

Local Imperialism:
Town and Empire in Warrington
1750-1910

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**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy.**

Department of Economic and Social History, 1998.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a town and its development from 1750 to 1910. It analyses its social, political and cultural growth in these years. The town is Warrington, then located in Lancashire (now part of Cheshire), equidistant from Liverpool and Manchester on the River Mersey. It is a study of the town's relations to region, nation and Empire, and how local factors reflected these relations. Warrington's historical identity was not a simple Englishness condensed. For reasons of geography and demography, its external influences were also northern and Irish. Warrington's English and Irish populations brought divergent understandings of nation and Empire.

The growth of civic pride and local identity became a potent social force, particularly after the incorporation of Warrington in 1847. A large part of municipal popular politics revolved around the idea of community and civic pride. This process had clear political uses, offering a facade of respectability and intellectual justification to political realities which were often unattractive and sometimes corrupt. The challenges of the working class or of radicals often compared the rhetoric of municipal pride and the reality of municipal government.

In examining the town's place in the Empire, this methodology is offered as a means whereby popular imperialism can be assessed and its components identified. Local involvement in Empire suggests that popular acceptance was based as much on the survival of traditional liberal arguments as on their defeat and abandonment by the forces of New Imperialism. Anti-slavery and imperial philanthropy were central to popular imperialism, and the appeals to 'local imperialism' which drew together civic pride, community values and Empire underpinned some of the outward manifestations of imperialism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have accumulated incalculable debts whilst writing this thesis. To my supervisor, Dr Mike Tadman, is owed special thanks for all his help and support. The staff at the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Liverpool have been wonderfully generous to me. Gill Wilson has been a treasure.

The mad women in the attic - Di, Emily, Sharon, Andrea and Marisa - have been my colleagues, mainstays and friends. I cannot thank them enough for their help over the years.

I have relied heavily on the staff of Warrington Local History library, and their knowledge and patience have been much appreciated (especially in the last few weeks' footnote frenzy). I would like especially to record my thanks to Peter Rogerson, Bob Thwaite, Hilary Chambers, Joanne Unsworth, Margaret Wybberley and Maddy Johnston. Thanks also to Amanda Richardson and the splendid ladies (and Ted) in the library.

Local historians in Warrington have provided me with invaluable material and insights. I would like to thank Dr. Pdraig O'Brien for his help with Archibald Hamilton Rowan and the United Irishmen. Peter Rogerson kindly shared his knowledge of Owen Devin with me. John Dolan was generous with his time and with documents concerning Robert Moffat. John Donlan at the Warrington Project helped with the Irish in Warrington. Laurie Toole helped to provide Census figures for the Irish. Peter Mulholland at Great Sankey School kindly allowed me to use his materials on the Irish. Hilary Chambers shared her knowledge of William Beamont with me. Maggie Burke helped with the Boer War. I thank them all.

My greatest debt is to my family. Laurie has contributed technical advice and

assistance and has been my emerald among the blue. Michael, Frances and Jackie have learnt housework and cooking and got on with things while I wrote, and wrote, and wrote. They are the best kids in the world. Thanks also to my wonderful sister, Jackie, and to John, Les, Anthony, Jess and Phil, and to Kate Toole in Birmingham, Steve, Mick and Jan. My mum, Joan Taylor and my dad, the late Les Taylor, deserve the greatest thanks of all, for everything.

ABBREVIATIONS

SJL Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

WALSC Warrington Archive & Local Studies Collection.

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Part One

Issues & Locality

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Mental pictures of late Victorian Britain conjure up scenes of imperial spectacle, flag-waving crowds and music hall singers of patriotic songs. The images are however much easier to assimilate than to explain. Why did British society appear to become so obsessed with Empire? And more particularly, why did the working class, whose interests lay in dismantling such a system, seem to be pulled along by its power? Was it, as some have argued, a purely irrational social phenomenon?

Questions such as this lie at the heart of current debates on British identity. For some, flag-waving jingo crowds are clear manifestations of Britain's inherent nature: aggressive, war-like, predatory. Others argue that jingoism was the product of transient political and social conditions, very specific in time and place. The latter school of thought believes that British identity is not to be found in such fleeting phenomena, but is rather in its provinces, counties and small towns, where the outside world rarely intrudes. This study addresses this problem by attempting a (small-scale) convergence of these seemingly irreconcilable approaches. It does so by detailing the growth of a single town, analysing the idea of community and of community values as social devices and political ideals. It demonstrates the role of Empire in forging the sense of community and at how the political manifestations of community ideals reinforced the emotional appeal of Empire.

The nature of the study is necessarily divided to draw together these disparate elements. Part Two deals with anti-slavery as a form of municipal politics and an imperial theme. Part Three investigates community values and popular imperialism. Part Four addresses the question of Irish immigration in the nineteenth century, and its effects

on ideas about community and on perspectives of Empire, given Irish experiences of famine and migration.

It is therefore hoped that this approach will contribute to present debates on British imperialism. Imperial historians worry that their subject has become fragmented, and is fast losing meaning and relevance. Post-colonial theorists ignore history to concentrate on literature. Shula Marks has attacked imperial history as the last redoubt of the male middle-class historian.⁽¹⁾ It is little wonder that David Fieldhouse in his vindication of imperial history should sound so defensive. Whether this apparent lack of purpose is more acute than that evident in history in general is a point for debate, but there is an acknowledgement that for imperial history to continue to attract a readership, it must reposition itself. Both Fieldhouse and Marks offer suggestions. Fieldhouse recommends that imperial history identify those concerns which cannot be understood within the processes of either metropolitan or colonial nation building, the “areas of interaction” which bound the Empire together. Shula Marks invites historians to consider the “connections between things”, by reading British social and economic history for its unacknowledged imperial content. In one sense, Fieldhouse wants imperial history taken out of British history, Marks wants it put back in.⁽²⁾ For both, the relationship between imperial history and British history is very problematic indeed. They do agree that Empire has had profound effects on Britain, but that this is often weakly acknowledged in the accepted versions of British history.

Imperial history is written from the standpoint of national history. The ideological connections between nationalism and imperialism have been obvious since the end of the eighteenth century, when war with America and with France sharpened both national and

1. Shula Marks, ‘History, the Nation and Empire: Snipings from the Periphery’, *History Workshop Journal*, 29 (1990), p.112.

2. David Fieldhouse, “‘Can Humpty Dumpty be put back together again?’: Imperial History in the 1980s”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12,2 (1984), pp.9-23.

imperial identities in Britain.⁽³⁾ By the end of the nineteenth century, the fusion between nation and Empire was apparently complete. Yet the psychological processes through which Britons came to identify themselves as British were more complex than historians sometimes assume. In the eighteenth century, county society and politics, and rural and proto-industrial forms of economic organisation defined the social structure of Britain. The growth of an imperial mentality was accompanied by a decline in these traditional systems, which were gradually replaced by urban systems. Yet it is clear that the sense of belonging to a town or county still mattered, and that nationalism had to harness and incorporate, not attempt to supersede, regional identity. Because the links between nation and Empire have been in such sharp focus, the local and regional dimension of imperialism has not been acknowledged or investigated. But it could be argued that throughout the nineteenth century, local identity remained as strong as ever it had been. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connections between local identities and imperial ones. This is not to argue that nationalism should be discounted. Clearly, the image of Britain as a collectivity embodying certain cultural characteristics, economic imperatives and moral strengths gathered emotional force throughout the nineteenth century. But the links between town and Empire may reveal aspects of imperial ideology not previously considered by imperial historians, and conceptual connections not yet examined.

If imperial historians have ignored the local, local historians have given no thought to the imperial dimensions in their work: there remains an academic chasm dividing them. Only histories of maritime cities are an exception. This polarity is partly institutional, and partly reflects the often restricted aims of local history. Local studies are generally undertaken for one of two reasons. Firstly, the researcher has national

3. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: BGA, 1992).

themes in mind, and chooses a local study to provide the building blocks or testing grounds for larger generalisations. The perspective between local and national is given as a constant: the locality is thus taken as a microcosm of society, and its characteristics as typical of the whole. Alternatively, the academic study of local history for its own sake has required that local historians advance their own conceptual strategies in developing their discipline. In the first place, this involved studying pre-modern areas, and defining their essential geographical detail. More recently, attention has been given to theorising urban and modern local history, and in defining terms, such as community, locality, society, more rigorously.⁽⁴⁾ The change from pre-modern to modern local history has brought about a change in emphasis from describing the shared experiences of people living in close contact, to considering tensions within a community; from the strength of stability and tradition to the forces of change and conflict. As local historians have encountered the work of other social scientists, they have begun to move away from the microcosmic towards the analysis of ‘social areas’, in which an urban centre and its environs are linked by kinship, market and culture.⁽⁵⁾ Consequently, it has been increasingly recognised that communities are defined, and define themselves, by their links with other communities.

The growth of towns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been seen principally in terms of their economic and commercial development, and politically as the process of municipal consolidation, involving changes in the machinery of government and the restructuring of services under the umbrella of an enabling state. That local development had a cultural dimension is also now acknowledged. The enormous effort which went into developing local pride—in architecture, literary and

4. J.D. Marshall, ‘Communities, Societies, Regions and Local History in High and Low Furness’, *The Local Historian*, (February 1966), pp.36-47; C. Phythian-Adams, *Rethinking Local History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), pp.27-42.

5. Marshall, ‘Communities, Societies, Regions’, p.37.

artistic culture, sport, education—bequeathed many of the dominant features of our own landscape. At the same time, there was a conscious portrayal of the strength of community values as the bedrock of social development, a rhetoric which became common to cultural and political forms of expression.

Historians have tended to accentuate the influence of patriotism and nationalism and particularly their manipulation for political purposes at the expense of this local consciousness. Patriotism was indeed one of the tenets of eighteenth and nineteenth century political belief. Englishness and Britishness were 'constructed' for modern purposes but drew on older traditions of myth, history and language. But Englishness also needs to be defined as a conglomerate of regional identities which, despite the absence in Britain of specifically regional levels of government, have continued to carry an emotional, and sometimes political, charge. When Warrington's first local histories were written in the nineteenth century, the story of the town was told against the backdrop of northern history, including Scotland, and of the history of the Britons, including Ireland. Southern England was not mentioned.

A further complication concerns the Irish. Warrington, like many Lancashire towns received thousands of Irish immigrants in the middle years of the nineteenth century, largely due to the Great Famine. Academic research has sought to provide a theoretical understanding of how this first 'ethnic minority' was absorbed into British society, and has framed this almost exclusively as a problem of industrialisation and the tensions inherent in the consolidation of capitalism. But the number of Irish workers had spread steadily throughout the north of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some settling in urban and rural communities, some migrating for harvest work, with implications again for the ways in which Englishness, Britishness and northernness were perceived. The migration of the famine Irish was not a new phenomenon, differing only

in scale to previously established migratory streams. As the political and cultural perspectives which were specific to the Irish were diluted but not destroyed by their settling in the north of England, analysis of the real and symbolic processes of regional and community development requires that their perspective be incorporated. The problem became whether British identity was defined as including Ireland, or in opposition to an Irish identity which was fundamentally distinct from the rest of Britain. The constituents of this difference have been the subject of studies from the 1840s and in following decades when Irish communities were built. The Irish are seen to be different from the English by reason of their poverty, class position, nationalist politics and religion. I would argue that the first three factors became evident only from the mid-nineteenth century, and ought to be thought of as secondary differences. Religion was the primary difference and the fundamental fault-line between the Irish and English in northern England from the eighteenth century. This seems to argue against accepting the tradition of religious tolerance in Britain and the secularisation of the British state. But minimising the importance of religious belief and practice ignores a deep and lasting social problem in British history, one which has always had political and constitutional implications (or a deep and lasting constitutional problem in British history, which has always had social implications). There is new academic interest in assessing how much Englishness and Britishness was formed out of a perceived need to defend Protestantism and to oppose Catholicism even as it allowed it to grow.

Imperialism provided an added layer of political and cultural consciousness with similar potential for political exploitation. Popular imperialism seemed to grow out of social dislocations which presaged the twentieth century: the yellow press, racism, the mass cultures of sport and music-hall. But Empire was also a part of the agenda of radical and mass politics throughout the period under review. Patriotism may have been

the currency of popular imperialism, but this study will describe how municipal culture and community values incubated a form of popular imperialism which was defined in moral and philanthropic terms, against the aggressive militarism and economic plundering of the jingo mentality. Part of the rhetoric of patriotism was concerned to confirm and validate a view of British evolution stretching from village and small kingdoms to the four nations of Britain which had become the centre of the Empire. This linear and cumulative process saw imperialism as the outcrop of a patriotism linked solely to the state. But excessive nationalism was not popular at all times, and a patriotism which was supposed to grow from community values, defined as “local patriotism” and “local imperialism” was a significant driving force in popular imperialism.

The chronological scheme which is adopted here therefore replaces the more common, much shorter time-frames of popular imperialism, and makes its gestation more in keeping with domestic political change. Popular politics and municipal culture are the main perspectives employed in the study. The growth of the state at national level may have been the dominant fact of nineteenth century political life, but the presumption that this occurred by appropriating municipal power and by replacing local loyalties with national ones is not correct. By the end of the nineteenth century, the state had indeed begun to take responsibility for many of the functions and services which had been until then considered to be in the private domain, often by enacting enabling legislation which municipal authorities could implement. This meant that in the early years of the twentieth century, the lives of most people were dominated by an increasingly powerful local state, in work, education, culture, welfare and health services and political organisation. Even military and defence requirements, usually unproblematically associated with the national state, had undergone a process of localisation which saw

older forms of recruitment and organisation strengthened by regimental changes which were deliberately engineered to exploit local loyalties.

Combining the study of local and imperial history could be productive for four reasons. Firstly, the concept of a social area could be adapted to describe the range of relationships which developed between a town and Empire, relationships built upon kinship, market relations and cultural ties. The Empire required its soldiers, workers, missionaries, migrants, and these people retained contacts and relationships with their families and hometown. As a consequence, the town's social area spread to wherever its citizens settled or served. The local press acted as a conduit through which the town's imperial consciousness could be expressed and pride shown in its colonial sons and daughters. This could be described as an imperial social area, one which could operate without overt nationalism. Migration studies present tentative evidence that local areas provided 'streams' of migrants, in which family and community 'routes' are established. Migrants thereby had a sense of security and contact with home was made easier: migration was probably not the social atomisation it once appeared, and migrants were not scattered in indeterministic ways.⁽⁶⁾ The idea of an imperial social area has some potential for both demographic and social historians.

The second point concerns the question of identities. If imperialist ideology is seen as an extra layer of identity which was placed over other identities, then it is easier to argue that local identity was superseded or stifled. But the opposite could equally be true, that wider travel and communication may have actually raised local consciousness and strengthened local identity. As Marshall puts it, when people from the provinces visit London, they tend to feel more conscious of their regional identity, not less.⁽⁷⁾ In fact,

6. Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp.4-7.

7. Marshall, 'Communities, Societies, Regions', p.38.

municipalities and the Empire grew together in the nineteenth century, and reinforced each other in important ways. Empire had an important effect on the development of municipal loyalty, as evidence presented in this study will show.

Thirdly, the concept of local imperialism which was advanced in the late nineteenth century has not been analysed by imperial or local historians. Local imperialism was a refuge for those who argued that nationalism had been tainted by jingoistic outbursts and political manoeuvring, and that the purer imperial motives were better expressed through local action. It is thus at the same time a means of understanding grass roots imperialism and an alternative perspective to traditional interpretations of popular imperialism. Finally, the uncovering of local factors should allow a range of evidence on such questions as how allegiances were formed, what tensions were inherent in the process, how the imperial and the domestic were entwined, how ideologies were tempered by social position. The value of the local press to the study of popular imperialism has certainly been overlooked. The growth of the cheap daily newspaper is often blamed for encouraging the excesses of jingoism, and there is no doubt that new, mass circulation dailies fed upon nationalistic clamour (although the class position of their readership is disputed.)⁽⁸⁾ However, such an analysis does not acknowledge the fact that most people in the nineteenth century still relied on the local press for their news. The local press thus played a pivotal role in structuring municipal and imperial experience. It reported colonial news and printed the letters of those ex-inhabitants active in Empire as settlers or soldiers. It fashioned local responses to the imperial debates at national level. It reflected the activities of the groups and individuals who concerned themselves in the humanitarian work of Empire. It was involved in the controversies which surrounded imperial celebrations and commemorations. It therefore influenced the imperial

8. John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp.6-7.

consciousness of the town in a more everyday sense than the brash, new, cheap dailies.

This study then, will analyse local and imperial history as phenomena which share many conceptual features. It does not use a single town to act as a laboratory to test theories from the national perspective. Nor does it conclude that the national picture can be reproduced simply by multiplying its findings. Instead, it argues that municipal consciousness was partly raised through imperial connections, that imperial identity could be formed locally, and that interpretations of both which are based solely on the growth of nationalism and which leave these links unexplored are correspondingly incomplete.

Chapters Four and Five analyse the development of local anti-slavery from its earliest beginnings in Warrington at the radical Warrington Academy and amongst local abolitionists to the early years of the twentieth century, when Britain's record on anti-slavery was cited to challenge the Tory government's South African policy. The intention is both to detail the role of anti-slavery in the formation of a moral view of Empire, and to place the local nonconformist elite in international abolitionist networks. Chapter Five also illustrates how abolitionism had become central to an understanding of national and regional history which stressed the sacrifices which had been made to end slavery in the colonies and in America's Southern states, as a result of Lancashire's endurance during the Cotton Famine. Chapter Six extends the analysis of the uses of history by outlining the writing of local history in Warrington, and looks at how the municipal elite structured their narratives to accentuate their role in the town's political growth. At the same time, the writing of local history allowed the more dangerous aspects of radicalism to be censored, and official disapproval of it to be displayed. Local history played an important role in strengthening the claims of community, and the class relations within the community, using both documentary evidence and popular memory and tradition to popularise the story of Warrington.

The association between popular imperialism and the military is the subject of Chapter Seven. In the policy of localisation, the Victorian Army implicitly recognised the strength of community ties, when they restructured the regimental system to correspond to urban, industrialised areas. The Volunteer system was also based on localities. In the Boer War, the appeal of local patriotism was perhaps at its most palpable, and the chapter shows that the rhetoric of sacrifice and heroism was specifically allied to communal ties, and to the working-class culture built around work, sport and drinking. Chapter Eight looks at the stormy world of commemorations, those which celebrated national and imperial events, and shows that these were often controversial, involving vicious political fighting. Municipal aspirations were at odds with the popular demand for small local celebrations and for projects which benefited and celebrated the town. This chapter focuses on an under-researched aspect of popular imperialism, that of the uses of philanthropy in establishing imperial ties and in projecting an image of Empire as progressive and beneficial. Philanthropic effort became a part of local culture, by no means restricted to the middle classes, and sport, music and lectures were arranged to raise funds following colonial disasters and famines.

Chapters Nine and Ten concentrate on the Irish in Warrington. The number of Irish in Warrington grew throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Warrington built connections with Ireland in education, nonconformity and Catholicism and politics in that time. The local elites, whether old Tory or Liberal, displayed their loyalty and historical principles by opposing the Irish. The Irish did not see their own position as an English Warringtonian did, and although their settling in the town brought about new schools, churches, parochial culture and political organisations, the Irish perspective on community, nation and Empire differed from that of the English. This was apparent also in their own sense of history, especially of famine and persecution. In this respect, the

Irish offered an alternative interpretation to the local historical narrative. The differing perspectives of English and Irish in Warrington provided further proof that ideas of community or of local scale—often the repository of political idealism, utopian hopes or historical revisionism—are as much subject to political friction and class conflict as any other social system.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Three areas of historiographical debate have been identified for their relevance to the themes of this study. Firstly, the issue of identities and their formation is explored. Secondly, works which focus on popular imperialism are reviewed. Finally, as this study argues that imperialism was thought to have a moral dimension which sanctioned its popular appeal, the role of anti-slavery in domestic and colonial history is assessed through competing interpretations by British and American historians.

IDENTITIES

The debates surrounding the formation of political identities have taken two directions. In the first, language and literature are regarded as the key factors in affirming and expressing shared loyalties.⁽¹⁾ This has been achieved however through the adoption of methodological changes which have broken with traditional historical writing.⁽²⁾ The second route is more concerned with the social and political implications of cultural production; who controls and benefits from specific cultural messages; why some cultural choices are made at the expense of others.⁽³⁾ Both methods have enshrined particular uses for history, and argument has arisen on the questions of language and materiality.

1. Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
2. Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997).
3. Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth Century Britain: Integration and Diversity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Robert Colls and Philip Dodds, (eds.), *Englishness, Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); John Kandle, *Federal Britain, A History* (London: Routledge, 1997); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles, A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Added to this, there are differing opinions about the relative importance of differing identities. Should we take Englishness or Britishness as the defining unit? Should we see imperial identities as transitory or fundamental to the British identity? How do such territorial concerns affect the periodisation of history? It is now a commonplace to say that identities are shifting, negotiated, socially constructed, multiple, layered, or competing, which makes any attempt at a reasonable synthesis extremely difficult.

The study of national identities has opened out questions about the making of the British state. In *Britons: Forging the Nation* (1992) Linda Colley argues that Britishness was formed in response to the military threat posed by France, and was achieved through a shared sense of religious loyalties. England, Scotland and Wales merged under the banner of Protestantism to oppose the Catholic French, and although Ireland was a more difficult proposition, it too was absorbed into the British state. Raphael Samuel describes this as a “unionist version of British history and an imperial view of national character”.⁽⁴⁾ The problems of Ireland are minimised, whilst the process of amalgamating the diffuse Protestant sects appears more smooth than it was. Catholicism is treated as a more homogenous entity than it was; in the French wars, Catholicism did not motivate the French, whilst English and Irish Catholicism had followed their own directions. Keith Robbins has argued that the British state grew out of other forces than Protestantism and fear of the French. He has outlined the broader processes of integration, in commerce, literature, migration, education, travel, which pushed integration forward (in a general sense: Britishness is not a homogenous culture, diversity has remained), and points out how the extension of the franchise increased the sense of belonging to a single political body.⁽⁵⁾ J.A. Pocock has called for a new definition of

4. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: BGA, 1992), pp.3,5-8; Raphael Samuel, ‘British Dimensions: “Four Nations History”’, *History Workshop Journal*, 40 (1995), pp.iii-xxii,xiii.

5. Keith Robbins, ‘An imperial and multinational polity? 1832-1922’ in Alexander Grant and

British history, which does not assume “a common heritage or a shared past” but is a study of “attempts to create such an identity, with all its contentions and struggles.”⁽⁶⁾

S.J. Connolly’s analysis of eighteenth century Britain focuses on varieties of Britishness, and on how the impulse for the amalgamation of a British state was challenged by those whose shared Jacobitism questioned the terms on which amalgamation was achieved. Connolly has stressed the “instabilities and impermanencies” inherent in the process of state integration. Irish Catholic politics, for instance, faced the choice between building alliances with radicals and non-conformists who eventually coalesced into British liberalism, or opting for self-determination and explicit challenge.⁽⁷⁾

If Empire is the focal unit, then the defining qualities of Englishness in the imperial context and its explicit manipulation through the agency of patriotism have been the central problems for cultural and political historians. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd have positioned the cultural formation of English identity within the process of slow political change which culminated in the acceptance of liberal values as the defining characteristic of the English.⁽⁸⁾ By the end of the nineteenth century, English tolerance, capacity to reform, love of liberty and constitutional mix of tradition and modernity had become the political messages which both Liberal and Tory parties needed to embrace to win elections. Hugh Cunningham on the other hand has pointed to the changes in the social and political bases of the rhetoric of patriotism away from its radical meanings towards a more populist, Tory-inspired jingoism which, having absorbed the radical elements of the

Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.251.

6. J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Conclusion’ in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.295.

7. S.J. Connolly, ‘Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the Hanoverian State’ in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.196.

8. Colls and Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture*.

patriotic message, succeeded more easily in appealing to the working class.⁽⁹⁾ Stuart Woolf shares this interpretation. He locates nationalism in the links between the language of romanticism and the liberal messages of progress and reform in the early nineteenth century, but argues for a change of emphasis in the later nineteenth century towards a “closed nationalism”.⁽¹⁰⁾ The contributions of Scotland, Wales and Ireland to imperial growth have come out of the historiography of proto-nationalism, principally in the idea that inequalities in British economic development fuelled the mass migrations which enabled Empire to become established. Michael Hechter’s *Internal Colonialism* has influenced this argument.⁽¹¹⁾ Raphael Samuel has argued that Celtic nationalism was not a reaction to imperialism but an accessory to it: nationalists sought only a greater role within Empire, and were as much inspired by a heightened sense of race consciousness.⁽¹²⁾

S.J. Connolly’s investigation into varieties of Britishness cited the writing of history as a factor in the integration of Britain, in that English history came to predominate over Scottish, Welsh and Irish interpretations. Bill Schwarz also looked at the writing of history in his study of the unwritten assumptions which underpinned the work of two nineteenth century historians, John Seeley and John Richard Green. The former’s work on the eighteenth century American colonies interpreted the Empire as an extension of England, and began with the assumption that English history was the history of where the English lived. Green instead made out a case for studying English history whose chronology was domestic, which cut out the international and imperial dimension,

9. Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), pp.8-33.

10. Stuart Woolf, (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the present: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.11-12.

11. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

12. Samuel, ‘British Dimensions’, p.xvii.

describing instead the internal dynamics and grand sweep of a pure English history.

Schwarz is aware that however disparate these approaches seemed, they were essentially complementary, both constructing a view of English progress which was characterised by specific racial traits.⁽¹³⁾

POPULAR IMPERIALISM

Britain's historic role in shaping global inequality and in causing the disastrous economic conditions which prevail in parts of Africa and Asia remains a subject of keen debate.

The British Empire, it is argued, retarded colonial development by restricting the natural growth of their societies and economies.⁽¹⁴⁾ At the same time, historians see imperialism as having had a less catastrophic, but nonetheless damaging effect on British society and economic performance.⁽¹⁵⁾ There is little disagreement over the official facts and statistics about the growth of Empire, but there are large disagreements in attributing cause.⁽¹⁶⁾ Economic decline in Britain, Continental rivalry, the growth of mass culture, turbulent class relations, monarchical vanity and the rise of modern democracy and party government have all been implicated. An offshoot of this controversy has led to conflicting claims for the supposed timing of the birth of 'new imperialism', from Disraeli's Abyssinia speech during the 1867 General Election campaign, to the Congress of Berlin, or perhaps the Fashoda incident, or the death of General Gordon or even the

13. Bill Schwarz, 'The Expansion and Contraction of England' in Bill Schwarz, (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, ethnicity and cultural history* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.1-8.

14. David Fieldhouse, *Colonialism, 1870-1945; An Introduction* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), pp.44-48.

15. Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: the Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.306; also see A.G. Hopkins, 'Accounting for the British Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 16,2 (1988), pp.234-247.

16. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), pp.3-29; R.E. Robinson and J. Gallagher (with Alice Denny), *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp.25-26,462-72.

Jameson Raid.⁽¹⁷⁾ At some stage in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the British Empire appears to have changed, and British society's interest in Empire also changed.

But the important question for social historians remains how popular the policy of building an Empire was. Some believe that ordinary people were indifferent to imperialism, or opposed it as best they could.⁽¹⁸⁾ Others have concluded that the ceremony and institutions of empire stirred strong emotional responses in British people, though a further debate has grown concerning whether these responses were genuine and autonomous, or the result of propaganda, political mendacity and class manipulation.⁽¹⁹⁾ The problem remains unsolved because there has been no agreement about how popular responses should be measured, or how to prioritise evidence. Inevitable disagreements about class and its role in shaping attitudes also fuel the debate.⁽²⁰⁾ These differences underwrite not only the conclusions but also the methodologies of historians of imperialism and British society.

John MacKenzie has written important analyses of popular culture and imperial propaganda. He considers that imperialism represented the ideal system of social discipline, and is understood therefore as a sub-plot of the drama of class relations.

17. Freda Harcourt, 'Gladstone, Monarchism and the "New" Imperialism, 1864-74', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 14,1 (1985), pp.29-51 and 'Disraeli's Imperialism, a question of timing, 1866-68', *Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), pp.87-109; Hugh Cunningham, 'Jingoism in 1877-8', *Victorian Studies*, 14 (1971), pp.429-53.
18. Bernard Porter, *Britannia's Burden: The Political Evolution of Modern Britain, 1851-1900* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p.125; Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: British Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972). Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp.82-100.
19. Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire, Myths and metaphors of popular imperialism, 1880-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.6; John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp.2-3; M.D. Blanch, 'British Society and the War' in Peter Warwick, (ed.), *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Longman, 1980), pp.210-257.
20. John Saville, 'Imperialism and the Victorians' in Eric M. Sigsworth, (ed.), *In Search of Victorian Values* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.162-178; Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp.8-13; Richard Price, 'Society, Status and Jingoism: The Social Roots of Middle Class Patriotism, 1870-1900' in Geoffrey Crossick, (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp.89-112.

Theoretically, MacKenzie works within the premise that imperialism soothed potentially destructive social relations, an idea which is strengthened by his understanding of the nature of popular imperial ideology, in which attention is focused on the emotional and psychological (and therefore irrational) forces which culminated in jingoism and hysteria.⁽²¹⁾ This was essentially an electoral strategy, discovered by Disraeli in 1867, when an unlikely Tory victory was assured by his populist manipulation of the Abyssinian crisis, and although the nature of the Empire changed from nineteenth century military conquest to twentieth century liberal rule, British society remained locked within a delusional fantasy of cultural and racial superiority. Increasingly sophisticated forms of propaganda and public relations ensured that this was so. Both formalised and commercialised cultural media—music hall, imperial shows and exhibitions, junior literature—relayed an imperial vision to which all classes submitted. MacKenzie concludes that imperialism represented a “rare coherence of Establishment, intellectual and popular interests.”⁽²²⁾

But studies based solely on levels of propaganda have been subject to criticism for their too simple assumptions about popular receptiveness to propaganda.⁽²³⁾ Bernard Porter has pointed out that high levels of propaganda can be indicative of low public interest and support and that imperial propaganda never broke down popular apathy, or competing political philosophies.⁽²⁴⁾ For him, politics matters in any analysis of this issue, and he believes that imperialism was only popular inasmuch as it seemed to offer a way out of Britain’s economic problems. Real political enthusiasm for Empire was

21. Mackenzie, *Propaganda*, pp.7-9; John M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), especially Introduction, pp. 1-17.
22. Mackenzie, *Imperialism*, p.13.
23. Cunningham, ‘Language of Patriotism’, pp.24-27; Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp.27-8.
24. Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A short history of British Imperialism, 1850-1970* (London: Longman, 1975), p.285.

limited to a few right-wing politicians, of the Old Tory kind rather than the free market capitalist kind. Porter also argues that propaganda only reveals what propagandists wanted people to think, and in itself does not establish that genuinely popular imperialism existed. Genuine displays of emotion prompted by imperialist occasions were evident but were brief and shallow, and not proof of widespread and enduring imperial support. Ordinary people were largely indifferent: “‘imperialism’ in the abstract meant little to them.”⁽²⁵⁾ As an ideology that could unite classes and inspire loyalty, Porter believes that imperialism signally failed.

In *Propaganda and Empire* (1984), MacKenzie makes several parallels between late nineteenth century and mid-1980s British mentalities.⁽²⁶⁾ The atmosphere in Britain at the time of the Falklands war, with fears of a return to jingoism, adds weight to his argument for a continuous history of populist nationalism. But both Boer and Falklands wars could also be interpreted as spasmodic episodes of patriotic flag-waving (for electoral purposes) with little durable effect on British society. More fundamental in my view is MacKenzie’s failure to offer any description of the intellectual framework through which imperialism was advanced. He argues that support for Empire was expressed as a loose collection of impulses and incitements which did not require reasoned argument to sustain it. This follows inevitably from his sources and the use he makes of them. The music hall, the early cinema and children’s literature did not deal with intellectually rigorous discourses, and the real intellectual engagement which working people made with Empire—whether they supported it or not—is thus denied a role in imperial processes. Of course, the intellectual construction of Britain’s imperial role will not be found in a music hall chorus. But it will be found in other sources, particularly in the symbiotic culture of politics and press. MacKenzie does not analyse

25. Porter, *Lion's Share*, p.137.

26. Mackenzie, *Propaganda*, pp.11,70,256-8.

these directly, and yet it is here that the machinations of ruling-class ideologues will be found and their claim to popular hegemony can be tested. It is a central argument of this thesis that popular imperialism required some degree of argument, analysis and reasoned debate, and popular responses were conditional upon these things. By ignoring that possibility, any theoretical linkages between Empire and British society are likely to be limited in scope and application.

Aspects of labour history are relevant to the issue of popular imperialism. Eric Hobsbawm's explanation of the weakening of working-class ambition and declining political radicalism includes popular imperialism both as evidence and cause.⁽²⁷⁾ Other labour historians, such as Henry Pelling, John Saville and Richard Price argue that this was not the case, particularly from research on the Boer War.⁽²⁸⁾ Henry Pelling found substantial anti-war sentiment amongst union leaders and Lib-Lab MPs. Richard Price studied working-class institutions beyond the traditional labour movement, and he also concluded that the case for working class enthusiasm for imperialism has been overstated. But on one important point they all agree with MacKenzie, in arguing that labour's engagement with Empire had no intellectual basis. Thus Pelling writes that "imperialism as an intellectual theory was a matter for the middle class" which could "reach down only in the catchy slogans of Kipling's verse and in the leaders of Harmsworth's *Daily Mail*."⁽²⁹⁾ Price thought that "imperialism as a concept was too tenuous for working class society".⁽³⁰⁾ The working class could only understand and respond to what was immediate. Whilst Liberal politicians such as John Morley could articulate an anti-Boer War position, workers had "no such value framework", and no "pre-conceived view of

27. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Cardinal, 1991), pp.61,69-71; Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism', pp.8-33.

28. Pelling, *Popular Politics*, pp.82-100; John Saville, 'Imperialism and the Victorians', pp.162-178; Price, *An Imperial War*.

29. Pelling, *Popular Politics*, p.83.

30. Price, *An Imperial War*, p.241.

events.”⁽³¹⁾ A recurring theme in these works is the apparent shallowness of labour’s response, making it presumably of little historical significance to pinpoint working-class reactions to imperialism, as they did not understand Empire anyway. This has become the accepted version, and it is instructive to trace this attitude back to its source.

All historians of the British Empire, whether they take a cultural, economic or political line, are indebted to the work of J.A. Hobson, whose major work on the subject, *Imperialism: A Study*, was first published in 1902.⁽³²⁾ Hobson was in no doubt that the imperial mentality of the late nineteenth century (and the economic imperatives behind it) was fundamentally different to that which had prevailed at earlier times. Free-trade internationalism had been replaced by the greed of narrow, sectional interests, principally finance houses and certain capitalist groups, which now effectively controlled British economic and foreign policy against the general and long-term interests of the rest of society. Hobson set out to question how, if this policy was so damaging to British well-being, the public were induced to support it. He offered a range of explanations. He believed that the political system had been weakened by the convergence of Liberal and Tory policy, leaving fewer options for the voter and a diminishing role for Westminster as domestic politics became less relevant.⁽³³⁾ The average educated Briton was not motivated to question the system in the colonies, as they were unaware of the real issues. The fault here lay with the press which had consciously deceived people into thinking that British presence was a force for good in transferring British values to colonial subjects. Hobson, a journalist at the *Manchester Guardian*, deplored the direction which the British press was taking, with its sensationalism and its abandonment of honest analysis, and feared that eventually newspapers would be owned by financiers for the

31. Price, *An Imperial War*, p.22.

32. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism, A Study*, (7th Impression) (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968).

33. Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp.143-9.

deliberate manufacture of public opinion.⁽³⁴⁾ Most significantly, however, Hobson drew the distinction between what the average Briton was supporting, and what he or she thought they were supporting. Hobson argued that the popular enthusiasm for imperialism was an expression of the best impulses of British society: the average Briton was persuaded to support Empire for humanitarian reasons, in that it could “extend civilisation, Christianity, extirpate slavery”⁽³⁵⁾ The real motivation, of private profit and exploitation “does not openly appear”. Capitalist imperialists used any “strong genuine elevated feeling” for their own ends.⁽³⁶⁾

This central assertion in Hobson’s complex analysis—that the British public were fooled—is perhaps its most controversial claim. Hobson has been charged with naivety on this point, in believing that imperialism was simply a plot, imposed on an unsophisticated public. Hobson, however, does at least attempt to explain the terms on which popular support was given, suggesting that that support did have limits, and debates did have some parameters, which MacKenzie does not.

ANTI-SLAVERY

Hobson’s work has made its greatest impact through his interpretation of changes in Britain’s economy and society in the late nineteenth century. Modern readers are perhaps less familiar with his ideas about the exploitation of black labour, a subject which Hobson saw as central to any understanding of British motives: “Imperialism rests upon and exists for the sake of forced labour”.⁽³⁷⁾ At first, as Hobson explains it, the supply and control of black labour could be achieved by the slave trade and slavery in the

34. Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 60.

35. Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 61.

36. Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 197.

37. Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 254.

Americas. When that option closed down, economic opportunities arose in sub-tropical areas which required native black labour, and new imperialism was born, as only colonial control guaranteed the conditions of exploitation which imperial capitalists wanted. Hobson's analysis ended there, and he did not follow the implications through in any way. Such critical developments in world labour supply, organised by Britain in her own interests, concerned British society, particularly in drawing out the economic and moral significance of slave and free labour. The issue of black labour therefore had become a matter of controversy in British politics by the end of the eighteenth century as pro-slavery and anti-slavery ideologies unfolded. Even in the early years of the twentieth century, black labour remained high on the political agenda. Hobson saw as much, with his view that the abolition of slavery in Africa was one of the humanitarian causes which capitalist imperialists hid behind in order to justify the conquest of Africa. Yet he believed that the ending of slavery in Africa was largely an irrelevance, given that schemes were immediately put into place to compel Africans, one way or another, to work in mines and plantations.⁽³⁸⁾ The value of the campaign against African slavery therefore lay in its cosmetic effect on British opinion, rather than in any substantial improvements it made in African societies. Nonetheless, Hobson realised that generalised concern for Africans did become a decisive political factor and hoped that groups such as the Aborigines Protection Society could re-educate the public about actual conditions for native labour, whilst the trade union and socialist movements would set about challenging the power of the capitalist imperialists.⁽³⁹⁾

The motive behind imperialism was to exploit black labour for profit, necessarily by force. Imperialism arranged itself into a system, and rearranged itself when necessary, to fulfil this function. The phases of imperialism were engineered to deliver black labour

38. Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp.248,253-259.

39. Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp.90,244.

to the imperial treadmill: the slave trade, colonial plantation slavery, the division of Africa into European territories, complete with tax laws and other coercive measures.⁽⁴⁰⁾

But these important observations are not integrated into Hobson's analysis of British society and its (largely passive) role in the imperial design. It is clear that he believed that British capitalists had virtually a free hand to use labour within the Empire as they wished, despite the fact that British popular campaigns had ended slavery in the colonies, and that popular support for abolitionism was sustained throughout the colonisation of Africa.

This aspect of Hobson's analysis has received little subsequent attention. The early historiography of Empire did not investigate forced labour systems, nor the effect of these systems on black peoples in the long term. More recently, the issue of race has overshadowed questions of imperial labour, highlighting Empire's responsibility for racism both globally and domestically, but works in this field have generally failed to explore how questions of race and of labour were linked together in the imperial context.⁽⁴¹⁾ More might have been expected of those historians who have studied British slavery and abolition, but here, theorists have debarred themselves from utilising and developing Hobson's long view, by their almost universal belief that abolitionism in Britain disappeared as early as the 1840s, that is, as soon as British emancipation was secured. For most historians of abolition, this is a central assertion, underlining their belief that abolitionism was a product of the onset and establishment of industrial capitalism, a process largely complete once the middle class had secured victory through the Repeal of the Corn Laws and the defeat of Chartism.

40. Hobson, *Imperialism*, pp.249-252.

41. Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London: Routledge, 1992) admits to offering "no general analysis of the relationship between race and class". Exceptions to this are Robert Miles, *Racism after 'Race Relations'* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.30-35 and Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis in association with Harriet Cain, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.61-95.

The historiography of late nineteenth century responses to colonial labour questions thus tends to be sparse and has largely been seen as an addendum to the agitation against slavery and the slave trade earlier in the century. Initially, credit for British emancipation went to its leaders and through them, to the British people whose traditions of liberty had triumphed over unnatural oppressions and colonial corruption.⁽⁴²⁾ Until Eric Williams published *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944, this view was not questioned. Williams however argued that slavery in the West Indies had ended when it was no longer a profitable way to operate colonial economies: Britain's essential goodness did not come into it.⁽⁴³⁾

Subsequent analyses have been positioned between these two standpoints, and have been built on the realisation that the origins of anti-slavery and its success cannot be explained without reference to the changes in the British class structure which occurred simultaneously with both the onset of industrial capitalism and the rise of anti-slavery. David Brion Davis recognised that humanitarianism in itself could not explain the causes of abolitionism. It did nevertheless reflect the values of that class of capitalist which emerged with most economic power from the industrialisation process. Brion Davis has argued that anti-slavery served to consolidate their hegemonic hold on British society, though not always in direct and conscious ways. The impact of anti-slavery on economic theory, political organisation and on the development of a specific literature provided avenues through which this hegemony could be expressed. It therefore represented a "revolution from above" on terms "defined by the oppressor."⁽⁴⁴⁾ Seymour Drescher has

42. Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Thorton Butterworth, 1933), pp.64-85.

43. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1944), pp.170-178.

44. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.350; David Brion Davis, 'Slavery and "Progress"' in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1986), p.353.

argued against this analysis, in pointing out that British anti-slavery was not the preserve of one social class, but rather had a “broad social base.”⁽⁴⁵⁾ The dynamics of abolitionism cannot thus be explained without reference to its popular support in the growing industrial towns. The question of working class support for abolitionism—always unstated until quite recently—has been taken up by others. James Walvin has argued strongly for its vital contribution to the eventual success of the movement, but others think they detect a more obstructionist radical stance which drew attention to the hypocrisy of abolitionist leaders who anathematised black slavery whilst condoning what they described as industrial slavery.⁽⁴⁶⁾ (Though as Betty Fladeland has noted, the weight of evidence underpinning the view that working-class opinion was thus anti-abolitionist is flimsy and inconsequential).⁽⁴⁷⁾

Working-class thought and political action is most subtly analysed by Drescher and Robin Blackburn, who both contend that the roots of abolitionism in British society are to be found in the social tensions produced by the early phase of liberal capitalism, and the growing complexities of class struggle. Blackburn maintains that anti-slavery “assembled an unstable class coalition”, and hints that its real political value to the middle class reformers was in its ability to galvanise and inspire their own class behind them.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Drescher suggests that the vagueness of class lines before the establishment of full industrial capitalism encouraged the development of popular anti-slavery, at the same time that class ideologies began to harden. Consequently, its open nature was always the

45. Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp.141-7.

46. James Walvin, ‘The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832’ in Bolt and Drescher, (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1986), pp.149-62; Betty Fladeland, “‘Our Cause being One and the Same’: Abolitionists and Chartism”, in James Walvin, (ed.), *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp.86-7.

47. Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), pp.vii-xiv.

48. Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988), pp.443,450.

source of power struggles.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Recently, it has become clear that these struggles also involved the issue of gender.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The works so far discussed all operate on the premise that abolitionism exploited an historical window of opportunity, roughly corresponding to the onset of capitalism. Before the 1770s only isolated voices were raised against the slave trade: after the 1840s, the conditions which generated popular abolitionism had gone. They appear to assume that the contradictions of liberal capitalism had been cleared up by that time. Therefore, it must be asked, what long-term developments were triggered by the successful abolitionist campaign? What legacy did it bequeath? For Seymour Drescher, the later development of capitalism constricted and killed the appeal of abolitionism, by displacing its predominant culture of artisan politics with that of the urban factory worker.⁽⁵¹⁾

Others however see a more positive contribution to nineteenth-century political culture. Roger Anstey has described anti-slavery as a: “model of the reforming impulse which outlasts the weakening of the forces which gave it life”, surviving through its having become institutionalised within government policy.⁽⁵²⁾ Brian Harrison believes that the abolitionist impulse survived as part of the genealogy of reform and one of the foundations of the libertarianism which characterised radical politics.⁽⁵³⁾ David Brion Davis appears to endorse this approach when he says that the humanitarianism brought out by anti-slavery became an “integral part of class ideology and thus of British culture”, though he was not convinced that working-class support for abolitionism was anything

49. Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery*, p.155.

50. Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992).

51. Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery*, p.153.

52. Roger Anstey, ‘The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’ in Bolt and Drescher, (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1986), p.36.

53. Brian Harrison, ‘A Genealogy of Reform in Modern Britain’ in Bolt and Drescher, (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1986), pp.119-148.

other than a transitory phenomenon.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Howard Temperley believes that the campaigns fed into an emergent nationalism.⁽⁵⁵⁾ All of these observations are valid and useful, but in assuming the death of popular abolitionism, and attributing its survival solely to leading personalities, philanthropists and government supporters, they have failed to comprehend the long-term significance of anti-slavery. Evidence and argument for its continuing popular support will be presented in this study.

My thesis argues for a continued role for anti-slavery into the twentieth century, a role which had both external and internal characteristics. In the colonies, anti-slavery set the conditions under which British companies and administrations were supposed to operate. Within domestic politics, anti-slavery was a vehicle through which labour ideologies in Britain were interpreted: in periods when abolitionism attracted critical public interest, its significance was related to assumptions about labour in Britain. Hobson did not advance any theoretical relationship between colonial slavery and British labour's articulation of its own position, other than to identify both as the victims of finance capitalism, and in expressing the hope that British trade unions would campaign on colonial labour's behalf. British labour sometimes equated itself with its colonial counterpart, in order to highlight grievances, expose hypocrisy or illustrate the real nature of capitalism. At times, abolitionism had a significant effect on the direction of class discourse, and this too will be examined here. Anti-slavery became written into national, regional and class identities: the success of earlier campaigns was used to bolster an increasingly vulnerable British identity, and acted as a thread on which a new narrative history of British imperial success could be written.

But anti-slavery was not simply consigned to the past. As the British Empire

54. Brion Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p.350.

55. Howard Temperley, 'Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism' in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1986), pp.335-350.

became a global system more instances of unfree labour came to light. This is particularly true in the case of Africa, which from the 1860s was recognised to have a slavery problem through the popularisation of Livingstone's letters from the interior. Slavery was rediscovered (sometimes reinvented) and always appeared to be at the cutting edge of the Empire. One example will suffice: the glorification of General Gordon is seen to owe much to the melodramatic tension surrounding his death, but it is often forgotten that his reason for taking up his mission to Egypt was to end the Islamic slave trade through the Sudan. National identity by the late nineteenth century had become moulded around the image of the British as the freers of slaves, giving legitimacy to its territorial ambitions and its claims to a higher moral ground than that inhabited by its Continental rivals. This narrative fed into the earliest academic studies of British anti-slavery which have been surveyed earlier in this chapter. Abolitionism had become embedded in the social structure and in the culture. Although organisations such as the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had a declining membership and subscription fund, from the mid-nineteenth century popular interest was sustained through their highly organised press campaigns.⁽⁵⁶⁾

It might here be argued that these conclusions are too grand and sweeping to emanate from a local study. Yet it is clear that reliance on the national perspective, especially in studies of national abolitionist organisations, have not delivered the full picture. Too much emphasis has been put on national institutions as the sole criterion of the popularity of anti-slavery: most abolitionist activists operated at community level, and when national organisation entered a weak phase, as it obviously did occasionally, those activists nevertheless continued to work within their localities. In the larger histories, they thus disappear: in a local study, they can be put back into the picture. And of course

56. Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), p.266.

by no means all abolitionists were involved in national committees and campaigns. Abolitionism could survive despite the near collapse of its national bodies, because it had become embedded in grass roots politics, a process cemented by those strata of local abolitionists lost within the national picture.

But the main argument advanced in Chapters Four and Five of this study is that anti-slavery continued to present opportunities for the arrangement of ideological arguments about labour. It was part of the polemic of class conflict from the beginnings of British capitalism until the early twentieth century. It is clear that in the British case, one of the ways in which workers positioned themselves (in relation to employment conditions, wage rates, civil rights and freedoms) was by relating these issues to colonial labour, as that too became drawn into capitalism.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Usually, this is interpreted for the most part as being a racialised and racialising process, though often in far too deterministic and formulaic a way. That these debates did involve the construction of racial categories is recognised here, but the process was not straightforward: the categories of free and unfree labour (and often fierce debate about what defined each condition) were manipulated ideologically as the consolidation of imperial capitalism drew the issue of colonial labour into the political arena. As Thomas Holt has written, the problem of slavery was followed by the problem of freedom, for which reformers had far fewer solutions. Racism allowed the emancipators to avoid the difficulties of their position when slavery was replaced by coercive forms of labour discipline, and has allowed contemporary historians to do the same.⁽⁵⁸⁾

57. Laura Tabili, 'Labour Migration, Racial Formation and Class Identity: Some Reflections on the British Case', *Journal of North West Labour History*, 20 (1995/6), pp.16-35.

58. Thomas Holt, "'An Empire over the Mind": Emancipation, Race and Ideology in the British West Indies and the American South' in J. Morgan Kousser and J. McPherson, *Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honour of C. Vann Woodward* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.283-313; Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labour and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

These potentially important questions about slavery, abolition and class formation in later nineteenth century Britain have been overlooked in both imperial and labour history. It is possible that the theoretical framework built around the classic 'age of British abolitionism' may require modifications in the light of this long-term perspective, especially as one of the central assumptions of the 'reformist' model (that working-class abolitionism was ended by the 1840s) is removed. To relate this back to the questions posed at the start of this study, abolitionism also goes some way towards explaining continuity in British imperial policy, and in popular acceptance of Empire.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY, TOWN & SOURCES

Each of the chapters in this study is concerned with some aspect of Empire, popular imperialism or nationalism as it was perceived at local level. But the connecting theme is that of the growth of the idea of community, and the promotion of community values in harnessing popular imperialism. Community is an inexact term, and is used to describe the total number of people who lived in Warrington, the area of study, and shared a common local culture. The other common definition of community, that of a group of people who share a common characteristic, for example, the Irish community, is generally avoided here, although it is clear that individuals can belong to more than one community. Emphasis is given to the development of a shared municipal culture, and its official and semi-official components. Both popular culture and popular politics are examined, although the dividing line between them is not always clear.

Community values are even more difficult to define, but they would include loyalty to neighbours, the duty of giving to those in need, both in time and money, tolerance and willingness to sacrifice for the common good. These of course were ideals, and everyday practice, especially in municipal politics, fell well short of them. Nevertheless, appeals to these values were the common currency of much of the culture of municipal politics, and of the increasing social relevance of religious bodies in the town. This can be explained in a number of ways: appeals to community values could be used to consolidate the middle-class message concerning the duties of the working class and the claims to citizenship rights. They were useful to employers in claiming loyalty (especially as industrial towns by the end of the nineteenth century had each become dependent on fewer, larger employers). Community values fit in well with the language of Victorian

sentimentality, and could be used to articulate a less aggressive attitude to social relations. But they were equally useful to plebeian claims for collective rights against employers and municipal leaders. They may have offered an opportunity for the re-evaluation of the role of women in society. Politically, community became the rhetoric of opposition to the strident forms of patriotism which liberals saw as disfiguring imperial politics by the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Gladstone recognised this (in the context of his Government of Ireland Bill) when he said “there is such a thing as local patriotism, which in itself is not bad, but good.”⁽¹⁾ Warrington’s local politicians used the language of local patriotism and local imperialism to place themselves in opposition to jingoistic excess and as a counterweight to the discredited financial and political manoeuvres surrounding the government’s policy in South Africa. The appeal of the local was that it came to symbolise the moral face of nation and Empire as a counter to the naked greed and aggression of the City of London. It is possible therefore that it carried out a similar function in the later nineteenth century that the language of patriotism had performed in the eighteenth century, as a medium through which critics could express a common challenge to the greed and corruption which had become associated with the state. Alan Metcalfe points out that the idea of community only develops under certain conditions, and that it grew at the same time as the idea of class.⁽²⁾ Appeals to local and municipal values were in themselves meaningless, they became significant only insofar as they were used in the contexts of class, ethnic or political conflict, or in deflecting or disguising such conflict.

However, “community” is a term which has been used by post-modernists to argue

1. Alan O’Day, ‘Home Rule and the Historians’ in D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day, (eds.), *The making of modern Irish History* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.145-6.
2. Alan Metcalfe, ‘Sport and Community: a case study of mining villages of East Northumberland, 1800-1914’ in Jeff Hill and Jack Williams, (eds.), *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p.16.

that the language of nineteenth-century popular politics did not reflect class conflict or social tensions.⁽³⁾ I do not agree. Community was an idea that was indeed offered as an alternative to class, but my method focuses on how economic, political and cultural change was effected through the medium of community and how class interests manipulated that idea. The value of claims of loyalty to community are a standard part of the rhetoric of local and national politics. Indeed, the forms of representative democracy traditional to Britain, where representation is based on territorial boundaries of constituency, borough and ward, rely on the language of community, sometimes masking the social tensions inherent in the workings of a relatively powerful local state.

Appeals to community and public service were not harmless rhetoric from which nothing but good could come: they could equally be covers for sharp political practices designed to maintain class relations. So for instance, the library committee threw out a donation of books which were “filled with Owenism”.⁽⁴⁾ Access to and control of community assets became central demands within popular politics, and the question of who financed and who benefited from municipal provision resulted in constant tension. The published works of the municipal elite are important also, for the political leaders and professional classes who ran the town combined their political philosophies with writing on local history. Many of their works are used to show how their particular interpretation of the town’s past served their own political and religious arguments. At the same time, newspapers and others began to draw out a popular memory which despite being anecdotal established and maintained some of the traditional stories of the area.

Whilst the idea of community was rooted in the past, social change in the

3. Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.41; For an alternative outlook, see Richard Price, ‘Historiography, Narrative, and the Nineteenth Century’ in *Journal of British Studies*, 35 (April, 1996), pp.220-256.

4. W.B. Stephens, *Adult Education and Society in an Industrial Town: Warrington, 1800-1900* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1988), p.55.

nineteenth century brought about new events and institutions which came to act as focal points for community. Walking Day, established in the nineteenth-century as a celebration for Sunday School children, quickly developed into an alternative attraction to the debauchery associated with the Newton races which coincided with it.

Nonconformists and Catholics gradually joined the processions, and Walking Day became recognised as an annual holiday incorporating aspects of traditional midsummer events such as rural sports and visiting fairs (said to date back to 1255 when Henry III permitted a fair in the first weekend of July as part of Warrington's first Charter).⁽⁵⁾

Later, it became a typically working-class event, as afternoon excursions and pub culture were added. Walking Day was subject to continuing pressures, both of a religious and political kind. Attempts to harness the event for the prevailing political concern of the day were not uncommon.

The role of sport in symbolising the community is a relatively new field of research for historians. Warrington's main sporting club was the Warrington rugby league club, which was known as the Wire, in reference to the leading local industry. Founded in 1879, the team were drawing crowds of 12,000 within a few years. Their communal significance was complex. They organised the Works Competition which drew in the amateur players. They played visiting teams from within the Empire and were soon importing Australian, South African and Maori players. They raised funds for a range of causes, from the Infirmary and Nurses' Fund, to the families of the dead in Welsh colliery explosions and trade unions in dispute. Again however, the picture is not wholly one without social tensions: the ground was closed down in the 1892-3 season after a mob at the game attacked the referee.⁽⁶⁾

5. Notes on Walking Day, compiled in the Reference Library, Warrington, (1950). [WALSC: 80841]

6. William Garvin, *Warrington Rugby League Football Club Centenary, 1879-1979* (Warrington: Warrington Guardian, 1979), pp.11-22.

And the symbolic features of the club carried broader political significance. The team's colours, primrose and blue, were chosen to reflect the political preference of its Patron, Sir Edward Greenall. (The primrose was in memory of Disraeli.) And why were the team called the Wire? Warrington did indeed produce a great deal of wire, but it had over thirty industries by the end of the nineteenth century, and was known principally as a brewing town.⁽⁷⁾ Its single largest workforce was that of teenage girls in the fustian-cutting workshops, but presumably names associated with either alcohol or teenage girls would not have sent the appropriate cultural messages.

The process of municipalisation and the cultural and institutional changes which accompanied it bore a complex relation to the idea of community. (In 1847, Warrington was incorporated as a borough, to be governed by a Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses. In 1900 its status changed again, to that of County Borough.) The idea of community provided part of the municipal ethic, and claimed a popular legitimisation for the activities of the municipal elite. Many of the institutional and cultural changes outlined in this study tapped into the idea of community, but middle-class ideas about community differed from those of the working class, and bitter political disputes about access to municipal services, about municipal funds and how they were raised and spent, and about municipal duties and failures were fought out under the banner of the community ideal. It is partly from these tensions that the idea of local patriotism and local imperialism was sprung. These terms had become commonplace in the political discourse of the later nineteenth century, but it is perhaps not surprising that they were frequently heard in educational circles from that time. Local councillors and teachers appealed to the ideals of local patriotism in political speeches and in the meetings of the National Union of

7. Arthur L. Bowley and Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty: A Study in the Economic Conditions of Working-Class Households in Northampton, Warrington, Stanley and Reading* (London: University of London, 1915), p.92; J. Norman Slater, *A Brewer's Tale: The Story of Greenall Whitley and Company, through Two Centuries* (Warrington: City Press, 1980), pp.158-161.

Teachers. There were calls that local history should be taught more often in schools, local pride more openly expressed, because these were the foundations of imperial sentiment—"the larger and truer patriotism".⁽⁸⁾

Just outside the town of Warrington lay a small village called Orford, now a large council estate within the town. In the 1850s, Warrington's first Mayor, William Beamont, delivered a series of lectures to the Mechanics Institute on local history, and included a lecture on the village. The country, he said, was indebted to Orford for "warriors and lawyers, sheriffs and magistrates, literature, naturalists and philosophers, teachers and poets." Louisa Hornby of Orford had her Bible stories translated into one or more African languages. And then there were its gardens. Anna Blackburne, daughter of the local landowner was a friend of George Rheinhold Foster, who had travelled with James Cook to the Pacific, and she corresponded with Linnaeus in Latin; her garden reflected her knowledge and friendships. Beamont even singled out two Orford trees, one of which, the Virginia Acacia, had been brought from America on the recommendation of William Cobbett, adding the aphorism, "he who introduces a useful tree is a greater benefactor than he who wins a victory".⁽⁹⁾ Beamont might well show great pride in the village. The son of a moderately prosperous linen draper, he himself now lived in Orford Hall, having amassed a small fortune from his law business. If such a variety of claims could be made for one small village, then an industrial town could offer endless opportunities for communal pride.

COMMUNITY, CLASS & IDENTITY

Observers in nineteenth century Warrington noted a very highly developed sense of

8. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 September 1899.

9. William Beamont, *Orford: A Page from the Past* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1858) and *A Retrospect of Warrington: A Lecture delivered 1 March, 1858, with notes and additions* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1887).

community in the town, born of a shared vulnerability to poverty, pollution and disease. Warrington had always been a manufacturing town. In the first century AD the Romans arrived in Warrington and settled in what is now Wilderspool, founding a manufacturing settlement which produced military equipment and supplies. Glass, bronze, iron, carpentry, pottery and textiles were its specialisms. Lead was brought from Wales, copper from Alderley Edge. Its goods supplied garrisons as far north as Hadrian's Wall. Cheshire historian, Alan Crosby, writing of Roman Warrington, has described it as the first industrial town in north west England.⁽¹⁰⁾ Whilst the town was subject to the general pattern of decline after the Roman period, its place on the remaining Roman road network and the emerging medieval road system guaranteed its survival as a regional economic centre. Even more important was its location on the River Mersey, at the spot where the river became sufficiently narrow to permit fording or bridge building. This early historical pattern has essentially never changed, and Warrington's subsequent success has been built upon those three factors: its transport links, its hereditary industrial skills and the diversity of its industry.

Anglo-Saxon toll records show that the range of goods available in Warrington market (hides, canvas, silk, wool, wood, coal, tin, brass, copper and millstones), indicate forms of domestic or workshop production. In 1486, Sir Peter Legh compiled a manuscript of local holdings and occupations which points towards substantial economic activity. Arrow makers, bowyers, millers, smiths, nailors and weavers worked there, and coal mines were already worked in the area. In 1586, the manufacture and export of poldavy (a strong sailcloth) from Warrington is mentioned in Liverpool shipping records. By the mid-seventeenth century, pin-making was established, and in 1729, a traveller's account notes Warrington's production of linen. Malting and brewing were carried out

10. Alan Crosby, *A History of Cheshire* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 1995), p.25.

from at least the seventeenth century.⁽¹¹⁾ Thus, by the beginning of the industrial revolution, Warrington was already well established as a manufacturing town. Prosperity in the eighteenth century had been built on poldavy. Warrington supplied half the navy's needs. By the early nineteenth century, there were also glass works, wire drawing, pin making, tanning, file and tool making, and brewing.⁽¹²⁾

New industries, and growth in older ones, sustained its industrial base through the nineteenth century. The Whitecross wire works, Dallam and Bewsey Forges and Rylands Wire works supplied domestic and foreign markets with telegraph and fencing wire, construction steel and iron goods of all description.⁽¹³⁾ By the end of the nineteenth century, the town's major industries were successfully established, and its industrial transformation complete. Yet, many workers remained tied to small workshop production to a surprising degree. File and tool making retained the artisanal methods of previous generations, whilst in textiles, especially in the cutting and making of fustian, a rough cotton, a semi-domestic mode of production was retained into the twentieth century. Whilst Warrington's industrial reputation was built upon its artisan craftsmen and heavy industry, its biggest employing sector, textiles, employed an almost entirely female workforce.⁽¹⁴⁾ Until recently, this would have required an apology for the untypical and backward nature of its economic base, but as the Industrial Revolution is now no longer regarded as universal in its effects and revolutionary in its methods and timing, towns such as Warrington can make a greater claim to historical relevance than

11. Austin M. Crowe, *Warrington Ancient and Modern: a history of the town and neighbourhood* (Warrington: J.H. Teare & Sons, 1947), pp.69,113-15,125-33; George Carter, *Warrington Hundred: a handbook published by the Corporation of Warrington on the centenary of the Incorporation of the Borough. Part 1: A history of Warrington to 1847; Part 2: Municipal development 1847-1947* (Warrington: Warrington Corporation, 1947), pp.47-9.

12. Carter, *Warrington Hundred*, p.48.

13. D. Dean, 'The growth of the Wire Industry in Warrington, Merseyside's forgotten town', *Leicester Geographical Journal*, (1969), p.43.

