵¹ Fowler, 'Retail practice', p. 49. *Derby Mercury*, 21 July, 1796; 15 March, 1792; 18, March, 1774.

way.¹⁵² In better shops ‘unwritten rules discouraged plebeians’, or, if a variety of merchandise was on sale, customers were discreetly offered what they could afford.¹⁵³

A high bankruptcy rate implied that a large volume of trade was attracting ‘marginal performers’, but the disparaging term nevertheless referred to people of some repute, because the debt of a bankrupt had to exceed £100 by law.¹⁵⁴ They were reported in the press on a number of occasions after 1770, especially after devaluation halved the real value of the threshold, but whether the percentage was average or high could not be ascertained. Robert Bowring of Uttoxeter gained his foothold in the town in 1779 when Mrs Priscilla Taylor & Son (tobacconists and mercers) went bankrupt. Mr Taylor had died six years earlier, soon after over-extending his credit by buying the newly-built mansion and premises of a bankrupt competitor, George Calton.¹⁵⁵ Despite owning two shops (one in Uttoxeter) Taylor left only £20, including his household goods and stock-in-trade. His wife recruited her son in a vain attempt to save the business, but had to sell to Bowring, an upholsterer.¹⁵⁶ He kept the big house and its two warehouses and continued to manufacture tobacco, but sold both shops. He invested his profits in houses to rent in the two towns, describing their superior fittings in his will.¹⁵⁷

After 1815 there was a spate of bankruptcies, including three mercer-chapmen suffering from the post-war collapse in cheap textiles. Thomas Gould had occupied the best retailing position in the town for thirty years, while Prudence Bass probably lived in the ill-fated house once owned by Priscilla Taylor, and latterly by Robert Bowring.

¹⁵² *Derby Mercury*, 9 June, 1769.

¹⁵³ Berry, ‘Polite consumption’, pp. 384, 388.

¹⁵⁴ J. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English business 1700–1800* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 86. Inflation increased the bankruptcy rate after 1790 when it became possible to sue for half the previous amount in real terms.

¹⁵⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 7 May, 1773.

¹⁵⁶ LRO, William Taylor, 9 September, 1773

¹⁵⁷ LRO, Robert Bowring, 12 June, 1810

The sale description was a good fit for George Calton's extravagant house; moreover, Bowring died the same year as her husband (1810) and she needed a warehouse for the business she was about to start.

The custom of landed gentlemen was very significant for the local economy if Sir Henry Fitzherbert's expenditure was typical, although he was one of the richest. The total recorded in his account book for 1807 was £1387, of which a minimum of £524 was spent with local tradesmen (table 4.51).

Table 4.51: Ashbourne tradesmen's accounts paid by Fitzherbert (1807)

<i>Name</i>	<i>trade</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>
Brinsley	butcher	27	0	0
Barnes	grocer, Chandler	67	0	7.5
Bradley	grocer, tobacconist	67	10	7
Riddlesden	mercier	29	0	0
Holyoak	Blackmoor's Head	14	9	3
Pidcock	plumber glazier	17	8	3.5
Morley	breeches maker	11	6	0
Howard	brazier	10	7	3
Heaps	cooper	7	8	0
Mr Riddlesden	physician	6	11	2
Hardy	hardware	6	5	0
Pimlott	seedsman	5	11	1
Bamford	shoemaker	5	13	4
Wetton	coachmaker	4	11	10
Tomlinson	carrier	2	6	2
Ashton	clockmaker		12	0
Redfearn	tailor	61	1	5
Smith	joiner	26	13	3.5
Frith	mason	23	17	2.5
Spencer	blacksmith	5	14	2
White	whitesmith	4	6	2
Whiston	saddler	2	17	8
Saxelby	seedsman	2	17	11
Richardson	baker and maltster	93	17	9

Source: DRO, 239M/F6297

Sir Henry obtained food, clothes, clocks, books, newspapers, stationery and confectionery in the town and his steward organized piano tuners, builders, carpet

cleaners, clock repairers and so forth to keep his house in order. Travelling cost him several hundred pounds a year for the hire and purchase of horses and vehicles alone, much of it spent in Ashbourne (vehicles required constant maintenance).¹⁵⁸ But he looked elsewhere for the finest luxuries: wax candles, china, carpets with matching curtains and upholstery, silver, a pianoforte, two mahogany ‘bidets’ and gold lace for his livery hat. His largest individual expenditure was on groceries, which he divided equitably between Barnes and Bradley, but he patronized a French wine merchant in preference to local men.¹⁵⁹ The large amount owed to Richardson could have damaged the latter’s cash-flow, since accounts were settled only once a year (in fact, his business became insolvent after his death).

The grocer’s trade rose during the second half of the eighteenth century to become the most enduring way to make a good living in retailing, owing to the addictive consumption of tea and sugar by all classes, in good times and bad. Joseph Bradley (1749-1834), the richest grocer in Ashbourne, created a dynastic business which lasted for a century, having been introduced to Fitzherbert as the protégé of the gentlemanly Tertius Dale.¹⁶⁰ To the majority of his customers he was an exponent of ‘the hard sell’.¹⁶¹ He placed annual notices in the *Derby Mercury* for about a decade (more than any other Ashburnian) emphasizing ‘value’ and once quoting the prices of 250 items ‘obtained from the principall markets in the kingdom’, but after ten years he decided to save £1 per insertion in favour of a printed catalogue ‘free to customers’.¹⁶² Seizing every opportunity to increase his wealth, he discounted clipped guineas and

¹⁵⁸ Fitzherbert spent £23 3s 6d with a coach maker in 1807 and bought a phaeton in 1811 for £157 3s 6d. DRO, 239M/F6297.

¹⁵⁹ DRO 239M/F6297.

¹⁶⁰ *Derby Mercury*, 20 January, 1775. (Dale’s recommendation of Bradley, probably his ex-apprentice).

¹⁶¹ B.A. Holderness, ‘The Commercialization of eighteenth-century England’, *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 122-124, p. 124.

¹⁶² *Appendix*, Pl. A10, p. 263. *Derby Mercury*, 8 December, 1791.

foreign gold when coins were in short supply, and began to manufacture tobacco after the Taylor bankruptcy. He survived competition from Bowring with ease, supplying tobacco wholesale to the most prominent grocer in Wirksworth, and doubtless to others.¹⁶³

Bradley was soon in a position to lend money to fellow townsmen on mortgage, including £600 to William Etches in 1787.¹⁶⁴ Etches, formerly a saddler, had taken out a mortgage twenty years earlier to rebuild his house on Market St with wine vaults. Bradley bought the mortgage from his creditor when Etches' wholesale business blossomed, allowing it to rise to £900, but then required him to redeem it. Etches was rescued by Ann Newton, a mercer's widow whose wealth appreciated from money-lending after her husband's death. In another venture, Bradley acquired the sole Derbyshire agency for the Phoenix Fire Assurance Co. of London, while his social aspirations extended to the cornetcy of the Ashbourne and Wirksworth Volunteer Cavalry.¹⁶⁵ At his death he owned estate in Ashbourne, Derby, Leicester and Manchester worth £8000 (he paid his wife an annuity of £400), in addition to unspecified British and foreign stocks, canal and turnpike securities, bonds, loans and cash, divided among his seven children.¹⁶⁶ Such investments were alternatives to expanding his business into other towns, a risk which the *petite bourgeoisie* was generally unwilling to take.¹⁶⁷

Grocery was one of several up-and-coming trades during the eighteenth century. The lucrative trade in wines and spirits was espoused by William Etches, while his

¹⁶³ Advertisement for cutters, *Derby Mercury*, 16 October, 1778.

¹⁶⁴ DRO, D2059/2.

¹⁶⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 15th March, 1797. Insurance assumed its modern form in the eighteenth century. J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 298.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, PROB 11/1828, 26 March, 1834.

¹⁶⁷ G. Crossick, 'Meanings of property and the world of the petite bourgeoisie', in J. Stobart (ed.), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town 1700—1900* (London, 2000), p. 52.

friend and contemporary, Daniel Shipley (born in 1722 to the town's pioneering clock-maker) took up peruke-making when the fashion for middling men and skilled artisans was a wig, hat, buckled shoes and white hose. Shipley was an expert fisherman, making artificial flies for gentlemen and fishing with them in Dovedale, and eventually left a fortune of £600.¹⁶⁸ He was well-educated and wrote the will of William Etches' father (a saddler) in a flowing hand. His own will enclosed an account of his outlay in sending his eldest son to Oxford; unfortunately, he did not live to see him inducted as vicar of Ashbourne, aged 45, in 1806.

William Etches and his son, Richard Cadman Etches, were born entrepreneurs. Having borrowed money to set up as a wine merchant, William apprenticed Richard to a London brandy merchant to gain expertise. By 1775 father and son were in possession of bonded warehouses in London and Liverpool and were selling liquor wholesale over a 25-mile radius of the town, Richard being permanently resident in London.¹⁶⁹ Ten years later they raised the capital to set up a London company to follow in the wake of Captain Cook, recently murdered in Hawaii where he oddly detoured while on a trading mission. Cook, the first to chart the waters of Nootka Sound (Vancouver), bartered seal skins from local Amerindians which sold for large sums in Canton. The Etches' partnership hired their predecessor's Royal Navy officers and spent perhaps £10,000 equipping the *King George* (320 tons) and the *Queen Charlotte*. The trip presented few problems to the experienced officers and the supercargo recorded an initial profit of

¹⁶⁸ Lemire, 'Second-hand beaux and "red-armed belles": conflict and creation of fashions in England c. 1660—1800', *Continuity and Change*, 15 (2000), pp. 391-418, p. 403. There were five peruke-makers in 1780, and the élite paid the powder tax in 1796. Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.2, pp. 93-5. Shipley's father had high status in 1720 when one clockmaker sat on the GSC.

¹⁶⁹ *Appendix*, Pl. A12, p. 261. *Derby Mercury*, 17 November, 1775; 25, 29 December, 1778.

54,857 Spanish dollars.¹⁷⁰ In 1789, when its luck ran out, Etches' company had acquired several ships and a permanent warehouse and settlement in Canada, all commandeered by the Spanish Navy in an act of colonial rivalry. The incident was settled by diplomacy; the ships were returned but in all probability seized by the British for the war effort.¹⁷¹ Etches was recruited to spy on the French on the high seas and somehow acquired Danish citizenship as a cover, repaying it with treachery on behalf of his masters. His work culminated in a mission to revolutionary France in 1798 to spring Sir Sidney Smith from his captors by bribing his guards.¹⁷² The town's historian, writing 40 years later, recorded his opinion that Etches advised the admiralty throughout the war.¹⁷³

4.6 The industrial revolution

The iconic industries of the industrial revolution (iron, coal and cotton) all had an enduring impact in Derbyshire. The Butterley Company of Ripley (1790—1968), co-founded by Francis Beresford esq., an Ashburnian attorney, was the largest coal-owner and the second largest iron producer in the East Midlands in 1830, when its capital was £30,000. Under the able management of Beresford's grandson it rose to £436,000 in 1858, through involvement in railways and transatlantic trade. The company's reserves of coal and iron had been discovered in the very act of excavating Cromford canal (begun 1789) which was an essential conduit for its products. Francis

¹⁷⁰ A W. Beresford, *A voyage round the world ... to the north-west coast of America: performed in 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788*, 2nd edn (London, 1789), p. 321. Sea captains involved with Etches: A.C.F. David, 'Cook, James (1728-1779), explorer'; A.C.F. David, 'Colnett, James (bap. 1753, d. 1806), naval officer and fur trader'; J.K. Laughton & B.M. Gough, 'Portlock, Nathaniel (c.1747-1817), naval officer and fur trader'; J.K. Laughton & B.M. Gough, 'Dixon, George (c.1748 – 1795), naval officer and fur trader'. *Oxford DNB*.

¹⁷¹ Britain's negotiator in Madrid was Fitzherbert's younger brother Alleyn. S. M. Lee, 'Fitzherbert, Alleyn, Baron St Helens (1753 – 1839), diplomatist', *Oxford DNB*.

¹⁷² M. Durey, 'The British Secret Service and the escape of Sir Sidney Smith from Paris in 1798', *History*, 84 (1999), pp. 437-457, p. 451.

¹⁷³ Anon., *History of Ashbourn*, pp. 50-53.

Beresford, a trustee of the joint-stock canal company, immediately formed the Butterley Company in partnership with John Wright (a Nottingham banker engaged to his daughter) and two experienced canal engineers. From 1805—c.1810 the company employed a leading Scottish metallurgist, David Mushet, self-educated but proficient. Mokyr's recognition that scientific technology, numeracy and precision outside academia were characteristic of Britain's industrial revolution is relevant in the case of Mushet. He was a talented mathematician, conducted scientific investigations throughout his life, read a paper to the Royal Society and held two patents for steel technology.¹⁷⁴

Beresford's grandson, Francis Beresford Wright J.P., a very wealthy man, became Ashbourne's patron.¹⁷⁵ Having married his cousin, Sir Henry Fitzherbert's daughter, he lived near the town in Osmaston Manor, built to perfection by the Evans building firm, with central heating and hydraulic lifts. Educated by Dr Arnold at Rugby School, he was an indefatigable magistrate in three counties and a crusading evangelical. Having feuded with the vicar, he part-financed St John's Church and contributed to a considerable extent to the town's classically-inspired town hall, built with a public assembly room above a covered market and other offices. As chairman of the Bench he banished cattle from the market place and banned the unseemly statute fair, but, despite his best efforts, Shrovetide football survives to the present as a shrine to civil disobedience.

¹⁷⁴ J. Mokyr, "Is there still life in the pessimist case?" Consumption during the industrial revolution', 1790—1850, *Journal of Economic History*, 48 (1988), pp. 69-92, p. 26. I.J. Standing, 'Mushet, David (1772—1847), ironmaster and metallurgist', *Oxford DNB*.

¹⁷⁵ He had full control of the Butterley Company and was a director of the Midland Railway Company. Both companies had their finest hour in 1868, building St Pancras Station beneath the world's largest single span, an outstanding engineering feat.

Ashbourne's contribution to the development of the region was illustrated by a published list of men willing to accept banknotes of denominations from £1 upwards when the Bank of England went off the gold standard, after a 'run' (table 4.61).¹⁷⁶

Table 4.61: Ashburnians willing to accept banknotes in 1797

occupation / status	type	N	Total
butcher	artisan	1	
farrier	artisan	2	3
brass founder ¹	manufacturer	3	
breeches maker	manufacturer	1	
cotton master	manufacturer	2	
maltster	manufacturer	2	
tobacconist	manufacturer	1	9
cheese/iron merchant	merchant	1	
liquor merchant	merchant	1	
corn merchant/miller	merchant/ processor	3	
skinner/tanner/currier ²	merchant/processor	3	8
cleric	professional	8	
headmaster	professional	1	
land agent	professional	1	
lawyer	professional	6	
surgeon/physician	professional	1	17
bookseller	retail	1	
grocer	retail	2	
stationer	retail	1	4
mercier	retail/putter out	5	5
gentleman		4	
innkeeper		5	
unknown		8	

Source: *Derby Mercury*, 9 March, 1797. ¹ clock or button-makers ² putting out

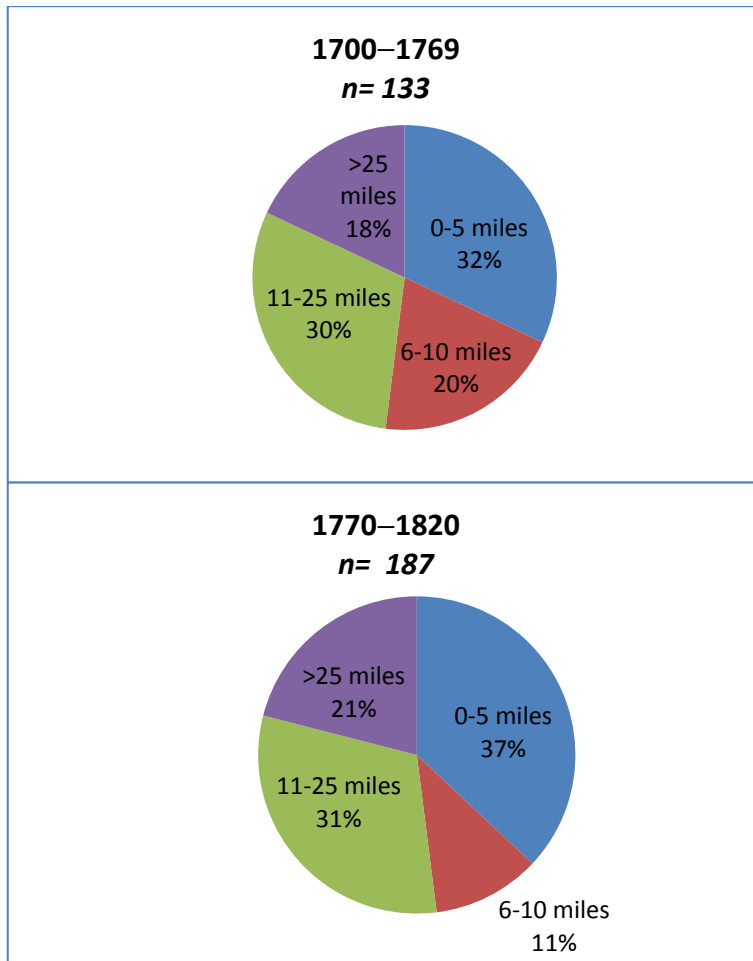
These 63 men signified those whose social and business contacts had moved beyond the face-to-face credit networks of the town. It reveals a varied manufacturing base, a sizeable company of pluralist clerics and six substantial lawyers. The shortage of artisans seems to imply purely local markets for their produce, but quite a number were

¹⁷⁶ Occasioning the mocking soubriquet 'The Old Lady of Thread Needle Street'.
www.bankofengland.co.uk

employed by putters out. There had been an alteration in the tentacles of trade, indicated by the links which testators had with other places, where they either owned real estate or had a personal or commercial relationship (fig. 4.61).

Fig. 4.61: Ashburnian testators' links with other places 1700 – 1820

Source: LRO, BC/11



The town's exclusive hinterland was taken to be a five-mile radius and the outer hinterland of up to 10 miles included the nearest market towns of Wirksworth and Uttoxeter. The next circle, up to 25 miles, incorporated the regional centres of Derby, Nottingham and Lichfield and other named towns included Chesterfield, Macclesfield, Stockport, Newcastle (Staffs) and Wolverhampton. Among towns over 25 miles away, London was named most often (25 references), others being Birmingham, Chester,

Coventry, Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The town had wide-ranging contacts even before 1770 and the main change was a percentage fall in contacts with neighbouring market towns in favour of the immediate hinterland, owing to the rise of textile manufacturing and the purchase of land by townsmen as their wealth accumulated. Their motives included social ambition and a haven for savings, used as collateral or mortgaged for business purposes. Contacts with towns over ten miles away now exceeded half of the total. The highest individual increases were indicators of the town's leisure orientation and metal trades: Buxton spa, developed in the 1780s (3.9%), Birmingham (3.9%) and London (4.5%).

The phenomenal success of Arkwright's cotton mill at Cromford in 1771 engendered a flood of imitators, but few were as ambitious as Anthony Bradley of Ashbourne. A rich mercer and self-styled banker he used family resources to form a partnership to build the New Mill on the Dove, in 1784, one mile from the town.¹⁷⁷ It was the largest cotton mill to date, insured by the Royal Exchange Co. for £12,550, compared with Arkwright's flagship Masson Mill, built the same year and insured for £10,000.¹⁷⁸ He survived for sixteen years, raising a large family in style and marrying his daughter to a gentleman. He became bankrupt in 1800, when his auctioned possessions included 'white corded dimity' bedroom furniture, 'rich Chintz curtains' and a 'beautiful bordered Wilton carpet', mahogany furniture 'in the best stile', upholstery, chests, cabinets and pier glasses, two horses and a chaise. He had shot game with his son-in-law, John Hayne esq. of Ashbourne Green Hall, and the 'Misses Bradley

¹⁷⁷ Bradley senior, a cheesemonger, left £4000 and his father-in-law William Shore owned land worth as much in Gloucestershire and a partnership in a Staffordshire coal mine. LRO, William Shore, 4 June, 1778. Joseph Bradley, 21 June, 1774.

¹⁷⁸ S.D. Chapman, 'Fixed capital formation in the first cotton industry 1770 -1815', *Economic History Review*, 23 (1970), pp. 235-266, p. 264.

of Ashbourne', who promptly opened a school in Chesterfield, putting their 'most liberal education at the best schools' to good use, must have been his daughters.¹⁷⁹

The difficulty of recouping the high capital cost of building a brand new, multi-storied cotton mill was further illustrated when the failing business of John Cooper was rescued by a Londoner, Archibald Douglas.¹⁸⁰ Cooper built the mill two miles north of Ashbourne on the town brook for c. £4000 in 1784; when Douglas purchased a partnership Cooper married his daughter and eventually left a personal estate of £7000 in 1820.¹⁸¹ John Douglas Cooper, heir to his parents' fortune, had meanwhile built a mill near Bradley's in partnership with Messrs Dale and Bainbrigge, gentlemen of Ashbourne, costing c. £5000 in 1793, and he managed to survive the depression. In 1817 he was an accepted gentleman, invited to steward Ashbourne's assemblies and figuring on Elizabeth Bradshaw's visiting list.¹⁸²

The intensification of putting-out (domestic industry) was a formative stage in the industrial revolution when 'ways of working, of doing and making things' and also lives were radically changed.¹⁸³ Cotton mills required a regiment of weavers working to a standard design and quality, but subject to rapid changes of fashion.¹⁸⁴ Bradley took his son into partnership to organize '63 looms in the neighbourhood of Ashbourne' making cotton nankeen for breeches, calicoes and checks in 1800.¹⁸⁵ Linen weaving was arranged on the same system, the workers being dispersed within a day's walk of the

¹⁷⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 20 April and 7 August, 1800.

¹⁸⁰ Chapman, 'Fixed capital', p. 264.

¹⁸¹ LRO, John Cooper, 22 January, 1820. TNA, PROB 11/1301, Archibald Douglas, 28 February, 1798.

¹⁸² Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol.1, pp. 36, 79.

¹⁸³ M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures 1700—1820: industry, innovation and working in Britain* (London, 1994), 2nd edn., pp. 26, 197.

¹⁸⁴ J. Styles, 'Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 532.

¹⁸⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 27 October, 1800.

town (8 miles) as appeared in 1792, when they attempted to fix prices for their work.¹⁸⁶ Daunton has discounted explanations of such clashes in terms of a ‘moral’ economy, arguing that workers were self-conscious participants in capitalist relations (the political economy), using the argument of traditional rights when it suited.¹⁸⁷ In fact, the period 1788—1803 was described by Rule as ‘golden’ for cotton weavers; wages fell when the *laissez faire* economy allowed their numbers to treble between 1795—1811.¹⁸⁸ Economy of scale, reduced overheads and a close attention to the market and stock control allowed competent middlemen to make huge profits, although they were vulnerable to over-production. Home consumption was stimulated by the craze for fashion, so manufacturers had a vested interest in creating demand, rather than just responding to it, but the export market was crucial to absorb the excess.

One of the ways in which industry based in the countryside depended on the town was illustrated by J.D. Cooper’s advertisement in 1795 for ‘a clockmaker used to fitting up machinery’.¹⁸⁹ Clock- and watch-making had been introduced to Ashbourne before 1713 and 18 qualified men practised in the town at some period between 1770 and 1820, the Harlow family being of particular note. Joseph, the son of a builder, was apprenticed in Birmingham and introduced brass-founding to Ashbourne about 1740.¹⁹⁰ His son Samuel was a watch and clockmaker with the exceptional expertise which Borsay mentioned as bestowing ‘cultural prestige’ on a town, thinking it surprising that ‘so many clockmakers lived in towns with only 4500-6000 inhabitants’ and noting the

¹⁸⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 5 and 24 May, 1792.

¹⁸⁷ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 328-9.

¹⁸⁸ A manufacturer of calicoes in Ashbourne advertised for weavers in 1793—4. *Derby Mercury*, 14 January, 1793; 4 September, 1794. J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981), pp. 30, 69.

¹⁸⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 8 October, 1795. Arkwright advertised for ‘journeyman clockmakers who understand tooth and pinion’, *Derby Mercury*, 13 December, 1771.

¹⁹⁰ R.G. Hughes & M. Craven, *Clockmakers & Watchmakers of Derbyshire* (Ashbourne, 1998), pp.104-106.

rarity of ‘particular ingenuity’.¹⁹¹ Samuel Harlow held a patent, costing £100, and wrote *The Clock Maker’s Guide*, a monograph with technical drawings published in Birmingham in 1813. In 1788 he built ‘a compleat Foundry for the purpose of casting brass’; it had to be large to accommodate his advertised production of mill machinery. Later, mechanisms (not the clocks) were dispatched all over Britain and exported to America. The family reputedly retained 35 journeymen in 1820, having become the town’s largest employer.¹⁹² Watches symbolized both the consumer and the industrial revolutions. Highly fashionable among all social classes, often stolen and pawned, they were cheapened by the division of labour, but the best were designed and assembled by experts.

During this period leather prices rose on account of increased demand, being quoted weekly with corn prices in the *Derby Mercury*. Like millers, men in leather-processing trades did very well (table 4.62). Predictably, the social credentials of leather merchants rose. Skinners lived in Church St and the representation of leather trades in the membership of the GSC rose from 8% to 19%. John Watson, a seller of sheep skins, had contacts with Utttoxeter, Cambridge and a Piccadilly coach-maker; his wealth was sufficient to override the negative connotations of the trade.¹⁹³ When he died, childless, in 1784 he had a total worth of over £10,000, including several houses in Ashbourne and Mappleton and his skinner’s yard, which he left to the Harrisons, who were probably his kin, in the same trade (table 4.62).

¹⁹¹ Appendix, Pl. A18, p.269. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 36-7.

¹⁹² *Derby Mercury*, 2 October and 4 December, 1788. J.A. Robey, ‘Samuel Harlow of Ashbourne and his long case movements’, *Antiquarian Horology* (2002), pp. 527-545, 531 -2, 542. Ashbourne has had 70 recorded master watch and clockmakers, the third highest number after Derby and Chesterfield and ‘out of all proportion to its size’. *Ibid*, p. 529.

¹⁹³ *Derby Mercury*, 17 November, 1775; 9 November, 1797.

Table 4.62: Leather merchants of Ashbourne 1770 – 1820

	<i>occupation</i>	<i>personal estate</i>	<i>family trust funds</i>
Barnes, J.	currier ¹⁹⁴	£300	£1000
Bradbury, J.	victualler, woolcomber, currier	£1000	
Brinsley, C	shoemaker (wholesaler)		
Butcher, J.	skinner		
Buxton, J.	tanner	£3000	£1800
Buxton, R.*	tanner		
Dawson, P.	tanner innkeeper	£1000	£600
Dawson, S.*	tanner		
Harrison, F..	skinner fellmonger	£600	
Harrison, G.	skinner fellmonger	£1000	£1700
Holbrook, J.*	tanner	£600	
Hurd, W.*	currier	£5000	£2930
Peach, W.*	currier, saddler		
Smith, J.	breeches manu.	PCC will	
Walker, W.*	tanner	£500	
Watson, J.*	fellmonger		£7330
Watson, T.*	fellmonger		

Sources: LRO, BC/11; DRO, Q/RE; DLHL, *Derby Mercury*. * Member of the GSC.

Curriers were finishers of calf leather, which was abundant in dairying areas where most bull calves were slaughtered. They were forced to make sweeping changes in business practice when marginal shoemakers could no longer afford to buy their produce. William Hurd put a shoemaker who owed him money out of business in 1781; a decade later he received a death threat from ‘A Shoemaker’ (although this was an empty gesture).¹⁹⁵ He was undercutting artisans by supplying domestic workers with pre-cut leather, a sufficient reason for his rise to riches (table 4.62). Shoes and boots made on a standard pattern in bulk were cheap, so, while artisans suffered a derogation in their status by accepting work from putters out, poor labourers were the beneficiaries. Middlemen also became involved. In 1774 a saddler advertised for ‘8 or 10 journeyman shoemakers’ and Charles Brinsley advertised for 15 journeymen to service his

¹⁹⁴ Father of John, William and Edward (grocer and mercers).

¹⁹⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 26 July, 1781; 24 October, 1793. J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981), p. 183.

warehouse.¹⁹⁶ In 1780 an entrepreneur in Uttoxeter set up a substantial outworking business overnight, having placed an advertisement for a hundred journeymen.¹⁹⁷ The most likely explanation for this was a government contract.

Around the turn of the century improvements in the design of vehicles enabled fast traffic to by-pass Ashbourne, a manifestation of progress which threatened the élite hospitality trade. Gervase Wood, the lessee of the Green Man, modernized his accommodation to attract more gentlemen in 1796 and kept chaises and horses at Leek, the next stop on the road to Manchester.¹⁹⁸ However, the Royal Mail and other long-distance coach services called regularly and the carrying trade increased. A number of innkeepers responded to the demand for malt from Burton-on-Trent, after William Bass pioneered commercial brewing in 1777. This seems evident from the marriage in 1786 between the brewer's second son, a carrier, and Prudence Tomlinson, an Ashbourne innkeeper's daughter. William Bass junior became Pickford's main competitor on the London-Manchester route, having relocated his stage-wagons to Ashbourne, and he became wealthy.¹⁹⁹ Prudence was part of a social circle including Thomas Hemsworth (1741—1815) the licensee of the Rose and Crown in Church Street, a considerable maltster who sustained three sons in the trade. His eldest son John (1769—1819) married Prudence's sister Ann. Maltsters were men of some standing and Hemsworth's daughter married a mercer. The requirement for fixed capital was illustrated by a malting works sold in 1810, comprising two malt-houses with six and three floors

¹⁹⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 11 February, 1774; 18 March, 1774.

¹⁹⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 30 June, 1780.

¹⁹⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 17 January, 1783; 17 November, 1796. James Boswell hired a chaise from this inn in 1777. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.1, p. 51.

¹⁹⁹ Ironically, his father sold his own carrying business to Pickford when William was a child. *Derby Mercury*, 4 December, 1767.

respectively, two cisterns, a kiln and a pump.²⁰⁰ John Hemsworth was a prosperous innkeeper, since in 1819 his wife Ann inherited a coach and horses, wines and liquors and an annuity of £150 p.a. (from a £3000 investment).²⁰¹

4.7 Female middling sorts

Women in the late eighteenth century had ‘wider access to people, information and ideas’ and a greater share of wealth than hitherto and it was noticeable that ‘propaganda for separate spheres became more strident’ when women used their leisure to intrude on politics.²⁰² In the late-eighteenth century a few well-to-do women joined the prosecution and anti-engrossing societies, but soon restricted themselves to the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and The Female Friendly Society (table 4.71).

Table 4.71: The founder members of Ashbourne’s Female Friendly Society (est.1806)

<i>Occupation</i>		<i>Husband/father’s Occupation</i>	
currier	1	attorney	3
grocer	1	banker	1
innkeeper	1	builder	2
maltster	1	merchant	2
chapwoman	1	headmaster	1
milliner	3	innkeeper	4
postmistress	1	leather manuf.	3
schoolmistress	2	maltster	3
TOTAL	60	mercier	4
		physician	2
		yeoman farmer	2
		<i>gentry</i>	20
		<i>unknown</i>	13

Sources: D662A/PF11/1-2; LRO BC/11; TNA PROB B11; Bailey’s Trades Directory, 1783.

²⁰⁰ J. Brown, ‘The Malting Industry’, in G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 6, 1750—1850 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 513. The malthouses: *Derby Mercury*, 5 July 1810.

²⁰¹ LRO, T. Hemsworth senior, 1 February, 1809; T. Hemsworth junior, 18 March, 1815; J. Hemsworth, 29 Jan, 1819; W. Tomlinson, 4 March, 1799. Mrs Hemsworth continued to hold the inn as a widow.

²⁰² L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation 1707—1837* (London, 1992), p. 281.

The FFS was a charitable organization which persuaded poor women to assure themselves of medical attention in illness or childbirth for a premium of a penny a week. The society therefore advocated self-help rather than a recourse to the parish. The popularity of male friendly societies suggested that ordinary people now felt the stigma of parish relief and preferred their independence, but the near-certainty of pregnancy made women a poor risk. So the members' guinea subscriptions had to balance a shortfall of contributions, not through default (for which the insured were peremptorily struck off) but because premiums had to be kept artificially low.²⁰³ The subscribers ('honourable members') came from the top echelons of town society and enjoyed the role of lady bountiful, although the sick probably welcomed their weekly visits. A few widows and spinsters among them were upper-middling sorts with identifiable occupations. It seemed that the Beresford family had initiated the society, being present in force (eight, including Lady Fitzherbert). Not shown are three gentlemen (honorary members), including John Beresford esq., the head of the family who had left the town.

All women below the professional élite most likely worked in the family business and those who outlived their husbands inherited some of the fruits of their labours for life. There was no reason to take a pessimistic view of these women's lives. They enjoyed an above-average standard of living and social status, kept a servant and had adequate, hygienic living space for their children, colourful clothes and opportunities to shop and socialize in congenial surroundings. In the worst case a wife had to work in an uncongenial occupation (albeit one with status) and all her control over her inheritance had been relinquished, either by default, or because her father

²⁰³ DRO, D662A/PF11/1-2. In 1851 over a quarter of the cost was borne by the 'honorary members'. Henstock (ed.), *Victorian Country Town*, p. 69.

wished to ingratiate himself with his son-in-law.²⁰⁴ The usual motive for a pre-nuptial settlement was the safeguarding of her assets for her children in case she predeceased her husband; in rare cases they were placed in a separate estate over which her husband had no control. This was not necessarily an option in the delicate negotiations, unless the bride was much richer than the bridegroom. It signified her father's wish for land to return to her stem family; in the most flattering circumstances he trusted her to preserve it through her financial acumen and avoidance of extravagance, otherwise it was placed in trust. Female testators were not so constrained and often provided other women with some independence.

In Lane's examples husbands almost invariably left their widows insufficient funds to maintain the style they were used to, *unless* they carried on the business or found some other way of making money.²⁰⁵ It was suggestive of some distaste that only 20% of Hinckley widows wished to continue in the family (hosiery) business, even at the testator's express bidding.²⁰⁶ Time constraints precluded a statistical assessment of women's wills in Ashbourne, but anecdotal evidence contributed to the arguments. Local society could not be fairly described as misogynous. Husbands usually made their wills when death was imminent and in some cases expressed deep affection for their wives, verbally, or in the case of a childless wife by depriving their kin to leave her their entire fortune (Mrs Adams received £10,000).²⁰⁷ Francis Beresford divided his disposable capital equitably between his wife and daughters. After a decade as a partner in the Butterley Company he left £19,000 (exclusive of mineral wealth owned by the company, in which his son succeeded him) of which £4000 went to his wife to live on

²⁰⁴ Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance', p.173.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 178, 180, 181

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 180.