14. BPP, 1897, [C.8611], xlv (347), *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination*, Appendix V. 'A report to the Commission of Dr. Thomas Dixon Savill on the outbreak of Smallpox in the Borough of Warrington in 1892-1893', p.84.

previously.

Warrington was most famous for its brewing industry in the nineteenth century. Although characterised by small producers, Greenall's became the most powerful influence in the town. The Greenall family had found cotton manufacturing in Wigan unprofitable, and had bought out the Saracen's Head public house in the late eighteenth century. Soon, by a combination of pub take-overs and the use of tied houses, Greenall's were able to build a new brewery at Wilderspool in Warrington. After taking over Mrs. Dakin's little brewery in Bridge Street, they were even able to incorporate the distilling of spirits into their business, an unusual step for a brewery in the early nineteenth century. Sir Edward Greenall eventually became owner of Walton Hall, Tory MP, patron of the Rugby League club and noted Orangeman. His money was thought to have bought many municipal election victories.⁽¹⁵⁾ The pub culture from which he made his money was of course a vital component in the images of community and the working class, demonstrating that such images were related to the growth of capitalism in subtle and complex ways.

Contemporaries noted that to a surprising degree, Warrington's inhabitants were overwhelmingly working class. In 1831, out of a population of 16,018, only 224 were defined in the Census as "capitalists, bankers, professional and other educated men."⁽¹⁶⁾ By 1913, Warrington was described as "being almost entirely a working class town, for the residences of the professional and upper classes lie for the most part outside the Borough."⁽¹⁷⁾ The levels of pollution explain why this was so. Repeatedly, commentators drew attention to "the vast pollution of the atmosphere" in Warrington. One hundred and forty seven chimneys emitted smoke into the air daily, apart from

15. Norman Slater, *A Brewer's Tale*, pp.49-50,61,136-7.

16. Stephens, *Adult education and society*, p.12.

17. A.L. Bowley & Margaret Hogg, *Has poverty diminished?: a sequel to "Livelihood and Poverty"* (London: University of London, 1925), p.103.

Sundays. The Medical Officer of Health described how the perpetual smoke hung over the town “like a pall, through which the sunlight only occasionally penetrates, and which seems to cast a shade over the inhabitants whose sombre faces are a fruitful index of their habits and occupations”.⁽¹⁸⁾ Bowley and Hogg describe “one mass of smoke... if anyone wishes to know what Warrington might look like, let him note its appearance on Sundays when the works are at rest.” Nor was the air pollution believed to be the inevitable outcome of industrial progress: it was reported that 90% of the smoke was unnecessary, but that manufacturers chose not to use cleaner, but more expensive, methods of smoke dispersal.⁽¹⁹⁾

Water pollution was also noted. The Mersey was described as a “sluggish stream, much polluted with trade produce and sewage”.⁽²⁰⁾ It was estimated that in 1893, 9,000 houses were still dependant on the pail system for the disposal of excreta, there being only 400 water closets in the town. Not surprisingly, scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, diarrhoea and enteric fever were endemic. The Irish were especially vulnerable to these outbreaks. Thomas Dixon Savill, the Medical Officer of Health claimed that he had “not seen so many pock-marked people in one place since visiting Northern Africa.”⁽²¹⁾ In 1872, the Local Government Board were moved to investigate the high incidence of typhus in the town, from which the fustian cutters suffered particularly severely, owing to their crowded and dusty working conditions. Provision of beds at the isolation hospital came under pressure: in November 1892, when the smallpox epidemic was at its worst, there were 30 isolation beds available for 256 cases.⁽²²⁾

18. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.81.

19. Arthur Bennett, *Warrington: as it was, as it is and as it might be* (Warrington: Sunrise Publishing, 1892), p.96; Bowley and Hogg, *Has poverty diminished?*, p.93.

20. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.81.

21. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.81; David Forrest, *Warrington Epidemic Victims, 1832 and 1892-3* (Warrington: Warrington Family History Group, 1993).

22. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.7.

These shared conditions encouraged communal living. Despite the growth in municipal and commercial sport, leisure and culture in the nineteenth century, it seems that most recreation remained family and community based. Amongst the small back-to-back houses which made up the bulk of the residential stock, adults and children used the “fields” for play:

They are for the most part old brickfields where rubbish has been, and in some cases, still is, shot. It is therefore artificially made ground.

These spaces serve for playgrounds for the children and resorts for the adults.⁽²³⁾

As far as the town’s Medical Officer of Health was concerned, the favourite pastime of the people was the exercising of its “gregarious nature”, by the “passing in and out of each other’s houses” and the communal play of the children in the streets. In his Report to the Royal Commission on Vaccination, Doctor Savill examined the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of smallpox in Warrington in 1893, which claimed hundreds of (mainly Irish) victims, and concluded that the sociability of its people was the major factor in the spread of the disease:

The families of the working classes of Warrington seemed very much to live in each others’ houses. The children when not at school or at play in the streets or open spaces have the run of all the houses in the street.

The women when not at housework go in and out for a gossip. The men if not at work spend most of their time in the public houses.⁽²⁴⁾

The 1893 Vaccination Commission Report Appendix compiled by Savill is a revealing document. Doctor Savill was continually exasperated by the fact that Warringtonians would risk their lives rather than restrain their neighbourly habits. The wife of a dying man brought their children out of school in order that they kiss their father

23. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.81.

24. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.90.

before his admittance to the fever hospital. Case 420 “attributed her infection to the fact that the children of a neighbour who developed smallpox thirteen days previously almost lived in her house.”⁽²⁵⁾ One old lady, also dying from the disease, was visited by her friends, who surrounded her deathbed drinking tea and chatting. Children broke through the fences of the fever hospital to play in its grounds, spreading the disease further. Mothers “strapped their boys”, others “leathered” them, to no avail.⁽²⁶⁾ Dr Savill’s perplexed responses to Warrington’s working class were shared by others in the town. When the local elite wished to convey their opinions about the town’s poor, it was often to the descriptive language of Empire that they turned. Dr Savill claimed that only in Africa had he seen people whose health was as poor as the people of Warrington. The Rector, William Quekett was appalled at the living conditions in the town when he arrived in the 1840s, and quoted a missionary bishop’s first words on arriving in Africa: “In we are, on we must”.⁽²⁷⁾

A NOTE ON SOURCES

As this is a study of the growth of an imperial consciousness, any source which transmitted awareness of, or reaction to, imperialism has been made use of. Sources can be grouped into military, cultural, municipal, political, educational and religious. The records of the South Lancashire Regiment are used, including official accounts, diaries, and letters. The profusion of pamphlets, sermons and memoirs are a reminder of the sheer weight of cultural messages produced by the clerical profession. The excellent series of theatre posters, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century to be found

25. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.60.

26. BPP, *R.C. on Vaccination*, Appendix V, p.68.

27. William Quekett, *My Sayings and Doings, with Reminiscences of My Life* (London: Kegan, Paul and Trench, 1888), p.184.

in the local archive give an indication of popular taste. Coronation celebrations and Jubilees provide programmes and newspaper supplements which reveals the public discourse of imperial patriotism. Warrington's literati produced a stream of works which are of historical (though rarely literary) interest. The Mechanics Institute Debating Society Minutes are a detailed account of what young middle-class men were thinking in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Occasional travel accounts are available. Municipal sources such as Council Minutes are used rarely as they carry little political debate: the local press is more useful as a record of opinion and public response to it, although library and museum records have been used. The cultural institutions of the town have left records of value, such as the Proceedings of the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society. Educationally, syllabus records are available, as are University Extension lecture reports and records of teachers' meetings. Unfortunately, records from the trade union movement are not available until the last years of this study, though monthly meetings of the Trades Council and the meetings of individual unions were reported in the local press, and some trade union and Trades Council correspondence has been found.

Undoubtedly, most people absorbed their knowledge of Empire from newspapers. Whatever else helped people make up their minds about Empire, whether a Kipling poem, a music hall song or a company balance sheet, would merely augment the daily transmission of news from and about Empire by the growing number of popular newspapers. As newspapers are an important source in this study, it will be useful at this stage to consider the connections between the press and Empire.

Newspapers are central both as records of events and reflectors of opinion, and as vehicles through which the narrative of the town was conveyed and the outside world brought in. Although operating in commercial and technological competition, the local

press was expected to be open in its access to opinion. More than once, newspaper proprietors published attacks on themselves after charges were made that they had abandoned their responsibility to free speech. The role of the local press cannot be understood outside its relation to the growth of the idea of community. The growth of the cheap popular press and the rise of jingoism are however also generally considered to be fundamentally related. To J.A. Hobson's mind, the press was one of the principal financial forces of imperialism, able to "mould public opinion and public policy". His explanation of why this should be so centred on the role and power of advertising. Newspapers were "always influenced and often dominated by the interests of classes which control the advertisements upon which its living depends". The independence of the press was increasingly threatened as the "cluster of interests which form the business nucleus of imperialism becomes more consolidated and more conscious of its politics". Hobson predicted a time when British newspapers would be owned purely in order that popular opinion be controlled by proprietors. As an old-fashioned journalist of independent temper, Hobson's fears were as much professional as political.⁽²⁸⁾

Eric Hobsbawm has taken a different view. He has argued that whilst the print environment was transformed in the late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, its social impact was dulled by its traditional forms and content.⁽²⁹⁾ The point is emphasised by contrasting newspapers with the revolutionary social impact of the cinema. But Warrington's early experiences of cinema, although exciting, seemed unlikely to transform society. The earliest cinematograph visited Warrington in 1899 as part of Chipperfield's Circus. Cinema shows were an added diversion to the attractions which traditionally drew the crowds. Bartlett's Lion Show and Cinematograph pitched

28. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism, A Study*, 7th Impression (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), p.217.

29. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Cardinal, 1991), pp.237-8.

tent alongside the 'Small Menagerie and Fat Woman' and the enigmatic 'Wild Man with Roundabout'.⁽³⁰⁾ As a cultural medium of significance, the cinema had some way to go to rival the press in these years.

Print technology improved, as did methods of distribution. Readership broadened considerably from the mid-Victorian Reading Room enthusiast to the family readership enticed by women's pages and sports columns. Advertising and pricing policies maximised circulation. But despite these extra features, news presentation and political comment remained vital to sales figures. Agencies (such as Associated Press and Reuters) placed international stories with greater speed via telegraph and telephone, and national and imperial politics assumed a popular immediacy which probably unnerved those accustomed to more sedate Victorian ways.⁽³¹⁾ And it is in this news culture, which provided story, drama, information and topics of conversation that the hold of newspapers on popular culture is probably to be found.

This was as true of the local press as the new mass circulation national newspapers. In the nineteenth century, the term 'local' newspaper referred only to readership and not to content. The local press carried all the major stories from the Empire, competing directly with national titles. This is explained by the economics of the industry. Many families were still able to afford only one newspaper, and would require that its content provided them with all the news. The growth of a self-contained local press, which concentrated solely on the municipal and parochial was possible only when families began to get international news from other sources. Furthermore, local editors saw the dissemination of national and imperial news as a duty, and one which reinforced, rather

30. [Warrington] Borough Officer's notebook (transcripton). (Includes details on fairs, funfairs, sideshows and exhibitions held in the Borough, May 1896 - June 1904). [WALSC: MS2302]

31. Michael Palmer, 'The British press and International news, 1851-1899: of agencies and newspapers' in George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate, (eds.), *Newspaper History: from the 17th Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978), pp.205-219.

than weakened, their claim to represent the town and its people. It allowed them, through editorials and comment columns to debate international matters, speaking with the voice of the community. Imperial news could often be enriched by emphasising local connections, as when letters home, from soldiers or migrants were passed to editors to be published. Foreign news with a local aspect became an important service of the local press as emigration and literacy increased in the nineteenth century.

This in itself would make local newspapers a valuable source for the historian of imperialism. But it is also productive to see newspapers not as a single source but as a repository of many sources, to investigate the whole newspaper and not just its explicit political content. Indeed, the proportion of newsprint devoted to political matters shrank decade by decade, as cultural and sporting activities, whether local or national, competed for attention. Thus the whole newspaper can be used to uncover imperial content.

By the late nineteenth century, Warrington produced five newspapers which was probably too many for the size of its population. The *Warrington Guardian* and the *Warrington Examiner* were the oldest, beginning in the 1850s and 1870s. The *Observer*, *Borough Press* and the *Sunrise* were destined to have more transient histories, as had the *Warrington Advertiser*, which had ceased publication in 1889 after a twenty-seven year existence.⁽³²⁾

It would be impossible to write the history of the press in Warrington without reference to Alexander Mackie, the founder, owner and editor of the *Warrington Guardian*. A Scot with some engineering training, Mackie's wife Elizabeth (known as the she-editor by rivals) belonged to the Boddington family of Manchester, which combined brewing with newspaper ownership (they owned the *Manchester Courier*). He began the *Guardian* in 1853, after having contacted the leading men in the town to ask

32. Crowe, *Warrington, Ancient and Modern*, pp. 163, 180.

for their support, undertaking that his newspaper would remain neutral in political and religious matters.⁽³³⁾ Mackie's politics are difficult to fathom. Originally a Chartist, he retained a commitment to social change, supporting anti-slavery and liberal imperialism, but also supported the Tory party.⁽³⁴⁾ The *Guardian* was undoubtedly a successful venture, eventually defeating all competition in the town. Mackie built its appeal on both the claim to neutrality and a pride in local affairs, writing in his first issue of his wish to return the town to the "high character which it bore in former years for intellectual culture and enterprise".⁽³⁵⁾ As one commentator said, "Although the *Guardian* is a private enterprise, it becomes really a public institution."⁽³⁶⁾

Yet it was not rhetoric which sustained the *Guardian*, but innovative business techniques and technological advantage. Mackie had invented the type composting machine which allowed the replacement of craft printers by cheaper women workers.⁽³⁷⁾ His newspapers were known for their professional production values (HMSO awarded Mackie printing contracts) especially in layout and artwork.⁽³⁸⁾ As early as 1861, a three-page illustrated presentation of the Crystal Palace was reproduced in the *Guardian*. Occasionally, illustrations were supplied on high quality paper so that they could be framed and hung.⁽³⁹⁾ Workers were encouraged to acquire new skills, especially in reporting and reading proofs, Mackie stating that "many London papers want our trained men."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Distribution methods also left little to chance, as the *Guardian* was sold, door

33. Geoffrey Nulty, *Guardian Country, 1853-1978: Being the story of the first 125 years of Cheshire County Newspapers* (Warrington: Cheshire County Newspapers, 1978), pp.4-6.

34. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.17.

35. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.7.

36. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.16.

37. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.23.

38. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.23.

39. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.16.

40. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.16.

to door, by newsboys who worked their own 'rounds', drumming up custom with traders and families. By 1868, the paper's workforce comprised over one hundred people, excluding newsboys. Perhaps most surprisingly, it employed fifteen reporters, and increasingly, Mackie worked in London, from where he both reported Parliamentary matters and wrote editorials. "No progressive provincial paper can manage without a strong representation in London," he wrote.⁽⁴¹⁾

By 1880, the *Guardian's* circulation was put at 30,000. The *London Graphic* stated that the *Warrington Guardian* was the largest newspaper in England, a claim repeated in 1886 by the *Effective Advertiser*, a trade periodical.⁽⁴²⁾ This was clearly an exaggeration, but one which was not as improbable as it seems. Mackie used his Warrington operations to expand into the rural areas of Cheshire, establishing offices at Northwich, Middlewich and Winsford in 1860, and in Runcorn, Nantwich and Crewe in the next three years. He campaigned against rural poverty, illiteracy and bad housing, at the same time providing vital local information on produce prices and agricultural issues, layered with national and international news, making these editions generally successful at increasing total circulation. It was in this drive to maximise sales that Mackie was a genuine pioneer.

Looked at in this way, the distinctions between national and local press begin to break down. In the first instance, it is probably more accurate to describe the *Warrington Guardian* as a regional paper. Furthermore, it clearly pioneered methods which would later be used by the new mass circulation daily newspapers. Until their emergence, 'national' newspapers were concerned to wield influence, not expand circulation, and relied on a particular class or political following rather than universal appeal. These London newspapers with national distribution were a particular target of radicals in the nineteenth century, what Richard Cobden referred to as "Cockney poison" which he

41. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.14.

42. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.16.

believed should be replaced by “good local papers”, less corruptible, less changeable, with editors more accountable because more identifiable in their local towns.⁽⁴³⁾ The *Warrington Guardian* attempted to meet these aspirations, stating itself to have been “founded on the promise of full reports of every meeting, political or religious, if local.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

Newspapers like the *Guardian* were an important part of the local economy, the local state and the local community. They sought to express a common experience, share a common local culture and represented a communal effort with vital contributions from local people and groups. A newspaper like the *Guardian* is therefore not especially helpful in that important task, that of finding out what the working classes thought. Its appeal, nevertheless, was broadly to the working class, for it could not have gained such a circulation otherwise. And in locations where its staff misjudged the mood of the working class, circulation did suffer. This happened in Crewe, where the *Crewe Chronicle*, a partisan Liberal paper, outstripped the *Guardian*. The issue on which this battle was fought was that of the London and North Eastern Railway’s pension scheme. The pension fund was administered by the Tory board of the L.N.E.R., and workers, already incensed by the intimidatory tactics wielded by employers to Liberal activists within the workforce, questioned the legality of the scheme. The *Guardian*, ostensibly neutral, objectively Tory, failed to campaign on this important case, and lost readers as a result.⁽⁴⁵⁾

One new source is used here, tentatively, and has the potential to become an important source to historians of Empire. These are the letters of emigrants which were

43. Brian Harrison, ‘Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain’ in Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, (eds.), *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), p.269.

44. *Warrington Guardian*, 31 December 1864.

45. Nulty, *Guardian Country*, p.41.

published in the local newspapers. No collections of family letters from the nineteenth century are available in archive collections in Warrington. The value of these letters has been recognised by demographic historians for some time, but their possible contribution to our understanding of British social history is a more recent discovery.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The letters reinforce the idea that those who left Warrington did not cease to be a part of its history.

One example is significant in this study. In 1770, Captain William Owen sailed from Warrington to the New Brunswick Islands to take possession of a grant of land bestowed by the British government. He took 38 indentured servants with him, amongst whom were John and Catherine Lawless and their daughter Mary. Mary married Andrew Lloyd who was apprenticed to Captain Owen. Their daughter Fanny married Abijah Garrison and their son, William Lloyd Garrison became a leader of the American anti-slavery movement. In that capacity, Garrison corresponded regularly with anti-slavery activists in Warrington, and visited the town in 1871.

Emigrants of course were only one group that sent letters home: soldiers and officers, colonial workers, missionaries all reported back on their experiences of living and working in the Empire. There are, of course, problems associated with letters which are found in the local press: there is no way of knowing on what basis they were chosen for inclusion, if indeed, they were assessed on the basis of content at all. Editors might reject a letter which proffered an alternative vision of emigration and Empire to that which they adhered, but might equally be tempted to publish a letter from a popular or well-known former resident of the town, regardless of its underlying message. Family letters should be treated with care under any circumstances, for guilt and other emotions may disguise the sender's message. Nevertheless, a few studies have made productive use of this kind of evidence, and have proved a valuable addition to the writing of 'history

46. Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp.1-33.

from below'.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Their contribution to this study will be much more modest, though it is clear that the continuing relationship between emigrants and their home town, and its relationship to them, goes some way to explaining the strength of both the communal and imperial ideal.

The sources used in this study are therefore diverse. Each has its own value and its own drawbacks, and I have attempted to draw attention to these where appropriate. It has been the general aim to assess the uses made of the appeals to community and municipal pride, whilst also remaining alive to the political and cultural manipulations of those terms as they were perpetrated. The value of this method is that it allows a more accurate assessment of the development of popular imperialism, and the slow pace of that development from the eighteenth century, than other studies of popular imperialism which have used a more restricted focus and time scale.

47. Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994).

Part Two

Anti-Slavery & Empire

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNITY AND ANTI-SLAVERY: THE ROOTS OF ABOLITIONISM AS A COLONIAL ISSUE FROM ITS RADICAL BEGINNINGS TO THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

In the Introduction, doubts were raised about the accepted literature's periodisation of anti-slavery in Britain, and in particular the view that abolitionism as a theme within popular politics had ended in the 1840s, having fulfilled its purpose of negotiating the hurdles attendant upon industrialisation. In this and the following chapter, an alternative chronology will be presented, built upon the assumption that anti-slavery retained its function as a vehicle for class politics and the framing of ideologies about labour into the twentieth century. These chapters will also put forward a fresh interpretation concerning the relationship between abolitionism and imperialism, which again, by taking a long view, advocates a firmer role for anti-slavery than is usually granted to it. In what follows, therefore, special attention will be paid to the links between class and anti-slavery, and between colonialism and anti-slavery. Abolitionism in the nineteenth century Britain is often seen as a series of loosely-connected campaigns, from its beginnings as a colonial issue, to the separate campaign to end slavery in the southern states of America. In this and the following chapter I shall argue that British abolitionism re-emerged as a colonial issue from the 1860s, as British interests in Africa grew, and that the campaign to end slavery in America, which had important political consequences in Britain as a result of the Cotton Famine, can be re-examined for the role it played in preparing the political arguments for a renewed interest in developing colonial ties.

Class connections built up between radicalised members of the middle class and labour are a large factor in the continuity of anti-slavery. And whilst the early and mid-nineteenth century decades covered in this chapter are years of seemingly popular

indifference to Empire, it is demonstrated here that events slowly began to take on an imperial dimension in popular consciousness. Identifying these changes corroborates my argument that popular abolitionism repositioned itself after British emancipation, as it did again later in the century. Part of this repositioning depended on the strength of local abolitionism, as national organisations turned to quasi-governmental forms of pressure, abandoning the methods of popular abolitionism with which they had collaborated in the successful British campaign. Local abolitionism, compact and deep-rooted, could be cultivated without its adopting a vigorous role in national campaigns, and could survive unacknowledged by either contemporaries or future scholars. Popular abolitionism certainly had its dormant periods, as did any political cause in the nineteenth century, but it did not die. What is more, the leaders of local abolitionism forged their own international links independently of national anti-slavery societies. The chapter outlines local anti-slavery chronologically, first in its radical British phase, and then in its activities to end slavery in America. The Cotton Famine in Warrington, although mild in its effects compared to that in other Lancashire towns, is reconsidered for its implications for popular imperialism brought out by the issues of raw material supply, emigration, and philanthropy.

LOCAL ABOLITIONISM

From the mid-eighteenth century, Warrington was home to some of anti-slavery's most illustrious names, in particular members of the Carpenter family of Bristol as well as lesser celebrities such as the Gaskells and the Robsons. The chapter also details their other political activities, especially in the culture of protest in the years up to and beyond the Reform Act. But abolitionism is also surprisingly uncovered in Warrington in a rural setting. Usually assumed to be the product of new urban political cultures, the

connections between anti-slavery and agricultural reform are explored here.

Warrington was undoubtedly one of the earliest provincial nurseries of the abolitionist movement, centring around its Unitarian community and the Academy. Joseph Priestley was one of the earliest abolitionists. Priestley's history lectures, delivered at the Warrington Academy in 1767, and published in London in 1826, argue for the end of the slavery in these terms:

Mankind, naturally averse to labour, have in all ages endeavoured to compel others to labour for them, and in Greece and Rome the manufacturers were generally slaves. In modern times, though an end has been put to servitude in the Christian countries of Europe, it has been greatly extended in our colonies, slaves being purchased in Africa and transported in order to their being employed in America.⁽¹⁾

Priestley held that slaves do not work with the same spirit as free men, and that slavery promoted war, and "every method of violence and injustice", leading eventually to a system whereby "negroes were propagated only for slavery."⁽²⁾

The Academy's reputation, and that of the Eyre's Press, attracted a number of anti-slavery activists to Warrington as visitors and residents. Thomas Cooper, Manchester radical and Unitarian and author of *Letters on the Slave Trade* (which was published in Warrington in 1787) was a frequent visitor, and eventually joined Priestley in Pennsylvania. William Roscoe, leading member of the anti-slavery campaign in Parliament, also stayed regularly in Warrington.⁽³⁾

The Gaskells were a wealthy family of sailcloth manufacturers who had played

1. Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy: to which is prefixed an Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life. A new edition with enlargements comprising a lecture on the Constitution of the United States, from the author's American edition, and additional notes by J.T. Rutt* (London: T. Tegg, 1826), p.402.
2. Priestley, *History and General Policy*, p.402.
3. James Kendrick, 'Contributions to the Early History of Warrington', [bound cuttings from the author's column in the *Manchester Courier*, 1839-51] [WALSC: 8054]; Pdraig O'Brien, *Eyres' Press, Warrington (1756-1803): An embryo University Press* (Wigan: OWL Books, 1993), p.108.

prominent roles in the founding of the Warrington Library, and were also active abolitionists, Unitarians and radicals. Holbrook Gaskell had attempted to start a Hampden Club in 1812, and had exchanged letters with the anti-slavery radical Major Cartwright for this purpose. We know that the Gaskells supported the radical Edward Hornby in Warrington's first election, and that the ending of slavery was a part of Hornby's political programme.⁽⁴⁾

The next generation of Gaskells, who came to political maturity in the 1840s, also combined Unitarianism with radicalism and anti-slavery, in variable proportions. Samuel entered the medical profession, becoming director of the Lancashire Asylum and serving on Her Majesty's Commission of Lunacy. Robert remained in business as a tanner, and was a member of the Warrington Board of Guardians and the Penketh Mechanics Institute. William became a Unitarian minister at the Cross Street Chapel in Manchester, and was the husband of the novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell. Ann married William Robson, Warrington's Postmaster and a director of the Warrington Dispensary. Robert married Susan Carpenter, daughter of Lant Carpenter, Unitarian minister of Bristol and head of another wide-ranging abolitionist family. Lant's son Philip became minister at the Cairo Street Chapel in Warrington, where he too combined religion, abolitionism and radical politics.⁽⁵⁾

In their capacity as politicised, professional middle-class activists, each of these was involved in the processes of urban change which accompanied the municipalisation process, both in the activities of the Town Council and its related institutions, and in the new cultural forms which defined its modern local identity. William Robson and Philip Carpenter took up campaigns for improvements in housing and health. Both were also

4. F.W. Woods, 'History of Parliamentary Elections for Warrington' from the [author's column in the] Warrington Observer, 1889-1990. [WALSC: 5250]

5. Robert Dickinson, 'Pedigree of the Gaskell Family' [a card index]. [WALSC: MS2119]

instrumental in the provision of education, for both children and adults, and helped found the Co-operative movement in Warrington.⁽⁶⁾ Robson's and Carpenter's close links with labour in Warrington are hinted at in a letter from Elizabeth Gaskell, who wrote to Robson to ask for help in circulating a series of pamphlets on Christian Socialism:

Now my dear Mr. Robson - I have written thus far, for you to read aloud (& save me the trouble of writing) to Philip Carpenter; to whom I am also sending tracts &c & what I want you both to do is to get them circulated among working men, they /the editors/ want their advice, and thoughts, and practical sense. Can you help in circulating them by getting some sellers of working men's papers to put them in their shops?⁽⁷⁾

Philip Carpenter set up the Oberlin press in Warrington as a vehicle to retrain the unemployed and to spread a radical political message. The press was well supported by its working-class volunteers, who printed and distributed it. Anti-slavery pamphlets were one of its mainstays as a commercial and political success. Other causes which Carpenter promoted amongst Warrington's workingmen, such as vegetarianism, were not adopted with the same enthusiasm as anti-slavery. Carpenter was an early member of the Vegetarian Society, but the message of his pamphlet *A Few Reasons for not Eating Dead Bodies*, published by the Oberlin press never caught on.⁽⁸⁾ Other members of the Gaskell clan also contributed to the shaping of municipal culture. William Robson and his brother Thomas, a local artist, were leading patrons of the municipal art gallery. Carpenter contributed specimens of importance in natural history to the museum, and used its collection to make his study of the world's shells. He requested that shell-collectors from around the world send their findings to him at Warrington Museum,

6. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 April 1894.

7. J.A.V. Chapple and A. Pollard, (eds.), *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p.105.

8. Russell Lant Carpenter, (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life and Work of Philip Pearsall Carpenter, chiefly derived from his letters* (London: C. Kegan & Co., 1880), p.161.

and many did. Carpenter used the museum as his base to accumulate the shell collection which he eventually donated to the American government. In his capacity as minister at Cairo Street Chapel, Carpenter made important changes to the way that Walking Day was organised when he arranged that schoolchildren should save weekly for their Walking Day treat, rather than have teachers using the proceeds of street-collections to pay for day trips and parties.⁽⁹⁾

After the town council refused to clear slum areas, Robson and Carpenter helped to clean and whitewash the poorest housing. At the same time they conducted and published a survey on the housing conditions of Warrington's poor (including Irish famine migrants) which eventually shamed the Council into taking action to build new housing. The activities of Carpenter and Robson in the campaigns against poor housing in the 1840s were documented by Lant Carpenter from Philip Carpenter's correspondence after his death in 1877. In 1894, the Cairo Street Unitarian Chapel celebrated its centenary and although Robson was now too old and ill to attend (he now lived in Wales) his contribution to Warrington's social progress was acknowledged. But the accounts differ quite markedly. In Carpenter's letters it is clear that workingmen themselves played an equal role in the campaigns, but by the 1890s the account tells only of middle-class leadership in solving the problems of the poor.⁽¹⁰⁾ This selectivity in the use of local memory and local history was not uncommon and will be described in greater detail in Chapter Six.

JAMES CROPPER AND THE RURAL CONTEXT OF ANTI-SLAVERY

Besides its group of radical activists, products of a manufacturing environment, Warrington provides evidence of the rural context of abolitionism. Eclipsing the Gaskells

9. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.136.

10. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 April 1894; Carpenter, *Memoirs*, pp.102-118.

in national anti-slavery reputation was James Cropper, a successful merchant with interests in the East India sugar trade, Atlantic shipping and the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company. He had been a founding member of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823. As a Liverpool MP, Cropper's part in the Parliamentary road to abolition was pivotal, having recognised the need to widen the campaign by encouraging popular involvement. In 1831, he therefore helped set up the Agency Committee, which employed salaried lecturers to tour the country and foster public support.⁽¹¹⁾

Cropper's background, however, was not in trade and politics but in yeoman agriculture and he had hoped to return to agricultural life, had the abolitionist campaign not kept him from it. Cropper is regarded as one of the intellectual heavyweights of abolitionism, who attempted to theorise post-emancipationist concepts of free labour in the colonial setting.⁽¹²⁾ When Cropper envisaged solutions to the problems of post-emancipation societies, he found these in a system of independent agricultural labour. He set out to test and prove his ideas on the viability of free labour at his farm at Fearnhead in Warrington. The farm, which Cropper had inherited from his father in 1810, and which he had hoped to make a refuge after his frenetic years of campaigning, thus became an extension of his abolitionist activity. The farm is of further interest for the light it throws onto Cropper's thoughts about British agricultural labour at an important juncture, as the New Poor Law 'freed' them at the same time as colonial slaves. There is no doubt that Cropper made no distinction between colonial and domestic labour problems. Fearnhead was an experiment in the application of his economic ideas, a concerted approach intended to be of benefit both locally and colonially. Although the

11. Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), pp.10-15; David Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.61-2.
12. Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), pp.19,57-8.

buildings were unfinished, and only six boys had been recruited (eventually the scheme accommodated thirty boys), Cropper symbolically laid the foundation stone of the farm colony and school for orphans on Emancipation Day, 1834. The stone read: "From and after the First August, 1834, slavery in the British Dominions shall forever cease... on that day, the foundation of this school was laid."⁽¹³⁾

The Fearnhead school was proclaimed through the anti-slavery network. Cropper had written to his friend, the American abolitionist leader, William Lloyd Garrison in May 1834:

I am just about to try an experiment which if it succeeds would be of vast importance to the Coloured people of your country whether children or grown up. I send The[e] a copy of my plan if some individual or society in America would take it up, it would be most desirable.⁽¹⁴⁾

The plan involved combining agricultural work with education, mostly for the young but eventually incorporating forty adult scholars. Its aim was to provide alternatives to the urban poverty of the manufacturing towns, and an answer to the problems of rural population growth and land tenure upon which the Poor Law Commission had focused. Cropper's plans were built upon the assumption that the key to a successful, and peaceful, agricultural sector in Britain and the colonies lay in the size of the plot which agricultural labourers should hold. The Report of the Poor Law Commission had argued that a cottage or garden allotment was the ideal size (which conveniently ensured that labourers were available to work for landholders when necessary). This reflected the prevailing orthodoxy which held that larger plots would prove too much for the labourer's limited

13. Kenneth Charlton, 'James Cropper and Agricultural Improvement in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 112 (1960), pp.65-78; Turley, *Culture of Anti-Slavery*, p.112.

14. Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), p.30.

strength, leading to his becoming a petty farmer without capital, producing a cottier population similar to that in Ireland. It was generally believed that the returns on larger holdings would be insufficient to provide the means by which small farmers might improve the productivity of the land.⁽¹⁵⁾

Cropper disagreed fundamentally with this analysis. He believed that larger plots of land were economically viable, and ran his colony on that basis. He rejected the connection, implicit in the Poor Law Commission's Report, between the impoverishment of the tenantry and the prosperity of farmers:

It is cheaper to maintain men in comfort than in misery—landowners may obtain higher rents from independent men with labourers living in comfort than they can from a poor dependent tenantry with half fed labourers.⁽¹⁶⁾

The key to this transformation would be the provision of education, though here it becomes clear that Cropper was by no means entirely radical in his economic philosophy:

The end and object of instructing the poor should be to afford them the knowledge requisite for the due performance of their duties in their station in life, and that the way to make them happy is to make them happy in their station, but not to give them the instruction which would raise them above their rank and instil into their minds the desire of advancement which renders them dissatisfied with their actual lot, restless and desirous of change.⁽¹⁷⁾

Views such as this set Cropper apart from the more progressive, urban radicals with whom he worked in the abolitionist campaign, such as his son-in-law, Joseph Sturge. David Turley has pointed out that mainstream abolitionism was fuelled as

15. Charlton, 'James Cropper', p.73.

16. Charlton, 'James Cropper', p.72.

17. Charlton, 'James Cropper', p.71.

much by the concerns of commerce as of manufacturing.⁽¹⁸⁾ Cropper appeared to believe that manufacturing was a social evil, contending that children who were drawn from the village to the manufacturing town became “idle and unmanageable”.⁽¹⁹⁾

During Cropper’s lifetime, the Fearnhead experiment was a success (Cropper died in 1840). The farm produced high yields which sold well. Local children, and adults, received an education, and orphans learnt sufficient agricultural skills to manage their plots of land, qualifying for the profit scheme which Cropper operated from the proceeds of the farm shop. The experiment soon attracted the attention of other abolitionist leaders. Lord Brougham wrote to Cropper asking for advice as he planned a similar scheme. The Quaker abolitionist, William Allen, also showed keen interest in Fearnhead, paying a visit in 1835: he too was drawn to such experiments, having been for a time involved in the New Lanark model factory with Robert Owen (before a quarrel with Owen led to his abandoning the project) and in promoting agricultural villages in Sierra Leone.⁽²⁰⁾

Cropper’s main interest for historians has been the influence he asserted in developing ideas about the economics of slavery and free labour in a mercantile context. Betty Fladeland has described him as “one of the Anti-Slavery Society’s experts on the economics of slavery”.⁽²¹⁾ His campaign to equalise the sugar duties on slave-grown and free-grown sugar has been interpreted as both a sound economic strategy to end slavery in the West Indies and an equally efficient method by which Cropper could increase his

18. Turley, *Culture of Anti-Slavery*, p.232.

19. Charlton, ‘James Cropper’, p.75.

20. Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp.276,449; Betty Fladeland, “‘Our Cause being One and the Same’: Abolitionists and Chartists” in James Walvin, (ed.), *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p.64; Turley, *Culture of Anti-Slavery*, p.113; Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p.12; Charlton, ‘James Cropper’, p.65.

21. Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working Class*, p.19.

business, and his profits, in the East Indies. Similarly, he tied together increased efficiency on the Fearnhead farm colony with improved distribution and marketing of produce by using the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, of which Cropper was a director, to transport fresh goods to urban markets. Cropper's philosophy stemmed from a rigid Christianity which sought to apply economic theory in the real world. His compassion for the poor and the slave was genuine, but he appears to have lacked the empathy with the poor which William Robson or Philip Carpenter showed, as this letter to his son, John Cropper, written in 1836, makes clear:

I fear many of the poor here are so little informed that they understand scarcely anything that is said or read to them.... I have thought of having them to tea—a few at a time—for two or three evenings in a week until I have got through them. But the question arises, 'What am I to say to them when they come?'⁽²²⁾

Cropper and the Gaskells appear to span the full ideological range of abolitionism from urban radical to rural idealist. It is coincidence that they all lived in Warrington, though this offers proof that even in a small town, the varieties of abolitionist activity, and particularly its differing philosophical roots frustrate attempts to offer a generalised hypothesis connecting abolitionism and popular politics. If abolitionism is not simply the by-product of the industrial revolution, this further strengthens the argument that anti-slavery remained potentially functional after the rate of industrial change had slowed, and that its strength is to be found in its diffusion throughout British society, regardless of organisational strengths and weaknesses.

Undoubtedly, the pace of anti-slavery activity, of whatever kind, slowed dramatically after the excitements of British emancipation faded. The political agenda was reshuffled as Corn Laws were opposed, Chartism peaked and famine struck Ireland

22. Charlton, 'James Cropper', p.77.

and Scotland. The national network of activists and its Parliamentary leaders loosened their ties, the former turning to their communities and to other concerns, the latter becoming a part of the apparatus of government anti-slavery policy. Global slavery remained an interesting topic: William Beamont, solicitor and campaigner for the incorporation of Warrington noted in his journal in 1844 that he had “spent a few hours with Mr. Moon, lately back from Brazil, where slavery continues, with the perpetual importation of slaves.”⁽²³⁾ Warrington’s anti-slavery caucus busied itself with the social problems of the town. As far as the scholarly narrative is concerned, popular anti-slavery was now dead, to be resurrected briefly during the American Civil War by agitators working for North and South. But Warrington again indicates a different chronology.

WARRINGTON IN THE COTTON FAMINE

The outbreak of the American Civil War was not entirely unexpected, and although its causes were complex, slavery and its possible demise captured the immediate public attention of Britain. Both North and South considered British public opinion to be a possible future determinant in the outcome of the war, even after the government announced its policy of neutrality. Both sides employed agents who, together with domestic political leaders, sought to mobilise the people behind one side or the other. Nowhere was this strategy more keenly employed than in Lancashire, which suffered unprecedented levels of unemployment as cotton supplies were disrupted by the war. Both sides claimed that Lancashire popular opinion was behind them, and demonstrated their claims with petitions and town meetings. The controversy thus created—which side did the Lancashire working class support during the American Civil War—remains active still.

23. William Beamont Diaries: 17 August 1844, also see Genealogical and biographical details of William Beamont. [WALSC: MS2120]

Originally, working-class abolitionism suffered at the hands of some historians of the anti-slavery movement. Frank Owsley concluded in 1931 that “the population of Lancashire and all industrial England was politically apathetic, sodden, ignorant and docile, with the exception of a few intelligent leaders.”⁽²⁴⁾ Howard Temperley, writing more recently, dismissed post - 1840s abolitionism as “very much a marginal affair, with more than its fair share of cranks, visionaries and habitual schismatics.”⁽²⁵⁾ At any rate, according to Temperley:

the anti-slavery appeal was essentially an appeal by the middle classes to the middle classes. The lower orders, insofar as they intruded at all, generally featured as rowdies and hecklers who tried to break up meetings.⁽²⁶⁾

However, working class support for the anti-slavery cause is now generally acknowledged to have played a significant role in campaigns to end both American and British slavery. Some have seen the relationship between popular abolitionism and working-class Reform campaigns as one of mutual benefit, in arguing that the activity unleashed by the American Civil War reanimated plebeian politics. Referring to the American Civil War, Royden Harrison has written that “Scarcely any of the political developments of the 1860s are intelligible without reference to it.” Royden Harrison describes how a labour leadership based around the *Bee Hive* newspaper and the trade union movement began to form an identity for themselves, developing a role within British political life.⁽²⁷⁾ The war was important in forming this leadership—whilst older Chartist leaders retained an anti-capitalist, and consequently more pro-Southern line,

24. Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the United States of America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp.544-6.

25. Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, p.246.

26. Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, p.73.

27. Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (London: Routledge, 1965), p.68,40-69.

younger men joined radical Liberals such as John Bright firstly in support for the North, and later for the Second Reform Bill. Eugenio Biagini presents a more positive picture of the growth of popular liberalism than does Harrison, and argues similarly that the issue of American slavery and the war was one of the factors which jump-started the new class politics, though he diverges from Harrison in concluding that there was no essential split along generational lines on this or other issues. Biagini argues that British labour was united, not split by the war, with older Chartist ideals reawakened and working-class abolitionism reactivated, to be absorbed as ingredients of popular liberalism.⁽²⁸⁾

Biagini's analysis feeds into Patrick Joyce's assumptions about the success of Liberalism in absorbing plebeian politics into populist, as opposed to class dynamics. Joyce considers that the language of slavery helped cement a moral populism in Lancashire during these years. In a forthcoming article, the present author takes issue with Joyce's interpretation and argues that anti-slavery and other issues brought up by the Cotton Famine reinforced class division and that plebeian interpretations of slavery originated in a class-based analysis.⁽²⁹⁾

An unusual work in this field is Mary Ellison's *Support for Secession*. Ellison sets out to prove that the Lancashire working class actually supported the South, in the hopes of securing a cotton supply. The strength of support for the South, she insists, was directly related to unemployment levels. As these were geographically determined (for climatic reasons, cotton towns were regionally separated according to productive function into weaving or spinning areas), political responses to the war can be predicted according to each town's location, and evidence is presented from newspaper reports of local

28. Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, p.39; Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.74.

29. Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.34,54,112; Janet Toole, 'Workers and Slaves: Class Relations in a South Lancashire Town in the time of the Cotton Famine', *Labour History Review*, 63.2 (Summer, 1998).

meetings to support this thesis. (Warrington, being situated in “the sunny, fertile lowlands of the western regions” was considered to be relatively relaxed about the outcome of the war).⁽³⁰⁾ However, this geographic model allows Ellison to ignore some elementary historical forces, such as class, civic leadership and workers' response, union organisation, community cohesion, cultural activity, religious associations and the vagaries and rivalries of the local press. Biagini disparages Ellison's conclusions and her methodology, pointing out that a simple arithmetical exercise using Ellison's text reveals a higher number of meetings in Lancashire towns in favour of the North than the South.⁽³¹⁾

This study does not directly test the validity of these competing interpretations of anti-slavery in Lancashire in the 1860s, being more concerned with the specificity of local conditions rather than regional homogeneity. What is clear from what follows is that the conditions for working-class abolitionism were not merely the creation of unemployment and Cotton Famine distress. Lancashire's feelings concerning slavery achieved significance three years before the war began thanks to U.S. Senator James Hammond. On 4 March, 1858, he made his King Cotton speech, in which he threatened the Northern states with the retribution of Lancashire and Great Britain if the South and slavery were opposed.⁽³²⁾ Incipient Confederate politicians offered this as their principal means of defence: the need for cotton would outweigh any sentimental feeling for the slave. This strident assertion of the slaveholders replicated the worst fears of American abolitionists, who had become concerned that popular anti-slavery in Britain was indeed a spent force and could not be relied upon to help them through. Just at this time, William Robson,

30. Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.15.

31. Biagini, *Liberty*, pp.75-6.

32. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, The Oxford History of the United States, Vol. VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Postmaster of Warrington, paid a visit to the United States. Probably through the intercession of mutual friends, Robson met with the anti-slavery leader, William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison had been active in American abolitionism for many decades. Despite schisms and controversies within the American anti-slavery movement, Garrison's role in domestic and international campaigning was pivotal in helping secure emancipation in the Southern states. His links to local abolitionists in Warrington have been noted earlier in this chapter.

On his return to Warrington, Robson set about forming a local Anti-slavery Society which like other similar groups, consisted originally of immediate family and religious colleagues, including active women members and organisers. It set itself the immediate task of writing the "Address to the Inhabitants of the United States from the People of Warrington upon the Subject of Slaveholding", which was signed by 3,522 names, and reported in the *Warrington Guardian* with great pride: "It is said by persons conversant with these matters that this number of names exceeds by 1,200 those attached to any previous address or petition which has emanated from Warrington on any subject."⁽³³⁾

Together with a \$100 donation, the Address was remitted to Garrison at Boston.

It is clear from Garrison's letter to Robson that evidence of abolitionist fervour in a Lancashire town was most welcome:

That Address I will read at our anniversary in New York and also at the New England Anti-Slavery Convention which is to be held at Boston.... We shall take pains to give it publicity in every direction. Of course all our anti-slavery journals have promptly published it. Such testimonies are of exceeding value to us and the more of them the better. Opinion, after all, rules the world, not statutes or constitutions.... Let us have the opinion of England. God bless you all in Warrington for what you have already done and the good example you have already set to other

33. *Warrington Times*, 21 May 1859.

portions of England.⁽³⁴⁾

Garrison had developed a small network of agents similar to that established by James Cropper in Britain and these, together with others who were able to make a living through public speaking, criss-crossed Britain publicising the facts concerning slavery in America. The most famous of Garrison's agents was the former slave, Frederick Douglass, who had visited Warrington in 1846.⁽³⁵⁾ Whilst in Boston, Robson met Miss Sarah Parker Remond, who belonged to a family of black anti-slavery agents from Massachusetts. Miss Remond was to tour Britain, and began her lecturing duties in Warrington. Arriving in early 1859, she stayed with the Robson family in Bewsey Street whilst the Warrington Anti-Slavery Society organised her first speaking engagement.⁽³⁶⁾ Remond was later to speak of the warmth of her welcome in Warrington, though an interesting family perspective on the visit is provided by this letter sent to Ann Robson by her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Gaskell:

Bob would I fear be vexed by my letter about Miss Remond, but with the greatest respect for her herself, (from all your accounts of her) I disapprove of her object in coming to England, and can only anticipate for her failure in it, (even did I think success desirable.) All the AntiSlavery people will attend her lectures to be convinced of what they are already convinced, & to have their feelings stirred up without the natural & right outlet of stirred up feelings, the power of simple and energetic action, - and I know they can use any amount of words in reprobation of the conduct of American slaveholders, but I don't call the use of words action: unless there is some definite, distinct, practical course of action logically proposed by those words. Wm. is even more vehement against the false course he thinks they are adopting (by

34. *Warrington Times*, 21 May 1859.

35. *Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews*, John W. Blasingame, (ed.), Vol. 2, 1847-54 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p.8.

36. *Warrington Times*, 21 May 1859; Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.143-4.

stirring up English opinion as an agent,) than I am; so please don't send Miss Remond here: it will only end in discomfort both to her and to me.⁽³⁷⁾

Miss Remond's first meeting took place in the Music Hall, and may have been the first occasion when a woman took a public platform in Britain. The meeting attracted the largest audience to have attended a public event in the town. Many failed to gain entry and were left on the pavement outside the hall. This account based on contemporary evidence describes the scene:

The doors opened at 7.30 p.m., the seats were soon filled, standing room was quickly exhausted and complaints arose as some members of the local elite were unable to obtain seats. Once the din died down, the audience was attentive, although outbreaks of noise continued as late arrivals attempted to push in.⁽³⁸⁾

Miss Remond spoke for one and a half hours on 'Slave Life in America.' The audience was made up mainly of working people, which caused some surprise and resentment.

The *Warrington Times* grumbled that

great numbers of most respectable people were thus debarred entrance. We think the gentlemen making the arrangements would have acted more wisely had they issued tickets and thus have saved a few seats for the better class who were almost entirely excluded.⁽³⁹⁾

A second meeting was therefore arranged, with a small admission charge made to discourage the poor. Before Miss Remond left for York on her tour, a third meeting "chiefly for the ladies", held at midday in the assembly rooms of the Red Lion Hotel, was addressed by Susan Gaskell.

The contents of Miss Remond's speeches reflected the two main concerns of the

37. Chapple and Pollard, *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, p.530.

38. *Warrington Standard*, 29 January 1859; *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859.

39. *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859.

American movement at this time. As we have seen, Garrison and others were convinced that, however much the British might sympathise with the slave, a national apathy had settled which could be an effective weapon to the Southern states. Only the active mobilisation of public opinion would do. Miss Remond “did not wish the English people to sympathise with her as the representative of a downtrodden race and then sit quietly and silently down and do nothing.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ Hence the obvious relief with which the Warrington ‘Address’ was received in Boston. Secondly, Remond's visit had the specific aim of raising awareness in Britain of the racism of the Northern states. Robson's advance publicity makes this clear:

... she is visiting this country with the object of arousing the sympathy of the religious and philanthropic people of England towards her race. The condition of the free coloured people of America is little known in this country, and yet as a subject of social importance, even to the English nation, it is second to few claiming public attention.⁽⁴¹⁾

Sarah Parker Remond’s personal testimony revealed how she was not allowed to sit with white congregations in Church or Chapel, was disbarred from attendance at public amusements and schools, and told of the violence of police against herself. When Warrington women presented her with a watch, she told them that

I have been received here as a sister by white women for the first time in my life. I have been removed from the degradation which overhangs all persons of my complexion; and I have felt most deeply that since I have been in Warrington and in England that I have received a sympathy I never was offered before.⁽⁴²⁾

Yet Miss Remond may have been aware that this part of her message could dislodge the delicate balance of English public opinion in relation to slavery, and was reluctant to give

40. *Warrington Times*, 5 February 1859.

41. *Warrington Times*, 22 January 1859.

42. *Warrington Times*, 5 February 1859.

it much emphasis. Mrs. Susan Gaskell called attention in her speech to the issue of ‘race feeling’, because “Miss Remond disliked touching on matters relating to the nominally free coloured people.”⁽⁴³⁾ These arguments were in fact widely used by Confederate sympathisers after the American Civil War began, in claiming that blacks were better treated in the South than in the North. Aware that civil war was increasingly likely, she was uncertain whether to focus on the plight of the slave or the free black:

She would not spend a moment of the precious time she had to occupy in endeavouring to prove that slavery was a sin—that would be an insult to their understanding—an insult to their hearts She was there that evening as the representative of a race that was stripped of every right and debarred from every privilege... she was there as the representative of a race which, in the estimation of American law, had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and for what? For no other reason than that they were of a different complexion from the majority of American citizens.... Black men and women were treated worse than criminals for no other reason than because they were black.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The Warrington Anti-Slavery Society was set up just in time: within two years the predicted war had begun. Comment on the war ranged over many areas, but the issue of slavery was always central and decisive in shaping responses. Speakers continued to visit Warrington through the war, representatives of British organisations set up to agitate for each side. A Southern Independence Society meeting was held, and a Manchester Union and Emancipation meeting also, but Warrington was not an important area for either of these bodies.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Neither organisation targeted the town until 1864, concentrating their efforts instead on the more recognisable cotton towns. (Although two noted abolitionist

43. *Warrington Standard*, 29 January 1859; *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859.

44. *Warrington Standard*, 29 January 1859; *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859.

45. *Warrington Advertiser*, 23, 30 January, 13 February 1864; *Warrington Guardian*, 30 January 1864.

speakers, George Thompson and Mason Jones did speak in the town).⁽⁴⁶⁾ Warrington's well publicised support for anti-slavery before the war may also have made both sides judge its residents to be impervious to, or not in need of, further propaganda. And perhaps surprisingly, the Warrington Anti-Slavery Society organised no more public meetings of the kind which initiated their existence.

Greater significance might be attached to the manner in which slavery and abolition were related to domestic politics, where the issues of slave and free labour were framed in class terms. This was made clear in an editorial in the *Warrington Standard and Times*:

The liberties of the world are not safe so long as such a huge power as that wielded by the American Republic is concentrated upon the enslavement of an entire race of mankind.... But it is not simply a question of moral progress, as that word is commonly used. The actual condition of the working classes all over the world, the rate of wages and the public estimation of labour are all bound up in this question. We shall recur to this part of the question again.⁽⁴⁷⁾

In a letter received by Mr. Phillip Wood of Northwich, passed over to the *Warrington Guardian* to publish, American Robert Leng pointed out that "Southerners went so far as to state that the social condition of England would be infinitely better if the labouring classes were domestic slaves."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Slavery, it was repeatedly stressed, was a labour question and although slavery and industrial labour were not equated, there were nevertheless parallels to be made, as when Edward Greening of the Manchester Union and Emancipation Society told his audience that

with the victory for freedom there would come the victory for freedom here... with the riveting of the chains of the slave there would come the

46. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 November 1861; *Warrington Guardian*, 27 February 1864.

47. *Warrington Standard and Times*, 19 February 1859.

48. *Warrington Guardian*, 29 January 1862.

deepening of the modified serfdom which we still have in this country.⁽⁴⁹⁾

At a pro-Northern meeting attended by working men, James MacMinnies asserted that “all working men are interested in the success of the North because their fight was the battle of free labour against slave labour”, a declaration which drew wild cheers from the audience.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Ranged against British and slave labour were the middle and upper classes of both nations. In a lengthy letter sent to a legal firm in Warrington from colleagues in America, which was again published by the *Warrington Guardian*, the writer blamed the war on “the desire of Southern planters and politicians as an aristocratical class to retain power as a class... the aristocratical element which lives upon the labour of others”.⁽⁵¹⁾ And at the Mason Jones meeting, John Crosfield declared it “lamentable that so few of the upper and middle classes were found taking the side of the North”. He went on:

How many were there in Warrington? No Rector, Mayor, Minister of Religion. He sincerely rejoiced that the great mass of the people in the country—those on whom the prosperity of the country depended - (Hear Hear) - was found correcting the voices of the upper and middle classes.⁽⁵²⁾

Confederate supporters themselves seemed happy to concede that class and status were the basis for their support. At the Southern Independence meeting held at Warrington in 1864, T. Bentley Kershaw pointed out that

Queen Elizabeth, Charles I and II, and Queen Anne all made profits by the slave trade. England’s most intelligent men, from Lord Brougham downwards had paid great attention to the subject.... The greatest men

49. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 February 1864.

50. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 February 1864.

51. *Warrington Guardian*, 2 November 1861.

52. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 February 1864.

of our country were Southern.⁽⁵³⁾

What is suggested here is a slightly different reading of the war's impact on class discourse than the Harrison-Biagini analysis. It will be remembered that both emphasised the ways in which radical Liberals and labour leaders developed a network of political communication during the American Civil War which eventually led to the successful campaign for electoral reform shortly after the war's end. This study suggests that anti-slavery in the Cotton Famine became identified unequivocally as the political province of the working class and was now seen as a cause which the middle and upper classes had effectively abandoned. Certainly, the Parliamentary leadership of the anti-slavery organisations showed little desire to harness popular opinion at the time of the American Civil War; most of their public pronouncements expressed dismay at the war, rather than embracing the opportunity that it gave for ending slavery. Their excessive constitutionalism seemed worlds apart from the political realism of grassroots opinion. Thereafter, anti-slavery and working class identity were juxtaposed.

Whilst the class dimension of abolitionism was expressed unambiguously at this time, the war and the Cotton Famine also began to generate a renewed popular interest in the Empire. Some elements of this were admittedly at this stage potential rather than actual, but are nonetheless significant in that they contributed to the chain of events which culminated in full-blown popular imperialism later in the century. The symbolic function of Britain's having eradicated slavery from the colonies was frequently attested. Colonies were legitimated by the absence of slavery. An important consideration for American abolitionists was that Britain had ended slavery voluntarily, and deployed its naval and diplomatic energies towards ending the maritime slave trade. The example that Britain had set was therefore used as an appeal to further efforts from abolitionists. In her

53. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 January 1864.

first speech in Warrington, Sarah Parker Remond noted “the noble conduct of England in wiping away slavery from her dominions”, ending her speech with the cry “God forbid that ever an English heart should lend a sincere throb to American despotism in this nineteenth century”⁽⁵⁴⁾ This message was reinforced in Warrington when Phillip Carpenter visited America later in 1859 to present the government with a collection of shells. (Dr. Carpenter, in addition to his religious duties and political crusades, was a world-famous conchologist). On 1 August, 1859, Carpenter planned to give a lecture in St. Louis to celebrate the anniversary of Emancipation Day. Although the city’s Mayor had given permission for the meeting, Carpenter began to receive threats from a “committee of fifty staunch men”, who promised “the Abolitionist Nigger Thieving Lecturer” that he would be tarred and feathered should he deliver his speech. As the hall which Carpenter had hired for his meeting was found to be locked on his arrival, he lectured from the steps, without incident. The story was reported in the American press, and found its way back to the *Warrington Standard and Times* several weeks later.⁽⁵⁵⁾

In three other areas, the Cotton Famine began a process which eventually repositioned Empire in popular perception. Individually or collectively, they caused no great movement in the imperial mentality at this time, yet each served to legitimate the ideal of Empire at the time or in the future. These were the efforts to promote emigration, the presentation of the Empire as a philanthropic network, and the economic arguments in favour of colonies.

EMIGRATION AND EMPIRE

The popular legitimacy of Britain’s colonies was advanced through the question of emigration. This was not of course a new phenomenon, but it drew added public interest

54. *Warrington Standard*, 29 January 1859; *Warrington Times*, 29 January 1859.

55. *Warrington Standard and Times*, 15 September 1859.

through the plight of the Warrington fustian cutters. Emigration appeared to solve two problems: high structural unemployment in Britain, and the gender imbalance of migrants into the colonies. Coventry ribbon-workers had availed themselves of a scheme which helped them to emigrate, and the suggestion had been mooted for the Macclesfield silk-workers when their work dried up.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Warrington did not share the overwhelming distress of neighbouring towns as a result of the Cotton Famine. The town had four cotton mills, and by 1862, fifteen hundred workers were out of work or on short time. Of these, a thousand were fustian cutters, of which three hundred were young girls.⁽⁵⁷⁾

These represented a separate problem from the factory operatives, who were put to work in the stone yard at the workhouse as a condition of receiving relief. There was general agreement that fustian cutting represented the worst kind of work. It was very poorly paid, employing a largely illiterate workforce who, being unconditioned to new forms of industrial discipline, represented a problem for social reformers by the 1860s.

The fustian cutters therefore found themselves in an ambivalent position, with their problems only tardily acknowledged. Partly, this reflected conventional attitudes to gender and family: being young and female, Relief Committees expected that the fustian cutters would somehow be looked after by their fathers. This was often not the case, as fustian cutting was often still family work, and unemployment affected parents also. The Curate of St. Elphins, Rev. Hamilton claimed that there was “real distress and starvation” amongst them. Yet, no specific relief was offered them. Eliza Ashton, who attempted to raise awareness of their situation in a letter to the *Warrington Guardian* (a rare example of a woman’s letter finding its way into the correspondence columns) wrote “I have been

56. Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.11; Stephen Constantine, ‘Empire, Migration and Social Reform, 1880-1950’, in Pooley and Gilbert, (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: a social history of migration* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.62-83; Colin Newbury, ‘Labour Migration in the Imperial Phase: An Essay in Interpretation’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 3,2 (1975), pp.234-256.

57. *Warrington Advertiser*, 22 November 1862.

seriously asked, what have we done to set everyone against us?.”⁽⁵⁸⁾ Eventually, a sewing school was established (William Robson attended the founding meeting) where a daily meal would be provided.

Added to this, it was suggested that the cutters were not strictly victims of the famine in that they had refused to take work when the price paid for their finished goods began to fall. Master cutters claimed that there was sufficient cotton for their purposes. At this stage the Board of Guardians became involved, originally refusing to offer relief on the grounds that they would thereby be supporting a strike. A clerk was dispatched to Manchester to test the masters’ claims: he reported that it was indeed the case that fustian was available, but that the cutters were also right in their assertion that wages were reduced.⁽⁵⁹⁾ As the difficult winter of 1862-3 progressed therefore two competing images of Warrington’s cotton workers had emerged. Cotton workers were seen both as victims, humbly singing hymns as they ate their charity food, and also as troublemakers. The Board of Guardians considered employing a drill sergeant to tame the stonebreakers (unemployed cotton workers who were put to work in the workhouse yard in order to qualify for Relief) who had taken to barring doors, refusing instructions and singing ‘Britons never shall be slaves’.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Robert Gaskell, a member of the Board of Guardians, put this down to their “natural inclination to resist authority”, and supported the suggestion that a drill sergeant be employed, although admitting that he was a member of the peace party.⁽⁶¹⁾ A few weeks later, several hundred women and girl fustian cutters rioted in Battersby Lane, attacking a master cutter who they branded a “knobstick”, for taking work at a less than acceptable rate.⁽⁶²⁾

58. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 March 1863.

59. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 March 1862.

60. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1862.

61. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1862.

62. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 February 1863.

The Chairman of the Board of Guardians therefore spoke for many when he told a Relief Fund Meeting “the trade is radically a bad one and the sooner people get out of it, the better.” The Rector “wished that it may cease to be a trade in Warrington.”⁽⁶³⁾

Middle class opinion resolved these dilemmas by setting out the attraction of emigration for the cutters as a group. The Board of Guardians hoped to provide assistance to fustian cutters to go to the colonies as domestic servants. Alexander Mackie added his voice to those supporting the idea.⁽⁶⁴⁾ But the scheme’s prime mover was the Rector, Rev.

William Quekett. The Rector clearly saw an opportunity to repeat his previous success, from very similar circumstances in his earlier incumbency, when he had been instrumental in the founding of the Female Emigration Society. In 1849 Quekett, ministering in the East End of London, noted the appalling employment conditions of the needlewomen and shirt-makers, for whom poverty had led to very high rates of consumption. The Female Emigration Society grew out of Quekett’s publicising of the needlewomen’s plight, and raised £22,000, which paid for an Emigrants Home in Hatton Garden, where women were given six week’s training and information on the colony to which they would travel, and for a home in every colony, as well as transport fees. Over one thousand women left the East End through the scheme.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The Cotton Famine rekindled Quekett’s interest in emigration for women. He arranged that letters which emigrants had written to him be published in the local press, such as this one from New Zealand, from the *Warrington Advertiser* in 1864:

I have pleasure in informing you and Mrs. that we are in possession of seventy acres of prime agricultural land... about thirty miles from the city of Christ Church. It is government land. We like the country much better than home. My three sons are in employment... we are seldom

63. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 March 1863.

64. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 February 1863.