²⁰⁷ LRO, Thomas Adams, 26 October, 1799.

during her lifetime, equal to the amount left to each unmarried daughter. His autograph will entreated his children ‘to administer that comfort and support to their Mother in her old age to which she is by her many virtues so justly entitled’; he had left her an additional £500 to set up a separate residence.²⁰⁸ Some men had total confidence in their wife’s ability to maintain the business and raise the children according to plan, or even to form an indeterminate partnership with an adult son. But most simply left their widows the highest annuity they could possibly afford, charged on their real estate and varying from Mrs Joseph Bradley’s £400 p.a. to a subsistence income of £10 p.a.²⁰⁹ Lane found that a low, but independent, inheritance stimulated most widows to improve their wealth through money-lending and buying houses to rent in the town.

Wills proved at the PCC were made by richer widows and spinsters and supported two of Lane’s generalizations: the tendency for women to favour their female friends and relations and a preference to live as *rentiers*. Dr Taylor’s cousin Dorothy Taylor, an attorney’s daughter, doubled her wealth when her spinster sister left her everything. She left £2,400 of which £700 was bequeathed to male relatives, the highest bequest of £500 going to her family’s ‘right heir’, but £1,700 went to female friends and relations. Three of the friends were Francis Beresford’s daughters (not in special need of their £100 legacies). Similarly, Elizabeth Pidcock gave her sister £800 and rent on her real estate for life; her right heir, a plumber, received £200 and the reversion of the real estate. Elizabeth Barnes, the wife of a currier and mother of John, William and Edward (grocer and mercers) owned one-quarter of six houses in St John’s St, together with stables, gardens and so forth, and had a fixed term annuity of £43 15s (not extinguished by her death) left to her by her sister-in-law. She gave more to her

²⁰⁸ TNA, PROB 11/1369, Francis Beresford, 23 February, 1802.

²⁰⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1828, Joseph Bradley, 26 March, 1834.

daughters than her sons, leaving the bulk of her real estate to her daughter's son at his majority, to be used 'for his education or advancement.'

A small minority of Lane's widows chose to run the family business, unshackled by male interference, and some managed to avoid relinquishing it to a son at the specified time. The strategies of widows and the choices of spinsters were various in Ashbourne, a number being upper-middling (denoted by honorifics). Hunt and Barker noted that women preferred to trade in fashionable merchandise, Hunt remarking that they 'transferred their skills in housewifery to innkeeping or grocery'.²¹⁰ Exemplars included the Misses Whittham, who sold clothes bought by the eldest on an annual spree in London; Mary Rowley (a widow) sold glass and pottery and there were two mother and daughter partnerships, Elizabeth and Ann Blore, grocers, and Elizabeth Gould and daughters, milliner-haberdashers. The Blores cultivated Mrs Beresford's custom, having inherited one of the few shops in Church St. It was well-fitted with 'Counters, Drawers, Shelves, Boxes, Scales, Weights, Measures, Cannisters, and Mills etc'.²¹¹ Mrs Gould (related by marriage to William and Thomas) used her inheritance to move from a farm in the wilds of north Derbyshire to the town, setting up shop with her daughters and marrying two of them off. Mistresses Blore and Gould each left a personal estate of £300 (Mrs Gould owned plate and china) and four of the women were members of the FFS.²¹²

The rise in print culture and literacy gave opportunities to educated women who found bookselling congenial.²¹³ There were two bookshops in Ashbourne and women

²¹⁰ Hunt, *Middling Sort*, p. 127. H. Barker, *The Business of Women: female enterprise and urban development in northern England 1760 - 1830* (Oxford, 2006), p. 38.

²¹¹ LRO, Ann Blore, 24 March, 1779. In 1780 Mrs Beresford paid her 4 gn for candles. Henstock (ed.) *Country Town*, vol.2, p. 76.

²¹² LRO, Mary Rowley, 31 October, 1805; Elizabeth Gould, 22 April, 1817.

²¹³ Hunt, *Middling Sort*, p. 145.

were prominent in both. In the 1730s Sarah Roe and her brother were partners, selling the newly-established *Derby Mercury*. After Mr Roe opened a shop in Derby Sarah ran the Ashbourne branch alone for thirty years.²¹⁴ Mistresses Smith and Walker replaced their deceased husbands. No relation to the tanners, William Walker died shortly after opening his adventurous new shop stocking musical instruments and his widow continued the trade 'in all its branches'.²¹⁵ William Brown of Wirksworth set up a printing press, bookshop and stationery business in the 1770s. In 1777 he used a surprisingly modern sales technique to off-load *A Description of the Thirteen Colonies of British America* when the title was overtaken by events, advertising the chance to win one of 17 prizes with every purchase, totalling £500.²¹⁶ He survived this potential disaster to bequeath the printing press and bookshop to his daughter, and an interior decorating business and paint mill to her brothers in Wirksworth.²¹⁷ Miss Brown married a Stockport brewer, selling the business to Miss Susanna Oakes, who for three or four years was one of two sub-distributors of stamps in Derbyshire, printing and selling hair powder certificates and suchlike.²¹⁸ This minor public office was unusual for a woman and she also fancied herself as an authoress, intending to publish *The Rules of the Forest* in three volumes in 1798, but apologized in an advertisement that she was 'incapable of the facility she wished'.²¹⁹ Her successor set up the town's circulating library about 1800.

When Prudence Bass was widowed in 1810 she unusually set up in an unaccustomed trade as a mercer-chapwoman. She probably thought the return on her

²¹⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 31 January, 1777

²¹⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 5 March, 1779; 29 September, 1780.

²¹⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 26 September, 1777. He bought the old town hall from Boothby, displaying books under the arches on market days, and his death in 1795 probably marked its demolition.

²¹⁷ LRO, William Brown, Ashbourne, 21 April, 1795.

²¹⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 7 April, 1796.

²¹⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 20 September, 1798.

capital would exceed the 4-5% she could expect from government funds, as had proved to be the case in the past. But she was unable to resist the chance to buy one of the best houses in the market place with some of her capital. Her husband left £3,500 of personal estate (gross) and considerable town property. He authorized his brother Michael, a trustee, to pay interest to her, suggesting it would not be necessary to sell real estate at first, but not ruling it out.²²⁰ Either the brewer did not dissuade her from risking her children's future, or he actively promoted her scheme. During the trade depression when the war ended she became bankrupt, forced to sell three large houses, shops, a public house, warehouses and seven acres of valuable land. The foreclosure could have been unnecessary, since she died worth £200 and might have weathered the storm if she had the appetite to continue.²²¹

Husbands trained their wives to run the business during the minority of the heir and it was a feature of small towns that widows' occupations were often unusual for a woman.²²² In Ashbourne a horse-collar maker, James Washington, divided his 'monies, securities, stock-in-trade, household goods, book debts and personal estate' equally between his wife and son, hoping they would live and work together.²²³ Mrs Washington would not have dirtied her hands in what Collyer described as a 'mean and nasty' trade, in which journeymen were 'no better off than common labourers' (which was an advantage for her).²²⁴ The trade was lucrative during the war and she vastly improved her assets. Her husband had left only £100 of personal estate, his shop and house and an annuity of £10. Twenty years later her will was proved at the PCC,

²²⁰ LRO, William Bass, Ashbourne, 19 November, 1810.

²²¹ *Derby Mercury*, 18 July, 1816; 2 May, 1816. LRO, Prudence Bass, 23 October, 1820.

²²² Barker, *Business of Women*, p.117.

²²³ LRO, James Washington, 22 August, 1787.

²²⁴ J. Collyer, *The Parents' and Guardians' Directory, and the Youth's Guide in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* (London, 1761), p. 111.

recording that she had bought farmland in addition to a (discovered) personalty of £1000. She divided the cash equally between her son and his wife, the latter to enjoy hers ‘as if she were sole and unmarried’, which insured her against the poor widowhood she herself had overcome.²²⁵

The women highlighted in table 4.72 had such unusual trades that they did not figure in the much larger samples of female businesses compiled by Hunt from insurance records and Manchester’s Directory (in a specimen year).

Table 4.72: Businesswomen of Ashbourne compared with others 1770-1820

<i>occupation</i>	<i>Ashbourne 1770 -1820</i>	<i>Manchester Directory (1772), M.R.Hunt</i>	<i>Royal Exchange 1775-87 M.R.Hunt</i>
baker	1	2	28
boarding school	7	3	
bookseller/ printer/ stationer	6		9
currier	3		
dealer/ huckster	1	9	
glass/pottery seller	1		4
grocer	4	6	35
hatter	2		2
horse collar maker	1		
innkeeper	4	5	6
maltster	1		
mantua maker/ milliner	7	8	88
mkt gardener	1		
mercier / draper	1	5	57
postmistress	1		
rope-maker	1		
shopkeeper	4		103
tobacconist	1		
victualler	10	13	68
TOTAL	57	51	400

Sources: Hunt, *Middling Sort*, pp.130, 133; LRO, BC/11; TNA, PROB 11; DRO, Bailey’s Directory (1784); Universal British Directory (1791).

Wiskin found that women were not deterred from these ‘masculine’ trades until ‘notions of gentility overrode respectability’ in the nineteenth century, but the functions they

²²⁵ TNA, Elizabeth Washington, PROB 11/1496, 6 April, 1809. Unusually a valuation was found in TNA, IR26,358/f.12.

actually performed are under-researched.²²⁶ The currier William Hurd worked with his sister (or sister-in-law) Hannah. In 1795 he made her co-executor with an attorney, leaving her the interest on his considerable real estate in the town for life and his household goods, stock-in-trade, book debts and working tools to ‘carry on the Business of a Currier’.

In this case, Mistress Hurd managed male employees and (doubtless) the finances, but her practical role was the skilled trade of leather-cutting. A female preserve, it was not entrusted to non-family, who might have purloined or wasted the valuable material.²²⁷ Hurd gave instructions that his foreman was to share the profits (so he was running the ‘dirty’ curing process) but he was ‘to have no part of the stock neither shall he purchase an interest’.²²⁸ Hurd’s personalty of £5000, less £1050 for legacies and legal charges, passed to Hannah absolutely. Undeterred by the threats from shoemakers, Hannah placed an advertisement confirming her continuation in business and she subscribed to the FFS and the Society to Prosecute Engrossers. Another currier, William Dyche, praised ‘the efforts of my sister’ in his will, who had doubtless had the same role. As she predeceased him, he left the business to his unmarried daughter, but she soon sold the ‘thirty year-old business of curriers and leather-cutters’, presumably for a considerable sum.²²⁹

William Sandys’ wife Ann inherited his timber and landscape gardening business, being requested to hold his estate only until the youngest child was twenty-one, ‘making no waste or imbezzilment but raising up and keeping up the usual and

²²⁶ C. Wiskin, ‘Industry, investment and consumption: urban women in the Midlands’, in J. Stobart & N. Raven, *Towns, regions and industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands c. 1700—1840* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 64, 66, 70.

²²⁷ Wiskin refers to gendered roles, ‘Urban women’, p. 69.

²²⁸ LRO, William Hurd, 2 July, 1795.

²²⁹ William Dyche, 23 September, 1797. *Derby Mercury*, 2 July, 1795; 23 September, 1797; 6 June, 1799.

regular stock of various sorts of plants or trees in proportion to the sale she makes of them from time to time'.²³⁰ This clearly called for considerable expertise. Ann Sandys did not relinquish the business, describing herself as a gardener in her will thirty-two years later. She made regular sales of timber, enabling her to buy out her son.²³¹

The licensed trade was the most common 'middling' occupation so it was likewise the most usual trade of 'middling' widows. Expertise in housewifery was useful, but servants performed the physical tasks in a major inn, inside and out. Mary Killingley and Mary Houghton inherited the leases of the major coaching inns (the Green Man and the Blackmoor's Head). Mrs Killingley's son soon replaced her, but Mrs Houghton established herself in the trade, relocating to the Nag's Head in Derby when the lease ran out. In 1777 Mrs Killingley greeted Dr Johnson's biographer with a curtsy and gave him an engraved card, which entreated him to 'name the House to his extensive acquaintance' and politely offered a prayer for his 'Happiness in Time & in a Blessed Eternity'.²³²

Other licensees' widows remained in post for decades. Mrs Clifford, Mrs Burton and Mrs Litton had pretensions to upper-middling status, since all owned their freeholds.²³³ Elizabeth Clifford, d.1790, ran the curiously-named Anatomized Horse for 20 years, demonstrating a concern to civilize the lower orders by instituting a Sunday school in the room above her stables.²³⁴ Sarah Burton inherited the Horse and Jockey, with thirty stables, three acres and 'several pews in church' (on account of the size of

²³⁰ LRO, Ann Sandys, 22 August, 1787; William Sandys, 25 September, 1761.

²³¹ *Derby Mercury*, 16 February, 1786.

²³² Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol. 1, p. 51. *Derby Mercury*, 1 March, 1792; 13 October, 1796.

²³³ Most inns were investments for the well-to-do, including Mrs Prudence Bass and Dr Taylor, who rented them to publicans.

²³⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 16 September, 1790. LRO, Elizabeth Clifford, 12 October, 1790.

the inn) from her deceased husband's brother, hanging on to it for thirty years.²³⁵ When her elder son finally took possession his brother was left some 'lately purchased' land and a gold watch, while her widowed daughter received interest on £500 and 'plate, china, linens, wines and liquors'. This equitable division probably accounted for the inn's swift passage out of the Burton family, which Sarah's brother-in-law had aimed to avoid.²³⁶ Jane Litton kept the Horns inn in the market place for nearly forty years and probably ran the business during the previous fifteen, when she was married to her first cousin, John Etches. They were members of the Litton-Etches innkeeping dynasties, however, John was an expert clockmaker. Having been apprenticed in the town in 1757 he later trained Samuel Harlow and one of his grandsons (born after his premature death) became 'an outstanding clockmaker' in Ashbourne in 1842—55.²³⁷ The dense network of yeomen victuallers, maltsters, leather-merchants, builders and butchers, to whom all the landladies were related by blood or marriage, formed the core of the indigenous middling sector from which Richard Cadman Etches had sprung. His brother married one of Elizabeth Clifford's daughters, while her other daughter married Jane Litton's son.

A cogent counter-indication of Hunt's theory, that men unfairly deprived women of economic independence and spent their assets, was the similarity of men's and women's personal estates at death. Although female probators were still outnumbered the difference was rapidly decreasing. There are some examples of scrupulous fairness. John Buxton, a childless grocer, had settled real estate on his late wife 'and her heirs' by a marriage bond and reminded his executors that the debt must be paid. John Alsopp

²³⁵ Derby *Mercury*, 17 September, 1815.

²³⁶ LRO, Sarah Burton, 10 April, 1810.

²³⁷ Hughes & Craven, *Clockmakers*, pp. 128, 95.

unusually returned his wife's £1000 dowry in her lifetime, perhaps with heaviness when it became clear that she would have no children and their combined fortunes would eventually be alienated.²³⁸ Hugh Fletcher, a town gentleman, credited his wife and sisters with the intelligence to manage their own affairs, failing to appoint trustees and asking a friend to advise 'if requested'.²³⁹ Mrs Hugh Fletcher listed her personal bequests in her own handwriting and style in a letter to her attorney brother (John Alsopp), rather than making a formal will, a gesture of trust. He carefully deposited the document at Lichfield, using two other attorneys as administrators.²⁴⁰

Upper-middling sisters from the professional élite often lived together unmarried, accumulating wealth from relatives whom they outlived. The Misses Taylor and the Misses Toplis (distant cousins of a Wirksworth banker) were *rentiers*, but others became proprietresses of schools for young ladies (there were seven schools in 1851).²⁴¹ Erasmus Darwin's natural daughters were 'educated to teach others', as he stated in the syllabus and prospectus he prepared, including English, French and Italian classics in the original, but not classical languages or mathematics (except arithmetic), all considered unfeminine.²⁴² He added botany and the humanities, as well as 'drawing and embroidery because they are the employment of ladies of the highest rank', since young ladies were educated to be the consorts of gentlemen.²⁴³ Several legal partnerships between men and women were found. Among the Parkers' imitators were two husband

²³⁸ TNA, PROB/11 915, John Buxton, 17 January, 1766. LRO, Elizabeth Alsopp, 23 June, 1794.

²³⁹ LRO, Hugh Fletcher, 19 May, 1772.

²⁴⁰ LRO, Mary Fletcher, 10 October, 1801. She left £600-worth of furniture, china, silver and securities.

²⁴¹ Henstock (ed.), *Victorian Country Town*, pp. 52-53.

²⁴² Darwin, *Female education*, pp. 8, 12, 19, 27, 120-126.

²⁴³ Brooke Boothby's cousin, Maria Jacson, published her botanical studies anonymously because 'the world have agreed to condemn women to the exercise of their fingers, in preference to that of their heads'. A. B. Ahteir, 'Jacson, Maria Elizabetha, writer on botany', *Oxford DNB*.

and wife partnerships with a school each.²⁴⁴ Some mother and son partnerships were less successful, evidenced by the bankruptcies of Jane Richardson & Son, bakers and maltsters (1817) and Priscilla Taylor & Son, tobacconists and mercers (1779).²⁴⁵ But the horse-collar makers were successful and Mrs Amelia Harlow was the senior partner in A.W. Harlow & Son (clockmakers) in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴⁶ Overall, a number of middling women headed businesses during the town's heyday and later, some being run from large premises and making considerable profits.

4.8 Conclusion

On any consideration Ashbourne was an exceptional town for its size, being fully representative of the modernizing influences mentioned by Plumb. Its development was attributable to good connections with London, through its position as a thoroughfare town and the commerce of its merchants, while its incarnation as a polite town owed much to the presence of numerous gentlemen living in a rich agricultural hinterland, 'a thickly-populated plain' described as 'the Vale Royal of England' by the town's historian.²⁴⁷ The town acquired an up-market image which attracted well-heeled *rentiers* who leased Palladian houses and enjoyed the attractive and salubrious countryside. They brought wealth and learning to the town, their numbers made the institutions of urban renaissance viable and their metropolitan taste was in tune with that of an existing population of lawyers and town gentlemen. As a result, the town's facilities corresponded to those which only a fifth of all towns in the regions to the north and west could boast: it promoted assemblies, classical chamber music, theatre and (very occasional) horse races. Other manifestations of politeness included numbers of

²⁴⁴ Henstock (ed.), *Country Town*, vol. 1, pp. 83, 85.

²⁴⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 10 April, 1817.

²⁴⁶ Hughes & Craven, *Clockmakers*, p. 103.

²⁴⁷ Anon, *History of Ashbourn*, p.128.

boarding schools for young ladies and ‘scientific lectures as entertainment’ which equalled the quality of those presented to the Derby Philosophical Society.

Abundant evidence was adduced in chapter three for a consumer revolution, which originated in the late seventeenth century within the privileged sectors of the population. In accordance with McKendrick’s theory this came to a head during the last third of the century, when it was accentuated and more widely dispersed in the population. It was demonstrated in bricks and mortar as the élite followed the latest fashion in architecture; specialist retailing catered for them, giving rise to a remarkable clock-making industry. The shopping facilities encouraged polite browsing and supplied exclusive goods for conspicuous display without the need for a recourse to a provincial centre, including the latest metropolitan fashion in dress, vehicles to buy or hire and pianofortes to accompany private dancing. Shopping space was extended by a considerable rebuilding of residential shops and workshops in the market place and the removal of the old town hall. The vitality of retailing may be judged from the fact that Ashbourne was one of few towns in the county to figure in Bailey’s Directory (1785) and paid the second highest shop tax in the same decade. Evidence of new luxuries post-1725 appeared in lists of people’s possessions in sales notices, while the ubiquity of silver plate and china within the middling sector was inferred from wills. There was anecdotal evidence of the extravagant dress worn to a formal dinner, to which the participants arrived in chaises, while hair-pieces as well as dresses were imported from London to wear at assemblies.

The town was a hive of enterprise in which shops became increasingly specialized and élite retailers were involved in property-dealing and money-lending. Fortunes were made from ventures which historians have noted as prevalent in market towns around 1800 (putting-out, tanning and malting). They accounted for much of the

town's unprecedented, but unsustainable, level of prosperity in its heyday. The regimentation of large numbers of workers in domestic industry to produce standard designs for a fashionable market was new. The growing commercialization was reflected in the popularity of schools which taught writing, arithmetic, accounts and other technical skills in the footsteps of Derby, as well as the increased use of print when the town acquired a press in the 1770s. The classical industrial revolution was apparent in the building of cotton mills and the rise of malting to supply the commercial brewers of Burton-on-Trent. Entrepreneurs became aware of opportunities through better communications. They had capital to invest and were keen to grasp them, illustrated by the Harlow clockmakers who diversified into mill machinery, the Etches merchant adventurers, Anthony Bradley the pioneering cotton-master, the rich grocer Joseph Bradley and Francis Beresford's co-founding of the Butterley Company (which benefited the town at a later date).

Evidence that the lower orders participated in a consumer boom is circumstantial but convincing. Bradley's grocery advertisements showed that the custom of obscure artisans and labourers was important to him. He sold at fixed prices, printed a free catalogue which over 60% of men could read (a minority afforded the newspaper), advertised the fairs which they frequented and took on extra staff on market days. His signal success in accumulating riches was attributable to his service to all, from Sir Henry Fitzherbert down. Plebeian spending power was enhanced by the high wages paid to weavers, which reached a peak in the 1790s. They were active in well over 100 households (60 were working for Bradley's cotton mill alone), making linens and various kinds of cottons.²⁴⁸ The town inevitably had many house servants whose

²⁴⁸ The opportunity offered to women in cotton mills is discussed in chapter five.

purchases of fashionable goods may be assumed, since their standard of dress was notoriously regarded with disfavour by the rich. Finally, there was discounting of goods, in warehouses used as retail outlets, through over-production of outworking dedicated to the latest fashion, and in sales of bankrupt stock at give-away prices.

The cost of urban renaissance primarily fell on upper-middling sorts, whose real incomes rose in the eighteenth century when ‘the urban counterparts of country yeomen were flourishing’ (William Gould’s 300-acre patrimony showed that yeomen did not rise from nothing).²⁴⁹ Some town gentlemen increased their real estate and acquired the more high-flown attributes of gentility, including the office of justice of the peace, which made them indistinguishable from minor gentry. The ‘quintessentially urban’ characteristic of politeness was a borrowing of the patrician manners and tastes of their social superiors which affected the middling sector to varying degrees.²⁵⁰ The preference of Ashbourne’s upper-middling sorts for metropolitan taste may be attributed to the small size of the town and their close association in formal assemblies with the landed gentlemen of the hinterland, which did not necessarily imply an urge for social promotion, although it did in some cases.²⁵¹

The heirs of wealthy men, who had not enjoyed the privilege themselves, went to university, a recognized avenue for social advancement, including Dr Taylor, whose forebears were yeomen. He exhibited the outward characteristics of gentility to a fault, having a higher income than most of the landed gentlemen.²⁵² He and other town

²⁴⁹ Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 135, 140. Rents outstripped prices from 1790—1815, *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁵⁰ Sweet, ‘Topographies of politeness’, p. 355. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 226. Wealthy men could choose to be promoted, but many rejected metropolitan culture in favour of regional allegiance. Wahrman, ‘National society’, pp. 48-9.

²⁵¹ J. Barry, ‘The making of the middle class’, *Past & Present*, 145 (1994), pp. 194-208, p. 201.

²⁵² Anon, *History of Ashbourn*, p. 214. N.J. Frangopulo, *The History of Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School Ashbourne Derbyshire 1585—1935* (Ashbourne, 1939), p. 117.

gentlemen inhabited neoclassical houses with tasteful interior decoration and landscaped gardens, kept a coach and engaged menservants.²⁵³ When they appeared at public or private functions, polite conventions governed the formal courtesies and had a civilizing influence.²⁵⁴ There was a strict code of precedence at Ashbourne's assemblies, for although the upper-middling sorts supplied the dynamic of urban renaissance, gentlemen were the gate-keepers.²⁵⁵ Ultra-extravagant display was possible at rich men's funerals around 1800, which the Green Man offered to furnish with 'any number of horses up to a hundred in a style equal to any place outside London'.²⁵⁶

Town gentlemen were extremely important to the economy of the town and, it is argued, to the regional economy. A narrow attention to the question of their social status and the belief in some quarters that they were parasites who dissipated the profits of agriculture in luxurious living diminishes them. The wealth of many *rentiers* derived from the non-agricultural enterprise of themselves and their ancestors; agriculture would have made minimal profit without them. They invested in the real estate of the town, which was necessary for its development. Only a minority accumulated land with social mobility in view; most were realists who used it as a bank before better opportunities arose. For all middling sorts, rent was the interest on a deposit which formed collateral for business and could be mortgaged to release capital.

As regards the 'consumer revolution' the expenditure of middling sorts in aggregate far exceeded that of the landed gentry. The lower-middling sorts benefited

²⁵³ Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol.2, p. 337.

²⁵⁴ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 147. H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600 – 1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 143. Ellis, *Georgian Town*, p. 120. J. Stobart, 'The spatial organization of a regional economy: central places in North-west England in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), pp. 147-154, p. 5.

²⁵⁵ Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 210.

²⁵⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 29 December, 1803.

from the custom of richer folk and all tradesmen absorbed forms of politeness which were useful for commercial dealings with their superiors.²⁵⁷ Circumstantial evidence showed that they emulated the élite by taking dancing and elocution lessons and attending balls in the assembly room of the town's second coaching inn; their own tastes in clothes might be shown off and their children could find suitable marriage partners. The theatre was a unifying force, open to less prosperous artisans, servants and some labourers. All middling sorts had an enthusiasm for education suited to their interests, so that commercial schools paralleled the up-market boarding schools patronized by the rich folk of the region. Curiously, despite their classical education, some county gentlemen had a strong interest in mathematical pursuits and natural philosophy, in which the leadership of the county town was apparent.²⁵⁸

After 1750 the average value of testators' personal estate rose in real terms and the value of bequests charged on real estate was also higher than previously. Women held a much higher proportion of wealth, largely through inheritance but not insignificantly from their own industry. The six-fold increase in people proving wills at the PCC, compared with the previous half-century, was substantially attributable to an increase in migrants to the town with landholdings of note. Out of 77 testators who proved their wills in London half were *rentiers* (almost a third being women) and 13% were professionals. But, owing to the wealth generated by the consumer revolution and aspects of the industrial revolution, the distinction between gentlemen of leisure and other town gentlemen became blurred; a carrier, a hardwareman, a skinner, five mercers and a grocer were also in this élite group. As was typical of such towns at this period,

²⁵⁷ P Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 311-331, pp. 311, 315, 318.

²⁵⁸ Derby's excellence in engineering has an unbroken succession from Sorocold's silk mill to railway locomotives and aero-engines at Rolls Royce. A county gentleman (Nigel Gresley) designed the 'Mallard', the fastest steam locomotive ever built (126 mph), but not at Derby.

malting, tanning and domestic industry enriched many. Ashbourne's population was not rising sufficiently to have absorbed the excess production, some being distributed to traditional outlets by mercer-chapmen and (presumably) by those who ran domestic shoe-making enterprises; malt was sent to Burton-on-Trent and trade with distant towns, particularly London, increased.

A study of the participation of middling women in manufacturing and commerce tallied with Lane's research into similar towns, confirming their widespread participation in the economy before the middle classes adopted the 'separate spheres' mentality. Most wives worked in the family business, which emphasized innkeeping in Ashbourne and other town specialities, irrespective of gender-stereotyping. Gender relations might be considered to have radically changed, but wills revealed familiar types of family concord and feud, with most testators affecting a conciliatory stance. (Dr Gresley banned his children from his funeral, perhaps because they disliked their stepmother. But he did not disinherit them).²⁵⁹

Lane took a feminist approach, suggesting that 'inheritance strategies *conspired* to marginalize married women' (italics added). She criticised a man for depriving his widow to endow six children. This was customary, but not so the case of a man who left the reversion of his children's inheritance to a cousin.²⁶⁰ She deprecated the fact that women inherited only for life, so they could not sell property (but they could make whatever use of the income they wished, which wonderfully concentrated the mind). Women preferred the employments that, through a circular argument, are now considered to be gendered. Lane reported that only 20% of widows continued the

²⁵⁹ LRO, John Gresley, 20 April, 1784.

²⁶⁰ Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance', pp. 182-3.

family business in Hinckley, most preferring to buy houses for rent with their annuities, while Vickery thought that widows relinquished uncongenial work with relief.²⁶¹

Upper-middling widows and spinsters used inherited money to choose a favoured and lucrative occupation, such as the proprietorship of an exclusive boarding school (for the similarly educated), bookshops, dress shops and other élite retailing concerns. Working in the economy did not lower their status, illustrated by the fact that the Blore grocers and the Gould milliners were members of Ashbourne's exclusive FFS in company with the top echelons of town society. Even those who pursued less 'feminine' occupations were not excluded if rich enough, as in the case of Hannah Hurd, a currier.

A wife depended on her husband for funds, which may not have appeared demeaning if she received a fair share of their disposable income; nevertheless, Elizabeth Alsopp was extremely grateful for being allowed a separate income and this was often enough arranged by parents and (significantly by other women) to appear corrective. Lane observed that widowhood conferred independence on middling women, but most faced a choice between a severely-reduced standard of living, finding a profitable investment for their inheritance or continuing the family business if the testator willed it. She concluded that most women aspired to more than the first option and might contravene the express wish of the deceased in the last.²⁶² The experience of Prudence Bass, who was ill-advised to live ostentatiously while setting up in an unaccustomed business, suggests that male trustees might prefer a quiet life to entering into controversy with strong women.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 180. Vickery, 'Golden Age to separate spheres?', p. 409.

²⁶² P. Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance', pp. 175, 181, 194.

Chapter 5: Wirksworth and the industrial revolution c. 1755—1830

5.1 Introduction

In 1830 Ashbourne was typical of the Midland market towns described by Stobart and Raven, which did not lose their manufacturing functions or experience stagnation or contraction despite their failure to grow.¹ This was predictable from the town's wealthy hinterland, referred to by Dyer, but it was perhaps surprising that Wirksworth had re-asserted itself as a major market town with a full range of services, a considerable textile industry for its size and notable crafts at that date, even though it was having to come to terms with the collapse of the lead industry, its historic *raison d'être*. In the 1830s, and for some time afterwards, the town housed a large number of redundant miners, although the industry had been over-manned for decades, so most had other sources of subsistence.² The town stood the loss for several decades, suffering a relatively minor fall in population before a replacement industry was found, the reason being that it had developed a sufficiently strong economy to weather the storm. In fact, more similarities with Ashbourne were discovered than might have been thought, as the investigation into the effects of urban renaissance, the consumer revolution and the industrial revolution proceeded.

The introduction of the modernizing worsted industry from Yorkshire in 1754 was a watershed for the majority of those living in the town and its hinterland. The re-organization of domestic industry in Halifax was designed to improve the profits of middlemen through tight control over the workforce. The linen industry apparently followed suit to become one of the few enterprises in which rapid fortunes could be

¹ J. Stobart & N. Raven (eds), 'Introduction', in *Towns, Regions and Industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands, c. 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2005), p. 26.

² Since by-employments were mostly unrecorded, the evidence is circumstantial, but convincing.

made, as seen in Ashbourne. Fortuitously, the local economy was further boosted by Richard Arkwright's choice of one of the town's hamlets for his construction of the world's first automated cotton-spinning mill, in 1771. This has been acknowledged by Harley and Crafts as a 'spectacular technical breakthrough' and the harbinger of 'rapid structural change' in Britain between 1770 and 1830.³ Chapman observed that 'the beneficial economic influence' which Arkwright had, directly and in the region as a whole, was incalculable; 'his building works and his instigation of the Cromford canal injected capital into the local economy', the requirement for machine parts stimulated metal-working and 'wage rates in Derbyshire doubled within a generation as a direct consequence of his enterprise'.⁴ The number of permanent shops increased in Wirksworth when the town retreated from an almost total dependence on mining, which was inimical to such development because miners' tastes and social inclinations were satisfied by the open market. The burgeoning textile industry was the leading edge of fashion and therefore of the consumer revolution.

Mining continued to employ the largest cohort in the town by some margin, so urban renaissance seemed unlikely (to say the least), but the industry was paradoxically instrumental in stimulating such manifestations as occurred. It will be argued that the combined forces of the Duchy and Francis Hurt, a mercantile gentleman, promoted the industry to investors with such success that upper-middling sorts were motivated to migrate to the town and to build its exclusive enclave of Palladian houses. The price of lead was rising inexorably as war approached (yet again) and both the Duchy and Hurt

³ C. Knick Harley & N.F.R. Crafts, 'Simulating the two views of the British industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 60 (2000), pp. 819-841, p. 820. See also P.K. O'Brien, 'Introduction: modern conceptions of the industrial revolution', in P.K. O'Brien (ed.), *The industrial revolution and British Society* (1993, Cambridge, 1998), p. 3.

⁴ S.D. Chapman, 'Fixed capital formation in the first cotton industry, 1770—1815', *Economic History Review*, 23 (1970), pp. 235-266, pp. 542-3.

were aware that some rationalization of the hidebound industry could be of inestimable advantage to them. If only it had been possible to increase production, as investors hoped, the meteoric rise in the price of the mineral during the Napoleonic war would have transformed the town. As it was, the renewed upper-middling presence had a rapid effect, narrowing, but not closing, the socio-economic gap with Ashbourne. Elite retailers flourished and the shopping centre had become the third or fourth best in the county for 'market town' and 'other services' by 1787 and remained so in 1828.⁵

The crucial support of substantive gentlemen for the institution of urban renaissance has been noted and in this case proved capricious. Some men who rose to riches in the industrial town were less 'polite' than might be expected, for instance the prosperous grocer Edward Mather came from a market trading background, while Jonas Heap, who introduced worsted manufacturing and left a taxed fortune of £7,500, married a widow of lower rank and lived very modestly. Even so, men of means from Derby and other places, seeking ways to invest their assets, found opportunities in Wirksworth to be good propositions, unlike their predecessors who had striven unsuccessfully to combat the apathy of town gentlemen. A few men from indigenous families who aspired to social promotion through wealth-creation were spectacularly successful.

The economy was stimulated in similar ways to Ashbourne's by regional developments and improved transportation. Thus cotton-spinning, leather trades, malting and building were in the ascendant. The construction of the Cromford canal in the 1790s was most advantageous to the town and its hinterland, carrying coal for its

⁵ N. Raven, 'Industry and the small towns of Derbyshire: evidence from the trades directories c. 1790—1850', in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840: trades, towns and regions* (Leicester, 2000), p. 83.

chemical industries and smelting works. Such developments accounted for Wirksworth's faster growth. A wide variety of fraternal and subscription societies formed the essence of the town's urban identity, being typically exclusive to men of a particular social status. Wirksworth's rising prominence was illustrated by investment trusts with a regional membership, one to stimulate the lead industry, another to build the Cromford canal. Prosperous plebeians formed friendly societies and the middling ranks joined hierarchical associations with their social superiors, as already met with in Ashbourne. Listings of subscribers to various causes were paralleled in other towns and confirmed the extent to which the occupational and social structure had diversified by 1800.

The chapter concludes with an examination of lead-mining in Wirksworth, rarely considered by historians because there was a plethora of small mines which kept no records.⁶ Willies regarded 1780 as a watershed, after which a portfolio of lead shares was 'likely to be consistently unprofitable' in Derbyshire, but Arkwright would not have been seen in 1771 as the fortuitous saviour of a town reliant on a failing industry, not even when the employment provided for 220 women and children at Wirksworth's cotton mills raised their families out of poverty and enabled them to participate in the consumer revolution.⁷ This was because the future of mining looked rosy when the Duchy built the new courthouse in 1773 and Wirksworth's lead mines were, in total, as productive as they had been previously, but (ominously) only about one tenth were profitable, so the hypothetical investor needed to make an informed

⁶ A. Raistrick & B. Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines* (London, 1965), p. 276.

⁷ L. Willies, 'Derbyshire lead-mining in the 18th and 19th centuries', *The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 14 (1999), pp. 31-33, p. 31. F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor ...* (London, 1797), vol. 2, p. 130. N. McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), p. 23.

choice. Mining remained the single most important source of male employment. As late as 1829 Pigot wrote that ‘the ore is found in great plenty around Wirksworth’, while Glover (a Wirksworthian) then referred to mines being drained by improved steam engines and having an output of five or six thousand tons of ore; at this late date he described Richard Hurt as ‘a considerable smelter’.⁸ But the end was nigh. In 1831 Pigot wrote: ‘From exhaustion and other causes, the productiveness of the mines has greatly decreased’; shortly afterwards this was signalled by incipient population decline.⁹ Thompson has observed that ‘religious revivalism took over when temporal aspirations met defeat’.¹⁰ This was borne out by the miners’ mass conversion to Methodism, contingent on the loss of mining. It illustrated the tendency for industrial communities ‘with outworking, mining and quarrying’ to favour New Dissent, perhaps because it was not deferential.¹¹

Textiles survived the cessation of mining, for the reported loss of Derbyshire’s cotton industry to Lancashire about 1795 was only relative.¹² The industry was expanding in the early nineteenth century, suffering no decline as it reached a steady-state in mid-century.¹³ Wirksworth’s cotton-mills produced narrow wares indefinitely and, as late as 1851, calico, gingham and silk-velvet were hand-woven in the town.¹⁴ However, Richards’ general theory suggested that Wirksworth was heading for a retreat

⁸ S. Glover, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby...* (Derby, 1831-33), vol. 1, pp. 311, 232.

⁹ Burt noted ‘a clear relationship between output and demography’ in lead-mining towns. R. Burt, *The British Lead Mining Industry* (Redruth, 1984), p. 192.

¹⁰ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963, London, 1968), p. 428.

¹¹ K.D.M. Snell & P.S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: the geography of Victorian religion* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 188.

¹² M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures 1700—1820: industry, innovation and working in Britain* (London, 1994), 2nd edn., p. 113.

¹³ In 1829, Haarlem mill was the prototype of nine tape mills in the county with 900 hands; overall there were then 112 mills with a total of 20,000 employees. Glover, *Gazetteer*, vol.1, pp. 252-3. ‘The textile towns maintained the mills and their communities for two centuries’. Derwent Valley Mills Partnership, *The Derwent Valley Mills and their Communities* (Derby, 2001), pp. 8, 78.

¹⁴ Pigot’s *Directory*, 1829—30.

into ‘semi-permanent backwardness’ unless the benefits of growth in the east of the county engendered sufficient prosperity for a replacement industry, textiles proving insufficient.¹⁵

5.2 Topography and shopping

Wirksworth was not frequented by tourists and was little known outside the county, the presence of lead-mining being an uninviting prospect. The town was never described in glowing terms, unlike Ashbourne, where in 1833 the ambience conveyed ‘a pleasing idea of security and social happiness’ to an envious Wirksworthian (the gazetteer, Stephen Glover).¹⁶ A traveller left a jaundiced description in 1795, describing Wirksworth (inaccurately) as ‘eternally enveloped in smoke from the “neighbouring” lead and calamine works’.¹⁷ However, two Palladian mansions built in the 1780s had improved its aspect from the east, as seen in an engraving of 1817, even if most of the town had been edited out.¹⁸

The first accurate map of the town was the tithe map of 1848 (pl. 5.21). The rectangle labelled C marks the place of the courthouse, which had been demolished thirty years earlier. Leacroft’s stone-built house (unnumbered, next to no. 456) had been standing for twenty years when the courthouse was built in 1773, not far from the Red Lion (450); these impressive buildings formed an urbane and civic focus for the town for over forty years.

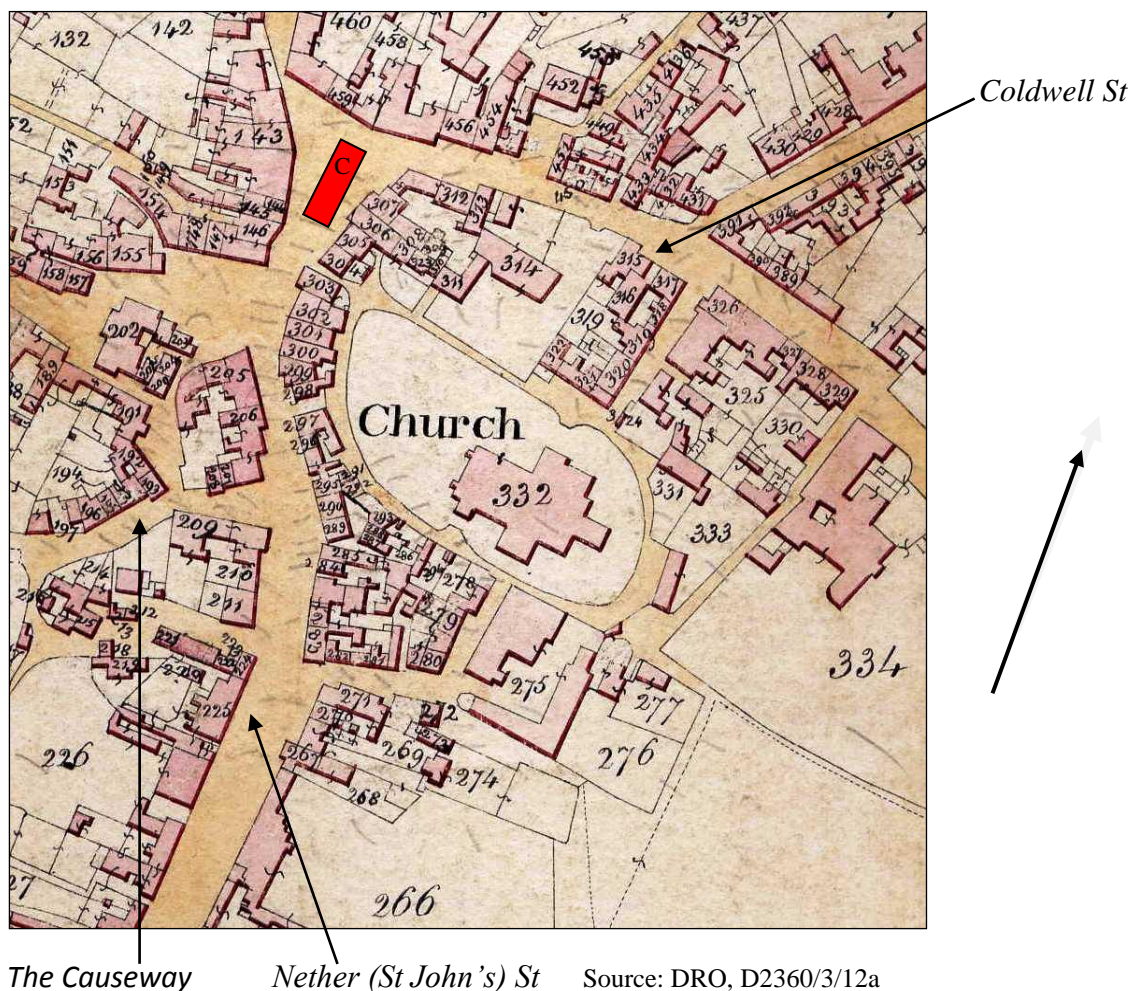
¹⁵ E. Richards, ‘Margins of the industrial revolution’, in P.K. O’Brien (ed.), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (1993, Cambridge, 1998), p. 205.

¹⁶ A. Henstock (ed.) *Early Victorian Country Town: a portrait of Ashbourne in the mid-nineteenth century* (Ashbourne, 1978), p. 8.

¹⁷ J.A. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (Newton Abbott, 1795), p. 648. The smelting works were situated well outside the town and the others were in Cromford, two miles away.

¹⁸ *Appendix*, Pl. A15, p. 268.

Plate 5.21: Wirksworth market place and churchyard in 1848, a section of the tithe plan



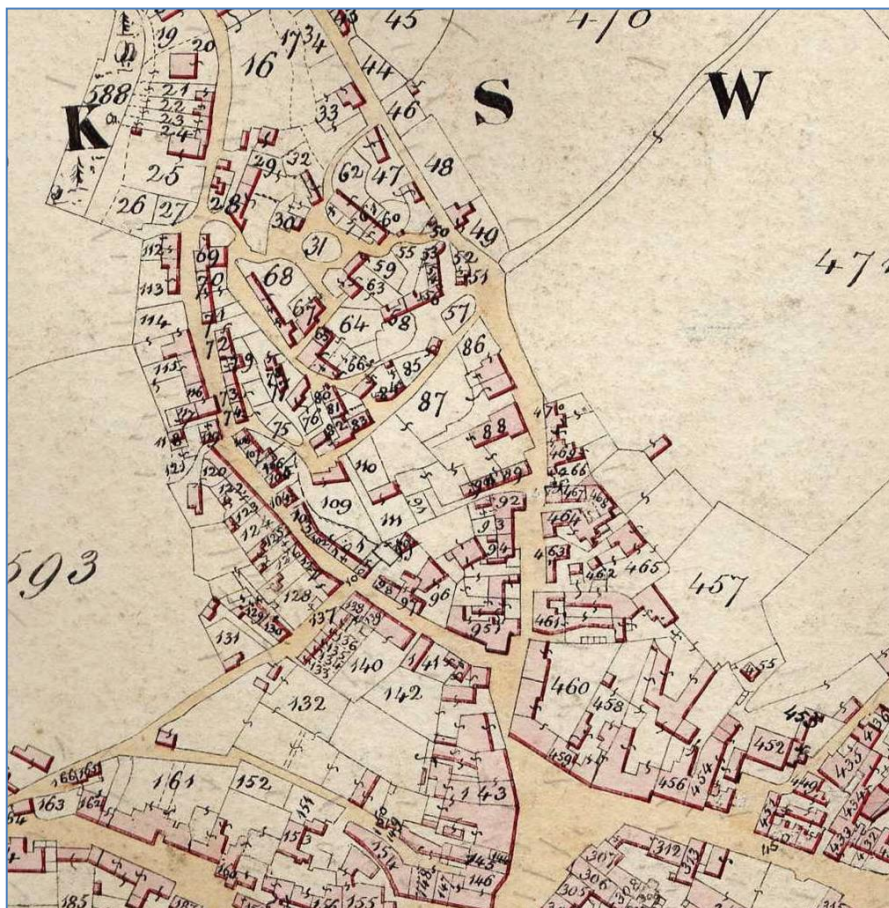
Source: DRO, D2360/3/12a

The Crown Inn of 1749, with an archway to the rear (155-6) had a very large yard with extensive outbuildings; in 1848 no. 153 was a silk mill. The élite enclave built c.1773—1800 was identified with houses currently listed and dated by *English Heritage* and numbered 298, 301-307 (two since rebuilt). One possessing its original bow window was, and is, an apothecary/chemist's shop. The development appears to be an encroachment, requiring the permission of the Duchy which owned the manorial rights to the market place. Many of the houses on the other side of the triangular space (numbered or otherwise), are probably contemporary, so there was effectively a new-built open square at the heart of the town. The row to the east of the Red Lion, and the

vicarage opposite (314) completed the development in 1800. Wirksworth Hall (334) and Nether Hall (266), built c.1780, have since been demolished; the Gatehouse (also rebuilt about this time) is extant but not on this section of the map.¹⁹ During the nineteenth century the best part of town expanded down the hill along Nether St, a broad thoroughfare soon renamed St John's St.

Consistent with what Rule has written most town miners lived in an enclave on the windswept Greenhill, to the north-west, and its western perimeter (the Dale). The whole is virtually cut off from the town and was 'guarded' from 1630 by no. 460, the extant Greenhill House, the large residence of a gentleman lead-smelter (pl. 5.22).

Plate 5.22: The Dale and Greenhill from the tithe map (1848)



Source: DRO, D2360/3/12a

¹⁹ See Appendix, Pls A13-14, pp.266-7.

In 1780 this house was appropriately in Hurt's possession, but partitioned into tenements; the only other gentleman's house in the enclave was vacated as early as 1724 to be used as a workhouse (88).²⁰ Additional cottages were built for miners in the interval 1705—1780 (earlier, rather than later).²¹ The houses shown in 1848 could not have accommodated the estimated 200 miners' families in 1800, many of whom rented cottages in the detached enclave of Bole Hill (the track shown to the north-east is in its general direction).

In 1791 the town's shopping facilities had dramatically improved. There were 23 hostelries, 23 food shops (ten grocers), 30 clothes outlets, including tailors and shoemakers, three drapers putting out work to linen-weavers, six hardware shops (selling the products of Sheffield and Birmingham), six market traders and a second-hand clothes shop, as well as a confectioner, staymaker, clockmaker, watchmaker and stationer.²² Four years earlier the town ranked fourth among Derbyshire's market towns for payment of the shop tax, only levied on premises paying rent over £5.²³ The changes were attributable to a sizable population of gentry and upper-middling sorts, lower-middling manufacturers, publicans, builders and traders and waged workers. The wages of the women and children engaged at Haarlem mill incomparably exceeded what they once earned breaking stones and washing ore (now mechanized) and could in some circumstances have doubled the family income. In 1797 a woman and two

²⁰ Originally the town house of the notorious Babington family, it was found adequate, but essentially unsuitable in 1797. Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol. 2, p. 132.

²¹ Land tax, DRO, D258/24/9/24 (1705); Q/RE (1780).

²² *UBD*. Eden found 36 ale-houses, some not in the *UBD*. Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol.2, p. 130.

²³ Buxton, £12 6s 6d; Ashbourne, £9 12s 4d; Chesterfield, £7 5s; Wirksworth, £5 12s.

I. Mitchell, "I had never seen better shops in a country town" fashionable retailing in Hanoverian Derby', *Derbyshire Miscellany*, 17 (2005), pp. 82-90, p. 84. Wirksworth paid slightly more than Nantwich (Cheshire) had in 1785 (£5 8s 7d). J. Stobart & A. Hann, 'Retailing revolution in the eighteenth century? Evidence from north-west England', *Business History*, 46 (2004), pp. 171-194, p.182. N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550 – 1820* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 5.

teenaged children could together earn 15s p.w. at Haarlem Mill, according to Eden, while Burt provides a figure of 3s a day for mining labourers in 1802 and 12s p.w. in 1818 when the price of food had gone down.²⁴ Arkwright's female workers in Cromford, two miles distant, clearly did not live in an 'isolated country district where there were few shops' (as Dauntton has supposed).²⁵ But they had little opportunity to shop in Wirksworth, since their master on one occasion refused to allow a half-day holiday per week which would reduce his profits.²⁶ His acquisition of a market charter for Cromford was an act of personal aggrandisement and control over his workers, albeit the houses he built for them set new standards of comfort and hygiene.

Before the town was by-passed by the valley road in 1818 it was a central place for trading routes, being situated near the exact centre of the county on the cusp of the limestone region, the coal-measures and the southern pastures. This was why packhorses congregated and provision was made at the Crown inn for the coaching trade, in 1747, and at the Red Lion in 1700. The town was on the major route from Derby to Chesterfield and the east coast; traffic passed the courthouse, called at the Red Lion and branched off to Cromford, where it crossed the Derwent. Another turnpike ran from Ashbourne to Alfreton (for Nottingham) through the main market place from west to east, continuing along Coldwell Street to Hurt's Alderwasley and a second (rare) crossing of the Derwent. The turnpiked route to Manchester ran via Cromford and Buxton.

It has been noted that civic pride encouraged the publication of a topographical history of Ashbourne in 1839 and Wirksworth produced one in 1863, during the hiatus

²⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol.2, p. 130. Burt, *Lead Mining*, p. 162.

²⁵ M.J. Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 180.

²⁶ R.S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights: spinners of fortune* (Manchester, 1989), p. 187.

when mining was defunct and quarrying not yet established. The town did not have an aspect of decline since it still possessed a sizable middling sector and had built a more utilitarian market hall with its own resources. The frontispiece of the work offered a realistic representation.²⁷ A solitary smoking chimney, just discernable on the horizon, belonged to a stationary steam engine which had hauled the trucks of the Cromford and High Peak Railway up Middleton Top since 1831, carrying coal, raw cotton and other goods between the Cromford canal and Whaley Bridge (Cheshire). It was designed as a short-cut to Manchester by the partners of the Butterley Company, a pioneer of rail and steam. Wirksworth's cotton mills are out of the frame.

5.3 Wealth creation

In table 5.31 figures for personal estate compiled from probates have been used to make comparisons between Wirksworth and Ashbourne.

Table 5.31: Personal estates of male probators 1700 – 1820

	ASHBOURNE		WIRKSWORTH	
	1700-1769	1770-1820*	1700-1769	1770-1820*
male probates N	345	205	325	151
sample N*	109	127	189	98
sample %	32%	62%	58%	65%
average value	£100	£645	£59	£385
median value	£26	£300	£20	£100
st. dev.	£182	£1,195	£102	£1,073

Source: LRO, BC/11. *sworn maximum

Between 1700 and 1770 the median values were almost identical, but Ashbourne's average was much higher, indicating a disparity only in the upper-middling sectors. During the later period the differences in both average and median values were high,

²⁷ Appendix, Pl. A16, p.268.

despite Wirksworth's improvement being well above inflation. By this date the reason was Ashbourne's larger numbers of rich mercers, leather manufacturers, builders and maltsters. In both towns wealth was much more polarized than it had been, market forces operating to the advantage of the upper-middling sector.

It was possible to examine and compare the relationship between personal estate and occupational status for men who left a sworn limit of £300 or more after 1770 (roughly corresponding to £150 in the earlier period, then the most frequent personalty for a man in a prosperous trade or profession). The strata were as previously defined: (I) professionals, merchants and large manufacturers, (II) 'clean', elite trades and (III) dirty, but prosperous trades (table 5.32).

Table 5.32: Male personal estate related to occupational status 1770 -1820

ASHBOURNE			WIRKSWORTH		
<i>social stratum</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>median PE</i>	<i>social stratum</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>median PE</i>
I	35	£800	I	11	£1000
II	21	£500	II	7	£450
III	35	£450	III	10	£600
<i>total</i>	<i>91</i>		<i>total</i>	<i>28</i>	

Sources: LRO, BC/11, Ashbourne, Wirksworth. Occupations from wills, the Universal British Directory (1791) and Pigot's Directory (1821).

The whole sector was three times larger in Ashbourne, but found to be subdivided into strata in the same ratios in both towns.²⁸ There was a clear wealth gap between groups I and II, but relatively little difference between the 'clean' and 'dirty' trades, in fact their profitability was inverted in the more industrial town. These figures neglect the less-prosperous artisanal strata in the lower-middling sector, inflated in Wirksworth by

²⁸ 42 Ashburnians proved wills at the prerogative court in the period 1770-1820 compared with 11 proved by Wirksworthians.

miners whose assets were mostly in small amounts of real estate; they rarely bought consumer durables.²⁹

It was also instructive to compare the patterns of real-estate holding in the two townships from a study of land tax records. In a sample year (1780) it was found that in both towns no single proprietor owned more than 5% of the real estate and the residents owned the lion's share; thus both towns could be described as 'open'. The largest holding in Wirksworth comprised 4.33% of the whole while the 20 largest proprietors (mostly residents) owned half and the rest was divided among 316 people (two-thirds resident).³⁰ In Ashbourne, the highest individual holding was a very similar 3.33%, the 20 largest holdings comprised 39% and the rest was divided among only 109 proprietors (87 being residents). But the township of Ashbourne was very small, as has been seen. From probate evidence many residents owned land in the adjacent township of Offcote and Underwood, where the historic open fields had been enclosed at an early date (the same occurred in Compton, but its records could not be isolated). Although sparsely populated, Offcote and Underwood was therefore in multiple ownership, however, proprietors' names could not be securely matched with individual townsmen. But when allowing for the fairly frequent references to land held elsewhere, Ashburnians were much richer on average than Wirksworthians, who rarely owned land outside the township.

Each township had a fixed tax liability related to the acreage (the quota).³¹ The tax was regressive since it paid the rich to improve their land by building or modernizing houses on it. As more were built or rebuilt Ashbourne revised house taxes

²⁹ Plumb excluded artisans from the middling sector. J.H. Plumb, 'Commercialization and society', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), p. 298.

³⁰ Most of the petty proprietors held copyholds of the Duchy, which lapsed into freeholds.

³¹ DRO, Q/RE. In 1780 the amounts of tax collected were c. £100 (Ashbourne) and £250 (Wirksworth).

downwards.³² But in 1780 similar sizes of dwelling seemingly paid the same tax in both towns, possibly because the assessors were Ashburnian magistrates.³³ Omitting Ashbourne Hall and Ashbourne Green Hall (in Offcote), Ashbourne's maximum charge was 16s, paid by Richard Beresford esq., Dr Taylor and John Alsopp, the same being paid by Francis Hurt on the modernized Red Lion in Wirksworth.³⁴ The Gatehouse and Leacroft's house were assessed at 12s 6d and 11s 6d respectively. The latter (five bays and three storeys) had cost over £800 to build. It was found that only substantial middling sorts could afford a house rated at 5s or more in either town in 1780, as occupational evidence from other sources showed (table 5.33). Few Wirksworthians owned houses and land together taxed over 3s, apparently because far fewer houses had been rebuilt to the new standards (fig.5.31).

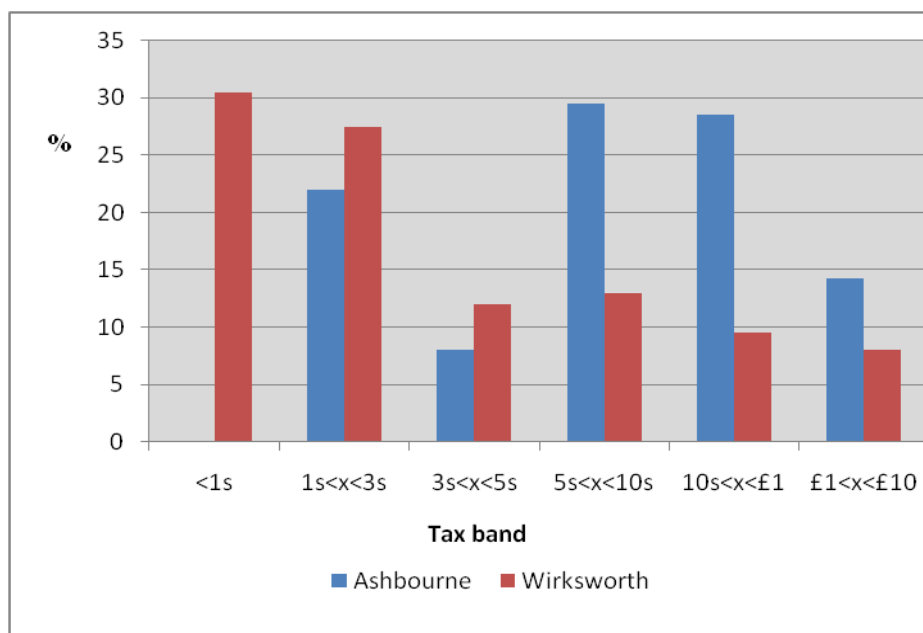
Fig. 5.31 illustrates the fact that, in 1780, thirty-odd miners living in Greenhill and the Dale owned their cottages, taxed at 6d and worth £20 (from the evidence of probates). Ashburnian cottagers rented their homes and the rates were paid *en bloc* by the proprietors, who were few, including Mrs Haynes, a gentlewoman. But during the following decades the number of small proprietors in Wirksworth decreased by 20% (fig. 5.32). This usually occurred through partible inheritance, but indicated that the younger generation of miners could not afford to buy.

³² D.E. Ginter, *A Measure of Wealth: the English land tax in historical analysis* (London, 1992), pp. 419-20. Ashbourne's excise officers were forced to subsidize the tax, reducing the quota by £40.

³³ Ashburnian magistrates assessed both towns in 1780.

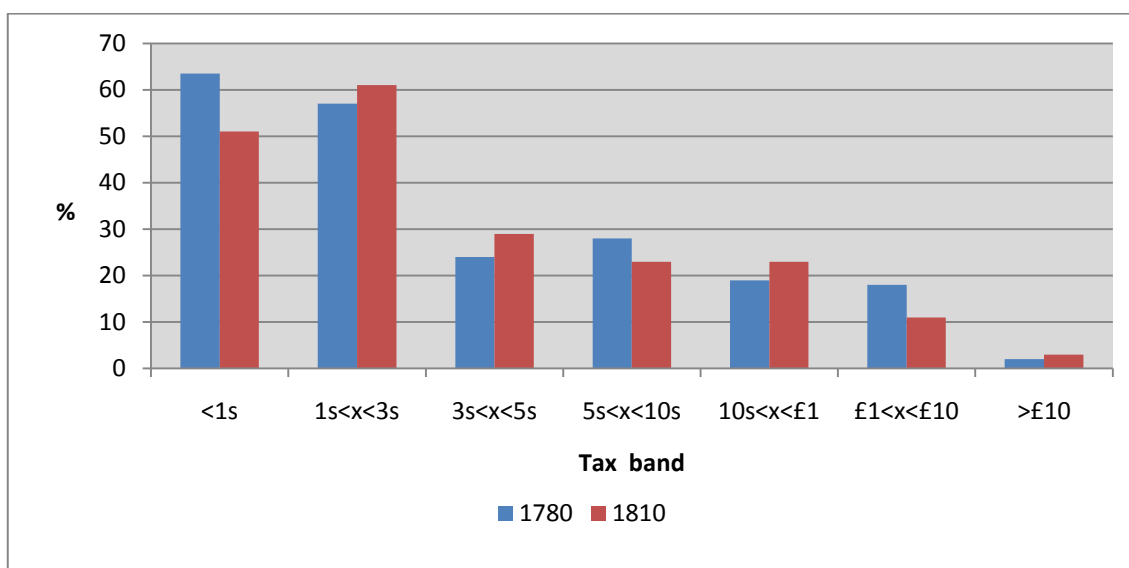
³⁴ Neither Wirksworth Hall nor Nether Hall had been built in 1780.

Fig. 5.31: A comparison of land tax paid by resident proprietors in Ashbourne and Wirksworth townships (1780)



Source: DRO Q/RE

Fig. 5.32: Land tax changes in Wirksworth 1780-1810 (resident proprietors)



Source: DRO Q/RE. Small landed estates rated over £10 in Wirksworth are omitted in fig.5.31.

Tables 5.32 (above) and 5.33 are in agreement in suggesting that three times as many Ashburnians were in higher wealth categories as Wirksworthians, whether decided by personalty or the value of their houses.

Table 5.33: Occupants of premises paying house tax of 5s or more in 1780

<i>occupation</i>		<i>Ashbourne</i>	<i>Wirksworth</i>
professional	attorney, banker, cleric, organist, physician, surgeon, headmaster	11	7
élite retail	chandler, draper, grocer, ironmonger, mercer, wine merchant	19	7
gentry		11	4
merchant	cheese, timber	1	1
innkeeper		21	6
manufacturing	brass founder, currier, maltster, dressmaker, pewterer, saddler, skinner, tanner, staymaker, weaver	13	3
food processing	baker, butcher, miller, pig- butcher	8	4
other	excise officer, miner, unknown	7	2
<i>Total</i>		<i>91</i>	<i>34</i>

Source: DRO Q/RE.

As in Ashbourne, some families with means were able to capitalize on the best ways to make a fortune in what might be described as a volatile economic climate. The yeomen forebears of John Toplis had lived for at least five generations on substantial parish freeholds which provided collateral for enterprise. In the latter half of the eighteenth century his father's generation made fortunes putting out linen to weavers. In 1775 John senior, a mercer-chandler, left property worth perhaps £5000; in 1780 his son was sufficiently credit-worthy to set up as a banker, and ambitious enough to marry the granddaughter of a gentlemen and to build Nether Hall. His uncle William in all likelihood advanced from putting-out to mill-owning, like Anthony Bradley in Ashbourne. William Toplis built two cotton mills in Nottinghamshire at Cuckney

(1785) and Worksop (1792), at a total cost of £14,750.³⁵ This investment proved over-ambitious, although tiny in comparison with Arkwright's, whose spectacular rise was the envy of all who imagined cotton-spinning to be a goldmine. (Thomas Eley, a mercer from Derby, wisely bought the established Haarlem mill from Arkwright junior). Bradley and Toplis probably underestimated the need for working capital, since both failed to survive a temporary downturn around 1800.

The banker John Toplis secured the custom of the gentry as far afield as Ashbourne and held the accounts of the Cromford canal, but his twenty-year-old bank was probably under strain at the turn of the century. In 1804 it was secured when Richard Arkwright junior bought a partnership which lasted 23 years, Toplis remaining in control until he died worth £30,000 in 1826.³⁶ This was a high capitalization for a country banker in 1800, but not at that date, so he was a cautious lender.³⁷ Lacking a male heir he did not found a gentry family, as was clearly his intention, but became a gentleman for life, appointed captain in Wirksworth's corps of the voluntary cavalry on equal terms with Francis Hurt esq. of Alderwasley and Peter Arkwright.

Dr Anthony Goodwin, the son of a Matlock yeoman, is believed to have acquired his medical training through apprenticeship, casting doubt on the validity of his degree.³⁸ However, he rose into the gentry with less effort and more permanence than Toplis through a clandestine marriage, his father-in-law having made the best of it when Goodwin married his only child at Gretna Green (a marriage at St Mary's

³⁵ Chapman, 'Fixed capital', p. 264. Early insurance valuations indicated the cost of construction.

³⁶ Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 245

³⁷ S.D. Chapman, 'Financial constraints on the growth of firms in the cotton industry 1790—1850', *Economic History Review*, 32 (1979), pp. 50-69, p. 51.

³⁸ R.P. Sturges, 'The membership of the Derby Philosophical Society 1783—1802', *Midland History*, 4 (1979), pp. 212-229, p. 220.

followed *tout de suite*).³⁹ He thereby gained possession of Wigwell Grange and manor, the largest estate in the township, where he was succeeded by his son Francis Green Goodwin, a J.P. and deputy lieutenant.⁴⁰

Grocers were exemplars of Barry's evolving bourgeoisie. In Ashbourne, Joseph Bradley's large fortune conferred high civic status on his youngest son Septimus, who kept the shop despite owning a considerable urban estate, and was a guardian of the union workhouse and a philanthropist. Wirksworth's grocers also fixed their ambitions on commercial advancement, being likewise enriched when the demand for tea and sugar descended the social scale. Edward Mather set his son up as a mercer in Leek (Staffs). When he died in 1823 two of his trustees were London grocers. As well as six houses, in good situations in the town, he left real estate in Nottingham together with 'money and securities', silver plate and a gold watch, all to his son, who retired to Wirksworth as a town gentleman.⁴¹

The career of Charles Wright (1766—1846), a native of Matlock, mirrored that of Joseph Bradley. Following an apprenticeship in Wirksworth he began in a small way as a tea-dealer, before moving into 'commodious premises' next to the Red Lion. From this excellent trading position he became Mather's chief competitor with an aggressive marketing strategy reminiscent of Bradley. His advertisement of 'cheap' tea bought in the East India Company's sale was countered in the following issue of the *Derby Mercury* by Mather's offer of 'fine' teas, a competitive price list and a plea for his customers not to desert him.⁴² Middling sorts were keen seekers after a bargain and, although the pair were far from being the only prosperous grocers in the town, Wright's

³⁹ J. Palmer, www.wirksworth.org.uk.

⁴⁰ TNA, PROB 11/1615, Anthony Goodwin, 16 April, 1819.

⁴¹ TNA, PROB 11/1668, Edward Mather, 26 March, 1823.

⁴² *Derby Mercury*, 20 April, 1797; 4 May, 1797.

business had outshone them all by the end of his long life. Table 5.51 shows that he had scoured the nation in search of the best suppliers for his purpose and the lowest prices.

Table 5.51: *The commerce of a Wirksworth grocer (1838)*

<i>commodities</i>	<i>value £</i>	<i>sources</i>
sugar	475	London & Liverpool
tallow	350	London
tobacco	251	Ashbourne*, London, Liverpool, Sheffield
tea	> 164	London & Liverpool
soap	79	Liverpool
linen yarn, wicks, cloth	58	Matlock
brushes	41	Sheffield
coffee	36	Liverpool
rice, raisins	29	London & Liverpool
hops	27	London
gunpowder	18	Wirksworth (lead shot made in Derby: £1)
wax candles	16	Derby
paper	12	Alport & Nottingham

Source: DRO, D899/2

The list is an edited version of some accounts reliably attributed to his business, in which forty-four suppliers are named. He bought a few items from local manufacturers, including some tobacco from Joseph Bradley and gunpowder made in Wirksworth, but he generally patronized wholesalers in the major cities of the realm, alternating the suppliers to force them to compete for his custom.⁴³ Daunton has referred to canals as being instrumental in the destruction of the ‘moral economy’ (which he, however, regarded as a misnomer) and there is an example here in the case of tallow.⁴⁴ Wright, like his master before him, was a chandler and could have bought tallow from local butchers (there were fifteen in the town between 1770—1820) but he evidently bought it cheaper in London. His outgoings for the year amounted to £1676, not counting his

⁴³ Thomas Turner of East Hoathley (grocer) and William Stout of Lancaster (ironmonger) similarly had wide circles of suppliers. Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, p. 182.

⁴⁴ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 328-9.

unrecorded dealings in wines and spirits reported in Pigot's directories. In 1861 his heir had a resident workforce of two grocery servants, four apprentices and three domestic servants. In the 1930s the firm of 'Charles Wright Ltd of Wirksworth, Leith and London' was blending its own brand of whisky and was a significant employer in the town within living memory (1962). Wright and Bradley were self-made men who had followed the same path to riches, re-investing the profits of small-scale tea-dealing and moving to larger premises when the time was ripe. Apprenticeship remained the mode of entry to the trade in 1861, restricting it to kin and those who could afford a premium.