65. Rev. William Quekett, *My Sayings and Doings, with Reminiscences of My Life* (London: Keegan, Paul & Trench, 1888), p.112.

out of work. We do not know anything about Peter Goodwin; we have not seen or heard of him these nine months. Mary Jefferson is doing well; has had a constant situation, and is much liked by her master in the city of Christ Church. Emily Gillam is well and is happily married. Nathan Birchall, I hear, is doing very well; and Emma Sykes is upper nursemaid in a family, at £30 a year. Morris is now doing tidy; has had constant work this while past. We know nothing more about our Warrington shipmates, as many are out of reach of us.

John Charles

PS I am sending you a newspaper by this mail; it will be extra information for you.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Letters such as these cemented local and imperial ties, offering a better life on the one hand, but one in which the local community was still valuable, in which community ties still functioned, despite removal to the colonies. The sense of displacement is more marked therefore. And it is clear from this extract from one of Rev. Quekett's sermons, published in the *Warrington Guardian*, that the key to this was increased literacy:

He narrated an interesting circumstance with reference to a girl who had emigrated with many others from this town a few years ago, and who, though unable to read or write before leaving, had learnt to do both on her passage to Queensland. The joy of her parents, on receiving a letter written by herself, knew no bounds; he (the Rector) was called in to rejoice with them; the letter was framed, and was regarded by the family of which the writer was a member, as a pearl of great price.⁽⁶⁷⁾

No exact figures exist for the number of fustian cutters who took up Rev. Quekett's escape route, but there were probably relatively few. Fustian cutting continued into the twentieth century, still employing young girls in unhealthy workshops for extremely low pay. Epidemics of typhus in 1865-7 and smallpox in 1893 caused many deaths amongst

66. *Warrington Advertiser*, 15 August 1864; Quekett, *Sayings and Doings*, p.351.

67. Quekett, *Sayings and Doings*, p.369.

them.⁽⁶⁸⁾ The Board of Guardians' aim to destroy the trade in the town was never more than rhetoric. But as rhetoric, the images of life in the British dominions (especially when contrasted with images of America as the land of slavery, despotism and race hatred) fostered popular interest in Empire, raising awareness of its potential value.

COLONIES AND THE PROBLEMS OF SUPPLY

British guilt in initiating slavery in the Americas, and in sustaining it by trading in slave-grown cotton had been part of the anti-slavery platform since British abolitionists had turned their attention to American plantation slavery. A boycott seemed unworkable; it would cause massive unemployment in Lancashire, and as Richard Cobden had pointed out, the end result would have been to increase the supply of cheap American cotton to Britain's less morally scrupulous manufacturing rivals. The Cotton Famine forced the issue of cotton supply firstly through the question of British guilt, and then in fastening alternative supplies. George Thompson, veteran abolitionist lecturer, outlined the argument in his speech in Warrington in November, 1861.

In 1620, the Mayflower had landed in America, that noble band, carrying their noble principles of government. But in the same year, Guinea men were transported there in a Dutch vessel, and sold to British colonists.... If called upon to bear our share of the chastisement which was likely to fall on all concerned in the support of slavery—whether by administering it, conniving at it, or even innocently (as was supposed) supporting it by purchasing slave produce, God grant that we might bear it with that patience which a sense of our complicity should teach and look for happier times, when the cotton should not come over to us every fibre of it steeped in the tears and crimsoned with the blood of the slave, but when the free-tilled soil of the U.S. or some generous

68. David Forrest, *Warrington Epidemic Victims, 1832 and 1892-3* (Warrington: Warrington Family History Group, 1993); BPP, 1897, [C.8611], xlv (347), *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination*, Appendix V. 'A report to the Commission of Dr. Thomas Dixon Savill on the outbreak of Smallpox in the Borough of Warrington in 1892-1893', pp.84,88.

soil in other parts of the world would give us the fruit of the cotton tree without the contamination now attaching to it. (Loud Cheers).⁽⁶⁹⁾

Sudden anxieties concerning the supply of raw materials underlined the argument for colonies. Until the break in cotton supply occasioned by the war, British industry had not needed to worry about its supply lines. The War exposed the fact that thousands of industrial jobs were dependent on agricultural production beyond Britain's control: although this was patently obvious before this time, the full realisation entered public and political consciousness only when the distress in Lancashire began to bite. (Though some, like John Bright and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, had been predicting that this would happen since the 1840s.)⁽⁷⁰⁾ A popular argument now maintained that the government should develop cotton production in the colonies, using free labour, British capital and expertise, thus ensuring industrial security and the development of the colonies, and delivering a terminal economic blow to American slavery which would become unprofitable once its principal market had gone. John Bright had chaired a House of Commons Select Committee on Indian cotton production as early as 1847, at which he had argued that increased cotton production in India would protect Britain's supply, alleviate Indian poverty and would be "the first great blow to slavery in the West."⁽⁷¹⁾ The idea was not taken up, and after his Parliamentary defeat in Manchester in 1857, he avoided public reference to cotton. But by 1861, Indian economic reform was an idea whose time had come. Mass meetings in Lancashire heard calls for government help in developing Indian cotton production, petitions were sent to Charles Wood, Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce pressed the

69. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 November 1861.

70. *Warrington Guardian*, 8 February 1862.

71. Donald Read, *Cobden and Bright: A Victorian Political Partnership* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p.203.

Indian government for infrastructure investment and quality control measures.⁽⁷²⁾ This line of reasoning was strengthened as the war progressed, and repeated in many public places throughout Lancashire. The Newton Mechanics Institute were told during their Annual Tea Party:

Hitherto, the cultivation of cotton had been neglected in the British possessions but now in both the West and East Indies and the Cape of Good Hope and many other places, the colonists and native populations were bestowing a great deal of attention on it and eventually we might be independent of the supply of cotton from America.... Another good... was the extinction of slavery. (Hear! Hear!)⁽⁷³⁾

This added linkage between colonies and anti-slavery gave a moral foundation to an issue which would otherwise have been one of purely commercial interest, and refutes the argument that radicals were hostile to the idea of Empire by this time. Radicals were at the forefront of the argument for stronger colonial links: both Bright and Richard Cobden believed that the increasing commercial development of colonies in schemes such as the growing of cotton would provide a way out of colonial poverty and would reduce the militarisation of Empire which they deplored. These ideas stemmed directly from abolitionist economic theory.⁽⁷⁴⁾

IMPERIALISM AND MUTUAL PHILANTHROPY

The international response to the distress in Lancashire promoted the value of imperial links in the popular mind. Concern for the operatives drove a welter of private and public charities. Historians have long recognised the centrality of charity in Victorian society,

72. *Warrington Advertiser*, 21 June 1862; *Warrington Guardian*, 21 June 1862.

73. *Warrington Guardian*, 10 August, 21 September 1861.

74. Read, *Cobden and Bright*, pp.200-09; Miles Taylor, "'Imperium et Libertas?'" Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 19,1 (1991), pp.7,12.

although generally their aim has been to analyse its role in the relationship between middle class and working class within the social control model. Attention has fixed on philanthropists as a sub-class, particularly on their role in prompting moral reform, and on their ideological message of self-help which sifted the deserving from the undeserving poor.⁽⁷⁵⁾ But it is equally instructive to consider the growth of philanthropy in its broader, cultural aspect, in its role in developing a particular form of civic bonding and its significance in working class life, not just as recipients but as givers too. These themes are illustrated in these years by reference to the growing culture of imperial fund-raising. Regular, day-to-day fund-raising for colonies was largely undertaken by missionary societies and concerned individuals, who concentrated on educational, religious or medical work. But sporadically, ad hoc Funds would be set up to deal with disasters, famines and other special circumstances. The launching of a Relief Fund had evolved its own social rules and routine by mid-century. Newspapers alerted its readers to a famine or catastrophe, the Mayor would call a town meeting, a Fund would be set up, subscription lists opened and published. Workmen's committees might follow, the vicar would arrange a service, and give a sermon. Soirees, bazaars and children's concerts would be held. When the worst of the emergency seemed to have passed, the Fund would close. This pattern was established in response to Ireland's Great Famine, and was used again in the 1850s to raise money for Indian famine relief, and soon after, in the Cotton Famine. This mutual support system between Britain and the colonies was cited as evidence of the growing emotional bond which was consolidating the Empire.

As the full extent of the cotton shortage became apparent, colonial fund-raising for

75. Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Brian Harrison, "Victorian Philanthropy" in *Victorian Studies*, 9,4 (1966); Michael E. Rose, "Culture, Philanthropy and the Manchester Middle Classes" in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts, (eds.), *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

Lancashire provided both material and moral support. As the *Warrington Guardian* wrote:

Every colonial mail bears remittance for the poor of Lancashire. The Australian papers, just arrived, contain pages of subscription lists and columns of speeches in aid of the distressed factory operatives.⁽⁷⁶⁾

In August, 1862, it was reported that Queen Victoria had donated £2,000 to the Lancashire Relief Fund. The Viceroy of Egypt, His Highness Said Pasha, had given £1,000. (The Viceroy had visited Manchester in July, 1862. The city was “dressed with flags and his reception was of the most flattering character.” He had been greeted at the railway station by a deputation from the Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce and the Cotton Supply Association.)⁽⁷⁷⁾ The Relief Fund benefited later in the year from a £20,000 donation, sent by Lord Elgin, Governor of India, when he closed the 1858 Indian Famine Relief Fund and sent its surplus to Lancashire.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Separately, £65,000 had been collected in Calcutta for the Lancashire operatives. Charles Dickens arranged public readings of his work in Paris in aid of the Lancashire Fund.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The local press reported such largesse prominently. But local efforts were also publicised. In September, 1862, the Liverpool and Manchester Agricultural Show was held in Warrington, and collection boxes were placed around the showground. In November, when the organising committee found itself with surplus funds from the show, those too were sent to the Lancashire Cotton Relief Fund. Also in November, churches in Warrington organised special collections at Sunday services to honour the twenty-first birthday of the Prince of Wales: the money collected was then sent to the Relief Fund. A

76. *Warrington Guardian*, 25 October 1862; John Watts, *The Facts of the Cotton Famine* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), pp.161-8.

77. *Warrington Guardian*, 12 July 1862.

78. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 December 1862.

79. *Warrington Guardian*, 23 August 1862, 20 December 1862.

ticket collector at Warrington's Bank Quay railway station set up a subscription list amongst porters and clerks after hearing a sermon on behalf of the distressed operatives. In the first week, nine shillings was raised and handed to the Mayor.⁽⁸⁰⁾

A description of corresponding efforts in Australia reveals clear similarities to the domestic pattern. There, too, communal efforts had been made to raise money for Indian Famine Relief. From 1862, town meetings, press campaigns, popular entertainments were organised on behalf of the Lancashire operatives.⁽⁸¹⁾ The Sydney Relief Fund alone raised over £20,000, though it quickly became apparent that there was no general agreement about how the money was to be used, whether in direct transference to Lancashire, or in inducement and aid to those operatives wishing to emigrate to Australia. (It was hoped that new emigrants to Tasmania from Lancashire would grow cotton there.) Finally, agents in England were given discretion to distribute the funds as they saw fit.⁽⁸²⁾

The creative energies and co-ordination that were required to raise and distribute donations are largely an unwritten part of the social history of the Empire (or of Britain). Charity has been seen as something which the middle classes did for the poor. Yet working people were as generous as the rich and as receptive to moral and sympathetic appeals. The globalisation of charity, the appeals for small contributions, the conspicuous roles of royalty and celebrities describe a culture of 'giving' much more recognisable to the twentieth-century perspective than the traditional view of Victorian charity centred on the Lady Bountiful figure. And ideologically, popular notions about the benign potential of Empire (which even radicals such as John Bright could endorse) were becoming one of the foundations on which popular imperialism would be built. The Cotton Famine rehearsed many such arguments which would be very influential in the

80. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 September, 8 November, 11 October 1862.

81. Keith Penny, 'Australian Relief for the Lancashire Victims of the Cotton Famine, 1862-3', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 108 (1956), pp.129-39.

82. Keith Penny, 'Australian Relief', p.136.

coming decades.

Anti-slavery cannot be contained within tight ideological borders, or short phases of time. In the early and mid-nineteenth century, even in a small town like Warrington, its role was complex and its impact diffuse. Its place in the urban political environment has been noted and less obviously in the problems of rural change and adjustment to the New Poor Law. More importantly, this chapter has tested the conventional view that the 1840s saw the end of popular abolitionism, and the fragmentation and weakening of the movement. An alternative analysis is suggested, in which the Parliamentary leadership took up positions as diplomats, government advisers, treaty negotiators and custodians of correct colonial labour practice, roles in which they felt more comfortable than those of political agitators. Their command in the country thus became more symbolic than actual, and when the American Civil War reignited the issue, popular support was mobilised by radicals like John Bright and by largely anonymous local leaders. This suggests that popular enthusiasm on the issue of slavery did not abandon the national leadership, rather it was the other way round.

The continuity of popular anti-slavery beyond the 1840s is explained by two factors: the survival of leadership at local level, and the growth of a cheap, popular, local press. This local leadership had strong communal links, especially with labour, although there is no single combination of abolitionism and class interaction (compare Cropper's uneasiness with the rural poor with Robson and Carpenter's sleeves-rolled-up whitewashing of the homes of the Irish poor). These links were clearly significant when the local leadership organised the petition, fund-raising and attendance at Sarah Parker Remond's meetings. Yet it is difficult to discern Harrison's generational shift or Biagini's revived post-Chartism here. Warrington's experiences suggest that the causal connections which Harrison and Biagini have outlined may also apply if inverted. They

have suggested that out of anti-slavery grew political bonding across class divisions; but in Warrington, out of cross-class activities grew a stronger anti-slavery. This suggests that working-class abolitionism had a greater autonomy, and was not merely a pale imitation of its middle-class equivalent. What is more, by the 1860s it is noteworthy that appeals to the anti-slavery instincts of the working class were made to them as a class, not on the basis of a depoliticised, universal humanitarianism. This sets the 1860s apart from earlier campaigns (and as the next chapter shows, establishes the character of abolitionism for the rest of the century).

The role of the press was decisive also. When British emancipation was secured in 1834, Warrington had no newspaper. By the 1860s, there were two, and they had begun the process of shaping local perceptions of the outside world. This could be achieved by direct local-international links, established by local citizens, acquired and transmitted (as letters, stories, news items) by local editors. Anti-slavery activists learnt to use the local press to great advantage in these years. This process was not dependent on a national framework of abolitionist organisation or of a view of the British state as the sole repository of political culture. The anti-slavery leadership in Warrington had no conspicuous national profile: they combined local and international activity over many decades, but their work is invisible at national level, and the continuity which this strata of leadership provided has gone unrecognised by scholars.

And what of the Empire? This chapter has been concerned with the decades when popular interest in the Empire had seemingly entered a long, dormant phase. It is thought that popular opinion took no interest in Empire in these years. But there was interest, in developing cotton production, in philanthropic ties, and in emigration. Pride was expressed in Britain's commitment to colonial free labour. Popular interest was motivated, at least in the middle years of the century, by liberal and progressive ideas, not

military ones. Abolitionism was central to this process in drawing together the emotional and economic strings of imperialism and imbuing the whole with a moral imperative.

The background to these developments—the sacrifices which Lancashire was making to end slavery in America—guaranteed that this was so.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINANCE CAPITALISM, POPULAR IMPERIALISM AND LABOUR'S RESPONSE: THE HERITAGE OF ANTI-SLAVERY

In an important but neglected study of the development of liberal thought and Empire, A.G.L. Shaw claimed that the idea of imperialism was accepted more readily by radical thinkers than is generally acknowledged.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, by the late 1860s, imperialism was already undergoing a revival. The previous chapter has suggested some of the components of that revival and identifies the American Civil War as the juncture at which many liberal preoccupations crystallised into an imperial frame of mind, when liberal thinkers began to imagine Empire as a means by which circles could be squared. This implies that popular imperialism was always a complex issue, the outcome of more than xenophobia and racism. This chapter will argue that popular imperialism began within liberalism, centred on anti-slavery, and drew its greatest ideological strength from within liberal thinking. Liberals did not oppose the idea of Empire, rather they were hostile to those colonial practices which expressly offended against the tenets of liberal economic doctrine.

Shaw's analysis concentrates on elite liberal thinkers and intellectuals. This chapter extends the subject of liberal imperialism into the area of popular politics and into the municipal culture of meetings and lectures which exemplify this era. To illustrate the point, what follows is a sample of stories taken from the *Warrington Guardian* in 1877, a year selected at random to demonstrate popular concerns in the years between the American Civil War and the heyday of popular imperialism at the end of the

1. A.G.L. Shaw, (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies, 1815-1865* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp.24-25.

nineteenth century. In particular, Britain's record on anti-slavery and its progressive racial attitudes compared to those prevailing in America were regularly promoted.

In March 1877, an account of a lecture delivered in Warrington on Dr. Livingstone was printed in the newspaper. The audience heard that Livingstone had been "one of the most peaceful explorers the world had ever known." In thirty years in Africa, he had used his revolver only three times. On one occasion, slaveholders had threatened Livingstone over a group of fugitive slaves which he harboured. Livingstone has taken out his revolver, saying "Before you shall make one of these slaves, I shall die on the spot." The audience had burst into applause at this tale.⁽²⁾

Also in March, a public meeting of the Warrington branch of the friendly society, the Good Templars attracted over one hundred members to hear a debate on "Negro Exclusion in the Southern States of America and the Action of the British Templars." The Templars were in the middle of a crisis: serious internal division had emerged following the American Templars' decision to exclude blacks from their membership. It was therefore "most dishonourable for them as Englishmen to remain in connection with an Order which refused equal rights and privileges to men who happened to be of a different colour." Black Freemasons and black Oddfellows had to get their charters from England, on account of the "most violent prejudice in America against coloured people."⁽³⁾

On 16 May, the death of Philip Carpenter was announced. In June, William Robson attended a meeting to plan a memorial for his abolitionist friend.⁽⁴⁾ And in August, William Lloyd Garrison came to stay with the Robsons, and was given a public breakfast at the Plough Inn. Robson asked Garrison for his views on the "future prospects

2. *Warrington Guardian*, 10, 17 March 1877.

3. *Warrington Guardian*, 21 March 1877.

4. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 June 1877.

of the Coloured races and what the results of the emancipation were.” Garrison’s reply stressed that Britain had had a great deal to do with the emancipation of the coloured races in America. As for the future, he believed that whilst things were improving in the North, conditions for blacks in the South were precarious. Southern whites were working to disenfranchise blacks, and their “forbearance” was often abused by employers. In reply, Mr. Brewtnall, speaking on behalf of the press, qualified Garrison’s evaluation of Britain’s role in emancipation:

During the struggle, England was greatly divided on its merits: the aristocracy generally, and the middle classes largely sympathised with the slaveholding South. To the honour of the Lancashire and Cheshire workmen be it said, they never faltered in their allegiance to freedom and the North, and through hunger and starvation, hung on for the freedom of the slave.⁽⁵⁾

Stories such as these made up standard popular reading from the 1860s into the post-Boer War era: in this randomly chosen year, only Garrison’s visit should be seen as a special event. Thus, in these few months in 1877, it is possible to identify the direction of grass-root thinking which would determine popular opinion on Empire for the next thirty years. Slavery, anti-slavery and emancipation were an integral and constant feature of popular debate throughout the last years of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Warrington people attended meetings, lectures and fund-raising events to hear about slavery, its history and its present extent. Those who did not would read about it in the local papers. This chapter asks why anti-slavery survived, and suggests three explanations. Firstly, the subject underwent reinvigoration as a result of increasing activity in Africa which identified slavery as a problem there. Secondly, these years saw a self-conscious attempt to claim a unique British identity which reflected its present

5. *Warrington Guardian*, 18 August 1877.

position in the world and which identified the qualities which had brought about its dominance. Anti-slavery sentiment was seen as a fundamental national characteristic. Thirdly, the onset of capitalism in Africa, especially with regard to South African mining, led to confrontations about how domestic and colonial capitalism operated, in which the meaning of slavery was once again contested by some elements of capital and labour.

What do anti-slavery histories tell us about this period? Narrative histories, particularly those of Howard Temperley and Reginald Coupland, extended their accounts to the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, and by so doing were able to recount the continuing activities of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Both noted the presence of anti-slavery in the growth of imperial sentiments.⁽⁶⁾ Coupland considered that the wish to end slavery was one factor in the Scramble for Africa, although not a dominant motive. He echoes Hobson in his belief that humanitarian arguments “sometimes figured more prominently in public professions than in fact.”⁽⁷⁾ Temperley also recognised the connection between the spread of European control in Africa and suppression of slavery.⁽⁸⁾ Neither however located abolitionism beyond the elite membership of formal bodies or the middle class.

There has been little recent historical investigation into late-nineteenth-century abolitionism. In the 1970s, as a result of new interest in British attitudes to race, historians looked to the Victorian period for evidence of the development of racist ideas. Both Christine Bolt and Douglas Lorimer thus argued for a direct causal link between the end of anti-slavery in Britain and the growth of imperialism, the opposite view to that taken in this study.⁽⁹⁾ Both believe that in the years following the American Civil War,

6. Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), pp.264-7; Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Thorton Butterworth, 1933), pp.221-3.

7. Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p.219.

8. Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp.263-9.

9. Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction, 1833-77: A Study in*

popular interest in slavery disappeared. Bolt has identified the Freedmen's Aid Movement as "the last great effort of British abolitionists to mobilise public opinion at home and abroad against slavery and its aftermath."⁽¹⁰⁾ Lorimer has written that by 1860 "the abolitionists were an ageing group and anti-slavery was a dying cause", quite literally, in that he sees the deaths of its leaders and an inability to replace them with new blood as signalling its end as an effective political force in British society.⁽¹¹⁾ The conventional approach therefore assumes that the decline of centralised, institutional abolitionism led to its dismissal from the popular mind and from political debate. This is to some extent explained by the sources used by Bolt and Lorimer. Both acknowledge that they rely heavily on middle-class evidence, the "articulate minority", and so possibly misjudge the popular mood.

The end of slavery in Africa has also until recently failed to attract the attention of historians. Important historical work has been undertaken by Suzanne Miers and David Roberts, Paul Lovejoy, Patrick Manning and Frederick Cooper, although only Miers and Roberts offer brief conclusions about the influence of British public opinion on the making of policy in this area, the rest concentrating on the role of colonial economic policies in the ending of slavery, or in maintaining it in refined labour systems.⁽¹²⁾ Miers and Roberts see the survival of abolitionism as missionary-inspired, and thus enclosed within religious networks; later it was to provide the colonial powers with a "moral

Anglo-American Co-operation (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.143-155; Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), pp.12-16,70-72,206-10.

10. Bolt, *Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction*, p.169.

11. Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, p.117.

12. Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1988), pp.16,24; Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1975), pp.7,210,315-6; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: a history of slavery in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983); Frederick Cooper, 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', *Journal of African History*, 20,1 (1989), pp.103-25.

justification for the conquest of Africa, which they used to rally public support.”⁽¹³⁾ They deal with this aspect briefly however, and do not analyse the domestic context of anti-slavery: their concern is to describe the African experience of the ending of slavery and not its role in British society.

Some elements of their analysis are incorporated into what follows, which also begins with the role of missionaries in sustaining anti-slavery beyond the 1860s. However there must be doubts about whether the influence of missionaries in itself was strong enough to bolster public opinion for so long, and this chapter therefore goes on to consider the role of anti-slavery in the forging of a British identity, and finally looks at the expansion of capitalism into Africa and the implications of this for British abolitionism and class rhetoric.

MISSIONARIES

The missionary movement has been blamed for much of the deterioration in British-African relations. Douglas Lorimer notes that missionary reports were emerging from Africa simultaneously as the American Civil War focused debate on slavery.⁽¹⁴⁾ As a result, he asserts, British opinion assimilated views about blacks which identified them solely with plantation slavery. This however must be questioned: the American Civil War drew out a range of images about blacks, many of which were positive, and missionary reports from Africa at this time similarly offered a range of perceptions. From his studies of Victorian literature, Patrick Brantlinger argues that although mid-century imperial attitudes had yet to become militaristic, an imperial frame of mind had set into Victorian society.⁽¹⁵⁾ Brantlinger sees David Livingstone and other missionaries as chiefly

13. Miers and Roberts, *End of Slavery*, p.9.

14. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, p.71.

15. Patrick Brantlinger, 'Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent', *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn, 1985), pp.166-203.

responsible for the “Myth of the Dark Continent” of “Africa as a centre of evil, a part of the world possessed by a demonic darkness or barbarism, represented above all by slavery, human sacrifice and cannibalism, which it was their duty to exorcise.”⁽¹⁶⁾ Such impressions, he argues, filled the vacuum in public discourse left by the death of abolitionism, which had been “often able to envisage Africans living freely and happily without European interference.”⁽¹⁷⁾ But through the medium of anti-slavery, Britain underwent a change in values from pre-Victorian to imperial imagery and ideology. Abolitionism in its earlier phase had stressed British guilt in maintaining the Atlantic slave trade, but by the late nineteenth century, that guilt had been displaced onto Africans themselves, through the agency of the dispatches of Livingstone and others.

Livingstone and his fellow missionaries did indeed play a signal role in forming British popular views on Africans, but a search through Warrington’s newspapers in the middle years of the nineteenth century shows quite a diverse range of sources. William Beamont, first mayor of Warrington travelled to North Africa and wrote a detailed series of letters which were published in the *Warrington Guardian*, and separately in book form. News and comment also came from government consuls, slave-patrol captains and Liverpool sailors with tales to tell.⁽¹⁸⁾ Information from missionaries came from books, extracts and reports, letters and personal visits, to Warrington and nearby towns. Beamont’s travel dispatches show an attempt at honest reporting, as in this description of Ramadan: “from sunrise to sunset people abstain from eating, drinking or smoking... the sufferings of the labouring class must be severe”. He notes “there is a great similarity in the customs of different countries” as when musicians herald the end of Ramadan, like

16. Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans’, p.175.

17. Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans’, p.170.

18. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 December 1861; *Warrington Guardian*, 14 December 1889; *Warrington Guardian*, 15 March 1862.

English May singers: "the end of Ramadan was similar to Easter."⁽¹⁹⁾

In fact, this more observational style, opened out by the increasing numbers who travelled to Africa in these years, began to break down the myths surrounding Africa. Stories of cannibalism and savagery gradually began to fade, and a more objective view emerged, largely as a result of Livingstone's success. This, it seems, triggered a policy change by missionary societies who realised that mere sensation was increasingly ineffective, that philanthropy and public support followed a liberal line and that generalisations about African savagery were discredited by Livingstone and the increasing numbers of geographers and scientists whose purpose was not in propaganda. To the Warrington newspapers, Livingstone was a hero, and his speeches and letters were featured prominently in their columns:

Doctor Livingstone addressed a meeting at Nottingham on Friday evening, to promote the objects of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He said he was of opinion that the people amongst whom he had wandered in distant lands were very far from being savages.(Cheers) On the seacoast they were a little bloodthirsty, especially those who had been engaged in the slave trade, but when they got inland about three hundred miles from the coast they met people quite mild and civil to all strangers, who were engaged in the cultivation of the soil....

They likewise manufactured iron, and he brought some over with him on his last visit to this country, which was sent to Birmingham, and there pronounced to be very good, it being afterwards converted into an Enfield rifle.(Loud Cheers) They likewise manufactured copper, and very good it was, and so far from being savages, they were very generally of opinion that the inhabitants of this country, the white folks, were.(Laughter) They could not understand where all the black people went to who were taken out of the country, and fancied that white people were in the habit of eating them.(Laughter) They looked upon

19. *Warrington Guardian*, 19 February 1862.

white people as cannibals and we looked upon them as savages. (Laughter) They were, he was of opinion, both very much better than they imagined each other to be.⁽²⁰⁾

Missionaries visited Warrington regularly on behalf of individual churches and chapels or as the agents of missionary societies, and interest in them was steady, if never spectacular. But in one case, Warrington claimed a local connection with the missionary enterprise which attracted widespread popular attention, gave the town a link with Africa and neatly illustrates the point that the direction of missionary activity could diverge from the standard narrative. Robert Moffat has been overshadowed historically by Livingstone. Born in Scotland in 1795, to a “lowly walk of life”, raised in strict Non-conformity, Moffat became a gardener and arrived in East Hall, High Legh, near Warrington, to work for the Legh family. He worked hard, and showed “little inclination for casual amusement”, spending “long hours in quiet study” and attending local Methodist meetings. Then in 1815:

Having a desire to visit Warrington, a town about six miles from where I lived, to purchase a trifling article, I went thither... I entered the town, and passing over a bridge, I observed a placard. I stood and read. It was a missionary placard, the first I had seen in my life.⁽²¹⁾

Inspired by this, and recalling his mother’s stories of missionaries in Lapland, Moffat applied to the London Missionary Society for training and ordination. Initially rejected on account of his lack of formal education, Moffat persevered and was finally accepted and posted to South Africa, to the Kuruman Mission. Six hundred miles north of Cape Town, Kuruman was as deep in the African interior as white men had so far travelled. Moffat remained in this area for over fifty years: his practice of the missionary vocation

20. *Warrington Advertiser*, 9 November 1863.

21. John Dolan, ‘The Northwood Story: The History of High Legh Independent Methodist Church, 1783-1983’, (1983), pp.18-20 [WALSC: MS2249]; John S. Moffat, *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889), pp.2-12.

differed fundamentally from that of Livingstone, who never stayed long in one place.⁽²²⁾

Moffat preferred the slow application of ideas, and accepted that missionary work was monotonous and protracted. His gardening skills proved to be vital, for the mission had to be self-sufficient; Moffat cleared and drained the land, plotting gardens and orchards.

He returned to Warrington on 1837, during a prolonged visit to Britain, during which he was introduced to Livingstone, whose intention at that time was to work in China. The meeting with Moffat drew him to Africa instead. Having arrived at Kuruman, Livingstone was soon restless, and was enticed to journey inland by Moffat's description of the unknown interior, of "the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary had ever been."⁽²³⁾ Kuruman had become the springboard of the missionary movement into the interior, but Moffat felt no inclination to explore for himself. In 1831, he had set up a printing press at the mission, in order to print lessons for the school and set about learning the Tswana language, with its "wide vocabulary and intricate grammatical construction", before beginning the task for which he is now chiefly remembered, translating the Bible into an African language for the first time.⁽²⁴⁾ The work was huge. Moffat had to find appropriate Tswana words in which to convey Christian ideas and theological terms, whilst also referencing Bibles in Dutch and Hebrew in order to guarantee textual accuracy. The Tswana bible was printed at Kuruman in 1857.

Moffat's type of missionary work, steady and slow and largely unacknowledged, was more typical of the vocation than Livingstone's heroic adventures. (Moffat and Livingstone remained close, however: Livingstone married Moffat's daughter.) But Moffat was not lionised as Livingstone was. He returned to visit Warrington in 1871,

22. Kuruman Moffat Mission Handbook, (Private collection of John Dolan).

23. Tim Jeal, *Livingstone* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p.22; Dolan, 'Northwood Story', p.25.

24. Humphrey Thompson, *Distant Horizons: An Autobiography of One Man's Forty Years of Missionary Service in and around Kuruman, South Africa* (Kimberley S.A., 1976), pp.40-2.

having kept up a correspondence with Alexander Mackie of the *Warrington Guardian* over many years. His permanent return to Britain in the 1870s brought public recognition, especially when he was called upon officially to recognise Livingstone's body when it finally arrived back in England.⁽²⁵⁾

Moffat had kept a journal during his fifty-four years in Africa, and this, together with his letters and newspaper reports, formed the basis of his biography, written by his son John in 1889. By this time, British opinion was beginning to be more strongly drawn towards Africa, and suddenly, Moffat's views mattered. From having typified a traditional, out-dated, pre-Livingstone generation earlier in the century, Moffat had interestingly come back into fashion. He articulated views about Africans which were fundamental to popular imperial ideology, and which ultimately signposted the direction along which British policy claimed to be travelling. He espoused a policy towards Africans which his son described as one of "implicit mutual confidence". Africans trusted Moffat because of the medical and practical knowledge which he offered, together with his readiness to mend broken guns for tribesman.⁽²⁶⁾ As rivalries in South Africa intensified, Moffat instinctively supported black Africans in their dealing with the Boers. He was, like Livingstone, suspicious of Boers and their activities as they pressed into the interior, accusing them of "greed and tyranny", and complaining of their "cruel and oppressive treatment" of Africans. Moffat believed that only British rule in South Africa could prevent Boer excesses, and that it was Britain's duty "to secure adequate protection to the loyal tribes within and near the borders of the country".⁽²⁷⁾ Eventually, when Britain handed back the Transvaal to the Boers, that sense of anger and suspicion attached to the British government, which he accused of "grievous mistakes of policy and

25. Dolan, 'Northwood Story', p.27; Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.269.

26. Jeal, *Livingstone*, p.42; Frank McLynn, *Hearts of Darkness: The European Exploration of Africa* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p.172; Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.133.

27. Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.296.

administration.” Moffat wrote:

The public mind has been soured by the policy of our government towards the native tribes on the northern border who have never given the shadow of a reason for being so dealt with. The odious powder ordinance put into force to meet the wishes of the inhabitants of the Free State and of the Transvaal Republic precludes the natives from procuring a single ounce of ammunition either to defend themselves or to kill their own game. This is tantamount to depriving them of their arms that they may become an easy prey to their enemies... we are sadly ashamed of it, and can no more open our mouth to say a single word in favour of our nation, once so respected and honoured by the aborigines.⁽²⁸⁾

In Moffat’s obituary, *The Times* observed:

He has lived to see the Transvaal handed back, freed from English control and sending forth once again the old swarms of adventurers to rob and plunder in Bechwanaland, bidding fair to undo his work and to force the entire region back into sheer barbarism. It would seem indeed, that it is only by the agency of such men as Moffat and his like that the contact of the white and black races can be anything but a curse to the blacks.⁽²⁹⁾

Such comments fed into the new dynamics of popular imperialism: liberal ideas could coexist with popular enthusiasm for Empire. Missionary reports from Africa provided by Moffat and Livingstone enhanced the view that the British Empire ought to be founded on liberal principles.

ANTI-SLAVERY IN THE CULTURE OF INFORMATION

Moffat had no direct experience of slavery at Kuruman, unlike Livingstone, who almost single-handedly shifted public attention towards a condemnation of the domestic slave

28. Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.213.

29. Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.290.

trade in Africa from the 1860s. Although the result was not a mass anti-slavery movement of the earlier stamp (as I have argued, political conditions no longer tended towards large pressure groups), Livingstone's message could have been propagated no more successfully had mass abolitionism been in operation. The momentum of anti-slavery was sustained, and indeed accelerated, at the end of the nineteenth century by its having seeped into so many of the crevices of British life and culture. Local culture reflected this: fund-raising meetings, lantern lectures, religious observance, political meetings, self-improvement classes, were all vehicles for abolitionism, and the growing news industry fed abolition to the town in big and small doses. The growth of news, information and popular response were essential aspects to much of the local associational culture of Victorian towns and cities.

This meant that public opinion was surprisingly well informed on conditions in Africa. In a lecture entitled 'Africa and Its People', given in the new Manchester Ship Canal Offices, and organised to raise funds for a seaside day trip for poor children, Mr. George Manning told his audience about Africa's geography, its roads and slave paths, and its two thousand languages and dialects. Africans worked hard, he said, although natural abundance relieved them from the necessity of work, and they were anyway prey to slavetraders.⁽³⁰⁾ In the Baptist Chapel at Latchford, the Rev. J. Warley described South African Kaffirs to a large audience. They were "muscular, elegant, frank, fearless, generous, and very intelligent", as well as "shrewd, sagacious", and with "great political wisdom." Although they now worked in towns, they worked to buy guns and cattle, which they prized. The verdict of history, the Rev. Warley concluded, was that centuries ago, the people of that continent had been foremost in the arts and commerce and in civilisation. The main cause of their present depression was the slave trade.⁽³¹⁾ Britons

30. *Warrington Observer*, 3 May 1890.

31. *Warrington Examiner*, 15 December 1888.

in Africa, especially with local connections, fed the appetite for details on slavery. The levels of slave demand in Egypt, the increasing incidence of slave raiding in Central Africa, the slave routes to Pemba and Zanzibar, the instrumental role of European traders in keeping slave demand high, and the forms which slave labour took were all matters of common knowledge to readers of the local press. British policies were critically assessed and slave ship captures, abolition by treaty, the role of individual Britons in rescue missions were given intensive coverage.⁽³²⁾

The emotional power of abolition came from its having come to stand for the essential character of Britain, what the Stretton Habitation of the Primrose League termed “British human nature”, and Joseph Chamberlain called “the glorious tradition of the British flag.”⁽³³⁾ Imperial greatness seemed to call for a new kind of history which “explained” Britain’s supposed facility for attaining and maintaining colonies. Abolition provided such a history, a history as much of popular memory as the pedagogic text. It was to be found on the political platform, in the newspaper editorial, the mechanics lecture, the sermon, wherever opinion was spread. Its narrative had several strands: the continuing need to expiate the sin of British involvement in the slave trade, the anti-slavery campaigns and abolition, the contribution of Britain, and more especially Lancashire, towards American emancipation, and the adventures of new anti-slavery heroes such as Livingstone and General Gordon.

The restatement of the historical significance of abolition to the British was the more vigorously promoted as relations with the Boers deteriorated. Anti-slavery rhetoric became the means through which Boer brutality was examined, and the subsequent war which broke out in 1899 thereby legitimised. In the popular imagination, the issues of

32. *Warrington Examiner*, 10 November 1888; *Warrington Guardian*, 14 December 1889; *Warrington Examiner*, 10, 17 November 1888; *Warrington Examiner*, 1, 8 December 1888.
 33. *Warrington Guardian*, 2 June 1900; *Warrington Guardian*, 3 April 1897.

Uitlander injustice or obstacles to mining development were less easily digested: popular memory of the local contribution to abolition could be opened up much more easily, as when, within weeks of the outbreak of the war, an “Evening Meeting” to raise funds for “Tommy Atkins” was organised, which featured a “Scene from the American Civil War”.⁽³⁴⁾ The Rev. Owen Atkins, formerly Superintendent of the Warrington Wesleyan Circuit had worked in the Transvaal for seventeen years, and attracted large audiences on his return to the district at the time of the war. He described how the Boers, despite having been given £1,247,000 in compensation by the British government after the 1834 Emancipation Act, remained pro-slavery in temper. Boer hostility, he claimed, was inflamed partly because payment had been made in London and not Cape Town. Slavery in South Africa had nevertheless persisted “under the euphemism of apprenticeship: every male black was compelled by law to serve a term of slavery until they were twenty one.” To attain freedom, the slave was compelled to swear his age before a Boer slaveholding magistrate, and as no native knew his own age, their emancipation never came. Natives thus had “absolutely no civil or ecclesiastical rights in their own country”.⁽³⁵⁾ At a meeting in Chester, the Rev. Atkins stated, to loud applause, that “the land belonged, if everyone had their own, not to the Boer or the British, but to the blacks.”⁽³⁶⁾

In his lantern lecture, the Rev. Egerton R. Young warned:

there is yet a great work to be done. England paid £20 million to set the slaves free in the West Indies... at the time England set the slaves free in the West Indies, there was a great deal of slavery in Natal, and England paid several millions of pounds to set those slaves of the Dutch free. Some of the Dutch, however would not liberate their slaves under any conditions, and they trekked northwards... to perpetuate slavery.⁽³⁷⁾

34. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1899.

35. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 March 1900.

36. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 March 1900.

37. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 April 1900.

There was a concern that not only the Boers but also British mineowners were perpetuating slavery in South Africa, and that in areas of Africa for which Britain held some responsibility, slavery was permitted to go unchecked. The strongest argument against these developments was that British effort and sacrifice had already dealt with the problem of slavery once, and had set certain humanitarian standards, which must not now be curtailed. British history should outweigh British economic expedience. When the President of the British Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, spoke at its sixty-first annual general meeting in 1900, he declared that

the society still held the same principles as when it was founded—that freedom should not be restricted to the British dominions and to white races, and that all on British soil should receive its freedom.⁽³⁸⁾

His choice of words conveys the traditions which the society stood for, as well as an implicit warning that current British policy remained subject to the same imperatives. The anti-slavery movement had come reluctantly to believe that only through colonial control could a speedy end to African slavery be effected. As greater chunks of Africa came under the British flag, its leaders used traditional appeals to force the pace of abolition.

The *Warrington Guardian* noted in 1889 “each failure after failure” to stop “the Curse of the African Slave Trade”. It reminded its readers that General Gordon had thrown himself into the movement and had lost his life in his abortive attempt. Now, after Arabs had penetrated Central Africa “the most revolting form the slave trade has ever assumed at present goes on unchecked”. But the editor put his faith in Britain’s historical record of abolition:

Britain has not forgotten how she accomplished the work of emancipation and her experience fits her admirably to advise the Sultan

38. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 April 1900.

of Zanzibar in the gradual extinction of domestic slavery throughout his dominion.⁽³⁹⁾

The Brussels Conference, held from 1888 to 1889, resulting in the Brussels Act of 1890, had bound European governments to stamp out the slave trade in Africa, and provided a guarantee that colonial administrations would aid fugitive and freed slaves. The ultimate aim was the ending of slavery itself, but colonial governments were wary, holding out full emancipation as the ultimate, but not immediate, fulfilment of imperial altruism. In this way, colonialism took on a “humanitarian guise,” where British methods and the spread of capitalism would combine to finally defeat slavery in Africa.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Continuity between earlier and later abolitionism was especially useful in advancing current campaigns. By the turn of the century, abolitionists still deplored Britain’s slowness to end slavery in Zanzibar. The British government had decided that no slave should be freed who could not prove a future means of subsistence. As a result, only three thousand to five thousand of the quarter of a million slaves there had yet been emancipated. The British Anti-Slavery Society promoted “Mr. H.S. Williams, of the Pan African Conference as one who has benefited by the abolition of slavery in the West Indies”, who spoke of “the pitiable plight of the natives on the African East Coast and of the apprenticeship system, which was really slavery in South Africa.”⁽⁴¹⁾

Slavery and abolition were thus seen to be in need of constant vigilance and analysis, and not as an orderly and inevitable progression from one to the other. Liberal thinkers looked with suspicion upon the Colonial Office and the colonial service, and upon capitalists in Africa, guarding the flame, not only of current abolitionist policies, but of Britain’s historical role in emancipation. And there was a contemporary fear that as

39. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 December 1889.

40. Miers and Roberts, *End of Slavery*, pp.16-7.

41. *Warrington Guardian*, 11 April 1900.

Britain had contributed to the slave trade from Tudor times, it could again help to preserve, or even initiate modern forms of slavery in Africa. Regression was considered to be an historical possibility.

In 1897, when the House of Commons reconvened “fresh from the Jubilee celebrations,” its first debate covered East African slavery. On the same day, a Spanish nobleman visited Bristol to unveil a monument to John Cabot. During the addresses, Lord Dufferin had launched a verbal attack on Christopher Columbus: “great and good as was the man himself, there lurked the Inquisition, slavery and carnage... while Cabot and the honest Bristol seaman who accompanied him brought prosperity and ordered government.” The remarks sparked controversy around an otherwise mundane ceremonial occasion. The *Warrington Guardian* noted the Dufferin’s speech had “drawn down reproof: it might be questioned whether he is historically justified in making these claims.” It went on:

Has Lord Dufferin forgotten Hawkins’ good ship, the *Jesus*, and the cargo which she carried, or the traffic which an English Secretary of State refused to discourage as late as 1775 because it was ‘so beneficial to the nation?’ The History of England in the Atlantic is not without its dark shadows, and the darkest among them is the slave trade.⁽⁴²⁾

The editorial condemned the prevarication surrounding the ending of slavery in Zanzibar, two years after its becoming a British protectorate. It urged immediate action “if we are to live up to, and deserve, our self laudations such as those which Lord Dufferin undertakes to give vent to at the expense of the Spanish.”⁽⁴³⁾

News and opinion from America similarly suggested that historical regression was likely (as Garrison had claimed on his visit to Warrington). Conditions for ex-slaves, and for blacks in general were believed to be deteriorating. The British press continued to

42. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 June 1897.

43. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 June 1897.

keep an eye on American politics and society, augmented by traditional cultural ties.

(‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ played to huge audiences in Warrington as late as 1905).⁽⁴⁴⁾

Visiting black American speakers publicised conditions in America, and in 1898, the visit of the Fisk University Singers to Wilberforce House in Hull attracted great attention:

With bowed heads and silent tongues, they stood for a few moments in mute contemplation of the four walls, and then with one accord they burst into song. The thrilling strains of John Brown’s Body lies Mouldering in the Grave filling the whole building with rich melody. People who had crowded into the building stood entranced and marvelled at the pathos and power of the singers.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The celebration of emancipated black Americans only underscored the consciousness of deteriorating conditions there. One editorial told how:

the negro was freed after a most sanguinary war and to this day, civilisation is at war with his enslavers in various parts of the globe. Yet he appears in danger of being re-enslaved, and that in the very country where he was freed at such terrible cost.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The ubiquitous Egerton R. Young asked: “Are negroes better off in freedom today than when in slavery? On this subject he had had conversation with a number of negroes and he did not meet one who said he or she was better off today.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

Continued interest in the fate of American blacks was partly explained by popular memory of the Cotton Famine and how working-class sacrifice then had helped in the fight against slavery. A further reminder was given on the occasion of the death of Jefferson Davis in 1889, when the career of the “hero of slavery” was re-examined:

In its final distress the South appealed to Europe where undoubtedly it had much sympathy. Even Mr. Gladstone was in favour of the South

44. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 January 1905.

45. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 January 1898.

46. *Warrington Guardian*, 2 November 1889.

47. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 April 1900.

and men of rank and station were everywhere in sympathy with the secessionists. Who does not remember the race there was to get the Southern bonds?... It was the instinct of the working men of Lancashire that scented the truth and tenaciously stuck to it without a sign of wavering, though they were starving the while.⁽⁴⁸⁾

News coverage of American race relations in Warrington newspapers was extensive. "Race Riots in New Orleans"; "Terrible Lynching Affair in America"; "Race War in Georgia"; "Terrible Negro Rising". On all these occasions, white attitudes were blamed: the role of the police in violence against blacks, and the lack of justice for black victims of crime were cited as frequent causes of racial disturbances. American politicians were condemned: in a Georgia State Legislature debate, there had been "not one good word said about the negro".⁽⁴⁹⁾

AFRICAN SLAVERY AND BRITISH RESPONSIBILITY

This fear of historical regression takes us back to the problem of chronology in slavery, abolition and imperialism. Those who have observed a steadily worsening situation from the end of British emancipation (such as Bolt, Lorimer and Brantlinger) have been keen to stress that this resulted in the rise of racism, mainly in the writings of literary and political elites. Others have avoided such a strict linear approach. Miles Taylor, in a 1991 article, observes that positive and negative versions of Empire were fought out in British domestic politics, and argues that the imperatives of British party politics (rather than a concern for how colonies should be run) prompted the taking of sides.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Discontinuities and turning points were determined by the requirements of political

48. *Warrington Guardian*, 11 December 1889.

49. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 December 1889, 8 March, 26 May, 8 September 1900.

50. Miles Taylor, "Imperium et Libertas?" Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 19,1 (1991), pp. 1-23.

debate, and did not necessarily follow the logic of the spread of Empire.

Such an analysis offers a more realistic framework within which to present the final argument for the survival of abolitionism: its function as a vehicle for class politics and the testing of class ideologies. This was to some extent true throughout the century, but re-emerged most acutely at the end of the century, and in particular during the 1906 General Election campaign. Two developments brought this about: the threat to party stability caused by the growth of socialism, and the onset of capitalism, in Africa especially, which helped to concentrate public attention on the economic, as opposed to racial aspects of imperialism. Commentators began to argue that Africa was slipping backwards, that the domestic slave trade was being compounded by new forms of slavery, introduced by British settlers and mineowners. A well publicised meeting of the Aborigines Protection Society in London in 1900 stated firmly that “there should be no dallying with slavery in any name or form. The natives must be protected from the greed of the financier, the capitalist and the company promoter.”⁽⁵¹⁾

Faced with these accusations, colonial administrations were eager to explain the economic realities which commercial exploitation brought to Africa. In 1905, the British government issued a White Paper on the perennial problem of slavery in Pemba and Zanzibar, written by British consuls specifically to answer the charge that despite legal abolition, slavery still existed. It concluded that if there were slaves remaining in Pemba and Zanzibar, they remained so from choice, as many had found that “freedom was not such a bed of roses as anticipated.” Ex-slaves had no land to cultivate, and no means with which to migrate. They were subject to penalties if they did not earn their own livelihood, and were therefore “in effect, obliged to accept the wages offered by the planters.” The problem was that “these wages are less favourable than the conditions of

51. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 July 1900.

slavery.”⁽⁵²⁾

The issue of the treatment of black labour, even when nominally free, was seen at its most stark in the mines, where the native labourer was “treated worse than cattle... the natives were compelled to go to work even when ill”, suffering low wages and a harsh system of fines, and even “glaring rascality with the respect to non-payment of wages.”⁽⁵³⁾ Natives were assaulted by overseers and exploited by touts. This report was written by John S. Moffat, the son and biographer of Robert, who worked hard to inform British public opinion about conditions for black Africans. He described how blacks worked in the docks, in reservoir buildings, as railway navvies and on the great drainage excavations at Cape Town, and of how whites refused to work next to them.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Sir Charles Dilke contrasted past and present in his talk ‘The Century of Our Colonies’:

The foundation of the social system in Britain’s tropical colonies a hundred years ago was slavery and the slave trade and at the beginning of the Queen’s reign, slavery and the slave trade were vanishing. The slave trade in the old sense was extinct, except for the supply of a few Mohammadan communities, but he was sorry to say that slavery under other names was reviving in our time, and reviving under conditions which contrasted unfavourably in his belief with those prevailing in British colonies in the early portion of the century and which our grandfathers nevertheless made heroic efforts to put an end to, as they thought, forever. Might the descendants of those who emancipated slaves in 1833 insist that slavery should not be allowed to creep in again under other names.⁽⁵⁵⁾

This situation was not new to abolitionists: post-emancipation problems of this kind were

52. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 January 1905.

53. *Warrington Guardian*, 23 August 1899.

54. *Warrington Guardian*, 23 August 1899.

55. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 April 1900.

familiar from the 1830s, and still worried those concerned by the problems of black poverty in the southern states of America. But this contrast between slave and free labour was significant also for radicals and working-class thinkers, and had been part of the ideological weaponry of early radicals, Chartists and labour leaders since before the Reform Act, and at the time of the American Civil War. The conventional view however is that by the late nineteenth century, British labour had taken on its own trajectory and, taken together with the idea that popular interest in abolition had ceased by this time, the continuing significance of slavery to British labour as an ideological reference point has not been explored.

SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITALISM AND LABOUR

One indication of the power of slavery to express labour's ideas can be shown by the frequency with which it was used as part of the rhetoric of political or industrial grievance. For instance, James Strange, a master baker, alleged libel against a trade union which had accused him of white slavery.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The National Union of Teachers' annual conference awarded Mr. R. Waddington of Bolton a statuette of a Lancashire half-timer, inscribed "To the Wilberforce of the White Slaves of Lancashire and Yorkshire".⁽⁵⁷⁾ The Labour Representation Committee, during a meeting in Warrington argued that a Labour Party in Parliament would be "the economic instrument redeeming the enslaved millions of today."⁽⁵⁸⁾ But slavery was not simply a useful but empty linguistic device: its real value was as a conceptual tool with which the changing nature of British capitalism could be understood and challenged. At an Independent Labour Party meeting in Warrington in 1898, John Edwards of the Liverpool Fabian Society

56. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 February 1897.

57. *Warrington Observer*, 8 April 1899.

58. *Warrington Examiner*, 25 March 1905; *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1895.

spoke on 'Political Freedom and Industrial Slavery', in which he argued that the essential of slavery was the dependence of one man upon another for the means of life. "Under our present commercial system, the workers were industrial slaves", he said.⁽⁵⁹⁾

It is generally argued that British labour embraced Empire because jobs, markets and raw materials depended on it. Others claim that labour was anti-imperialist, regarding it as an expense and an irrelevance to their problems. Both embody the premise that working-class attitudes were essentially self-centred. But slavery was not seen as an irrelevance to British labour's concerns, nor as a historical remnant which would wither as Africa 'modernised'. The new slavery was regarded as the inevitable outcome of rapacious finance capitalism.

Migrant labour in mining compounds were the archetypes of this new type of slavery. Hence, the reinvigorated abolitionist campaigns, based on the fear that Britain would once again be historically contaminated as slaveholders and slave users, and the argument that British traditions were under attack from new forms of capitalism. Anti-slavery activity was a convenient and effective way to oppose imperial capitalism's methods, with its traditions, its organisation, and its links to government and media. Radicals and labour activists were able to use the channels which anti-slavery opened out to challenge both the new capitalism and the Tory government which they accused of capitulating to it. Public scrutiny of the treatment of black labour mounted as the situation in southern Africa worsened and war broke out, and as we have seen, slavery became a major contributant to the moral justification for war against the Boers.

After the war, interest in labour conditions in South Africa exploded when radicals seized upon the government's decision to allow Chinese indentured labour to work the mines. In the heightened atmosphere of the 1905 general election campaign, the issues of

59. *Warrington Guardian*, 2 February 1898.

slavery and free labour dominated political debate. When David Lloyd George addressed a packed meeting of Liberal supporters in the Parr Hall at the beginning of the election campaign he spoke beneath a banner which declared 'No Slavery under the British Flag', and the Chairman claimed "they were going back to the old days of slavery."⁽⁶⁰⁾ This electoral campaign has been presented as the first racialised electoral appeal in British politics (the 1905 Aliens Act which sought to limit Jewish immigration was another controversial measure), but in Warrington the question of South African mine labour was framed with reference to capitalism rather than race.

Mr. R.L. Outhwaite, who had lived in both Australia and South Africa, was now Liberal candidate for Joseph Chamberlain's West Birmingham constituency. In September 1905 he gave two addresses in Warrington on the Chinese Slavery Question, described as "undoubtedly the most complete history of the South African labour trouble ever presented to a Warrington audience."⁽⁶¹⁾ Originally only one meeting was planned, but when two and a half thousand people attended, a second meeting was hurriedly arranged. His main theme was the "rise of Continental capitalism in South Africa", and he began by tracing the history of British mining. Too many speculators had made the price of diamonds fall, until Cecil Rhodes had formed the De Beer's Mining Company to maximise price and profit. After Rhodes had floated his British and South Africa Company, he had sold shares to "the British aristocracy, the House of Commons and the borderlands of royalty itself". Rhodes had "spread his net wide and spread it well". After gold was discovered, a new labour system based on the compound was introduced, but even this did not deliver labour cheap enough for the new capitalists. The mineowners had thus asked the Boer government to increase taxes on Kaffirs, so as to compel them to work, but the government had refused. Rhodes had then travelled to London where he

60. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 February 1905.

61. *Warrington Examiner*, 23 September 1905.

had bribed sections of the press and secured the support of those British shareholders in positions of influence. He also appealed to “the humanitarian and nobler sentiments of Englishmen” (by claiming to be working for improvements for black labour), for which the British had believed themselves to be fighting. Now Milner and the British government had imported Chinese labour in order that wage costs be brought down, and the mineowners had finally won all they had set out to achieve.

Outhwaite was keen to stress that this new capitalism was to blame for the reintroduction of slavery, of both Chinese and black labour. The essentials of slavery were apparent: labour was flogged in the mines, there was no escape from the compound and the workers were hungry and starving. The compound system had “reintroduced a system of labour into British territory which was the foulest system existing on the face of the earth.” Black labourers had been “virtually prisoners.” Attempts by mineowners to gain new measures from the Boer government which would compel black labour to move to the mines were “only another name for slavery — (Applause) — for to compel a man to work by law for less than he could get as a free man was to enslave him. (Applause)”. Nevertheless, after the war had ended, this was exactly what the British government had sanctioned, when black wages were cut to one shilling a day, and native taxes increased to force blacks to work.

Despite these policies, mineowners had still required the importation of 50,000 Chinese slaves, because black labour had beaten the mineowners:

The mineowners however failed in their object for the reason that they had overlooked the fact that the Kaffir, unlike the British worker, had still access to the soil of his country. When the great lock-out took place, the Kaffirs therefore went to their land and had a holiday. (Laughter) By that means they beat the greatest monopolists virtually in the world in the greatest lock-out he believed had ever taken place in

the history of labour.⁽⁶²⁾

Outhwaite claimed however that labour costs were not the only impetus behind the policies of the new capitalists. The mineowners' objective was to exclude British labour, who, if they migrated to South Africa would "rule the country by labour parties".

Randlords took the Australian mines as their example "where combination could dictate conditions to owners," as in the Western Australian gold-mining areas, where all MPs except one belonged to the Federal Labour Party. The workers of England should "force open wide those gates, though profits and dividends do fall to multimillionaires. (Loud and prolonged cheers)."⁽⁶³⁾

The Tories organised an immediate counter-attack through their Conservative Labour Party: an open air meeting outside the Coach and Horses public house. The neutral *Warrington Guardian* estimated that one hundred and fifty people attended "including as usual a number of boys and girls", who were told that the Chinese were not held in slavery and that the Kaffir "liked to smoke his pipe and watch his wife work". The meeting ended abruptly when a fight broke out between two dogs in the centre of the crowd. The Tory *Warrington Observer* on the other hand welcomed "another successful open air meeting, with a large attendance."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Outhwaite's meetings had been organised by the Progressive Labour League, the vehicle through which the Liberals hoped to fix working class support to the party in the face of the growing strength of socialism. Outhwaite's rhetoric was focused on his appeal to organised labour. Douglas Hamer has set out the Liberal predicament in these years as the need to "avoid anything that looked like class legislation yet at the same time maintain a close emotional, even ideological relationship between Liberalism and labour"

62. *Warrington Examiner*, 23 September 1905.

63. *Warrington Examiner*, 23 September 1905.

64. *Warrington Observer*, 23 September 1905.

by exploiting “a series of themes which themselves lay outside the realm of working class demands but on which Liberals could assume attitudes which suggested an emotional identification with the cause of labour.”⁽⁶⁵⁾

Hamer mentions attacks on certain capitalists and “free labour” versus Chinese slavery as typical of these issues.

Keir Hardie’s visit on behalf of the Warrington Labour Representation Committee also addressed the issue of Chinese slavery. (Hardie shared the platform with J.R. Clynes and Ben Tillet.) Hardie drew attention to the working and living conditions of the Chinese in South Africa, and the parallels with British capitalism, citing the practice of blacklisting in South Wales as examples of the unfree nature of British capitalism:

They heard much concerning Chinese slavery in South Africa but slavery was not confined to the compounds. Why should the right to work be dependent on some third party being able to make a profit out of that work? They were told the British workman was free. Our politicians boasted that we had swept slavery from under the British flag, that we had abolished serfdom. Certainly we had abolished legal slavery but between the position of hirelings and serfs there was but little to choose.⁽⁶⁶⁾

The problem of Chinese slavery was obviously useful as a Liberal stratagem to draw working-class votes, and was a successful one: it threw the government on the defensive, and helped secure a Liberal victory, though it also allowed the Labour Representation Committee to expand the debate into their territory. But the fundamental question—why did Chinese slavery have the power to motivate British labour so dramatically?—remains open to interpretation. Douglas Hamer writes of “the tendency to promote the projection of class feeling onto external issues which themselves had nothing to do with class

65. D.A. Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery: A Study in Leadership and Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.306.

66. *Warrington Examiner*, 4 February 1905; *Warrington Guardian*, 1 February 1905.

relationships in Britain.”⁽⁶⁷⁾ Yet this again assumes a basically introspective working class. It is a central tenet of this work, however, that labour politics could display altruistic interest in external issues. Workers were particularly interested in how capitalism was using labour, because the problem of slavery appeared to have returned (and traditionally this was a subject they cared about) and because slavery revealed to them aspects of their own situations. Race played a surprisingly small part in how these questions were approached.

Africa was not simply a backcloth before which the drama of British class struggle might unfold. The transmission and cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences became much more complex as contact between parts of the Empire grew. The continuing history of R.L. Outhwaite is an example. A Liberal MP for many years, he finally joined the Independent Labour Party after World War One specifically on the issue of land nationalisation.⁽⁶⁸⁾ His observation that the Kaffir “unlike the British worker, had still access to the soil of his country” is a portent of the development of his ideas. The description of Australian working class politics given in the speech is another example of the way that labour ideology was looking to other situations for guidance.

The 1905 election campaign was the culmination of one of the most durable political traditions in Britain, that of popular anti-slavery. Outhwaite’s speech leaves no doubt about this. Abolitionist images and connections are cleverly worked into Outhwaite’s speech. Having primed his audience with the claim that the mine engineers and miners in South Africa were nearly all Americans “mostly from the slave states of the South”, his final appeal was made on the basis of folk memory, local identity and class pride, all combined around the anti-slavery cause. He declared:

67. Hamer, *Liberal Politics*, pp.307-8.

68. Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-24* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.141; Martin Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics, 1867- 1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p.215.

A moral obligation rested upon the people of England to sweep away this foul system.... It seemed to him that in Lancashire at least an appeal could not be made in vain. It would be strange that Lancashire should give toleration of any sort to the introduction of slavery because it was Lancashire that furnished

A NOBLE EXAMPLE

in the history of labour not long ago—the example that the British worker would not tolerate slavery. The last attempt that was made on the part of any section or class in England to get the sanction of England to slavery was at the time of the Civil War in America in 1862. The ships of the North blockaded the ports of the South from which Lancashire obtained its cotton supply. The consequence was the great cotton famine and awful distress prevailed throughout the length and breadth of the county. At that time there came emissaries of the slave owners of the South...and they appealed to the Lancashire operatives and their families who were starving to lend their aid to the slave-owning South so that they might profit. Then it was that John Bright thundered forth and appealed to the Lancashire operatives to put humanity before their immediate gain...He did not appeal in vain to Lancashire.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Without doubt, the experience of Lancashire labour in the Cotton Famine remained an emotional undercurrent in the political appeal of the Liberal Party and class collaborations on which Liberal success depended. It was as if, fearing for a future in which labour could be enticed away by socialism, Liberals fell back upon the message that had originally drawn working-class votes to them in the 1860s, that of Liberal support for popular anti-slavery. And in this case, it worked again; the Liberal Arthur Crosfield was elected as the town's MP in 1906.