The status of men who made clothes was usually low but some attracted high-class customers through superior skill and a polite address. The tailor Henry Belfield owned two houses and employed journeymen and the family expanded into Ashbourne. His nephew John made clothes for Francis Hurt senior and left a personal estate of £300. An account paid to him by Hurt listed 'a gray Cloth Coat & silk Waistcoat' costing 9s in 1783.⁴⁵ The Peal shoemakers, established in the seventeenth century, were also highly skilled and prosperous. In 1786 Peter Peal advertised for three journeymen, two with 'a neat stuff hand' to make ladies' shoes and one to make men's shoes and boots. One year later he required two more assistants, one to make women's leather pumps and shoes; when he died in 1807 he left personal estate of £600 and owned three acres of land.⁴⁶ His brother Samuel brought lasting fame to the family name. Having invented a process for waterproofing leather he emigrated to London to make his fortune. He there attracted the attention of the upper class, most likely army officers requiring waterproof riding boots. His descendants exhibited hunting and fishing boots

⁴⁵ DRO, D2535M/C278. Hurt's accounts D2535/Box C/260. LRO, Henry Belfield, 28 April, 1818; John Belfield, 28 February, 1814.

⁴⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 6 July, 1786; 24 October, 1787. LRO, Peter Peal, 13 October, 1807.

at the Great Exhibition and by the twentieth century ‘Peals’ owned several factories in London which supplied the royalty of Europe and American high society with footwear. The family sold out to Brooks Brothers of America in 1965.⁴⁷

5.4 Could there be urban renaissance in Wirksworth?

During the time when Wirksworth could accurately be described as a mining village it was politically advisable for landed gentlemen to promote the unity of the mining community with rough sports which humoured the crowd. Cock fights were held regularly and horse races on the commons occasionally, but a cricket match arranged between Wirksworth and Sheffield in 1757 appeared to be unique. The likely sponsors were Nicholas Hurt of Alderwasley, High Sheriff in 1756, and the Sitwells of Renishaw Hall, ironmasters, whose adopted heir was a Hurt.⁴⁸ The *Derby Mercury* reported ‘a larger concourse of persons of all ranks than were ever seen in this Country on such or the like occasion’ and Underdown has written of the ‘striking social mixing ... the blurring on the field of class lines which remained intact off it’ which characterized the game.⁴⁹ The miners won the handsome prize of £50 in gold when the cutlers refused to accept a dismissal; otherwise, it was a civilized affair in comparison with the food riots of the previous year, when miners broke millstones and smashed windows in Derby.⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly, urban renaissance was non-existent in 1767 when Francis Hurt esq. succeeded his brother Nicholas and shortly made a decision to rebuild his massive, medieval Red Lion Inn with a Venetian-Diocletian window combination on the façade and an assembly room. He may have been emulating Boothby, then rebuilding the

⁴⁷ www.wirksworth.org.uk. www.aim25.ac.uk (London Metropolitan Archive).

⁴⁸ R. Pearce, *Gentlemen and Players: Wirksworth cricketers 1757-1914* (Huddersfield, 2007), pp. 5, 12-13.

⁴⁹ D. Underdown, *Start of Play: cricket and culture in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 2000), p.xviii.

⁵⁰ *Derby Mercury*, 2 September, 1757.

Blackmoor's Head in Ashbourne, which itself followed immediately on the building of Derby's New Assembly Rooms. Even so, it seemed strange that Hurt managed to achieve a quorum for the formal assemblies he instigated in 1770. However, contrary to appearances, there was a *coterie* of well-born gentlemen living in Wirksworth during its period of urban decline, as well as educated professionals ministering to their needs.⁵¹ It became clear from later developments, explored below, that Hurt was interested in refocusing their attention on the town, more specifically seeking investment in lead-mining.⁵²

During the second quarter of the century these families were effectively estranged from the town, disporting themselves with sartorial extravagance at Derby's original assemblies. This is evidenced by the marriages of well-to-do Wirksworthian women to such men as Dr John Gresley esq., M.D., the grandson of a baronet from south Derbyshire, and Dr Richard Wright, M.D., brother of the Town Clerk of Derby and uncle of the artist.⁵³ The Leacrofts, who were considerable landowners and successive Duchy stewards, dominated the miners' court and enjoyed inimitable prestige. Thomas (d. 1721) had provided his three daughters with dowries totalling £2320 one of whom remained unmarried, the inventory of her will (1770) being redolent of a life spent among the county set. Her personal estate of £3588 included quantities of china, a bedroom adorned with chinoiserie, gold watches and jewellery, silk gowns and six riding habits which had enjoyed good use when she was active, and therefore 'fit only for mops'.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Their presence had attracted a bookseller offering a lending library with over 900 volumes in 1764-6, but their custom was fickle. J. Sanders, *Derby Mercury*, 29 April, 1764; 20 April, 1765; 8 August, 1766.

⁵² See Section 5.7.

⁵³ DLSL, Ince, 'Pedigrees', p. 045a (127,150,H929.2/127), www.wirksworth.org.uk.

⁵⁴ LRO, Mary Leacroft, 17 August, 1770.

In 1768, when the Red Lion was being rebuilt, Francis Harding opened his drapery shop, perhaps anticipating the formal assemblies which encouraged his trade, and he married in the year after they began. During the period 1773-9 he imported calicoes each 'season' from a Manchester firm, as did a Mrs Hawkins in Ashbourne.⁵⁵ In 1781 he was named as a trustee by Francis Tomlinson, a Manchester merchant born in Hopton (Wirksworth), whose will instructed his numerous mourners to buy their 'mourning' at Harding's shop.⁵⁶ Calicoes were the height of affordable fashion, percolating well down the social scale, being brightly patterned, washable and far more durable than the fine silk which denoted a gentlewoman. But a bolt of 'armozeen silk taffeta' was significantly stolen from the shop of Mr Blackwall in 1782, showing that he had rich customers. A near-gentleman, he was accorded his rank in the town for thirty years.⁵⁷

The assemblies were apparently successful and three years later the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gifted the town with a courthouse in pure metropolitan style, effectively the first classically-inspired town hall in the county outside Derby. This had the intended effect of upgrading the town, which was perceived as rising in the world by those who emulated its neoclassical style in new buildings.⁵⁸ Assemblies continued during Francis Hurt's lifetime, marking the high point of the town's polite pretensions. After he died, in 1785, the events were no longer advertised to the 'quality' in the *Derby Mercury* and the ageing innkeeper retired. But during his tenure of the inn John Salt

⁵⁵ B. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991), p. 127.

⁵⁶ LRO, Francis Tomlinson, 27 March, 1781.

⁵⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 10 January, 1782.

⁵⁸ Derbyshire's historian singled out elegant Georgian houses in Wirksworth and especially Ashbourne for favourable mention, remarking that the county's second town, Chesterfield, has very few. G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire* (Cardiff, 1999), vol.3, p. 1313.

capitalized on well-heeled newcomers and made the most of his contacts as a minor landowner, having promoted at least one classical concert in the new courthouse.⁵⁹

The year 1780 was Wirksworth's *annus mirabilis*, marking a turning point in the town's social credentials. Assemblies were in full swing and Charles Hurt, the second son of Francis Hurt (and therefore not the major beneficiary of his estate) married Sir Richard Arkwright's only daughter and rebuilt Wirksworth Hall with the aid of her £15,000 dowry.⁶⁰ He was a lead merchant, a bibliophile and 'a man of fashion' (as appears from Wright's portrait).⁶¹ The same year John Toplis founded the first bank in Derbyshire outside the corporate towns, one of only about 100 country banks in England at the time, and the clearest sign of the prosperity engendered by cotton-spinning.⁶² In the previous year the spectacular crash of Heath's bank in Derby was a *cause célèbre* which created an opportunity through links with the town gentry (the deceased Mary Leacroft had been a depositor).⁶³ Toplis set about building Nether Hall, which added to the polite ambience of the enclave within which a 'very handsome re-erected house lately in the possession of a surgeon' was advertised two years later, while a 'capital messuage in Nether St west newly-erected with six rooms to a floor' in 1777 was among those built to attract well-heeled newcomers by unidentified investors.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ In 1783 it was the advertised venue for a classical concert featuring harpsichord, violin and vocal solos, tickets being available from Salt, or at Matlock Bath, for 2s 6d. *Derby Mercury*, 29 May, 1783.

⁶⁰ Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p.182. The size of this dowry was the first intimation to the public of Arkwright's wealth. The Arkwrights 'arrived' after successfully targeting the *eldest* son in the next Hurt generation.

⁶¹ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol. 3, p. 1340.

⁶² Relation between cotton mills and banking: S.D. Chapman, 'The transition to the factory system in the midlands cotton-spinning industry', *Economic History Review*, 18 (1965), pp. 526-543), p. 541.

Number of banks: Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 347.

⁶³ E. Lord, *Derby Past* (Chichester, 1996), p. 54.

⁶⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 3 October, 1782; 28 February, 1777.

The town could not sustain a polite winter season indefinitely, in competition with Derby and the Duke of Devonshire's spectacular new spa at Buxton, opened in the early 1780s, and the younger generation of gentlemen did not wish for one. In 1778, in his father's lifetime, Francis Hurt junior promoted a ball in Derby's New Assembly Rooms to celebrate his marriage 'on so generous a Style that it Bordered on Profusion'; inevitably, Wirksworth's assemblies were tedious in comparison.⁶⁵ When he inherited the Alderwasley estate, Francis celebrated with a two-day race meeting on the commons which all could enjoy, offering prizes of 'purses of gold worth £50' (the minimum decreed by law).⁶⁶ The brothers were wealthy and conscious of their status. Town gentlemen did not seek to join their shooting parties, but associated with them through their mercantile activities, Charles being a lead smelter and Francis an ironmaster.⁶⁷

So formal assemblies and classical musical concerts failed to take root in Wirksworth, but the fifteen years of polite leisure forms 'interrelated with fashion' left their mark.⁶⁸ In 1775 a barber advertised for a journeyman 'who can dress hair well' and the occasion for such indulgence remained, since dancing lessons were advertised by peripatetic teachers and there were performances by the travelling theatre company based in Ashbourne.⁶⁹ 'Fancy dress', advertised by the Misses Fern (milliners) in 1805, surely required a showcase, the assembly room of the Red Lion being an obvious

⁶⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 14 August, 1778.

⁶⁶ Wirksworth races were annual events before 1734, but hardly ever reported thereafter until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when they resumed. *Derby Mercury*, 3 August 1732; 31 August, 1733; 18 August, 1785.

⁶⁷ Gun licences: *Derby Mercury*, 26 October, 1796 (etc.).

⁶⁸ B.A. Holderness, 'The Commercialization of eighteenth-century England', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 122-124, p. 123.

⁶⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 5 May, 1775; 23 January, 1806. 'Comic opera' and a two-act comedy were performed by a travelling company in 1778 in the 'old' market hall, the traditional venue. The co-existence of the old and new town halls shows that the courthouse was on a virgin site. *Derby Mercury*, 11 September, 1778.

place.⁷⁰ Soirées in the houses of the rich may be assumed to have continued, considering their owners' outlay on interior decoration. Leacroft's brick-built annexe was built on the adjacent plot, with taller ceilings (perhaps to accommodate chandeliers) and ostentatious Venetian windows. The large house mentioned above was re-let fourteen years later by a female relative of the vicar, described as 'a 17-room mansion in St John St'. It contained mahogany furniture, swing glasses, four-poster beds hung with cotton moreen,⁷¹ dressing tables, china, glass, 'a variety of flowering plants' and so forth. In another example, a Miss Wright's possessions, sold at the courthouse in 1795, included a set of 'dining, card, screen, Pembroke and tea tables', indicating a busy social life, as well as carpets, glass, china and 'a quantity of greenhouse plants', implying the attentions of a gardener.⁷² The impression that an upper crust of gentlemen and professionals enjoyed every comfort was endorsed by Walter Jessop's advertisement and sale of water closets in 1791, a successful business.⁷³ These anecdotes suggested that Wirksworth Hall and its glamorous residents attracted fashionable neighbours.

For a short period the town had a manufactory of china, the ultimate in luxurious extravagance owing to its fragility and hand-painted decorations of high quality. Philip Gell esq. of Hopton Hall discovered china clay on his land and forthwith opened a workshop in his manorial headquarters in St Mary's Gate. In 1769 a china-maker from the celebrated Derby works got married in the town, revealing the source of his skilled workforce. The manufactory survived for about eight years, closing either when the

⁷⁰ *Derby Mercury*, 14 November, 1805.

⁷¹ A heavy, corded fabric with overlaid decoration.

⁷² *Derby Mercury*, 8 October, 1795. An identical set of tables was sold by Dr Taylor's heir in Ashbourne. *Derby Mercury*, 24 March, 1796.

⁷³ *Derby Mercury*, 26 May, 1791. Jessop left a fortune of £1500. LRO, Walter Jessop, 14 October, 1809.

market was saturated, or because the products became over-ambitious. The sale included ‘very large figures, vases, urns and lamps exquisitely moulded’.⁷⁴

A more enduring symbol of urban renaissance was a private school for young ladies, advertised misleadingly as ‘near Matlock’ in 1778, by a Londoner.⁷⁵ Elizabeth Bradshaw, a pupil from c.1803—5, criticised its standards.⁷⁶ The school was then run by the Misses Stubbs, the daughters of a mine agent, who traded on the proximity of Wirksworth Hall, for Mrs Hurt (née Susanna Arkwright) voluntarily supervised the infants.⁷⁷ Elizabeth recalled her fellow pupils as ‘children of gentry and lesser folk, there to be finished off’. But although the emphasis was on manners and deportment she found the food coarse and the private facilities not up to the standard she was used to. She described Lydia Stubbs as ‘a real vixen’, keeping order by pinching the girls. Such ‘academies’ were ‘characteristic of shire towns and resorts’, according to Borsay, but were evidently more widespread, since Marshall has referred to them in Cumbrian market towns, where ‘they created expensive tastes’.⁷⁸ Elizabeth was eventually ‘finished off’ in Doncaster, a gentry resort where Yorkshire’s second race-course had a grandstand to exclude the *hoi polloi*.

Other private schools trod the same path as Ashbourne’s. A grammar school assistant opened a boarding school for boys in 1796, adding French, English grammar, writing, land-surveying and book-keeping to the humanist curriculum.⁷⁹ Five years later the headmaster of the grammar school opened another in a new house, ‘three stories

⁷⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 9 May, 1777; *Appendix*, Pl. A19, p. 270.

⁷⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 6 March, 1778.

⁷⁶ The cited visitor to Ashbourne. DRO, D1491/M/Z 1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.7. *Derby Mercury*, 5 January, 1797.

⁷⁸ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), p. 138. J.D. Marshall, ‘The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660 - 1900’, *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209, p. 172.

⁷⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 5 May, 1796.

high four rooms to a floor with closets and two cellars', boasting 'the most salubrious soft water in the kingdom on tap'.⁸⁰ By all accounts the school rivalled Ashbourne's as regards fees and educational standards. In 1818 there were thirty boarders paying £30 p.a. and nine years later, when a new grammar school was built with £900 from the accumulated funds of the Gell charity, forty-seven boys were studying the classics and others followed a commercial curriculum.⁸¹

In Wirksworth there was no equivalent to the exclusive entertainment offered at Ashbourne Grammar school, but there was a pocket of notable intellectual endeavour, with an appropriate scientific bias. Charles Hurt preferred mathematics and astronomy to Boothby's more eclectic pursuits, while the Revd Abraham Bennett, F.R.S., an assistant at Wirksworth grammar school, published learned articles on electricity cited by Volta.⁸² In the 1770s he demonstrated to the Derby Philosophical Society, attended by Charles Hurt and Dr Anthony Goodwin of Wirksworth.⁸³ They were typical of the mercantile gentry and physicians who were interested in the progressive values of the Enlightenment and attended lectures under the aegis of one of the nation's foremost intellectuals, Dr Erasmus Darwin.⁸⁴

'Philosophical' societies in British cities were exchanges for theoretical and practical scientific knowledge and Elliott has shown the nationwide links between them and with the Royal Society of London. The Derby Philosophical Society was the

⁸⁰ *Derby Mercury*, 29 January, 1801.

⁸¹ A.F. Leach, 'Schools', *VCH*, vol.2, pp. 253-4.

⁸² Turbutt, *Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1340. P. Elliott, 'Abraham Bennett, F.R.S. (1749—1799): a provincial electrician in eighteenth-century England', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 53 (1999), pp. 59-78. It was noteworthy that a French theoretician gave credit to Bennett's experiments.

⁸³ Literary and scientific associations were formalized in the 1790s, according to Morris. The term 'science' was associated with the artisan; gentlemen preferred the term 'philosophy'. R.J. Morris, *Men Women and property in England 1780—1870: a social and economic history of family strategies amongst the Leeds middle classes* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 31.

⁸⁴ Sturges, 'Derby Philosophical Society', p. 220. One member, John Whitehurst, was awarded his F.R.S. for geological research in Derbyshire. D. Vaughan, 'Whitehurst, John (1713—1788), maker of clocks and scientific instruments and geologist'. *Oxford DNB*.

culmination of half a century of scientific culture in the town.⁸⁵ As in the case of the more famous Lunar Society of Birmingham (which had some shared personnel) there was a strong Non-conformist presence of men thereby barred from university. Elliott considered that Derby's 'scientific culture' gave rise to 'the most varied and growing industrial structure' in the east Midlands.⁸⁶ Many historians have diminished Britain's industrial technology (in comparison with a supposedly-superior theoretical approach in Europe) as 'tinkering', with Arkwright in mind.⁸⁷ However, Mushet of the Butterley Company was among many who made systematic improvements in accordance with current scientific theories (which were not authoritative) as did William Strutt of Belper, a member of the Derby society. He was described as 'a mechanic and engineer of the highest distinction', whose mill was 'the most sophisticated and technically-perfect structure of its period'.⁸⁸ Elliott states firmly that 'the perceived and actual association between the acquisition of scientific and mathematical knowledge and industrial success explained the (misleading) rhetoric of utility', although fundamental theoretical research was going forward.⁸⁹

Sturges assumed that the social function of the Derby Philosophical Society overrode the scientific, because formal demonstrations, although of high quality, were

⁸⁵ Elliott, *Derby Philosophers*, p. 260.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 261.

⁸⁷ Mokyr assumed that British inventors were purely empiricists. J. Mokyr, 'Introduction' in J. Mokyr (ed.), *The British Industrial Revolution: an economic perspective* (San Francisco and Oxford, 1993), pp. 33-4. McKendrick's view was equivocal: he thought there was too little appreciation by historians of the 'ingenuity' of entrepreneurs. McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', p. 31.

⁸⁸ It had improved ventilation, fire-proofing and central heating. *Derwent Valley Mills* (Derby, 2001), p. 41.

⁸⁹ Elliott, *Derby Philosophers*, p. 261. George Green, a Nottingham miller (1793—1841), was taught to read aged 8 or 9 and was then entirely self-educated through Nottingham's equivalent of the Derby Society (a subscription library). He wrote the much admired *Essay on the Application of Mathematical Analysis to the Theories of Electricity and Magnetism* (1828). He went to Cambridge aged about 40 and his work in mathematics remains influential, having attracted praise from Einstein.

infrequent.⁹⁰ But Elliott pointed out that the Society purchased the latest scholarly books and periodicals with subscriptions and brought together university-educated physicians and local manufacturers, including the self-taught academician John Whitehurst, F.R.S., the originator of Derby's high reputation for instrument-making and the 'father of modern geology'. Charles Hurt had a considerable library himself and attended out of intellectual curiosity, as did Sir Brooke Boothby, a keen botanist. Both outranked most of the other members so had little, if any, social incentive to join. Elliott likewise dismissed any suggestion that dissenters were seeking social inclusion through their membership, since they were well-established in the borough élite from 1750—1850, the Unitarians being particularly prominent (led by the Strutts).⁹¹ At this time Wirksworth's Presbyterian heritage was in retreat, as the Buxton and Toplis families conformed to Anglicanism.

5.5 Associations and status

Barry's argument that middling sorts were identifiable through their associations may be further pursued through the subscription societies which multiplied in this period.⁹² An overview of Wirksworth's middling sector at the turn of the century was revealed in a list of subscribers to a volunteer infantry corps in 1798 (edited in table 5.51).⁹³ This data has been selected from the full parish list, in which the names of all who afforded at least 1s to the patriotic appeal were arranged according to the social hierarchies in town and hamlet. The town's ten gentlefolk headed eight professionals (four medical men) and the draper Robert Blackwall claimed similar status, paying

⁹⁰ Sturges, 'Derby Philosophical Society', pp. 212-4.

⁹¹ Elliott, *Derby Philosophers*, p. 260.

⁹² J. Barry, "'Bourgeois collectivism"? Urban association and the middling sort', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550—1800* (London, 1994), p. 84.

⁹³ *Derby Mercury*, 17 May, 1798.

more than most gentlemen (ten guineas). There were two mill-owners, including Thomas Eley at Haarlem mill and John Dally in an adjacent mill on the Ecclesbourne. The town's raised social credentials were apparent in the anonymous gifts of servants in seven gentlemen's houses, journeymen employed by the bespoke tailor Henry Belfield and the scholars of the Misses Stubbs' school.⁹⁴

Table 5.52: Contributions to the war effort in 1798 by the élite of Wirksworth

occupation	N	min	max	occupation	N	min	max
gentry	10	½ gn	£40	builder /plumber	3	½ gn	1 gn
banker	1		£20	grocer	4	½ gn	1 gn
attorney	4	2 gn	£10	hosier / worsted manu	3	½ gn	1 gn
draper	2	1 gn	10 gn	saddler	1		1 gn
physician/ surgeon	4	½ gn	10 gn	maltster	1	½ gn	
vicar			5 gn	master shoemaker	1	½ gn	
merchant	3	½ gn	5 gn	overseer of the poor		½ gn	
innkeeper	4	½ gn	2 gn	butcher	4	½ gn	
mine agent	1		2 gn	unknown	7	½ gn	
yeoman	6	½ gn	2 gn	schoolmaster schoolmistress	2	10s	½ gn

Sources: Derby Mercury, 17 May, 1798; LRO, BC/11; *UBD* (1791).

Wirksworth's inns and public houses were the venues for masculine associations of every type. Ceremonial dining occurred biannually when the Duchy court rose and the King's farmer of the royalties hosted three separate tables of miner-jurors, mining officials and gentlemen whom he feasted in appropriate style.⁹⁵ A ten-year trust set up to purchase shares in lead-mining met annually at the Red Lion, the attendees being gentlemen from the Midland region and rich traders.⁹⁶ The Cromford canal trust, whose members had a similar social background, had subscribed £80 a head to the joint

⁹⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol.2, p. 131.

⁹⁵ R. Slack, *Lead Miner's Heyday: the great days of mining in Wirksworth and the low peak of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield, 2000), pp. 11-12. After 1800 the farmer of the royalties was Richard Arkwright junior.

⁹⁶ Discussed in section 5.7, below.

stock company by 1791, in frequent £5 instalments deposited with Toplis's bank, and were still contributing in 1806.⁹⁷

Subscription societies governed by rules were characteristically urban and those formed by artisans in a single occupation have been linked by Gorsky with rapid urbanization. He cited Wirksworth as an exemplar of towns catering for the social needs of migrant labour forces of solitary young men. Eden reported eight 'friendly societies' in 1797, although their total membership exceeded the number of the town's householders, so it may be supposed that men from the hinterland gathered to socialize in the town and pay their dues.⁹⁸ Such societies were something of a regional phenomenon and suspected of being quasi-trade unions. They extended deep into the social fabric, for Pilkington mentioned 'several thousand sick clubs for the lower stations of life in Derbyshire'.⁹⁹ Some clubs are known to have existed a generation earlier, when tradesmen and substantial artisans (including miners) met separately to gamble, drink, smoke and discuss politics, as was revealed in 1770. In that year, half a dozen convivial societies in Wirksworth made common cause with 'small-to-middling voters in corporate towns' by celebrating the release from gaol of the rakish John Wilkes. Their sentiments were fully shared by their counterparts in Ashbourne, who similarly celebrated and even rang the church bells, and also by the grocer Thomas Turner in Sussex, who thought Wilkes' *North Briton* 'an extreme good paper' with 'such a spirit of liberty'.¹⁰⁰ Wilkes had no coherent political programme, but his virulent English nationalism and anti-authoritarianism appealed to lower-middling

⁹⁷ *Derby Mercury*, 28 April, 1791.

⁹⁸ Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol.2, p. 130. M. Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution of English Friendly Societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp. 489-511, p. 499.

⁹⁹ J. Pilkington, *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire ...* (Derby, 1789), vol.2, pp. 55-6.

¹⁰⁰ N. Rogers, 'The middling sort in eighteenth-century politics', in Barry & Brooks (eds), *Middling Sort*, p. 175. D. Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754—1765* (Oxford, 1984), p. 275.

Wirksworthians and Ashburnians, whose ‘Scottophobia’ dated from 1745.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it was the forty-fifth issue of Wilkes’ newspaper which was declared a seditious libel, so forty-five ‘tradesmen’ dined ostentatiously on a 45-lb buttock of beef at the Crown, to express ‘concern for invaluable rights and liberties’ (the Whigs’ clarion call). The *Derby Mercury* did not have to explain the significance of the figure when it reported forty-five miners holding an informal sheep roast in the open, while an equal company of woolcombers marched with flags and band, singing the patriotic song, *Britons Strike Home*, and drawing ‘a prodigious number of spectators’.¹⁰²

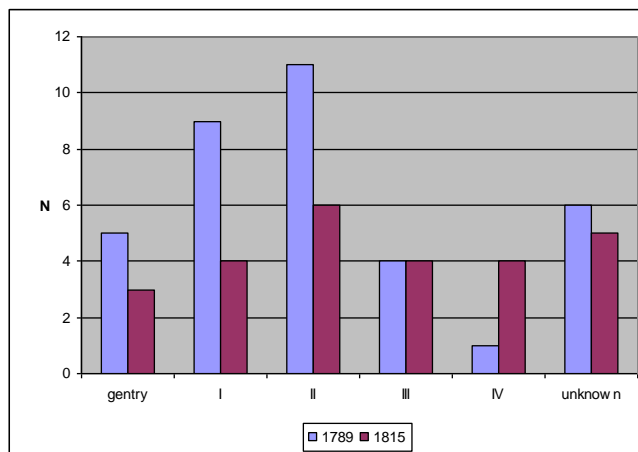
Morris’s ‘middle-class’ subscription societies included Wirksworth’s ‘Society for the Prosecution of Felons’, then the victim’s responsibility. This was a common form of insurance, set up in every town, including Ashbourne, and many villages, subscribers ranging from gentlemen to lower-middling yeomen and shopkeepers (fig. 5.51). In accordance with Morris’s theory of class-formation it encouraged fellow-feeling among middling sorts when higher status groups withdrew, as was becoming apparent in 1816. But in 1789 the town society was strictly hierarchical, the ‘prosecutions committee’ comprising every male subscriber of upper-middling status or higher.¹⁰³ There were three women on the books, but not on the executive, despite their rank (the vicar’s wife, Mrs Hurt and Mrs Kitty Taylor, a grocer). There were none in 1816 when the gentry presence had halved and gentlemen were outnumbered by artisans.

¹⁰¹ L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation 1707—1837* (London, 1992), p. 117. Report of Prince Charles Edward’s sojourn in Derby: *Derby Mercury*, 1 November, 1745. Wirksworth celebrated the Duke of Cumberland’s crushing victory with a bonfire on which an effigy of the prince was burned. *Derby Mercury*, 2 May, 1746.

¹⁰² *Derby Mercury*, 13/ 27 April, 1770. These 45 miners would have been the industry’s finest, taking pleasure in dispensing food to the population at large.

¹⁰³ R.J. Morris, ‘Voluntary societies and the British urban élite 1780 – 1850: an analysis’, *Historical Journal* 26 (1983), pp. 95-118, p. 101.

Fig. 5.51: Subscribers to the Wirksworth Society for the Prosecution of Felons



Source: *Derby Mercury*, 7 November, 1789; 11 January, 1816.

Key: I- professionals, merchants; II- clean trades; III- prosperous dirty trades; IV-artisans.

As mentioned in chapter three the governing body of the parish left few records. In the 1820s, the vestry had responsibility for the sprawling parish and its large population, the overseer being their salaried employee, as was the surgeon who treated paupers.¹⁰⁴ In 1824 a select group of upper-middling tradesmen, chaired by the mercer Robert Blackwall, set the church rates for the town and its ten hamlets, including Arkwright's Cromford, officially a market town, but rated lower than three agricultural hamlets (the Arkwright residence and Masson mill were just inside the parish of Matlock). The chief landed gentlemen of the parish occasionally offered their financial or political muscle as the last resort in times of distress. They commanded respect through their lineage, the office of justice of the peace and their considerable wealth, being happy to oblige from a combination of vested interest, high principle and the enhancement of personal prestige. In a meeting of thirteen, chaired by the banker, John Toplis, others present were Charles Hurt esq., Philip Gell esq. of Hopton Hall, the vicar and his curate, a solicitor, the churchwardens and the clothier, John Heap (Heap and Toplis being the cynosures of the entrepreneurial élite).

¹⁰⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol.2, p. 131.

5.6 Wirksworth as a microcosm of the industrial revolution

Richard Arkwright's first cotton mill at Cromford (1771) was the most significant symbol of the industrial revolution in the parish (and arguably the nation). He built Haarlem mill in Wirksworth in 1783 (seven bays and 3.5 storeys for £4200), which provided work for generations of Wirksworthians.¹⁰⁵ However, the rapid rise of worsted manufacturing in mid-century had preceded cotton spinning and was the catalyst for profound economic change. It may be dated to 1754, when the Yorkshire clothier, Jonas Heap, married and settled in the town. The fashion for worsted had not suddenly arisen, but its manufacture had inaugurated a 'cultural transformation' in Halifax during the first half of the eighteenth century. Unlike broadcloth manufacturers worsted clothiers were 'merchant-manufacturers buying wool at fairs and putting it out over a wide area to be spun and woven'.¹⁰⁶ Berg described its production as a 'supposedly stagnant' industry which 'pioneered radical technical and organizational change within rural, dispersed manufacture'.¹⁰⁷ Their *modus operandi* incorporated advanced accounting techniques and the maximization of profit, for instance, workers were laid off during downturns and strict accounting replaced the trusting system of old.¹⁰⁸ Jonas Heap would have calculated the suitability of Wirksworth as a centre for his operations. As a sheep-farming area, the Peak district had a low requirement for agricultural workers for most of the year, while lead-miners had 'short hours and numerous holidays' and were laid off in inclement weather.¹⁰⁹ There was loose manorial

¹⁰⁵ Chapman, 'Fixed capital', p. 264.

¹⁰⁶ J. Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire 1660—1780* (New York, 1994), p. 69. Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁷ Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁸ Smail, *Middle-Class*, pp. 70-3. Defoe approved the industriousness of cottagers when he visited Halifax in the 1720s, reporting that the hands of a four-year-old were 'sufficient to itself'.

Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ Burt, *Lead Mining*, p. 140..

control, so squatters might contribute to the workforce, and the local wool was of the right variety (long-staple).¹¹⁰ He himself combined the functions of woolstapler and clothier, so he fitted Berg's description of the men who masterminded the process from raw wool to buyer.¹¹¹

Domestic worsted manufacturing, controlled from the town, entailed the settlement of numerous woolcombers who constituted an urbanized, 'artisanal élite'.¹¹² Worsted suited the requirements of the consumer revolution, being a light, fashionable cloth substituting for the more expensive broadcloth (which required a higher order of skill from weavers). Jonas Heap's kinsmen were also clothiers active in the town and the indigenous Smedley hosiers rose to riches using the same material. Thomas Smedley, a hosier from a yeoman-mining background, had a warehouse in 1780, when it was taxed, and his namesake son was later described as a clothier employing town weavers. In his will (1823) he left his Bible to a weaver living in the yard of the Steeplehouse inn, a mile from the town. In 1813 it housed 'two large weaving shops with about 30 looms, a winding machine, warping mill and other articles in the weaving business', together with houses for the workers.¹¹³ He was a member of the town's middling élite, his will being proved at the PCC, and his prized possessions were similar to those of Ashburnians in his position: books, silver plate and initialled tea spoons, china and pictures, including a portrait of his 'most valued and esteemed friend' the banker, John Toplis. However, his younger brother John founded the family's long-term fortunes when he purchased a cotton mill at Lea, a hamlet of Matlock near Cromford.

¹¹⁰ Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 150.

¹¹¹ M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures 1700—1820: industry, innovation and working in Britain* (London, 1994), 2nd edn, p. 216.

¹¹² Smail, *Middle-Class*, p. 79. Twenty-five got married in Wirksworth in the period 1754—1760.

¹¹³ TNA, PROB 11/1668, Thomas Smedley, 22 Mar 1823. *Derby Mercury*, 22 April, 1813.

He or his son converted it to spin worsted which they put out to knitters.¹¹⁴ The rise of John junior was dramatic. In the mid-nineteenth century he transformed Matlock (not to be confused with Matlock Bath) from a declining lead-mining town to a spa, having built a hydropathic institute ('Smedley's Hydro') and the mock-Gothic Riber Castle as his residence on the heights above. His original mill, regularly up-dated with the latest technology, advertises itself at the present time (2010) as the 'earliest-established hosiery company in the world' and boasts an international clientèle for luxury knitwear.

Coal became increasingly important for heating in the last half of the century. The infrastructure of turnpikes sufficed to convey it before the Cromford canal became its main conduit (together with raw cotton and other goods in the 1790s).¹¹⁵ In 1803 it was the heat source for a variety of industries in Cromford, Alderwasley and Wirksworth, including red-lead and calamine manufactories, iron- and lead-smelting, soap-boiling, candle-making, malting, bleaching, lime-burning, tanning and brick-making.¹¹⁶ Steam pumps and coke-fuelled cupola furnaces had been in use in mining for many decades and the world's first use of steam in a cotton factory occurred at Haarlem, where a pump designed for mines was used to enhance the water pressure.¹¹⁷

As in most market towns, tanning was currently on a considerable scale and major innkeepers were maltsters, including Thomas Marshall, John Nuttall and Francis Walker of the Red Lion, who respectively left personal estates of £1500, £1000 and

¹¹⁴ It deprived the female hand-spinners mentioned by Eden. *State of the Poor*, vol. 2, p. 130.

¹¹⁵ E. Pawson, *Transport and Economy: the turnpike roads of eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 152, 271.

¹¹⁶ Lead was rolled into sheets (for roofing) and red-lead production for paint manufacturing was described as 'considerable', no reference being made to the trade's toxicity. Pilkington, *Derbyshire*, vol.1, p. 123. References to such industries in Knick Harley & Crafts, 'British industrial revolution', p. 822; Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 35.

¹¹⁷ Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 57.

£1000, between 1803 and 1818.¹¹⁸ Nuttall, an experienced innkeeper, bought the Crown after a predecessor's bankruptcy in 1791. Its up-market furnishings then included 'a large quantity of goose feather beds and mahogany bedsteads with cotton hangings', but it had lost trade to the Greyhound at Cromford, built by Arkwright in 1778 to accommodate his visitors. So it was fortunate that Nuttall had another string to his bow (malting).¹¹⁹ Just before he died he was excavating the under-used inn-yard for lead, with a cavalier disregard for the consequences.¹²⁰

Owing to the requirements for the paraphernalia of horse transport, upholstery, shoes and other uses, leather was in high demand and tanning provided added-value second only to wool from 1770—1831.¹²¹ Most practitioners were inured to the disagreeable trade for the sake of high profit, but Joseph Satterfield, heir to a large tanning concern, was unsuited to it and may have made the mistake of paying others to run it. Within three years of his marriage to the granddaughter of a minor gentleman (who brought him a dowry of £800) he 'declined trade' and put his tanyard up for sale, as a result of which its full extent is known: '43 pits or vats, 44 'handlers', 6 lime pits, 11 drenches, 3 drying rooms, 2 bark mills with 100 tons of bark', stock-in-trade and over four acres of land.¹²² He went bankrupt, also having to sell his wife's share of a

¹¹⁸ LRO, John Nuttall, 27 April, 1803; Thomas Marshall, 3 September, 1817; Francis Walker, 17 October, 1818.

¹¹⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 2 June, 1791. The Derwent valley road which ended Wirksworth's coaching trade for good had yet to materialize, but Cromford was a convenient place to change horses and passengers were interested in viewing the mills.

¹²⁰ In 1736 Robert Toplis (a tanner) sued George Wigley, who had exercised his right as a free miner to tunnel for lead in the cellar of his house in Wirksworth market place, between two houses owned by Toplis. Ten tons of ore worth £100 and 500 loads of soil were excavated. Toplis (a kinsman of the banker) struck a blow for civic values when he won his suit on a judgment of Solomon: it was lawful to excavate lead ore, but not soil. Derbyshire LSL, *Woolley Mss*, 6685 f.172-173. Wirksworth Hall was demolished in the early twentieth century as a result of subsidence caused by mining; possibly this affected the courthouse, although its removal certainly enlarged the market place.

¹²¹ Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, p. 52.

¹²² *Derby Mercury*, 13 October, 1796.

tanyard and seven houses, stables, buildings and gardens in exclusive Full St, Derby.¹²³ There were also several skimmers curing sheepskin. Anthony Poyzer had property worth £1000 in 1791, including ‘7 bays of building, 600 pelts in the lime, 200 pelts ‘in the wool’, 800 in the oil, a quantity of unfinished leather, wash leather and 40 packs of wool.’¹²⁴ His eldest son James had his own yard and left a much larger fortune of £5000 in 1818, after adding his father’s premises to his own. Jonas Heap’s nephew and heir, John Heap, apparently bought wool from the Poyzers (a by-product of skinning), since he married into their family. As in Ashbourne, the trade was integrated into the innkeeping, malting and leather-producing network. Another similarity was the fact that Poyser’s aunt worked as his leather-cutter, apparently cutting out breeches; in fact, six breeches manufacturers in the town were skimmers putting out work to tailors.¹²⁵ Among them was Edward Griffin (1728—1794), who employed three of his kinsmen. One of his daughters married Jonas Heap’s cousin George, further strengthening the commercial link with clothiers.

Skimmers who manufactured breeches made substantial fortunes in both towns, even though leather breeches were supposedly ‘deeply’ unfashionable.¹²⁶ Perhaps army contracts were partly responsible. In 1794 the recently-bereaved ‘Widow Griffin’ and Joseph Morley of Ashbourne were given contracts by the Ashbourne and Wirksworth cavalry (the yeomanry) for breeches in white leather. William Hurd and Peter Peal were their boot-makers, Robert Blackwall and John Riddlesden their drapers and hatters and

¹²³ *Derby Mercury*, 4 January, 1798; LRO, Samuel Mellor, 13 January, 1802. DLSL, Ince, ‘Pedigrees’, p.52d (-,181,H929.2/155), www.wirksworth.org.uk.

¹²⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 6 October 1791.

¹²⁵ Rule noted that research into ‘proto-industry’ other than textiles and nailing is rare. J.G. Rule, *Albion’s people: English Society 1714-1815* (London, 1992), p. 111. This research includes leather manufacturers in the trade. LRO, Anthony Poyzer, 15 May, 1799; James Poyzer, 21 May, 1818; Mary Poyzer, 31 January, 1812, leather-cutter (fortune £100).

¹²⁶ Francis Place, apprenticed to a breeches-maker, wrote that leather had been abandoned by all classes in 1780. Lemire, *Fashion’s Favourite*, pp. 89,102.

Robert Whiston and Isaac Pearson their saddlers. The cavalry were drawn from the upper social ranks of the towns and these suppliers (one per town) were the élite in their trades, all accorded the honorific except Mrs Griffin (who surely deserved it).¹²⁷ Thousands of men were kitted out during the war, for instance, 6,594 volunteered for the infantry to which Wirksworthians contributed in 1798, and a militia regiment was conscripted in Wirksworth Hundred in 1809 (the town being briefly accorded its authority over Ashbourne).¹²⁸

The question of whether the industrial revolution empowered workers to shop for other than necessities may be addressed. Pessimists have pointed out that only 10% of the income of 'working class' families was discretionary and de Vries described those engaged in domestic industry as 'marginal' workers consuming sugar, tea and spirits to make their drudgery bearable.¹²⁹ Styles disagreed, arguing that labourers worked hard in order to consume, 'or stole what they desired'.¹³⁰ Six market traders and one seller of second-hand clothes lived in Wirksworth and perhaps were the only ports of call for labourers' families. Second-hand clothes were not suitable for rough work, having been sold to shopkeepers by richer folk, or given by them in exchange for new. Moreover, they were not cheap and were thought by Lemire to have been purchased for leisure and often pawned for their value.¹³¹ Styles has used paintings of laundresses, servants, and Stubbs' well-known 'hay-makers' to give indications of plebeian working dress. Their wages allowed most single women to purchase *colourful* clothes new, for

¹²⁷ *Derby Mercury*, September 4, 1794.

¹²⁸ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, pp. 1253-4.

¹²⁹ S. King & G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English economy and society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2001), p. 153. J. de Vries, 'The industrial revolution and the industrious revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 54 (1994), pp.249-270, pp. 3, 151, 100 -104.

¹³⁰ J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 6, 14.

¹³¹ M. Lambert, "'Cast-off wearing apparell': the consumptional distribution of second-hand clothing in northern England during the long eighteenth century", *Textile History*, 35 (2004), pp. 1-26, pp.1-2.

the first time in history, and to own a hat covered in black silk, which cost 5s (less than a gown).¹³² Styles' laundresses wore leather bodices and coloured petticoats with the obligatory white linen hat for work (no gown or boned stays) and this was well-paid work.¹³³ In Wirksworth hand-weavers' wages would have reached their historical peak in the 1790s and cotton mills employed women and children from a high percentage of poor households on good wages.¹³⁴ McKendrick's theory that factory wages afforded the purchase of fashionable dress and household objects was feasible and Lemire's assertion that the 'improving working classes' afforded bright clothes and furnishings was believable.¹³⁵

As regards Stubbs' 'haymakers', the above-stairs servants of the rich were as well-dressed as most people below the élite and it seems that some had been pressed into service on the demesne to bring in the harvest. The men's white stockings are a give-away and the elegant corseted figure of one young lady contrasts with another picture of rustic finery, even if her attitude had not seemed inappropriate.¹³⁶ Stubbs' original version of the painting had the women more realistically wearing straw hats, not their best black silk, for the task.¹³⁷

Table 5.61 is a list of men willing to accept banknotes in 1797 which is comparable with that given above for Ashbourne, when its significance was explained. The total of 40, compared with 63 in Ashbourne, is perhaps higher than expected.

¹³² In the mid 1770s a Manchester firm offered 478 different designs of cloth, the vast majority being relatively affordable and washable. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite*, p. 95. But it was perhaps more likely that the poor bought calicos produced by domestic weavers (mentioned twice in relation to Ashbourne).

¹³³ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 42-3.

¹³⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, p. 130. J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981), pp. 25, 168.

¹³⁵ McKendrick, 'Commercialization and the economy', p. 23. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite*, p. 55.

Drab colours were previously worn by the poor: Lemire, 'Second-hand beaux', p. 396.

¹³⁶ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 68, 10, 29.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

Table 5.61: Wirksworthians willing to accept banknotes in 1797

<i>occupation / status</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
cooper	artisan	1	
plumber/glazier	artisan	1	
saddler	artisan	1	
shoemaker	artisan	3	6
breeches maker	manufacturer	1	
cotton master	manufacturer	2	
iron master	manufacturer	1	
lead smelter	manufacturer	1	5
skinner/ tanner/ currier	merchant/processor	5	5
banker	professional	1	
lawyer	professional	2	
school proprietor	professional	1	
surgeon/physician	professional	2	6
hosier	putter out	3	
worsted maker/clothier	putter out	2	
mercier	retail/putter out	1	6
grocer	retail	4	4
gentleman		4	4
innkeeper		2	2
unknown		2	2

Sources: *Derby Mercury*, 9 March, 1797; *Universal British Directory*, 1791; LRO, BC/11.

The most surprising difference with Ashbourne is the presence of three shoemakers. One could have been the bespoke shoemaker, Peal, but comparison with Ashbourne suggests that they were middlemen engaged in putting-out operations and not necessarily shoemakers themselves. There were some very rich men, but not so many in the intermediate category (maltster or miller) as in Ashbourne, implying that such men traded only in the town and its exceptionally large hinterland. The town was less genteel than Ashbourne on several counts; it had only two superior inns against five, no bookseller or stationer of high standing and six professionals against seventeen. Both lists recorded four armigerous gentlemen.

5.7 Lead mining

In 1771, the year Arkwright signed an agreement to build his first mill, any fear that investment in mining might be diverted into the textile industry seemed premature

and unlikely to be the rationale for the coincidental foundation of the élite ‘Society for the Encouragement of Mining in the Wapentake of Wirksworth.’ It was an investment trust formed by Francis Hurt to purchase a portfolio of shares in lead mines to revitalize the industry, the members pledging £5 p.a. for ten years. Hurt had persuaded mercantile gentlemen and well-to-do traders from as far away as Birmingham to join and to subscribe regularly (the meetings were advertised in the press), so a total of £3750 was expected if none defaulted. One-third of the seventy-five members who met annually at his Red Lion inn were gentlemen, supporting Landes’ assertion that ‘Gentlemen made decisions that are the hallmark of active entrepreneurship during the industrial revolution’(table 5.71).¹³⁸

Table 5.71: Membership of the Society for the Encouragement of Mining in the Wapentake of Wirksworth (1771)

	<i>Derbyshire</i>	<i>Elsewhere</i>
Gentlemen	27.4%	10.7%
Traders, smelters, merchants	42.4%	21.9%

Source: R. Gould, ‘Capital formation in the Wirksworth lead-mining industry 1700-1800’, *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 6 (1977), pp.233-240, p.239.

The whole episode is fraught with ulterior motives. In 1782, when he made his will, Francis Hurt owned the cupola smelting works, a rolling mill to produce sheets of lead for building and two red lead mills in Wirksworth.¹³⁹ In 1771, from his and the Duchy’s perspectives, Wirksworth’s lead industry was uniquely hampered by the free-mining code which caused inefficient fragmentation. A consolidated company which integrated mining, smelting and drainage (as the first London Lead Company had

¹³⁸ There were only nine tradesmen and professionals from Wirksworth: a banker, an attorney, two grocers, a mercer, a rope-maker, a hosier, a physician, and the innkeeper of the Red Lion. See also Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 28. D.S. Landes, ‘Technological change and industrial development in western Europe’, in J. Hoppit & E.A. Wrigley (eds), *The industrial revolution II*, p. 135.

¹³⁹ DRO, D2535 BOX C/ 226.

achieved in Winster) could exploit the lead field more efficiently and make far more profit for the gentleman smelter, the Duchy and (incidentally) the vicar.¹⁴⁰ But it was impossible to buy a large holding in violation of free miners' rights, hence the drip-feed of carefully-chosen shares to be bought anonymously by the Society in the most profitable mines.

The first meeting took place in the last week of March, 1771. Two months later, the Duchy advertised that the old 'moot hall' (a timber-framed market hall on arches) was to be demolished and sought tenders for its replacement.¹⁴¹ This was no coincidence. When Hurt formed a partnership the following year to drive the immensely costly Meerbrook sough, in order to drain the mines once and for all, suspicions were finally aroused and small proprietors and miners convened and advertised a meeting on neutral ground at Matlock Bath, to oppose 'the suppression of the mining customs'. This intention was immediately denied by a notice in the press from Hurt and his partners, Philip Gell of Hopton Hall and George Evans (banker), whose apparent aim was to undermine the customs legally, by gaining a controlling interest.¹⁴² However, the extent to which the Duchy could exercise discretion is obscure. In 1771 an (apparently) unrelated petition from the 'New London Lead Company' had been received with favour at headquarters, although the sixteen named partners were Londoners with no connection with the town whatsoever. This company gained ownership of the aptly-named 'Good Luck' mine, drained it with a horse mill and later a steam pump and employed local labour. Its output was to make 'a significant contribution' to the town's

¹⁴⁰ Raistrick & Jennings, *Lead Mining*, pp. 176, 249. The London Lead Company was a joint-stock company formed in 1692. J. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 170. It introduced the first cupola furnace in Derbyshire in 1730. Turbutt, *Derbyshire*, vol.3, p.1176.

¹⁴¹ *Derby Mercury*, 29 March, 1771; 1 May, 1771.

¹⁴² Francis Hurt's initials and the date 1772 appear on the entrance to the sough. *Derby Mercury*, 24 April, 1772; 1 May, 1772.

production.¹⁴³ From this time onwards 10% of the mines (including this one) made the industry viable.

Between 1772—3 the Duchy proceeded to build an edifice which would do justice to investors' expectations, a statement of confidence in the industry. Before the decade was out, Hurt's younger son Charles was assisting his father and very soon inherited all his lead-mining interests. Francis Hurt had outlived the life-time of his high-powered investment trust. The destination of its investments is unknown, but it aroused the interest of investors in general and arguably revitalized the town. Hurt's sough created work for miners and made slow progress when investment waned. Just before the Cromford canal intervened an over-enthusiastic memorandum from the son of a mine agent calculated that Meerbrook sough could drain 'the whole valley from Duffield' at an estimated *further* cost of £175,000, fill a canal and open 'mines of inexhaustible wealth' (*italics added*).¹⁴⁴ The attempt to drain the town's aquifers proceeded in fits and starts for three-quarters of a century, achieving limited benefit for mining but affecting the rival industry severely. The Ecclesbourne's flow was permanently reduced and Haarlem mill had to use a steam pump; the water supply to Arkwright's Cromford mills failed, forcing his son (who never used steam) to close them in 1846.¹⁴⁵ The sough was never completed owing to the loss of the industry (mines below the Derwent could not be drained by gravity in any case). However, the

¹⁴³ R. Gould, 'The activities of the London Lead Companies in Wirksworth: a brief summary', *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 7 (1978), pp. 28-30, pp. 29-30.

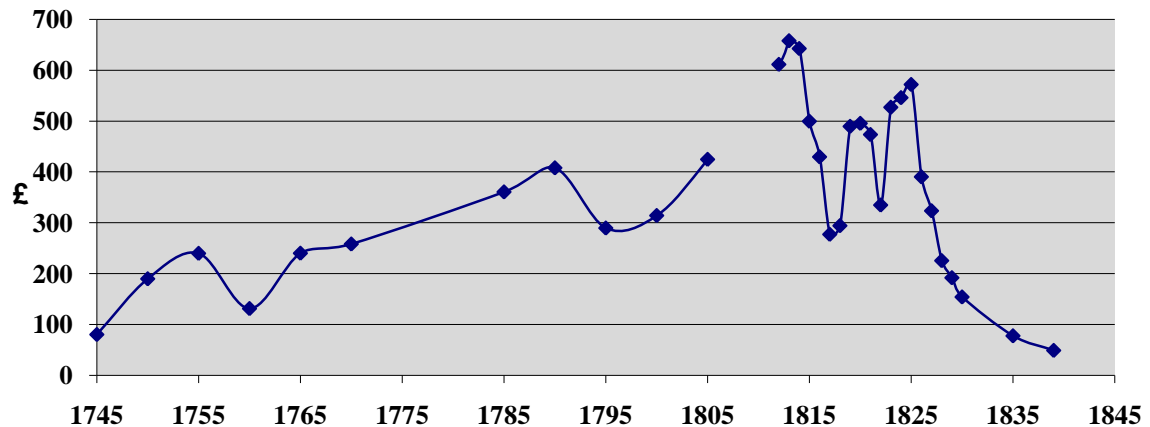
¹⁴⁴ G.B. Tissington (son of Anthony Tissington F.R.S. a mine agent and geologist), 'Observations upon the state of the lead mines in the soke and wapentake of Wirksworth called the King's Field in the county of Derby.' DRO, DS289/1/12/1. Modern geologists discount reserves of ore. Willies, 'Derbyshire lead-mining', p. 33.

¹⁴⁵ Arkwright's water supply derived from Bonsall Brook, not the 'legendary Cromford sough' according to Chapman, 'Transition to the factory system', p. 531. However, the British Geological Survey has shown that both sources contributed to the flow. www.bgs.ac.uk.

cost was not wasted. The flow from the sough at the present time is 3.75 million litres per day and forms part of the public water supply.¹⁴⁶

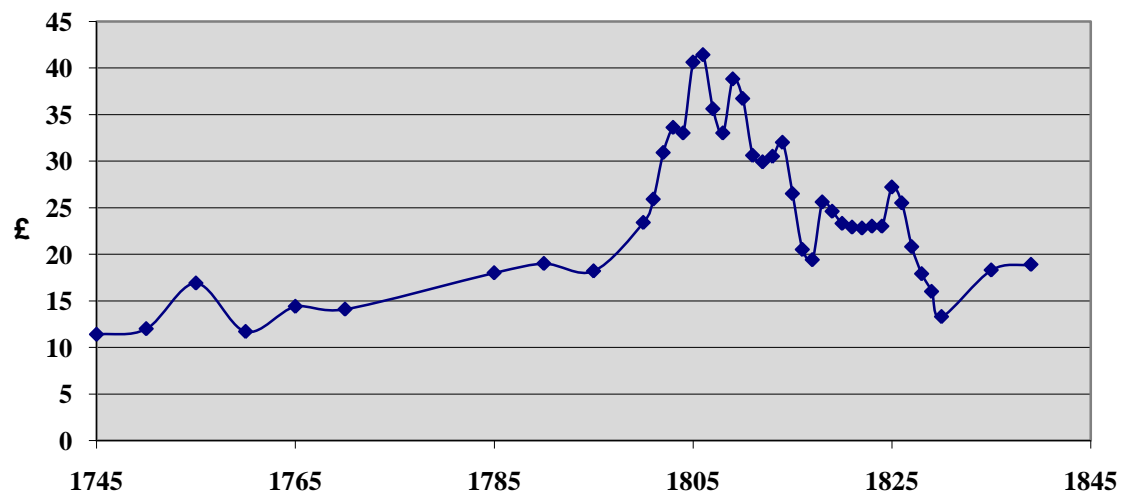
In fig. 5.71 the tithe receipts from 1740—1840 are used as a proxy for lead production, which may be compared with the movement of lead prices (fig. 5.72).

Fig. 5.71: The annual value of tithes on ore mined in the parish of Wirksworth 1740 – 1840, augmented with estimates based on mineral royalties 1812—1820



Sources: DRO, D3105A/P1/9, 1-5; D163/15/1.

Fig. 5.72: Prices of pig lead per fodder (ton) 1740-1840



Source: Burt, *Lead Mining*, pp. 304-5.

¹⁴⁶ Raistrick & Jennings, *Lead Mining*, p. 225. Glover, 'Gazetteer', p. 311. www.bgs.ac.uk.

Between 1800 and 1821 (except for 1805) there is a chasm in the tithe record which has been partially filled from 1812 using a fragmentary record of Richard Arkwright's royalties. (The ratio between the tithes and the royalties from 1821 was not quite exact and was averaged).¹⁴⁷ The form of the graphs shows that the value of the tithes followed market prices fairly closely up to 1800, implying that production was relatively constant. It was limited by the rate at which the mines were drained and, in practice, it never increased, because technological improvements were offset by the difficulty of mining at ever greater depths. A period of considerable fluctuation in prices during the war coincided with the chasm in the tithe record, but it was only in 1830 that the tithes failed to reflect an upturn in prices and moved towards zero indicating that the field was worked out.¹⁴⁸

In 1811 Arkwright noted the cost of the lease on the royalties as £13,600, which seems to have been the cumulative value of two, successive payments. Although Gould considered that he was buying prestige, he made a paper profit, but since the royalties were paid in ore he would have had smelting costs.¹⁴⁹ The year 1825 was one of his best, but followed by one of his worst, however, he renegotiated the lease in 1827 for £5500. Since the tithe was set at 1/40th of the ore the total production in 1825 was worth £23,000, representing c. 850 tons of metal. Productive mines were owned by anonymous consortia and partnerships of local builders, rope-makers and grocers (for example) who employed labour on moderately good wages. Marginal miners were independents who scavenged worked-out mines and were reported to be desperately poor, although other employments were available to most (some were shoemakers or

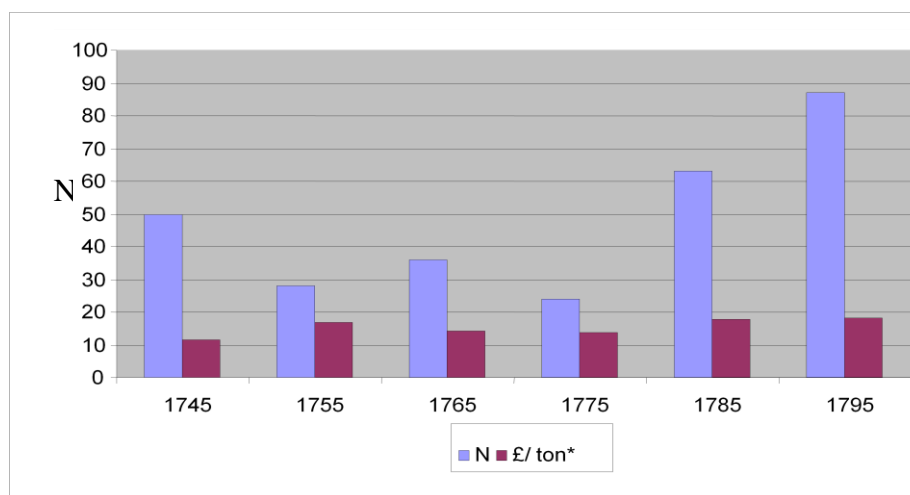
¹⁴⁷ Arkwright's Mineral Dues (1812—1840). DRO, D163/15/1

¹⁴⁸ Raistrick & Jennings, *Lead Mining*, p. 278.

¹⁴⁹ Gould, 'London Lead Companies', p. 30. Gould, 'Capital formation', p. 277.

even woolcombers).¹⁵⁰ By sampling the tithe record every decade after 1745 it was found that individual ‘free miners’ increased in number in the last two decades of the century in line with the population. The hopes of most were dashed and inevitably there was over-manning (fig. 5.73).

Fig. 5.73: Men with title to a mine compared to the price of lead 1745—1795.



Sources: D3105A/P1/9, 1-5. Burt, *Lead Mining*, p304. *fodder

Absentee investors appointed local mine agents. These ‘middle-management’ positions carried prestige and higher rewards, distancing their holders from the rank and file and enabling some to become men of means. In 1775 it was reported that Anthony Tissington of Alfreton was a ‘gent and now esquired aged 80’.¹⁵¹ A Wirksworth miner from the age of eight, he rose to mine agent at twenty-five, was barmaster of Matlock aged thirty and accorded his F.R.S. owing to his expertise as a geologist.¹⁵² Another agent, Edward Stubbs (1727-1781) sent his daughters to an academy, enabling them to open their own, as has been seen. In the mining enclave of Bole Hill the Knivetons

¹⁵⁰ Gould, ‘Capital formation’, p. 22. Labourers earned 3s a day in 1810 and the rate did not significantly decrease, while craftsmen could earn double. Burt, *Lead Mining*, pp. 162-163.

¹⁵¹ DLSL, Ince, ‘Pedigrees’, p. 028d (-, 91,H929.2/73). www.wirksworth.org.uk.

¹⁵² P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009), p. 64.

significantly invested the profits of their agency in weaving shops.¹⁵³ Sough-masters, including Francis Hurt, retained agents to keep a check on water levels and to collect dues, which was not a task for the faint-hearted. Anthony Tissington's wealth derived from bargains he had struck with sough-masters for part-ownership.¹⁵⁴

A minority of miners left wills, being in possession of real estate and sometimes described as 'yeoman-miner'. Their low personal estate shows that they led the abstemious lives of their forebears, eating well and drinking immoderately, but investing savings and windfalls (table 5.72).¹⁵⁵ They may have dressed in a fashion appropriate to their middling status, considering that many had other employments, but rarely farming.¹⁵⁶ In 1780 roughly one-third of 65 identified miners owned at least one cottage.¹⁵⁷ Only about ten had enough land to support any commercial use; four mentioned livestock and two who received beast-gates after enclosure rented them to farmers. In 1780 a substantial minority of these men were letting out cottages in the miners' enclaves (tables 5.73, 5.74).

Table 5.72 Tax paid by Wirksworth lead-miners on real estate in 1780

<i>tax</i>	<i>6d - 9d</i>	<i>1s - 2s</i>	<i>2s 3d - 4s 6d</i>	<i>5s - 12s</i>
1 house	29	12	4	
2 houses		7	3	2
3-5 houses		3	1	3
land	2	1	4	7

Source: DRO Q/RE

¹⁵³ Gould, 'Capital formation', pt 2, p. 22.

¹⁵⁴ In 1756 he was one of four 'part owners and proprietors' of the successful Cromford Moor Sough. Derbyshire LSL, *Woolley Mss*, 6684, pp. 153-163.

¹⁵⁵ The town had 15 butchers and 9 bakers in the period 1770 —1820.

¹⁵⁶ Burt, *Lead Mining*, p. 167.

¹⁵⁷ It is impossible to identify all the miners in the land tax record owing to a lack of occupational descriptors in the source. However, one third of the bridegrooms in the town, c. 1760, were described as miners. Using the township population of 3000 in 1801 as a guide, there would have been perhaps 200-220 miners, not all full-time.

Table 5.73: The personal estate of a sample of parish lead-miners 1700 - 1820

	1700-1769 (n=26)	1770-1820 (n=33)
average	£17	£57
median	£16	£20
st.dev.	£15	£70

Source: LRO, BC/11.

Table 5.74: The real property of a sample of parish lead-miners 1700 – 1820

<i>n</i>	<i>PE</i>	<i>house</i>	<i>>1 house</i>	<i>land</i>	<i>mine shares</i>	<i>*admon</i>
13	£5	5	2	6	3	
14	£6-£19	4	6	6	5	1
18	£20	7	5	8	5	5
2	£21-£99					1
9	£100	2	2	7	1	1
3	£200- £300		2	1	1	1
% of 50 *		36	34	56	30	

Source: LRO, BC/11 Note: *admons supply personal estate only.

Miners raised funds on mortgage to finance enterprise or to tide them over a lean spell. When he died in 1767 Arthur Spencer had saved £60 to redeem his mortgage at his death, so unless lenders were profligate his real estate was worth a tidy sum. He had perhaps used the money to buy the mine shares he owned and two cows (he either sold milk or cheese).¹⁵⁸ In the good times shares returned yields well above the 4-5% cost of borrowing. Robert Frost expected the dividend from his part-shares in three mines to amount to £15 at a ‘reckoning’ in 1757; on a lesser scale, William Flint paid his executors a guinea out of his meagre personalty of £5 to raise a mortgage on his house on Greenhill in order to pay his debts and repair the house (said to be worth £20) for his heir.¹⁵⁹ William Bamford’s will referred to five leases and two freeholds he owned on various houses, together with a shop he had bought to sustain his widowed daughter-in-

¹⁵⁸ LRO, Arthur Spencer, 19 October, 1767.

¹⁵⁹ LRO, Robert Frost, 21 October, 1757; William Flint, 13 December, 1768.

law, 'so long as she bears my son's name' and 'a little beer house and garden next to the churchyard' where he doubtless passed his retirement.¹⁶⁰

Other miners aspired to run a public house when their physical powers failed. Matthew Flint had three barrels, three cheeses, pewter plates and dishes, and a long table together worth £5, while Samuel Colledge and Joseph Moore respectively kept a brewhouse and a bakehouse, by-employments which implied some substance.¹⁶¹ John Hawley, d. 1815, a miner-innkeeper, left personal estate of £300, including cash, securities, 'plate, linen and china', as well as considerable real estate.¹⁶² The title of 'free miner' was respected in Wirksworth and used by men who would be physically incapable of the long vertical climb to the surface, as well as richer men who paid others to mine. William Wigley, d.1773, was a weaver who called himself a miner, having title to three mines. He lived in a large house and owned two others and a small-holding, but his domicile was sparsely furnished with a loom, spinning wheel and clock among contents worth only £12. His properties entitled him to several pews in church (unusual for a miner) which he and his sons attended. The unique name of his second son, Obadiah, also a weaver, figured for thirty years in the lead-tithe books and he was a prominent townsman, paying land tax of 9s 6d on two houses in 1780.

Snell and Ell found a statistical probability that parishes where real estate was heavily subdivided among many proprietors, as in Wirksworth, were breeding grounds for religious dissent.¹⁶³ But in 1797 there was little evidence of this. Eden wrote that Wirksworthians were 'chiefly of the established Church', although Wood has maintained that miners were infidels, having noted their bitter opposition to tithes

¹⁶⁰ LRO, William Bamford, 6 April, 1716.

¹⁶¹ LRO, Matthew Flint, 17 April, 1771; Samuel Colledge, 5 October, 1770; Joseph Moore, 14 October, 1812.

¹⁶² LRO, John Hawley, 10 October, 1815.

¹⁶³ Snell & Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p. 375.

(which led to poor relations with the vicar) and their irreligious, but superstitious, ale-house culture.¹⁶⁴ However, in the nineteenth century the disintegration of their industry was the trigger for a mass conversion of miners to Methodism, when they had nowhere else to turn.¹⁶⁵ Profanities were banished from their speech and the immoderate use of alcohol from their diet.¹⁶⁶ Burt is no friend of ‘the old empty puritan values’ but he remarked upon the social revolution which ensued.¹⁶⁷ His argument that Methodism facilitated ‘an upsurge in education and literacy’ and was responsible for a ‘new industrious and highly provident class’ of former lead-miners by 1857 may, however, be questioned.¹⁶⁸ The miners’ friendly societies predated their mass conversion by many decades and they were as literate as the next townsman. As regards their savings, a poor law commissioner noted that the ownership of a cottage represented a miner’s last shred of respectability and men declined poor relief rather than relinquish it.¹⁶⁹

5.8 Conclusion

This was a period of challenge and change for Wirksworth. Manifestations of the long industrial revolution offered hope for the future and were responsible for a diversification of the town’s economy and higher wages. The wealth created by the coexistence of lead-mining and the modernizing textile industry assisted the town’s regeneration, symbolized by its vibrant shops after a period in the doldrums. This undoubtedly signified the ability of most townspeople to participate in the consumer

¹⁶⁴ Eden, *State of the Poor*, p. 130.

Wood, *Politics of Social Conflict*, p. 193.

¹⁶⁵ Snell & Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p. 5. A Methodist chapel was built in the miners’ enclave in 1828.

George Eliot’s aunt, Diana Evans, the model for the saintly heroine of *Adam Bede*, preached there to the miners.

¹⁶⁶ The Revd James Pilkington had never heard such ‘rudeness, indecency and profaneness’ as existed in the speech of Wirksworth miners around 1800. Pilkington, *Derbyshire*, vol. 2, p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Burt, *Lead Mining*, p. 182.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 182-3.

¹⁶⁹ Burt himself recorded this, *Lead Mining*, p. 55.

revolution. Even if most of the earnings of the workers were spent on essentials, these now included cottons, soap, linens, tea and confectionary.¹⁷⁰ Once the economy was ‘back on track’ enterprises which were typical of any substantial market town multiplied. Investors moved in from the hinterland to snap up opportunities, including almost all the élite retailers and the tanner Joseph Satterfield’s father.¹⁷¹ It is possible to envisage many of these changes taking place without any appearance of urban renaissance, but not to the same degree, considering the boost assemblies gave to the economy.

Francis Hurt’s rebuilt Red Lion inn incorporated the ‘motif of the decade’ and an assembly room. His social prestige was such that assembly-goers were drawn from the hinterland and from among those town gentlemen who had the resources to build a Palladian town house, but had not yet made a move (his own intention to rebuild Wirksworth Hall was latent). The Duchy revealed its decision to upgrade the ‘moot hall’ through an advertisement which immediately followed the first meeting of Hurt’s high-powered society to invest in lead-mining. The magnificent courthouse appeared the following year, demonstrating to all and sundry that Hurt and the powers-that-be believed in the ability of the lead industry to deliver greater rewards, however, miners felt threatened.

In the 1770s Hurt’s grand scheme to drain the mines and his promotion of the industry to investors were proceeding according to plan, while he controlled the lucrative smelting and manufacturing sides of the business. More important for the town’s image, gentlemen began to emulate the architecture of the courthouse (1773).

¹⁷⁰ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 79-81.

¹⁷¹ He appears to have bought the tanyard owned for generations by the family of the banker John Toplis. LRO, John Toplis, 27 April, 1762.

Hurt enjoyed further good fortune when Richard Arkwright financed the rebuilding of Wirksworth Hall for his daughter, as a stepping stone into county society for himself. But it was unsurprising that Hurt's sons did not share his aims for promoting urban renaissance in Wirksworth, given the proximity of Matlock Bath; further competition from Buxton arose just before their father's death. During the early decades of Charles Hurt's marriage the town nevertheless appeared fashionable, the élite enclave grew and continued to expand down St John's St in the nineteenth century. Charles was personable and had leadership qualities, being preferred over his elder brother as the C.O. of the yeomanry and High Sheriff in 1797. He was resident in the town and punctilious in fulfilling his responsibilities on what may be considered the town's governing body, alongside Philip Gell esq. of Hopton.

Formal assemblies ceased about the time that the shop tax levied on the town indicated how much their fifteen-year duration had contributed to the quality of shopping. A strengthened élite, including Robert Blackwall (mercier), John Heap (clothier) and John Toplis (banker) were among those who may be credited with a renewal of civic pride and firm town management during the difficult years after 1820. A social and commercial register compiled from probates and the *UBD* for the period 1770—1820 included 18 professionals and 11 gentlemen (some titled).¹⁷² The retailing sector included 17 grocer/tea dealers, 8 mercer/drapers, hairdressers, milliners, a stay-maker and chemists. There were also watchmakers, a cabinet-maker, braziers, ironmongers, hatters, auctioneers, a landscape gardener and a stationer.