69. *Warrington Examiner*, 23 September 1905.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the nineteenth century, British identity, and especially working class identity, gradually became bound up with the anti-slavery cause; abolitionist sentiment was claimed as the symbol of British character, and the transformation from a nation of slave traders to emancipators was thought to exemplify the span of British history. This and the previous chapter have followed the development of abolitionism in Warrington from Joseph Priestley's history lessons at the Academy in the 1760s to Keir Hardie's speech at the Parr Hall in 1905. Using a chronological approach in this way has been productive in two ways. Firstly, it has allowed the great sweep of anti-slavery narrative to be unfolded, countering the belief that popular support for it had faded quickly after British emancipation: its localised nature has permitted this, for when national abolition campaigns have appeared disjointed and spasmodic, the gaps in between are seen to be times of activism and consolidation at local level. Of equal importance, it has demonstrated how anti-slavery maintained the strength to survive in new political, cultural and economic contexts. Secondly, the narrative approach has shown how anti-slavery developed with each episode, campaign or success. Political thought incorporated its tenets incrementally, so that its history, its heritage of ideas developed broader uses. For instance, the radical campaign to develop cotton growing in India in the 1840s stemmed from a preference for free labour over American slavery, together with concerns about supplies to Lancashire and Indian poverty. These ideas resurfaced during the American Civil War, and were considerably strengthened during that time. The events of the Cotton Famine also became part of the popular history of abolitionism, still not forgotten fifty years later. Anti-slavery both grew on its own past, and served as a means of understanding the political questions generated by the new forms of capitalism. In attempting to draw together both popular imperialism and liberal-labour political

thought, the resilience of grass-roots anti-slavery provides a dominant unifying theme. Although the survival of interest in abolition has been recognised in works on popular culture, it was in domestic political culture that the consequences of anti-slavery were effected, as the tenets of anti-slavery doctrine came to play a role in the expression of class politics and the direction of party agendas.

Histories of abolitionism have largely been premised on the belief that popular anti-slavery ended in mid-century, and have thus strengthened the argument that social mobilisation of imperial ambition drew its greatest strength from growing feelings of racial superiority. It is clear however that explicitly racialised appeals were rarely the basis on which popular imperialism was built. As regards Africa, much scholarly work has centred on the construction of literary images of Africans in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, although the value of this work is limited by a lack of historical context. This is true of the work of Patrick Brantlinger, who argues that missionaries were responsible for the Myth of the Dark Continent which excused European exploitation and conquest

Andrew Porter on the other hand adopts a more sober attitude, noting both the tensions between missionaries and government (and thus making it clear that there was no monolithic British view) and the changes in their relationship over time, determined by missionary motivation, government intention and colonial manners. In a 1989 article, the connections between Christianity and imperialism, commonly assumed to be unambiguous, were dissected and analysed by Andrew Porter to reveal complexities and shifting circumstance.⁽⁷⁰⁾ He sections the relationship into three phases. Initially, from mid-eighteenth century to early nineteenth century, government and missions held a mutual aloofness. This lessened in the second phase, in the mid-nineteenth century, when

70. Andrew Porter, 'Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1780-1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20,3 (1989), pp.370-90.

respective goals synchronised to some degree, but by the later nineteenth century, missionaries were again distancing themselves from imperial interference.

From this study, it is clear that missionaries operated in a rapidly changing world. (One missionary speaker in Warrington complained of how difficult it was to convert Bhuddists in Bombay to an understanding of the Bible, when they subscribed to Tom Paine's denunciation of it.)⁽⁷¹⁾ Andrew Porter points out that historians have tended to define the missionary as the vanguard of emerging capitalism, often neglecting their primary work in the conversion of souls.⁽⁷²⁾ In Livingstone's case, this is hardly a surprise, as he was thought to have converted hardly anyone to Christianity. Moffat believed that conversion to Christianity took decades, and few had his endurance. This spiritual element should not be disregarded. But to what extent could spirituality support or censure prevailing economic and social orthodoxies? A letter which John Moffat received after his father's death suggests that antipathy to the new capitalist class might derive from spiritual concerns:

I have often been profoundly impressed with Dr. Moffat's evident natural boldness in relation to the cause and kingdom of His Divine Lord. He was a man who, having planted himself on a principal, would stay there till he died! When receiving civic honours at the Mansion House, London, on being introduced as one familiar with the African diamond fields, he responded, in the midst of the assembled traders, merchants and civic dignitaries, that he could tell them little about the diamond fields, or the diamonds there, for he had gone to Africa to seek jewels of a very different character, namely the natives, in order that they might be made as gems to adorn the Saviour's crown.⁽⁷³⁾

It is not perhaps a coincidence that some of the most vociferous critics of British

71. *Warrington Guardian*, 3 October, 1863.

72. Andrew Porter, *Religion and Empire*, p.374.

73. John Moffat, *Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.299.

policy in South Africa who visited Warrington in these years, or whose work was reported in the press, were missionaries. Within Warrington, Rev. John Yonge campaigned robustly against the Boer War, and the Catholic clergy brought out the Irish dimension to debates about the effects of colonialism.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Missionaries and domestic clergy ought not be cast entirely as willing dupes of imperial dogmatists. Radical Christianity has been ghettoised historically as an enthusiasm of avant-garde socialist sects, and largely irrelevant to mainstream politics. This chapter has suggested that this was not the case, and that radical Christianity, in its idealism and pragmatic attention to contemporary political debate, deserves academic attention. But the most important effect of the survival of anti-slavery was that it allowed a link to be made between radicalism's long-standing beliefs, its ideological heritage and imperialism. This conjunction became a powerful argument against the new forms of capitalism which began to emerge in South Africa in these years.

Historical studies of earlier anti-slavery, reviewed in the previous chapter, have debated the theoretical connections between abolitionism and the rise of capitalism. Three factors have been identified: the value of abolitionism in negotiating class tensions, its significance in defining a free labour ideology, and its role in softening the edges of capitalism at the same time that it strengthened it. These larger questions are beyond the scope of a local study such as this, but it is apparent that similar theoretical constructions could be usefully adopted to clarify the development of popular responses to capitalism. Liberal and socialist rhetoric was positioned differently on the question of slavery in South Africa, for instance. Both opposed it, and the aggressive capitalism which it symbolised, but Liberals saw it as a fall from British standards and a provocation to free British labour, whilst the Independent Labour Party used it to draw domestic capitalism

74. *Warrington Observer*, 23 September 1899; *Warrington Guardian*, 12 January 1898.

into its sights.

It was not however an explicitly anti-imperialist position. Hobson's idea that the new imperialism used humanitarian issues such as anti-slavery to disguise baser motives is true to an extent, but ignores how anti-slavery also worked as a basis from which to question developments in South Africa. When Miles Taylor argues that the radical position on Empire was concerned more with its effect on British character and political culture than about real effects in the colonies, he understates the very real and long-standing concern for black labour, slave and free, detectable in popular attitudes in this study.

Part Three

Local Imperialism

CHAPTER SIX

“THE GOOD OLD TOWN”: LOCAL PATRIOTISM AND THE WRITING OF LOCAL HISTORY, 1750 - 1900

When, in the nineteenth century, the popular historian, John Richard Green set out the value of studying and writing history, he suggested that enthusiasts direct their attention to the “streets of some quiet little town.” He observed:

In the quiet, quaintly named streets... lies the real life of England and Englishmen, the life of their home and their trade, the ceaseless, sober struggle with oppression, their steady, unwearied battle for self-government. It is just in the pettiness of its details, in its commonplace incidents, in the want of marked features and striking events that the real lessons of the whole story lies.⁽¹⁾

He hoped that scholars would “look on a town as a whole, instead of simply the place where such and such a church or castle was to be found.” Green’s purpose was both political and practical. Deploring what he called “trumpet and drum history”, and equally unhappy with the idea of “history as past politics”, he preferred to offer “an organic life of the nation as a whole”, which was to be found largely in its small towns and countryside.⁽²⁾ Green described traditional municipal freedoms as “a kind of nationalism in little, and in some ways the more satisfying for it.” His disciple, Edward Freeman took this idea further: England’s municipal strength set its historical development apart from Continental countries, generating “the steady advance of the whole realm as opposed to the brilliant development of particular cities.”⁽³⁾ In a recent

1. J.R. Hale and John Rigby, (ed.), *The Evolution of British Historiography from Bacon to Namier* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p.180.
2. Hale and Rigby, *British Historiography*, p.62.
3. Hale and Rigby, *British Historiography*, pp.181-4.

work, Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer took a similar view; that the strength of the English state lay in the shires, which were an Anglo-Saxon inheritance, inspiring regional loyalty whilst reinforcing central authority.⁽⁴⁾ The present chapter also focuses on the writing of local history, and its role in fixing municipal, national and imperial loyalties. Its subject tends towards the development of an urban-based local history as opposed to one which was centred on the mythical, scenic aspects of English history. The writing of local history in Warrington in the nineteenth century was a product of middle-class interest entirely, particularly of the new professional class who had the time, resources and inclination to undertake research and writing. Local history allowed this class to reposition itself socially. In relation to the local aristocracy, local historians with access to family papers could restate the legitimacy of aristocratic status even as they appropriated their properties and their political roles. (William Beamont, solicitor and local politician wrote of the historical contributions of the Blackeburne family at the same time that he moved into their family home, and arranged the incorporation of Warrington which replaced the Blackeburnes' paternalism with a form of popular democracy and middle-class political leadership.) Local history also legitimated the idea of community in less obvious ways. The chapter examines the teachings of Joseph Priestley, radical and scientist, who taught history in Warrington: he argued for the value of oral history in uncovering the past, and Warrington's local historians fully exploited the stories and memories of older Warringtonians in their construction of the past. Local history thus became an amalgam of strict scholarship and popular memory, and the presentations of local history, in lectures, pamphlets and books were often given the common touch by local anecdotes or personal memories. This was more than

4. Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, 'The enigma of British History' in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.3-11.

enlightened methodology: it also ensured that there was a popular market for local history which would not have been attracted to more inaccessible forms of scholarship. Thus the local press encouraged local history, and much of the intellectual cultural forms - pamphlet literature, Natural History and Literary and Philosophical Societies, evening lectures, library and museum - were both markets for local history and vehicles for historical inquiry. Local history could thus claim to be both intellectual and popular. It helped the community understand itself, both in relation to its own past, and in its place in the nation and the Empire. It reinforced the claim of the new municipal class to speak for the community.

A study of the development of local history would take in the use of new sources as well as themes and content. Not only did Green theorise the growth of the state in concepts different from constitutional historians, but he could turn to a range of sources and evidence which was more diverse than those upon which political historians relied. Physical geography and landscape could tell stories and reveal clues, as could buildings, street names, local mythologies. Increasingly, Green and the scholars whom he influenced sought out and used the works of local archaeological societies which were an element in the culture of intellectual inquiry and a key foundation of Victorian municipal life.

It was at this point, and in this manner, that local and national history were first brought together, with two long-term consequences. Firstly, the roles of local and national historians became fixed, the former to provide detail, with the latter bringing their comparative and interpretational skills. Secondly, local history settled into an enclosed, pastoral English narrative, constrained within the boundaries of the county, the village, the folk-moot, the small town. The modern forms of urban life which were put into place in the nineteenth century—municipal government and institutions, the

provincial press, industrial and commercial growth—did not attract academic local historians until recent times. The alternative theme of English history—that of exploration, trade, conquest and Empire—made no connections to local history (other than in that concerning a handful of ports) and imperial and local history thus became separated.

Bill Schwarz points to a danger in Green's method, laudably radical as it appeared, in that it implied that 'the people' were not involved in the many wars and conquests which built imperial Britain. Recent debates have contrasted Green's approach with that of the historian, Sir John Seeley, whose narrative of British progress was centred on the imperial theme, and particularly on the spread of 'Britishness' into colonies of settlement. Seeley, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, published *The Expansion of England* in 1882, in which, according to Schwarz, the author "conceptualised England as constituted by its overseas possessions." England and its colonies were made of the same cloth (Seeley wrote almost exclusively of settlement colonies) and the colonies were thus "an organic extension of the home nation." In contrast, J.R. Green's *Short History of the English People* (1874) de-emphasised monarchy and aristocracy with their domestic and foreign rivalries in order that 'the people' be made the subjects, not objects of history.⁽⁵⁾ Seeley and Green are thus presented as the standard-bearers for two highly divergent trends within national history. However, Robert Colls sees their work as essentially complementary: "If [Seeley's] new Empire was where the Englishmen were, who were the English?"⁽⁶⁾ Green provided the answer: they were the people descended from "the free moot of the Saxon village". Schwarz admits that Seeley's work "attempted to

5. Bill Schwarz, 'The Expansion and Contraction of England' in Bill Schwarz, (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, ethnicity and cultural history* (London: Routledge, 1966), pp.1-8.

6. Robert Colls, 'Englishness and the Political Culture' in Robert Colls & Philip Dodd, (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p.44.

dismantle the dualism of 'internal' and 'external' altogether by insisting on the necessary unity of the two."⁽⁷⁾ Within this broad debate, local history is conceptualised as firmly 'internal', reflecting an approach which was parochial and ethnically exclusive. Victorian local historians are dismissed as the writers of folk-studies, mythologies and county histories and are particularly accused of presenting rosy and romantic visions of a rural past.

In fact, very little has been written about the development of local history in the nineteenth century, although much has been implied. Whilst the development of a national history is seen as a key factor in the growth of a culture of patriotism, local or regional identities are largely assumed to have been buried within national triumphalism. Those who have acknowledged the persistence of historical local identities, such as Eric Evans and David Cannadine, have done so briefly and tentatively. For instance, in his study of the construction of Englishness, Robert Colls argues that local history revealed "the populist lines of race language and tradition", and he states that this had "a profound effect on regional, sub-national identities", but no instances are given of how this process worked.⁽⁸⁾

In fact, the writing of local history in the nineteenth century was a highly complex procedure, and was by no means the sole province of the harmless eccentric or the racially fixated. The emphasis here will be upon the local, not merely as a component of national-imperial history writing, or as a small-scale representation of higher historical forces, but to show how Warrington's local historians developed a chronology and narrative of the town for its (and their) own purpose, consciously appealing to a 'local

7. Schwarz, 'Expansion and Contraction of England', pp.1-6.

8. Eric Evans, 'Englishness and Britishness, National Identities c.1790 - c.1870' in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.233-243; David Cannadine, 'British History as a "New Subject": Politics, Perspectives and Prospects' in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.12-28; Colls, 'Englishness', p.47.

patriotism'. One of the problems with the historiographical overview of the development of local history from the Green perspective is that it has tended to view the local as static and unchanging, as symbolic of a timeless England. Consequently, much of the dynamic of local history in the nineteenth century has been overlooked. Patrick Joyce has included a local history perspective in his study of Lancashire in the nineteenth century, and concludes that "Past and present were intrinsically linked in the advance of liberal culture". Protestantism linked to radicalism to produce a "popular version of the Whig interpretation of history."⁽⁹⁾ For Joyce, the language of such local histories—inclusive, unproblematic, progressive—tells us all we need to know about their purchase in urban cultures. Joyce's Protestantism has no anti-Catholicism, his communities have no displaced Irish immigrants, his middle-class politics provokes no plebeian backlash. This chapter attempts to look behind the language and finds ideological manoeuvring and the use of knowledge and scholarship to disguise the unattractive realities of municipal politics.

In connecting the writing of local history to the process of municipalisation, and to the institutional, social and political transformations which accompanied it, this chapter investigates the ways in which national and imperial identities were built into the structures of the town through the legitimisation which local history provided. Its central focus will be on the writings of a generation of local historians who were also instrumental in bringing about the granting of municipal status, and on how they selected historical themes which enhanced their own family and social status and gave intellectual support to their political methods.

There is an extensive range of sources on which to draw. Some educational material such as lectures and schoolbooks were produced locally, but far outweighing

9. Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.177,185.

these is the local history available in meetings, books and pamphlets, newspapers and literature. Lastly, the final years of the nineteenth century saw a stream of commemorations, centenaries and jubilees: some celebrated local life (schools, churches, institutions, the Town Council itself), some focused on national-imperial events but were locally organised.

The four sections of this chapter cover the stages of the argument. The first deals with the historical writings of Joseph Priestley who, though not strictly a local historian, was a local hero and a teacher of history at the Warrington Academy. His writings influenced many of the local elite, and his historical methods legitimised the study of local communities. Secondly, the methods and themes of Warrington's local history are explored. Thirdly, the construction of local patriotism is observed through the recovery and presentation of the histories of Warrington Academy and the Warrington Volunteers. Finally, the chapter recounts the life and career of William Beamont, local historian and Warrington's first mayor, an influential figure who embodied many of the intellectual and political currents noted here.

The writing of local history in Warrington reflected broader historiographical trends. Historical writing in the eighteenth century had begun to evolve along two seemingly divergent paths. The older English universities continued to offer only the classical curriculum demanded by the sons of the aristocracy, gentry and clergy as the unmistakable sign of a gentleman. In contrast, the Scottish universities were establishing a new form of historical inquiry, which emphasised the view that civil societies passed through stages of development (agricultural, feudal, commercial) allowing for a comparative approach between societies and eras. John Millar and Adam Smith were important figures in this new method, but its origins are to be found in the work of David Hume and Voltaire. More significantly, the subject matter of historical inquiry moved

beyond classical texts to embrace the development of trade, religion, law, customs, government and 'manners', or social history. This implied the adoption of new ways of writing; narratives now became interspersed with discursive asides and attempts at synthesis. Appendices and footnotes were added, and the whole began to take on a more recognisably modern scholarly aspect.⁽¹⁰⁾

By the nineteenth century, British history had come to be channelled into providing an explanation for British exclusivism, and especially upon the birth and growth of British freedom. A new popular history grew which celebrated the uniqueness of Britain's history, expressed through the Saxon genesis of liberty and monarchy, the roots of Empire in Tudor trade and the singular constitutional effects of the Reformation and Glorious Revolution. Although appropriating the methods and language of the Scottish school, English historians were driven by resistance to the cosmopolitanism espoused by David Hume, John Millar and Adam Smith, who believed that far from being uniquely British, freedom was a collective European phenomenon.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY: THE METHODS AND USES OF HISTORY

Warrington's first recognised teacher of history, Joseph Priestley taught at Warrington Academy from 1761 to 1769. Few towns had establishments of the calibre of the Academy or teachers of Priestley's quality, though the success of the Academy encouraged the founding of similar establishments; the spread of Nonconformist education dates from this time. Despite expressing a preference for science and mathematics, Priestley prepared his lectures in history very thoroughly, with the result that his notes present the reader with a full validation of the relevance, methodology and

10. Hale and Rigby, *British Historiography*, pp.21-31; J.W. Burrow, *The Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.26-28.

substance of history as it existed in the 1760s. Priestley argued for the value of history to the ‘civil and active life’ which awaited his students. The lectures were “not intended for proficients, but for students unfurnished with the very rudiments of historical and political knowledge”.⁽¹¹⁾

Priestley’s lecture notes were perhaps originally prepared so thoroughly to protect him against the consequences of his stammer, which he admitted made teaching difficult and which had been a contributory factor to his lack of success in religious and social life. But he soon saw a gap in the market for a history text which covered economic and social history, and planned to find a publisher for his lectures. A former pupil has left an account of his teaching style:

What Dr. Priestley added in discoursing from his written lectures (most of which are since published to the world) was pointedly and clearly illustrative of the subject before him, and expressed with great simplicity and distinctness of language, though he sometimes manifested that difficulty of utterance which he mentions in the Memoirs of his life. At the conclusion of his lecture he always encouraged the students to express their sentiments relative to the subjects of it, and to urge any objection to what he had delivered without reserve.... His written lectures he used to permit each student to take and read in his own lodgings. Those on Rhetoric he gave them the liberty of copying, those on History of reading only, as he intended them for publication. From minutes in short-hand, he dictated to each student, by turns, one of the lectures on History, who copied after him in long-hand. From this copy the Doctor told me they were printed, with some additions only, relative to subsequent events.⁽¹²⁾

As a source in itself, revealing the central part played by new history in a

11. Joseph Priestley, *An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life* (London: C. Henderson, 1765), preface v.

12. Joseph Priestley, *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley*. [(1) Introduction by Jack Lindsay, (ed.); (2) Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, (3) Further discoveries in Air] (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1970), p.15.

mid-eighteenth century progressive education, the Lecture Notes are invaluable. Their local significance lies in the number of boys from the town who attended the lectures (and we know that Priestley was partly responsible for the provision of ‘public exercises’ in Warrington, in which “tutors, students and strangers assembled” to hear public lectures).

Priestley’s pedagogic writings on history reveal that even in the 1760s, the concept of empire exercised historians, and required them to explain and describe how empires came about. Priestley therefore also published a Chart of History as an aid to the student, schoolmaster and general reader. The Chart used time-lines to record the development of the major empires and nations: “If the reader carries his eye vertically, he will see the contemporary state of all the empires subsisting in the world, at any particular time.”⁽¹³⁾

Priestley wrote that he felt compelled to publish his chart because the only other available, a French chart, contained so many errors. Constructed in 1769, Priestley’s Chart incorporated changes in the British empire from the peace of 1763, but from then to the end of the century Priestley had left spaces for the purchaser to continue the lines according to subsequent events. He pointed out that “The French chart, though drawn several years ago, supposes everything to remain as they then were to the year 1800”.⁽¹⁴⁾ As Priestley pointed out, this was not wise, and those who purchased the French chart in preference to his own, were wasting their money. Given that the late-eighteenth century was one of the most turbulent periods in history, we can only sympathise with those who had put their faith in useless French time-lines.

Priestley taught his students that there were good social reasons to study history: “an acquaintance with history is agreeable to us as sociable and conversable creatures;

13. Joseph Priestley, *A Description of a New Chart of History, Containing a View of the Principal Revolutions of Empire that have Taken Place in the World, [Inscribed to Benjamin Franklin]* (London: J. Johnson & J. Payne, 1770), p.13.

14. Priestley, *New Chart*, p.9-10.

since it may be considered as a means of extending the power of conversation”.

Furthermore,

the politeness of the times has brought the learned and the unlearned into more familiar intercourse than they had before. They find themselves obliged to converse upon the same topics. The subjects of modern history, policy, arts, manufacture, commerce, etc. are the general topics of all conversation.

Modern history’s advantage was in its being written in “our native tongue”, never in a foreign or dead language, and was therefore accessible to all. Finally, Priestley adds an observation made by David Hume “that the fair sex may learn from history,—that love is not the only passion that governs the male world.”⁽¹⁵⁾

History inclined the student to “free the mind from many foolish prejudices, particularly an unreasonable partiality for one’s own country, which makes a people truly ridiculous in the eyes of foreigners.” What Priestley called this “national prejudice” produced “a most unreasonable aversion to foreign nations and foreign religions which nothing but an acquaintance with history can cure”. But prejudice was difficult to dislodge:

our very signs do to this day bear the traces of the extravagant opinion of the size and strength of the Saracens, which they who returned from the Crusades propagated among their ignorant countrymen.

(The notes refer here to the common inn sign, the Saracen’s Head “which is always drawn to appear exceedingly large and fierce”. The Saracen’s Head in Warrington would soon become the foundation upon which the Greenall family built its brewing business.) History also cures man of the “absurd pride of birth and family and an excessive passion

15. Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy: to which is prefixed an Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life. A new edition with enlargements comprising a lecture on the Constitution of the United States, from the author’s American edition, and additional notes by J.T. Rutt* (London: T. Tegg, 1826), pp.2-25,27-63; Priestley, *Liberal Education*, p.38.

for fame,” and “gives us a deep conviction of the instability of all human things.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Having convinced his students of the value of history, Priestley pressed upon them the rules of study to which the historian should abide, in particular in using and evaluating a full range of sources. For earlier times, Priestley detailed the many sources available: laws and customs, paintings, coins and medals, pillars, edifices, heaps of stones, language, Bardic poems were analysed, and their strengths and weaknesses as evidence weighed. Priestley had this to say about oral history:

Aged parents having little share in, and enjoyment of, the present, they are perpetually reviewing, and taking pleasure in relating, the past scenes of their lives, faithfully retained in memory. The natural talkativeness of old age meeting with the natural inquisitiveness and curiosity of youth, makes a happy coincidence of circumstances, very favourable to the propagation of knowledge and instruction.⁽¹⁷⁾

Oral tradition was “much more extensive and exact than we can well imagine... since persons who had no histories to read would make more inquiries and take more pains to procure information”, although Priestley believed that oral tradition could not carry popular memory accurately beyond two centuries.⁽¹⁸⁾ (It will be seen that Warrington’s local historians used oral tradition extensively in their writings.)

Having assembled sources, and considered the “bias to falsify”, the historian must then write his or her history, a process which was also beset with difficulties. Priestley hoped that his lectures would

suffice to give you an idea of what care, labour and sagacity are necessary to compile a good history of our country, which will make us more sensible of the obligations we are under to those diligent historians and antiquarians who have taken the pains requisite for that

16. Priestley, *Lectures*, p.46.

17. Priestley, *Lectures*, p.66.

18. Priestley, *Lectures*, pp.67-69.

purpose, and increase our contempt for those writers who, without stirring from their closets, or perusing one ancient, original author, assume the name of historians, and publish pompous accounts of their works, when they have done nothing more than republish, in a new and perhaps no better form, the information that had been collected by others. Of the second and third hand compilers, no nation perhaps furnishes a greater number than our own.⁽¹⁹⁾

WARRINGTON'S LOCAL HISTORIANS

Priestley and the Academy left a lasting impression on Warrington's image of itself, as a place capable of scientific and literary excellence, providing a yardstick against which its subsequent cultural development was to be judged. By the nineteenth century, the Academy had closed and its personnel had moved away: it was from the town's inhabitants that historical writing subsequently came, specifically from a small group of men of the professional class. The group included John Fitchett (born in Liverpool in 1776, who worked as a solicitor in Warrington until his death in 1838), his nephew John Fitchett Marsh, and Fitchett-Marsh's friend William Beamont (both solicitors), together with the local doctor, James Kendrick. As they established a common thematic and methodological approach, and disseminated their work in a shared municipal culture of improvement, it is useful to examine their work collectively.⁽²⁰⁾

To all of these men, the writing of local history was clearly more than mere pastime: their output suggests a strong intellectual commitment. Beamont alone published over sixty books and pamphlets. Local history moreover represented a civic responsibility, to be shouldered along with other social and political duties. Beamont was Warrington's first Mayor, and Fitchett Marsh the first Town Clerk. Fitchett Marsh's

19. Priestley, *Lectures*, p.209.

20. James Kendrick, *Profiles of Warrington Worthies* (1853; rpt. Warrington: Harold Wells, 1996).

'Notes on the Literary History of Warrington during the Eighteenth Century', given as a paper to the Mechanics' Institute, demonstrates that the idea of public service was cited as motivation for both municipal and historical tasks. He wrote of his notes as

forming my first attempt at a public lecture, and delivered under the persuasion that the prominent position in which I had recently been placed in connection with municipal affairs imposed on me certain duties and obligations, from which others, better qualified for the performance of them, considered themselves exempt.⁽²¹⁾

In this, his first attempt at historical writing, he outlined to his audience what he considered to be history's worth, in opposing the "narrow sentiment of geographical egotism so improperly called patriotism", and seeking to replace it with an "honest pride in dwelling upon the distinctions acquired by our own country and our own town."

As well as providing the stimulus for historical research, professional and municipal duties also supplied the means. As solicitors and doctors, Fitchett, Beamont, Fitchett Marsh and Kendrick were familiar with Latin and had access to documentary evidence. Consequently, they were comfortable with the empirical demands of research, and they often demonstrated high levels of scholarship. They used the family papers of clients, or papers which came into their possession, for research purposes. As champions of the municipal library and museum (Beamont laid the foundation stone for the new public building in 1855) they were able to channel local documentary collections in private hands into the municipal archive. Other sources became available as the town spread. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the physical growth of the town often occasioned the uprooting of artefacts and archaeological sites. In 1832, land adjoining the parish church was given over for the building of a Clergy Daughters'

21. John Fitchett Marsh, 'Notes on the Literary History of Warrington during the Eighteenth Century', *Warrington Mechanics Institute Lectures, 1848* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1858), p. 1.

School, and the Saxon Mote-Hill was discovered during its construction. When the Quay canal was cut in 1801, the first Roman remains were first discovered. The building of Greenall's brewery uncovered the Roman amphitheatre. Extending the sewer system into Battersby Lane in 1875 revealed a Roman road. And John Stringer, a labourer, digging Mrs. Tinsley's drains, in November 1848, found a Celtic flint.⁽²²⁾ The museum benefited from these discoveries, whilst the local historians wrote papers, books and pamphlets explaining the value of the finds.

Besides documentary and archaeological evidence, Warrington's historians relied on oral tradition and oral evidence to fill in some of the gaps in their knowledge, lending their work a communal aspect. Kendrick was helped by a "very old man" when he tried to identify the house in which Cromwell had stayed during the Civil War: the man had been shown the house as a child. Kendrick also relied on the stories of estate workers in his account of the history of Bewsey Hall. Beamont interviewed the workmen who had dug the Quay Canal about the layout of the remains that they had found, as no plans had been made at the time of their discovery.⁽²³⁾ But it was in the research into the more recent past, examined in detail later in the chapter, that oral evidence was most effectively used, in particular in researching the histories of the Warrington Academy and of the Warrington Volunteers, both institutions dating from the late-eighteenth century.

In summary, drastic changes in historical method, new sources and new themes, and a scholarly interest in more humdrum avenues of research had given a stimulus to a

22. James Kendrick, 'Contributions to the Early History of Warrington', [bound cuttings from the author's column in the *Manchester Courier*, 1839-51] [WALSC: 8054]; James Kendrick, *An account of Excavations made at the Mote Hill, Warrington, Lancashire. Read before a meeting of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire on the evening of Thursday 4th November 1852* (Liverpool: T. Bracknell, 1853), pp.3-4; James Kendrick, *An account of the Roman Remains discovered at Wilderspool, near Warrington, 1868-9* (Chester: Courant Office, 1874); William Beamont, *Orford. A page from the past* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1858), p.2.; William Beamont, *An account of the Roman Station at Wilderspool* (Warrington: J. Wood, 1876), pp.3,6-7,9.

23. Beamont, *Roman Station*, pp.16-19,22-24.

history which was locally produced, was concerned with local subjects and was addressed to a local audience. This local history was connected at many levels with the evolution of a municipal identity. Central to this process was the accumulation of an archive, consisting principally of family documents, which eventually became incorporated into the town's library collection. The museum similarly benefited from the donation and discovery of artefacts of local interest. The clearing of local land, undertaken as roads, railways, canals, and buildings were constructed, literally uncovered the past, and provided new materials for local historians. Besides this, what might be termed a taste for popular memory became a marked feature of local literary output: family memoir, biographies, local histories of schools and churches were privately published or presented as lectures or as newspaper features. All of the local historians examined here published lectures and articles in the Warrington, Liverpool and Manchester press. James Kendrick had a regular column of 'Historical Notes' in the Manchester Courier from 1839 to 1851, and subsequently also in the Warrington Guardian. Apart from the strength this gave to the idea of community, the effect of this was to sanction the institutions of the town: the library, the museum, the town council, the old families who provided political leadership, the cultural institutions such as the Literary and Philosophical Society, the local press. But as we shall see, the intellectual and political circle at the nub of this activity expected a full measure of control over it.

The career of John Fitchett epitomised much of the argument about local patriotism. Fitchett worked all his adult life in Warrington, joined the Warrington Volunteers in 1798, wrote history which combined local legend with imperial themes, and assembled an extensive personal collection of books, mainly literature and history texts, many of which were passed by James Kendrick into the municipal library collection after his death. Fitchett's career as historian and writer was built upon his reputation as a

poet: his work is firmly within the genre of historical-political poetry which the Romantics made fashionable. He wrote:

Come then, thou airy Queen of every Muse,
Imagination; in thy right hand lead
The nymph of graver mien, Historic Truth.⁽²⁴⁾

Fitchett combined the use of local legend, or of the narratives of local landmarks to convey an imperial or patriotic message. His first success came with the publication of his *Bewsey: A Poem* in 1796, which used the tale of Sir John Boteler, the local feudal lord who had been murdered at Bewsey Hall, Warrington, in the sixteenth century. The narrative had become available through the recent publication of a collection of medieval ballads from the Bodleian Museum, and Fitchett used the text as the basis of his poem, adding pieces of local colour and knowledge.⁽²⁵⁾ His description of the murder, however, deviates from the Bodleian Manuscript in one important respect: Fitchett details the efforts of a servant to save Boteler from his attackers. In the original ballad, the servant is female, but in Fitchett's tale, the servant is male, and black:

Tradition tells, a faithful Negro brav'd
Singly their savage rage, and bold oppos'd
Their passage to the room, where thoughtless slept
His dearly honour'd master, till at last,
O'erpowered by numbers, and o'erwhelmed with wounds,
Alas he nobly fell. Their reeking hands,
Unsated yet, had still to execute
Deeds of black import, and dire schemes of blood:
For ah! unarm'd, and in his bed surpriz'd
Vilely they butcher'd the devoted lord!⁽²⁶⁾

24. John Fitchett, *Alfred: A Poem*, Vol. 1, (Preface by Robert Roscoe) (London: William Pickering, 1841), p.1. [WALSC: 5155]

25. John Fitchett, *Bewsey, A Poem* (Warrington: Eyres' Press (Printers), 1796).

26. Fitchett, *Bewsey*, p.9.

Fitchett told his readers that the Bodleian Manuscript had in effect written the part of the black servant out of the text, and he had reclaimed it. He could do this because the story of the black servant was “traditional in the neighbourhood”, a part of popular memory and oral tradition. He also claimed that the servant was interred with Sir John Boteler in the parish church in Warrington, and that “in a niche in the wall is a figure of the Negro, in a recumbent posture, of black stone, or stained composition.”⁽²⁷⁾

It is now impossible to corroborate these claims. Bewsey Hall is a ruin, having passed out of the Boteler family centuries ago in payment of a gambling debt, and pre-industrial popular memory is dimmed. The statuary in the parish church does not include a figure of a black man. However, Fitchett’s poem was a popular success throughout the nineteenth century, having been rewritten as a melodrama for the local stage, catching on to the sentimental imagery of popular abolitionism.⁽²⁸⁾

Fitchett’s next fusion of poetry and history developed into one of the most bizarre works in nineteenth century literature, his *King Alfred: An Epic Poem*. Robert Roscoe (who was the son of William Roscoe, Liverpool MP and abolitionist, and was articled in the law at Fitchett’s office) pointed out in his Preface to the poem that Fitchett was inspired to turn to Alfred’s reign by his professional studies in “the groundwork of the English laws and constitution as framed by our Saxon ancestors.” His object was:

nothing less than to illustrate, in a national Poem, the character and actions of the wisest and greatest of our princes; to give a vivid picture of the times in which he lived, ... and of the religion, laws and learning which he supported and improved.

In this light his work must be regarded not merely as a Poem, but as a biography of the Monarch, a history of his age, and an epitome of its antiquities, its topography, mythologies and civil and military condition. For the completion of such a design, extensive researches

27. Fitchett, *Bewsey*, p.9.

28. Theatre Posters: Warrington Museum and Library Collection. [WALSC: BSW792]

amongst contemporary writers, and repeated excursions throughout various parts of the kingdom, were indispensable; and to the acquisition of information to be thus collected, he freely devoted his fortune, his labour and his time.⁽²⁹⁾

In a sense, Fitchett extended the method he had used in *Bewsey*, that of combining local detail and knowledge with national and imperial themes. As Roscoe reported “Almost every spot which had been the scene of the events that he celebrates, he visited in person.” Fitchett believed that the researches necessary for the reproduction of the “minuteness” of detail of life in Alfred’s time justified his efforts and expense. However, the poem took forty years to write, took six volumes to publish and was until recently acknowledged to be the longest poem in world literature. Its reception, however, contrasted starkly with that of the popular *Bewsey*. Roscoe confessed that had Fitchett lived (he died before the poem was completed) he might have “subjected the whole Poem, as soon as completed to a rigid and final review. Of this advantage, it has unfortunately been deprived.” Indeed, there is no evidence that anyone, including Roscoe, ever read the entire work.⁽³⁰⁾

A further opportunity to attach national and imperial meaning to local legend was presented in 1811 when Phipps Hornby, son of the Rector of Winwick parish, returned to the town after successfully captaining a vessel during a military engagement against the French. Captain Phipps was “entitled to the love of the British Empire”, and his hero’s return was marked by local celebrations. As the Hornbys were related to the Earl of Derby, the ceremony was a prestigious one, with a feast and speeches and many guests of social standing. The event was held under the Winwick Broad Oak, an ancient tree, twelve feet high, with “a canopy of branches a hundred yards in circumference”. For the

29. Fitchett, *Alfred*, preface vi.

30. Fitchett, *Alfred*, preface x.

occasion the tree was topped with the British flag, and the local militia formed a guard of honour. A tableau was enacted in which an ensign carried the French flag and looked “crestfallen”.⁽³¹⁾ History and naval success was linked through the tree: “The OAK has been immemorially the characteristic tree of the British soil. Its timber forms the wooden walls which since the days of Alfred have been the Glory and the Preservation of our nation.” In his speech, the Rev. Chippindall declaimed:

I meddle not with politics as a science, but it seems to me as a subject of congratulation to us all to contemplate the elevated station which our country has assumed in the sight of both hemispheres, chiefly owing to our Navy.⁽³²⁾

William Marriott composed a historical poem, which was published in book form. Marriott’s poem also linked the oak to the success of the imperial navy, beginning with a description of the genesis of the Winwick Broad Oak in ancient times:

Of Win’s famed forest so to thrive,
Was left one spray,
‘Tis yon Broad Oak.⁽³³⁾

Marriott also hailed King Alfred, the founder of the British navy, before describing the strength of the modern navy:

Conq’ring prows in triumph sail,
Far as winds of heaven blow
Foreign regions you shall hail
Far as waves of ocean flow
Woods which boast a woodland race
Wooden bulwarks brave shall yield

31. Rev. G. Chippindall, “*The Winwick Broad Oak*”: *An Account of the Public Dinner given to the gallant Captain Phipps Hornby of H.M. Ship, Le Volage, under Winwick Broad Oak, by all the Inhabitants of Winwick with Hulme, on Monday August 26th 1811* (Warrington: J. Haddock (Printers), 1811).
32. Chippindall, *Winwick Broad Oak*.
33. William Marriott, *The Festival of Win, celebrated beneath his broad oak, and likewise at his good wick* (Stockport: J. Dawson, 1811), p.7.

Vict'ry's flag their tops shall grace
 Alpion's rocks their seamen shield
 Yes, Alpion's sons, rejoicing shall invoke
 On Win's broad tree the wizard of the Oak.
 "All good loyal Britons straightway shall repair" to the Broad Oak,
 Beneath the aged oak of WIN
 Now see the festive scene begin...
 Partake of plenteous dainties stor'd
 The ruddy dames, the sturdy louts
 And wains raise their jocund shouts.⁽³⁴⁾

The next generation of local historians in Warrington looked to the more tangible urban local history for their sources and themes, and thankfully, refrained from communicating through the medium of poetry. Jenny Kermode has described how the "gentry culture of authors and subscribers" which had sustained local history into the nineteenth century began to break down, and its themes shifted slowly to include urban development, trade and industry.⁽³⁵⁾ In Warrington, local historians took pains to point out that history and industrialisation were not incompatible, and Beamont particularly wrote on economic history and the coming of industrialisation to Warrington. Fitchett Marsh stressed that the success of his lectures "protests against the opinion of those who deem it idle to tempt the Muses into what they call the incongenial realm of cotton"⁽³⁶⁾.

But none of the group were industrialists, and their particular interpretations did not reflect the Manchester School ethos. Two themes became predominant in their writings: Protestantism and drink. The first carried a distinctly anti-Catholic message, especially as much of it was written in the years of highest Irish migration and the resurgence of public forms of Catholicism. The second theme eulogised and legitimated the drink culture of

34. Marriott, *Festival of Win*, p.36.

35. Jenny Kermode, 'Lancashire' in C.R.J. Currie and C.P. Lewis, (eds.), *English County Histories: a Guide* (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), pp.216-27.

36. Fitchett Marsh, 'Literary History', p.87.

the town. Both served the purposes of Warrington's Tory politics, the politics of Greenall's, election bribery and Orangeism.

A particular example of this process at work was written by James Kendrick. Kendrick described what happened at Bewsey Hall when James I visited in 1617. Having received complaints from "the lower orders" of the locality, concerning prohibitions on their pastimes, King James published a manifesto at Bewsey, commonly called the "Book of Sports", in which he concluded that restraint on local revelries was orchestrated by:

two sorts of people, wherewith that country is much infested (We mean papists and puritanes). And as for our good People's lawful recreation, Our Pleasure is, that after the end of Divine Service, Our Good People be not disturbed, letted or discouraged, from any lawful recreation; such as dauncing, either men or women, Archerie for men, leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless Recreation, nor from having of May Games, Whitsun Ales and Morris-dances, and the setting up of Maypoles and other sports therewith used.⁽³⁷⁾

Kendrick also uncovered a reference to Warrington by the traveller Barnaby Harrington, known as "Drunken Barnaby", who had written his Journal in rhyming Latin. Kendrick provided a translation, which described Barnaby's visit to Warrington when the River Mersey was in flood:

Thence to Warrington, banks o'erflowed,
Travellers to the town were rowed;
Where supposing it much better
To be drowned on land than water,
Sweetly, neatly I sojourned
Till that deluge thence returned.
Thence to th' Cock i' Budworth where I
Drank strong ale as brown as berry'
Till at last with deep healths filled,

37. Kendrick, 'Contributions', (Book of Sports), No. X, 66.

To my bed I was compelled:
 I for state was bravely sorted'
 By two porters well supported.⁽³⁸⁾

William Beamont similarly wrote nostalgically of old fairs, and regretted the “reform” of British holidays. He noted how recent this change had been, in a public lecture, when he described the old fairs, which were “within the recollection of some here.”⁽³⁹⁾ J.R. Hale points out that the Tory historical narrative relied heavily on this type of “primitive social history”, especially in the 1830s and 1840s: Cobbett was an innovator and exemplar in this field of historical writing (and was quoted approvingly by Beamont).⁽⁴⁰⁾

RADICALS AND VOLUNTEERS IN LOCAL HISTORY

But it was in writing the histories of the recent past that this group could most easily manipulate narratives to their own advantage. The era of their fathers’ generation offered irresistible opportunities for political selectivity and public presentation of municipal qualities of patriotism and leadership. The eighteenth century had witnessed the years of Warrington Academy, a dissenting institution of research and teaching, and the birth of the Warrington Volunteers, formed at the time of the French wars. In writing the histories of these two institutions, the nineteenth-century historians constructed a particular amalgam of respectable radicalism and communal patriotism (and completely erased past conflicts in the town.) In a 1981 article, Hugh Cunningham showed that during these years there were several versions of patriotism in circulation, each adapted to serve the interests of both right and left in popular politics: patriotism could be the

38. Kendrick, ‘Contributions’, No. XIX, 136.

39. George Carter, “William Beamont and the Town of Warrington in the Nineteenth Century”, (Diss: Diploma in Local History, University of Liverpool, 1983), p.26. [WALSC: MS2421]

40. Hale and Rigby, *British Historiography*, p.240.

accessory to radical opposition, or of Disraelian ambition or of populist militarism.⁽⁴¹⁾ Cunningham's chronological outline shows how radicalism, buoyant from the mid-eighteenth century, was gradually weakened by Tory imperialism from the 1870s. This suggests a distinct linear evolution of radicalism and Toryism, representing two entirely separate political philosophies. However, when the writing of history is brought into the picture, it is possible to see how nineteenth-century ideologies reinterpreted eighteenth-century radicalism and popular Toryism, blurring political identities and traditions. Toryism could steal from the radical past, eulogising aspects which Tories at the time had found dangerous and threatening. In Warrington, late-eighteenth century radicalism was represented by the Academy and had been opposed and often victimised by King and Country Tories, symbolised by the Warrington Volunteers. The histories of both these institutions were researched and written locally in the nineteenth century. From these histories it is clear that despite their Tory politics, Warrington's local historians did not seek entirely to repudiate the record of radicalism. Instead, the history of local radicalism was first neutralised and made safe, and then absorbed into their historical narrative of the town. Some radical history was written out, and some was written in. This disguised real events and actual political conditions: hard politics were excluded (often in the name of historical neutrality) or written about disapprovingly. The interpretations of Warrington's local historians partly reflected their own political views, and were partly compounded from a wish to produce a conflict-free picture of the local past. Thus by the late nineteenth century, a composite picture had been fixed, a seamless fusion of radicalism and patriotism, the controversies and hazards inherent in the political activism of Academy personnel (some of whom had been driven from the country and others imprisoned) rendered safe, and harnessed to the cause of political respectability.

41. Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), pp.8-33.

This process was much more important to the historical understanding of the evolution of popular politics and imperialism in Warrington than the symbolic meanings of Saxon moots and other such 'racial' typologies.

The Academy was a fertile area for nineteenth-century local researchers. The location of such academic and literary activity could not fail to leave ample documentary evidence, and these were often in the hands of acquaintances and associates of the local historians. (Henry Bright, a Liverpool Unitarian, compiled a thorough history of the Academy in part using the papers of its founder, John Seddon, which had been found in a Liverpool cheese shop.)⁽⁴²⁾ Again oral testimony was important in uncovering personal memories of former students and of the descendants of tutors, and also in revealing the townspeople's reactions to the intellectual radicalism of the Academy from popular memory. The subsequent histories of Academy staff and students were not the stuff for Victorian sensitivities: Priestley had been driven from the country by riot, Gilbert Wakefield imprisoned for sedition, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, United Irishman, also imprisoned for sedition. Speculations concerning even more dangerous characters were hastily quashed by local historians. Rev. William Turner's claim that the French Revolutionary leader, Marat, had taught French in Warrington was denied by Bright, who quoted Lucy Aikin, the daughter of an Academy teacher: "there was an alarm about Marat, but investigation set the matter at rest: they were certainly different men." Bright also refuted the scholarship of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, who had confused Archibald Hamilton Rowan with "Fighting Fitzgerald, who never was at Warrington." The possibility that Tom Paine had had *The Age of Reason* printed secretly by the Eyre's Press in Warrington was viewed with alarm and dread.⁽⁴³⁾

42. H.A. Bright, 'A Historical Sketch of Warrington Academy', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 9 (1859), p.1.

43. Bright, 'Warrington Academy', p.19,26,43.

The selection of detail and emphasis was all the more plausible for its being carried out under the banner of political neutrality and historical scholarship. Fitchett Marsh explained in his Mechanics' Institute lecture on the subject that he hoped to write with "that freedom from political bias which historical inquiry demands—to make allowance for the political feeling at the time."⁽⁴⁴⁾ The new era of tolerance claimed for mid-Victorian Britain allowed for these reinterpretations. Kendrick conceded that

Advocate as I am for the lasting union of Church and State, I can yet live in harmony with those who have been led to think differently. The reign of bigotry and prejudice has passed away and we are now free to admire the possessors of character and talent, however much they may differ from us in politics and religion.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The radicalism which had been thought so dangerous at the time of the French wars was thus retrospectively moderated and softened. This was certainly the case with Anna Laetitia Barbauld who had lived for fifteen years in Warrington as part of the Academy family. At the time of its publication, Mrs. Barbauld's poetry had been considered both of high quality and extremely politically dangerous, revolutionary and unpatriotic. But H. Stuart Page in his lecture on Mrs. Barbauld to the Warrington Literary and Philosophic Society praised Mrs. Barbauld for the way in which her "ideals" had "helped to make England great and free."⁽⁴⁶⁾

The local historians also used their narratives of the Academy to set out their thinking on the social and intellectual roles befitting to literary women. Lucy Aikin's popular *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth* (1881) was praised by Kendrick: "the subject was happily chosen—a female reign was fitly illustrated by a female pen" treating

44. Marsh, 'Literary History', p.9.

45. James Kendrick, *A Morning's Ramble in Old Warrington* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1855), p.8.

46. H. Stuart Page, 'A Warrington Poetess - Mrs Barbauld', *Proceedings of the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society, 1907-8*, (9th March, 1908), p.6.

only with “the domestic history of the period.” (Lucy Aikin’s work as historian had been praised by Priestley in his lectures, without qualification on the grounds of gender.)⁽⁴⁷⁾ H. Stuart Page thought that Mrs. Barbauld would have become “a modern suffragette” and, had she been, he added pointedly, she would have been “dignified, and not brought it into ridicule.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

It is clear from the tone of the lectures and articles on the Academy that its historians linked the radical politics of its staff with the anti-social behaviour of its students. Rev. William Turner conceded that the rowdiness and loose ways of students had provoked “alarm”, but the threat had come from “hot blooded young Irishmen” and the “sons of planters: the dissipated and inflamed West Indians whose pastime had been from his youth to sport with human sufferings”. Added to these were the “profligate outcasts of our public schools” and the “pampered petling of large fortune” who treated everyone with “a degree of scornful insolence”. Students had shown open support for the colonists during the American war and had given respectable townspeople a fright. Turner detailed other student capers (Archibald Hamilton Rowan switched the inn signs round in one night; students had dressed as ghosts and devils to terrify folk in the dark) and alluded to “other traditions of this kind still current in Warrington.”⁽⁴⁹⁾ Rev. Turner distinguished between these students and those who had brought credit upon the institution and the town: the Wedgwoods, Thomas Malthus, the MPs Henry Beaufoy and Benjamin Vaughn, William Bruce, who had become President of Belfast Academy.

If the Academy was the radical alternative in the later eighteenth century, the

47. Lucy Aikin, *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Longman & Hurst, 1818); Priestley, *Lectures*, p.239.

48. Stuart Page, ‘Warrington Poetess’, p.24.

49. Rev. William Turner, *The Warrington Academy: Part I - An historical account of Warrington Academy. Part II - An historical account of students educated in the Warrington Academy. (reprinted from articles originally published in the ‘Monthly Repository’, Vols VII, IX and X, 1813 -1815)* (1872; rpt. with introduction by George Carter, Borough Librarian, Warrington: Musuem & Libraries Committee, 1957), p.36; Bright, ‘Warrington Academy’, pp.21-23.

Warrington Volunteers represented patriotic values and civic duty. Raised in 1798, the Volunteers became a staple theme of the historical narrative of the town: nothing better illustrated the emotional charge of local patriotism and the significance of local history in setting forth its attractions. The Volunteers had been born out of the fear of invasion, but quickly became diverted, at the request of the government, to protecting the surrounding area from the rebellion of the United Irishmen. They quickly came to symbolise the civic spirit: willing to play their part in national and imperial campaigns, conflating service to country with local leadership and class position.

James Kendrick was the first to popularise the history of the Volunteers, in a lecture given at the Warrington Church Institute in 1856. He told his audience that the Warrington Volunteers had been established in 1798 “for the defence of this country against foreign aggression and for the suppression of internal disloyalty, no worse a foe.” They embodied the “three sterling virtues, which we are prone to think peculiarly British: LOYALTY PATRIOTISM AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP.” Kendrick’s researches were set out in book form and were, it seems, never out of print, if judged by newspaper adverts of local presses. He also donated the relics of the Volunteers to the Warrington Museum.⁽⁵⁰⁾

In 1898, the *Sunrise* newspaper in its special Jubilee edition “dealing with Warrington at different periods”, retold the history of the Volunteers, using Kendrick’s book, the Museum collection and archive, and adding the “memories and mementoes of the sons and grandsons of the original Volunteers.” Warrington, it claimed, had been “always associated with military glory”. The supplement included a newly composed ‘Song for the Volunteers’:

Who fears to speak of ‘98?

50. James Kendrick, *Some Account of the Loyal Warrington Volunteers of 1798* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1856), p.7.

Not Warrington, I wot
 When strange disturbance stirred the state
 And rebel blood was hot.
 Followed by the Chorus:
 Death would face undaunted, fired by your renown,
 For the dear old country and the 'good old town'.⁽⁵¹⁾

Kendrick had stressed that although the Volunteers were answering the nation's call, they had been formed "from the simultaneous wish of the townsmen", they had cost the government nothing, having paid for their own uniforms and arms, aided by £250 raised by the townspeople.⁽⁵²⁾ Crompton and Venn's history shows that the list of names who had financed the corps—Patten, Blackburne, Beamont, Clare, Fitchett, Greenall, Glazebrook, Gaskell, Kendrick—were those of the principal families in the town who had retained or since achieved political and social power. Each history underlined the links between the original membership of the Volunteers and the generation of municipal leaders who emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. James Ashton, "Old Death or Glory", had been apprenticed to the father of William Beamont, "a fact of peculiar interest" wrote the *Sunrise* in 1898, "for we have just celebrated the Jubilee of the Incorporation of the Borough, for which Mr. Beamont was a prime mover." The paper noted that Beamont's father had also been a member, as had James Kendrick's father, and John Fitchett himself.⁽⁵³⁾

The *Sunrise* supplement, published in 1898 to celebrate the Volunteer's centenary, took the story of the Volunteers beyond Kendrick's paper, detailing their subsequent reformation in 1859. Although once again a response to another French invasion scare, the decision to reform was not taken without strong criticism. John Clare was by now the

51. Walter Crompton and George Venn, *The Loyal Warrington Volunteers, 1798-1898* (Warrington: Sunrise Publishing, 1898), preface xxv.

52. Kendrick, *Volunteers of 1798*, p.3.

53. Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, pp.4,14,73.

sole survivor of the 'Old Bluebacks', as the Warrington Volunteers had been known, and his speech at the public meeting called to reconstitute the regiment contributed markedly to the decision. "In the year 1798," he said "during the Irish Rebellion, both he and his father were both proud to carry their muskets three times a week and to be drilled in a field on which Cockhedge factory now stands." In 1861, the Mayor convened another public meeting to appeal for an increase in the Volunteers' present strength. By this time, Clare was too ill and old to appear in public, but arranged that a letter from him be read out to the audience. One hundred and forty new recruits answered the call.

But the records of the Warrington Volunteers which Kendrick and Bennett chose not to use tell a different story. The money which was raised by the townspeople to clothe and arm the Volunteers was so slow in coming that the town owed over two hundred and fifty pounds to a Birmingham armoury. A Report written in August, 1799 described the Warrington Volunteers as "disorganised" and called attention to the "field of exercise almost deserted" and to the high level of fines incurred by their "neglect". At the same time, receipts for a Volunteers' dinner revealed charges for "93 broken glasses at 4d a glass".⁽⁵⁴⁾ The heroic role of John Clare must also have been sadly revised had these records been used. Clare's boast of his drilling three times a week with his father would have been dented by the publication of a letter, dated 15 April, 1799 from John Clare which explained that his father could not leave his business in St. Helens to attend drill (and anyway was suffering from a splinter of oak in his foot—a highly symbolic disability). Clare wrote "we have a deal of Business, which must be attended to, or else no soldiering."⁽⁵⁵⁾ This contradicts Clare's own words in moving the resolution in 1859 to re-establish the corps, that he "assured them that it cost him much time, and a great

54. Papers relating to the Warrington Volunteers, 1798-1802. [WALSC: MS2327]

55. Volunteer Papers; Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, p.19.

deal of money; but all considerations of that kind he threw to the wind.”⁽⁵⁶⁾ In Crompton and Venn’s history of the Volunteers, this letter was reprinted and treated in jocular vein, but the name of the sender was removed, as it clearly would have contradicted their idealisation of Clare.

The political misdoings of the Volunteers and Militia were not entered into at all by their historians. When two radical Unitarians, Mellor and Pilling organised a petition for political reform, Captain Lyons confiscated the petition and put Mellor and Pilling in jail. Their release was only obtained after the Gaskells had contacted Lord Brougham who had raised the matter in Parliament. But these were regrettable incidents which presumably did not need to be remembered by subsequent generations. Reminders of Irish rebellion however served useful political purposes in the 1850s and 1860s, as Chapters Nine and Ten of this study will show.

The history of the local Volunteers provided the foundation upon which the later Volunteer movement was built. The next chapter will set out how the emotional hold of local patriotism was finally recognised by national government in its military reforms in 1874, when the regimental structure of the army was reorganised to correspond with local areas. This was no more than an admission that local patriotism played a significant part in recruiting men and in cementing popular loyalty to national (and increasingly imperial) campaigns.

The rhetoric of inclusivity disguised some of the calculated strategies which were required to preserve the distinctions of rank and class. There was also a suspicion that Warrington’s youth were not really suitable Volunteers material, being early initiated into the habits of drink and merry-making. In 1852, another French scare opened the question of forming a Rifle Corps. Strong arguments were used against the plan, not least of

56. Volunteer Papers; Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, p.72.

which concerned the fear that young men so occupied might be starting upon “the path to dissipation.” It was argued that as they would be subject to military law, the young men could be sent to other towns (which drew the sarcastic response that few would object if they were). Perhaps in an effort to deal with the admission of potential Volunteers’ bad habits, a Cadet Corps was formed (catering for boys aged ten to fourteen) which would act as a feeder to the ranks. It attracted forty members, each paying 25s and 6d for an outfit. Two ceremonial occasions are recorded in which they took part; at the commemoration in Warrington of Prince Albert’s funeral and in the following year, at the funeral ceremony of a twelve-year-old Ensign in the Corps, and son of John Bowes, headmaster and author of a school textbook on Britain’s Colonies.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Kendrick had proudly pointed out that the Volunteers obscured all distinctions of private life: shopkeepers, professional men, clergy and even poets were all in the ranks. But there is some evidence that even the middle class found military life too exacting. Without any trace of irony, the Sunrise supplement described how the seedsman, Thomas Pierpoint, had been constrained by his business interests from attending regular drill, so “like a true patriot, he had sent his apprentice instead.” He had bought the lad’s uniform and undertook to provide all his Volunteer’s requisites for the six years of his apprenticeship. Other tradesmen followed suit.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Class inequalities provided the most obvious grounds by which distinctions were maintained. In December, 1859, a meeting was convened under the auspices of the Workingmen’s Local Improvement Society in an effort to induce working men to join. The problem of uniform was immediately raised. Working men could not afford the full dress and equipment, and declined to accept the offer of a free uniform. A modified

57. Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, p.99; William Bowes, *Notes on the Colonial Empire of Great Britain*, (2nd ed.) (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1869).

58. Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, p.84.

version was suggested, but rejected as “not sufficiently soldier—like,” which would “detract very considerably from the martial appearance of the Company, especially on drills and reviews” (which was anyway all that Volunteers did). Efforts to recruit working men had been in this case “unproductive for the time being”.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Despite the claim to communal inclusivity, radical criticism of the Volunteers was constant. Military action against United Irishmen would not have been popular in radical quarters. (Priestley’s lectures for instance are explicit about, and critical of, the colonial relationship between England and Ireland. Priestley himself was an honorary member of the United Irishmen.) John Clare’s symbolic value as an old soldier did not impress radicals in the 1840s, when Clare was a guest at a dinner for Operative Conservatives (or a “feed of the gormandizing Tories of South Cheshire”, as radicals termed it.) One wrote:

It is laughable to see these great tories now courting the favours of the operative classes, when but a short time ago they denominated them ‘the ragged crew’, ‘the swinish multitude’, ‘the unwashed’,... Now we happen to know that this was *not* an operative dinner—one MP, one barrister, lawyers—*Captain* Clare who boasts that he has borne arms for forty years in support of his Church and King, and a few reverends, a few rabid tories from Wigan, tory farmers, tory traders and one pauper... Mr Malley, the £30 a year Grand Secretary to the protestant, alias Orange Association, (another operative!) read the speech.⁽⁶⁰⁾

In the 1850s the remnants of the Academy’s social and intellectual circle opposed the setting up of a Rifle Corps. Robert Gaskell voted against the proposal at the meeting to form a new Corps. Philip Carpenter wrote “I abhor the trade of mankilling—teaching ignorant men the trade of mankilling was a very wicked employment” in a letter to the *Warrington Guardian*. Kendrick reacted by warning that present and future generations

59. Crompton and Venn, *Warrington Volunteers*, p. 78.

60. Newspaper Cuttings, 1875-1902 : consisting mainly of articles on the Warrington Museum and Library. [WALSC: 80841]

would not be up to the standards which the first Volunteers had set. “We ourselves are heroes of punier times”, he said, and blamed “teetotalism and vegetarianism” for having softened the appetites of Warrington’s manhood for “the Garswood ale and the roast goose of Penketh”, a reference to Carpenter, an early member of the Vegetarian Society. Carpenter had recently written and published a tract in Warrington, *A Few Reasons For Not Eating Dead Bodies*.⁽⁶¹⁾

THE CIVIC FATHER OF HIS NATIVE TOWN: THE LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM BEAMONT

The life and career of William Beamont illustrates many of the connected aspects of Warrington’s modern, urban identity—with its distinct sense of place, its people and their history, and its place in the nation and Empire, defined by its new governmental status as a municipal borough. Born in 1797, the son of a draper (who also served in the Volunteers) Beamont was articled to the law in Knutsford at the age of fourteen, eventually setting up his own law firm in Warrington’s market place. He soon became active in a number of the town’s cultural and philanthropic areas, such as the Literary and Philosophical Society, Mechanics Institute, and Natural History Society. Many of these pursuits became focused upon the municipal library and museum, which he and his friend John Fitchett Marsh helped establish (jointly organising a bazaar in 1855 which raised £1,026.) His first attempt at local history was his publication of the *Legh Rental*, a detailed description of sixteenth century Warrington, which was published by the Chetham Society in 1849. He went on to produce over sixty books and pamphlets, and to be elected Vice President of Chetham’s Society. George Carter describes Beamont’s historical work as “scholarship of a high level” which exhibited “the approach to history

61. Kendrick, *Volunteers of 1798*, p.7; Russell Lant Carpenter, *Memoirs of the Life and Work of Philip Pearsall Carpenter: chiefly derived from his letters* (London: C. Kegan & Co., 1880), pp.135,161.

of a trained legal mind with substantially more to offer than the romantic musings of many of those who are currently derided for their antiquarianism.”⁽⁶²⁾ Beamont travelled regularly and widely, often describing his experiences in journals, diaries and more publicly, in newspapers and lectures. He frequently combined travel and historical research, in Ireland in 1842, 1844 and 1845, on the continent and in Egypt in 1862, where he paid particular attention to local customs and religious practice.

The political leadership of a town with municipal status gave Beamont access to documents and the opportunities to mix in higher circles than would be expected for a mere small-town solicitor who had left school at fourteen. His historical understanding, and his enthusiasm for travel played no insignificant part in developing the political ideas which he used to bring municipalisation about, being often constructed out of historical precedent. When the suggestion was first made in the 1840s that the town become incorporated, a large opposition gathered behind the argument that incorporation would mean expense and imposed taxes. Beamont’s *Necessity for a Corporation: A Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warrington*, published in 1846, galvanised opinion behind the eventually successful incorporation campaign.⁽⁶³⁾ The uses of history, and the knowledge gleaned from his travels underpinned his argument. He began his address with an analysis of the “authorities in whom the government of Warrington resides”; the magistrates, constables and commissioners of police, outlining their historical development and constitutional role. This inadequate system was then compared to the ‘corporate system, which he had observed on his travels to Germany, where he had been struck by the difference between town and village: the former was invested with local self-government and the privileges of incorporation, whilst the latter remained in a

62. Carter, “William Beamont”, pp.16-7.

63. William Beamont, *Some remarks as to the neccessity of a Corporation: A Letter to the people of Warrington* (Warrington: J. Haddock (Printers), 1846).

dependent role. Beamont argued that in the past guilds and fraternities had acted in the common interest and been “semblances of corporations”. But since those times, as David Hume had pointed out, the people had become servile, dependent on kings and great lords; they formed no community and were not regarded as a body politic. Since then, the rapid growth of manufacturing towns had left some populous areas run like villages. A charter for Warrington would be a declaration, as charters in England had ever been, that its people should not be treated as slaves.

Municipalisation had gathered local power to the urban middle class at the expense of the older, traditional forms of control, and Beamont was sensitive to the need to reposition the community with respect to the local landowning families. Beamont’s involvement in associations such as Chethams and the Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society brought him into association with the local aristocracy. Family histories and estate histories can be interpreted as a form of cultural appropriation, as an appeal to continuity in a social environment which was changing rapidly, or as a form of witness to a vanishing world. Beamont met many aristocrats in the execution of his duties. His visit to Eaton Hall to have dinner with the Marquis of Westminster just prior to the publication of the *Calendar of Charters at Eaton Hall*, and the Cheshire edition of the *Domesday Book* (which Beamont had edited) shows his own sense of social uncertainty in such company. His hosts had shown him “gracious courtesy”. He wrote “I hope I have learnt much from this visit and that I shall practice it in my own conduct.” On visiting Lord Stanley and finding him confined to bed with the gout, he remarked upon “the unnatural habits as to living and diet which great men lead.” All this made him “thank gracious providence to be middle class and equally removed from the glare and glitter of rank and station and the ennui and listlessness of wealth and idleness.”⁽⁶⁴⁾

64. Carter, “William Beamont”, p.17.

Beamont's political philosophy, a form of civic Toryism, was reflected in his response to those who feared that incorporation would bring on "the bickerings of an annual franchise": municipal posts and offices should be taken without payment by the "wealthier classes" and he called upon the "leaders of trading and commercial activity" to volunteer for municipal duties.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Local history became an alternative means of expressing and complimenting civic and communal processes which disguised ideological difference and dispensed with the need for explicitly political content.

Not surprisingly, Beamont was elected the town's first mayor in 1847, with John Fitchett Marsh as his town clerk. His inauguration was, of course, an entirely new and invented ceremony, but one which needed to reflect the town's history. The mayor thus encouraged the 'traditional' custom of 'walking the boundaries', which took place on 10 September, 1847, accompanied by councillors and townspeople (and one which does not appear to have lasted very long, and was soon to be replaced by the less strenuous traditional quaffing of sherry.) Beamont also designed the municipal coat of arms, along customary heraldic lines.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Beamont's hopes for civic altruism and a generous politics never materialised. The real politics of the town were controlled by Tory brewers with a particular fondness for Orange patriotism, with standards of municipal conduct which were often corrupt and mean-spirited. Beamont's belief in service selflessly and disinterestedly given hid real political conditions which were eventually challenged by radical working men: in the process, the class nature of municipal control was exposed. Even the municipal library's policy on the lending of books was class-oriented, though the narrative of the development of civic provision hid the fact.

The educated portion of Warrington was very proud of its municipal library. They

65. Beamont, *Necessity of a Corporation*.

66. *Warrington Examiner*, 8 June 1889.

liked to claim its having been descended from the Academy, and that when reconstituted as a municipal institution in 1847, it was the first rate-supported library in the country. Beamont and Fitchett Marsh had founded the library, and they, together with James Kendrick and William Robson, had donated many items to it. Fitchett Marsh impressed the House of Commons Committee on widening access to public libraries in 1848, but in Warrington, the system of lending books caused complaint, and eventually a public campaign to broaden access was commenced. For whilst the library was rate supported, and any inhabitant could read books within its reading room, only those who paid an extra subscription could take books home, a system which effectively precluded working class families from borrowing books.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The Liberal *Warrington Examiner* in an editorial in February, 1886 described the system as “a reproach to Warrington as a community”, pointing out that even Widnes now had a free library.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Letters to the press complained that the library was “a publicly paid for, but privately managed concern.”⁽⁶⁹⁾ The Trades Council arranged meetings of protest. Beamont, who still controlled the Museum, Library and Arts Committee forty years after he had founded them replied that cost ruled out the introduction of a free service, though the suspicion arose that policy, not cost, was Beamont’s motive. Workingmen, he wrote, could rise in the world without free libraries, and “the discomforts and noises of children and of household work” in poor homes would prevent sufficient care being taken of books.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Working men wrote angry letters to the local press. One asked “what share he is to have in bringing up his children if he is only to eat and sleep at home as would be the case

67. *Jubilee of Warrington Museum and Library* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1898). [WALSC: P2074]

68. *Warrington Examiner*, 1, 6 February 1886.

69. *Warrington Examiner*, 13 March 1886.

70. *Warrington Examiner*, 22 May 1886.

nearly if he was to devote a few nights to the reading room?”⁽⁷¹⁾

One solution to emerge from the agitation was that the corporation extend free use to all in honour of the forthcoming Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria.⁽⁷²⁾ A packed town meeting called by the mayor supported this option. The Jubilee Committee set up by the Council to organise municipal festivities also supported the measure.⁽⁷³⁾ But the Museum, Library and Arts Committee were unmoved. At this point, the radical MP Charles Bradlaugh became involved, questioning the Attorney General in the House of Commons on Warrington’s lending system, and asking for advice on its legality. There was popular elation in the town when the Attorney General’s reply made clear that the policy was indeed illegal. The Museum, Library and Arts Committee circumvented further legal challenge by making a penny charge for each book borrowed. Campaigners remained angry: the committee had escaped further legal challenge without conceding free use. Worse, working men were obliged to provide a voucher with every penny paid, signed by two persons who attested to the lender’s respectability. Thus, the *Warrington Examiner* wrote, the working man was treated like a suspect, whilst subscribers, who might be any “scented popinjay” required no such testimonials.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Perhaps Beamont realised that political conditions were changing, and that his model of municipal utilitarianism, an ethos based on largesse and paternalism was already increasingly insufficient to meet the demands of the age of Chamberlain and municipal socialism. The celebrations to mark Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887 provided the opportunity for his last contribution to local affairs.

Beamont’s suggestion that the town mark the Jubilee by providing public parks was

71. *Warrington Examiner*, 22 May 1886.

72. *Warrington Guardian*, 17 November 1886.

73. *Warrington Examiner*, 23, 27 April 1887.

74. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 April, 26 November 1887; *Liverpool Courier*, 14 September 1887.

born out of his proclaimed interest in social conditions. He argued that this would be of great benefit to the poor who needed green spaces, singling out Howley (an area of large Irish population) as an example of poor housing and cramped conditions, and that with industrial development at its current rate there would soon be no green land left in the town. In further presentation of his argument, Beamont described how the towns in Egypt which he had visited in the 1860s always had large open spaces. In 1842 he had been impressed by his visit to Phoenix Park in Dublin.⁽⁷⁵⁾ And to emphasise the value of his opinion, he pointed out that he had been charged with organising the celebrations in Warrington for the coronation of the present Queen's grandfather, William IV. But again, historical and imperial language masked unpleasant political details: the present mayor was busy fending off corruption allegations after having bought the Old Warps estate from the executors of a deceased local councillor, using municipal funds but without municipal sanction. Beamont's timely advice allowed a face-saving scheme to be cobbled together which saw the estate pass into municipal control, to be renamed Victoria Park.⁽⁷⁶⁾

The progress of the museum also demonstrates the stages from private to public provision which characterised Beamont's role in local politics, and the roles that local history and Empire played in negotiating that process. Begun as an assortment of specimens assembled by the Natural History Society (Beamont's personal donations were mainly of stuffed birds: he kept an eagle called Desmond) municipal support for a new museum building was committed as soon as the town became incorporated. Many members of the town's intellectual elite were benefactors to the museum's collection, most notably Beamont, James Kendrick, Philip Pearsall Carpenter, William Robson and J

75. 'Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen', *Warrington Observer* (Supplement, June 1887); William Beamont Diaries: Diary of a Tour in Ireland, 18 October 1842. [WALSC: MS295]

76. 'Golden Jubilee', *Warrington Observer*; Carter, "William Beamont", p. 11.

McMinnies, the future Liberal MP.⁽⁷⁷⁾ James Cooper, its first curator, had a similar background to his municipal masters. Although from Carlisle, and of humbler social origins (he had been a handloom weaver), Cooper had distinguished himself both in natural history and in the Carlisle Volunteers, having “been engaged in suppressing some political riots” there.⁽⁷⁸⁾ As the local landscape was dug up for urban development, Roman, Celtic and Saxon remains were deposited with the museum. Charles Madeley, the curator, described how the collection had been formed and enlarged, through purchase and exchange but mainly through donation. He paid handsome tribute to its local benefactors, including “the generosity and thoughtfulness of several Warringtonians of distant lands who in their exile have not forgotten their native town or its museum.” Items from India, Canada, Madagascar and South and West Africa were now displayed thanks to their public spirit. Madeley had outlined these achievements at the dinner to celebrate the Jubilee of the Museum and Library in December, 1898.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Perhaps in a less guarded moment, in the pages of the *Museums Journal* in October, 1904, Madeley was less reverent on the subject of local collections:

[a] cabinet of curiosities developed into a collection of monstrosities: it is no longer enough to provide a room and then ask the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to dump into it whichever of their possessions they were most tired of.⁽⁸⁰⁾

Imperial trappings were part of the museum’s attraction. The *Warrington Guardian* reported “important additions to the loan collection” in November, 1891. A collection of curios belonging to Major Mackie of the Second Queen’s Regiment, collected from

77. *Warrington Guardian*, 17 December 1898.

78. Berry Kendrick, ‘The Life of James Cooper: Late Curator of the Warrington Museum and Library’, (1879), p.4. [WALSC: MS1904]

79. *Warrington Guardian*, 17 December 1898.

80. Charles Madeley, ‘District Museums: A Suggestion to County Councils’, *Museums Journal*, (October 1904), pp.117.

Abyssinia, Egypt and the Sudan had been lent to the museum for a short time. The items included a fragment of the diary of General Gordon at Khartoum, found in a hut in Hebbeh where Major Stewart had been murdered, together with one of the medals struck by Gordon to reward his men during the siege.⁽⁸¹⁾

By the end of the nineteenth century, the museum had begun to make conscious efforts to attract working-class visitors as part of its educational activity, but also perhaps to deflect controversy surrounding working-class access to the library. Madeley firmly espoused the project: “we now require museums to justify their existence by diffusing and advancing knowledge”. He outlined two factors which went to build a good museum: a capable staff and “public spirit or local patriotism.”⁽⁸²⁾ Lectures to working men were arranged (advertised welcomingly as ‘Chats with Working Men’) when the contents of the various departments were displayed and discussed. Free lectures were also given: Rev. John Yonge used the occasion of the Queen’s Jubilee in 1887 to lecture upon ‘Working Class England, Fifty Years Ago and Now’, which drew a large crowd. Rev. Yonge, a Clarion Socialist, opened his talk with a declaration of his support for a free lending library and then expressed dissatisfaction with the municipal elite. The museum and library would develop rapidly, he argued, only when a “larger public spirit began to prevail amongst the richer classes of the locality”. As to his larger theme, this was “unquestionably the day of the working class.” Two hundred years ago, the working man was little better than a bond slave; fifty years before it had been illegal for working men to combine. The age of Queen Victoria was the age of labour.⁽⁸³⁾

Much academic interest has been invested in the study of identities in Britain, in describing the mushrooming of imperial identity as the nineteenth century progressed,

81. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 November 1891.

82. Madeley, ‘District Museums’, pp.117-119.

83. *Warrington Examiner*, 9 April 1887.

culminating in the excess of jingoism as the century ended. The writing of a nationalist history has been judged to have contributed to this mentality, and the writing of local history to have helped to provide the foundations upon which the myths of Englishness were constructed. But the direction of local history in the nineteenth century was often less concerned to implant Saxon myths than to describe and explain how the urban and industrial landscape had come about. Central to this process was the emergence of a middle class whose status and power came not from industrial wealth but from the production of intellectual and cultural goods and services. Their energies were channelled into the process of municipalisation, and the writing of local history was part of that process. It is clear, also, that these were essentially political strategies, which might reduce class tensions, but could also provoke them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUNICIPAL AND MILITARY VALUES: THE PROBLEM OF THE WORKING - CLASS IMPERIALIST CROWD

If the central argument of this study—that the process of municipalisation reveals motives for the growth of the imperial mentality that are more complex than historians of popular imperialism have suggested so far—is to be sustained, the problematic area of military history must be explored. The direct relationship between the growth of patriotism and militarism in the late-nineteenth century seems obvious. The popular success of the army and the growth in interest in military matters are seen as symptomatic of deep changes in British social thought, reflecting the victory of bombast over humanitarian and radical principles, and in turn driving the irrational and bellicose spirit of jingoism.⁽¹⁾ There is however a local aspect to this, as military reform forged links between regiments and localities, but it is an aspect which has been little explored in studies of the social history of the army and in studies of the relations between military and social life. This chapter therefore asks two questions. How were the links between military and municipal life developed and maintained? And how does the local focus affect the view that militarism was a sign of working-class jingoism? It is argued here that a particular set of municipal values were connected to military values, but this in itself does not imply that society became militarised, and in the accepted sense of that word, it is to be doubted whether the evidence presented here can sustain such a view. Popular support was given to the common soldier, not to the military system. Importantly, this chapter is able to draw on evidence which has not been used elsewhere, particularly in the role of the local press in the projection of the image of the military, in the records of municipal institutions, and in

1. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism, A Study*, 7th Impression, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), pp. 128-138; Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.2.

the letters of soldiers serving in South Africa.

The question of popular support for the military, particularly revolving around the apparent enthusiasm displayed by the working class for the military life, is taken as a measure of their deeper feelings about imperialism generally. John MacKenzie, in his study *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, draws attention to what he describes as “a paradox of British history”; the British were relatively anti-militarist in the nineteenth century, yet historians need to explain the ubiquity of military images and the constant cultural presentation of colonial warfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁽²⁾ MacKenzie details the use of military images in the new mass-commercialised culture which, he argues, together with the moral and intellectual justifications forwarded by writers such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, provided the cultural framework for the transformation in popular attitudes to the military, from social pariahs and agents of political repression to war heroes and defenders of British liberties.⁽³⁾ The methodology which MacKenzie employs analyses some aspects of popular culture (art, band music, music hall, juvenile literature, war correspondents) for their explicit military content, but as with his other work, does not assess its impact, particularly on working-class thought—and this is a central weakness.

Both Michael Blanch and Richard Price, in separate studies of the Boer War, have adopted more systematic approaches to the problem of uncovering military-social links, though their conclusions are conflicting. Blanch’s statistical evidence suggests that almost a quarter of males between the ages of seventeen and forty joined one or other of the military organisations (Regular army, Militia, Volunteers, Yeomanry) in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, indicating a high level of popular support for the

2. John M. MacKenzie, (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.19.
3. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism*, pp.2-7.

army. Blanch concludes from this that enthusiasm for the Boer war was unequivocal amongst the working class.⁽⁴⁾ Richard Price however questions whether the motives of the part-time military were so simple, and proffers alternative explanations for their involvement, such as sporting and social factors. He concludes that the influx of new Volunteers at the time of the Boer War was due to a rise in unemployment and “was not governed by the patriotism that was attributed to them.”⁽⁵⁾ Price’s use of other indicators—voting patterns in the ‘khaki election’, the Working Men’s Club Movement, the Jingo crowd—all suggest that “the typical working-class reaction was not imperialistic, patriotic or jingoistic.”⁽⁶⁾ Blanch, on the other hand, argues that working-class nationalism was “innate”, and the myths of nationalism gave the working-class both a status and a sense of belonging.⁽⁷⁾ Where they both agree, however, is in believing that working-class thought was entirely reactive, reflecting, in Blanch’s phrase, no “enduring or systematised ideological value system.”⁽⁸⁾

More detailed analyses by social historians of the military show that if social and military attitudes converged this was not simply as a result of the wild divergence of social thought from its previous altruistic path; the military itself was forced to undergo significant reform, sometimes with extreme reluctance, in attempts to counter poor image, persistently low recruitment and internal social problems. This context, usually ignored by cultural historians, is important here, in that it explains the framework within which the link between civic and military institutions was created. The chapter therefore begins with a general outline of nineteenth-century defence policy and a narrative account

4. M.D. Blanch, ‘British Society and the War’ in Peter Warwick, (ed.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Longman, 1980), p.214.

5. Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp.231-2.

6. Price, *An Imperial War*, p.238.

7. Blanch, ‘British Society and the War’, p.236.

8. Blanch, ‘British Society and the War’, p.236.

of locally significant military events. The chapter then continues with an exploration of aspects of the communal experience of the Boer War, looking particularly at the Volunteers, the local press, the rituals of municipal support (used in the sense of assistance rather than specific political approval), before ending with a more detailed analysis of the roots of the municipal-military values which seemed to emerge in the late-nineteenth century.

The methodology used in this chapter assumes that in order to understand working-class responses to military-imperial ventures, it is necessary to take a broad picture which combines work, community, trade unions and politics, sport and leisure, which might approximate to how communities associated separate features of their lives into a whole view, so reflecting some of the nuances in this very complex question. The frameworks used by MacKenzie, or by Blanch extrapolate the workers' views from external evidence, and thereby misread the signs. My argument is that support for the military was based largely on support for the common soldier, especially for the 'citizen soldiers' in the Volunteers and the Army reserve. Military values were expressed as community values, rivalling the rhetoric of aggressive patriotism. Hard political support for imperial war was much more limited, in time and in numbers, than this communal relationship between town and military might suggest, so that opposition to imperial war did not preclude active measures to help soldiers and their families.

Regimental sources are used, as are municipal records of commemorations and civic rituals which took on a military component. Employers' records reveal evidence of their attitudes to militarism, particularly in their public pronouncements to their employees. The local press is again used for the range of topics with which it dealt, from political debates to pulpit to sports reports. Drama and local literature which conveyed the image of the soldier also uncovers the role of the military in the production of

municipal culture. But the most significant evidence used here are the words of the common soldier, the “Warringtonian at the front”, whose letters from South Africa relate the military—municipal link at its most rudimentary. There are two advantages to this approach: unlike other analyses which employ a tightly focused time frame, this chapter is able to take a long-term look at the development of military history in the town, and secondly, in the area of popular culture, the local press reveals what people actually did in their leisure hours to a far greater degree than recent studies of popular culture and the military, which concentrate on cultural production and only speculate on its reception.

THE LOCALISATION OF THE MILITARY

The army faced two enduring problems in the nineteenth century: it could not recruit enough men and its public image was poor. For the first half of the century, recruitment was effected by traditional, often underhand, methods employed by the recruiting sergeant, agent and press gang, who had devised many a ruse to coerce the gullible and the desperate into uniform. The soldier would be most commonly Irish, or from a rural background, without education or work. But a combination of demographic and economic factors, most conspicuously the Famine and subsequent emigration from Ireland, together with changing population patterns in England and the decline of agricultural communities, seriously affected the army’s traditional recruiting methods. Consequently, as Alan Ramsay Skelley states, the Victorian army “faced severe manpower shortages throughout virtually the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century.”⁽⁹⁾ The problem was accentuated by the realisation that the small wars that Britain tended to wage were no longer typical. Sooner or later, Britain might become engaged in wars similar to the Franco-Prussian War or the American Civil War, both

9. Alan Ramsay Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.236.

highly technical encounters involving mass armies, and its shortage of soldiers would tell.

The 1868 Liberal government was required to confront the problems of military strategy, poor recruitment and a popular mandate for retrenchment. Gladstone's Secretary of War, Sir Edward Cardwell instituted a series of changes which became known as the 'Cardwell Reforms'. In an attempt to make soldiering a more attractive option, conditions of service were improved and brutal punishments were stopped. Recruitment of the officer class was opened to the rising middle classes when the system of purchasing commissions was ended.⁽¹⁰⁾

Cardwell's major initiatives involved the creation of a reserve capability (by introducing 'short-service' contracts, of twelve years duration, partly to be spent with the Colours and the remainder in the Reserve) and the fusion of the regular, reserve and auxiliary units under a single command. But most significant for this study was the policy which became known as localisation. Cardwell outlined the policy in the House of Commons in 1872:

It is intended to associate every regiment and battalion of the Army with some particular district of the country in order that the ties of kindred and of locality may bring into the army a better class of men and a greater number than now present themselves.⁽¹¹⁾

The line regiments of the standing army were reorganised into 166 divisions, each corresponding to county boundaries. Auxiliary forces, the militia, yeomanry and Volunteers were tied into the regimental structure more formally. These new recruiting areas provided two regular battalions, two militia battalions and a unit of local Volunteers. At least one regular unit would be serving abroad at any time, whilst the other would be stationed in its new home. This system was designed to improve

10. Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*, pp.251-260; Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), pp.177-205; Byron Farwell, *For Queen and Country* (London: Lane, 1981), pp.153-161.
11. Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*, p.253.

recruitment for active service, establish a reserve army of trained men, and maintain links between the two. Regimental names were changed and localised, and conscious efforts were made to establish a shared identity between local towns and ‘their’ regiments. It was hoped that the army would not now be judged outside the usual social parameters, peopled by the social extremes of wayward aristocracy and unemployable underclass, but would instead be regarded as part of the fabric of everyday life, an item on the social calendar, local heroes from the local barracks. Cardwell and his supporters believed that this would bring about fundamental change not only in willingness to enlist but also in public respect towards the army.

The principles which underlay the localisation strategy reflected the realities of low recruitment and poor image. The army knew why men enlisted, and it had nothing to do with patriotism. The first Royal Commission on Recruiting reported in 1861 that

but few enlist from any real inclination for the military life and that Enlistment is, for the most part, occasioned by want of work—by pecuniary embarrassment—by family quarrels—or by any other difficulties of a private nature.⁽¹²⁾

Recruitment problems were compounded by the low opinion which most had of the army. Edward Spiers believed that the army’s efforts to draw new recruits “foundered on the profound contempt with which the military career was viewed.”⁽¹³⁾ Alan Ramsay Skelley concluded that “suspicion and disregard for the army was widespread throughout all levels of society.”⁽¹⁴⁾ The soldier was often treated with contempt and discrimination by the public, during the very years when Tommy Atkins was a hero in the media and popular culture. Structural economic change coupled with the localisation policy ensured that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century recruitment would come from

12. Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.44.

13. Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.49.

14. Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*, p.243.

the poorest and least skilled sections of the working class, with casual labourers providing the greatest number of enlisted men. Urban recruitment outstripped that from agricultural areas, and the preponderance of Irish and Scottish soldiers was superseded by the English and Welsh. But the reforms in themselves caused further recruiting problems, in that the short-service policy required a higher turnover of recruits, and over-reliance on the poor and unskilled resulted in high rejection rates. The army turned down between a third and a quarter of prospective recruits; by the early twentieth century, a half of possible recruits were rejected on medical or physical grounds, and this despite the fact that physical standards were persistently lowered in order that targets were met.

Cardwell's Reforms met with a mixed success. Recruitment, whilst still below requirements, was maintained. (Although the hope that regiments would rely almost entirely on local enlistment was never fulfilled: in 1874, regiments found 83.8% of their recruits from the local area; in 1898 this had fallen to 63.3%. Geoffrey Moorhouse's study of Bury's military history found that in 1900, its local regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers, still contained more Irishmen than locals.)⁽¹⁵⁾ Conditions for the common soldier improved, barracks and depots were constructed, education and medical policies were enacted. Criticism came from the most uncompromisingly radical wing of the Liberal party, who complained about its cost and the militarisation of communities. The military response also tended to be negative, centring particularly on the loss of regimental tradition.

However, connecting the military to local communities had effects on the communities themselves. If the War Office theorists were correct, the regimental placings would alter public perceptions about the military, and forge new social bonds, but studies of either the military or popular imperialism have ignored this aspect. So how

15. Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Hell's Foundations, A Town, Its Myths and Gallipoli* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p.39.

did localisation work in practice?

In 1873, Warrington became designated the 14th Subdivision for military purposes, and the new South Lancashire Regiment, the Prince of Wales Volunteers, became attached to it. The regiment consisted of two battalions: the 1st Battalion had been the 40th Regiment of Foot, the 2nd Somersetshire regiment, the "Fighting Fortieth". The 2nd Battalion was made up from the 82nd Prince of Wales Volunteers. A 3rd Militia Battalion was formed from the 4th Royal Lancashire Militia, the Duke of Lancaster's Own Light Infantry. Existing Volunteer Battalions became affiliated to the regular regiment, so that the existing Warrington unit, the old 9th Lancashire Volunteer Rifles became the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the South Lancashire regiment. The regiment's historian is explicit about the reasoning behind this process: South Lancashire offered a better recruiting ground than more prosperous Somerset.⁽¹⁶⁾

Once the Cardwell reforms had been put into place, both town and regiment set about establishing links to each other, a policy, it was thought, of mutual benefit. The 'new' regiments brought a history which was now claimed by the town as their own, whilst the town provided a local military history which could be absorbed by the new regiment. The historical outline of Warrington which was uncovered and recorded through the nineteenth century laid great store by its military heritage, from the Celtic Mersey warrior, the Roman soldier, the fighting serfs in medieval battles, to the town's contribution to Civil War history and the Loyal Warrington Volunteers.⁽¹⁷⁾ But this

16. Colonel B. Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment; Prince of Wales' Volunteers* (Bristol: White Swan Press, 1952), pp.130-6.

17. James Kendrick, *An Account of the Roman Remains discovered at Wilderspool near Warrington*, (Chester: Courant Office, 1874) and *An Account of Warrington, AD1643 and of some Manuscripts of that period recently discovered at Houghton Green, near Warrington* (Liverpool: T. Bracknell, 1852) and also *Some Account of the Loyal Warrington Volunteers of 1798* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1856); William Beamont, *An Account of the Roman Station at Warrington* (Warrington: J. Wood, 1876) and 'Some Occurrences during the Rebellion of 1745 principally in Warrington and the neighbourhood' in *Transactions of the Proceedings of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 11,7 (1859), pp.183-200.

historical narrative was framed only by domestic, internal conflict. When the South Lancashire regiment was formed, and given its new home in Warrington, Widnes and St. Helens, its constituent parts brought their histories with them, to be incorporated into that of the town. Thus, Warrington suddenly claimed local involvement in almost every military engagement in Europe, Ireland and the colonies for the past three hundred years, on the tenuous basis that regiments which had been relocated in South Lancashire had taken part in these actions. This simple device strengthened the appeal of local imperialism with the idea that allegiance to imperial values was embodied most fundamentally in love of town and duty to community.

The 40th and 82nd regiments had been born out of that military and political turmoil which followed the landing in England of William of Orange, his defeat of Stuart resistance and Irish Jacobite forces at the Boyne. Between 1717 and 1774 the 40th had seen duty in Canada and America and principally, Ireland.⁽¹⁸⁾ In 1759, the 40th were with Wolfe in Quebec. In 1775, they were in America under Cornwallis, engaging in the battles of Concorde and Brandywine Creek.⁽¹⁹⁾ During the years of the French Revolutionary wars, the regiment had been posted to St. Domingo, where they fought against “hordes of negroes, numbers of mulattos and a few French, all considered equal under the doctrines of the revolutionary French” in this “hopeless and bloody war”. In 1796 they were in St. Vincent, engaged in a “marauding and bushfighting war” with the Caribs.⁽²⁰⁾ In the Peninsular War, the 40th led the Forlorn Hope at Montevideo, with thirty-two men, of whom twenty-three were killed or injured. The regiment also fought at Waterloo.⁽²¹⁾

18. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.22-32.

19. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, p.35; Capt. Nelson, ‘Notes on the 40th Regiment, 1775-1907’. [WALSC: MS769]

20. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.44-7.

21. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.99-107; Nelson, ‘40th Regiment’.

In the half century between the end of the Napoleonic War and reorganisation, the two regiments were put to the task of “consolidating the Empire”.⁽²²⁾ This largely demanded garrison duty in Ireland and India, but battle honours were gained by the 40th in Caudahar, Ghuznee and Caboul in 1842, and by the 82nd at Sebastapol. They were also used to tighten the military grip on India after the Mutiny. The Maori wars of the 1850s and 1860s brought the 40th into battle once more, when the regiment’s first Victoria Cross was awarded to Colour Sergeant John Lucas, an Irishman.⁽²³⁾

But consolidating the Empire clearly involved more than subduing native populations: it also required the quelling of internal dissent at times of industrial unrest or ethnic tension, both in Britain and settlement colonies. Thus the 40th were in Manchester in 1820 and in Ashton-under-Lyne in 1868. In March 1823 they were dispatched to the New South Wales penal colony to act as guards on convict ships. In 1839, convicts on board transport ships mutinied and the 40th responded fiercely: many were killed and injured. The regiment returned to New South Wales in 1852, when they were guarding transports at Bendigo Goldfields, where “something like a revolution” had broken out: several soldiers were killed by rebel miners. In 1854, the Ballarat Goldfields were also subject to insurgency, and the 40th were sent to capture their stockade.⁽²⁴⁾

After reorganisation, the South Lancashire regiment was used in the 1880s in Natal, Zululand and the Transvaal, and saw extensive garrison duty in India. They were also often in Ireland. Garrison duty and low-level military action were the norm there (and Skelley’s observation that the army was used in Ireland to force tenant evictions suggests some possible involvement in politically sensitive areas). When the Home Rule crisis

22. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, p.108.

23. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.124-129; Nelson, ‘40th Regiment’.

24. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.108-9,122.

came to a head in Ulster in 1912, the South Lancashires were stationed at the Curragh.⁽²⁵⁾

Unlike the regiments of the 40th and 82nd, whose links to Warrington were pure artifice, the Loyal Warrington Volunteers was an authentic local institution. The Volunteers had been formed in 1798 in response to the French threat, and its membership was drawn from the town's newly enriched business, commercial and professional class. In reality, the value of the Volunteers was more in the opportunity it gave for social bonding than defence of the country. Nevertheless, its membership, officers and privates, were protective of their local status, clearly giving their local autonomy a higher priority than national considerations. In 1809, the government planned to merge the Warrington Volunteers with the Wigan Rifles, Wigan Loyals and Newton Associated under a new set of officers imposed from the regular militia. The Warrington Volunteers were outraged. Privates had agreed to transfer their services to the militia on condition that they could continue to serve with their own officers, but Lord Hawkesbury insisted that transfers should be accepted only if made unconditionally. A memorial was sent, signed by John Clare, John Fitchett, Thomas Glazebrook and Thomas Percival. Lieutenant Colonel Borron, commander of the Warrington Volunteers wrote of the "great disgust and discontent" which had been created by the government's policy, which had changed "zeal and patriotism into apathy and indifference."⁽²⁶⁾ The Volunteers were disbanded, but as a previous chapter has shown, its place in the popular memory was assured by the importance it was given in subsequent nineteenth century histories of Warrington.

The Volunteers were re-formed in 1859, again to guard the town against the designs of the French, and it would seem that the idea that they might have an imperial role was not seriously entertained. The Volunteers were incorporated into the municipal

25. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp.130-6.

26. Lieutenant Colonel J.A. Borron, *A Statement of Facts relative to the transfer of service of the late Warrington Volunteer Corps into the local Militia* (Warrington: J. Haddock (Printers), 1809).

celebrations occasioned by the opening of the new Town Hall in 1873, being invited to join the procession (along with the town council, militia staff, scholars of various Sunday Schools, clubs trades and inhabitants generally) and were welcomed in the speeches, one of which declared “if we, as Warringtonians, are not essentially a war-like race, we are most sincerely glad to see the naval and military services of our country represented amongst us”.⁽²⁷⁾ Nevertheless, there was some suspicion about the motives and desirability of the Volunteers, as this local song, from the 1850s, suggests:

Bleeding is needful to keep up the firing
Of corks and champagne at the requisite speed
Choose not the men who are highest aspiring
But rather the gents who are willing to bleed.⁽²⁸⁾

Scholarly interest in the localisation process has concentrated entirely on its logistical aspects, but its social and cultural significance to local communities also require analysis. The impact of the Cardwell Reforms on the urban environment are little appreciated by social historians, yet they facilitated to a large extent the growing popular awareness of military matters which became such a feature of late-nineteenth century society, and which facilitated the bursts of popular enthusiasm for Empire which culminated in the street scenes during the Boer War. Most large towns now had a barracks and a body of soldiers within. Towns now had a newly acquired military history, together with new regimental insignia, uniforms and emblems, all designed to enhance the local connection. Uncovering the day-to-day details of the relationship between town and military, whether deliberately cultivated or randomly encountered, would require more detailed study, and this chapter covers only some aspects of its development.

27. ‘New Town Hall and Bank Park’, *Warrington Guardian* (Supplement, 20th June 1873).

28. Walter Crompton and George Venn, *The Loyal Warrington Volunteers, 1798-1898* (Warrington: Sunrise Publishing, 1898), p.67.

The Orford Barracks, sometimes called the Peninsular Barracks, was completed in 1878. Covering twenty acres, the imposing brick-built structure was designed to house fourteen officers and four hundred men, with stabling for horses and a hospital with five beds.⁽²⁹⁾ Dr. Savill's Report to the House of Common's Commission on Vaccination, written in 1896, states that at that time the Barracks held three hundred Regulars, two hundred Militia, eighty women and two hundred and thirteen children.⁽³⁰⁾

The military elite soon became incorporated into the town's higher social circles. This process was fortunately documented in Warrington by two aspiring novelists. Quentin Murray published *Battleton Rectory* in London in 1885, after having served as curate to Rector Quekett at Warrington. His book details the comings and goings between the Rectory, the Barracks and that layer of society which busied itself with philanthropy and social calls. Murray's barbed account, particularly concerning the Rector and his wife, both of whom he loathed, is nevertheless a convincing portrayal, free of Victorian sentimentality. He describes how the Rector's wife, Jezabel, had "a weakness for attaching to her staff pretty girls and then asking the officers from the barracks to do escort duty, which the gallant sons of Mars by no means disliked." She was, nevertheless "the bete noire of the married officers for she bored their wives to death on every conceivable occasion. No sight was more unwelcome at Hillsea Barracks than 'Jez's confounded pony and trap.'"⁽³¹⁾

Murray's satire is gentle fare compared to the bitter attacks on Warrington's military and social scene made by scandalous author and 'New Woman', Sarah Grand, whose marriage to an officer in the South Lancashires was one of the most unlikely, and

29. Gillian Kersley, *Darling Madame, Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* (London: Virago, 1993), pp.46-7.

30. BPP, 1897, [C.8611], xlv (347), *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination*, Appendix V. 'A report to the Commission of Dr. Thomas Dixon Savill on the outbreak of Smallpox in the Borough of Warrington in 1892-1893'.

31. Quentin Murray, *Battleton Rectory* (Manchester: John Haywood, 1885), p.24.

disastrous, of the nineteenth century. David McFall, an Ulsterman, married Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke, also of Ulster, in 1871. The couple saw some colonial service in the Far East and Ceylon, then in 1871, McFall was made Honorary Brigade Surgeon at Warrington Barracks. Frances McFall wrote later, in fiction and reportage, of her experiences at Warrington, under the name of Sarah Grand (her husband not surprisingly was reluctant to allow her to use her real name for her work). Sarah Grand described a small-town world in which she felt trapped. She hated Warrington. Periodic unemployment required voluntary work at the clothing clubs and soup kitchens, organised by the Rector and Mrs. Quekett, and Sarah Grand took her part in sewing and ladling, and “reading to the poor from Tennyson and Longfellow”.⁽³²⁾

Her writings, however, furnish details of the inside of barrack life which are rarely available from military sources. It is not possible to determine whether David McFall’s habits—drinking, smoking, getting into debt, telling lewd stories, making unreasonable sexual demands and keeping a mistress—were purely personal failings or typical of the urbanised military culture. He was responsible for the treatment in Warrington of cases of sexually transmitted diseases. The town council had ordered that all such cases were to be admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital on payment by the military authorities of one guinea per head per week. This was the local Lock hospital, where suspected prostitutes (and other women) could be forcibly detained under the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act, a controversial system which was ended in 1886 after pressure from campaigners. Sarah Grand felt particularly humiliated that her husband was associated with the “whole horrible apparatus for the special degradation of women”.⁽³³⁾ She left her husband, and Warrington, in 1890.

32. Kersley, *Darling Madame*, pp.43.

33. Kersley, *Darling Madame*, pp.54.

THE ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1899-1902

This chapter need not deal with the larger narrative of the Anglo-Boer war, 1899-1902, with either its causes (which are even now a matter of dispute amongst historians) or its long-term impact. Warrington's soldiers, like those of the rest of Britain, experienced the war militarily in a number of phases—pre-conflict doubts giving way to feverish preparation and flag-waving, interest ebbing and flowing as the early excitement, sieges lifted, and battles won, ground down into a long and fruitless guerrilla war. When the troops returned, the town planned and built a memorial to its dead, as the earlier doubts returned and were re-articulated in political debates.

The Reservists of the South Lancashires were called to the colours on 7 October, 1899, arriving in Warrington in November; 577 men arrived at Orford Barracks under the command of Lieutenant Colonel W. MacCarthy O'Leary, an Irishman who had been an adjutant to the Warrington Volunteers fifteen years previously. Newspapers reported the scenes "unparalleled in the history of the town."⁽³⁴⁾ The route from the railway station to the barracks was lined by thousands of spectators, cheering vigorously. Soldiers had to fight their way through the crowds. One reservist later published his account of the send-off from Fulwood Barracks. In his account, 'From Preston to Ladysmith with the First Battalion South Lancashire Regiment', he recalled:

The scenes that were enacted that day will long live in the memory of those who witnessed them. Here might be a soldier, his arms encircling a young child, with his wife clinging to him; there a sad looking fellow clasping his grey haired mother to his breast and whispering words of encouragement, although he knew he might never see her again, Others were shaking hands and kissing people whom they had never before seen. Men and women laughed alternately and some of the younger women became quite hysterical. The remarks passed were nearly all

34. *Warrington Guardian*, 18 November 1899; *Warrington Observer*, 18 November 1899; *Warrington Examiner*, 18 November 1899.

relating to President Kruger, and had he been present, I don't think he would have enjoyed himself very much. "Don't forget to make 'Owd Kruger' dance when tha' gets to Africa," could be heard from the men, whilst the only appeal from the women, young and old, was "Don't forget to bring 'Owd Kruger's whiskers back." Occasionally one heard such a remark as "Cheer up, owd lads, you'll be back agean i' three months; you're only going on a picnic." Thus did we commence our journey to Africa's sunny clime, after having experienced a send-off that will always be a pleasant remembrance to those that participated in it.⁽³⁵⁾

The First Battalion—1,053 men of all ranks including 541 reservists—sailed from Liverpool on 1 December, and landed at Durban on Christmas Eve.⁽³⁶⁾

Meanwhile, the Volunteers in Warrington had not waited for the call: in September, before the outbreak of the war, a special parade was called in the Drill Hall, at the special request of the officers and men to consider the question of volunteering for service in South Africa. The men decided unanimously to offer the service of the whole battalion to the Secretary of State for War, only the second such offer to be received by the War Office. Consequently, in January 1900, the Volunteers were asked to raise half a company for service with the 1st Battalion. Ten officers and four hundred men volunteered immediately, and of those, one officer and sixty-nine men were selected. Together with a similar unit from St. Helens, the company served at Ladysmith from March 1900, returning home in the following year and "receiving a tremendous welcome from its fellow citizens when it arrived back in Warrington".⁽³⁷⁾

After the Cardwell reforms, the Volunteers were expected to be in a state of military readiness should regular battalions need to be supplemented. Volunteers might

35. T. Neligan, 'From Preston to Ladysmith with the 1st Battalion, the South Lancashire Regiment, by One of the Regiment' (South Lancashire Regimental Library, Preston).

36. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, p. 136.

37. Mullaly, *South Lancashire Regiment*, pp. 142-145.

be asked to offer themselves for service with active regiments at times of conflict, although this was never required until the Boer War. Until that time, Volunteering was something of a healthy pastime; Volunteers attended drill and civic functions, participated in shooting competitions locally and nationally, and enjoyed annual camp. At a presentation of long-service medals at the Town Hall in 1895, being a Volunteer was described as “a healthy and pleasant life, with pleasant comrades. Camp was pleasant and health-giving.”⁽³⁸⁾ Hugh Cunningham also makes this point in his study of the Volunteers: “a desire for recreation was the prime motive which led working men to enrol.”⁽³⁹⁾

So when the Boer War began, there was real surprise in the numbers of Volunteers who had enlisted as England’s “citizen soldiers”. As Rev. John Yonge explained: “the role of the Volunteers in this war is hitherto unparalleled...three months ago, no-one really even dreamed it”. Yonge, a Clarion socialist and supporter of Keir Hardie, was otherwise critical of the war but praised the Volunteers for two reasons: their actions had ensured that “the country need never fear the necessity of conscription, the old and evil ways, and rely upon compulsion to make men fight for them”. Secondly, this might “change young men from the pursuit of selfish prosperity and enjoyment.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ When the Mayor swore in the Volunteers in a public ceremony before a large crowd, “none more pregnant with deep interest and calculated to rouse her townspeople’s feeling of enthusiasm”, he declared:

It was not easy to conceive fully the importance of the occasion. Had anyone suggested its probability a few years ago, he would have been regarded with real sympathy and advised to take a rest and keep his mind free from worry for a time. The possibility even of the Volunteers

38. *Warrington Observer*, 24 April 1895.

39. Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859-1908* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p.154.

40. *Warrington Observer*, 20 January 1900.

being requisitioned for home defence was not very seriously entertained outside official circles. But we move rapidly in these exciting times.⁽⁴¹⁾

The First Battalion suffered its first casualties in the disastrous engagement at Spion Kop; twelve men died and twenty four were injured in defending the Kop. There were more deaths at the Battle of Pieter's Hill, during the fourth attempt to relieve Ladysmith, including that of Colonel MacCarthy O'Leary. As the regimental history describes:

Colonel MacCarthy O'Leary gave the order to fix bayonets and charge, and, with his famous cry of 'Remember, men, the eyes of Lancashire are watching you today,' ringing in their ears, the First Battalion swept forward in an irresistible wave, led by their gallant commanding officer.⁽⁴²⁾

O'Leary died in battle, but Ladysmith was relieved on the following day. General Sir Redvers Buller (who was later to unveil the statue of O'Leary in Warrington) wrote to the War Office describing how the enemy's main position "was magnificently carried by the South Lancashire Regiment". On 3 March, the brigade marched through Ladysmith, and for most of the rest of the war, was engaged in chasing a mobile enemy round the veldt, before finishing the war defending the communication line at Vryheid in Natal.⁽⁴³⁾

Social historians have tended to see the war as evidence of the jingoism and militarisation of British society. First among these was J.A. Hobson who, writing immediately after the war, concluded that although its origins were in British finance capital (geographically located in London and its immediate regions), the wider British society was culpable in having justified and supported the war with enthusiasm.⁽⁴⁴⁾ More recently, Blanch and MacKenzie have seen popular support for the war as evidence of an underlying imperial mentality affecting all classes, whilst labour historians such as Price

41. *Warrington Guardian*, 17 January 1900.

42. Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment*, p.142.

43. Mullaly, *The South Lancashire Regiment*, p.144.

44. Hobson, *Imperialism, A Study*.

and Pelling have argued that working-class support for the war has been exaggerated, and that labour allied itself to those who campaigned against the war.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The Boer War produced scenes until then unique in British society, when large crowds seemingly expressed their enthusiasm for the war. It is no difficult task to illustrate this point with examples from Warrington, but it is more difficult to assess how deep the roots of this enthusiasm went. The crowd's exterior surface is clear and definable, but its interior remains puzzling. What exactly were the crowds expressing—simple relief, rampant imperial ambition, comradely feeling, communal loyalty, a manufactured patriotism, or a pure love of country and its values?

Street scenes were not the only form of communal ritual which the war initiated. As so many soldiers were leaving jobs, friends, churches and chapels, formal send-offs became a standard news story in the winter months of 1899 and 1900. They included a presentation of gifts to the departing soldier, speeches and a dinner and smoking party. Many were organised by workmates. Organisations began to personalise their gifts; the teachers and elder scholars of Holy Trinity school presented a khaki Bible, paid by subscriptions from the Bible class. Golbourne Street Baptist Band of Hope also gave a Bible to their departing Volunteer. The Postmaster's Office chose a writing case and writing materials. Warrington Rugby League Club supplied woollen garments of every description.⁽⁴⁶⁾ These individual send offs were dignified and bound by a ceremonial improvised from the rites and customs of Victorian municipal social life, and it is difficult to imagine that these rituals were entirely new in public life, for Volunteers and Reservists had never before been sent to war.

The regimental departures were occasions for street scenes of popular outbursts of

45. Price, *An Imperial War*; Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

46. *Warrington Observer*, 27 January 1900.

emotion, as reservists and Volunteers took planned and publicised routes around the town from the barracks to the railway station. When the South Lancashire Volunteers left for the Transvaal, the municipal authorities organised a parade and a public dinner, at which the soldiers were each presented with field glasses and a life insurance policy to the value of £100, raised through public subscription. The newspapers described the hearty send-offs and enthusiastic farewells, of the kind described above.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Frank Stansfield remembered being taken to Orford Barracks by the family maid to witness the soldiers' departure: "The gates opened and out they came with their womenfolk hanging on to their arms."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Popular participation was undoubtedly facilitated by the granting of an afternoon off by several of the largest works in the town. On the occasions when this favour was not granted, crowds did not line the streets, and the farewell scenes were reported to have drawn "very few people". By December, send offs attracted "not many spectators".⁽⁴⁹⁾ By May 1900, Volunteers were leaving for the front without any parades or street scenes.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Excitement also became focused upon the lifting of the sieges of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Pretoria in the first year of the war. The town received the news of the relief of Ladysmith at a time "most opportune for rejoicing", when the shops had their early closing day. Shopkeepers flew flags, banners and bunting, bus and cab drivers decorated their vehicles. Works and schools gave the afternoon off and soldiers left the barracks to celebrate. Children marched, with flags and effigies of Cronje "blowing tin whistles and other instruments of torture", and eventually the same children, according to

47. *Warrington Examiner*, 25 November 1899; *Warrington Observer*, 17 February 1900.

48. Francis O. Stansfield, *Early Life of an Old Warringtonian* (Warrington: W. Williams, Gregson & Co., 1969), p.11.

49. *Warrington Examiner*, 9 December 1899; *Warrington Observer*, 25 November 1899.

50. *Warrington Observer*, 12 May 1900.

the *Warrington Observer*, broke into bouts of streetfighting which required restraint.⁽⁵¹⁾

In May, the expected relief of Mafeking sparked off more communal rejoicing; church bells were rung, works' whistles and sirens blew and the people came onto the streets, only to return home when told that a foghorn blown from a boat in the Mersey had been mistaken for a signal that the siege at Mafeking had been relieved: Mafeking was not to be relieved until later that month.⁽⁵²⁾ By the time Pretoria was relieved, few people expressed an interest, and celebrations were reported to be muted.⁽⁵³⁾ In Frank Stansfield's memory, Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking were "all celebrated by holidays, bonfires and what-not".⁽⁵⁴⁾

Nevertheless, the war allowed the regiment and the town to be connected in ways which had never been envisaged. In particular, new ceremonials were initiated which symbolised this new relationship. In January 1900, the 3rd South Lancashire Regiment brought their Colours from Preston to be deposited with the town, in a ceremony which the *Warrington Observer* described as "interesting, picturesque and unique". The *Observer* praised the arrangements, commenting that the "inward significance of the ceremony had been adequately realised", and in its 'Observer Notes' column, it explained what that significance was.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Colours had previously been taken into battle, and had been the standard around which the soldiers of each regiment fought. But military tactics had changed; war was now mechanised and long-range, soldiers no longer fought at close combat. The lesson had been learnt during the Franco-German war, where there had been a lot of needless slaughter around the rival colours. It had thus been decided that colours were to be kept in the regimental barracks, and the ceremony of presenting them to the

51. *Warrington Observer*, 3 March 1900.

52. *Warrington Observer*, 12 May 1900.

53. *Warrington Guardian*, 6 June 1900.

54. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.15.

55. *Warrington Observer*, 13 January 1900.

Mayor signified the links between the town and the regiment. The party transporting the colours at the station was met by a guard of honour, composed of Volunteers, the Fire Brigade, a band, the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, the police, Mayor, Town Clerk, Chaplain, the Town Council, magistrates, the Board of Guardians and the general public. The procession made its way to the Parish Church, and then to the Town Hall, where the Mayor was requested by Captain Skirrow to "undertake the custody of the colours during our absence in South Africa": they were then hung in the Council Chamber.

In fund-raising too the connections between the town and regiment were strengthened during the war. Elsewhere in this study the social and political significance of fund-raising in municipal culture has been described, and particular reference has been made to its ritualised forms and in the role of the working class, not as recipients but as donors and fund organisers. Nobody had seriously expected a war of this kind, where reservists and Volunteers gave up their jobs to go to the front, and no provision had been made for this eventuality. The local press made clear that the government was not prepared to devote expenditure to keeping reservists' families. Despite the (well-publicised) announcement from most employers that the jobs of the Volunteers would be available when they returned, the Board of Guardians had the immediate problem of providing for over a hundred wives and families of soldiers. The Mayor instituted a Fund, which would collect for local families, injured soldiers and refugees: money donated to the first category was to be distributed locally, whilst for the other categories, donations were transferred to the national Lord Mayor's Fund, or Mansion House Fund. Within weeks of its being established, Warrington's Mayor's Fund had reached over £2,000. The totals are suggestive of the underlying causes behind popular enthusiasm, for whilst £149 had been given specifically for refugees, and £66 for the sick and wounded (both nationally administered), the local Reservists, their widows and

orphans, had been given £1,025 and £817.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Community organisations had immediately set into action: the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon's Society of the YMCA held a concert in the Parr Hall, the Rugby League Club organised a game to raise funds, the schoolgirls' sale of work brought in £275, Crosfields, sensing a commercial opportunity, promised to donate the profits on the sale of Perfection Soap to the local fund.⁽⁵⁷⁾ When in February 1900, the War Office announced that St. Helens had been unable to supply their full contingent of Volunteers, Warrington was called upon to supply the shortfall, which it did, subsequently requiring more fund-raising efforts for their families.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The larger works left the collecting of subscriptions from workmen's wages to specially constituted workmen's committees (this system being reverted to after a new scheme, whereby workers were to pass their donations into Parr's Bank, was abandoned when it proved unpopular: workmen felt intimidated by the Bank's ambience).⁽⁵⁹⁾

Specific appeals were made from the ladies attached to the 1st Battalion of the South Lancashires, for items such as balaclavas, socks, cardigans to be parcelled into 'Comforts for the Troops'. A second appeal was made for a thousand tubes of Vaseline (for soldiers' feet). Other gifts were arranged, such as the ton of tobacco sent to the Transvaal by Peter Rylands, and the portable wire clippers given to each Warrington Volunteer by Thewlis and Griffiths, Ltd.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The soldiers themselves were instrumental in forging the links between the town and the war, especially in the public way in which their letters home could be read.

56. *Warrington Examiner*, 25 November 1899.

57. W. Garvin, *Warrington Rugby League Football Club Centenary, 1879-1979* (Warrington: Warrington Guardian, 1979), p.22; *Warrington Observer*, 25 November 1899; *Warrington Examiner*, 25 November 1899; *Warrington Observer*, 20 January 1900; *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1899.

58. *Warrington Guardian*, 3 February 1900.

59. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 October 1899.

60. *Warrington Observer*, 16 December 1899.

Families and friends passed letters on to the editors of the local newspapers, and all three, the *Guardian*, *Observer* and *Examiner* filled columns of print with them, under such headlines as “Warringtonian at the Front: Interesting Letter”.⁽⁶¹⁾ In the many references to Warrington made in the letters, it is clear that these were a significant link in the chain which bound popular feeling to military institutions. Soldiers wrote to the Mayor, or to the *Warrington Guardian*, letters which publicly recognised gratitude for help given to family, or for communal gifts. Families often sent a copy of the local newspaper to soldiers, which was probably passed round, so that soldiers knew how the war was being experienced at home; sometimes their letters commented on war reports in the press.⁽⁶²⁾

This was certainly another new development as far as the army was concerned. In previous wars, most soldiers could not have written such letters anyway: in 1857, only 5% of soldiers could read and write easily. This proportion increased dramatically as the effects of compulsory education and the army’s own educational policies bore fruit. Alan Ramsay Skelley writes that “Education was an important aspect of the army’s transition from an earlier uncaring, fiercely disciplined body to a more humane organisation with greater welfare for the welfare of its men.”⁽⁶³⁾

The letters are certainly an undervalued record of the common experiences of war, the soldiers giving accounts of their journeying, training, fighting and of everyday events and conditions. The celebrity war correspondent, with his unrealistically heroic presentation of military life, has been given detailed attention by historians.⁽⁶⁴⁾ But the regional and local press did not employ war correspondents, and reported the war largely through news agencies and the letters of local soldiers, providing the kind of authentic,

61. *Warrington Observer*, 25 November 1899.

62. *Warrington Guardian*, 20, 24 January 1900.

63. Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*, pp.87,117.

64. Roger T. Stearn, ‘War Correspondents and Colonial War, c.1870-1900,’ in John M. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism*, pp.139-161.

decidedly unembellished, interpretation of colonial warfare which considerably enriches the narrative of the war. The letters spoke with a voice which was not yet confined within military jargon, which did not harbour the suspicion which the army still held towards civilians, and which was not activated by the commercial imperatives of the popular press and the literary market-place.

The idea that popular support for the war was only maintained by deliberate misinformation about its conduct and conditions, or by the manufacture of heroic myths is not borne out by the letters. The reality of war was often communicated movingly in small details, as when one soldier described how he joined others on the deck of his transport ship on the way to South Africa, to wave at a ship travelling in the opposite direction, which carried 350 soldiers who had been injured in battle.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Woundings, deaths, incompetence were reported in plain prose. Here is a typical account of the defeat at Spion Kop:

I can tell you our fellows were simply slaughtered without having a chance to fight.... It is not fighting on our part, it's simply getting shot down or blown to pieces without us having the slightest show. I wish we could get a proper smack at them. People at home cannot possibly understand the difficulties we have to contend with.... I can tell you, I shall feel myself very lucky if I get through this affair all right.... I expect they will have to build plenty of workhouses in England when this war is over as there will be plenty to fill them, what with the crippled and diseased soldiers.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Editors realised that there was a power in these letters which the overblown prose of the special war correspondents could not rival, and their impact on the local community went far deeper than that of the war correspondents.

The unexpected role of the Volunteers and the Reserve in the Boer War resulted in

65. *Warrington Observer*, 17 March 1900.

66. *Warrington Observer*, 17 March 1900.

a problem which the military authorities had not foreseen, in that whilst benefiting from the unusually high public interest and excitement surrounding the participation of local men in a foreign war, the channel of communication between the front and the town opened up by the letters does not appear to have been subject to the kind of direct military censorship which became a fact of life in the twentieth century. The *Warrington Observer* (which was more sensitive to criticism of the war as a supporter of the government) saw both the value and the danger in the letters. Whilst the editor accepted that the letters were as interesting as those of the established war correspondents' and had become a "prominent feature in most of the newspapers of late", he also noted that they were freely critical of the campaign, and warned that, if taken too far, such reports could constitute treason.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The letters give a different interpretation of how the war was experienced, and challenge the standard view that the common soldier merely aped the imperial mentality of his upper-class officers. They are a reminder that hundreds of thousands of 'ordinary' men, whose lives were bound by family and work in urban Britain, found themselves in a part of the empire with a large majority black population, and found themselves living and talking with black people for the first time. One wrote on arriving in the Cape "it was strange to see so many black faces around."⁽⁶⁸⁾ Their reactions are instructive. As W.R. Nasson has written, the ordinary soldier and black South Africans became closer as the war advanced:

Tommyes were far more inclined than the officer elite to view blacks as fellow *men*.... More than one soldier saw analogies between black labourers and Irish navvies, and between malnourished black children and Glaswegian urchins.⁽⁶⁹⁾

67. *Warrington Observer*, 3 February 1900.

68. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 December 1899.

69. W.R. Nasson, 'Tommy Atkins in South Africa,' in Peter Warwick, (ed.), *The South African*

This conclusion is supported by Peter Warwick's *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902*:

The British army was largely composed of soldiers who previously had no first-hand experience of colonial society in general.... It is not surprising that British soldiers were much less influenced by the taboos in South Africa that were associated with the participation of black people in white wars.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The reactions revealed in the Warrington letters are therefore instructive. They do suggest that class affected the perceptions of soldiers towards blacks. Some of the letters describe the roles that blacks played in the war, in counting the number of Boer dead to report back to the British, or in acting as transport and guides. One letter reported:

Much amusement is caused by the Kaffirs who act as carriers and their stratagem in getting through the enemy's outposts is very commendable, the Boers having a perfect hatred of the darkies, showing them no mercy.⁽⁷¹⁾

Others encountered blacks in off-duty moments. Arthur Statham, a St. John's Ambulanceman, wrote "Some of us went on Sunday night to Capetown. Half of the people or more were blacks, some are as black as soot and rare swells they are."⁽⁷²⁾

In contrast, in 1902, Captain Appleton of the South Lancashires delivered a lecture, illustrated by lantern slides to the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society on the Warrington Volunteers in South Africa. Referring to the Warrington "Tommy", he described him as a "bit of a grouser...but his feelings and sentiments are generally and often where least expected those of a gentleman." This was proved by "the love for him of children, dogs and natives, who are in many ways as simple as children and as

War: the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902 (London: Longman, 1980), pp.131-2 .

70. Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.27.

71. *Warrington Guardian*, 10 February 1900.

72. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 May 1900.

discerning as dogs.”⁽⁷³⁾ This was the view of the officer class, condescending towards both the common soldier and the black South African.

The letters fed into the perceptions of Warrington people about the war and why it was being fought, and more broadly into local imperial values. They describe conditions in camp and on the march, military bungling and government neglect, homesickness for family, workmates and town, and gratitude for the community’s financial support to the soldier and his family. T.W. Jones wrote to his family:

I have very little time for writing, as duty is very stiff here. Kindly remember me to everybody, and if they want to know why I haven’t written, tell them that I haven’t come here to write letters. We could buy lots off the trains going up to the front if we only had the money, but as they haven’t paid us yet, and I don’t suppose they will, we have to be content with dry hard biscuit and tinned meat.⁽⁷⁴⁾

His brother, Corporal A.W. Jones was faring better:

We are eating mutton stew, as we captured 4,000 sheep. This is a very rough life, sleeping on rocks and hillsides. We have had no money for two months. I heard from you all yesterday. I had six letters and four Christmas cards. Everybody tells me that England is sending us all kinds of provisions, but up to the present we have not received a particle of anything, and we are not likely to. Somebody is having a good haul.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Private Charles Smith of Wellfield Street wrote to the *Guardian* Office along similar lines:

I hope the gift of Crosfield’s tobacco will come to us correct, as we have seen neither the Queen’s chocolate nor any of the 20,000 puddings. There are lots of other dainties too numerous to mention

73. Captain Francis M. Appleton, ‘The Warrington Volunteers in South Africa: Lecture illustrated with Lantern Slides’, *Proceedings of the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society, 1901-2* (14th October, 1901).

74. *Warrington Guardian*, 20 January 1900.

75. *Warrington Guardian*, 20 January 1900.

referred to in the English newspapers but we have received none of them yet. Perhaps the army authorities are waiting until the 10th or 11th divisions come out and all the present divisions are dead.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Soldiers soon learned to manipulate the military system. One soldier wrote “Please send me some cigarettes but label the parcel ‘Religious Tracts’ then it will be sure to reach me.”⁽⁷⁷⁾ (Meanwhile, back in Warrington, the schoolboy Frank Stansfield was collecting cigarette cards from Ogden’s Guinea Gold and Ogden’s Tabs, with their pictures of Lord Roberts, Lord Buller and General Baden-Powell.)⁽⁷⁸⁾ If soldiers were disillusioned about the army’s lack of concern for their small comforts, they were nonetheless grateful for municipal support for their families. Private W. Baker wrote to the Warrington Transvaal Relief Committee:

I was very pleased to hear that you were doing your best for my wife and children... I feel more easy now that I know that your kind Committee is doing what they can for them.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The letter of Private Makin of Watkin Street to the Mayor was similarly appreciative of the town’s support:

Myself and my fellow comrades who hail from Warrington feel a duty to return our sincere thanks to you and all the ladies and gentlemen in the good old town, for our pipes and tobacco on leaving England, and the War Fund. Our wives and dependants are able to keep the wolf from the door.⁽⁸⁰⁾

Others had real battle tales to tell, such as P.C. Jowett of Woolston:

You said in your letter that I was just nicely settled down, and then having to come out here, to the horrors of war—and it is just the horrors of war. We have fairly caught it since we came here.... We have lost

76. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 January 1900.

77. *Warrington Guardian*, 1 September 1900.

78. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.11.

79. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 January 1900.

80. *Warrington Guardian*, 12 January 1900.

thirty killed and ninety wounded out of our regiment so far.... He will be a lucky man that comes back.... Give my respects to my old comrades and tell them I smoked all the cigarettes before I left London. My greatest trouble is in not having any to smoke here.⁽⁸¹⁾

Sergeant H. Holt wrote to his mother after the battle of Colenso:

I am safe and sound after the battle. We lost 1,150 killed and wounded. The Scottish, Dublin and Connaught Rangers were slaughtered, because of an oversight, being unprotected by artillery.... Men were shot down like dogs.... It was a sickening sight.⁽⁸²⁾

R. Barton at the Wire Rope Works received this letter from his brother, also at the battle of Colenso:

I have a slight wound on my right hand, on the fingers, but it's getting round champion. I'm sorry I can't be home by Christmas.... The underclothes I am wearing will drop off me if I don't get a change soon. I have had them on six weeks now. I am so sleepy I don't know where to put myself. We are up day and night.... Hoping this will find you all well and hearty as I am myself.⁽⁸³⁾

Corporal James Chappell, of Wash Lane, Latchford, suffered a compound fracture at Colenso. His letter said he had "quite enough of his share of the battle."⁽⁸⁴⁾

But most letters were a mixture of hope and disappointment. P.C. Hurst wrote:

You can tell everyone that Howard and myself are not dead or wounded yet, but alive and kicking and living in hopes of being in Warrington next summer and the war all over and settled. We are getting tired of this country.... We have got one blanket to sleep with at night and when we wake up we are half starved with the cold.⁽⁸⁵⁾

And Sergeant Houghton wrote this to his workmates at Rylands Wire Works:

81. *Warrington Guardian*, 20 January 1900.