The onset of an explosion in the demand for home-produced linen can be dated from the late 1760s, when several mercers and drapers became re-established in the

¹⁷² The sources were not comprehensive, since probators were mainly of the older generation and the *UBD* listings were for only one year.

town.¹⁷³ Plebeians were adopting the same high standards of ‘conspicuous cleanliness’ as middling sorts, expressed through visible white accessories requiring the use of soap.¹⁷⁴ Slightly earlier, the introduction of worsted manufacturing had made domestic industry into a cornerstone of the town’s economy; although its full extent was only hinted at from the sources, there was evidence that it was widespread and included leather, as well as textile, workers. A guesstimate of 15 resident woolcombers (from ten wills) implied 1200 weavers or knitters of worsted alone.¹⁷⁵ An advertisement showed that domestic industry was spread over c.100 square miles in the 1790s (a distance up to eight miles from the town, but largely to the north). It does not seem unlikely that the hills of the Peak district attracted migrant weavers, like the ones described by Thompson who descended on Lancashire, or that small farmers took to the loom, as he mentioned.¹⁷⁶ In those ‘golden’ years when work was plentiful and labour relatively scarce he wrote that weavers’ families were well-clad, their houses furnished with a clock, ornaments and utensils from Staffordshire, Birmingham and Sheffield (contrary to the suppositions of de Vries).¹⁷⁷ The total number involved was notionally over 2000, since the number of mercers and worsted manufacturers was about the same. This was not impossible, for the vestry reported ‘20,000 people living within five miles’ in 1840.¹⁷⁸ Overall, at least a dozen textile merchants were added to the strength of the town’s wealthier inhabitants, while the industry bound the extensive hinterland to the town with long-lasting consequences for its authority as a central place.

¹⁷³ Linen production in 1720 had been quadrupled by 1775. J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England’s developing economy 1714-1815*, (London, 1992), p. 105.

¹⁷⁴ Lemire, ‘Second-hand beaux’, p. 395.

¹⁷⁵ Rule, *Experience of Labour*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁶ Thompson, *English Working Class*, pp. 304-05.

¹⁷⁷ King & Timmins, *Industrial Revolution*, p. 155.

¹⁷⁸ See chapter three.

The influence of Arkwright senior on Wirksworth's economy included the building of Haarlem mill and Wirksworth Hall, which encouraged the towns' building trades just before most of the Palladian houses were built. When Arkwright junior took a partnership in Toplis's bank it became as safe as the Bank of England (of which he was the chief fund-holder) with incalculable benefit to the businesses in its wide sphere of influence.¹⁷⁹ Arkwright's heavy investment in government funds is relevant to the question raised by historians as to whether government borrowing extended into all industrial areas.¹⁸⁰ References to government bonds appeared in a number of wills in both towns and William Bateman, a Derbyshire native married to Dr Taylor's cousin, worked at the bank of England.¹⁸¹ The Wirksworth bank was a haven for the assets of subscription societies, turnpike trusts and that of the Cromford canal, as well as more modest savers.¹⁸² When Arkwright's patent expired, Toplis's bank received business from the expansion of cotton-spinning, a second mill being built next to Haarlem mill.

The lead industry plodded on, and had its successes, but 90% of the mines were unproductive or effectively exhausted. This did not dissuade young hopefuls from seeking title to small mines, whose numbers increased owing to a surge in the population. Their low production explains why the industry was considered 'very dull' by Eden (1797) and 'declined' by Pilkington (1789). But decline *per se* was belied by evidence from the tithe book that production was virtually constant, as a result of advanced pumping techniques in the productive 10% of mines (which paid good wages)

¹⁷⁹ Fitton, *Arkwrights*, p. 296.

¹⁸⁰ King & Timmins, *Industrial Revolution*, p.112.

¹⁸¹ TNA, PROB 11/1604, Ashbourne, Dorothy Taylor, 22 May, 1818.

¹⁸² In 1820 Ann Wragg, victualler of the Ship inn, referred to savings of £40 in Wirksworth bank, directing that the legacies of beneficiaries under age 21 should remain there. LRO, Ann Wragg, 20 April, 1820. The clothier Thomas Smedley owned a portrait of the banker, John Toplis, suggesting gratitude for his help. Although he refers to Toplis as his 'friend' it was a business relationship, because he felt obliged to make a formal request for Toplis to accept his likeness as a gift.

and more efficient extraction of the metal by cupola smelting, creating considerable fortunes for the Hurts.¹⁸³ In 1803 Arkwright junior (Hurt's brother-in-law) gained local control of the industry, having paid an unprecedented sum to become the King's farmer of the royalties.¹⁸⁴ He also purchased the manorial lease (including the market tolls and control of the courts leet, baron and frankpledge) from the Duchy and appointed Adam Woolley of Matlock as his steward in place of the Leacrofts.

In both towns the 'truly urban experience' was demonstrated by assemblies and other manifestations of urban renaissance, while urban collectivism was made apparent by the Wilkite celebrations in 1770. The woolcombers' marching band and enhancements to make up their numbers supported Rule's view that the trade was tightly organized.¹⁸⁵ The membership of Hurt's mining trust and the permeation of the hinterland by eight friendly societies in 1797, with a total membership of c. 680, were concrete indicators of the town's wide influence.¹⁸⁶ The affiliation of Wirksworthians to their town and county was shown by the crowds who attended the cricket match against Sheffield and the lengthy subscription list for the voluntary infantry. *Apropos* of Richards' theory, support for the town was delayed until 1867, when the Midland Railway Co. (with headquarters in Derby) came to the rescue and the Butterley company of east Derbyshire built a branch line from the town to the Derwent Valley. One extractive industry was replaced by another and by 1891 there were 3,488 quarrymen in west Derbyshire and only 289 lead-miners.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Eden, *State of the Poor*, p. 130; Pilkington, *Derbyshire*, vol.1, p. 126.

¹⁸⁴ Entry fine for 31 years: £1560 in 1766; £6000 in 1803, having risen well above inflation. (Burt, *Lead-mining*, pp. 29-30. In 1811 the lease was probably £7,600 (see above). DRO, D163/15/1.

¹⁸⁵ The number (45) appears excessive for Wirksworth, so others must have been brought in. Rule, *Experience of Labour*, p.164.

¹⁸⁶ Eden, *State of the Poor* vol.2, p. 132.

¹⁸⁷ Slack, *Lead-miner's Heyday*, p. 84. Limestone has been mined until very recently (not quarried) after the 'big hole' almost destroyed the town.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Corfield has remarked that societies are fully urbanized when a majority of the population lives and works in a town.¹ England did not achieve this in the long eighteenth century because urbanization ultimately became dependent on the industrial revolution, which did not come to fruition before the mid-nineteenth century. The early industrial revolution in the eighteenth century therefore did not mark a sharp discontinuity with the past, but was a vital preliminary process associated with the growth of towns.² The urban was the antithesis of rural, *ergo* a town was a place where agricultural employment had been superseded by sophisticated and diverse occupations in the manufacturing and service sectors. Wrigley and Schofield have shown that before 1740 the population was relatively static, so urbanization became possible only because increased agricultural productivity permitted a movement into other employments.

It was found necessary to justify the urban status of Ashbourne and Wirksworth, because many urban historians, including de Vries and Wrigley, have omitted settlements with fewer than 5000 inhabitants from the urban typology.³ Ashbourne exemplified urban qualities other than the demographic to a high degree, including a concentration of services, specialist economic functions, a complex social structure and an influence beyond its immediate boundaries, while the same could be said of Wirksworth after 1770. Only the further attribute of a ‘sophisticated political order’ could rarely apply to a small town (but much depends on definition).⁴ In 1700 only 7.6% of the population outside London lived in towns of 2,500 upwards (Corfield’s

¹ P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700—1800* (Oxford, 1982), p. 1.

² E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 35,78.

³ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p. 23.

⁴ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, p.135. P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500—1700* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 4-5.

minimum).⁵ Both townships then had even smaller populations, but had diverse occupational structures with resident professionals and sophisticated shopping facilities for the period. By the end of the eighteenth century, when the towns had reached Corfield's population limit, she noted that towns with populations of 2500 or more outside London still housed only 19.9% of the population. So the neglect of small towns seems unjustified purely on statistical grounds; however, this research agrees with that of Marshall, Ellis and Smith in showing that small towns in fact shared many of the aspects which defined larger towns, including a fair proportion of entrepreneurs and innovators.⁶

The occupational organization in towns represented a transition from a subsistence economy to one in which capitalist relations generated more wealth than agriculture and enlarged the middling ranks. Relatively small settlements, like these, gained importance through their possession of high order services, the taxonomy of central place theory being inappropriate.⁷ A sophisticated occupational structure 'whose hierarchy was sensitive to money' was more important for its functional order than population.⁸ Wealth was fundamental to middling status, but a man's standing was closely associated with his professional or commercial capacity. The middling sorts were proprietors of businesses and manufacturing concerns, professionals and merchants, generally divided here into those involved in manual work (manufacturers and master craftsmen), termed the lower-middling sorts, and those employed in high-

⁵ Corfield, *English Towns*, p. 9.

⁶ J.M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680—1840* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 2. J. D. Marshall, 'The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660—1900', *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209, p.132. C.A. Smith, 'The renaissance of the English market town: a study of six Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680—1840', unpub. Ph.D. thesis (University of Nottingham, 1997), p. 2.

⁷ J. Stobart, 'The spatial organization of a regional economy: central places in North-west England in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), pp. 147-154, p. 154.

⁸ L.S. Burns & R.G. Healy, 'The metropolitan hierarchy of occupations: an economic interpretation of central place theory', *Regional Science & Urban Economics*, 8 (1978), pp. 381-393, pp. 381-3.

level services (including retailing, distributive trades and the professions) termed the upper-middling. If in doubt, wealth was the deciding factor, because it largely determined the associations to which people belonged and the families into which they married. This was a simplified version of the taxonomy used by French and others to classify societies in large towns. He and Wrigley omitted *rentiers* from their consideration, implicitly dismissing them as leisured folk living off the labour of others. They have been seen here in a more positive light. Most invested primarily in the urban (and later the transport) infrastructure, which were essential for the development of the urban economy. Many were widows for whom rents constituted their pensions; they and others lent their savings to businessmen before a banking system became general. Those who invested in agricultural land were rarely ambitious for social promotion; it was the best depository for their savings before stocks and shares were generally available. Some bought government securities, despite the low rate of interest, because they were safe. As the most prolific spenders on rare luxuries, the influence they had on the economy may be deprecated by some but should not be underestimated.

Wirksworth received a set-back to its urban credentials in the early decades of the eighteenth century, when it experienced a flood of poor migrants to the lead-mines. It was effectively relegated to a populous village in spite of the fact that it retained political functions, most notably the miners' court, and lead-mining in the township was at its historical peak in terms of the numbers gaining a viable living. The situation arose because the mining community retained the societal values of its recent rural origins and richer folk showed no interest in promoting civic and urbane values to the plebeian majority. As a result, the shopping centre, a major feature of any successful town, was impoverished.

Ashbourne's urban functions were never in doubt and its credentials improved, except that its population stagnated. From the point of view of wealth-creation this was positive. There was indirect evidence of a shake-out from agriculture in the decades before 1720, when the number of men not assigned a skill increased, but later migrants to the town came primarily from the polar opposite social category, as the town developed into a minor gentry resort. Up-market retailers, merchants and professionals were attracted from Wirksworth, Uttoxeter and the Peak; others brought new skills, including building in brick and printing, and an Ashburnian apprenticed in Birmingham introduced brass-founding. Later, the town's reputation attracted school proprietors and a theatrical impresario. Opportunities for the unskilled seemed limited and out-migration balanced the population.

Borsay's urban renaissance contributed to a cultural, social and economic heyday in Ashbourne. Its origins may be traced to around 1720, when John Beresford esq. took his Fitzherbert bride to live in the town's first Palladian house. Its occupation by the family was uninterrupted until the last Beresford widow died there in 1814, after which it was divided into tenements. Urban renaissance reached fruition after the 1760s, the decade when some major town houses were built or substantially refurbished in the latest architectural fashion. Landed gentlemen (including Beresford) were the social leaders, emulated by upper-middling sorts with some success, if their taste in architecture is any guide. During the town's heyday the upper ranks of Ashburnians enjoyed the annual excitement of the 'season' of plays, assemblies, private balls, concerts and improving lectures at the grammar school. Throughout the year there was a routine of private calls, shopping and promenading, borrowing books from the subscription library and occasional trips to Lichfield racecourse. Women 'shared fully in the literary and recreational life ... and seemed positively to dominate it' in this

period, although men frequently socialized together.⁹ In Ashbourne, the cream went shooting and doubtless hunted with the gentry. But by 1814 almost all of this elevated social circle had died leaving no heir in the town. Sir Brooke Boothby's rebuilt hall and its landscaped and secluded grounds were enjoyed, but eventually neglected, by his tenants. The town's function as a gentry resort was effectively over, although Lady Fitzherbert added a summer ball to the winter season of plays and assemblies, which survived to 1820 (plays for longer) and made it worthwhile for Miss Whittham to make her annual buying trip to London for a few more years.

The large majority of Ashburnians were excluded from the polite diversions of the élite, but tradesmen had houses well-furnished for their own social round while leading full lives running their businesses. A notable feature of the period was the growth of capitalism and banking. By agreement, the lead-mining industry was one of the few accessible sources of investment (after the South Sea Bubble it was illegal to invest in non-chartered companies), so when the cotton industry offered opportunities to invest, through partnerships, it was no coincidence that the first bank outside Derby and Chesterfield was established in Wirksworth.¹⁰ Tradesmen from London acquired the Good Luck mine and miners bought tiny fractions of shares to spread the risk of drawing a blank themselves, but rich men could be more adventurous. In Ashbourne, Brian Hodgson invested in copper mines in Anglesey and Joseph Bradley had canal shares and 'foreign stocks' in his portfolio.¹¹ At the time of Ashbourne's greatest prosperity its traders were perhaps making more out of property and other deals than from their designated occupations, thereby stimulating the trade of the town. Many

⁹ P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727—1783* (Oxford, 1992), p. 109.

¹⁰ R. Gould, 'The activities of the London Lead Companies in Wirksworth: a brief summary', *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 7 (1978), pp. 28-30, p. 30.

¹¹ TNA, PROB 11/1125, Brian Hodgson, 14 January, 1785; PROB 11/1828, Joseph Bradley, 26 March, 1834.

owned town property, including inns and (in one anecdote) houses with superior fittings to let or lease in Ashbourne and Uttoxeter. Speculative builders retained their houses as investments.

The conspicuous consumption engendered by urban renaissance lined the pockets of the commercial classes and encouraged technological innovation, as has been seen in clock-making; the coachmaker likewise had to keep up with improved design and fashion. It was contagious, for even if the classical motifs on Wedgwood's pottery did not descend far down the social scale, there was an appetite for cheaper decorative artefacts, including brass buttons manufactured in the town. Polite culture made a deep impression on the layers of middling society excluded from subscription assemblies in Ashbourne. They held their own balls in the assembly room at the Green Man, sported fashionable dress and took elocution and dancing lessons; some afforded private day schools for their sons which taught accounts and surveying as well as basic literacy (taught in charity schools since 1710). Exclusive dress shops bought silk mantuas in London, but calico versions were obtained from Manchester, indicating a metropolitan-regional divide within the local culture. In both towns, china tea services and silver spoons became status symbols in lower-middling wills, showing that they were imitating the polite ceremonies of their social superiors.

Poor people followed fashion, as Styles has shown, and have justly been described as a mass market by McKendrick (with some doubt regarding his chronology). De Vries argued that an 'industrious revolution' gave women discretionary income, and, noting the flood of criticism directed at servants for dressing above their station, Rule commented that the poor continued to consume even when times were

hard, 'because they were accustomed to do so'.¹² Servants would have been numerous in Ashbourne, often housed in the attic storeys of the new houses. By 1800 houses had semi-basements, another domain for the staff.

It is impossible to give a coherent account of what happened in Wirksworth from the 1760s onwards because of the high rate of flux in the personnel of the commercial middling sector, the richest of whom were mostly migrants to the town. Perhaps following in the steps of the worsted merchant, Jonas Heap, hosiers put out the yarn to knitters and mercers supplied flax to linen weavers; others perceived a market for the 'new luxuries' including hardware and beverages (then affordable). In some cases their enterprise was premature, but there was a resuscitation of shopping facilities when Francis Hurt's institution of assemblies in 1770 was accompanied by a demand from the élite for fashionable clothes and hair-dressing. The startling appearance of the Duchy's new courthouse in 1773 must have convinced those residents from a higher social class who shortly began to build emulative houses that a new day had dawned. A few examples may illustrate the interest aroused.

The town became a magnet for yeomen freeholders able to raise capital on land. The Toplis mercers were the sons of a yeoman-tanner, whose large tanyard was probably the only one in the town supplying calf leather to saddlers, shoemakers and the mining industry. Circumstantial evidence suggests that it was snapped up by John Satterfield from east Derbyshire in 1762 (the year the owner died and he moved in); he became wealthy, marrying his son to a gentleman's daughter and his daughter to a mercer. The elder Toplis mercer was the father of the banker and his brother eventually built two cotton mills in Nottinghamshire, as mentioned. Two other mercers opened

¹² J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992), p. 256.

their doors after 1768, when the go-ahead Francis Hurt inherited the Alderwasley estate. Francis Harding, a yeoman's son from Bonsall, had strong links with Manchester cotton merchants (being named executor by one), while Robert Blackwall, descended from a minor gentry family of Kirk Ireton, sold expensive silk. Thomas Eley migrated from Derby to buy Haarlem mill and Anthony Goodman, from Matlock, was probably apprenticed to a town surgeon. Although he was a humble yeoman's son, he would have attended the town's gentlemen, with the unforeseen consequence mentioned. Finally, Ralph Toplis (no relation to John), a grocer-chandler, was a Brassington yeoman's son who took young Charles Wright from Matlock as an apprentice, with significant implications for the town. This by no means exhausts the array of retailers who paid one of the highest shop taxes in the county in the 1780s.

It was the turn of the indigenous mining community to feel overwhelmed. In 1772 they observed the goings-on which surrounded the Duchy's sudden interest in the town, including an influx of gentlemen conducting negotiations at the Red Lion with the town's chief inhabitants 'to encourage lead-mining'. They were disturbed, rightly suspecting that their ancient liberties were under threat. This failed to materialize from a strictly legal point of view, but profitable mines undoubtedly became concentrated in the hands of wealthier folk and the remaining 90% could not provide a viable living. Whether the new expertise in geology fostered by the Derby Philosophical Society (of which Charles Hurt was a member) had assisted gentlemen in their choice of sites to mine is an open question, but these more profitable mines were adequately drained with the latest steam engines in 1829, paid regular wages and doubtless attracted expert miners.

The cessation of Wirksworth's assemblies after fifteen years demonstrated the lack of interest from landowners in perpetuating them, but the town now had an urbane

and civic centre, a noteworthy shopping centre and a permanent population of upper-middling sorts and town gentlemen. Charles Hurt and his wife Susanna raised a large family, painted by Joseph Wright as the picture of genteel domesticity at Wirksworth Hall. The neighbouring school for young ladies had no difficulty attracting boarders from rich families, including some of Richard Arkwright juniors' numerous progeny.

In the 1790s the gloss of urban renaissance and the 'consumer revolution' concealed the tensions engendered by rising inflation. Devalued wages coincided with severe weather and a shortage of grain, which raised prices and embarrassed the relatively affluent town of Ashbourne. Events in France stimulated political consciousness and also a sense of unease and foreboding. Many men in the lower orders banded together in friendly societies (undercover trades unions) and their masters organized prosecution societies to preserve their property, or, in the case of the Society to Prosecute Engrossers, to defuse social tensions and preserve their authority by disclaiming their capitalist sympathies. There were riots in both towns in 1796 against the militia ballot, being suppressed by the recently-formed Ashbourne and Wirksworth yeomanry in a nadir of class relations.¹³ However, in 1798 the fear of invasion drew all ranks together in Wirksworth, where even the poor contributed a day's pay to the call for subscriptions to a voluntary infantry. It seems possible (if inherently unlikely) that the irenic Boothby's failure to give a lead accounted for the absence of Ashbourne among many towns and villages in Derbyshire recorded in the newspaper as contributing to the cause.¹⁴ The wars which ensued were enormously damaging to life and treasure, which needs to be taken into consideration when considering the slow growth of the economy.

¹³ G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire* (Cardiff, 1999), vol.3, p. 1252-3

¹⁴ Turbutt, *History of Derbyshire*, vol.3, p. 1253.

The theories of Morris and Barry (respectively), that the experience of subscription societies and cooperation in town government created vertical ties which united the disparate ranks of middling sorts have limitations. Their unity was demonstrated *vis-à-vis* the lower classes by the foregoing examples, but it seemed less certain within their own ranks. For the time being associations worked because lower-ranking members deferred to their superiors and the time-honoured divisions of class and wealth remained. The executive positions were filled by gentlemen and upper-middling sorts; for others the status of belonging to an exclusive group was sufficient to justify the subscription. But by 1815 gentlemen were gradually leaving the field to the bourgeoisie.

As they had in the Netherlands, the Smithsonian reforms of production and the rise of capitalism provided a historically high standard of living, before the law of diminishing returns in the face of a rising population would normally have called a halt to progress.¹⁵ Domestic industry was a classic example, reported by Marshall to be ‘the life-blood’ of small Cumbrian towns and contributing immensely (but not exclusively) to the prosperity of Ashbourne and Wirksworth.¹⁶ It regimented workers through the division of labour and imposed standard, but ever-changing, designs which could be widely duplicated. Materials were strictly controlled in the leather trades (at least). This cheapened the product and maximised the profits of the middleman, while scarcity value enhanced workers’ pay in the late eighteenth century (Arkwright was forced to recruit weavers from Scotland).¹⁷ Thousands of households became involved in linen,

¹⁵ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp. 25-26

¹⁶ Marshall, ‘Cumbrian market town’, p. 131.

¹⁷ J. Heath, *An Illustrated History of Derbyshire* (Derby, 1993), p. 75.

cotton, silk and worsted production in west Derbyshire.¹⁸ The industry, which clothed the masses and created a surplus for export, was controlled from the towns, catapulting John Buxton into the magistracy in Ashbourne and initially funding John Toplis's bank in Wirksworth. It generated fortunes for less-adventurous men and the occupation of mercer, ever attractive to the upwardly-mobile, expanded without seeming to be overstocked, until some had a rude awakening in 1816.

As suggested, domestic industry was comparable with Adam Smith's self-limiting pin-making, being the final surge of the 'organic economy' destroyed in the steam age.¹⁹ The industry has been excoriated for supposedly derogating struggling artisans into the labouring masses, while the wealth it created for its middling masters often promoted them into a higher social class, attracting the charge of exploitation. However, E.P.Thompson recorded that hand-weavers were initially better-off than they had ever been and no evidence was found in this research that the weavers' craft had earlier attracted riches or high status. As predicted by Malthus, they became the victims of an exponential rise in the population, which destroyed their apprenticeship system to create an overstocked labour market. This was followed by the creeping obsolescence of their craft.

Ambitious mercers aimed to become cotton-masters, but many fell by the wayside through under-capitalization. Mills of any importance were expensive to build and the demand for circulating capital was high, so large mill-owners became mercantile gentlemen. Jedediah Strutt was a successful hosiery entrepreneur in Derby (with a patented ribbing machine) before he formed a brief partnership with Arkwright

¹⁸ In 1830 Glover estimated 6,500 framework knitters of silk hosiery. Ward, Brettle & Ward of Belper were the major hosiery wholesalers in London making 1.2 million pairs p.a. S. Glover, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby...* (Derby, 1831—33), vol.1, p. 9.

¹⁹ Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population*, pp. 84-5.

and moved into cotton spinning. In 1789, having ploughed back the profits for years and kept up-to-date with building works, the Strutts valued their Belper mills at £37,000 and made annual profits of £36,000. Their multi-storey buildings were designed from scratch, involving the construction of a weir across the Derwent, a very powerful river in full flow, and the latest technology for their turbines.²⁰ Significantly, William Strutt was a notable engineer and an enthusiastic member of the Derby Philosophical Society. Smaller men succeeded on sites about one mile from the town centres of Ashbourne and Wirksworth. Thomas Eley wisely bought Haarlem mill as a going concern from Arkwright, with a 'captive' workforce. John Smedley's worsted mill, founded by a Wirksworthian, made a fortune in the second generation. All these mills survived to the late twentieth century. Arkwright's Masson mill kept around 200 workers but Strutts employed 2000 throughout the first half of the nineteenth century; in the early twentieth century the Derwent mills were saved by a Lancastrian firm, which modernized Masson and built a much larger mill in Belper.²¹ *Apropos* the supposed decline of cotton in Derbyshire, the largest single county workforces in 1905 were engaged in coal-mining (45,000) and spinning, largely cotton, (12,620).²²

This brief look into the future seemed appropriate. Much of the research into small towns has concentrated on the eighteenth century, for reasons which have been advanced here. However, Ellis has pointed out that 40% of towns had fewer than 5000 inhabitants even in 1841, when 'trade remained their lifeblood and rationale' and there was a 'belief in the civilizing agency of their urbane values'.²³ Although Barry considered urban renaissance in the eighteenth century to be élitist and divisive and

²⁰ Derwent Valley Mills Partnership, *The Derwent Valley Mills and their Communities* (Derby, 2001), p. 82. Curiously, this was not an organic industry, but it had a limited energy source.

²¹ *Derwent Valley Mills*, p. 84.

²² *VCH* (1905), vol.2, p. 191.

²³ Ellis, *Georgian Town*, pp. 12, 21.

Ellis similarly commented that it ‘encouraged the identification of the majority as outside the pale of “proper company”’, the urbane values she and Barry admire had their origins in the polite culture which was its essence.²⁴ Its pervasive influence was demonstrated by the bourgeois concept of a ‘perfect gentleman’. When the pukka gentry and their followers deserted Ashbourne the regional culture reasserted itself, but their legacy was a town full of well-built houses, one of the three best retailing centres in the county, one of its few theatres, private schools, coach-builders and noted precision-instrument makers. The local history society has recorded the existence of a Literary Society and library in imitation of Derby’s Philosophical Society. Before mid-century the town’s printer published the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, which ultimately ousted the *Derby Mercury* when it relocated to the county town, but not without local replacements. Wirksworth’s history has been little researched, but the town boasted a mechanics institute, rebuilt its grammar school, saved the church and built a town hall where petty sessions took place, as well as a number of non-conformist churches. So its rejection as a Poor Law Union on the grounds of its imminent decline was premature. There were reasons to respect the inimitable culture of the mining region west of the Derwent, and to allow it to care for its own.

To conclude: historians have referred to small towns which failed to grow in the nineteenth century as being on a slippery slope from stagnation to inexorable and rapid decline. Both towns had ranked in the top three market towns in Derbyshire ever since records began and trades directories show that they continued to outrank larger industrializing towns in terms of skilled occupations and the sizes of their middling

²⁴ J. Barry, “‘Bourgeois collectivism’? Urban association and the middling sort’, in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550—1800* (London, 1994), p. 87. Ellis, *Georgian Town*, p. 127.

sectors.²⁵ As in Cumbria, there was ‘no immediate contraction of retailing and a continual diversification’ in those towns whose heydays were over.²⁶ Even if they had declined into quiet backwaters forthwith, they and similar market towns had made essential contributions to the changes which founded England’s wealth in the nineteenth century.²⁷ But they did not. In 1835, Pigot’s directory showed near parity between the towns in food shops (19, 20), public houses (21, 26), builders (14, 17), professionals (10, 14), bankers (2) and grocers (11, 12). Wirksworth possessed the full range of services, including a jeweller, but Ashbourne was wealthier. There were 34 men and women designated as ‘gentry’ to Wirksworth’s 12, 52 manufacturers and sellers of clothes (excluding shoes) and 3 major inns, 27 purveyors of luxuries, 27 dealers or merchants, 16 in a minor profession (2 in Wirksworth), 6 instrument-makers, 13 drapers, 4 boarding schools and 14 leather merchants and artificers other than shoemakers. Both towns had several printers and booksellers and Ashbourne had two lending libraries. Wirksworth’s industrial base had shrunk temporarily with mining in disarray, but quarrying eventually replaced it. Trinder’s comment that the manufacturing of market towns was unimportant on a national scale may be questioned, considering that two railway companies went to the enormous expense of building branch lines to transport the towns’ respective production of milk and stone to distant markets.²⁸

²⁵ In 1828, trades directories showed that they ranked second and third among the market towns in the coverage of trades. N. Raven, ‘Industry and the small towns of Derbyshire: evidence from the trades directories c. 1790-1850’, in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840: trades, towns and regions* (Leicester, 2000), p. 83.

²⁶ Marshall, ‘Cumbrian market town’, p. 197.

²⁷ A. Henstock (ed.), *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol.1, ‘Fashionable Society’ (Ashbourne, 1989), p. 14.

²⁸ B. Trinder, ‘Towns and industries: the changing character of manufacturing towns’, in J. Stobart & N. Raven (eds), *Towns, Regions and Industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands, c. 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2005), p. 104.

APPENDIX

Fig. A1: Vital statistics of Wirksworth parish 1660 -1800

Source: Parish registers. Five-year moving averages

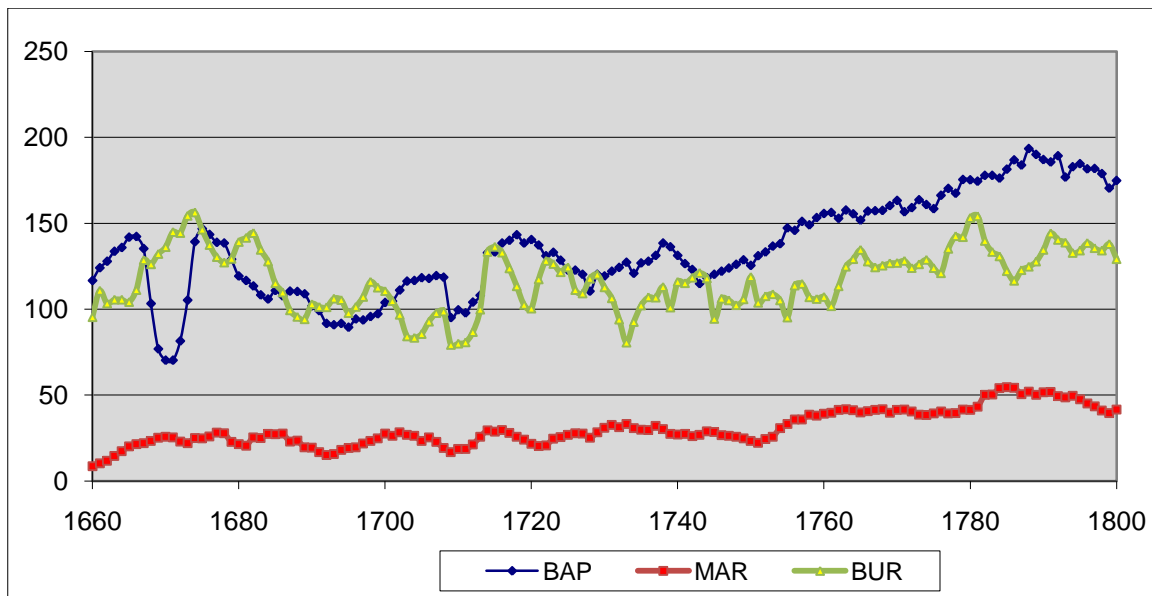


Fig. A2: Vital statistics of Ashbourne parish 1660 – 1800

Source: Parish registers. Five-year moving averages

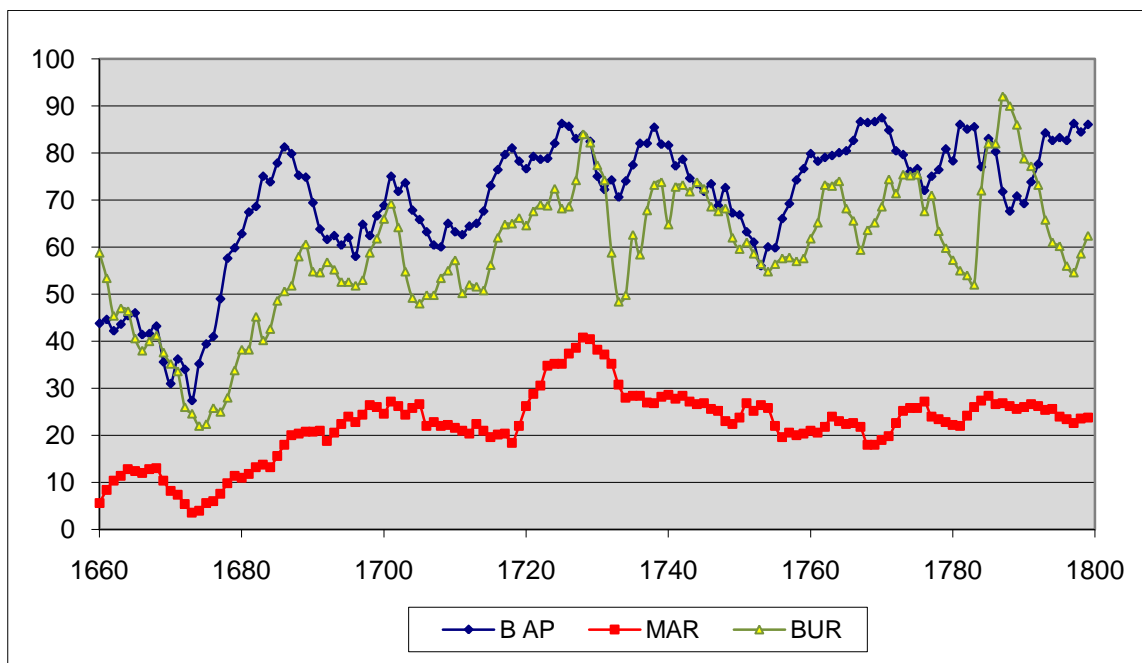
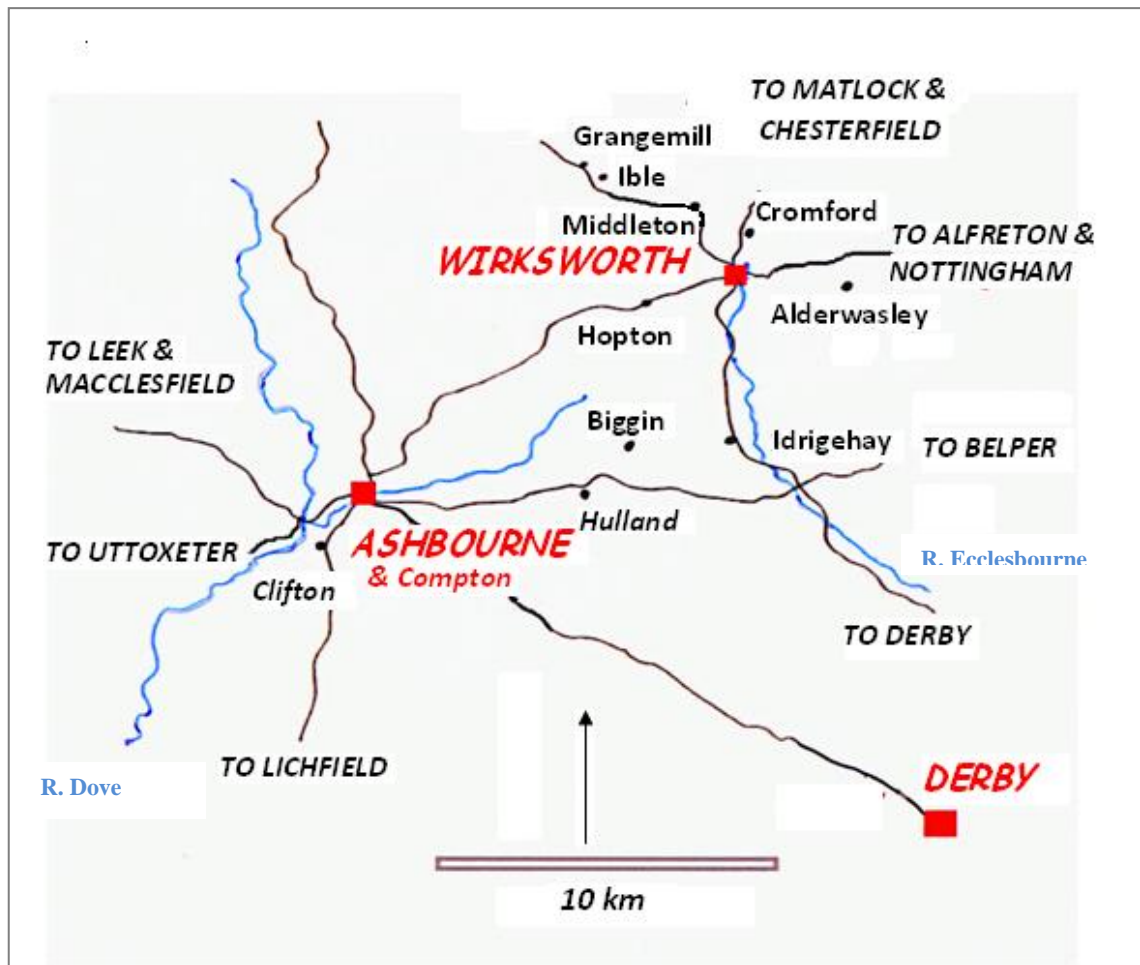