82. *Warrington Guardian*, 20 January 1900.

83. *Warrington Guardian*, 20 January 1900.

84. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 January 1900.

85. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 January 1900.

They are not much better than a lot of savages, the Boers. They are stripping the dead of their clothes and cutting their fingers off if they have any rings on. It is pitiful to see the corpses brought in naked, frizzled up with the sun. They, the Boers, have robbed the natives of all they have and they are knocking about without a mouthful to eat.⁽⁸⁶⁾

There are no references to patriotism in the letters, few writers mention England or Britain, but there are many references to Warrington. Soldiers identified most closely with their home towns, and the values which they saw as those of the town, particularly in providing emotional and financial support, were those which sustained them.

WORK, SPORT AND DRINK: WORKING-CLASS CULTURE AND THE MILITARY

Enthusiasm for the war was less a product of nationalistic fervour than an expression of communal support for the local lad soldiering in South Africa (given wider context by anti-slavery arguments). To what extent, therefore, did popular culture in the town reflect and propel community support? It is a commonplace in imperial historiography that mass culture fuelled an emotive popular imperialism based upon identification with military success. In what follows, I will investigate the connections between work, sports and drinking—the material and cultural environment of the industrial working class. This prosaic perspective differs from that of cultural historians who connect working-class imperialism to literature, art and national music hall, whose markets were in reality more middle-class than proletarian.

Some leisure pursuits are considered to be more significant than others, and some have become so closely linked with particular historical ‘problems’ that it is difficult to divorce the two. This is true of popular imperialism and the music hall. J.A. Hobson blamed the music hall for fostering jingoism, although in doing this he did no more than

86. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 January 1900.

reiterate the standard late-Victorian Liberal, *Manchester Guardian* analysis.

Subsequently, historians have accepted and worked within Hobson's cultural framework, giving the central role in the spreading of the imperialist message to the music hall. But music hall did not encompass the full range of imperialist arguments, and reflects an undifferentiated and unspecific emotional response, usually interpreted as racially motivated. The focus on music hall typifies the view that imperialism was a product of consumerism, in its widest meaning: a London fashion exported to provincial Britain, who naively fell for its attractions. The complexity of popular attitudes is not apparent from music hall evidence alone. The latest work on popular culture and the military has similarly concentrated on cultural production without providing evidence of how the cultural vehicles connected to their 'audiences' and to society, and how their messages were received. John MacKenzie's *Popular Culture and the Military* includes art in its analysis, but not sport. The methods employed in the present study place the military in a real setting, in an urban culture which is made up of the components of everyday existence: in work (and joblessness as threat and reality), in trade unions, and in the sporting, drinking culture so typical of the industrial town.

The cultural forms by which MacKenzie argues for the militarisation of culture, such as art and literature, only operated at certain abstract levels. The more cerebral municipal institutions—the Debating Society, the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Art College—did not remotely attract the interest of either the officer class or other ranks, and never acted as a conduit for the mixing of municipal and military values. It is instead within the prosaic world of working, drinking and sporting that the soldier and the local people were bound together.

Work was the central concern for all of Warrington, and the common soldier was not far removed from that concern. As we have seen, lack of work drove the bulk of men

to enlist. Discharge often meant a return to the same fate: one in four left the Edwardian army to become unemployed or an unemployed vagrant. The idea behind the creation of the Reserve and the Volunteer movement was that men could remain in work and the stark division between soldiering and working became blurred as a result of these measures. Many men, particularly the young unskilled, might operate within a shifting range of military and civilian options. In what follows, military experience and the military image is placed within the culture of families who were in work and out of work, who belonged to trades unions and trades councils, and whose main concern, even at the height of flag-waving enthusiasm, was with fellow workers. When looked at in this light, the Warrington Trades Council meetings, in which members offered toasts to the Volunteers and demands for the implementation of the Fair Wages Clause, do not seem to be in conflict.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The Boer War was not, as other chapters also make clear, a distraction from the class struggle, because it highlighted the capitalistic nature of the imperial economy, and brought about a revival of radicalism and a great impetus to the spread of socialism. The bravery of the common soldier, and the final tally of unnecessary deaths gave focus to post-war political controversies.

Employers emphasised the role of empire as a source of markets and jobs, and welcomed the spread of Volunteering as a means of socialising the workforce. In the contexts in which these messages were conveyed (usually at works outings), workers had no option but to listen to them. It is unlikely, however, that plebeian responses to Empire (whether for or against) were a simple reflection of self-interest, as earlier chapters on the survival of anti-slavery suggest. The question of the economic importance of the Empire to Warrington must be analysed within a broader ongoing debate amongst economic historians about the significance of imperialism to Britain's economic well-being,

87. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 March 1900.

although the debate tends to have marginalised the issue of manufactures, focusing instead on investment and the City of London. The claim that manufacturing jobs depended on colonial markets was certainly a common one at various times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but was countered on economic and moral grounds by radicals and socialists. Local employers however did not question the economic value of Empire, and frequently sought to proselytise their workforce on the link between Empire and employment.

In 1905, Rylands Brothers commemorated the centenary of their wire manufacturing business, marking their status as contractors to the British Admiralty and the India Office, Crown agents for the Colonies. The Warrington works made wire ropes, fencing wire, barbed wire, telegraph and telephone wire, wire netting, wire springs. The importance of the colonies was clear from export figures: fifty per cent of Ryland's business went abroad, of which seventy-five per cent was colonial trade. An illuminating article in the *African Review* on 27 January 1894 described the visit of a South African to Greenings' Wireworks in Warrington. Wire was made here for screening in the mines at Witwatersrand and Kimberley, and Greenings had invented the first machine for weaving wire by steam power. At the Scotland Bank and Crown Street works, the traveller was shown the 'South African Room', where screens were made of twenty-four inch wire for the goldfields. Frank Stansfield described the construction of Ryland's new works at Dalton Bank, when the large earthworks became known "spontaneously and universally" as Spion Kop.⁽⁸⁸⁾

Nathaniel Greening had visited South Africa in 1880 and 1888 to establish contacts with his customers, and the Rand had become one of the company's best markets. The Boer War however was not a blessing for Greenings: construction of the new Bewsey

88. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.12.

works had to be halted when restricted steel supplies brought wire production to an abrupt halt.⁽⁸⁹⁾ If Warrington wire tethered the Empire, Warrington's role in the development of khaki cloth was perhaps more surprising (given that Warrington never was a 'cotton town'). Armitage and Rigby, owners of Cockhedge Mill, had been introduced to the Swiss chemist, Gathy, who had invented the khaki dye in 1884. The firm offered to weave his cloth, and the first khaki was woven by the firm. A nonconformist company, the walls of the weaving shed were decorated by portraits of Cobden, Gladstone and Bright.⁽⁹⁰⁾

The works' annual excursion was a common vehicle for employers' messages, as when brewers Peter Walker and Sons took their workforce to Douglas and Blackpool, where they were admitted free to the Tower and gave the men spends; it was reported that there was "not a trace of disappointment anywhere". Their Chairman told them after dinner at the County and Lane Ends Hotel:

Seven years after their beloved Queen ascended the throne, a little brewery was started in Warrington, a town then of about ten thousand inhabitants. Since that time Warrington had progressed consistently with the development of the Empire until it was now a large town with many enormous businesses, some of which indeed were to be numbered amongst the largest and most successful in England. (Hear Hear) As Warrington had developed that little brewery business had become a big one.⁽⁹¹⁾

In the case of Walkers, the value of Empire was in a collective prosperity rather than in exports, as beer was produced only for the local market.

So, regardless of their politics or the structure of their markets, employers sought to

89. S.P.B. Mais, *A History of N. Greening and Sons Ltd. (Warrington, England) from 1799 to 1949* (Warrington: Mackie & Co., 1949), pp.30,33,37-38.

90. Godfrey William Armitage, 'A History of Cockhedge Mill, 1802-1938', (1938). [WALSC: MS1969]

91. *Warrington Guardian*, 12 July 1899.

persuade their workers that Empire was necessary for prosperity. A toast to the Army, Navy and Volunteers became a standard feature of any works dinner or outing. It is therefore not surprising that employers encouraged the expression of support for the Volunteers during the Boer War. It became standard practice to signal military celebrations by a cacophony of factory sirens. Send-offs were organised on a works basis, and particular street celebrations (as for instance when the Volunteers left for South Africa, and the Relief of Ladysmith) were made possible by the closure of the main works. But it was made clear that this concession was only permitted once, and farewells and celebrations which were not facilitated by employers in this way were barely marked at all.⁽⁹²⁾

Employers developed an informal collective response to the local issues engendered by the war, which tended to override the political differences between them. Their position was articulated most publicly by Arthur Crosfield, member of the soap-making family, who stood as Parliamentary candidate for the Liberals in 1900 and 1906, losing in the first instance, but successful at the second. Crosfield outlined his personal Liberal Imperialist philosophy, one built essentially upon pragmatism:

The sun never sets on the exports of Warrington. I may go further and say the sun never sets on the exports of Bank Quay. [Crosfield's soap works at Warrington.] Perhaps this sounds a sordid way of putting it. You may regard the honour as well as the responsibilities of Empire and its influence on our national character as higher considerations. I am sure we are none of us blind to them. They are of the highest consideration. All the same, no town in the kingdom, perhaps has a more direct interest in the advance of the colonies...all we have got to do now is keep our enthusiasm and patriotism within bounds. We don't want to wake up one fine morning and find ourselves at war with half of

92. *Warrington Observer*, 3 March 1900; *Warrington Guardian*, 6 June 1900.

Europe.⁽⁹³⁾

It is clear that the principle of Voluntarism in the army had become central to the economic and employment policies of the large employers. Voluntarism was also central to employer's social policies. Arthur Crosfield warned during the difficult weeks of December 1899 that conscription might be introduced. Employers must encourage and sustain Voluntarism, which represented "self-reliant, self-respecting citizenship", allowing time for training. He added:

Nowadays commercial competition very often meant commercial warfare. Those in commerce were spared the bloodshed, but discipline and obedience to those in authority were none the less essential to victory in commerce.

If trade unions, he argued, would recognise this "much friction might be avoided... and some of these disastrous conflicts between capital and labour which played into foreign opponents' hands."⁽⁹⁴⁾ The company's actions during the war reflected this belief: John Crosfield sent one ton of tobacco to South Africa for the soldiers, and donated the profits from Perfection soap sold in the Warrington area to the Mayor's Fund for the families of the reservists.⁽⁹⁵⁾

After the end of the war, Crosfield's pamphlet '*A Basis for Further Improvement in the Physical, Mental and Moral Conditions of the Workpeople*' noted:

Recent statistics show that there is a marked and serious decline in the fitness and consequently in the capability in the class of people who are wholly dependent for their subsistence on their bodily labour. Out of every three men presenting themselves for enlistment, two are rejected on the grounds of physical unfitness. These men are not only unfit to fight their country's battles, but correspondingly unable to fight their

93. *Warrington Guardian*, 29 September 1900.

94. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 December 1899.

95. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1899.

own daily battle for existence.⁽⁹⁶⁾

Crosfields provided the full array of paternalistic pastimes; sports teams, brass bands, cookery lessons, evening lectures, orchestra, gymnasium and amateur dramatics. The company also furnished a unit of Volunteers to the South Lancashire regiment (two employees had been in South Africa). Every encouragement was given: all Volunteers were allowed to go to camp for the full fortnight, and the firm paid their wages in full for the first week, and paid the difference between employment pay and regimental pay in the second week. One hour's drill was given per week during work's time, at work's expense. A similar arrangement was made for the Ambulance Brigade, which had over fifty members, of whom two had served in South Africa. Crosfields also encouraged membership of the National Service League, and directors, managers, foremen and labourers were supporters through the Warrington branch of the League. Their aim was to "improve the nation physically and mentally and create and develop in all classes a desire to serve the community."⁽⁹⁷⁾ Volunteering was seen by employers as an adjunct to the need to counter labour unrest and to equip workers for the rigours of international competition. It was on these terms that military, municipal and social values converged for employers. But was this true also for the working class?

The evidence suggests that the support which the working class showed during the war was given for the Volunteers as fellow-workers and townsmen. The immediate concern for Volunteers who were selected to go to South Africa was that families were left behind without financial support. Workmen's Committees were quickly organised, and subscriptions were deducted from wages for the town fund.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Workmen collected

96. Joseph Crosfield & Sons Ltd., *Basis for Further Improvement in the Physical, Mental and Moral Conditions of the Workpeople of J. Crosfield and Sons* (Warrington: J. Crosfield & Sons Ltd., 1905).

97. Crosfield & Sons, *Further Improvement*.

98. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 October 1899.

for comrades, presenting gifts before their departure, in brief ceremonies in dinner hours. A typical send off was the one to honour three wireworkers from Rylands Brothers in November 1899. A works collection was organised on their behalf, and presented at a lunch-time function, together with smoking outfits. Hundreds of their fellow workmen attended, hearing the works manager, J.J. Neald promise that the men's jobs would be available on their return.⁽⁹⁹⁾ Reservists from the Mersey White Lead Works were also honoured in this way. In the following February, another band of Volunteers left for the front, with more smoking parties and presentations from workmates. The local branch of the United Operative Plumbers Association sent off two of its members, presenting them with a case of pipes, one pound of tobacco and a purse containing gold. Replying to their good wishes, Volunteer Jones promised that "if he got a chance, he would prove himself a credit to the Plumbers, the Volunteer Section and the town." The local Joiners Association organised a send off for its Volunteer members. The Committee of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation pledged to pay the subscriptions of its members who had been sent to South Africa, and supported cases of hardship.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

It is the public language of these ceremonies which must be noted: it is as fellow workers and Warringtonians that the common soldier takes his leave. When the Warrington Trades and Labour Council debated the war in December, 1899 they declared that their support was given to soldiers, not Empire. Quoting Abraham Lincoln, the Council proclaimed "Our sympathy is with the soldiers, with the army of Britain and the Transvaal, who have been ordered to settle a grievance by killing one another."⁽¹⁰¹⁾ When the war had ended, a system of wage deduction was used to collect subscriptions for the town's memorial for the dead of the South Lancashire regiment. One thousand

99. *Warrington Guardian*, 15 November 1899.

100. *Warrington Guardian*, 18 November 1899; *Warrington Guardian*, 3 January, 7, 17 February, 1900.

101. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 December 1899.

pounds was donated in total, of which five hundred pounds was subscribed by the Committee of Workingmen.⁽¹⁰²⁾

At other times, trade unions used the war to outline their industrial grievances. In May 1900, a meeting of the local Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, in calling for the nationalisation of the railways were informed that

In the last year, 4416 workers had been killed in workshops in the United Kingdom. This country was today fighting a battle in the Transvaal and the newspapers often contained, he much regretted, casualty lists. But there were no comparative lists of the lives lost in the manufactories at home. He had the greatest possible admiration for the men who were upholding the grand traditions of Great Britain in the Transvaal and were giving their lives in their country's wars but had it never struck them that the man who from month to month and from year to year continued in his vocation in the workshops and at the anvil on the railways was equally a hero as the man who might mount Spion Kop. It was the intelligence and the industry of the working man that had made England what she was today, and if that was so, was not the life of one of the workers as valuable to England as that which is lost in the Transvaal? And vastly more lives had been lost in the industrial struggle.⁽¹⁰³⁾

The National Union of Teachers used similar arguments. Its Cheshire branch was addressed by Dr T.J. McNamara on 'A Neglected Side of Imperialism':

They were the great Imperial British nation; therefore it did not matter about them because they had the divine monopoly of supremacy; they were divinely endowed with supremacy; they did not want any special training. That was the British position. (Laughter) Their armaments had cost millions of money; they were absolutely piled high up and yet orders were given to make more of them, and spend more money.... Now he wanted the same thing with regard to the schools.... They

102. *Warrington Examiner*, 28 January 1905.

103. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 May 1900.

could find £50 million for the army and navy without turning a hair but when £10 million was asked for the education of the people it was grumbled at by a considerable number of people.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

In the fields of entertainment and sport, increasing local provision in municipal institutions acted as focal points for the growth of the sense of community, and sometimes this included an imperial and military dimension. Hobson saw the militarism of the music hall as a recent phenomenon and a product of the particular political and social conditions of the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. But this was not the case: the relationship between popular theatre and the military preceded music hall. The first Warrington Volunteers, founded in 1798, maintained close links with the local theatre. Indeed, one of the most prominent Volunteers, solicitor and amateur poet, John Fitchett, owned the first Scotland Road theatre from 1818. The Volunteers and Militia also acted as patrons to this and other theatres in Warrington. In 1818, a play titled 'John Bull' was produced "By desire and under the patronage of the Officers of the Warrington Local Militia". The Militia twice acted as patrons in the first season of Fitchett's theatre, and performances were also patronised by "The Loyal Warrington Volunteers of 1798". The local theatres were also used by the military for formal and informal events. In 1804, the Assembly Rooms were used when the Warrington Volunteers were visited by Prince Frederick William of Gloucester, and the Volunteers' annual Christmas Ball was held there. In 1807, the local Newton Volunteers band provided the entertainment. The Music Hall in Market Place held a "patriotic entertainment" in 1810, when 'Rule Britannia' was sung to the accompaniment of the Band of the Royal Horse Guards. The military also provided subject matter for drama. In 1807, the play 'A Soldier's Daughter' was first performed in Warrington, and was still being performed at the Theatre Royal, also in Scotland Road, in

104. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 September 1899.

the 1860s. In 1907, the Scotland Road theatre staged a drama about the Irish Rebellion of 1798.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Locally therefore, the links between the military and theatre were by no means newly forged in the era of New Imperialism, and the importance attached to music hall by Hobson and MacKenzie fails to acknowledge these continuities with the past. Music hall was drawing on its older traditions, not presenting a new culture at all.

And in the general context of the main focus of this study—the power of local consciousness in national and imperial mentalities—the picture of a proliferating national culture, largely controlled from London needs to be tempered by the survival of local drama which continued to have a place (even the most commercialised theatres allotted repertory weeks to local amateur companies) and in the development of a consciously ‘northern’ culture in the music hall, for example in the pride of place given to clog-dancing exponents (Dan Leno performed in Warrington after winning the national clog-dancing championship in Oldham), and in early ‘northern’ comedians such as Soft Tommy Shuttleworth and George Formby (the latter a Warrington publican and music-hall performer whose son became the epitome of ‘northern’ comedy).

Further, the popularity of touring shows provides a context within which to analyse the military in popular culture, in that they demonstrate that imperialism was not the only backcloth for adventurous displays. In 1903, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show came to Warrington, arriving at Bank Quay railway station and forming a procession to Wilderspool Fields. The show included cowboys, Indians and Aztecs, scenes from the recent battle at Talana Hill between Americans and Cubans, eight hundred men and five hundred horses, with displays of riding, shooting and lassoing. American soldiers were shown singing around their campfire. It is estimated that twenty thousand visitors saw

105. Gordon S. Aspden, “Up in the Gallery: a Study of Warrington’s Music Hall and Theatre from its beginnings to the Outbreak of the First World War”, (Diss: Dept. of Drama and Theatre, Padgate College of Education, Warrington, 1973), pp.5-19,26,71.

the show in Warrington. When some of the Buffalo Bill show attended the service at the Parish Church on the following Sunday, their singing again drew a large crowd.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Other less spectacular Wild West shows were regular visitors to Warrington. In September, 1899, two performers in the travelling show, 'On the Frontier', Bill and Mack Yellowhawk, were brought before Warrington magistrates on assault charges. They had been arrested for drunkenness after knocking a man from his bike in Buttermarket Street. Once in custody, they had violently beaten up a policeman, and it was for this offence that they were charged. The Yellowhawks said that when sitting quietly in the pub, they had been provoked by women who had tried to cut off their hair. The Chairman of Magistrates was inclined to be lenient, saying that "they had not the same knowledge of our laws as other people", but the Chief Constable protested "Probably not, but I think it is common law and common knowledge all over the world that you must not assault a policeman." The magistrates nevertheless administered a small fine, concluding that the behaviour of Bill and Mack Yellowhawk must be "mitigated by the actions of foolish people."⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Sport has been less frequently studied in the context of popular imperialism, at least this is so in relation to working-class sport, which has been analysed principally with regard to what it reveals about class and gender relations, the important connections between sport and imperialism being located in public school football, cricket and rugby.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Although what follows is not a thorough analysis of the role of sport in the building of a local community, there is enough anecdotal evidence here to indicate how the popular appetite for sport provided a vehicle for military and imperial messages. The army itself encouraged regimental sport, and has been described as harbouring a "passion

106. Aspden, "Up in the Gallery", p.60; Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.15.

107. *Warrington Observer*, 9 September 1899.

108. J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: aspects of the diffusion of an ideal* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1986).

for sport”—principally football, rugby, cricket and boxing—where military engagements were mere interruptions to sporting fixtures.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Furthermore, sport lent itself to the spreading of certain values which connected the municipal to the military, which working-class families could share. The growth of rugby in Warrington revealed this process at work. Rugby league became a vehicle for civic pride in Warrington as in other northern towns in the late-nineteenth-century. Recognised as a significant expression of working-class culture in Lancashire and Yorkshire, its imperial connections were confined to members of the New South Wales working class.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ But this is to deal in stereotypes: rugby league has broader cultural roots and imperial connections. Thus a touring team of Maoris who visited Britain in 1889 were a great attraction to the “gate-money clubs” who, within a few years would form the Northern Football Union, the first rugby league clubs. The Maori team played against Warrington, an event which provided opportunities to connect community and imperial values and to promote the idea that such values had replaced colonial tensions until recently the norm between Britons and Maoris.⁽¹¹¹⁾

Rugby football began in Warrington in 1876, with the formation of three teams, Boteler Grammar School, Warrington Wanderers, and I Zingari: the Warrington club was founded in 1879 with the amalgamation of Zingari and Padgate. Throughout the 1880s, the club grew through amalgamations with small local clubs, soon coming to be seen as representatives of the town.⁽¹¹²⁾ The relationship between the town and its team was nurtured by the club’s involvement in the community, in organising charity games, perhaps surprisingly, for strike funds in particular. The Filesmiths Society benefited from

109. Farwell, *Queen and Country*, p.203; Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.63.

110. Geoffrey Moorhouse, *At the George and other Essays on Rugby League* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), pp.7,114.

111. Angus John Harrop, *England and the Maori Wars* (London: New Zealand News, 1937); Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori Wars* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1974).

112. Garvin, *Warrington RLFC*, p.5-9.

the proceeds of a charity match during their protracted strike through the winter of 1899-1900. In 1883, when the club were to play Fairfield, the visitors failed to raise a team, so a friendly was played between marrieds and singles. The singles won, and the proceeds were donated to the Wiredrawers' Labourers.⁽¹¹³⁾ The process of mutual dependency was not always straightforward, however: the rugby club became involved in political controversy in 1905 when the town council decided to honour their cup victory with a civic reception. Independent Labour Party councillor, and Warrington Trades Council secretary Fred Stott complained about the cost to the town of the ceremony, at a time when there was severe unemployment, although he was keen to stress that he was a member and supporter of the club.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

In 1888, the first international touring team to visit Britain to play the sport arrived from New Zealand, causing considerable interest, particularly in view of the fact that this was a multi-racial team. The imperial and military significance of such an event is clear, since it was only two decades since one of the component regiments to the South Lancshires had seen active service in the Maori Wars. As the *Warrington Observer* wrote "It is but another of those ever welcome colonial invasions in which our fellow subjects across the seas come to wage friendly war with us in some one of our national sports and pastimes."⁽¹¹⁵⁾

The New Zealand Native Football Representatives, made up of "six full blooded Maoris, 15 half-castes and four pure Europeans" arrived with the full support of the Rugby Football Union at a time when the issue of broken time and professionalism was dividing the game. For the paying rugby spectator, the "dusky sons of the Antipodes" were a rare attraction. Warrington was already a leading team in the Northern Union, and

113. Garvin, *Warrington RLFC*, p.8.

114. *Warrington Examiner*, 10 June 1905.

115. *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1889.

the game against the Maoris was a defining moment in the town's sporting history, drawing comment in the sports pages, news columns and editorials of the local press. The level of local interest "probably unexampled in the football annals of Warrington" brought the game into a wider social orbit. The newspaper reporting demonstrates this: the description and analysis of the game assumed that details of the Warrington team were as foreign to some readers as were the Maoris.

The match was to be played at 3.00 p.m. on 17 January 1889. The *Warrington Guardian* printed a special edition on the day of the match, and a full itinerary was planned for the visitors. Several hundred people waited at Central Station for their arrival from Manchester. The visit provided an opportunity to celebrate, and advertise local manufacturing, and the team were given a tour of the forges at Bewsey and Dallam, and the local glassworks, before dinner at the Roebuck Inn. By 2.30 p.m. the stands at the ground were "literally besieged" with spectators, who had provided the club with its second highest gate receipt ever. The *Guardian's* reporter was overwhelmed at what he saw, at "the enormous, the absolutely and phenomenally enormous attendance of spectators, the great enthusiasm which marked every varying feature of the game."⁽¹¹⁶⁾ "Loud cheers greeted the Warringtonians, who were headed by their captain, W. Dillon, as they entered the field and soon after this, the Maoris made their appearance amidst deafening cheers." The *Warrington Examiner* noted that "their fine physique was at once the subject of comment and admiration."⁽¹¹⁷⁾ In the pre-match ritual, the New Zealand team entered the field wearing native mats and carrying spears, which were handed to an attendant before the kick-off. The Maoris won the match, and were congratulated at the official farewell dinner by Conservative Councillor William Pierpoint, who admitted that Warrington had been "well beaten" by men "better than themselves". The dinner guests

116. *Warrington Guardian*, 19 January 1889.

117. *Warrington Examiner*, 19 January 1889.

sang 'For they are Jolly Good Fellows' and the Maoris responded with 'Ake Ake Kia Kaha', translated as 'May they be forever strong'.⁽¹¹⁸⁾

The game gave the opportunity for the expression of civic pride and the strengthening of imperial ties. The town's Member of Parliament, Sir Gilbert Greenall was the club's patron. The team's colours, primrose and blue, were chosen by Lady Greenall because they represented Disraeli's favourite flower, after which the Primrose League was also named. The *Warrington Observer*, Greenall's supporter, praised the Maori language and literature, before describing the features of civilisation which "the modern Maori" had acquired. Its list gives a picture of what they themselves saw as civilisation:

the electric telegraph, savings bank, native schools with sewing mistresses, a Chief Justice and a Court of Appeal, public libraries, universities, railways, volunteers, an Education Act and a tidy little Public Debt, to which civilised luxuries must now be added our visiting football team.⁽¹¹⁹⁾

The editor welcomed the "spectacle of the noble Maori coming from distant parts of the earth to play an English game against English players", defining the tour as "essentially a phenomenon of our times". It was "the very essence of peace and bears a message of kindly import and goodwill towards men". The editorial continued:

It should ever be remembered with pride that we never fail to cultivate the practice and love of our games in all lands. The gentle Parsee plays cricket and now the olive-brown descendants with their well-shaped, intellectual heads and fine muscular development come to play football.⁽¹²⁰⁾

But both the *Guardian* and the *Observer* were concerned that if sport was to act as

118. *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1889.

119. *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1889.

120. *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1889.

an arena for civic and imperial values, then its participants must manifest those values, and it is clear that in the view of the editors, domestic players did not do so. Football players, wrote the *Observer*, had “a tendency to verge on roughness”, and were not self-disciplined, especially in obeying the off-side law: “in this respect—obedience, absolute and unquestioned, to the law—the noble Maori may possibly set us a good example of manners.” The *Guardian* described English rugby players as “underbred ruffians”, whose “brutality” had caused many “recent incidents and accidents, fatal and otherwise”, which “arises from the rather low type of men who frequently make it their profession.” These comments were answered by the *Warrington Examiner* by counter-charges concerning the Maoris’ style of play. The New Zealanders had “played like savages. But what else should they play like?” In case of any doubt, the editor added “Scratch a Maori, and you will find a savage.” The *Guardian* believed that the game had been “of a too hostile nature to be termed a pleasant one”, alluding to the Maoris’ “strong tackling powers” and “the tactics which had become associated with their name.”⁽¹²¹⁾ It is clear that the physical strength, especially of the Maori forwards, and their superior tactical awareness were not at all what pundits in England had expected. Arthur Shrewsbury, the manager of the first England rugby tour of Australia had warned that the touring team “were sure to get many a licking”, a prediction that was disproved time and again. In a twenty-five week tour, the Maoris won 49 out of 74 games, drawing five and losing twenty. Their heaviest defeats came at the hands of the strong Northern Union clubs, especially in Yorkshire, the ‘gate-money clubs’ where players were trained, and which were to lead the movement which separated rugby league from the amateur union. When Warrington won the Cup in 1905 Frank Stansfield’s heroes in the team were Jackie Fish and Papadoulos, a Maori.⁽¹²²⁾

121. *Warrington Observer*, 19 January 1889.

122. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.59.

When the Boer War started, the municipal-military connection was strengthened through rugby and football. Soldiers used sport as a metaphor for the war. Private Thomas, a Warrington Volunteer, wrote:

I am in rare football trim. I want to fight for my medal or else have none at all. I have had to fight for my other medals (meaning his medals which he has won for football) but this is a match without a referee or touch judge and there will be no lemons at half time. Tell Tom he had better come and hold my jacket.⁽¹²³⁾

As the South Lancashire reservists were given their popular send-off, Colour Sergeant Jones, captain of the Warrington association football club was carried shoulder-high through the crowd. In the previous year, another South Lancashire soldier stationed at the Orford Barracks had created local interest when he had been signed by Aston Villa, at that time league and cup champions.⁽¹²⁴⁾ The Warrington rugby club played their part by organising a charity game for the Transvaal Fund. Other charity games were held to raise funds for the memorial to the South Lancashires in 1905. Boxing was another obvious vehicle which could be used to convey military information: in 1902, the Theatre Royal put on Edison's Cinematograph which included the prize fight between Corbett and McCoy, followed by war pictures from South Africa.⁽¹²⁵⁾ Frank Stansfield recalled a visit to the Parr Hall to see Dyson's Concert Party which included a "living picture" of a scene from the Boer War "though I now have my doubts. Anyway, all we saw through a flickering haze was a steep hill with three or four British soldiers running up it and one or two of them tumbling over."⁽¹²⁶⁾

The emphasis put on social control as an explanation of the growth in commercial

123. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 July 1900.

124. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 November 1899, 8 January 1898.

125. *Warrington Guardian*, 9 July 1901.

126. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p. 16.

sports in the last quarter of the nineteenth century has distorted the diversity of sport and the variants in its social beginnings. Urbanisation and community development were factors which were part of the process which embedded particular sports and clubs into society. As Neil Tranter has stated, the impetus which propelled the spread of sports came from below, from neighbourhoods and workplaces, as much as from the elite and aristocracy.⁽¹²⁷⁾ There is strong evidence here to suggest that sport operated as a vehicle for the message that community and colonies shared the same values. This process had some recourse to racist appeals, but they were by no means pervasive.

Perhaps the most important leisure pursuit in Warrington, preceding and surpassing rugby, was drinking. For some, drink and patriotism were inseparable. An anonymous soldier writing in 1832 composed these lines:

Let Homer sing of nectar, drink divine
 And lordly bacchanals descant on wine;
 O'er rosy goblets, and in lofty strain,
 Rehearse the praise of claret and Champaign;
 I heed them not but boldly touch the lyre
 With equal passion, though inferior fire;
 Then aid me, Bacchus, and I shall not fail,
 To sing the praise of England's glory—ale-
 Spirit of malt! John Bull's peculiar zest!
 In Warrington the brightest and the best—
 All hail to thee, thou amber foaming draught!
 By thy own hardy sons so richly quaffed—...
 ...Hail England's nectar! Other lands may teem
 With arrack, whiskey or the grape's rich stream;
 But still all other draughts to match thee, fail,
 Thou honest, generous, sparkling, peerless ale!
 In pie and hogshead, barrel, butt or tun,

127. Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.28.

Thine own ale bears the palm, fair Warrington.⁽¹²⁸⁾

It has already been noted that some concern about drinking had been expressed from the very beginning of the re-formation of the Volunteers in 1859. Drinking continued to be a part of the social side of Volunteering, not unexceptionally, given that Warrington was a brewing town, and the political culture of the town was so influenced by the brewing interest. A free pint of beer was provided to Volunteers at medal presentations and similar functions. Occasionally this seemed to lead to excess, as when a number of Volunteers were reprimanded, newspaper speculation that Volunteers had been very drunk were denied by officers: the miscreants had not been charged with drunkenness, but with 'inefficiency'.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Edward Spiers points out that drunkenness was a "recurrent problem" in the Victorian army, and although it had begun to decline, Spiers believes that it nevertheless remained sufficiently characteristic to underpin a general image of lack of respectability in the military.⁽¹³⁰⁾ But in a drinking town like Warrington, abstention and restraint were regarded as extreme, and public attitudes to drink were fairly tolerant.

The disruption to the social life of the town during the first months of the Boer War certainly revolved to an extent around the drinking culture of the town. In November, 1899, when the first contingent of reservists left the town, the *Warrington Observer* declared that "many drank until they could drink no longer".⁽¹³¹⁾ The *Observer* carried a weekly column of cases brought before the magistrates court on drinking charges called 'Sequels to Saturday'.⁽¹³²⁾ Michael Hennessey, a regular at the court, was drunk and disorderly in Buttermarket Street. Police described how he had been surrounded by a

128. G.W.B., (A private of the 80th Regiment), *The Blossoms of Hope or a soldier's bequest to his friends* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Arnot, 1832), pp.49-50.

129. *Warrington Observer*, 24 April 1895; *Warrington Guardian*, 4 December 1889.

130. Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.60.

131. *Warrington Observer*, 25 November 1899.

132. *Warrington Observer*, 2 December 1899.

large crowd, “shouting that he was off to Pretoria to have a—at the Boers.” He pleaded to be let out before Christmas: “his patriotic spirit overcame him.”⁽¹³³⁾ Soldiers took the opportunities opened for them in this situation. The works send-offs may have been the formal celebration of leaving, but it was unlikely to be the only one. When one detachment of Volunteers left, the *Observer* noted that they had been out on the town every night of the week.⁽¹³⁴⁾ Soldiers were regularly brought before the courts, and the authorities were uncertain about whether to show leniency or severity. One militiaman was given a four month gaol sentence for drunkenness and assaulting two constables, having been “very violent all the way to the police station”. The prisoner had received his call-up and “got very much drunk”.⁽¹³⁵⁾ A constable employed by the Cheshire Lines railway company, who as a reserve soldier was due to report at the barracks, was charged with being drunk at the railway station, using obscene language and assaulting a police inspector.⁽¹³⁶⁾ The Chief Constable publicly complained after a Liverpool reservist assaulted a police constable after drinking heavily: reservists, he said, seemed to be under the impression that they could do what they liked because they had been called upon to join the colours. Eventually, the military authorities issued a public appeal not to offer drink to soldiers leaving the depot.⁽¹³⁷⁾ When the 5th (Irish) Volunteer Brigade of the King’s Liverpool Regiment (Supplement to the Royal Irish Regiment) arrived at Warrington barracks, Monsignor Nugent warned that “he knew no more dangerous place for young men to be stationed in than Warrington”, and asked them to “restrain themselves”.⁽¹³⁸⁾

133. *Warrington Observer*, 2 December 1899.

134. *Warrington Observer*, 12 May 1900.

135. *Warrington Observer*, 9 December 1899.

136. *Warrington Observer*, 6 January 1900.

137. *Warrington Observer*, 2 December 1899.

138. *Warrington Observer*, 27 January 1900.

But sometimes the exceptional circumstances allowed moderation to prevail in charging and sentencing. Following the combined celebrations for the relief of Mafeking and the Queen's birthday, all criminal charges against public order were dropped. Similar attitudes prevailed after Saint Patrick's day, when Irish soldiers were toasted through the town. There were "many dry tongues and swelled heads on Sunday morning but the victims had the consolation of knowing that they suffered in a good cause."⁽¹³⁹⁾ Michael Hennessey—thirty-five times before the court—was charged once again after the celebrations which erupted prematurely for the relief of Mafeking. He offered this apology: "If he had done anything wrong to the officer, he humbly apologised. It was only patriotism." He was relieved of his fine, said the magistrate "on account of his nationality. Your countrymen have done good work in South Africa".⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Possibly, by this time, Warrington's police were becoming wearied by patriotism.

These reports suggest that despite the best efforts of the civil and military authorities, relations between town and army were never wholly smooth. The problem of desertion was exacerbated by popular support for the escaping soldiers. Fighting broke out between soldiers and civilians after a military prisoner was handed over to an escorting picket in Buttermarket Street. An angry crowd intervened in an attempt to free the prisoner and arrests followed. Captain Seaton from the barracks explained to the court that young recruits had now to be used for picket duty as experienced soldiers were in South Africa, and admitted that interference from civilians who were protecting deserters was a continuing problem.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ This, too, illustrates that popular support was less with the army than with the common soldier. Another example concerned the King's Own Liverpool Regiment (Volunteers), who had been asked to replenish the Dublin

139. *Warrington Observer*, 3, 24 March 1900.

140. *Warrington Observer*, 12 May 1900.

141. *Warrington Guardian*, 5 September 1900.

Fusiliers in South Africa. The required number were recruited, passed medically fit and dressed in khaki, and were sent to Warrington Barracks for training. What happened next became a controversial issue in Warrington and Liverpool. According to the Volunteers, they were given no forks and insufficient food. They were never supplied with towels or soap. The majority then failed medical tests, and were told that the unit was to be disbanded. Given only the train fare back to Liverpool, they were then approached by a recruiting sergeant offering them a place in the regular army and some immediately joined up “rather than face a humiliating return to their friends.” The military authorities were heavily criticised locally for their “extraordinary treatment” of the Liverpool men. The *Manchester Evening News* reported their plight: “many had thrown up good situations and had been feted by their fellow townsmen—now they were crushed by an intense feeling of wounded pride.” They received no pay or relief from special funds, and many were now unemployed and worried by the “stigma that has been cast upon them.” Colonel Spratt, officer commanding at the barracks called the stories “a falsification from beginning to end”, but the damage had been done.⁽¹⁴²⁾ The army had inflicted the worst that it could on Volunteers: unemployment and the “stigma” of rejection.

John MacKenzie has written that in his view, the military wielded power in British society through “a popular culture in a new mass age of consumerism, becoming, in short, a significant cultural factor in the mass market.” Colonial war sparked “spectatorial passions”, its distance and excitement lending legitimacy to it.⁽¹⁴³⁾ I take issue with this analysis on a number of points earlier in this thesis, principally in its assumptions that popular responses had no moral or political content, and that working-class thought particularly operated in a vacuum, without its own historical framework. An analysis which relies so completely on the view that working-class opinion was dominated by a

142. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 July 1900.

143. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism*, pp.8-9.

consumerist mentality is, in my view, open to question. For instance, how influential in a place like Warrington was the “officer culture”, with its self-image as “knights errant” and its fondness for bloodsports, which MacKenzie sees as pivotal to the power of the military image? Even the officer class had its own hierarchy, as Byron Farwell points out. He notes that the socially prominent regiments had officers drawn from the peerage, but

By contrast, the less expensive regiments were commanded by lesser figures, though most had been knighted and had reached the rank of lieutenant-general. Still, the colonel of the South Lancashire regiment in 1899 was only a major-general with no post-nominal letters, not even a C.B..⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

So the view that society became militarised, particularly in the later years of the nineteenth century, is one that needs to be defined more specifically. The military never achieved a Prussian role in Britain, and if there was convergence between the military and society, this had much more to do with changes from within the army than in society. An important element in this change was the policy of localisation. Military historians have tended to see localisation as less than a complete success, in that it failed to counter completely the poor image of the army, and that it did not prevent the continuing problem of under-recruitment. Nevertheless, that policy, together with the decision to create the army reserve and to incorporate the Volunteers into the whole army, meant that soldiers lived and worked in their communities, and when they were unexpectedly called up for action in South Africa, the community—workmates, churches and chapels, trades union branches, pubs, sports clubs—gave them emotional and financial support. This explains why the working-class crowded onto the streets to cheer goodbye and to celebrate military victories. This is not to deny that patriotism played a part in popular reaction, but it was not the whole picture. Hugh Cunningham’s study of the Volunteers concludes

144. Farwell, *Queen and Country*, p.55.

that the patriotism of the Volunteers was elusive.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ In Warrington, those who had been most vociferously against the war, such as John Yonge, could still support local soldiers. Working-class organisations such as the trades council could organise for the adoption of a Labour Party candidate for Warrington at the same time as they collected money for the memorial to the dead of the Transvaal campaign.

In this respect, the most eloquent of the sources used here are the soldier's letters written from South Africa. These are not the words of jingoistic militarism; they do not contain racial abuse or high-blown patriotic phrases. They describe hardship, homesickness and worries about poverty for their families, and send messages for workmates, team-mates and friends. If their inclusion in Warrington's local press was typical of other local and regional newspapers, then they may be an important source for the historian of working-class thought. Here, they have reinforced the conclusion that a fusing of community and imperial values provides a framework in which to understand popular responses to Empire.

145. Cunningham, *Volunteer Force*, p.153.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JUBILEES, APPEALS AND CELEBRATIONS: COMMUNAL PHILANTHROPY AND EMPIRE

Prevailing debates about how working-class ideologies interacted with imperialism have tended to be reduced to a simple question about whether labour was for or against Empire. The concept of popular imperialism sanctions this idea, in presuming that Empire was a simple matter of popularity or otherwise. This approach, however, is of limited value in understanding the complexities of the problem of how people thought about imperialism. It is more realistic to try to judge how domestic political and social thought incorporated Empire, and how Empire fed into the growing creative tension of late-nineteenth-century politics, interacting with class politics, the global economy, economic theories, mass markets and technologies. The rhetoric of empire in popular politics helped create the particular characteristics of British imperialism, as a system supposedly different from other empires. The main debate about empire throughout most of the nineteenth century was not whether an empire was desirable (the question occurring only occasionally) but how Britain should govern the empire it had. Implicit to popular belief was the idea that British imperialism was a product of traditional liberal values of tolerance, community and equality before the law. This chapter will consider further aspects of this liberal image of Empire. An explicit appeal to local imperialism—the argument that communal values not nationalistic self-interest were the real substance of Empire—was a component in this liberal image. Philanthropy was seen as both an imperial and municipal duty, both in domestic and colonial causes, and the communal nature of philanthropy was stressed.

This particular way of looking at imperialism and popular politics may dispel some

of the negative views which have been expressed concerning the limitations of working-class thought on the subject. M.D. Blanch's study of British society in the Boer War sees working-class responses to empire as essentially emotive, as "an extension of the music hall stage onto the streets", and with "few intellectual roots". He concludes that "working people could hold what appeared to 'educated' people to be two entirely contradictory opinions at the same time, or at different times about the same event." They lacked an "enduring or systematised ideological value system." Blanch cannot account for working-class behaviour which might combine aggressive class politics with an acceptance of empire, because he also believes that Empire "glossed over the great cracks in society."⁽¹⁾ But this is to take the rhetoric of certain "one nation" imperialists at face value, and it was perfectly possible to subscribe to certain visions of Empire and still to engage in class politics. Even Richard Price, who takes an opposite view of working-class imperialism to Blanch, declares that

It is fruitless to look for a systematised and distinct framework of ideology or thought into which working-class attitudes to problems like imperialism can be placed.... To look for a recognisably consistent political and cultural value system through which the working classes could view the Boer War and imperialism is to look for something which did not exist.⁽²⁾

Both see consistency in political values as attributes of the middle-class. Whilst middle-class ideology could be fired by moral precepts, or by the workings of imagination or empathy, working-class ideals are deemed to be roused only by everyday experience.

The popularity of celebrations commemorating the Golden Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 and 1897 are seen as proof of the feelings of the

1. M.D. Blanch, 'British Society and the War' in Peter Warwick, (ed.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Longman, 1980), pp.235-6.
2. Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.4.

common people with regard to monarchy and nation. The state—national or local—put on a pageant, and the masses cheered. But the process was never so simple; from first planning meeting to final firework display, each stage required negotiation between interest groups, and had to obtain popular consent if sufficient donations to cover costs were to be forthcoming. It is in analysing the dynamics of these negotiations that their historical value can be used to advantage.

Communal fund-raising was not only practised for local and national celebrations, but was also used in an imperial context to provide relief in situations of disaster or distress. There are genuine problems of methodology in tracing underlying working-class ideas about empire, to which a study of fund-raising may be one possible solution. Philanthropy reflected back towards donors an image of positive intervention and contribution, a return on emotional and social investment. Because philanthropy was organised through municipal structures, it tended to strengthen the image of local imperialism, together with the concept of empire as a liberalising force. Sometimes positioned against the City of London with its ruthless pursuit of profit, such philanthropy drew upon both ideas of municipal loyalty and communal duty and a ‘northern’, Lancashire, image of generosity, particularly relating to memories of the Cotton Famine.

Philanthropy had developed into a social activity with its own conventions and rituals by the late nineteenth century, and with its own conflicts and controversies. The study of philanthropy has encouraged the view that the significant relationship was between the middle class as donors and decision-takers, and the working class as receivers of charity and moralising advice. This may have been true in the middle years of the century, but by the 1890s, communal fund-raising with a strong financial and organisational working-class content, was evident in Warrington. Jubilees had to be paid for by subscription and donation, and charitable efforts were made on behalf of other

imperial causes. Elizabeth Hammerton and David Cannadine have studied how class structured the municipal events that were organised in Cambridge to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.⁽³⁾ The social and economic character of Cambridge differed from Warrington, but in both towns, middle-class plans for the Jubilee had to some extent to be adjusted as a result of fund-raising difficulties and competing working-class ideas. The method used in this chapter assesses the role of communal philanthropy as a measure and indicator of the moral content of popular thought on empire.

The chapter uses the papers of the Jubilee Committee set up in 1887, together with reports of meetings and celebrations of the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, and uses evidence on the response to Warrington's first Empire Day in 1907. These materials are used to uncover the rules which governed the organisation of 'ritual philanthropy'. Inasmuch as this kind of activity formed an important aspect of social organisation at municipal level, it has much to reveal about the workings of local democracy. Final arrangements required some popular sanction whenever fund-raising was required, because working-class contributions were vital to success. Rituals, and the fund-raising which accompanied them, can be used as more than the symbols or sign of popular support for monarchy or empire, for they can reveal the role of monarchy and empire in the rhetoric of social relations, in setting the conditions and limits to their popular appeal. Through a study of popular philanthropy, it is possible to be more specific about what was popular in the celebrations concerning town, nation and empire, because some financial appeals were answered and some were not. We can in some respect divine a moral framework to these responses, not just in comparing totals raised for competing appeals, but in looking

3. Elizabeth Hammerton and David Cannadine, 'Conflict and Consensus on a Ceremonial Occasion: The Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge in 1897', *The Historical Journal*, 24,1 (1981), pp.111-146.

at the controversies which came to surround the rules and rituals of celebrations and at how these were absorbed into political debates about access to democratic institutions, and ultimately, the competence of local democracy itself. Evidence presented here further suggests that the breakdown of the rules of municipal philanthropy was a feature of the socialist challenge to traditional municipal practices, introducing a defensive reaction on the part of the previously-unchallenged political elite. The years between 1887 and 1907 saw almost uninterrupted fund-raising or commemorating of anniversaries or events in Warrington, from the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887, the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the fiftieth anniversary of Warrington's becoming a borough in 1897, Indian famine relief in 1897 and 1900, the Transvaal Fund for wives and children of Volunteers, the South Lancashire Memorial Fund and the first commemoration of Empire Day in 1907.

Local celebration of royal Jubilees were part of a pattern of public ritual at local level which incorporated many influences.⁽⁴⁾ The arrangements for Jubilee processions for instance incorporated the traditional Walking Day. Warrington was similar to many northern towns in having a Walking Day. It had been introduced in Warrington by the Rector, Horace Powis, in 1835 in an attempt to divert interest away from the Newton race-meeting, the latter having become an opportunity for revelry which had begun to disturb respectable Warringtonians. Walking Day (which continues as a popular festival in Warrington) was intended to be an occasion for schoolchildren, churches and chapels to declare their faith, with processions and band music. The day has traditionally been an annual holiday in the town, larger employers conferring a day off with pay. Consequently it quickly became both an occasion for civic and religious pride and for a celebration of

4. David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c.1820-1977' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.104-108.

working-class culture, with its travelling fair, drinking, and sea-side day trips. But whenever it was suggested that Walking Day be absorbed into Jubilee Day or Empire Day, popular protests were loudly voiced. We have seen in Chapter Six that the Golden Jubilee in Warrington was modelled on memories of royal commemoration from over fifty years earlier, together with schemes of local importance which William Beamont had suggested from his imperial travels. Any local celebrations thus tended to follow an established routine which dovetailed local and royal pageantry.

Routines were nevertheless still subject to the prevailing political winds. The opening of the Town Hall in 1873 in Warrington was marked by a public display which was in some respects considerably more open and democratic than the royal jubilees were to be. In the first meeting called to organise the opening of the Town Hall, it was decided that the order of the procession would be taken from the demonstration on the marriage of the Prince of Wales, and would include the schools, churches, Town Council, workhouse, friendly societies and clubs such as the Gardeners, Oddfellows and Protestants, the trades and inhabitants of the town generally. The Militia provided music, and the Rector recited a prayer from the Town Hall steps, perhaps inappropriately on the theme of Failure. A Banquet Committee organised a display of fireworks and a treat for all Sunday school children. For the parade, the order in which trades, societies and clubs would process was decided by ballot. The Orangemen of the Prince of Wales Lodge, No. 224, accompanied by their own band, carried a “magnificent new banner, on one side of which was a portrait of Mr. Disraeli, and beneath it the words, ‘The Altar, the Throne and the Cottage’.” Representing the trades, the tanners “wore aprons and carried articles used in their craft”. The ironworkers’ banner, displaying the motto ‘Prosperity to the Dallam and Bewsey Ironworkers’ was described as a “very fine one”, whilst the gasmen carried lamps, globes, a meter “and other things mounted on poles”, as well as “neat little models

of a retort bench and condenser.”⁽⁵⁾

Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1887 proved controversial in Warrington, considerable disagreement surrounding proposed schemes to mark the occasion. These are described in detail in Chapter Six, as they related to the issue of access to library facilities and to the role of local politician and historian, William Beamont. The original meeting to bring forward suggestions for schemes to honour the occasion heard calls for the Jubilee to be marked by a school for waifs and strays, the free library scheme, recreation grounds and improvements to the recently acquired town hall. The municipal council favoured the perhaps unintentionally symbolic building of a brick wall around the town hall, and issued a public appeal for funds to finance it. Unfortunately for them, public response was so poor that the council was forced to abandon the plan. But before the Jubilee celebrations had been mentioned, in April 1886, a campaign had been initiated to force the Library Committee to allow readers to borrow books free of charge, rather than being obliged to pay a yearly subscription before lending rights could be secured.⁽⁶⁾ This scheme had the support of the Trades Council and the radical Liberal town councillors and radical nonconformist ministers such as John Yonge of Wycliffe Congregational Mission. It also had the support of the *Warrington Guardian’s* founder and former editor, Alexander Mackie, who was now Mayor (but a sudden illness forced Mackie’s withdrawal from politics and the Mayoralty). The suggestion that free borrowing be used to mark the Queen’s Jubilee was not made until November 1886, but proved very popular. Public meetings called to organise the Jubilee locally were turned into platforms from which the campaign for free lending could be waged. Town meetings called unanimously for the granting of free use.⁽⁷⁾ The Golden

5. ‘New Town Hall and Bank Park’, *Warrington Guardian* (Supplement, 20th June 1873).

6. W.B. Stephens, *Adult Education and Society in an Industrial Town: Warrington, 1800-1900* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1988), pp.42-3.

7. *Warrington Examiner*, 23 April, 26 November 1887; *Warrington Guardian*, 12 January 1887.

Jubilee therefore became a pretext for the presentation of a popular grievance in large public meetings attended by the working class, developing from initial complaint about restriction of access to the library into a larger dispute about priorities in local spending, and attacks on the selfishness of the political elite. The statement made by Rev. John Yonge that Warrington “wants a larger public spirit amongst the richer classes of the locality” was one echoed by articulate working men who spoke at these meetings. Free lending was finally conceded after a bitter fight, which eventually reached the House of Commons and the office of the Attorney General.⁽⁸⁾

So whilst the Jubilee celebrations in Warrington in 1887 seem to provide proof of popular loyalty to monarchy, the form which the celebrations took is equally proof against the view that this induced an unwillingness to be confrontational, albeit on the seemingly innocuous issue of library books. At a time when working men’s participation in local democratic institutions remained uncommon, the planning stages of the Jubilee provided opportunities for them to organise and protest.

In one sense, the town council entered the Jubilee year in 1897 exactly as it had in 1887, facing the charge that it was behaving in an arrogant manner at ratepayer’s expense. The controversy this time centred upon the hasty convening of an emergency council meeting on December 23 1896 in order that the council sanction the purchase of the Old Warps estate from the Mayor, Alderman Fairclough. The Mayor had bought the property from the trustees of the late Alderman Davies without first consulting the Council. The council agreed to the purchase at a cost of £10,000. Letters of complaint immediately featured in the local press, denouncing this “suspicious mode of transacting public business”.⁽⁹⁾ When it was suggested that the estate could be converted to a public

8. Newspaper Cuttings, 1875-1902: consisting mainly of articles on the Warrington Museum and Library. [WALSC: 80841]

9. *Warrington Observer*, 2 January 1897.

park, to be named Victoria Park in honour of the Jubilee, and thus partly financed by the fund-raising that the Jubilee generated, the council saw a means of escape from the mess it had made and took up the suggestion. Criticism was still not wholly stemmed however, some expressing fears that the park would share the fate of other publicly-acquired land such as the cinder tip between Orford Lane and Winwick Road, “a standing monument to the incapacity of the Open Spaces Committee.” Criticism of the council was compounded when it was discovered that a secret meeting had agreed to increase the salaries of council officials. Complaints mushroomed: now it was pointed out that the council chamber contained no facility for public attendance, denying the ratepayers their democratic rights, and it was noted that the Mayor had been voted a £500 salary for “special services” during the year.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Diamond Jubilee coincided in Warrington with the fiftieth anniversary of the granting of borough status to the town, and arrangements for the two were often treated jointly. Newspapers asked readers to send reminiscences of the incorporation, and editors published these along with reprinted accounts from contemporary documents and letters describing ‘Warrington of Fifty Years Ago.’ The exact date of the anniversary in April was celebrated with a procession, public dinner and fireworks. However, relations between the town council and the Trades and Labour Council deteriorated as the plans were being made, a letter from Arthur Lang and William Bullock, the latter’s President and Secretary complaining that “the scheme was drawn up without consultation” and that “in that programme, working men of the borough had been entirely ignored”. They warned that “in future, we will be very chary in offering our co-operation in any public demonstration arranged by our Honourable Town Council.”⁽¹¹⁾

When the council brought forward its suggestions for commemorating the 50th

10. *Warrington Examiner*, 9 January, 6 March 1897; *Warrington Observer*, 27 February 1897.

11. *Warrington Observer*, 13 March 1897.

anniversary of the town's incorporation, it was immediately clear that important lessons in public relations had not been learned. A new coat of arms was planned at a cost of £60, the Mayor was to have his portrait painted, the Council planned to buy a new mace and sword for the Council chamber and robes for all councillors, silver caskets were to be presented to freemen of the town, and a treat for schoolchildren and the poor including a firework display was to be provided. Funds were still being requested for these schemes when, on May 1, two weeks after the council announced an increase in the rates of 6d. in the pound, an appeal was issued for funds for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, together with an assurance that donations could be earmarked for specific projects.

The public response to the Queen's Jubilee appeal was initially so poor that further appeals had to be made. Donations remained small however and schemes were pared down until eventually only the schoolchildren's treat remained to mark the occasion. But worse was to come, when it was revealed that there were even insufficient donations to cover the cost of the schoolchildren's treat, and that it would therefore be restricted to children who attended Sunday schools, thus depriving around a thousand children of their tea and parade. Eventually, only £200 was raised for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee appeal (£300 was required to give all schoolchildren their treat). The council was blamed for this, rather than the parsimony of the people.⁽¹²⁾

When the council announced that it had decided to move Walking Day to June 22, Queen Victoria's Jubilee Day, in order that employers would not need to allow two days off work, public anger mounted. All of the town's annual celebrations were to be forfeited for the sake of the Royal Jubilee. The town council was subject to "one universal chorus of disapproval". Schoolteachers now complained that two separate days were required. The letters column of all three newspapers were critical of the way in

12. *Warrington Observer*, 27 March, 17 April, 1 May, 12 June, 1897; *Warrington Examiner*, 27 February, 15 May, 1897.

which the schoolchildren had been treated, and particularly that Walking Day had been sacrificed. One letter to the *Observer* pointed out that the only scheme to attract public support was the children's treat, "and for this they are to be robbed of their Walking Day—a very magnanimous idea". The writer predicted that the celebrations would have "much the same farcical character as the municipal Jubilee celebrations" that marked Warrington's fifty years as a municipal borough. More complaints were made concerning those children who did not attend Sunday school, and who would have "no treat, no medal, no Mayor's threepenny bit" to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.⁽¹³⁾ As it turned out, there were insufficient funds to provide medals for the Sunday school children also. Finally, the trades refused to take part in any procession and, together with the Friendly Societies, organised their own parade through the town on July 24.

Nevertheless, on June 22, the town celebrated Victoria's Jubilee with a parade, treats for (some) children, and a firework display in the evening.⁽¹⁴⁾ An analysis of the day's events would suggest that Warrington was the equal of any town in expressing its loyalty to the crown. Yet in the weeks before the celebration, it is clear that the monarchy's role was to provide a context for the pursuit of local hostilities. Neither the council nor their critics seemed to be much motivated by either negative or positive feelings for the monarchy, seemingly seeing the Queen as an accepted fact, and thus proceeding with the more important task of political conflict. As one letter to the *Observer* remarked after the town council had blamed the townspeople for failing to give generously for the Royal Jubilee appeal, the "right of donation" was not in the council's bidding:

every man has a right to choose whether or not he makes the town council the dispensers of his generosity, and the preservation of

13. *Warrington Observer*, 12 May 1897.

14. *Warrington Observer*, 8, 15, 22 May, 5, 26 June 1897; *Warrington Examiner*, 5 June 1897.

courtesy and freedom is of far more importance than even the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of a glorious reign.⁽¹⁵⁾

The “right of donation” appears then to have a more dialectic role in the popular will, acting not only as an agent of humanitarian or civic generosity but also as a measure of public feeling and political priorities. Simply, what was politically unpopular or undervalued was not given voluntary public funds. In itself, this seems to suggest an unenthusiastic response to the Royal Jubilee, the popular will stipulating that the very minimum—a children’s tea—should be provided. In contrast, there was no lack of support for other fund-raising ventures. In March 1897, Warrington was visited by the Bethesda Welsh Choir, who were touring the country giving performances to raise funds for unemployed quarrymen at Penrhyn. The men were in dispute with quarry owner, Lord Penrhyn, who refused to allow them to join a trade union. In the cause of “their gallant fight for the right of combination”, the choir gave two performances in the Parr Hall. The Trades Council publicised the visit, and all the local press conjoined to entreat the town to support them, because of their cause and because “to hear the Welsh sing in large numbers is a treat”. After two successful concerts which attracted large audiences, the Penrhyn Choir thanked Warrington for “coming to the aid of the choir and showing sympathy for the men.”⁽¹⁶⁾

The Royal Jubilees are portents of more intricate social processes than is imputed to them: they were not simply the manifestations of the militarism and monarchism associated with new imperialism. They are compounded from such factors as municipal hierarchies, competing political ideas, and local and national rituals. Their final forms were dictated by the decisions of local people about whether to give financial support or not. They did not simply emerge out of emotional good-will. At bottom, as one

15. *Warrington Observer*, 5 June 1897.

16. *Warrington Examiner*, 6, 13 March 1897.

correspondent remarked in the *Warrington Examiner*, they were a children's festival.⁽¹⁷⁾ But there is a further factor which ran side by side with the Jubilee celebrations, which allows the opportunity to draw more specific conclusions about how empire had become absorbed into the political atmosphere and into the culture of celebration and commemoration during these years, and this is the incidence of famine in India in 1897 and 1900. B.M. Bhatia's study, *Famines in India*, shows the relentless nature of famine from 1860 to the present day, although he stresses that from the late nineteenth century the nature of famine in India changed as its frequency increased alarmingly between 1860 to 1908. Perceptions of famine changed in that time, as it "ceased to be a natural calamity and was transformed into a social problem of poverty and dearth". It became clear that famine was no longer simply a problem of food shortage but of price rises triggered by temporary shortage which could affect all the endemically poor in agricultural areas. The economic policies of the imperial government made problems worse. Government income was dependent upon continued export of foodstuffs, and in addition economic change caused the emergence of new social classes and the destruction of the old system of social obligations which had warded off the effects of famine in the past. The British government established Famine Commissions and Famine Codes, but based their policies on the British Poor Law system, with its dogmatic utilitarian belief that for society the danger of demoralisation was greater than the danger of death. Relief had to be earned, and schemes were put into place to provide work. Bhatia shows however that gradually British administrations discovered the new causes of famine and moved towards famine prevention and irrigation schemes. These measures, together with economic growth and increased mobility of labour, broke the famine cycle by 1908.⁽¹⁸⁾

17. *Warrington Examiner*, 5 June 1897.

18. B.M. Bhatia, *Famines in India: A Study of Some Aspects of the Economic History of India with Special Reference to the Food Problem, 1860 - 1990*, (3rd ed.) (Delhi: Konark, 1991), pp.ix,2,22,111,289.