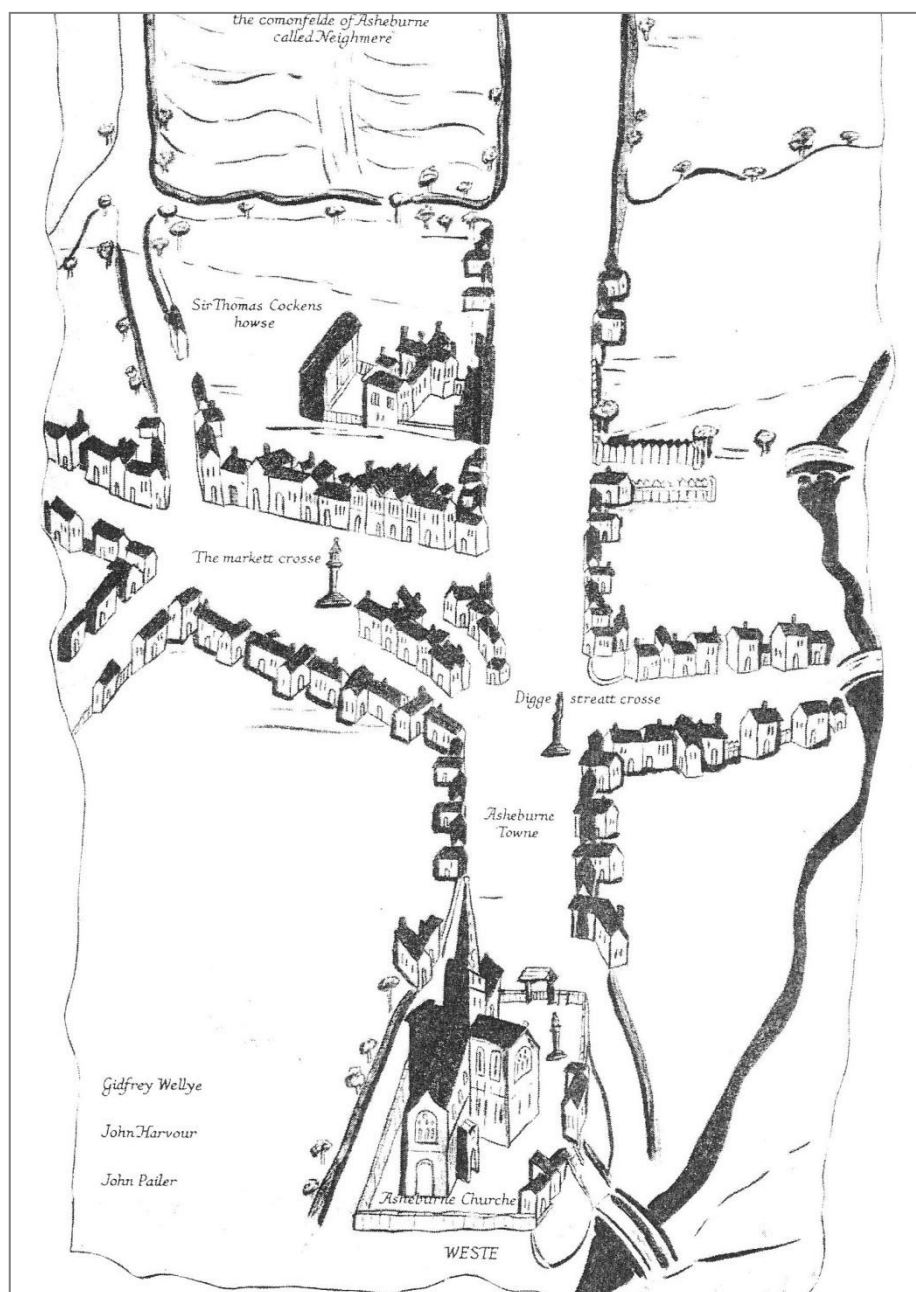
Fig. A3: Geographical location of Ashbourne and Wirksworth

Ashbourne's hamlets in italics (smaller ones omitted).



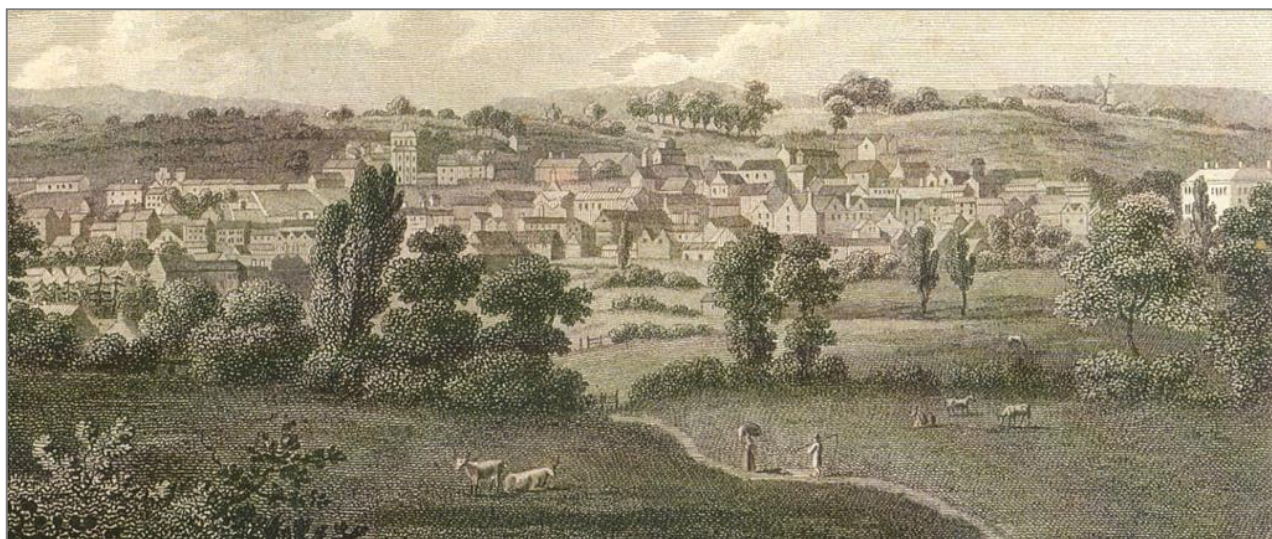
Pl. A1: Map of Ashbourne (1547)

Source: E.M.Yates, 'Map of Ashbourne', *Geographical Journal*, 126 (1960), pp. 479-81, p.481.



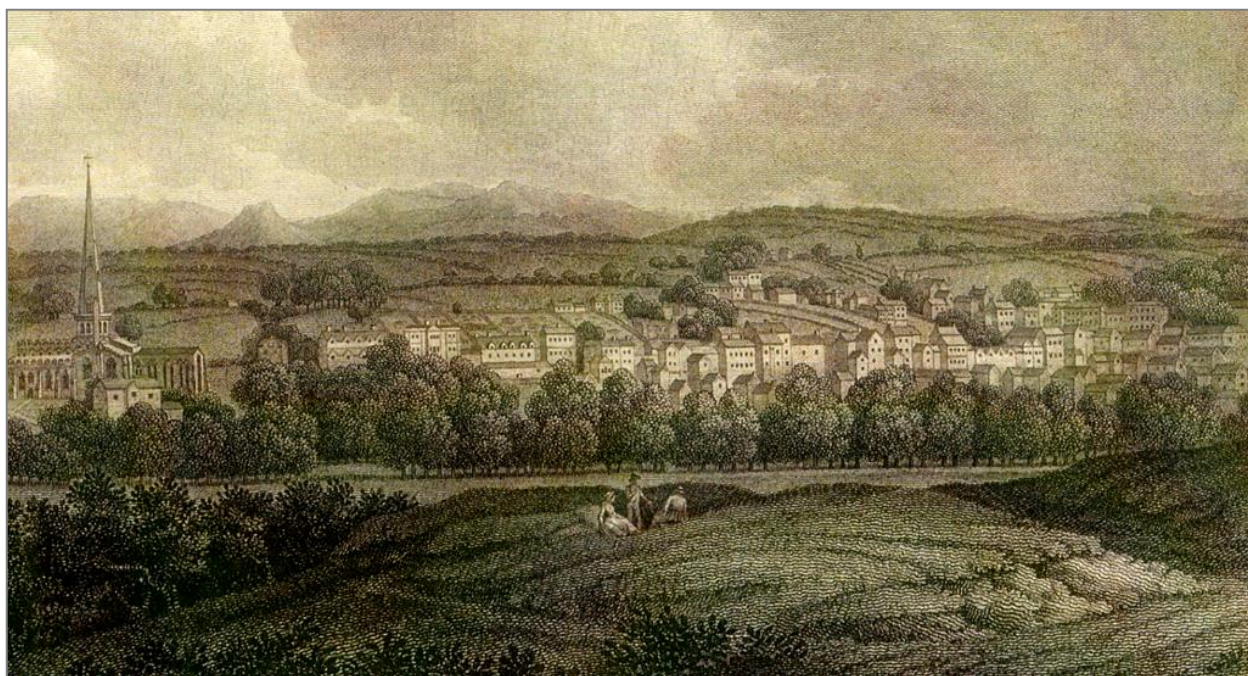
Pl. A2: Section of 'A View of Ashborne', E. Dales & Sparrow (1795)

Source: DLHL Print Collection (by permission)



Pl. A3: Section of 'Ashbourn', J. Farington, esq., R.A. (1817)

Source: DLHL Print Collection (by permission).



Pl. A4: ‘Ashbourn’ c. 1839.

Source: Anon, *The History and Topography of Ashbourn, the valley of the Dove and the adjacent villages* (Ashbourn, 1839), facing p.73.

Copyright-holder unknown.

Pl. A5: The Grey House, Ashbourne (façade c. 1760)



Pl. A6: the Mansion, Ashbourne (restored c. 1763)



Pl. A7: Compton House, Ashbourne (1760s)



Pl. A8: The Duchy Steward's House, Wirksworth (built 1752-3 with later annexe)



Pl. A9: The Red Lion, Wirksworth (restored c. 1768-70)



PL A10: Joseph Bradley's advertisement (1783)

Source: Derby Mercury, 8 May, 1783 (By permission of the DLSL).

Sugar, Tea, & Tobacco.

J. B R A D L E Y,
Of ASHBORNE, DERBYSHIRE;

RETURNS his Friends and Customers his sincere Thanks, for the great Encouragement he hath long been favoured with, and begs Leave to inform them, that he hath lately purchased a large Assortment of the under-mentioned Articles, which he is now selling Wholesale and Retail (for ready Money) from 13 to 20 per Cent lower than they sold for during the late War; and when the Publick consider the additional Duty on Sugar, Tea, Tobacco, &c. the following Prices must be thought very low & reasonable.

Sugar, 4d. and 5d.—good, 6d.
 Fine white Powder ditto, 7d. to 8d.
 Good Lump ditto, 8d $\frac{1}{2}$. to 9d.
 Fine Loaves, 9d. 10d. 12d. to 16d. per lb.
 Treacle, 3d. per lb.
 Ordinary Bohea Tea, 4s. 4d.
 Ordinary Green Tea, 5s. 4d.
 Fine Bohea ditto, 4s. 10d. to 5s.
 Congou and Green ditto, 6s. to 6s. 6d.
 Pekoe, Souchong, and Singlo, 7s. 8s. 9s. to 10s.
 Fine Hyson, 9s. 6d. 10s. 10s. 6d. 12s. to 16s.
 Coffee, 3s.—very good, 4s.
 Best ditto, 5s. 4d. to 6s. per lb.
 Good Cocoa, 6d. 8d. 12d. 16d. to 2s. 4d. per lb.
 Saffron Tobacco, 16d. 20d.—fine, 2s. to 2s. 6d.
 Good Shag, 2s.—fine ditto, 2s. 4d. to 2s. 6d.
 Twist Tobacco, 2s. 6d. 2s. 8d.—very fine, 3s.
 Broad Cut and Square Cut, manufactured to Orders.
 Tobacco Sand, 4d. to 6d.
 Dust ditto, 10d.—very fine, 12d.
 Very strong Tobacco Water, 6d. per Gallon.
 Good Snuff, 2s. 2s. 4d. 2s. 8d.
 Best Sweet ditto, 3s. 3d. to 3s. 6d.
 Hops, 8d.—fine, 10d.—very best, 12d.
 Soap, Starch, Blue, Writing Paper, Spice, Fruit, Flax,
 Hemp, Cordage, Dyers Goods, Oils, Paints, Drugs, &c.
 &c. on the lowest Terms.

N. B. Ashborne next Fair will be on Wednesday 21st Inst.

THEATRE, ASHBOURNE.

ON FRIDAY the 30th of January, will be performed, (never acted here) the favourite Play of

THE POINT OF HONOR.

After which the Grand Dramatic Romance of
BLUE BEARD;
Or, FEMALE CURIOSITY.
(Never performed here.)

With new Scenery, Dresses, and Decorations. The principal of which are

A Mountainous View in Turkey,
And a MAGNIFICENT PROCESSION of Blue Beard and his Retinue, from the Distant Country.
A Brilliant Display of the BASHAW's
Illuminated Temple and Garden.

The Mystic Talisman of the Golden Key.—The Enchanted Blue Chamber, which changes to the Cavern of Death.—Skeleton of Death.—Blue Beard's Portraits.—A Picturesque View of Blue Beard's Castle.—Selim's Attack, Conflict, and overthrow of Abomelique.—Death Striking Blue Beard, and Innocence Triumphant.

Boxes 3s.—Pit 2s.—Gallery 1s.

Doors to be opened at Half-past Five, and the Performance to begin at Half-past Six.

*** Nothing under Full Price can be taken.

BLUE BEARD will be repeated on Monday, with a Play as will be express'd in the Bills of the Day.

Pl. A12: Richard & William Etches' advertisement (1777)

Source: *Derby Mercury*, 19 December, 1777. (b permission from the DLSL).

R. and W. E T C H E S,
WINE, and BRANDY MERCHANTS,
A S H B O R N E, D E R B Y S H I R E.

RETURN their most sincere Thanks to their Friends for the great Encouragement they have experienced, which they hope for a Continuance of, by their constant Endeavours to offer the best Kind of WINES and LIQUORS, on the most reasonable Terms.

They now think proper to inform their Friends and the Public, that they have lately imported and received a large Quantity of Foreign Wines, Rum, Brandy, Holland Geneva, Arrack, and all Sorts of British Wines, and Compounds, which they will sell NEAT, at the under-mentioned very low Prices, for READY MONEY ONLY.

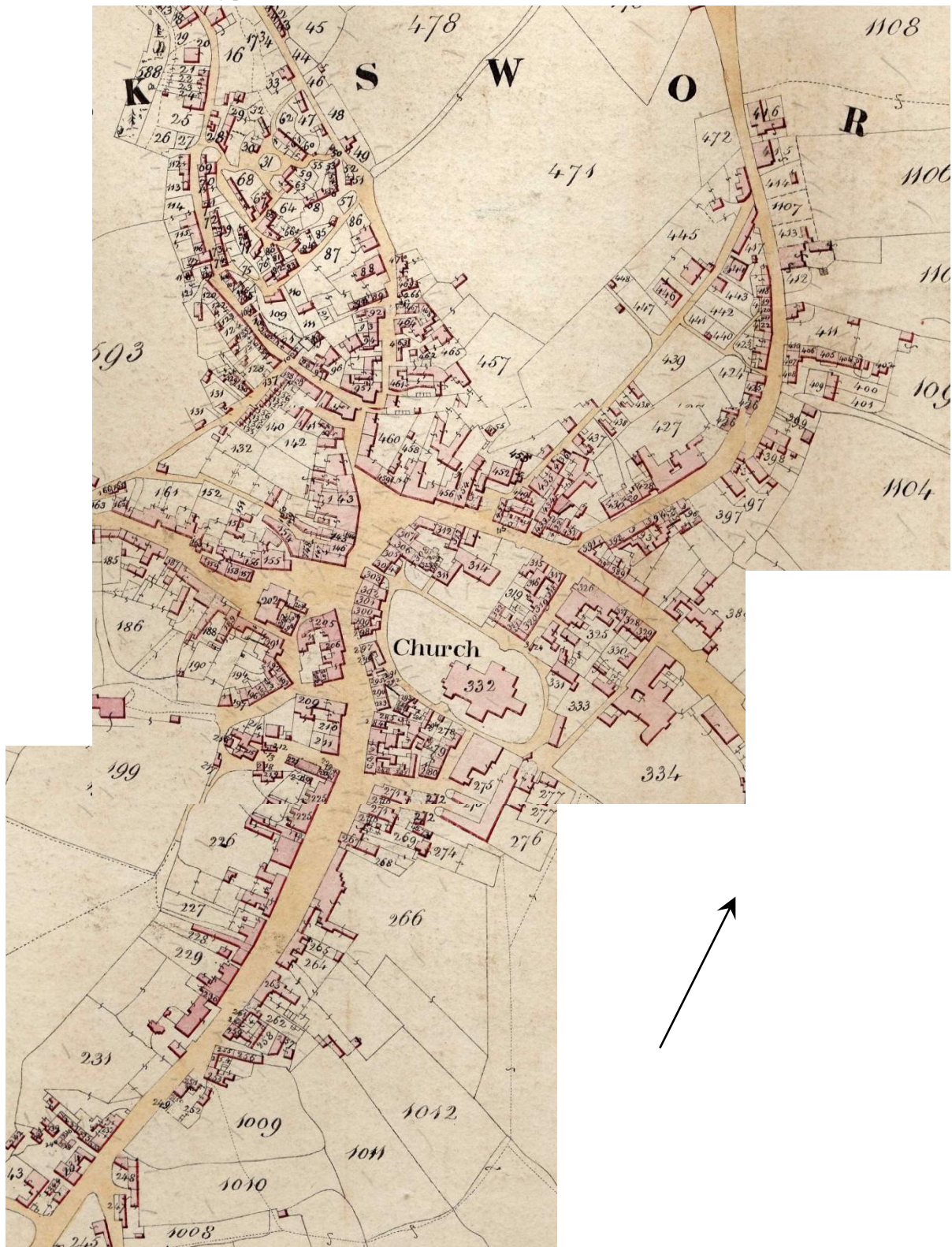
Cogniac Brandy, Proof, ———	11s. 6d. per Gal.	Wine Brandy Shrub, ———	6s. 6d. ditto.
Cogniac Brandy, Over proof, } ———	13s. 6d. ditto.	British Geneva, ———	4s. 6d. ditto.
that will sink Oil, } ———	8s. 6d. ditto.	Queen's Cordial, ———	4s. 6d. ditto.
Jamaica Rum, Proof, ———	8s. 6d. ditto.	Brandy Sack, ———	3s. 6d. ditto.
Jamaica Rum, Over-proof, } ———	9s. 6d. ditto.	Spirits of Wine, ———	11s. 6d. ditto.
that will sink Oil, } ———	12s. 6d. ditto.	Red Port, ———	18s. 6d. per Doz.
Arrack, ———	8s. 6d. ditto.	White Port, } in great } ———	or 6s. 6d. per Gal.
Holland Geneva, ———	9s. 6d. ditto.	Mountain, } Perfection. } ———	
Rum Shrub, ———	6s. 6d. ditto.	Lisbon, ———	46s. 6d. per Doz.
Pepper-Mint Water, ———	7s. 6d. ditto.	Claret, ditto, ———	38s. 6d. ditto.
Cinnamon ditto, ———	4s. 6d. ditto.	Old Hock, ditto, ———	30s. 6d. ditto.
Anniseed, Cholic, Surfit, and Worm- } ———	6s. 6d. ditto.	Fontenac, ditto, ———	33s. 6d. ditto.
wood ditto, ———	7s. 6d. ditto.	Madaira, ditto, ———	20s. 6d. ditto.
Wine Brandy, ———	5s. 6d. ditto.	Carcavella, ditto, ———	3s. 3d. per Gal.
Walt ditto, ———		Raisin Wine, ———	
Rasberry and Cherry ditto, ———			

They likewise take this Method to acquaint the Gentlemen, Publicans, &c. of Leek, Macclesfield, Buxton, Congleton, and all Places adjacent, that for the Convenience of vending, they will on the 14th of January, 1778, open a Vault in the Market-Place in Leek; where all Orders from those Parts will be duly attended to, and punctually executed, on the above Terms.—Attendance will be given every Wednesday, and all Fair Days.

As R. and W. ETCHES import their own Wines, &c. they presume the Public will allow they can afford every Article as cheap as any Merchant in England, Carriage considered.

N. B. No less a Quantity than two Gallons of Liquor or Wine, sold at their Vaults in Ashborne; and no less a Quantity than two Gallons of Liquor, and one Quart of Wine, from their Vaults in Leek.

Pl. A13: Wirksworth Tithe Plan, main settlement (1848). Source: DRO, 70Z/ 81-3
See Gatehouse (199). (by permission).



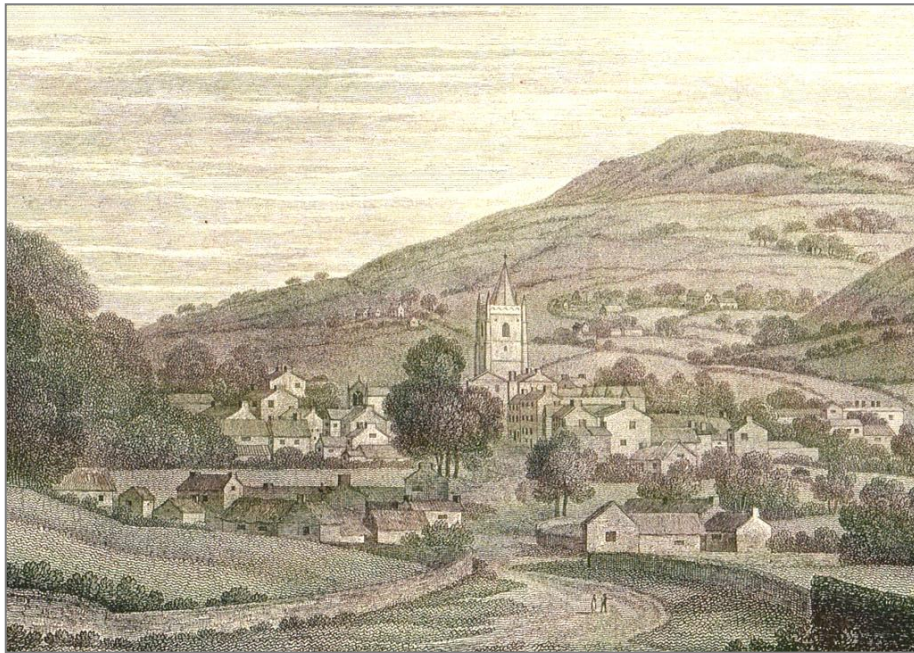
Pl. A14: Duchy of Lancaster plan of Wirksworth (1821)

Source: TNA, DL 41, Plan no. 726.

Copyright uncertain.

Pl. A15: Section of 'Wirksworth' (1817)

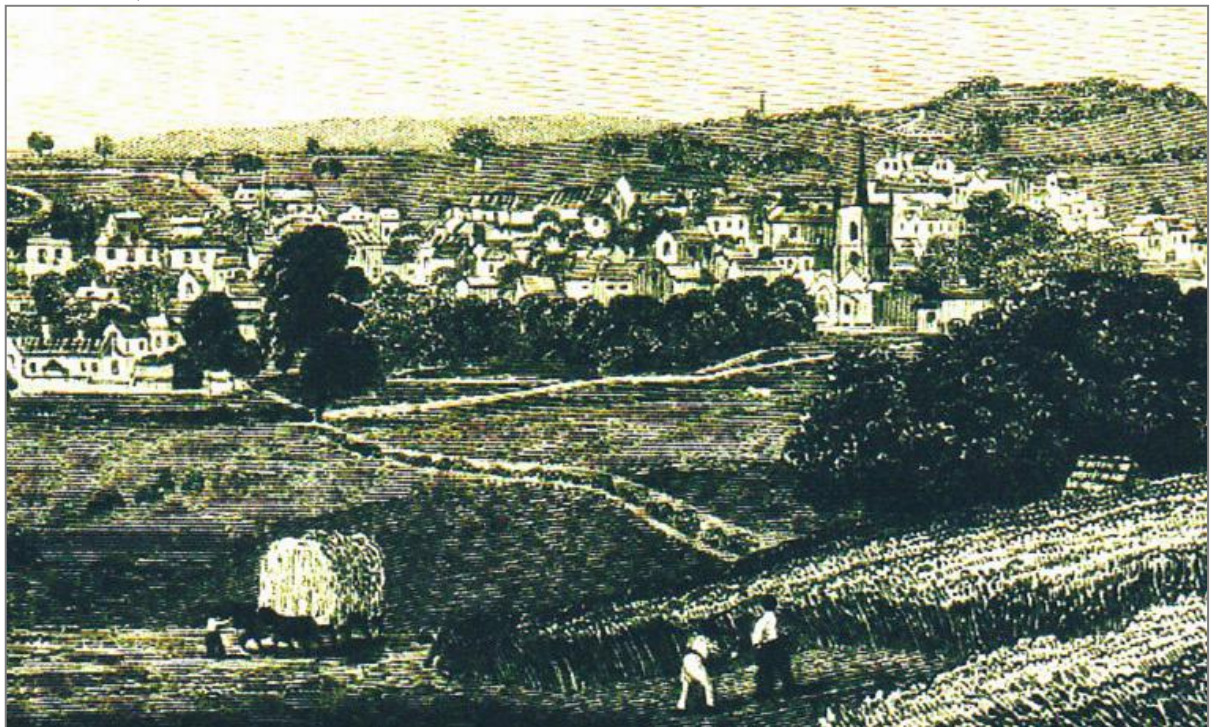
Source: DLHRO Print Collection (by permission of the DLSL).



T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, London

Pl. A16: Enlarged section of 'A Prospect of Wirksworth (1863)'

Source: R. Hackett, *Wirksworth and Five Miles Round* (Wirksworth, 1863), frontispiece (by permission of the DLSL).



Pl. A17: Postcard of Wirksworth Hall c. 1920 (built c. 1780)

Source: J. Palmer (The extension was a ballroom, added in the nineteenth century). (No copyright owner found).



Pl. A18: Long-case clock by Samuel Harlow, Ashbourne (c. 1790)

Source: R.G. Hughes & M. Craven, *Clockmakers & Watchmakers of Derbyshire* (Ashbourne, 1998), p. 105

Copyright not yet arranged.

Pl. A19: Wirksworth china (c. 1770)

Source: www.derby-porcelain.org.uk/porcelain/wirksworth

Copyright holder not discovered

Pl. A20: Banknote of Arkwright's Bank (1829) founded by John Toplis in 1789

Source: J. Palmer, www.wirksworth.org.uk

Copyright holder not discovered.

Table A1: A selection from the stock of George Buxton ironmonger of Ashbourne (1714) Source: LRO, BC/11/Ashbourne, G.Buxton, 5 October, 1714. Spelling modernized. (by permission).

				unit
for weaving		miscellaneous		price
27 st	yarn		white cap paper	
31 st	outlandish flax		brown cap paper	
16 st	Holland flax	8 qu	paper	
24 doz	Stafford flax	3 firk	soap	
125.5 st	hemp	3 doz	candles	5d each
12 st	hurds			
18 lb	flax			
8 pr	wool cards			
3 lb	indigo blue			
ironmongery		groceries		
24	spades		brimstone	
3	saws	2 lb	horse radish	1s
9	chafing dishes	14 lb	ginger	1s 1d
	scales & weights	4.25		
	frying pans	lb	black pepper	4s
	latches, catches and coffin handles	38 lb	Jamaica pepper	10d
	gun catches		wormwood	
	bellows		dry spices	
	hinges, hooks, nails, tacks	10 lb	green ginger	4d
	ropes	6 lb	treakle	18s
	horse combs	8 lb	sugar	42s 9d
shopfittings		2 lb	sugar	9s
scales & weights			powder sugar	
counters drawers, shelves		21 lb	honey	4d
		3	sugar loaves	
book debts £90		2 lb	sugar	9s
TOTAL £320 16s		1 lb	tobacco	84s
			tobacco dust	
			middle tobacco	
			best tobacco	

Table A2: Edited inventory of Robert Getliffe chandler of Ashbourne (1747)

Source: LRO, BC/11/Ashbourne (by permission). R. Getliffe, 27 October, 1747. *Unit prices apply where given*

<i>miscellaneous</i>		<i>brassware etc</i>	<i>spices groceries</i>	<i>spices groceries</i>	<i>cloth, dyestuff, yarn, paper</i>	<i>ironmongery</i>
64 lamb black barrels	67 doz candles @ 4s 6d	12 large coffin handles	1.5 lb cloves @ 15s	12 lb (...) tea @ 16s	19 yd of hurden roll @ 4.5d	10 chest locks
14 lb Spanish jute	4 doz dirty candles @ 4d	33 small ditto	aniseed @ 6.5d lb	4 lb green tea @ 7s 4d	5 lb fine cording @ 6d	24+ box locks
6 lb antimony (rat poison?)	3 firkins and 1 keg soap; 147 lb soap @ 5.5d	1 lock 7s 6d 6 'scutchins' (escutcheons)	caraway seed @ 2d lb	2.5 lb Bohea tea @ 6s	28 yd cloth	23 padlocks
chalk, sand, pitch, ropes, timber	2 lb bees wax @ 1s	46 knobs & handles	allium @ 1s 3d lb	2 lb coffee @ 5s 6d	34 ells flaxen cloth @ 8.5d	17 cupboard locks
12.5 gr fine corks 28 gr cheap corks	36 lb of pins	2 gross curtain rings	coriander seeds @ 14s lb	1 cask of first white sugar	48 yd of towelling	34 drawer locks
21 bed cords	20 galls of rape oil @ 2s	25 cloak hooks 15 others	20 lb pimento @ 2s 7d	1 cask brown bastard sugar	27.5 lb of indigo 14 lb alum	1 iron closet lock
lb of camphor @ 6s	3 pints of turpentine @ 4d	brass weights	6 lb liquorice powder	1 cask of clear sugar	92 lb blue 25 lb starch	
25 lb brimstone @ 2.5d	3 pints of the oil of Hoike @ 8d	195 lb of paper bags	12 lb ground turmeric @ 7d	96lb Jamaica sugar @ 4.5d	1.5 lb raw silk @ 12s	2600 white nails
102 lb salt petre @ 6d	8.5 lb Roman vitriol @ 12d	25 lb pack thread	6 lb of nutmegs @ 8s 6d	38.5 lb double loaf sugar	1.25 tons of flax	4450 other nails
5 lb flowers of sulphur @ 4p lb	5 lb of aloes @ 10.5d	3 pieces of best quality binding	1/4 lb cinnamon @ 2s	39 lb of lump sugar @ 9.5d	185 lb flax cleanings 200 flax hurds	400 hobnails
4.5 lb shot @ 1.5d	10 doz clock line	8 pieces of ordinary binding	3456 tobacco pipes (24 gross)	4 lb of loaf sugar at 10d	182 lb hemp	smoothing iron
6 coach harness brushes	56 lb hair powder @ 4.5d	11 tin canisters boxes & shelves	60 lb large square tobacco at 9d	14 lb of sugar at 7.5p	87 lb hemp cleanings 102 hurds	1 iron range
15 weaver brushes oil brushes	E powder (code) @ 9.5d lb	7 pair of scales	one box & 13 lb of Scotch snuff @ 15d	2 gallons rum @ 9s	2.3 ream foolscap paper @ 11s 5d	9 oval fend(ers)
clamps & shoe brushes	powder (+code) @ 10.5d lb	one beam balance	69 lb tobacco dust @ 4d	one hogshead of Spanish wine @ £1 10s	1.5 ream smallcap paper @ 2s 2d	12 house locks
cloth, hearth & painters' brushes	47 galls of compound at 2s 6d	100 lead weights	9 lb tobacco	2 pots rancid butter @ 2s 6d	1.5 ream largecap paper @ 2s 10d	3 6 gate locks
counter brushes 14 brooms etc	9 lb bolearmonack	2 wood bottles 11 casks 2 mills	53 lb shag tobacco @ 9d	125.5 cwt currants @ £2 6s - £3 15s	0.76 ream rag paper @ 12s 8d	7 candlesticks
	577 lb hops 6 lb malt at 2s 6d	6 sets of drawers glass case 3 chests a compting house	3.25 lb pig tail tobacco @ 10d	12 lb lard @ 8d	6.5 pieces of wig ribbon	
			green dragon @ 2s lb	185 lb Worcs hops		

Table A3: Inventory of haberdashery and miscellaneous stock, Thomas Bagueley, mercer of Ashbourne (1688).