These developments were only vaguely recognised in Britain, though this is not to say that public opinion was ignorant of or indifferent to Indian suffering. The first major Indian famine to have an impact upon British public opinion was the Madras famine in the 1870s, but better forms of communication and the growth of the press resulted in the famines of 1897 and 1900 gaining wide publicity in Britain. These coincided with the Diamond Jubilee and with the Boer War, both events acting as focal points for debates on empire, and both sparking fund-raising efforts. The campaigning and fund-raising for Indian famine relief coincided and competed with these purely domestic appeals for donations, and as a result they provide some indication of the underlying beliefs about empire. The *Warrington Examiner* drew attention to some of the “graphic descriptions” of starvation beginning to emerge from correspondents, the “pitiful sight” of a woman holding a dying boy in her arms, of parents willing and ready to give their children to strangers, “a sure sign of the hopelessness of their condition.”⁽¹⁹⁾

In the middle of January, 1897, the Lord Mayor of London began the Mansion House Fund to co-ordinate local collections for the famine, and announced that the Queen had made the first donation of £500.⁽²⁰⁾ Alderman Fairclough did not immediately move to organise the Warrington Mayor’s Fund, and it was left to the shopkeepers and traders to put out collection boxes. Within a fortnight, the Rev. John Yonge had written to the *Warrington Examiner* in terms very critical of the Mayor, suggesting that if he would not make the effort, then the Rector, also remiss, should set up a town fund. Failing that, it would be left to the individual efforts of churches and chapels with their collection boxes. Rev. Yonge’s sermon was reprinted in the *Warrington Guardian*. He took as his text “God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” The sermon continued:

The people of India are men and women of simple habit, satisfied with

19. *Warrington Examiner*, 2 January 1897.

20. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 January 1897.

very little, used to no luxury, but they have all our human feelings. They care for one another. They care for their children. They care for life, barren though it must be.... Let us not hide behind richer folk, and say that this business is theirs and not ours whose means are less. It is our business.⁽²¹⁾

Stung into action, the Mayor's Fund for Indian Famine Relief was announced in the next *Warrington Examiner*, and within days £650 had been collected. All church collections on the following Sunday were designated for the Famine Fund. A Parr Hall concert was arranged, a Famine Fund Football match played, collecting boxes were placed in shops, in churches and in Market Place, Warrington's busiest shopping area. Unitarians and Catholics raised funds within their own communities, and the Orange Order held a charity ball. By March, Warrington had raised £1,150 for Indian Famine Relief.⁽²²⁾

When famine broke out again in 1900, a Warrington Fund was rapidly set up (prompting the *Warrington Observer's* headline, 'India's Distress—Warrington to the Rescue').⁽²³⁾ Arrangements were discussed at a public meeting, after which a house-to-house envelope collection was organised and the usual collecting facilities put into place. But unlike in 1897, on this occasion workers collectively played a bigger role in the mechanics of the Fund. The Mayor reported to the meeting that the Workingmen's Committee of the Infirmary, which already had procedures in place for the collecting of donations, had offered their "active co-operation". The Mayor welcomed their "desire to have a large representation", and as a consequence, a number of working men were appointed to the Fund committee.⁽²⁴⁾ Each works was to appoint a representative to co-ordinate donations. The Trades and Labour Council became involved also, in sending

21. *Warrington Guardian*, 3 March 1897.

22. *Warrington Examiner*, 20 March 1897; *Warrington Observer*, 20 February 1897; *Warrington Guardian*, 10, 13, 27 February, 1897.

23. *Warrington Observer*, 3 March 1900.

24. *Warrington Guardian*, 3 March 1900.

delegates to the Fund committee and in organising a Saturday collection.⁽²⁵⁾ Churches repeated their efforts of three years before; St. Mary's Amateur Dramatic Society performed an "ambitious" Grimaldi in the Parr Hall over three nights. Many were locked out, and £98. 3s. 0d. was raised.⁽²⁶⁾

In 1897, Jubilee fund-raising in Warrington brought in £200, whilst the Indian Famine Fund raised £1,150. In 1900, the Transvaal Fund (organised to raise money for the families of the Warrington Volunteers) raised £3,300, whilst for the Indian Famine Fund a creditable total of £1,301 was collected.⁽²⁷⁾ These comparative amounts allow some tentative conclusions to be drawn concerning how the public viewed town, nation and Empire. The hyperbole of imperial and national greatness is not apparent here, and whilst superficially the Jubilees were successful, it is clear that in Warrington at least the Jubilee celebrations did not inspire much popular enthusiasm. People directed their energies into famine relief, and even when the town was most intensely involved in raising funds for the relief of the families of serving soldiers, great efforts were made for famine relief. The reality of famine in India provided the context in which the debate about the Council's overblown plans was conducted. The *Examiner's* editorial in February 1897 counselled its readers that "the numerous celebrations of the Queen's long reign are in very doubtful taste if millions of the Queen's subjects are at the same time dying of starvation."⁽²⁸⁾ Another critic asked how the Council could consider "paying £60 for a coat of arms, meanwhile there is a terrible famine in India. How poor old Warrington has existed all these years without a coat of arms passes all understanding."

25. *Warrington Examiner*, 17 March 1900; *Warrington Guardian*, 11 March 1900.

26. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 May 1900.

27. *Warrington Examiner*, 20 March, 15 May 1897; *Warrington Observer*, 20 January 1900; *Warrington Guardian*, 2 February 1901.

28. *Warrington Examiner*, 13 February 1897.

And as for the mace and sword “a stick and bladder might be more fitting”.⁽²⁹⁾ In March 1897, one correspondent to the *Warrington Examiner* wrote to protest about the plans to buy “municipal gee-gaws”, suggesting that all money donated for the Borough Anniversary Fund should be given to the Indian Famine Fund as a gift from Warrington, with only sufficient retained to provide the poor and schoolchildren with their treat.⁽³⁰⁾ This suggestion was not taken up formally, although in effect, this is exactly what happened.

These controversies were underpinned by the broader consciousness of Indian affairs. At its most whimsical, local people saw India through the eyes of Miss E.M. Houghton, “A Warrington Lady,” who lived at the Church of England Zenana Mission in northern India. Miss Houghton was “so charmed” by India: “After tiffin we are kindly taken to meet the other missionaries at Amritsar,” Miss Houghton reported meeting Indian women on a train and “parting such good friends”.⁽³¹⁾ Of more practical value were the reports of Rev. E.R. Hockern, who had been in India in 1877 and had witnessed the famine at that time. In his call for donations for India in 1900, Hockern could advise that aid was needed not just to keep people alive but also to provide seeds and bullocks for the coming months.⁽³²⁾

Efforts to explain the causes of the famine ranged from the Rector’s claim that “the famine was not due to any human fault: God had not seen fit to send rains”, to the more analytically developed views of Rev. John Yonge, that lack of rain meant that rural labourers could not work, and food prices had risen accordingly.⁽³³⁾ And whilst the fund-raising was undertaken enthusiastically, with none of the disparagement shown for

29. *Warrington Examiner*, 27 February 1897.

30. *Warrington Examiner*, 6 March 1897.

31. *Warrington Observer*, 20 February 1895.

32. *Warrington Examiner*, 3 March 1900.

33. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 February, 3 March 1897.

the municipal and Jubilee schemes, the necessity of fund-raising for India and the frequency of famine there was noted and questioned, as in this *Examiner* editorial in 1897:

What is the truth about the Indian famine? It is about time that British people were beginning to look into this matter. Twenty years ago there were five million dead, largely due to official indifference and incompetence, a black and disgraceful chapter in the history of British rule in India. Again, there is too much British optimism that famine won't happen.⁽³⁴⁾

These criticisms soon became channelled into a growing demand that government should organise famine relief from its own resources, not because people would not contribute to India but because government should take its responsibilities towards India more seriously. "Private benefaction even if lavish may not be sufficient. The time seems to have come when the Imperial government should use all its resources to save the starving millions India."⁽³⁵⁾

The *Examiner* to some extent led this debate, though the *Guardian* shared its concerns. The *Guardian* was critical of the Viceroy's "cadging appeals" for charity and suggested that a grant from the Imperial fund would be a better way to relieve India.⁽³⁶⁾ By 1900, Liberal and Labour attacks on 'capitalists', especially shareholders who had provoked war in South Africa for their own profit, were beginning to take hold and as a consequence famine fund-raising could be used to broaden their attacks on the rich. The *Examiner* feared that the famine fund was languishing due to the competing claims on national generosity, particularly for the War Fund:

If so, this shows a deplorable lack of discrimination. Thousands of English people living at ease in England derive a large part of their

34. *Warrington Examiner*, 2 January 1897.

35. *Warrington Examiner*, 13 February 1897.

36. *Warrington Guardian*, 22 July 1900.

income, directly or indirectly from India. What of the shareholders of the Mysore Gold Mining Company, with their 140% dividends in a time of famine, or of other companies bringing untold riches from India to persons in England who never saw the land? A list of shareholders in Indian companies containing the amounts they have contributed to the Famine Fund would be a remarkably interesting document.⁽³⁷⁾

For those who opposed the Boer War in 1900, the famine strengthened their anti-war arguments. Rev. E.T. Reed refused to attend the Volunteers' Parting Service and Dinner in February of that year, instead sending a letter condemning "this absolutely unnecessary war", in which he wrote:

while so many millions of our fellow subjects in India are starving or on the verge of starvation I feel that any money I have to spare should be given to help them during this time of unparalleled scarcity and dire distress in our Indian empire.⁽³⁸⁾

Another aspect of this analysis of Indian's problems stressed the particular obligations which Lancashire owed to India: in the words of the *Warrington Guardian's* editorial "now is the time for Englishmen and particularly Lancashire men to act and to show that they have a brotherly feeling." People were reminded that Lancashire had a "special duty" after India's contribution to the operatives at the time of the Cotton Famine.⁽³⁹⁾ John Yonge made this a central part of his argument that Warrington was failing in its duty to India. In February 1899, the Warrington Liberal Association had invited the former MP Dadabhai Naoroji to address its members. He noted that he found Lancashire to be especially interested in Indian questions.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Alderman James Fairclough, speaking as Mayor in 1897, claimed that "of all the counties of England,

37. *Warrington Examiner*, 5 May 1900.

38. *Warrington Guardian*, 21 February 1900.

39. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 January, 10 February 1897.

40. *Warrington Guardian*, 3 May 1897; *Warrington Observer*, 25 February 1899.

Lancashire is the most deeply interested in the security, prosperity and contentment of India. To that great dependency over half the products of our looms is sent.”⁽⁴¹⁾

This picture of a shared economic fate was enhanced by reports of India’s industrial transformation. One of the “graphic descriptions” of the famine was made of how the plague was spreading through mill operatives in Bombay. A report in the *Warrington Guardian* in 1890 had drawn attention to the millowners’ resistance to attempts to reduce hours for women and children in Indian cotton mills where children were working eighty hours a week and where they were in consequence weak, stunted and miserable, as they had been in Britain before Lord Shaftsbury’s campaigns. The *Guardian* added:

It is no good our sending delegates to labour conferences at Berlin and posing as the pioneers of protection to women and children in England if at the same time we allow the women and children of India to be crushed by ill-conceived and barbarous factory legislation.⁽⁴²⁾

Dadabhai Naoroji in his address at the Co-operative Hall in 1899 told his audience that Indians only asked to be treated as fellow subjects, the same as the British (suggesting a possible interpretation of the phrase ‘fellow subjects’ which implied economic and social rights rather than subjective status), but instead they were bled and plundered, living “in extreme poverty, with millions swept away by famine and plague and scores of millions starved due to insufficient food.” The reason was that “Indian people have no say in government, administration and expenditure, and were not admitted into all civil and military services.”⁽⁴³⁾ Although the episodes of famine helped ferment dissatisfaction with imperial policy in India, support for increased Indian political representation had preceded the famines. In 1889, the *Warrington Examiner* condemned Lord Salisbury for expressing a racial insult to Dabhari Naoroji. The editor protested that “Indian people

41. *Warrington Guardian*, 30 January 1897.

42. *Warrington Guardian*, 19 April 1890.

43. *Warrington Observer*, 25 February 1899.

had been civilised when Lord Salisbury's ancestors were painted and half-naked savages", and called for Indian representation in Parliament.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The success of the Mayor's Funds for famine relief in 1897 and 1900 are to be explained from a mixture of motives from humanitarian or Christian philosophy to political beliefs about duty or the reciprocity of imperial connections or economic ties. These have tended to be overshadowed in historical accounts of imperialism by the symbolic significance given to the Jubilees. In the early twentieth century, Empire Day replaced the Jubilee as the most common expression of imperial sentiment. Warrington organised its first Empire Day in 1907, after the Mayor had convened a public meeting in response to requests from several "influential ladies and gentlemen." Arthur Bennett had complained in the previous year that Warrington was failing to commemorate the occasion adequately, deriding the lecture on snakes which was provided in honour of the day.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The meeting was made up mostly of "lady schoolteachers", perhaps fired by the Education Committee's efforts in the previous year in organising a schools' Empire Day with special lessons, patriotic songs and recitations, and reminders of "the duty which devolved upon children to learn to love the Empire and to become worthy citizens of it."⁽⁴⁶⁾ But Rev. W. Bracecamp explained that to make Empire Day a real success, schoolteachers were not enough: fathers and mothers must be present. The aim of the meeting was to establish Empire Day as an annual celebration for the whole community; to "impress the public mind" with its significance. A "larger and fuller" programme was planned, with public lantern slides and lectures and a procession culminating in a patriotic demonstration in the park. The *Warrington Guardian* gave a muted welcome to the plans in an editorial which attempted to define the nature of the British Empire: "in

44. *Warrington Examiner*, 26 January 1889.

45. *The Dawn*, June 1906.

46. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 March 1907.

one sense the Empire is an insubstantial thing, held together loosely by sentiment primarily, with perhaps, some secondary considerations of material gain and mutual convenience.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

The discussions at the public meeting and subsequently make clear that its organisers and supporters were attempting to maximise public enthusiasm for the event without alienating potential support, and were particularly keen to deflect charges of Jingoism. A general air of wariness pervaded their deliberations. The Mayor believed that the celebrations should not be large at first, as he was unwilling to ask employers for another half-holiday, and suggested that events could begin at five o'clock in the afternoon. The question of whether there should be any military involvement was rendered academic when Captain Crosfield of the Volunteers stated his belief that the Volunteers should not participate at this stage as the aim should be to start small. Mrs. Stansfield concurred, as she “did not agree with military demonstrations”. (It might be noted here that Mrs. Stansfield was the headmistress at Fairfield School and the mother of Frank Stansfield, the small boy who collected cigarette cards bearing the portraits of his Boer War heroes, and whose involvement in street celebrations and bonfires during the Boer War, and in local gang-fights described in his autobiography, probably occasioned a degree of parental angst.) The *Warrington Guardian* took the same line in declaring that “real imperialism is not militarism in this country.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

However, the greatest controversy was again triggered by suggestions that Empire Day should be merged with Walking Day. Rev. Bracecamp argued that this would give meaning to Walking Day, which he seemed to believe had no meaning other than to act as a counter-attraction to Newton Races. Mrs. Stansfield again complained, supported by

47. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 March, 3 April 1907.

48. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 March, 3 April 1907; Francis O. Stansfield, *Early Life of an Old Warringtonian* (Warrington: W. Williams, Gregson & Co., 1969), p.79.

Mrs. Edelsten, that Walking Day had religious, family and community value and should not be tampered with. In the end, Walking Day and Empire Day were celebrated separately, and there was some relief that Warrington's first observance of Empire Day had not reached the "militant stage". The celebrations had promoted "the encouragement of a reasonable, Imperial and local patriotism". Hopes that a flag and flagpole could be provided for every school had been diplomatically muffled, and the day was celebrated finally by special school events, including a prize for the school with the best work on empire and by the co-ordinated sounding of works hooters at 9.00 a.m. Again big plans were not realised, and hopes of a grand civic and popular event were pared down to the level of the long-suffering schoolchildren.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Schoolchildren of course had no say in whether they took part or not.

There is an interesting addendum to the founding of Empire Day in Warrington. In 1910, Warrington Education Committee instituted a policy whereby all married women teachers were to be dismissed. There being only one permanent teacher involved, Mrs. Lydia Mary Stansfield, the decision was considered to be designed specifically with her in mind. Her son was sure that the policy was grounded in political rivalries, not educational policies, Mrs. Stansfield being regarded as a firm but professional teacher. Fairfield School managers were told she must be sacked, but the Education Committee were forced to do this themselves when the school managers refused to comply. As the dismissal of a teacher was only legal on educational grounds, Mrs. Stansfield appealed to the National Union of Teachers and took her case to the High Court. She received letters of support from leading suffragettes and MP.s, and correspondence from Philip Snowden and his wife. The Borough Council withdrew their case, reinstating Mrs. Stansfield and paying all costs. It is unclear whether this episode was motivated by Mrs. Stansfield's

49. *Warrington Guardian*, 16 March, 11 May 1907.

public disapproval of militarism, or was a simple piece of Edwardian misogyny.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The liberal vision of empire, the *Warrington Guardian's* “insubstantial thing” which brought out a spirit of “self-sacrifice in the interests of the community” provided the key to popular acceptability in Warrington.⁽⁵¹⁾ In order to uncover the importance of fund-raising as a measure of popular feeling, it has been necessary to investigate the social rules which governed voluntary donating, and to move away from the idea that the middle class monopolised philanthropy. In the popular forms which philanthropy took, in house-to-house collections, charity football games and concerts, giving in churches or shops, working-class charity was clearly important. And by 1900, the works-based organisation of donating was established. The idea of the ‘right to donation’ was a critical social principle which seemed to have evolved its own class codes. In the last chapter, we saw that the Transvaal Fund was initially held back by collection arrangements which required that working men take their contributions into banks.⁽⁵²⁾ Working men seemed happier to establish their own networks for fund-raising. Important political conditions also had to be met, principally in adherence to the principle of independence. The Workmen’s Committee for Fund-raising for the Infirmary complained at the mere suggestion that employers might compulsorily deduct contributions from workmen’s wages.⁽⁵³⁾

There was inevitably a strong moral content to the culture of working-class philanthropy, and an underlying belief that that which was being supported had to be of worth. This pervaded working-class culture. An interesting illustration comes from sport: before football and rugby became professional, an injury to a player might mean

50. Stansfield, *Early Life*, p.79.

51. *Warrington Guardian* 3 April, 11 May 1907.

52. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 October 1899.

53. *Warrington Guardian*, 11 March 1893, 3 March 1897.

absence from work and loss of wages. Therefore, if a player was carried from the field, volunteers would circle the pitch with buckets for the crowd to donate coppers for the injured man. This became a means whereby crowds could pass judgement upon the worth and work-rate of the player.⁽⁵⁴⁾

These findings run counter to the conclusions of Blanch and Price (and others) who conclude that working-class beliefs were at best muddled and inconsistent and at worst had no moral content at all. However, these beliefs were entering a period of change during these years, resulting from the pressure of organised labour's increasing demands that the state, both nationally and locally, take greater responsibility. Both domestically and imperially, demands originally sprang from the problem of hunger. Indian famines were one aspect of this, but by 1905, at a time of high unemployment in Warrington, the local Labour Representation Committee and Independent Labour Party were arguing that Warrington Council provide free breakfasts to the children of the unemployed. Soon they also demanded public works for the unemployed, and a scheme was set up providing temporary work which transformed the ignominiously acquired Old Warps Estate into the imperial tribute, Victoria Park.⁽⁵⁵⁾

In looking at the string of commemorations which Warrington celebrated in the thirty-five years between 1873 and 1907, it has been possible to contrast popular responses at municipal, national and imperial level. A number of conclusions can be offered. Firstly, the Golden and Diamond Jubilees were not very popular locally, perhaps as a result of mismanagement, and possibly corruption, by the town council, although there is little evidence that contributions would have been higher had the council behaved better. There was a feeling that support had found its own natural level, much lower than councillors and aldermen had dreamed, and sufficient to provide only a

54. *Oldham Standard*, 9 October 1888.

55. *Warrington Guardian*, 4 March 1905; *Warrington Examiner*, 11 February 1905.

token gesture for Sunday school children. Secondly, there was always strong local defence of Walking Day whenever it was about to be sacrificed for national or imperial ends, suggesting that nationalism never smothered local loyalties. And finally, popular responses were built upon an ethical foundation which explains the substance of popular imperialism more accurately than episodic evidence from Jingo crowds.

Part Four

The Irish in Warrington

CHAPTER NINE

THE WARRINGTON IRISH: HISTORY, RELIGION AND THE LIMITS TO MUNICIPAL INCLUSION

As Warrington grew, it developed its own social dynamic, but it also shared some experiences with the rest of Lancashire and northern England, and some with 'Englishness' generally. It also manifested aspects of Britishness, those which integrated the four nations as well as those which reinforced a sense of difference and tension. These processes were effected by Warrington's acting as host to temporary and permanent migrants from other parts of Britain, and less substantially but more symbolically, its location as a route for military movements.

In November 1745, the Young Pretender approached Warrington in his drive southwards from Scotland. His plan was to cross the Mersey bridge at Warrington, and then move into the Welsh hills which would afford cover for his troops who could then invade England from the west. The reaction of the townspeople to news of his approach was mixed, some hiding plate and valuables, others preparing a welcome for him. Before his arrival, Warrington bridge was destroyed by royal troops, a handful of Highland soldiers were gathered up in Warrington, the rest having marched on Manchester instead. On the news of the Pretender's approach, the inmates of the workhouse escaped and disappeared. William Beamont provided these details in his *Annals of the Lords of Warrington* which he published in 1873. He recounted that "within the period of living memory, there was in Warrington an old lady, now deceased, who remembered seeing these Highland prisoners seated barefooted on the floor and eating oatmeal porridge from a large dish, while a piper played to them to keep up their spirits." As the Scots were driven back north, the workhouse inmates mysteriously reappeared from their hiding

places and made their way back to the workhouse.⁽¹⁾ Warrington Catholics saw Bonnie Prince Charlie's retreat with different eyes: "with great anxiety for the safety and escape of the unfortunate Catholic Gentry mixed up with the affair. Alas for the hopes of a Catholic Prince."⁽²⁾

By the end of the nineteenth century, Scots in Warrington were of a milder temper: they organised their Caledonian Society, their picnics and Burns Night suppers, complete with toasts to the Queen, Army, Navy and Volunteers. They established a "charity fund for the relief of distressed Scotchmen who might turn up", but nobody did. (In 1893, the fund dispensed half a crown to distressed Scotchmen.)⁽³⁾ The Warrington Scots were comfortable and content, successfully assimilated members of the prosperous British state. But as the Scots were holding their Burns Nights, Warrington's Irish, now the largest Catholic group in the town, were still marked by historical experiences of conflict. Warrington was not a refuge for the Irish from those experiences, but was in some ways itself a part of the conflict.

This chapter assesses how the processes of municipal development, in its political and cultural aspects, responded to the arrival of the Irish. The purpose of this and the following chapter is not to construct a comprehensive history of the Irish presence in nineteenth-century Warrington. My emphasis is rather on the ways in which the local elite used the Irish in their attempts to construct their model of community. The focus is on the impact that the Irish had on the developing sense that municipal identity was a merger of patriotism and radical politics, symbolised by the Warrington Volunteers and the Warrington Academy. Could the Irish, with their different religion and different

1. William Beamont, *Annals of the Lords of Warrington and Beswey from 1587 to 1833; when it became a Parliamentary Borough: Part 1 - Warrington* (Manchester: C. Simms & Co., 1873), p.104.
2. *A short history of the Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society: Centenary Celebrations, August 1823-1923* (Warrington: J.A. McGrath, 1923), p.5. [WALSC: P23333]
3. *Warrington Observer*, 30 January 1895.

historical experiences be included in the town's historical narrative as a success story? Would they be offered, and tempted by, the advantages of municipal inclusion? Or did they point up the realities behind the image—of an elite which used cultural institutions to cover over corruption, exclusion and class antagonism? This chapter looks at the interactions between religion, history and politics up to 1870. The final chapter will then extend this analysis into the early twentieth century, using the same method to examine how the Warrington Irish responded to local imperialism.

This chapter begins with a brief statistical summary of the Irish in Warrington, and an outline of their history in the town. It then examines the religious profile of Warrington, paying particular attention to the political significance of three factors: the changes in Catholicism, the move towards the respectability of nonconformity, and the strength of popular Orangeism. There follows a description of how the local historians writing in the nineteenth century discussed the Irish in their accounts of the growth of the town, and the conclusion that emerges is that distrust of the Irish was a defining characteristic of Warrington's elite. Finally, the chapter describes two aspects of the aftermath of the arrival of the famine Irish, as they sought to find a place within municipal politics and as the municipal elite responded to what was seen as the Fenian threat in the 1860s. The chapter argues that the poverty of the Irish, sometimes seen as the defining difference between themselves and the English, was considerably less important at municipal level than their religion. It also argues that the immediate economic and social problems associated with the famine Irish were less influential in structuring the municipal response. Taking a longer historical perspective than other studies of the impact of the Irish in Britain (which are usually based on the 1840s to the 1860s), the chapter argues that the writing of local history had the effect of marginalising the Irish over the entire chronology of this study, from 1760 to 1910.

Historical research on the Irish in Britain has been conducted in response to central

post-war concerns about class, race, ethnicity and the relationships between these factors. Post-1950 Commonwealth immigration into Britain brought these ethnic questions out, with the result that debates about twentieth-century immigration were borrowed by historians when they formulated questions about nineteenth century Irish immigration. What was the economic impact of mass immigration? What effect did it have on the standard of living? Was the process of industrialisation slowed or accelerated by their presence? Did ethnic difference fracture working-class solidarity? To what extent were the immigrants required to surrender their ethnic identities in order to gain acceptance? The self-image of mainland Britain as a country where sectarian violence was practically non-existent was challenged by evidence of its prevalence in nineteenth century towns and cities.⁽⁴⁾ A substantial body of research has shown that whilst the Irish did integrate into British society they also retained their own distinct religious culture and political concerns. The recent works of Ó Tuathaigh, Roger Swift and Steven Fielding are broadly aligned to this conclusion.⁽⁵⁾

Theoretical studies on the subjects of ethnicity and class have concentrated on the South Lancashire area, particularly the cotton towns, where evidence of ethnic rivalries and sectarian violence is strong.⁽⁶⁾ These studies have concentrated on analysing the evidence for ethnic division within the working class, but have perhaps underestimated the active role played by the English local elites in the process of division. Clearly certain political groups did reap benefits from ethnic tensions, and the activities of local

4. Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: the Liverpool experience, 1819-1914: An aspect of Anglo-Irish history* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).
5. M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth century Britain: Problems of intergration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), pp.149-173; Roger Swift, 'The historiography of the Irish in nineteenth century Britain' in Patrick O'Sullivan, *The Irish in the New Communities, The Irish World Wide*, Vol. 2 (Leicester, Liecester University Press, 1992), pp.52-81; Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).
6. Neville Kirk, 'Ethnicity, Class and Popular Toryism, 1850-1870' in Kenneth Lunn, (ed.), *Hosts, immigrants and minorities: historical reponses to the Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1980), pp.64-106.

elites should perhaps be reconsidered.

In the late 1840s, Warrington in common with other Lancashire towns, witnessed the arrival of thousands of famine Irish. The immediate crises in housing, disease and poverty were slowly addressed (at least, Irish poverty and living conditions became no more alarming than for their English neighbours). The following two chapters relate English and Irish experiences together within the developing framework of municipal activity. Previous chapters have described how the sense of belonging to a town was created, how a sense of place was developed through the writing of local history, how the town became incorporated, particularly with regard to the founding of municipal institutions and traditions and the conflicts surrounding these processes, how local cultural and intellectual life and political routines were developed. It has been argued that this sense of place was not bounded by narrow borders but had its own international (particularly imperial) dimensions. The Warrington Irish intervened in this process at a number of important junctures. The presence of Irish Catholics skewed the municipalisation process.

Warrington absorbed many thousands of Irish immigrants who settled and succeeded in the town, and yet, despite their presence and that of a strong Orange tradition, the town was able to avoid ethnic violence; this may be connected to its not being a cotton town, or may be a consequence of other factors. It seems therefore to represent a model of the assimilationist ideal. But what did the Irish assimilate to? Can assimilation be measured in material terms, in the housing market, wage rates and educational success? By their presence and practices, immigrants changed the society to which they were assimilating. The assimilationist model assumes a static centre, which is temporarily destabilised by the presence of outsiders, but which moves quickly back to stability, having transformed the outsiders into citizens with a sense of belonging. If this observation is true of the national picture, it is even more so in local history, where

historical methods have tended to stress continuity rather than change. The methodology adopted here towards local history, one which challenges the premise that local history is 'enclosed' (see Introduction) makes an assimilationist model even less appropriate. This is particularly noticeable in the periodic instances when Empire came to the fore: the assimilationist model requires some reassessment at these points. The Irish were not simply being absorbed into a small town, its factories and slums, but had moved from one part of the Empire to another, a small part of a vast movement of people out of Ireland. But as English, Irish and Irish-colonial experiences of Empire were not the same, this again poses the question: what were the Irish assimilating to? Was it to a small town, or to a part of Empire? How did the differing historical experiences of the English and Irish in Warrington feed into popular imperialism and debates about the costs and value of Empire? My aim here is to consider the ways in which Irish immigrants' sense of their own history, popular memory and surviving links to Ireland structured their responses to the municipal and imperial appeal. This and the following chapter looks therefore at the Irish in municipal culture, in the writing of local history and at Irish perspectives on Empire.

Much of the debate about assimilation revolves around the competing claims of ethnicity and class as motivations in attitudes and behaviour. But academic writing on this subject has tended to assume, perhaps unwittingly, that the Irish had ethnicity whilst the English had class, that English society by the mid-nineteenth century had outgrown ethnic culture, which was supposedly backward-looking and tradition-bound, and was instead characterised by a modern class-stratified society. The Irish on the other hand were still thought to be trapped within ethnic thought patterns and cultural forms. The process of assimilation demanded that the Irish lost most of their Irishness, save for a few symbolic gestures, by becoming part of the English working class, and therefore motivated by modern, material concerns. For assimilation to take place, ethnicity had to

be subsumed beneath modern class consciousness. The results of such analyses have not been entirely satisfactory. The relationship between class and ethnicity has now been reassessed in places like South Africa, and it is clear that the demands of capitalism and the class system were dominant factors in how ethnicity unfolded.⁽⁷⁾ Only very recently has there been a realisation that the English are also an ethnic group, whose cultural forms are not universal and neutral but specific to itself, albeit modified by regional diversity, class variants and a real or manufactured imperial mentality.⁽⁸⁾ The thrust of research in Europe has been into analyses of the growth of nationalism, but this too has been criticised for its too formulaic approach.⁽⁹⁾ Much of the present study has been concerned with how this English ethnicity was expressed in a local setting and how it adapted to a modern urban capitalist environment. So, my contention is that conflict between the Irish and English in Warrington had a class dimension, but was fundamentally an ethnic conflict between the English and Irish. This is not to say that class was secondary to other forms of social organisation, but to suggest that these factors intertwined so deeply that they cannot be entirely separated.

The meaning and components of ethnicity includes the sense of a historical development which is specific to the group: shared custom, culture, and values, all of which are believed to stem from that historical development, and a uniformity of language and religion. I shall argue that religion stood at the centre of the contrast between English Warrington and Irish Warrington. In nineteenth century England, certain liberal values of tolerance and freedom were taken to be historically determined,

7. Gerhard Mare, *Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1992).

8. Bill Schwarz, 'The Expansion and Contraction of England' in Bill Schwarz, (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, ethnicity and cultural history* (London: Routledge, 1966), pp.1-8; Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, 'The enigma of British History' in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.3-11.

9. Stuart Woolf (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the present: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.1-39.

and to have been the natural outcome of the Protestant religion. Warrington's Irish held views on their own history which differed from the English, which led to continued misunderstandings between them and the English. Though the Irish may have been absorbed into the local working class, and though their churches and schools may have taken root in local communities, a distinct memory of certain historical conditions remained with them and informed their political thinking. If the Irish kept their ethnic loyalties, so did the English, and English claims to tolerance and freedom were challenged by Irish accusations of hypocrisy, because the Irish did not see English history as the English did. That these ethnic strains were suffered in the context of a growing Empire in which both the English and the Irish were active adds further complexities.

THE IRISH IN WARRINGTON: NUMBERS AND THE NATURE OF MIGRATION

There was an Irish presence in Warrington from the 1760s. Warrington had a long tradition of trading with Ireland, especially in linen. The Warrington Academy attracted a number of Irish students from the educated dissenting families of Belfast and Dublin and the list of members of the Catholic Philanthropic Society shows Irish members from 1825.⁽¹⁰⁾ William Beamont's journal mentioned Catholic Irish farm-workers in the area, and an Irish funeral in Warrington in 1844.⁽¹¹⁾ To add to this, migrant workers were based in the vicinity; Philip Carpenter's letters describe the duties of his anti-slavery friend, the Postmaster William Robson, who was required to send money orders to Ireland for one hundred and four workers each Sunday.⁽¹²⁾ Others who passed through Warrington were navvies building canals and railways (as late as 1894, the construction

10. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.9.

11. William Beamont Diaries: 19 August 1844, 17 September 1872.

12. Philip Pearsall Carpenter, *Memoirs of the Life and Work of Philip Pearsall Carpenter: chiefly derived from his letters* (London: C. Kegan & Co., 1880), p.100.

of the Manchester Ship Canal brought a number of Irish families into the town.)⁽¹³⁾

Table 6.1: Irish-born populations of Warrington and England & Wales

	1841	1851	1861
Warrington	916 (4.9%)	2,615 (12.6%)	2,869 (11.9%)
England & Wales	289,404 (1.8%)	519,959 (2.9%)	601,634 (3.0%)

Sources: Census Returns and Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity, Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Open University Press, 1993), p.21.

As Table 6.1 shows, when the famine Irish arrived, they joined a local Irish population which was already substantial. It is noticeable that the proportion of the total population from Ireland was already, in 1841, well above the national average even before the famine Irish arrived.

Table 6.2: Percentage of Irish-Born in British cities, 1851

Liverpool	22.3	Paisley	12.7
Dundee	18.9	Warrington	12.6
Glasgow	18.2	Bradford	8.9
Manchester/Salford	13.1	London	4.6

Source: M. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth-century Britain: Problems of Integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31, p.152

But Warrington's pattern (as Table 6.2 shows) was, by 1851 at least, typical of the pattern for many towns in Western Scotland and northern England. Irish numbers had almost trebled between 1841 and 1851, the decade of the highest famine migration. Furthermore, Irish immigration must be seen as only one aspect of Warrington's demographic increase. The Irish-born, however, accounted for more than three quarters of the total increase in Warrington's population in the 1840s. By the late-nineteenth-century, the Irish-born and their descendants would possibly constitute a third of the population of the town.

13. John Williams, "Elementary Education in Warrington, 1870-1900: Problems of Attendance", (Extended Essay: B.Ed. Hons, Edge Hill College of Higher Education), (1984), p.3.

Despite these qualifications about the long-established roots of Irish settlement in Warrington, the arrival of so many immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century was an event of lasting significance. The response to the Irish had two aspects. Firstly, the incorporation of the town in 1847 corresponded with the surge in immigration, and established a new political structure through which the immediate demands on local services would be negotiated. Secondly, local working-class political organisation (which may have included Irish who had previously settled in the town) focused their political demands on the new council as social conditions in the town worsened.

In 1846 the anti-slavery campaigner Philip Pearsall Carpenter arrived in Warrington, at the same time as the Irish. Carpenter immediately began to play an important role in community politics. Warrington was, he thought, a “drunken and unhealthy place”, which had itself suffered a visitation of potato blight, so that its “swampy fields and market gardens smelt horribly of the potato disease.”⁽¹⁴⁾ In a letter to a friend in America, Carpenter described conditions in Warrington in 1847, when high unemployment and the arrival of the Irish poor combined to produce unbearable social conditions:

I never knew such a winter and spring and summer, even in the bad times at Stand, and trust I may never again. Most of the mills stopped; one since November, another since January, others for two or three months, and the rest half-time. Only three mills are now going and those but partially: fustian cutting not one twelfth work; pinmaking ditto. Inundated with many thousands of Irish of the worst class, determined not to work; food terribly high; fever much worse than the cholera. We have had more than twice the number of deaths; large wooden sheds erected for the sick; and have now got so used to seeing people with starving faces that one hardly thinks of it. You may trace them gradually getting thinner and thinner, and more and more sickly;

14. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.97.

things gradually pawned; credit gradually used up; hard-hearted relief officer and altogether a mass of misery.⁽¹⁵⁾

Carpenter's comments on Irish unwillingness to work are unfair: it was clear that there was no work, especially in the kinds of employment, fustian cutting and pin making, into which the Irish would go. Carpenter found dealing with the Irish a distasteful necessity.⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless, he organised relief for them, providing food and shelter, and joined with working men to bring pressure to bear on the new town council to improve sanitation and housing. Whilst his relief efforts brought testimonials from meetings of working men (at which John Fielden, the radical Tory Member of Parliament, presented Carpenter with a Bible), his pressure for urban improvements brought continuous friction between Carpenter and the councillors and aldermen of the town.

Carpenter and the Working Men's Sanitation Association saw the problems of disease and poor housing in terms of bad municipal management and political indifference. They did not seek to blame Irish immigration for the condition of the town. They believed that the purpose of the 1847 Municipal Corporation Act was to carry out the social improvements which the town needed. The newly-elected town council did not seem to concur. Tensions were exacerbated by irreconcilable differences on the subject of drink: Carpenter was sure that the town council's attitudes to the poor were the product of their reliance on the brewers' wealth and popular influence, and he was determined to undermine their influence. When his sister Susan, who was also very active in voluntary provision (and eventually married Robert Gaskell) "devoted herself to the preparation of nutritious food", she "promoted the use of Indian corn and barley puddings, a practical protest against the dreadful waste of barley—more than enough to feed the starving

15. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.99.

16. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.112.

millions—by the distillers and brewers.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Together with William Robson and Peter Rylands, Carpenter addressed the Working Men’s Sanitation Association in a series of open-air meetings, in order to press the Municipal Sanitary Committee to act to improve the local standards of public health through improvements in sewerage, water supply and housing. Groups of unemployed from the Working Men’s Sanitary Association made a house-to-house survey of conditions in the town. Mortality figures supported their arguments: from 1847 to 1848 mortality in Warrington rose from 599 deaths to 1,008 deaths. A petition, signed by “almost all the adult working population”, containing 5,119 signatures was presented to Warrington’s MP, J. Wilson Patten. The Municipal Sanitary Committee was however unresponsive. Later, the Working Men’s Sanitation Association petitioned the town council to implement the Public Health Act. Carpenter pointed out that “working men naturally assumed the town would place itself under the working of the Act”, but it did not, claiming that it wished to observe the act operated in other towns before committing itself to expenditure. Carpenter then issued a pamphlet which railed against the “Drink and Dirt Interest” who were campaigning against the cost of sewerage. And Irish migration continued, as Carpenter noted. In 1849, a second petition and a series of meetings were organised, but still the Council refused to act.⁽¹⁸⁾

Carpenter drew attention to town councillors who were feasting at great public expense, whilst the poor suffered. In the local newspaper which he founded, the *Helper*, he contributed a column ‘Proceedings of Public Bodies’, in which he described the “public dinners of the civic authorities” who “consumed at one meal the equivalent of the food of sixty or seventy neglected children”. When the *Helper* was discontinued, he began the *Town Council Reporter* “which was of service in reminding that body of its

17. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.102.

18. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, pp.102,118-121.

responsibility.”⁽¹⁹⁾ These comments comfortably reflected Carpenter’s moral philosophy, but significantly, he was less comfortable with the idea of a campaign which would politicise the working class. When the second petition was forwarded to the Council from the Working Men’s Sanitary Association, he resigned from its committee out of disapproval for the openly political tone which their addresses had begun to take. He never advocated improving the access of working people to local government’s structures, either as both a right course in itself and as a way of challenging the policies of the town’s elite. Perhaps he believed that as long as the brewers held such sway in the town, popular involvement in politics, as distinct from individual campaigns, was not an option to be considered.

Carpenter also argued that the motivations of the political elite were as much sectarian as economic: when he set up industrial schools in the winter of 1847 to help the unemployed and the Irish, he was angered that the Relief Committee would not help them “owing to the bigoted conduct of the clergy”, although, he added “William Beamont, although a Churchman and a Conservative, handed me fifty pounds for the establishment of a school.”⁽²⁰⁾ The Rector, William Quekett, (an important social and political influence on the middle-class) was known to be strongly anti-Catholic. (His autobiography expresses his feelings about Catholicism in Warrington: “Romanism holds its own by a terrorising priesthood.”) An entry in Beamont’s journal in 1844 suggests that the Rector’s views could not be ignored in the town: “Mr Leicester has been to Dublin, where he spent some hours in a visit to Daniel O’Connell and his fellow conspirators. I hope the Rector will not hear of this.”⁽²¹⁾

19. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.125.

20. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, p.106.

21. Beamont Diaries: 11 August 1844; William Quekett, *My Sayings and Doings, with Reminiscences of My Life* (London: Keegan, Paul & Trench, 1888), p.366.

CATHOLICS IN WARRINGTON

It is generally argued that in the nineteenth century, a combination of social factors reduced religious conflict, leaving mainland Britain free of sectarian troubles (apart from in some unreconstructed areas of Liverpool and Glasgow).⁽²²⁾ These factors include declining church attendance and weakening power of the Church of England, the secularisation of the state, increasing tolerance of religious difference, the institutionalisation of religious rivalry through culture and sports, the increasing respectability of Catholic and non-conformist doctrines, and the submergence of religious difference in class mobilisation. But these changes can be exaggerated. Catholics still represented and articulated a particular world and other-world view which was not wholly absorbed within British mainstream culture. Catholic practice changed, both the public and private culture of Catholic worship modernised, the Church built chapels, schools, clubs, societies and cathedrals which paralleled those of English Protestants and non-conformists, but they remained recognisably Catholic, different, and a challenge to Protestant orthodoxy, if no longer in the suspicion that Catholics sought the overthrow of the English state, then in its alternative views on English history and worldly authority.

Historical descriptions of the Irish are often qualified with a reminder that not all Catholics were regular Church attenders, and that a proportion had lapsed from the Church, some having taken a positive decision to do so, some through apathy; quantifying these matters is however extremely difficult.⁽²³⁾ My categorisation divides those Catholics who regularly practised their faith from ethnic Catholics, who are brought up within the Church but whose links to it are loose, though not broken. For this latter group, cultural and family connections to the Church are maintained, and the most

22. Roger Swift, 'Historiography of the Irish', p.74; M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain', p.173; Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, p.3.

23. Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.52-3.

rudimentary demands of Church membership fulfilled. Critically, ethnic Catholics do not move into other religions nor do they express overtly hostile views towards Catholicism.

The role of Catholicism in the lives of the Irish poor was a political factor, but for many, the spiritual aspects of their faith mattered more. The changing culture of Catholicism, in both its public and private aspects in these years ought not to be ignored. The Catholic church in England grew in the nineteenth century, and became a much more plural institution. Its class structure changed fundamentally, its social and religious practices and even its beliefs and forms of worship underwent more radical change than is usually recognised.⁽²⁴⁾ Warrington was typical of these national trends. These developments were in themselves partly a response to the demands of the working-class Irish, and were a focus for their energies and resources. The spiritual aspect of Irish life is often ignored completely, and Irish Catholicism seen as nothing more than an ethnic badge. The next chapter includes an examination of the journal which William Beamont, Warrington's first Mayor, kept on his two journeys around Ireland in the 1840s, and the journal is full of descriptions of the central place of faith and worship in Irish society. If this spiritual life is marginalised, then the story is incomplete, so this changing Catholic culture is a part of the story of how the Irish settled into local life, and is included here.

The arrival of the famine Irish coincided with other emerging trends in local Catholicism. One of these was the steady growth in the number of non-Irish Catholics living in Warrington, another was the urbanisation of a Church which had been largely rural and covert since the Reformation. Writing in the *Catholic Directory* in 1823, Dom John Alban Molyneux stated that "In few places in England have Catholics of late years increased more than in the town of Warrington, in proportion to its size". Attendance at

24. Sheridan Gilley, 'Catholic faith of the Irish slums of London, 1840-70' in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff, (eds.), *The Victorian City*, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 846.

services spilled out of the chapel, leading Fr. Molyneux to suspect that such crowds actually prevented some who sympathised with Catholicism from joining the Church. English and Irish Catholicism had developed along separate paths; sharing as they did only a basic creed, a Latin liturgy, and a historical experience of discrimination, their local forms of worship could be markedly different. Catholics were adapting to the new situation which Emancipation had brought about, of the freedom to build churches and schools, of public witness and access to the processes of local politics in gaining the vote and the right to property. And just as local scholars popularised their version of the town's history, a Catholic popular memory emerged and was incorporated into new Catholic institutions.

In fact, Warrington shared with the rest of Lancashire a relatively strong Catholic presence in the years since the Reformation. Woolston Hall, owned by the Standish family of Wigan, stood close to Warrington, and provided for the religious and social needs of the local recusant community. Itinerant priests visited there in the eighteenth century, such as Fr. Benedict Shuttleworth, who travelled disguised as a packman, and Dom Benedict, who said Mass in the back rooms of local pubs. Such secrecy was warranted by the surviving religious tensions endemic to national politics. Family heritage maintained the stories of local Catholics, of priests in hiding, secret Masses, the English martyrs, some of whom crossed the bridge over the Mersey on the way to their deaths (one of the Martyrs, Fr. James Bell was from Warrington and had ministered in the local area), stories which enforced feelings of religious strength and of persecution.⁽²⁵⁾ Family tales and personal memory were important in maintaining this tradition: John Ashton, a Catholic solicitor who helped found St. Mary's church remembered how his grandfather had secretly helped itinerant priests. Peter Caldwell, who died in the 1870s,

25. Brian Plumb, *The Warrington Mission: A Bi-Centenary* (Goldbourne: Locke Press, 1978), p.3; *Warrington Examiner*, 3 September 1887.

aged one hundred, remembered attending secret masses. Thomas Gee recalled masses in rooms where piles of sacks were placed so that, if necessary, priests could hide.⁽²⁶⁾

William Beamont, writing up observations from his travels in Lancashire often picked up stories with a Catholic theme, stories which he noted in his journal, such as his witnessing a festival of the Assumption of the Virgin; or of the three Benedictines who alone knew the whereabouts of the bones of St. Cuthbert, which would be returned to Durham when England was returned to the One True Faith; and of the wooden house in Preston, built from Irish wood, which had never harboured bugs and vermin, on account of St. Patrick's casting them out.⁽²⁷⁾

In Catholic historiography, the lives of the established Lancashire families are relatively well recorded, but conditions for poorer Catholics under their protection have not been researched. From the 1790s to the 1820s, the number of Catholics in Warrington grew significantly, not as a result of Irish immigration, but because the town attracted population movement from outlying villages and hamlets where Catholicism had survived. At the same time, conditions for Catholics had begun to improve. After the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791, public worship was permitted on registered premises with registered priests. St. Alban's church was opened in 1823, and there were other signs that Catholics had begun to organise together; the first Catholic school took part in the procession to honour the coronation of George IV (organised, it will be remembered, by William Beamont) and the Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society was formed in 1823.⁽²⁸⁾ Thus there was a Catholic presence in Warrington before the famine, made up of English and Irish Catholics. Other changes in Catholicism at this time also had their local aspect. Following the conversion of Henry, later Cardinal Newman, the Town

26. Brian Plumb, *Our Glorious Chapter, The Story of St Mary's, Warrington. A centenary handbook, 1897-1997* (Liverpool: Kilburns (Printers), 1997), pp.10-11.

27. Beamont Diaries: 27 September 1845.

28. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p 8.

Clerk, G.T. Moore became a Catholic.⁽²⁹⁾ The indications are that had the famine Irish not arrived, urban English Catholicism would have developed a social profile similar to that of the nonconformist faiths.

The Irish migration made further building and organisation necessary, and helped provide the finance to implement it. A Latchford mission was opened in 1869 in a disused room on the premises of Hadfield and Co., cotton spinners, a room which Catholic employees scrubbed and whitewashed for use. The altar was borrowed from the private chapel of G.T. Moore. A new church (consecrated to Our Lady of the Assumption, but known as St. Mary's, possibly to avoid sectarian attack) was built in Latchford in 1871.⁽³⁰⁾ St. Mary's, Buttermarket St. also resulted from the combined efforts of the clergy, middle-class English and poor Irish. Donations were collected from 1857, although the church was not completed until 1877. Land was purchased from the Gaskell family, reputedly in secret transactions carried out by John Ashton lest opposition to Catholic acquisition to land cause a backlash. Father Hall elicited collections in local pubs and on trains. John Ashton paid a substantial share of the building costs.⁽³¹⁾ Even after its opening, fund-raising continued for the interior of the church. In 1881, the Warrington Catholic Cricket Club donated £20 for the altar rails.⁽³²⁾

Building new churches was in the first instance considered a spiritual necessity. (Though their political significance should also be noted. As this chapter will later show, Fr. Hall used the fund-raising for St. Mary's as a distraction from Fenian politics, and argued that church-building was the only alternative to serious political violence between

29. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p 8.

30. David Forrest, *Our Lady's of the Assumption, A Parish History* (Warrington: n.p., 1991), pp.3-5. [WALSC: 3184]

31. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p.11.

32. St. Mary's Warrington: Notes on the early history of the parish taken from the manuscript records of the North Province and preserved in the archive of Downside Abbey, 16-18 March 1953. [WALSC: MS1634]

the English and the Irish.) Fr. Hall ensured that Fr. Dunn of the nearby village of Rixton attended at Christmas, Lent, and Easter in order to say Mass in Irish. The opening of a new church seems to have increased formal worship: in 1875, 1,933 Catholics made Easter duties in Warrington, but by 1885 the number had risen to 2,347 at St. Mary's alone. Catholic associations were established through the parishes. St. Mary's, Buttermarket St., founded active branches of the Children of Mary, the Guild of the Sacred Heart and the Confraternity of Mount Carmel. Warrington's leading Catholic Society was the League of the Cross, dedicated to total abstinence, which arranged evening classes, picnics, pantomimes, tea parties, lectures and the League of the Cross band. Cardinal Manning spoke twice at their meetings in the 1880s, attracting over a thousand listeners. There was also an amateur dramatic society.⁽³³⁾

Churches also helped to institutionalise Catholics into municipal culture. Sermons and news from the church were published in the local press. The parish negotiated on behalf of Catholics in the workhouse, and arranged the Catholic section of the municipal cemetery. Social organisation of the parishes, however, gave a higher priority to internal cohesion and the development of a sense of community and religious witness than to full municipal assimilation. Catholic participation in the annual Walking Day is an example. Catholics took exuberantly to the demands of public witness, and the memories of generations where worship was necessarily secret released the impulse to parade their faith. Catholic scholars were originally included in the Walks in 1857, when children from St. Alban's school walked for the first time, before leaving for a day out at Pomona Gardens. From 1860, Catholics held their own procession, taking a separate route from that organised by the Church of England, a practice also used by the nonconformist churches. This system remained in operation until 1909, when Catholics followed the

33. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p.20; *Warrington Guardian*, 7 July 1900.

same route as the Church of England, but did not congregate outside the Town Hall before the mayor and dignitaries, seemingly to stress the religious rather than municipal character of the procession. Not until 1920 did Catholic schools join the main procession in a system which remains in operation today, with Church of England schools leading the procession followed by nonconformists and finally by Catholic schools and churches.⁽³⁴⁾ Walking Day became, for Catholics, the principle means of publicly attesting their faith, with large processions of schoolchildren, statuary, banners, League of the Cross Band, and Confraternities taking part. Religious art and artefacts helped unite the disparate Catholic traditions now alive in the town. Sheridan Gilley has pointed out that the mushrooming of iconography and statuary in the Catholic church at this time was one way in which the poor could identify with their faith.⁽³⁵⁾

The St. Mary's rugby league team is a further demonstration that municipal claims did not override those of the Church. By the 1880s, the amalgamation of smaller club teams had produced the Warrington team which competed in the Northern Union and was seen as the town's representative sporting body. As the club became more structured and the need for greater competitiveness followed from increased commercialism, the officials of the club requested that local schools and works teams agree to a scheme whereby the Warrington club were permitted to call upon the services of any player from these teams. This was accepted by the local league teams, but St. Mary's refused to part with their best players for the town's team, and held out for some time against the scheme.⁽³⁶⁾ There is no evidence that the Irish in Warrington attempted to organise Gaelic sports, and it seems likely that rugby league became the favoured Catholic sport in the small towns of Lancashire.

34. Notes on Walking Day compiled in the Reference Library, (1950). [WALSC: P2494]

35. Gilley, 'Catholic faith', pp 845-6.

36. *Warrington Guardian*, 15 January 1898.

So although the Irish were assimilated into the town over the nineteenth century, the Catholic parishes were as much concerned with developing a cohesive faith as with enhancing their municipal status. This is not surprising: in addition to the efforts required to effect building programmes, and to equip the Irish for survival in an industrial town with schools, clubs and social provision, the clergy needed to unite two different Catholic traditions into one Church. This process whereby a single Catholic Church was created from different traditions, with different spiritual forms and occupying different positions in the local economic and social structure would repay further academic attention. Added to this was a generalised fear that despite Emancipation and the tolerance which it was supposed to bring, Anglicans and Nonconformists actively sought the conversion of Catholics.

As well as parish organisation, the Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society was part of the process of uniting the faith and urbanising the faithful. Established in 1823, the same year in which the first Catholic church was built, its centenary history (written when Britain and Ireland were engaged in the Irish Civil War, and an interesting document for that reason) describes how:

four years before the Catholic Emancipation Act and a considerable time before successive famines and oppression drove our fellow-Catholics from the land of the oppressed in search for sustenance and justice in the land of the oppressor, the faithful of the town... decided to found a Friendly Society. Thus the true order of progress was maintained: Spiritual Welfare, Education, Material Needs.⁽³⁷⁾

Its first list of members (priest, clerk, chairmaker, pickermaker, farm servant, shoemaker, hawker, ostler, blacksmith, cotton spinner, engineer, basket maker, file-cutter, fustian-cutter) reflects the economic position of local Catholicism, with the majority in

37. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.7.

the smaller skilled trades (although, of course, those below and above this class could not afford to join, or did not need to.) In 1825, the Society enrolled its first Irishman, Martin Gerrarty, or as the Centenary history describes him, that “very early swallow of a glorious spring of Catholic Revival and warm summer of religious freedom”.⁽³⁸⁾ John Cavanagh and Hugh O’Neill joined in 1826, and then followed a steady growth in Irish membership.⁽³⁹⁾ In 1843, members of an older Catholic Society, active in Warrington since the time of the penal laws, transferred their membership to the Catholic Philanthropic Society, and over the next years, as the number of Irish members increased, the Society could claim to be loosely representative of Catholic Warrington.

The Society’s primary aim was to establish financial security for its members, but like other Friendly Societies, its social side clearly mattered also. (Indeed, in its first year, the total payment for sickness, £1 8s. 0d. was easily surpassed by the £1 4s 6d paid for beer and the £5 16s 0d for dinners and drink.)⁽⁴⁰⁾ The Society also indulged in the popular passion for parading; rules pertaining to the Annual Feast required that members “assemble, walk in orderly procession to attend Divine Service, return back in an orderly procession, transact the business of the Society and partake of a dinner and entertainment.”⁽⁴¹⁾ The Society’s other functions and activities were fashioned from its particular Catholic ethos: money paid on the death of a member or his wife covered funeral expenses and the cost of Requiem Mass, and other religious services for the deceased. An important qualification to membership required that before relief was given, claimants had to forward a certificate from a priest in evidence that Easter duties had been performed. When the Society registered under the Friendly Societies Act in

38. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.7.

39. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.12.

40. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.10.

41. Rulebook of the Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society, 1844. [WALS.C: P1447]

1875, the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies ordered that the Society delete its Rules for Masses for the Dead and its Easter Duties clause, but the Society refused to do so, and incurred penalties for failure to register. For its Catholic members, therefore, the Society provided services which secular friendly societies could not. By the 1860s it had become prosperous (with assets of £600) and had put its resources at the disposal of the Church: in 1858, £200 was given as a loan to the Catholic Schools Committee.⁽⁴²⁾

The society operated a series of fines and checks to deter members from making false claims or indulging in abusive behaviour towards each other, and it would be tempting to see these as weapons with which to tame the Irish, except that these rules were adopted when its membership was purely English, and merely outlawed a greater range of offences with each rulebook, as and when required (a clause which suspended the membership of those impressed into the Navy, for instance, fell into disuse.) Membership became stratified into honorary and ordinary membership, conferring separate entitlements according to payment of fees.⁽⁴³⁾

There is evidence however that in spiritual and moral matters, the clergy were concerned by the practices of the Irish and attempted to change them. Father Hall noted the Irish tradition of holding wakes, which he would have liked to have stopped, except “there seems to be no way to prevent them from doing so”.⁽⁴⁴⁾ And on the subject of marriage: “I attribute five or six people getting married before the Registrar to avoid the trouble of confession because they are living in sin.”⁽⁴⁵⁾ Again, this needs to be seen as both the inevitable process of a social transformation from rural to urban living, and the demands of a priesthood, largely at this stage raised and trained within the English

42. *WCPS: Centenary*, p.15.

43. Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society Rules and Regulations, 1824, Containing Manuscript List of Members, 1823-1843; Rules and Regulations of the Warrington Catholic Philanthropic Society, 1844. [WALSC: MS1214]

44. Plumb, *Warrington Mission*, p.18.

45. Plumb, *Warrington Mission*, p.19.

Catholic tradition confronting the peasant culture of Gaelic Catholicism, at the same time that the Irish were required to adjust to the demands of a capitalist working day. At St. Mary's, Buttermarket St, Father Pozzi bought the first full set of High Mass vestments, and instituted a weekday mass at 5 a.m. "to enable the working class to receive Holy Communion."⁽⁴⁶⁾ In doing this, Fr. Pozzi was rebuilding the connection between the Church and the poor. This was perhaps the most important task facing English Catholicism in the nineteenth century. The Catholic Church was required to adapt to new conditions and to minister to some of the very poorest in society, as part of a general refashioning of Britain's religious profile. The overriding aim of the Catholic Church was to maintain internal cohesion, and whilst social acceptability mattered, it was not the highest priority.

PROTESTANTISM IN WARRINGTON AND THE IRISH CONNECTION

Protestantism embraced a range of religious groups, from Anglicans to Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Unitarians, and others besides, who, despite differences between them (and sometimes vitriolic schisms within them) eventually arrived at an accommodation through a shared belief that their common heritage had underwritten national and imperial progress. Catholics however remained outside this perspective, and consequently even those Protestants who supported the Irish politically found their belief in an inherent English tolerance was stretched to the limits by the assertion of Irish Catholic difference. Liberals and radicals from the English tradition could not always understand those from the Irish tradition. Often English liberalism was led by men of strong (Protestant) religious belief, who could never quite shed their suspicion of Catholic doctrine and religious practices. And so whilst

46. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p.17.

assimilationists are right to point to the gradual decline of the tensions between the Orange and the Green in Britain, this chapter examines the less obvious friction between liberals and the Irish.

Links were built and maintained from English Protestantism to Ulster Protestantism at this local level. The connections between Warrington's Protestants and the Irish Protestantism are complex. At local level, the Church of England joined with Irish and English nonconformity to produce a hybrid 'Protestant' political forum. Warrington's Conservatives organised politically for Orangeism and Unionism throughout the nineteenth century. From the Working Men's Protestant Association in the 1850s,⁽⁴⁷⁾ to the Orange Lodges in the 1870s,⁽⁴⁸⁾ and the Primrose League branches and the Unionist campaigns at the end of the century,⁽⁴⁹⁾ Warrington's contribution to Orange politics was continuous and efficient, but it seems that this owed as much to the political power of Edward Greenall's brewing interest within Conservatism (which included a strong Protestant appeal) as to the numbers of Protestant Irish living in the town. From the 1870s, Warrington's Orange Lodges celebrated the Relief of Derry, when hundreds marched in an effort to "challenge public attention by a procession", which was criticised by some in the town for the offence this gave to local Irish Catholics.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Orangemen in Belfast watched events in Warrington with satisfaction: the *Warrington Advertiser* published the acclamations which the *Belfast Weekly News* gave to Warrington's Orangemen.⁽⁵¹⁾

Warrington nonconformists also had connections with Ireland, especially through the Academy and its past pupils. Belfast Presbyterianism in particular, by no means

47. *Warrington Guardian*, 19 November 1959.

48. *Warrington Guardian*, 8 April, 19 August 1871; *Warrington Advertiser*, 25 February 1871.

49. *Warrington Observer*, 24, 27 April 1895; *Warrington Examiner*, 18 March 1898.

50. *Warrington Advertiser*, 12 August 1871.

51. *Warrington Advertiser*, 25 February, 12 August 1871.

originally the stronghold of Orange politics, had antecedents in Warrington. Given that Nonconformists in Warrington had campaigned so effectively for religious liberty, especially in the years of the Academy, it is perhaps surprising that their relations with Catholicism were so poor. Presbyterians at the Academy were unsympathetic to Catholics, feeling that liberty for a faith which they saw as hierarchical, incapable of answering the claims of reason and bound by superstition was not worth fighting for. Priestley had once been asked whether he had known any Catholics at Leeds and had answered that he “never did converse with any papist in my life. We were brought up in a thorough abhorrence and contempt of them.” In 1798, he wrote from America rejoicing in “the destruction of Papal power for which we have long prayed.”⁽⁵²⁾ Catholics nonetheless respected Priestley: in 1781, the seminary at Douai in France which had traditionally educated the sons of English Catholic families undertook to modernise itself and upgrade its teaching methods; Fr. William Gibson carried out the reforms after consulting Fr. Joseph Berrington, Professor of Philosophy, who urged change “along lines directly derived from Priestley’s Warrington Academy.”⁽⁵³⁾ Others from the Academy were equivocal in their support for Catholic rights: William Bruce angered Wolfe Tone in Belfast by his argument that Catholic Emancipation should be gradual.⁽⁵⁴⁾ From the Academy and the Unitarian-Presbyterian congregation at Cairo St. Chapel, a chain of Nonconformists can be traced who were also supporters of religious tolerance, but who nonetheless angered local Catholics. Philip Carpenter had links to Belfast Presbyterianism, and clearly had little sympathy for the Catholic Irish poor in Warrington. Carpenter took in a number of young men as lodgers whom he introduced into his

52. Padraig O’Brien, ‘Priestley and Catholicism’, *Link Magazine*, 60, pp.8-11 (Warrington: St. Gregory’s Deanery, 1987).