<i>stationery and books</i>		£	s	d	<i>sewing materials, trimmings, accessories</i>		£	s	d
1483 sheets	paper		16	6	3 doz	boans (for bodices)	1	7	0
11	skins of parchment		3	8	8.5 gr	buttons		17	0
4	(p)salters		2	4	9 gr	boddice buttons	1	9	0
1	bible		3	6	1 gr	buttons, perle		1	6
1	Common prayer book		1	6		buttons: silver buttons and gold and loope lace		10	0
14	grammers (sic)		9	4	5	caps		2	4
3	testaments		3	0	2	caps, sattin		2	6
6	inckhornes		1	8	4 pr	childs stockings		1	0
28	primers		4	0	1 lb	cruells (needles)		1	6
20	abc		1	1	5 pr	cuffs, ..eade (made)		2	0
					4	girdles		1	0
<i>food, spices, household</i>									
16 lb	allom (alum)		3	4	1	hood, black		2	6
6 lb	ananseed (aniseed)		4	0	3.8 lb	hookes & eyes		3	10
	black peper		8	6	5 pces	galloones (gold, silver or silk lace)	1	3	0
	brass mortar & pestell		5	0	1 gr	lace: loop		8	0
6 l b	brimstone		1	0	12	lace: silver	1	0	0
1 lb	browne candy		7	6		laces old	1	3	0
5 lb	browne sugar @ £1 7s lb	6	15	0	4 gr	silk bodice laces		3	8
2 lb	currand seeds (red/black-current)		1	0	4 pces	padding		5	6
1.5 lb	currents @ £1 8s	2	2	0	5	peeces of fringe for pelisales		5	0
2 lb	ginger		7	6	1/2 doz	pins		4	0
8 lb	gunpowder		5	4	4	pr of bodis		5	6
9 lb	hops	1	2	6	4.5 lb	silk	2	10	0
	iron mortar & pestell		2	0	15 oz				
3	patternes (clogs)		1	6	7 pr	small hose		2	6
2 lb	pep(p)er		2	6	21 pr	wool hose	1	1	6

<i>groceries</i>		£	s	d		<i>Sewing materials</i>	£	s	d
4.4 lb	powder	1	7	6	2 pr	black stockings	4	0	
12 lb	prunes		1	6	3	stomages (stomachers)	3	0	
8 lb	reason (raisin) solis	1	4	6	8 pces	tape	5	4	
12 lb	rice		2	6		tape & inikle (inkle)	19	2	
	soap	1	10	0	5 pces	tape: cornelian	2	6	
	starch		11	0		tape: hole		6	
3.5 lb	suggar		18	0	4 pces	tape: holland	3	0	
	suggar		12	6	16	thimbles	1	0	
	loaves								
185 lb	tobacco at 8d lb	6	5	2	26 lb	thread: (coloured)	2	16	8
	tobacco		2	0	21 lb	thread: black and brown	1	16	2
	pipes								
3/4 lb	treakle		12	0	5.25 lb	thread: fine	1	5	0
5 doz	wash ball		2	10					
8	whiskes		10	0					
<i>other and shop fittings</i>		£	s	d	<i>other and shop fittings</i>	£	s	d	
	siterne		1	0	4 pr	spectacles		1	4
	wyes					boxes		8	0
23	battledoors		1	6		draw boxes	1	0	0
3 doz	cards		7	0		(drawers) weights & weighs			
1 doz	comb cases				9	lookinge glasses		15	10
10	combs			8		in ye lyttle drawers	1	10	0
15 doz	curtaine ringes		2	7	185 lb	tobacco @ 8d lb	6	5	2
1 doz	horne combs		1	8		tobacco pipes		2	0
	3 ivory and 3 box combs				8	whiskes		10	0
1/2 lb	powder			4					

Source: LRO, BC/11/Ashbourne (by permission), T. Bagueley, 6 October 1688 (by permission).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Secondary Sources

- A. B. Ahteir, 'Jacson, Maria Elizabetha, writer on botany', *Oxford DNB*.
- J. Appleby, 'Consumption in early-modern social thought', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- T. Arkell, 'Interpreting probate inventories', in T. Arkell, N. Evans & N. Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000).
- T. Arkell, 'The incidence of poverty in England in the later seventeenth century', *Social History*, 12 (1987), pp. 23-47.
- H. Barker, *The Business of Women: female enterprise and urban development in northern England 1760—1830* (Oxford, 2006).
- H. Barker & E. Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (London, 1997).
- H. Barker, "'Smoke cities': northern industrial towns in late-Georgian England", *Urban History*, 32 (2004), pp. 175-90.
- J. Barry, "'Bourgeois collectivism"? Urban association and the middling sort', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550—1800* (London, 1994).
- J. Barry, 'Consumers' passions: the middle class in eighteenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 207-216.
- J. Barry, 'The Making of the Middle Class', *Past & Present*, 145 (1994), pp. 194-208.
- J.V. Beckett & J.E. Heath, 'When was the industrial revolution in the east Midlands?' *Midland History*, 13 (1988), pp. 77-94.
- M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures 1700—1820: industry, innovation and working in Britain* (London, 1994), 2nd edn.
- M. Berg, 'Markets, trade and European manufacture', in M. Berg (ed.), *Markets and Manufacture in Early Industrial Europe* (London, 1991).
- M. Berg, 'Small producer capitalism in eighteenth-century England', *Business History*, 35 (1993), pp. 17-23.
- M. Berg, 'Women's property and the industrial revolution', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 24 (1993), pp. 233-250.
- M. Berg, 'Consumption in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Britain', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- M. Berg & P. Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the industrial revolution', *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 24-50.
- M. Berg, 'From imitation to invention: creating commodities in eighteenth-century Britain', *Economic History Review*, 55 (2002), pp. 1-30.

- M. Berg, 'In pursuit of luxury: global history and British consumer goods in the eighteenth century', *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), pp. 85-142.
- R.M. Berger, 'The development of retail trade in provincial England c. 1500—1700', *Journal of Economic History*, 40 (1980), pp. 123-128.
- H. Berry, 'Polite consumption: shopping in eighteenth-century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 375-94.
- I. Black, 'Money, information and space: banking in early-nineteenth century England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21 (1995), pp. 371-397.
- P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989).
- P. Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: the development of the provincial urban culture c. 1680—c. 1760', in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Town: a reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (London, 1990).
- F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th—18th Century*, vol.1, 'The structures of everyday life, the limits of the possible' (Paris, 1979), tr. S. Reynolds (London, 1985).
- C. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort 1550—1800', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1500—1800* (London, 1994).
- J. Brown, 'The malting industry', in G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 6, 1750—1850 (Cambridge, 1989).
- J. Brown, *The English Market Town: a social and economic history 1750—1914* (Marlborough, 1986).
- S.E. Brown, "'A Just and Profitable Commerce": moral economy and the middle classes in eighteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), pp. 299-304.
- K. Bruland, 'Industrialization and technological change', in R. Floud & P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860 (Cambridge, 2004).
- P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2001).
- L.S. Burns & R.G. Healy, 'The metropolitan hierarchy of occupations: an economic interpretation of central place theory', *Regional Science & Urban Economics*, 8 (1978), pp. 381-393.
- R. Burt, *The British Lead Mining Industry* (Redruth, 1984).
- R. Burt, 'The extractive industries', in R. Floud & P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860 (Cambridge, 2004).
- K.C. Campbell, 'The face of fashion: milliners in eighteenth-century visual culture', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (2002), pp. 157-172.
- G. Carnall, 'Moore, Thomas (1779–1852)', *Oxford DNB*.
- C.W. Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: a study of the building process 1740—1820* (London, 1974).
- S.D. Chapman, 'The transition to the factory system in the Midlands cotton-spinning industry', *Economic History Review*, 18 (1965), pp. 526-543.

- S.D. Chapman, 'Fixed capital formation in the first cotton industry, 1770—1815', *Economic History Review*, 23 (1970), pp. 235-266.
- S.D. Chapman, 'Financial constraints on the growth of firms in the cotton industry 1790—1850', *Economic History Review*, 32 (1979), pp. 50-69.
- G. Clark, 'Agriculture in the industrial revolution: 1700—1850, in J. Mokyr (ed.), *The British Industrial Revolution: an economic perspective* (Oxford, 1993).
- P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500—1700* (1976, Oxford, 1979).
- P. Clark, 'Small towns 1700—1840', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol.2, 1540—1840 (Cambridge, 2000).
- P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580—1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000).
- L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation 1707—1837* (London, 1992).
- J.E. Cookson, 'The English volunteer movement of the French wars 1793—1815: some contexts', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867 - 891.
- P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700—1800* (Oxford, 1982).
- P.J. Corfield, 'Small towns, large implications: social and cultural roles of small towns in eighteenth-century England and Wales', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10 (1987), pp. 125 - 138.
- P.J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number', in P.J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Cambridge, 1984).
- P. Corfield & S. Kelly, "'Giving instructions to the town" the early town directories', *Urban Year Book* (1984), pp. 22-75.
- D. Corner, 'The tyranny of fashion: the case of the felt-hatting trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries', *Textile History*, 22 (1991), pp. 153-78.
- W.P. Courtney & M. Bevan, 'Taylor, John (bap. 1711, d. 1788)', *Oxford DNB*.
- N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550—1820* (Aldershot, 2000).
- D. Cressy, 'Literacy in context: meaning and measurement in early-modern England', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- G. Crossick, 'Meanings of property and the world of the petite bourgeoisie', in J. Stobart (ed.), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town 1700—1900* (London, 2000).
- F. Cummings, 'Boothby, Rousseau and the Romantic malady', *The Burlington Magazine*, 110 (1968), pp. 659-667.
- M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700—1850* (Oxford, 1995).
- A.C.F. David, 'Cook, James (1728—1779), explorer', *Oxford DNB*.
- A.C.F. David, 'Colnett, James (bap. 1753, d. 1806), naval officer and fur trader', *Oxford DNB*.
- L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780—1850* (London, 1987).
- Derwent Valley Mills Partnership, *The Derwent Valley Mills and their Communities* (Derby, 2001).

- A.E. & E.M. Dodd, *Peakland Roads and Trackways* (Hartington, 1974).
- M. Durey, 'The British Secret Service and the escape of Sir Sidney Smith from Paris in 1798', *History*, 84 (1999), pp. 437-457.
- A. Dyer, 'Small towns in England 1600—1800', in P. Borsay, P. Proudfoot & J. Lindsay (eds.), *Provincial towns in early modern England and Ireland : change, convergence and divergence* (Oxford, 2002).
- P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: business, society and family life in London 1660—1730* (London, 1989).
- P. Earle, 'The middling sort in London', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550—1800* (London, 1994).
- J. Egerton, 'Wright, Joseph, of Derby (1734—1797, painter', *Oxford DNB*.
- J.M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680 – 1840* (Basingstoke, 2001).
- P.A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: science and culture in British urban society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2009).
- P. Elliott, 'Abraham Bennett, F.R.S. (1749-1799): a provincial electrician in eighteenth-century England', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 53 (1999), pp. 59-78.
- S.L. Engerman & P.K. O'Brien, 'The industrial revolution in global perspective', in R. Floud & P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- A. Erickson, '"Common law versus common practice": the use of marriage settlements in early modern England', *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 21-39.
- C. Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England: cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces 1660—1780* (Manchester, 1998).
- A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London, 1985).
- A. Everitt (ed.), 'Introduction', *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London 1973).
- A. Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn 1560—1760', in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973).
- M.E. Falkus & E.L. Jones, 'Urban improvement in the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Research in Economic History*, 4 (1979), pp. 193-233.
- C.Y. Ferdinand, '"Selling it to the provinces": news and commerce around eighteenth-century Salisbury', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- R.S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights: spinners of fortune* (Manchester, 1989).
- R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700 —1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- C. Fowler, 'Changes in provincial retail practice during the eighteenth century, with particular reference to central-southern England', *Business History*, 40 (1998), pp. 17-54.
- N.J. Frangopulo, *The History of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ashbourne, Derbyshire 1585—1935* (Ashbourne, 1939).
- H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600—1750* (Oxford, 2007).

- H.R. French, 'Social status, localism and the "middle sort of people" in England 1620—1750', *Past & Present*, 166 (2000), pp. 66-99.
- H.R. French, 'The search for the "middle sort of people" in England 1600—1800', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 277-293.
- H.R. French & J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500—1800* (Basingstoke, 2004).
- H.R. French, "'Ingenious and learned gentlemen": social perceptions and self-fashioning among parish élites in Essex 1680—1740', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp. 44-66.
- E. Gilboy, 'Demand as a factor in the industrial revolution', in J. Hoppit & E.A. Wrigley (eds), *The Industrial Revolution in Britain II* (Oxford, 1994).
- D.E. Ginter, *A Measure of Wealth: the English land tax in historical analysis* (London, 1992).
- P. Glennie, 'Consumption within historical studies', in D. Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption: a review of new studies* (London, 1995).
- N. Goose and N. Evans, 'Wills as an historical source', in T. Arkell, N. Evans & N. Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000).
- M. Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution of English Friendly Societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp. 489-511.
- R. Gould, 'Capital formation in the Wirksworth lead-mining Industry 1700—1800', *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 6 (1977), pp. 233-240.
- R. Gould, 'Capital formation in the Wirksworth lead-mining Industry: Part 2', *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 7 (1978), pp. 21-27.
- R. Gould, 'The activities of the London Lead Companies in Wirksworth: a brief summary', *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 7 (1978), pp. 28-30.
- J. Gregory & J. Stevenson, *Britain in the Eighteenth Century 1688—1820* (London, 2000).
- J. Harding and A. Taigel, 'An air of detachment: town gardens in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Garden History*, 24 (1996), pp. 237-254.
- R. Harris, 'Government and the economy, 1688—1850', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1: 'Industrialization', 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- J. Heath, *An Illustrated History of Derbyshire* (Derby, 1993).
- A. Henstock (ed.), *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol.1, 'Fashionable Society' (Ashbourne, 1989).
- A. Henstock (ed.), *A Georgian Country Town Ashbourne 1725—1825*, vol.2, 'Architecture' (Ashbourne, 1991).
- A. Henstock (ed.) *Early Victorian Country Town: a portrait of Ashbourne in the mid-nineteenth century* (Ashbourne, 1978).
- A. Henstock, 'House repopulation from the land tax assessments in a Derbyshire market town, 1780—1825', in M. Turner, D. R. Mills (eds), *Land and Property: the English land tax 1692—1832* (New York, 1986).
- D. Hey, *Packmen, Carriers & Packhorse Roads: trade and communications in north Derbyshire and south Yorkshire* (Ashbourne, 2001).

- M. Hodges, 'Widows and their assets', in T. Arkell, N. Evans & N. Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000).
- B.A. Holderness, 'The Commercialization of eighteenth-century England', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 122-124.
- P.M. Hohenberg, 'Urban manufactures in the proto-industrial economy: culture and commerce', in M. Berg (ed.), *Markets and Manufacture in Early Industrial Europe* (London, 1991).
- K. Honeyman, *Origin of Enterprise: business leadership in the industrial revolution* (Manchester, 1982).
- K. Honeyman and J. Goodman, 'Women's work, gender conflict, and labour markets in Europe, 1500—1900', *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991), pp. 608-28.
- K. Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialization in England 1700—1870* (Basingstoke, 2000).
- J. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English business 1700-1800* (Cambridge, 1987).
- P. Hudson, *The industrial revolution* (London, 1992).
- P. Hudson, 'Financing firms 1700—1850', in M.W. Kirby & M.B. Rose (eds), *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain from the eighteenth to the twentieth century* (London, 1994).
- P. Hudson, 'Industrial organization and structure', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700 - 1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- A. Hughes, Review of A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country 1520—1770*, *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), pp. 612-613.
- R.G. Hughes & M. Craven, *Clockmakers & Watchmakers of Derbyshire* (Ashbourne, 1998).
- J. Humphries, 'Household economy', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700 - 1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- M.R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: commerce, gender and the family in England, 1680—1780* (Berkeley, 1996).
- I.E.L. Jones & M.E. Falkus, 'Urban improvement and the English economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Town: a reader in English urban history 1688—1820* (London, 1990).
- S.R.H. Jones, 'The origins of the factory system in Great Britain: technology, transaction costs, or exploitation?', in M.W. Kirby & M.B. Rose (eds), *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain from the eighteenth to the twentieth century* (London, 1994).
- B. Joyce, *Derbyshire Detail & Character: a celebration of its towns and villages* (Stroud, 1996).
- S. King & G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English economy and society 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2001).
- N. Kirkham, *Derbyshire Lead Mining Through The Centuries* (Truro, 1968).
- L.F. Klein, 'Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century', *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), pp. 869 - 98.
- C. Knick Harley, 'Trade: discovery, mercantilism and technology', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- M. Lambert, "'Cast-off wearing apparell", the consumption and distribution of second-hand clothing in northern England during the long eighteenth century', *Textile History*, 35 (2004), pp. 1-26.

- D.S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: clocks and the making of the modern world* (London, 1983).
- J. Lane & A. Tarver, 'Henry Fogg (1707—1750) and his patients: the practice of an eighteenth-century Staffordshire apothecary', *Medical History*, 37 (1993), pp. 187-196.
- P. Lane, 'Women, property and inheritance: wealth creation and income generation in small English towns 1750—1835', in J. Stobart & A. Owens (eds), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town c.1700—1900* (Aldershot, 2000).
- P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727—1783* (Oxford, 1992).
- P. Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689—1798* (Oxford, 1991).
- P. Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 311-331.
- J. Langton, 'Town growth and urbanization in the midlands from the 1660s to 1841', in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840* (Leicester, 2000).
- J. Langton, 'Prometheus prostrated?' in P. Slack & R. Ward, *The Peopling of Britain: the shaping of a human landscape* (Oxford, 1999).
- J.K. Laughton & B.M. Gough, 'Portlock, Nathaniel (b. c.1747, d.1817), naval officer and fur trader', *Oxford DNB*.
- J.K. Laughton & B.M. Gough, 'Dixon, George (1748? —1795), naval officer and fur trader', *Oxford DNB*.
- A.F. Leach, 'Schools', in W. Page (ed.), *VCH (Derbyshire, 1907)*.
- S.M. Lee, 'Fitzherbert, Alleyn, Baron St Helens (1753—1839), diplomatist', *Oxford DNB*.
- B. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660—1800* (Oxford, 1991).
- B. Lemire, 'Second-hand beaux and "red-armed belles": conflict and creation of fashions in England c. 1660—1800', *Continuity and Change*, 15 (2000), pp. 391-418.
- B. Lemire, 'Consumerism in pre-industrial and early industrial England: the trade in second-hand clothes', *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (1988).
- D. Levine & K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560—1765* (Oxford, 1997).
- P. Lindert, 'English occupations 1670—1811', *Journal of Economic History*, 40 (1980), pp. 695-712.
- E. Lord, *Derby Past* (Chichester, 1996).
- J. D. Marshall, 'The rise and transformation of the Cumbrian market town 1660—1900', *Northern History*, 19 (1983), pp. 128-209.
- P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: an economic history of Britain 1700—1914* (London, 1969).
- P. Mathias, 'The social structure in the eighteenth century: a calculation by Joseph Massie', *Economic History Review*, 9 (1957), pp. 30-45.
- A. Menuage, 'The cotton mills of the Derbyshire Derwent and its tributaries', *Industrial Archaeological Review*, 16 (1993).

- M. Miles, “‘A haven for the privileged’: recruitment into the profession of attorney in England, 1709—1792”, *Social History* (London), 11 (1986), pp. 197-210.
- D. Mitch, ‘Education and skill of the British labour force’, in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol. I, ‘Industrialization’ 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- I. Mitchell, “‘I had never seen better shops in a country town’: fashionable retailing in Hanoverian Derby”, *Derbyshire Miscellany*, 17 (2005), pp. 82-90.
- J. Mokyr (ed.), *The British Industrial Revolution: an economic perspective* (Oxford, 1993).
- J. Mokyr, ‘Demand versus supply in the industrial revolution’ in J. Hoppit & E.A. Wrigley (eds), *The Industrial Revolution in Britain, II* (Oxford, 1994).
- J. Mokyr, ‘Accounting for the Industrial Revolution’, in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol. I, ‘Industrialization’ 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- J. Mokyr, ‘Is there still life in the pessimist case?’ Consumption during the Industrial Revolution, 1790—1850, *Journal of Economic History*, 48 (1988), pp. 69-92.
- D. Moore, *British Clockmakers’ and Watchmakers’ Apprenticeship Records 1710—1810* (Ashbourne, 2003).
- R.J. Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution 1780—1850* (London, 1979).
- R.J. Morris, ‘Voluntary societies and the British urban élite 1780—1850: an analysis’, *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp. 95-118.
- R.J. Morris, *Men Women and Property in England 1780—1870: a social and economic history of family strategies amongst the Leeds middle classes* (Cambridge, 2005).
- C. Macleod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution: the English patent system 1660—1800* (Cambridge, 1988).
- A. McConnell, ‘Arkwright, Richard (1755—1843), cotton manufacturer and landowner’, *Oxford DNB*.
- G. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: new approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities* (Bloomington, 1990).
- A. McInnes, ‘The emergence of a leisure town: Shrewsbury 1660—1760’, *Past & Present*, 120 (1988), pp. 53-57.
- E. McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: the development and design of the city 1660—1720* (Manchester, 1999).
- N. McKendrick, ‘Home demand and economic growth : a new view of the role of women and children in the industrial revolution’, in N. McKendrick (ed.), *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J.H. Plumb*, (London, 1974).
- N. McKendrick, ‘Commercialization and the economy’, in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982).
- S. Nenadic, ‘Middle-rank consumers and domestic culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720—1840’, *Past & Present*, 145 (1994), pp. 122-156.
- M. Noble, ‘The land tax assessments in the study of the physical development of country towns’, in M. Turner, D.R. Mills (eds), *Land and property : the English land tax 1692—1832* (New York, 1986).
- P.K. O’Brien, ‘Agriculture and the Home Market for English Industry, 1660—1820’, *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985), pp. 773-800.

- P.K. O'Brien, 'Political preconditions for the Industrial Revolution'. in P.K. O'Brien & R. Quinault (eds), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge, 1993).
- A. Owens, 'Property, will-making and estate disposal in an industrial town 1800—1857', in J. Stobart & A. Owens, *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town 1700—1900* (Aldershot, 2000).
- M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy 1500—1850* (Cambridge, 1996).
- E. Pawson, *Transport and Economy: the turnpike roads of eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977).
- R. Pearce, *Gentlemen and Players: Wirksworth cricketers 1757—1914* (Huddersfield, 2007).
- R. Pearce, 'Wright, Francis Beresford (1806—1873) iron manufacturer', *Oxford DNB*.
- S. Pennell, 'Consumption and consumerism in early-modern England', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 549-564.
- C. Phythian-Adams, "'Small-scale toy-towns and Trumptions'? Urbanizations in Britain and the new Cambridge Urban History', *Urban History*, 28 (2001), pp.256-268.
- J.H. Plumb, 'Commercialization and society', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982).
- N. Powell, 'Do numbers count? Towns in early-modern England', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp.549-564.
- J. Price, 'What did merchant do? Reflection on British overseas trade 1660—1790', *Journal of Economic History*, 49 (1989), pp. 267-284.
- S. Quinn, 'Money, finance and capital markets', R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds). *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- B. Rackham, 'Wirksworth porcelain: a note', *Burlington Magazine*, 29 (1916), p. 339.
- J. Radley & S.R. Penny, 'The turnpike roads of the Peak District', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 92 (1972), pp. 93-109.
- A. Raistrick & B. Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines* (London, 1965).
- N. Raven, 'Industry and the small towns of Derbyshire: evidence from the trades directories c.1790—1850', in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840: trades, towns and regions* (Leicester, 2000).
- N. Raven & T. Hooley, 'Industrial and urban change in the Midlands: a regional survey', in J. Stobart & P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700—1840: trades, towns and regions* (Leicester, 2000).
- M. Reed, 'The cultural role of small towns in c.1600—1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *Small Towns in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1995).
- E. Richards, 'Margins of the Industrial Revolution', in P.K. O'Brien (ed.), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (1993, Cambridge, 1998).
- J.A. Robey, 'Samuel Harlow of Ashbourne and his long case movements', *Antiquarian Horology*, 26 (2001), pp. 527-545.
- N. Rogers, 'The middling sort in eighteenth-century politics', in J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: culture, society and politics in England 1550-1800* (London, 1994).

- M.B. Rose, 'Social policy and business; parish apprenticeship and the early factory system 1750—1834', *Business History* 31 (1989), pp. 5-32.
- J.G. Rule, *The Vital Century: England's developing economy 1714—1815* (London, 1992).
- J.G. Rule, *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (London, 1981).
- J.G. Rule, *Albion's People: English society 1714—1815* (London, 1992).
- L. Scammell, 'Town versus country: the property of everyday consumption in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in J. Stobart & A. Owens (ed.), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town c. 1700-1900* (Aldershot, 2000).
- A.J. Schmidt, 'The country attorney in late eighteenth-century England: Benjamin Smith of Horbling', *Law and History Review*, 8 (1990) pp. 237-271.
- K. Schürer & T. Arkell (eds), *Surveying the People: the interpretative use of document sources for the study of population in the later seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1992).
- J. Seed, 'From "middling sort" to middle class in late eighteenth-century England', in M.L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: studies in social stratification* (London, 1992).
- C. Shammass, 'Change in English and Anglo-American consumption for 1550—1800' in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- R. Sharp, 'Bedford, Thomas (1707—1773), non-juring C of E minister and historian', *Oxford DNB*.
- R. Sheldon, 'Practical economics in eighteenth-century England: Charles Smith on the grain trade and the corn laws, 1756—72', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), pp. 636—62.
- D. Simonton, 'Apprenticeship, training and gender in the eighteenth century', in M. Berg (ed.), *Markets and Manufacture in Early Industrial Europe* (London, 1991).
- R. Slack, *Lead-Miner's Heyday: the great days of mining in Wirksworth and the low peak of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield, 2000).
- C.A. Smith, 'Population growth and economic change in some Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680-1840', *Local Population Studies*, 65 (2000), pp.29-46.
- C.A. Smith, *The Renaissance of the Nottinghamshire Market Town 1680—1840* (Chesterfield, 2007).
- K.D.M. Snell & P.S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: the geography of Victorian religion* (Cambridge, 2000).
- J. Spavold & S. Brown, *Ticknall Pots & Potters from the late fifteenth century to 1888* (Ashbourne, 2005).
- M. Spufford, 'The cost of apparel in seventeenth-century England and the accuracy of Gregory King', *Economic History Review*, 53 (2000), pp.677-705.
- H.M. Stevens & R.T. Steam, 'Dyott, William (1761—1847), gentleman and army officer', *Oxford DNB*.
- J. Stobart, 'The spatial organization of a regional economy: central places in North-west England in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), pp. 147-154.
- J. Stobart, *The First Industrial Region: north-west England c. 1700—1760* (Manchester, 2004).
- J. Stobart & A. Hann, 'Retailing revolution in the eighteenth century? Evidence from north-west England', *Business History*, 46 (2004), pp. 171-194.

- J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: leisure and shopping in the English town, c.1680 - 1830* (London, 2007).
- J. Stobart, 'Leisure and shopping in the small towns of Georgian England', *Urban History*, 31 (2005), pp. 479 -503.
- J. Stobart, 'Social and geographical contexts of property transmission in the eighteenth century', in J. Stobart & A. Owens (ed.), *Urban Fortunes: property and inheritance in the town c. 1700—1900* (Aldershot, 2000).
- J. Stobart & N. Raven (eds), *Towns, Regions and Industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands, c. 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2005).
- J. Stobart, *Spend Spend Spend! a history of shopping* (Stroud, 2008).
- R.P. Sturges, 'The membership of the Derby Philosophical Society 1783 - 1802', *Midland History*, 4 (1979), pp. 212-229.
- J. Styles, 'Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007).
- J. Styles, 'Involuntary consumers? Servants and their clothes in eighteenth-century England', *Textile History* 33 (2002), pp. 9-21.
- J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early-modern London', *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 124-169.
- R. Sweet, 'Small towns in England, 1600 – 1800', in P. Borsay and L. Proudfoot (eds), *Provincial Towns in Early-Modern England and Ireland: Change, Convergence and Divergence* (Oxford, 2002).
- R. Sweet, *The English Town, 1680 – 1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999).
- R. Sweet, 'Topographies of politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 355-374.
- J. Tanu, 'Watt, James (1736-1819), engineer and scientist', *Oxford DNB*.
- E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963, London, 1968).
- H. J. Torrens, 'Warltire, John (1725 – 1810), itinerant science lecturer', *Oxford DNB*.
- B. Travers, 'Trading patterns in the east midlands 1600 - 1800', *Midlands History*, 15 (1990), pp. 65- 82.
- B.S. Trinder, 'Eighteenth and nineteenth-century market town industry: an analytical model', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 24 (2002), pp 79-83.
- B. Trinder, 'Towns and industries: the changing character of manufacturing towns', in J. Stobart & N. Raven (eds), *Towns, Regions and Industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands, c. 1700—1850* (Manchester, 2005).
- G. Turbutt, *A History of Derbyshire* (Cardiff, 1999).
- G.L. Turnbull, *Traffic and Transport: an economic history of Pickfords* (London, 1979).
- R. Twigger, 'Inflation: the value of the pound 1750 - 1998', Research Paper 99/20, *House of Commons* (London, 1999).
- D. Underdown, *Start of Play: cricket and culture in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 2000).

- D. Vaughan, 'Whitehurst, John (1713—1788), maker of clocks and scientific instruments and geologist', *Oxford DNB*.
- A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 383-414.
- A. Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions 1751—81', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- D. Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: reading and writing in modern Europe* (Malden, MA, 2000).
- H-J. Voth, 'Living standards and the urban environment', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol.1, 'Industrialization' 1700 - 1860* (Cambridge, 2004).
- J. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: consumer behaviour and the household economy, 1650 to the present* (Cambridge, 2008).
- J. de Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early-modern Europe', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the Wider World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- J. de Vries, 'The industrial revolution and the industrious revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 54 (1994), pp. 249-270.
- D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: the political representation of class in Britain c. 1780 —1840* (Cambridge, 1995).
- D. Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 17 (1992), pp. 43-72.
- D. Wahrman, 'Virtual representation: parliamentary reporting and languages of class in the 1790s', *Past & Present*, 136 (1992), pp. 83- 113.
- L. Weatherill, 'The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660 —1760* (London, 1988).
- L. Willies, 'Derbyshire lead-mining in the 18th and 19th centuries', *The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, 14 (1999), pp. 31-33.
- L. Willies, 'The Barker Family and the eighteenth-century lead business', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 93 (1973), pp. 55 - 74.
- J.E. Wills, 'European consumption and Asian production in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993).
- C. Wiskin, 'Industry, investment and consumption: urban women in the Midlands', in J. Stobart & N. Raven, *Towns, regions and industries: urban and industrial change in the Midlands c. 1700—1840* (Manchester, 2005).
- A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999).
- K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525—1700* (Oxford, 1995).
- E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541—1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981).
- E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge, 2004).

E.A. Wrigley, 'British population during the "long" eighteenth century 1680 - 1840', in R. Floud & P.A. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, vol. I, 'Industrialization' 1700—1860* (Cambridge, 2004).

E.A. Wrigley, 'The transition to an advanced organic economy: half a millennium of English agriculture', *Economic History Review*, 59 (2006), pp. 435-480.

E.A. Wrigley, 'The supply of raw materials in the industrial revolution', in J. Hoppit & E.A. Wrigley (eds), *The Industrial Revolution in Britain II* (Oxford, 1994).

E.A. Wrigley, 'Corn and crisis: Malthus on the high price of provisions', *Population & Development Review*, 25 (1999), pp. 121-128.

E.A. Wrigley, 'Country and town: the primary, secondary and tertiary peopling of England in the early-modern period', in P. Slack & R. Ward, *The Peopling of Britain: the shaping of a human landscape* (Oxford, 1999).

E.M. Yates, 'Map of Ashbourne', *Geographical Journal*, 126 (1960), pp. 479-481.

Primary sources

Anon., *The History and Topography of Ashbourn, the Valley of the Dove and the adjacent villages* (Ashbourne, 1839).

J.A. Aitkin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (Manchester, 1795).

P. Barfoot & J. Wilkes, *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture*, (London, 1793-98).

W. Beresford, *A voyage round the world ... to the north-west coast of America: performed in 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788*, (London, 1789), ECCO.

R. Blome, *Britannia, or A Geographical Description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland...* (London, 1673).

J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. comprehending an account of his studies and numerous works, ...* vol.2 (Dublin, 1792), ECCO.

J. Britton and E.W. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales, or delineations topographical, historical and descriptive of each county*, vol. 3 (London, 1802).

J. Burnley, *The History of Wool and Woolcombing* (London, 1889).

R. Campbell, *The London tradesman. Being a compendious view of all the trades, professions, arts, both liberal and mechanic...* (London, 1747).

J. Collyer, *The Parents' and Guardians' Directory, and the Youth's Guide in the Choice of a Profession or Trade* (London, 1761), ECCO.

C.R. Colville, *A Record of the Volunteer Cavalry of Derbyshire 1794 - 1864* (London, 1868).

J.C. Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals as illustrated by the Records of Quarter Sessions in the County of Derby* (London, 1890).

Erasmus Darwin, *A plan for the conduct of female education in boarding schools ...* (Derby, 1797), ECCO.

D. Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, (London, 1726), vol. 2, eds G.D.H. Cole and D.C. Browning (London, 1962).

- V.S. Doe (ed.), *The Diary of James Clegg of Chapel en le Frith 1708—1755* (Matlock, 1978).
- F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor or an history of the labouring classes...* (London, 1797).
- G. Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London, 1857).
- C. Glover & P. Riden (eds), *William Woolley's History of Derbyshire c.1700* (Derby, 1981).
- S. Glover, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby...* (Derby, 1831-33).
- J.D. Marshall (ed.) *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester, 1967).
- J. Page (ed.) *The Victoria County History of Derbyshire* (1905).
- J. Pilkington, *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire ...* (Derby, 1789).
- D. Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765* (Oxford, 1984).
- T.S. Willan, *An Eighteenth-Century Shopkeeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen* (Manchester, 1970).

Unpublished sources

- C.N. Dack, 'The distinguishing features of a rural middling sort: a socio-economic and cultural study of Alstonfield, Staffordshire, c. 1660—1740', unpub. M.A. dissertation (Leicester, 2004).
- T.N. Ince, 'Ince's Pedigrees', unpub. mss, 1824 - 1860 (DLSL). Transcription by J. Palmer, Kathryn Farrell and Sonia Addis-Smith, www.wirksworth.org.uk.
- S.A. Lewis, 'An historical and geographical study of the small towns of Shropshire 1600 – 1830', unpub. Ph.D. thesis (University of Leicester, 1990).
- C.A. Smith, 'The renaissance of the English market town: a study of six Nottinghamshire market towns, 1680-1840', unpub. Ph.D. thesis (University of Nottingham, 1997).
- The Woolley mss (Derbyshire Local Studies Library).