53. O’Brien, ‘Priestley and Catholicism’, p.9.

54. Marriane Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p.137.

political campaigning: one of these, Frederick Monks, later a successful businessman and municipal councillor, outraged Catholics in 1899 when he donated the Cromwell statue to the town.⁽⁵⁵⁾ And Arthur Crosfield, Liberal candidate in the general election of 1900, and MP in 1906 donated one of the bells—St. Patrick—to St. Mary’s, Buttermarket St., in 1906 but then offended Catholics by campaigning for an end to religious education.⁽⁵⁶⁾

WRITING THE IRISH IN WARRINGTON’S LOCAL HISTORY

The history of the Warrington Academy and the Warrington Volunteers was written to provide a cultural legacy for Beamont, Kendrick, Fitchett and Fitchett-Marsh, the Gaskells and others. These histories stressed the continuities between the Academy, the Volunteers, and nineteenth-century progress as defined by the Library, churches and chapels, Mechanics Institute, Museum, and the incorporation of the town itself. This continuity encouraged the public projection of a set of values such as comradeship, community, religious and political tolerance. But the local historians were also keen to stress Warrington’s Protestant past. In his *Annals of the Lords of Warrington*, Beamont listed the local philanthropic efforts for Protestants: in 1662 a town collection for the distressed Protestants of Lithuania, in 1695 a large sum collected for French Protestants and in 1708 a collection for the Protestants of Oberbarmen. All of this he concluded “seemed to show that the cause of Protestantism recommended itself to the people.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ In the same work, Beamont described how Welsh fusiliers returning from the Battle of the Boyne had been quartered at Warrington but had been “carried off by an infectious disease.”⁽⁵⁸⁾ Kendrick put his historical skills to proving that St. Elphin, after whom

55. Carpenter, *Memoirs*, pp.99,112,118.

56. Plumb, *Glorious Chapter*, p.24.

57. Beamont, *Lords of Warrington*, preface vii-viii.

58. Beamont, *Lords of Warrington*, preface viii.

Warrington parish church was named was a Saxon, not a Celtic saint, and unknown to the “Romish calendar.” When Kendrick wrote the story of the Book of Sports, the edict from James I concerning the rights of his subjects to sport and games on Sunday, Catholics were specifically excluded from those rights.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Ireland and the Irish could not be ignored in the town’s story. The Academy had been part of a network of non-conformity to which both Dublin and Belfast belonged: Irish families sent their sons to the Academy and former pupils served in Ireland as religious and civic leaders. Rev. William Turner’s important first history of the Academy included a list of all its students, together with information on their subsequent careers. Turner was effusively proud of the Academy’s students, highlighting their academic and civic qualities, and proclaiming their subsequent public careers. As a previous chapter demonstrates, Turner neutered Academy radicalism, extolling its commitment to anti-slavery and prison reform, disowning its Paineite connections. One former student, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, had been a founder and leader of the United Irishmen, and clearly, Rev. Turner disapproved. He wrote:

Of this gentleman who as a friend of Napper Tandy, and as such indicted for high treason, as having escaped to America and having afterwards made his peace, has excited no small bustle in the world: the present writer is not furnished with documents, (nor is it at all in his line of reading to look for them) which might enable him to make a memoir.⁽⁶⁰⁾

As Turner’s scholarship provided the basis on which all subsequent nineteenth-century studies of the Academy were based, his attitudes were replicated

59. James Kendrick, ‘Contributions to the Early History of Warrington’, [bound cuttings from the author’s column in the *Manchester Courier*, 1839-51]. [WALSC: 8054]

60. Rev. William Turner, *The Warrington Academy: Part I - An historical account of Warrington Academy. Part II - An historical account of students educated in the Warrington Academy. (reprinted from articles originally published in the ‘Monthly Repository’, Vols. VII, IX and X, 1813 -1815), (1872; rpt. with introduction by George Carter, Borough Librarian, Warrington: Museum & Libraries Committee, 1957), p.56.*

throughout this period. Other connections between the Academy and nascent Irish nationalism were also written out of the histories of the Academy. Priestley had been a particular hero to the United Irishmen, who sent him an adulatory letter after he had decided to leave England. Kendrick's lecture on Priestley's correspondence ignored it. H.A. Bright's "A Historical Sketch of Warrington Academy", written for the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1858, elaborated further on Hamilton Rowan "the Irish rebel," in tracing his spirit of rebellion back to his days at Warrington (and before, for he had been sent to Warrington after having been asked to leave Cambridge), describing his pranks, in changing the inn signs in Bridge Street, and his undisclosed "indecent and shameful behaviour at Liverpool".⁽⁶¹⁾ Hamilton Rowan had reputedly dressed as a ghost and terrified people in the night: Bright wrote that these and other stories concerning Hamilton Rowan had become "traditional" in Warrington. Hamilton Rowan may well have been indecent and shameful in Warrington and Liverpool, but he was not alone in this: bad student behaviour was the principal reason given for the Academy's demise. Other Irish connections were covered more generously, particularly those between Irish and Warrington nonconformity. Another pupil at the Academy, William Bruce was congratulated for his eventual success in becoming Principal of the Belfast Academy. Bruce was the kind of radical acceptable to Warrington's nineteenth century historians. Histories of the United Irishmen make clear that Bruce's radicalism stopped short of entering their ranks; Bruce's disagreement with Wolfe Tone on Catholic Emancipation has already been referred to.⁽⁶²⁾

The connections with Warrington continued. William Bruce had taught William Hamilton Drummond of Larne at Belfast, who became a noted Irish scholar. His son,

61. Henry Bright, 'A Historical Sketch of Warrington Academy', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 11 (1859), pp.1-30.

62. Turner, *Warrington Academy: Part 1*, p.74.

James Drummond, was Principal of Manchester College, Oxford (whose origins were in Warrington Academy) and his son, William Hamilton Drummond, served as minister at Cairo St. Unitarian Chapel, Warrington from 1893 to 1900, and was a close colleague of Frederick Monks.⁽⁶³⁾ This group played an important role in Belfast and Dublin in promoting the Irish language. A.T.Q. Stewart observed “some enthusiasm for the Irish language among the Presbyterians most closely associated with the founding of the (Belfast) Academy”, and in particular, Stewart noted the role of liberal Presbyterians and United Irishmen in promoting the study and publication of works in Irish.⁽⁶⁴⁾ The influence of Priestley’s *Lectures on History*, written at Warrington Academy, with his strong recommendation for the use of oral history may have been at work here (see Chapter Six)

If the Academy had fostered both loyal and disloyal Irishmen, the history of the Volunteers pitted loyal Warringtonians against more Irish rebels. Kendrick’s first history of the Warrington Volunteers outlined their purpose: “for the defence of this country against foreign aggression and for the suppression of internal disloyalty, no worse a foe.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ Internal disloyalty meant the Irish, and specifically the uprising of the United Irishmen in 1798. Kendrick described how, when the government received information that the Irish rebellion was about to break out, the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire requested the Volunteers to “extend their protection to the country for five miles around Warrington”. It was rumoured that the rebellion might be aided by insurgents and Irish supporters from within England and that a French invasion in support of the United Irishmen might be expected. No such excitement ensued, but in the following year a

63. Pdraig O’Brien, *Warrington Academy, 1757-86: Its predecessors and successors* (Wigan: OWL Books, 1989), p.41.

64. Roger Blaney, *Presbyterians and the Irish language* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996), pp.136-7.

65. Kendrick, ‘Contributions’; James Kendrick, *Some Account of the Loyal Warrington Volunteers of 1798* (Warrington: Guardian Office, 1856), p.1.

party of Irish rebels who had evaded the waves of executions which followed the failed uprising were seen passing through Warrington. In Bridge Street they overpowered their escort, and were “actually breaking the sword of the commanding officer over his head.” The Volunteers fought with the rebels, who were recaptured, in what became known as the ‘Battle of Bridge Street’.

This was the Warrington Volunteer’s only serious military engagement, and became central to the mythology and popular history of the local militia. Kendrick’s account of the ceremony at which the Volunteers were presented with their colours is further evidence that they were more exercised by the Irish than the French. After an “excellent dinner”, the company gave a toast “to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and success to his measures.” The band then played ‘Croppies Lie Down’, a song which Robert Kee describes as “popular with the Orange yeomanry.”⁽⁶⁶⁾ The song went:

Oh, Croppies ye’d better be quiet and still
 Ye shan’t have your liberty, do what ye will,
 As long as salt water is found in the deep
 Our foot on the neck of the Croppy we’ll keep.
 Remember the steel of Sir Phelim O’Neill
 Who slaughtered our fathers in Catholic zeal
 And down, down, Croppies, lie down...

The story of the Battle of Bridge Street was retold in subsequent historical accounts. Crompton and Venn’s centenary history of the Volunteers written in 1898 repeated the account of the ‘Battle’ and a song was written especially for the anniversary,

Who fears to speak of ‘98
 Not Warrington, I wot;
 When strange disturbance stirred the state,
 And rebel blood was hot.⁽⁶⁷⁾

66. Robert Kee, *The most distressful country: The Green Flag, Volume One* (1976; rpt. single volume, London: Quartet, 1977), pp.98-9.

67. Walter Crompton and George Venn, *The Loyal Warrington Volunteers, 1798-1898*

Arthur Bennett's popular history also recounted the Battle of Bridge Street.⁽⁶⁸⁾ In 1907, the Scotland Road Theatre put on a performance of a new play about the United Irishmen, '98'. It was well attended.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Even as early as 1811, on the occasion of the return of Lieutenant Hornby after his victorious sea battle against the French, with its ceremonial congregation under the Winwick Broad Oak, this poem was published as part of the commemoration:

You may talk of your *Currency, Paper, and Pelf,*
 Your *Coin* and all that, till the devil himself,
 Can't skill of your blarney at Killiboreen :
 Great Britain d'ye hear me, can never be poor,
 For has she not sailors and soldiers—y're sure,
 Whose hearts are all over of true British gold?
 A *Bullion* that's not to *be bought or be sold,*
 By the croaking old spalpeans at Killiboreen.⁽⁷⁰⁾

These songs, stories and entertainments were not diversions from the grand sweep of Warrington's history, but were presented as crucial events in the town's development, endlessly repeated in new editions and local publications. Their importance in cementing the political and cultural power of the network of families which had emerged from the radical tradition of the Academy and the burgess tradition of the Volunteers is significant.

But what effect might this have had on the Irish in Warrington? It may have contributed to the "vivid recollection of national wrong" which Irish migrants and their

(Warrington: Sunrise Publishing, 1898), preface xxv.

68. Arthur Bennett, *Warrington: as it was, as it is and as it might be* (Warrington: Sunrise Publishing, 1892).
69. Gordon Aspden, "Up in the Gallery: a Study of Warrington's Music Hall and Theatre from its beginnings to the Outbreak of the First World War", (Diss: Dept. of Drama and Theatre, Padgate College of Education, Warrington, 1973), p.71.
70. Thomas Glazebrook: a dedication in Rev. G. Chippindall, "*The Winwick Broad Oak*": *An Account of the Public Dinner given to the gallant Captain Phipps Hornby of H.M. Ship, Le Volage, under Winwick Broad Oak, by all the Inhabitants of Winwick with Hulme, on Monday August 26th 1811*' (Warrington: J. Haddock (Printers), 1811).

children carried, in Raphael Samuel's phrase.⁽⁷¹⁾ Samuel describes the upbringing of James Sexton, whose mother had been born in Warrington, although her parents had lived through the aftermath to the defeat in 1798, when rebels and Catholic priests in Ireland were put to death. Such memories "served as a family inheritance".⁽⁷²⁾ It is ironic that such families journeyed to Warrington to escape the "days of terror", only to find that the town's leaders trumpeted their own small part in the defeat of the Irish. No doubt as far as the Catholic Irish of Warrington were concerned, poverty, bad housing and disease weighed more heavily upon them than their being portrayed unsympathetically in local history. Yet the history of the Warrington Volunteers perhaps reinforced an Irish sense of discrimination when the histories were written by the some of the very people who refused to tackle poverty and slum conditions.

WILLIAM BEAMONT'S TRAVELS IN IRELAND

Warrington's most prestigious local historian in the nineteenth century, William Beamont, showed little interest in the military adventures of the Volunteers (although his father had been one of their officers). His interest in local history was directed more to social and cultural themes; he showed a special interest in religious history. By the 1840s Beamont had become a wealthy solicitor, an active Conservative, and leader of the campaign to have Warrington incorporated. He was also at this time making his first efforts at historical scholarship, and preparing his first local history texts for publication. Beamont was able to indulge these interests when he toured Ireland in 1844, returning there again in 1845. On both occasions he kept a daily journal of his observations and conversations. His travels in Ireland prompted him to raise questions about Ireland's

71. Raphael Samuel, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Poor' in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.283.

72. Samuel, 'Catholic Church', p.283.

economic development, its relations with England, its religious character and about the local histories of the places he visited.

Beamont offers us a view into the mind of the patrician Tory gentleman. He was no slavish Orangeman (William Cobbett was his hero), and he was capable of sensitive analysis of the relationship between England and Ireland. But there were limits to his understanding: he was anti-Catholic, although this was tempered by generosity to the Catholic poor. His writings are valuable in providing excellent, detailed reports on English and Irish historical methods in the mid-nineteenth century. His observations, combining historical and political perspectives, popular memory and attention to scholarship address the relationship between the past and the present in Ireland and in England, and suggest that he believed that relationship to differ in both countries.

Beamont's journeys were made by coach, an experience which he enjoyed, taking issue with those who complained of Irish coach transport. "A traveller from the land of railways finds a strange change when he returns to the old coach system", he wrote on first arriving; a coach journey allowed him to meet Irish people and view the land. "I have never failed to meet intelligent fellow travellers, and the elevated seat gives the best opportunities for seeing the country."⁽⁷³⁾ The sense of place and the history of place which had dully formed his politics in Warrington found new areas of research in Ireland. His journal details the many stories and legends attributed to the forms of Ireland's landscape, of Brian Boru, St. Patrick, St. Kieran and the devil himself, Oliver Cromwell. The names of hills led him to consider the Irish language, which was a pure inheritance from the past, whilst in English "every syllable derived from a different language."⁽⁷⁴⁾ From his elevated seat, he also observes a pattern, an outdoor mass attended by a great

73. William Beamont Diaries: My Tour in Ireland, 1844-45: 8 May 1844, August 1845. [WALSC: MS291]

74. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 10, 12 May 1844.

crowd.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Travelling through Bally Shehan, he had “a view of country very rich... low lands rich and well cultivated”.⁽⁷⁶⁾ But Beamont was favourably impressed by Irish people. Irish fellow-passengers “talked as sensibly on ordinary subjects as the plainest and most downright John Bull could desire.”⁽⁷⁷⁾ Politeness “seems natural to every Irishman”. Everywhere he is greeted with the same phrase “God bless your work”, and even the people of Waterford “in character the wildest in Ireland... have a native politeness and civility which is very pleasing”.⁽⁷⁸⁾

Beamont had expected Ireland to be a much poorer country than he found it, and he was taken aback by the evidence of the abundance of market produce. He noted that Irish children, unlike Warrington children, did not need to work. Yet the evidence of the extreme poverty of the peasantry also surrounded him. A land agent of his acquaintance, Mr. Blake, described to Beamont how he found a woman tenant and her six sons eating their dinner of salt and potatoes.⁽⁷⁹⁾ He saw the homestead of the cotters “made by a deep hole in the ground where filth collected, where the cotter heaps material that are to feed his potatoes, and children, pigs and poultry paddle about.”⁽⁸⁰⁾ Beamont concluded that change was required, and he argued for an end to small farms, a system of land and wages for the cotter and increasing capital investment in the land, although he added, “Ireland’s resources need peace and quietness to develop”. His conversations with peasants revealed to him the depth of popular hostility towards heartless land agents and absentee landlords. He wrote:

when last at Killarney, I took formal possession of one of the rocky islands in the lower lake. I am therefore an absentee landlord but unlike

75. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 15 August 1845.

76. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 11 August 1845.

77. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 15 May 1844, 5 August 1845.

78. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 8, 10 May 1844, 11 August 1845.

79. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 25 August 1845.

80. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 11 August 1845.

other absentees I can safely say that I spent on the island much more than the whole of the rents I receive from my Irish property.⁽⁸¹⁾

The religious life of the Irish confounded him, for he disliked and distrusted Roman Catholicism “which falls in with every feeling of man’s corrupt nature”, and in particular he distrusted the priesthood. He was perplexed by the sight of nuns in Kilkenny:

There are several convents in Kilkenny, the inhabitants of which are occasionally met with on the streets habited in the robes of their order. Does not this seem more like a foreign country than a portion of the United Kingdom?⁽⁸²⁾

He was surprised by the use of Latin in Catholic worship, noting that Irish peasants shared with English scholars the daily use of the language:

The morning service is always in Latin, and apart from the occasion of some outrage or some public excitement, is never addressed in any other language than Latin, and in the excepted cases a harangue in Irish is the extent of what they have from the altar, the spirit and tendency of which unlike the peaceful language belonging to the place is seldom calculated to promote good order and obedience.⁽⁸³⁾

Beamont noted that the Latin tongue was adopted for worship during the Roman Empire, but repeated the explanation that he had been given for its survival, that the devil understands all modern languages but not ancient Roman, and therefore the prayers of the Catholics were “not thwarted by the evil one.” There was “no doubt the Irish are a religious people and that they are strongly attached to the faith of their fathers.”⁽⁸⁴⁾ But despite his distrust of the priesthood, whom he referred to as “the enemy” he believed that the Irish people themselves were morally superior to the English. At harvest time and potato-setting, when young women helped in the fields, he noted their modesty:

81. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 15, 21 August 1845.

82. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 8 May 1844.

83. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 10, 28 August 1845.

84. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 28 August 1845.

In their immortal honour the crime of unchastity is held in the greatest detestation and is of very infrequent occurrence. It cannot be Popery that causes this pure state of morals. It may be national character.

In conversation with a “poor old peasant”, he was told that “priests have taught him not to swear, nor to steal, and to do to others as he would be done to.”⁽⁸⁵⁾ Beamont’s experiences of the Irish in Warrington before his tour of Ireland suggest a similar respect for Irish character. This entry was made in his journal on 19 August, 1844:

Oh the awful consequences of sin! I stood near the Market Gate today when the funeral of a young person passed along the street. The pall was edged with white from whence I concluded that the deceased was some unmarried person. On enquiry I found that it was the funeral procession of Mary O’Brien, an Irish girl whom I have seen on various occasions at the bar of our courthouse. She had been charged with frequent disorders and irregularities, and at length had died in the act of giving birth to an illegitimate child. A large party of Irish were following to the grave the remains of this poor child of error, for whom no doubt they felt a degree of sympathy of which perhaps her unfriended life and her melancholy end were the moving causes. I doubt very much whether as much compassion would have been shown towards an English unfortunate.⁽⁸⁶⁾

As in his local histories of Warrington, Beamont incorporated popular memory and story, local tradition and legend into his journal, but significantly, despite this common methodology, he saw a clear difference between English and Irish history, in that Irish history was in his eyes less authentic than English. The journal contains loose fly-sheets and letters containing written histories of Ireland. The Royal Irish Academy, he noted, had begun translation of the ancient manuscripts of Irish history “but finding that legendary fiction much predominated over any authentic details, it was stopped.” (And,

85. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 28 August 1845.

86. Beamont Diaries: 19 August, 1844.

he observed “in these books is a lamentable account of the incessant broils of the various sects, even after the English invasion.”⁽⁸⁷⁾ As he travelled, he noted the legends associated with hills, mountains and features, such as those associated with St. Kieran, St. Patrick, Fingal the Great or Brian Boru. He described fortresses, castles and pyramids built by the Danes and Norsemen, but attributed to the fairies. He discoursed on the history of the round towers and the early Christian and pagan architecture of the land. As in Warrington, he found history in the houses which he visited, such as the garden at Goughall, the house of Walter Raleigh, where it was believed the potato was first grown in Europe. One acquaintance related to Beamont his personal stories of the suppression of the Whiteboys, and whilst visiting Bantry Bay, he was told of “the signal dispersion of the French fleet on arrival in this bay in the year 1796. Eleven of the men of war including the admiral’s ship was actually at anchor within sight of this house.”⁽⁸⁸⁾

Another feature of Irish history which drew comment from Beamont was the impact which Cromwell had had on the Irish imagination. He noted features of the landscape which were associated with Cromwell’s name, either as legend or as historical artefact. He was shown a bridge which Cromwell had had built in thirty hours on his way to Beerhaven to take vengeance on the O’Sullivans. (In Warrington, Beamont had located the house in Church Street in which Cromwell had stayed by interviewing a very old lady who had been told of Cromwell’s stay there as a child):

Cromwell’s name is held in no respect here. In the rock of one of the hills of the north are one of the footprints of two feet said to have been made by a priest who being hotly pursued by the usurper made a miraculous leap from this rock to another distant twelve miles and so escaped from further pursuit.⁽⁸⁹⁾

87. Beamont Diaries: 19 February, 1859.

88. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 13 May 1844, 14, 19 August 1845.

89. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 19 August 1845.

Beamont liked everything about the Irish except their religion. He never doubted that union between England and Ireland was right for the Irish, and that the Repeal campaign and its leader, Daniel O’Connell, were wrong. The Irish were a “generous, noble and a mistaken people.” The people were “certainly insane on the subject of Repeal”, and O’Connell was “a tool in the hands of the priesthood”. Beamont intoned, “Grant them to see that their true interest is in union with England and not in separation from her.” A railway system would “do more good than fifty Repeal meetings, or Repeal itself,” by “developing her rich resources and removing the grounds of complaint against England.”⁽⁹⁰⁾ (His friend Dr Allman was not so sure: “Dr Allman believes that railways would produce great moral evil by urbanising the country and thus taking away the charm of its solitariness and loneliness which at times he thought were absolutely necessary to keep the mind in health.”)⁽⁹¹⁾ And railways and other economic changes would not solve the problem of religion:

The social evils of Ireland arising principally out of the tenure of land are capable of, and I hope will receive, a remedy, but the religious difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant, fomented as they are by the priesthood of the former, are a far greater difficulty and the remedy is not easy to discover.

In the long term, the answer lay in education: an experiment he had witnessed at Clogheen, where Catholics and Protestants were educated together had impressed him as “an approach to harmony”.⁽⁹²⁾ The real problem was that “our discoveries in politics and moral science do not keep pace with the discoveries in physics. Where are the corresponding discoveries in the art of governing or instructing mankind?”⁽⁹³⁾

90. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 15 May 1844, 5 August 1845.

91. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 10 August 1845.

92. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 9 August 1845.

93. Beamont Diaries: Ireland, 5 August 1845.

OWEN DEVIN

Given that municipal politics were the preserve of traders and the professional class from the inception of the town council until 1903 when the Independent Labour Party candidate Fred Stott was elected, the possibilities open to the Irish to organise sufficiently to challenge the stranglehold of the local elite would seem remote.⁽⁹⁴⁾ In the main, the necessary conditions for political growth seem lacking, given the nature of the local economy, and the position of the Irish at the bottom of the labour market, combined with material and educational disadvantages, poor union organisation and few opportunities to develop a leadership. Yet the Irish in Warrington, notably with the campaigns of Owen Devin did mount a challenge to the style and content of local politics. Discontent was sparked initially by the behaviour of the police towards the Irish, but eventually grew into a political campaign against the whole municipal culture.

Whenever the police in Britain have been perceived to have poor relations with ethnic minorities, these have been seen principally as a problem in social history rather than political history. The possibility that relations between police and immigrant communities might have become politicised in the nineteenth century has been overshadowed by a rigid interpretation of how political action could be ignited. In Warrington, a political campaign reflecting Irish and community issues, was stirred initially by apparent police and council abuse over the case of Ellen Devin, the daughter of a Warrington Irishman.

On 20 March 1856 the *Warrington Guardian* reported that

the body of Ellen Devin, missing since 18th February last was this day found in the river Mersey opposite the Wilderspool brewery and has been removed to the house of her parents. There are no external marks

94. *Guardian Yearbook and Almanac* (Warrington: Mackie and Co., 1905).

of violence upon the body which has been seen by Mr. White, surgeon. Neither is there any reason to suppose her death to have been caused otherwise than by her own act.

The next issue of the *Guardian* reported however that the police were “making inquiries into the truth of several rumours of persons having seen Ellen Devin in company with a young man on the night she was missing.”⁽⁹⁵⁾ When the inquest was held at the Lower Angel, the large crowd which attended heard witnesses describe the young man who had been seen with Ellen Devin. James Mercer, a sixteen year old basket maker described how he heard screams from the river, and saw a man run from the bank. He identified Samuel Taylor, a clerk, as the man he had seen. Others also testified that they had heard screams but had put it down to an “Irish row”. Ellen Devin’s mother testified that her daughter had been keeping company with Samuel Taylor, and was in the family way by him. The clerk who shared an office with Taylor admitted that he had been absent from work between seven and eight in the evening on which Ellen Devin died. Her family was convinced that she had been murdered, and were angered by the verdict which suggested suicide.⁽⁹⁶⁾

Owen Alban Devin, Irishman, described as a tinker, a dealer in fish, a dealer in etceteras, musician, and fiddle-player published and circulated a handbill accusing the police of “partiality” in the inquest. The police had “insulted the females at his own fireside” and had abused witnesses. The Chief Constable had been seen to take liquor in Taylor’s house on the night of Ellen Devin’s funeral, and a brass tobacco box which had belonged to Taylor had been lost in Arpley and later found in the possession of the Mayor’s son. The Watch Committee investigated these claims and found most unproven.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Devin apologised and paid £5 into the Dispensary fund as compensation

95. *Warrington Guardian*, 24 March 1856.

96. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 March 1856.

97. *Warrington Guardian*, 10, 29 April 1856.

after magistrates sought to be “lenient on Devin, under the circumstances.”⁽⁹⁸⁾

Devin’s handbill had included a call that the police force in Warrington be reformed, and in the following months Devin’s personal vindictiveness against the Chief Constable developed into a political protest. In the annual local elections held in November 1856, Devin put himself forward as a candidate in the South East ward after a public meeting called to denounce local corruption. The sitting councillors had expected no opposition, and made no preparations for a campaign, and were therefore surprised when Devin announced his intention to challenge for the ward. They were surprised also to find that Devin headed the poll for half of election day, and was finally beaten by only twenty-one votes.⁽⁹⁹⁾

Four months later, Devin chaired an election meeting attracting an attendance of several hundred in the Market Shed; the meeting was called to register support for a challenger to local brewer, Conservative candidate and Orangeman, Edward Greenall. *The Warrington Guardian*, although itself campaigning against the practice in local elections of purchasing votes with drink, nevertheless ridiculed the political ambitions of Devin, “partly musician and partly tin man”, whose candidature was “looked upon as a joke.” The *Guardian* cajoled the “defeated candidate, who to the surprise of the town was nearly turned from a tinker into a T.C.” Comments such as these drew this response from Devin:

Oh that the editor of a newspaper should descend so low as to disparage a working man whom the Creator has destined to earn his bread by labour.

You seem sir to repine at the prosperity of an aspiring artisan. For the *Guardian*’s ill-usage of me I cannot account. Perhaps I am envied because of my popularity, being out a working man and associated

98. *Warrington Guardian*, 10 May 1856.

99. *Warrington Guardian*, 8 November 1856.

solely with my own class.... A newspaper editor should be the last man to attempt to impugn that portion of society to which I belong, the labouring class—whose sinews are the main support of the state. Your sneering phraseology is unbecoming that of a gentleman whom education should have better taught. You sir, with others are afraid to have a tinker in the Council chamber... such large sums of public money should not have passed through the Council (if I were there) without a thundering noise from a tinker's hammer.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

The *Guardian's* editor, Alexander Mackie, replied that “the insertion of this abuse is one of the penalties we have to pay for opening our columns to all.”

In the municipal election later in that year, Devin again stood as a candidate in the South East ward, but lost by a single vote. Immediately prior to the election, Devin had been arrested on suspicion of stealing a copper fire escape, the property of the Corporation of Warrington, and a brass safety valve from the cabin of the steam yacht of Edward Greenall. The police claimed also to have found stolen lead piping on Devin's premises. At his trial at the Borough Court, Chief Constable MacMichael argued against bail (to “confusion and hisses” from the crowd in the courtroom) but, acting as presiding magistrate, the Mayor (the same Peter Rylands who had campaigned with Philip Carpenter for social improvements a few years previously) replied to the cheers of those present that it was very wrong to refuse bail. Devin presented the bail money at the Mayor's door at 10 o'clock at night, with a “crowd of hundreds cheering as he emerged, he was then carried on a chair shoulder high up Bridge Street, where he addressed the people.” The *Warrington Guardian* continued to snipe : “Thus although Owen Devin had that day failed to be exalted to the dignity of a T.C., yet he found himself elevated to the height of the Irishmen's shoulders.”⁽¹⁰¹⁾

100. *Warrington Guardian*, 29 November 1856.

101. *Warrington Guardian*, 7 November 1857.

At his subsequent trial at Kirkdale Quarter Sessions, Devin was sentenced to six months gaol for receiving goods knowing them to be stolen, despite his argument that tinkers regularly bought old metal without knowing its origin. Suspiciously, one of the witnesses against him was employed by Mr. Whittle, one of the two candidates who had defeated Devin after his arrest. Devin “became much disheartened” and “seemed much affected upon hearing his sentence” Again the *Guardian* gloated in their report of his being charged despite his being “before the burgesses of the South East ward—or as it is popularly and facetiously yet significantly termed—the Kilkenny ward.”⁽¹⁰²⁾

Owen Devin’s next attempt to win a seat on the town council came in 1860, in a bye-election. Devin had entered the list at the last minute, and when the opposing candidate, John Dolan suddenly declined to stand, Devin was sure to be elected. The poll was fixed for 9 a.m. in the Council Chamber, and Devin and his supporters arrived to vote and celebrate his victory. Election procedure required that the alderman of the ward, Alderman Robinson, should preside over the election. But Robinson failed to appear, and Devin’s supporters, “for the most part his own countrymen, Irishmen, manifested no small degree of impatience.” The second Alderman for the borough refused to preside, it not being his duty. At 10.30 a.m., the Town Clerk refused to wait longer and left. At the town council meeting, Robinson explained his absence—he had gone rabbit-shooting—and promised to rearrange the election for the following day, as the law allowed. Voting papers were prepared and sitting councillors persuaded Dolan to oppose Devin. Devin was again arrested and detained, for a breach of the Municipal Corporation Act, complicity in an act of personation, and subsequently lost the election. The court cleared Devin of the charges of personation, and decided that the police had acted illegally in taking him into custody for an offence which was a misdemeanour but not an indictable

102. *Warrington Guardian*, 31 October 1857.

offence. Robinson later admitted to Devin's solicitor that he had arranged the second election without telling the candidates. (The personation allegations were anyway dubious. Thomas Bridge had voted for Devin although ineligible, this after he had received relief, a coffin for his child.)⁽¹⁰³⁾ The *Guardian* continued to pursue Devin:

Thanks to Alderman Robinson and the rabbits of Bold Hall, Warrington Town Council has escaped the humiliation of having a gentleman lately discharged from Her Majesty's gaol at Kirkdale enrolled amongst its members.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

The *Guardian* nevertheless published an attack on itself written by Devin, who wrote that despite having "hundreds of votes", he had been "subjected to treatment unlawful, ungenerous and unprecedented" and charged the councillors with using "cowardly means" to defeat him. He then attacked the *Guardian*, for the things they had written about him, comments "not meted out to more honoured individuals in the same spirit you report the eloquence flowing from the lips of our town councillors". He added

That my mode of life, my open speaking incurred bad blood is more than probable—that my connection with the country in which birth was given me—my firm adherence to the religion I revere—that the habits of my life peculiar to the class of peasantry in which I was reared created uncharitable feelings toward me is more than possible. One of the many privileges the laws of the country concede to me is the right to contest a seat on the council.... Heaven only knows to what bitter persecution and unrelenting hatred the enjoyment of that constitutional right has subjected me. Unaided with beef, beer, money, committee bribery, corruption or undue influence, my election was beyond doubt.... By a person old metal was brought to me and against my habit was purchased and as purchased was taken by me in open day to the shop of a respectable tradesman.... The sin consisted of my aspiring to a position where I might have been obnoxious to some—the possession

103. *Warrington Guardian*, 16, 23 June 1860.

104. *Warrington Guardian*, 23 June 1860.

of the metal but the pretence:

Why am I not entitled to a seat on the council? They who conceive my object to be ambition, mistake me. Not money, beef or beer—not the aid of landlords or the domination of employers, nor illegal imprisonments will keep me out of the council.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

In 1862, Devin spoke at the Public Hall to an audience of five hundred, advertised as “Warrington’s Garibaldi and a thorn in the Council’s side”. He spoke against council overspending, its buying up land, high official salaries, trips to London by deputations and its borrowing £100,000 for the cemetery and museum. “Every bit of property in the town is mortgaged, with workingmen servicing the debt.” The council was made up of “publicans and sinners”, who were themselves only the sons of tradesmen. Devin then invoked the events in Warrington in the immediate aftermath of Peterloo, when Sir Charles Wolseley had arrived to try to secure legal redress for those murdered and attacked in Manchester, and had been himself attacked by the Warrington Militia:

There were among them the descendants of the men who made themselves notorious when Sir Charles Wolseley visited Warrington by manufacturing horse collar broach pins for neck ties as a *neck-romantic* spell against Reform. (Loud Laughter) ... When he became a candidate for the Town Council the whole clique was up in arms against him; all their petty differences were buried for the time being, his voters were intimidated, threatened, coerced, obstructed, scrutinised and almost turned away by every ignorant, snarling upstart: himself maligned, oppressed, persecuted, ruined, milched and imprisoned. The Municipal Corporation Act was a sham, a delusion, a mockery and a snare.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

It is possible that Devin’s campaign resulted in a greater sensitivity by the police to public scrutiny, even if only occasionally. In 1861 Irish labourer Patrick Fahey was beaten whilst in police custody in Warrington: the policeman responsible was immediately

105. *Warrington Guardian*, 28 June 1860.

106. *Warrington Guardian*, 27 December 1862.

dismissed from the force.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Relations between the police and the Irish was the subject of a sarcastic editorial in the *Warrington Times and General Commercial Advertiser* in February, 1859. The writer used the occasion of an attack on police efficiency to condemn the Irish:

How long are we to break our shins against Irishwomen's coal barrows? It is an acknowledged fact that the English cannot compete with the Irish and wherever the latter plant themselves the former retreat. Only the other day we saw one of the most respectable and populous thoroughfares of the town quite in a flutter of excitement because a policeman was coming up the street leading a cow. She must have been a very old and hardened offender, doubtless, as there have been serious crimes enough committed in the neighbourhood of her capture without any notice being taken of them whatever, the only answer to requests for police help against thieves being that the Irish were kicking up some shindies in the town, officers could not be spared.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

When the Fenian movement was said to have set up in Warrington, the police and municipal elite panicked. Following the Manchester, Chester and Clerkenwell incidents, rumours began to spread in Warrington that the Fenians were organising locally. The *Warrington Guardian* wrote of meetings broken up by the police and strangers who left the town on midnight trains with large sums of money in their possession. The *Guardian* wrote that there "may be here and there a lurking Fenian", and described a "very suspicious looking Irishman" leaving the town in a hurry. But Mackie put his faith in the Chief Constable, who could "lay his hand on every Fenian in the town".⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Then, on 28 December 1867, the *Guardian* reported that an attempt had been made to blow up the Gas Works. According to the report, fifty men had been seen, speaking Irish, before the

107. *Warrington Guardian*, 6 July 1861.

108. *Warrington Times and General Commercial Advertiser*, 19 February 1859.

109. *Warrington Guardian*, 21 December 1867.

intended explosion. The plan had apparently involved releasing the safety plug on the Gasometer, the resulting escape of gas exploding as it reached the street lights. The Home Secretary sent soldiers and a supply of revolvers to Warrington and the Volunteers were signed as special constables. The Gas Company sacked every Irish or Catholic employee and four Irish employees were imprisoned, together with a man who was found in the Gasworks at the time when the removed plug had been discovered.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Father Placid Hall, parish priest at St. Albans defended the men. Like Devin, he blamed the police for their behaviour and attitudes towards the Irish, in rounding up innocent men, searching premises and fuelling rumour. Fr. Hall took the dismissed Catholics to the magistrate, to swear their innocence under oath. He also echoed Devin in blaming the editor of the *Warrington Guardian*, who took “an interest in speaking unkindly of the poor Irish of Warrington and increasing the sorrows under which they labour at present.” It was “treatment like this that gave rise to Fenianism”. There were not, he claimed, more than one in a hundred Irishmen in Warrington who were Fenians. (But that, as the *Warrington Guardian* pointed out, still meant a lot of Fenians.) Fr. Hall called for “justice to Ireland and the Irish” and asked the Irish to assist him to build a second church in the town (he had been planning and fund-raising for St. Mary’s church for ten years) and warned the town that “were it not for the teachings of the Catholic Church you would long since have met us in serried ranks, at the edge of the sword and the point of the bayonet.” Fr. Hall was sure that the supposed plot had been a hoax—it transpired that the stranger who had been arrested for the incident was a Welsh unemployed puddler, who had travelled to Warrington looking for work and had twice visited the police station on the night of his arrest to ask for shelter. Having been refused, he had climbed into the Gasworks to keep warm.⁽¹¹¹⁾ The story of the plot had been taken up by the national

110. *Warrington Guardian*, 18 December 1867; *Warrington Advertiser*, 28 December 1867.

111. *Warrington Advertiser*, 28 December 1867, 11 January 1868; *Warrington Guardian*, 4, 18

press however, and all Gasworks managers were warned to be vigilant.

CONCLUSION

The study of the Irish in Britain has focused on the middle years of the nineteenth-century and on the problem of their integration or otherwise into the English working class. Most begin with an 'ethnic minority' perspective, which has tended to fix the class-ethnicity model into a theoretical concrete. The problem with this approach is that it assumes that only the Irish were ethnic, and only the English had accumulated the experiences of class. This chapter has therefore included a look at the dimensions of English ethnicity, the ways in which popular discourse connected English history, Protestantism, and progress, not merely in the minds of Orangemen, but in the attitudes of the liberal, dissenting English. This conjunction allowed Catholicism, the religion of the majority of the Irish, to appear at worst illiberal compared to 'rational' nonconformity, and at best simply awkward and retreatist. To these English characteristics were added the perspectives of Irish nonconformity, with local bonds established through Academy, chapel, and political and doctrinal exchanges. Catholicism was the exception to this world view, and was to some extent a counterforce to it. Both English and Irish Catholics had known persecution. As much as liberals might like to forget this aspect of their history, Catholics would not let them. The gradual merging of Anglican and nonconformist culture in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a major factor in the creation of a British identity, as Irish, Scottish and Welsh nonconformity became allies of English Protestantism. The claims of Linda Colley in *Britons: Forging the Nation*, that British identity was constructed in response to the French threat is not borne out by my findings. Perhaps Colley's theory operates in the South of England, but in Lancashire it would seem that a British identity was formed out of northern and Irish Protestantism. This both

adds to other criticism of Colley's work and argues for a definition of Britishness which is paradoxically regionally formed and differentiated.⁽¹¹²⁾

Any study of ethnicity risks the accusation that insufficient attention has been paid to the central experiences of class and its political manifestations, that the promotion of ethnic identity as an explanatory device softens the hard edges of capitalist exploitation. But this need not be the case, and the inclusion here of the ideological battles between the municipal elite and those excluded from the benefits of municipal growth both widen the perspective on class conflict away from its preoccupation with the workplace and demonstrates how ethnicity, far from dwindling away under the impact of modernity and class, is itself formed and reformed through adaptation to different forms of class society. Ethnicity and class do not operate in straight lines, and are not tidy; they can converge and diverge in unexpected ways.

A largely unexplored aspect of this is Catholicism itself, which ought to be repositioned analytically from its vague image of an inward-looking and incongruous survival from pre-industrial societies to looking at how Catholicism dealt with the glaring class distinctions within its English branch, and at how local factors interplayed with global processes. Spencer's description of English Catholicism as comprising Irish numerical strength, English recusant continuity and the fresh blood of middle-class converts all had their parallels in Warrington. Modern Catholicism was a product of major nineteenth-century change in response to the demands of modernity which affected earlier forms of worship and social organisation. These had their own internal dynamic, but also had to contend with the pressures of anti-Catholicism, whether traditional Anglican, dissenter, liberal, rationalist, or Orange, all of which viewed Catholicism as

112. Keith Robbins, 'An Imperial and Multinational Polity, 1832-1922' in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.249-251.

uniquely illiberal compared to their own systems of belief and worship. Raphael Samuel was right to conclude that Catholicism in nineteenth century England had a “belligerent fidelity” with a “confessional and social reality which historians should study”.⁽¹¹³⁾

If attitudes to the Irish changed from the difficult post-famine years to the late nineteenth century, this has been seen as the result of the waning of Orange influence in popular politics and the success of the Irish in rooting themselves economically and socially in English society. Such a conclusion is itself a component of the view that English society really was as liberal and tolerant as it claimed to be. In fact, I would argue that taking the long view, the hundred and fifty years from the 1760s, local attitudes to the Irish showed remarkable continuity. Whilst the Irish might adopt the cultural practices common to the industrial poor, their religious faith and historical experiences marked them out as separate. The Irish held dissenting views on locality and Empire: the nature of their divergence is explored further in the final chapter.

113. Samuel, ‘Catholic Church’, pp.282,290.

CHAPTER TEN

THE WARRINGTON IRISH: FAMINE, MIGRATION AND EMPIRE

There has been a tendency in recent years to write Ireland into post-colonial and post-national theory.⁽¹⁾ Scrutiny by historians has qualified the idea of Ireland as a British colony, but has resulted in more positive and meticulous attempts to appraise Ireland's precise role in the British Empire. The complications inherent in trying to fit the Anglo-Irish relationship within an imperial-colonial frame is acknowledged early in Keith Jeffery's *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, when he writes that "some Irish nationalists came to see Empire as a liberating framework within which Irish autonomy might successfully be secured" whilst "more separatist colleagues made powerful common cause with other subject peoples and provided role models for militant nationalists throughout the British Empire."⁽²⁾ This judgement is brought home particularly by the relationship between Ireland and India. The Anglo-Irish aristocracy, with a surplus of sons to find employment for, trod a well-worn path to colonial governance in India; the Irish gentry and professional classes took a similar road.⁽³⁾ Amongst radicals also, there were links, as Home Rule agitation and the Indian National Congress Movement emerged from similar impulses in the 1880s. Alan O'Day's study of Parnellism in English politics suggests that nationalists had evolved a vision of Empire and their place within it which was built on a less aggressive imperialism consistent with

1. Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.200-204.
2. Keith Jeffery, 'Introduction' in Keith Jeffery, (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p.1.
3. T.G. Frazer, 'Ireland and India,' in Keith Jeffery, (ed.), *An Irish Empire?: aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp.77-93.

mainstream Liberal views.⁽⁴⁾

The emphasis on Parnell and the Parliamentary leadership of Irish nationalism suggests that there was no need to develop nationalist ideas within the field of popular politics on the mainland. Steven Fielding's recent study of the popular politics of the Irish immigrant community in Lancashire in the late nineteenth century also appears to assume that the Irish were indifferent to political developments in the Empire.⁽⁵⁾ There is therefore a need to investigate the effect of popular imperialism from the perspective of the Irish community which had developed in Warrington by the late nineteenth century, and to ask if they expressed a particular form of popular imperialism or anti-imperialism, and if so, whether Irishness, or migration, or other factors, shaped their response. My argument will be that the Irish did fashion a particular perspective on imperialism, one which resulted from their historical experience of famine.

The experience of migration also formed a particular Irish view. The Home Rule debate is well documented and described, but it usually reflects the political concerns and methods specific to high politics. That it was also a repository of some of the emotional longing that the Irish continued to feel for their country is clear from reports in Warrington's newspapers on local Home Rule meetings. The historiography of Home Rule stresses its value in delivering the Irish vote to the Liberal party in a straightforward political way.⁽⁶⁾ But Home Rule meetings in Warrington from the 1880s to 1905 articulated other concerns which affected the immigrants and allowed them to reflect upon their own position in the town, nation and Empire, articulating particular Irish experiences in each. Popular Home Rule was not silent on the subject of imperialism,

4. Alan O'Day, *The English Face of Irish Nationalism: Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1880-86* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977), pp.158-167.

5. Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).

6. D.G. Boyce, *The Irish Question and British politics, 1868-1996* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp.55-67.

nor was it uncritical of labour politics.

This chapter extends the themes developed in the previous chapter, in exploring how the local English history which was written by Beamont, Kendrick and others dealt with the problem of Irish history and Irish difference. Kendrick wrote about the United Irishmen, whilst Beamont wrote about Ireland itself from his observations on two tours which he made there in 1844 and 1845. In this chapter, I am concerned with how the Warrington Irish responded to local imperialism through the issues of famine and local philanthropy and migration. The chapter looks at the issue of famine as an imperial problem upon which the Irish were uniquely qualified to hold an opinion. Philanthropic efforts on behalf of India and Ireland's impoverished western districts became politicised partly through Home Rule discourse and partly through the international consciousness of Catholicism. The mobilisation of support for Home Rule also drew out popular responses to emigration which appear to be at odds with the prevailing view that Irish migrants to Lancashire and England did not express their feelings towards their migration in such emotional terms as their counterparts in America or Australia, nor see themselves as exiles, or as refugees from political or economic crisis, as American or Australian emigrants did.

As his tour came to an end, Beamont wrote again of the Irish poor, "I cannot help wondering to see the healthy and contented looks of the peasantry considering how hardly most of them live. Potatoes and salt without any other addition form their unvarying food." Seeing potatoes at Callan market, he was "almost of Cobbett's opinion that this root is a curse to Ireland." This entry, on August 28, 1845, was almost Beamont's last before leaving on his return journey to Warrington. As the potato crop came to harvest, an old peasant told Beamont how "by order of the Bishop, the people just now were

enjoined to beseech heaven for fair weather in order to ripen and gather in the harvest.”⁽⁷⁾

Within two weeks, the potato blight had arrived in Ireland.

FAMINE IN IRISH MEMORY

There is a contemporary view that Ireland’s unique experiences of famine in Europe have resulted in its having a particular sensitivity to Third World issues such as food shortage and refugees. If this is true, it is not a recent development, for the same claim could have been made in the nineteenth century. In Chapter Eight, the communal efforts which were put into raising famine relief funds for India suggested a humanitarian interest in Empire which stimulated all classes and political shades. The experience and memory of famine remained an important frame of reference for the Irish, and both in the persistence of food shortage, particularly in the West of Ireland, and in the continued incidence of famine in India, the Irish consciousness of famine was kept alive by the Catholic church and Irish political organisations.

As described in Chapter Eight, British popular opinion became gradually more aware of famine, and gradually more critical of government policies towards it. Popular fund-raising for famine victims allowed people to believe that empire had a humane and positive aspect to which they could contribute. The Irish experience of famine was useful, therefore, for what it taught to those who were concerned with the treatment and prevention of famine in the imperial context. And for Irish nationalists the persistent vulnerability of the West of Ireland to distress and food shortage, together with the popular memory of the potato famine, strengthened the demand for Home Rule.

Both of these aspects can be found in Warrington. Surgeon-Major William Curran, of the Army Medical Department of Warrington, had served in India, making a special

7. William Beamont Diaries: My Tour in Ireland, 1844-45, 28 August 1845. [WALS: MS291]

study of sunstroke cases in the British army, which was published in the *Army Medical Journal*.⁽⁸⁾ It is difficult to glean from his writings whether Curran had been born in Ireland, but raised in Warrington, or was Warrington-born of an Irish family. It is possible that he was serving in Ireland in 1880 when he published an article on famine in Ireland.⁽⁹⁾ Having become concerned that agricultural conditions in Ireland were worsening, and might again end in famine, Curran set out to study the diseases which accompanied famine, and his article was both a report on present knowledge and a call for further research. He himself was too young to remember the famine: “I was not of an age at this time to know anything of such matters, neither have I seen anything like them since.” His task was made the more difficult by his duties as a working doctor, for he required “books or reports of a special character which are quite beyond my reach. Men in my position can rarely expect to meet such papers”.⁽¹⁰⁾ Instead, he relied on written reports sent him from newspapers, correspondence with relief workers at the time the Irish famine struck and the personal memories of famine survivors, together with the Transactions of the Central Relief Committee, lamenting that “our hapless land affords peculiar opportunities for the prosecution of an inquiry of this kind.” He then compared the material which he collected with reports from the 1877 Madras famine. His article began with an account by Rev. Canon Bourke which had been published in America:

I myself saw strong men and women die of starvation;...I saw two men dead with grass in their mouths. Scenes like this were then very common. Many would not believe that such things occurred, but I saw them. I saw hundreds of children, from the age of two to twelve, with hair on their skinny arms and cheeks fully one inch long—a false

8. Surgeon-Major William Curran, *Sunstroke, As Seen in India* (London: McGowan's (Printers), 1880).

9. Surgeon-Major William Curran, *The Pathology of Starvation* (London: McGowan's (Printers), 1880).

10. Curran, *Starvation*, p.3.

growth caused by decay and hunger.⁽¹¹⁾

Curran was particularly intrigued by the detail of the growth of hair on children, and corresponded with Bourke on the point. But his main interest lay in outlining a morphology of famine fever, which he said had tainted every famine ship which left Ireland, and had caused as many deaths:

Mr Sullivan is equally emphatic in the same direction in his article 'The Black Forty-seven' in 'New Ireland', whereat, he expressly says that 'it was the fever which supervened on the famine that wrought the greatest slaughter and spread the greatest terror.' ... These books are, or ought to be, within the reach of every Irishman and the general fact is, moreover, not gainsaid.⁽¹²⁾

Curran took seriously the predictions that Ireland was again about to be visited by famine, and that the people remained in a wretched state and were consequently vulnerable: "in considering the state of Ireland, one must start with the hypothesis that the normal condition of a very large proportion of the people was one of starvation." And evidence from the great famine, and from Madras showed that it was this permanent state of malnutrition, not sudden food shortage, which caused deaths. This normal condition of starvation led to the degeneration of the digestive organs to such an extent that when a famine crisis occurred, a stage was quickly reached beyond which the renewal of food supplies made no difference; for if the starving were fed in the latter stages of degeneration, they would die: a full meal "kills them immediately". The accounts which he had read tend "to show that prevention is the best, indeed the only, remedy for this state of things, for food and physic are clearly unavailing when this change is fully established." Curran's answer was that charity should be forthcoming "at this time, in respect of the crisis contemplated in this essay." Curran warned that "famines are not

11. Curran, *Starvation*, p.1.

12. Curran, *Starvation*, p.10.

unfortunately the only phenomena through which history repeats itself in Ireland.”⁽¹³⁾
 (Coincidentally, Curran was a descendent of the liberal barrister, John Philpott-Curran, who became Master of the Rolls in Ireland, and who had gained his legal and political reputation in Dublin in defending most of the leaders of the United Irishmen, including Wolfe Tone, and was particularly remembered for the speech which he delivered at the trial of Archibald Hamilton Rowan. When William Beamont visited Ireland in 1842, he made a copy of the inscription to Philpott-Curran which he found in St. Patrick’s cathedral as a gift for his mother.)⁽¹⁴⁾

Curran’s writing is evidence that the issue of famine in Ireland, and the fear of it, did not end with the potato famine “for famine is again stalking with all its grim and ghastly accessories through extensive portions of our unhappy country”.⁽¹⁵⁾ Recent reappraisals of famine in Ireland have demonstrated that shortage of food persisted intermittently in the West of Ireland until the end of the nineteenth century. But there has been no suggestion that this made any impression on public opinion on the mainland. It is clear from what follows however that nationalists used the issue of ‘distress’ in Ireland to draw attention to rural poverty. A precursor to this form of mobilisation is mentioned in the local newspapers in 1887, when the Warrington Branch of the National League organised a St. Patrick’s Night Celebration on behalf of the Irish Evicted Tenants Fund.⁽¹⁶⁾ An event such as this was a celebration of Irishness, an excuse to wear the shamrock and best clothes and step out at a dance, combined with an opportunity to express grievances against the British government and Dublin Castle and to raise money for the poor of Ireland. There were worse ways to spend an evening.

13. Curran, *Starvation*, pp.3,7,9.

14. Correspondence and biographical notes relating to Robert Curran of Warrington. [WALSC: PS2262]

15. Curran, *Starvation*, p.2.

16. *Warrington Examiner*, 26 March 1887.

The combination of social event, church activity, political mobilisation and philanthropy was used for appeals for India and the West of Ireland, and allowed parallels to be drawn between the two. When famine struck in India, Catholics organised relief through their parishes. In 1877, the first special collection undertaken in the new St. Mary's church was organised for the Madras famine victims.⁽¹⁷⁾ In 1897, the Catholic Famine Fund for India was established, sending money to the Diocese from Warrington.⁽¹⁸⁾ Catholic fund-raising for the 1900 Indian famine was again in evidence. St. Mary's Amateur Dramatic Society, as noted in Chapter Eight performed an "ambitious" Grimaldi in the Parr Hall on behalf of the Town Fund for India, raising £98 in three nights, with demand for tickets so high that crowds were unable to gain entrance to the performances.⁽¹⁹⁾

In 1898 a similar Irish Distress Fund was arranged after reports of the deteriorating situation in the west of Ireland. Warrington Catholics and the Warrington branch of the Irish National League placed collection boxes on the streets "as in the Indian Famine Fund".⁽²⁰⁾ The Mayor, Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk involved themselves in the fund-raising, and public meetings were arranged. The Irish National League called a meeting to "organise the Irish in Warrington to help their starving countrymen at home," and then organised a ball in the Parr Hall. The meeting turned out to be controversial. It began with an account of the fund-raising, and an acknowledgement of the number of subscriptions "especially from Roman Catholics and the Irish in Warrington". There followed a discussion of "the chronic nature of poverty in rural Ireland". The Mayor attempted to halt unfavourable references to "politics and government failures", but with

17. Brian Plumb, *Our Glorious Chapter, The Story of St Mary's, Warrington. A centenary handbook, 1897-1997* (Liverpool: Kilburns (Printers), 1997), p.17.

18. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 December 1897.

19. *Warrington Guardian*, 26 May 1900.

20. *Warrington Guardian*, 29 January 1898.

little success. The meeting heard that “people were getting tired of these constant appeals for help in distressed cases,” and it carried a resolution calling on the government “to adopt measures to permanently relieve the distress of the poor in Ireland”, sending a copy to the Secretary of State for Ireland and the local MP.⁽²¹⁾ An editorial in the *Warrington Guardian* viewed the introduction of politics into the meeting as inopportune, but thought that nevertheless, Warrington had set a good example to the rest of the country.⁽²²⁾ The *Warrington Examiner* pointed out that the Liberal, Frederick Monks, had chaired the meeting, and that Manchester, not Dublin, had been the first to organise relief for Irish distress.⁽²³⁾ Whether it had been the conscious intention of nationalists to draw the parallels between Ireland and India, the fact that fund-raising for Ireland followed closely upon the Indian appeal made the analogy inevitable. The *Warrington Guardian* published the text of a sermon delivered by Father Cregan at St. Wilfred’s Catholic Church at Northwich:

They heard from their infancy that the duty of the government was to see to the safety of the people...but Ireland was governed by a narrow-minded clique from Dublin Castle who took little interest in the people...During the Victorian reign 900,000 people had perished with famine... [which] would never have occurred if Ireland had had the management of their own affairs. They found that in countries deprived of the liberty to govern they were liable to periodical visitations of famine. Witness India and the awful famine that had raged.⁽²⁴⁾

The *Warrington Examiner* on the other hand was annoyed that nationalists had apparently made the distress in Ireland a religious issue. Whilst acknowledging that Catholics, not Protestants were the victims of the distress in the west of Ireland, the *Examiner* asked

21. *Warrington Guardian*, 5, 8 January 1898.

22. *Warrington Guardian*, 8 January 1898.

23. *Warrington Examiner*, 12 February 1898.

24. *Warrington Guardian*, 12 January 1898.

why West Indian distress was not blamed on the religion of the landowners. The editor “deplored the easy conclusions on religion” which nationalists claimed.⁽²⁵⁾ It is worth noting that the *Examiner* was a Liberal newspaper, supporting the political groupings around Frederick Monks, William Hamilton Drummond and Arthur Crosfield, who were to provoke Catholic anger again in a few months by defending the Cromwell statue.

Nationalists hoped that Ireland would be treated within the Empire like Australia and Canada which had been granted self-government, but feared that it shared the fate of India and the poorer colonies. Settler colonies within the Empire were seen as models for Ireland’s future. As early as 1889, one meeting heard that Home Rule “advocated a separate Parliament for Ireland such as was enjoyed in Australia and Canada.”⁽²⁶⁾ At a large Home Rule meeting in the Parr Hall in 1905, Mr. C. Roddy described how Irishmen held positions of political power in Canada, Australia and South Africa: “The only place in which the Irishman was unable to rise into power was in the land of his birth. There all avenues were closed to him.”⁽²⁷⁾

At the same meeting, speakers noted the role of the Irish diaspora in overseeing Ireland’s welfare: “For generations past it had been the ambition of Irishmen in this country, in the colonies and in all parts of the world that before they died they might see Ireland prosperous”.⁽²⁸⁾ Unfortunately, that prosperity had still not arrived. Other meetings had argued that Irish poverty caused Irish migration: if Ireland governed itself, it would have sufficient wealth to maintain its population and the Irish now living in communities like Warrington could return to Ireland. A meeting of the Michael Davitt Runcorn Branch of the Irish National League, reported in the Warrington press, heard that

25. *Warrington Examiner*, 12 February 1898.

26. *Warrington Guardian*, 31 July 1889.

27. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

28. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

“There were thousands of Irishmen in this country who would prefer to live in their own land if there were any possible way of obtaining a livelihood in it.” But migration was the great fact of Irish politics; the meeting in 1905 was described as “a testimony to Irish emigration.”⁽²⁹⁾ These meetings strengthened the idea that the immigrant Irish believed themselves to have been driven from their homeland, to be in exile. One speaker described his feelings for the British flag, “a flag which no Irishman could love as it stood today for it represented to them the degradation of their race and their enslavement and the banishment of their people”, a phrase which drew loud applause from the audience.⁽³⁰⁾ But Cllr. Maginn brought them down to earth. “Most of them would now remain in England for the rest of their lives.”⁽³¹⁾

But the dream of return clearly stirred Home Rule activists and supporters. At a meeting in 1893, one speaker held out the hope that were Home Rule to come, “they would go to their native land, work at their various industries, leaving Englishmen to follow their employment in their own way.”⁽³²⁾ From comments made at these meetings, it is clear that the issue of their relationship with English workingmen remained a problem, which ideally, would be best solved by their return to Ireland. Failing that, Irish nationalists hoped that they and their English neighbours could begin to recognise a common interest and a common enemy. According to one speaker, “Irish workmen were dumped in England because of Irish poverty, and he hoped they would discuss these causes with their fellow workmen.”⁽³³⁾ By 1905, Home Rule supporters in Warrington were drawing together calls for a new relationship between English and Irish working class:

29. *Warrington Guardian*, 21 January 1893; *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

30. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

31. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

32. *Warrington Guardian*, 21 January 1893.

33. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

The English workingman had an eternal hatred or apathy to what was happening in Ireland, and still taunted the Irish that they were not as intelligent, but they were now seeing the English workingman beginning to see that in the House of Commons they must be represented by their own class.⁽³⁴⁾

Councillor Maginn reiterated the argument:

Englishmen were waking up to the fact that their interests and those of Irish working people were bound together and that their representation in Parliament should be a representation of the people and not of the millionaires.⁽³⁵⁾

Councillor Maginn was infuriated by the Tory Bill on the Redistribution of Seats which would reduce the number of Irish constituencies by forty, asking:

Were these his words when the Tories wanted Irish soldiers in the last war? Colonial troops were paid five shillings a day, the Irish one shilling a day.⁽³⁶⁾

With the references to banishment, the eternal hatred or apathy of the English, and the hope of eventual return, a picture emerges of an Irish community (or at least significant sections of it) which for all its economic, religious and cultural roots in the town, still felt ambivalence about England. The rhetoric adopted in these meetings suggests that the immigrant Irish in mainland Britain settled more slowly and reluctantly than is usually thought to have been the case. Historians such as Ó Tuathaigh have speculated that the Irish in Britain retained a sense of exile and an ambivalent attitude to their host society.⁽³⁷⁾ Perhaps distance played no part in the migrant psychology, and the sense of exile was as potent in Lancashire as in America. If this was the case (and a

34. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

35. *Warrington Examiner*, 30 September 1905.

36. *Warrington Guardian*, 15 April 1905.

37. M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth century Britain: Problems of integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), p.159.

much broader study on this particular focus of popular Home Rule rhetoric is required) then this has an impact on the development of class politics in England, suggesting that events in Ireland, not England, helped determine the thinking of significant sectors of the industrial working class.

Clearly at local level, by the early years of the twentieth century, mainland Irish nationalism was responding to (and sometimes presaging) ideological changes in class politics and shifts in imperial policy. Its potential as a popular movement with valuable roots in British radical politics requires further analysis. When David Lloyd George spoke out against the Boer War in January 1900, he was able to take opportunities which the Home Rule movement had opened for radical imperialism. The full text of his speech, delivered partly in Welsh and partly in English, was published in the *Warrington Guardian*. Lloyd George began by setting out a Welsh position on Empire, which he said, was an “entirely different attitude to Ireland”. The Irish attitude to the British government was hostile, and he “was not prepared to say it was an unjustifiable one”. The Welsh objected to the monopoly of the Empire by one nation, England. “But Empire was not imperialism, that was a heresy of Disraeli. Patriotism and imperialism were essentially different. The first was the love of one’s own land, the second, a lust for other people’s land.” He then set out his view on the implications of imperialism for the relationship between the nations comprising Britain:

The danger of imperialism for Wales was that it retarded its national progress. It first led to power in England being decided by foreign not domestic issues, second, it required a complete military system to uphold it, and this meant national ruin. New imperialism meant ruin, despotism, the death of right and freedom. So long as New Imperialism held sway, Welsh reforms must suffer. The only remedy was a large measure of self-government. If England was going to insist on electing statesmen to govern the country simply and purely from the imperialist point of view, it behoved Wales and Scotland and Ireland to press more

urgently for the right to manage their own concerns. Though Wales owed a duty to the Empire it should give right direction to policy by insisting on tenderness towards the weak and fairness to all nations. That was not the policy of late in England.⁽³⁸⁾

Lloyd George was reiterating arguments which were the common currency of the radical Liberal tradition from which he had grown, arguments often heard from Home Rule nationalists. In 1889, the Parnell branch of the Altrincham Irish National League, in a meeting reported in the *Warrington Guardian*, was told that

in the various nationalities that made up a great empire, those who most brought true unity would not be those who tried to crush and extinguish the feelings of nationality, but those who would rather cherish and encourage it.⁽³⁹⁾

But in opposition to this approach stood those imperialists who saw Ireland as indispensable to their ideas about Britain and Empire. Warrington's strong tradition of Orange politics was not damaged by the victory of Arthur Crosfield in 1906. Ireland was a significant issue in the General Elections in 1910. Crosfield was defeated by the Unionist candidate, Harold Smith, in the second election in that year. (In the Carson Review of the 'Protestant Army' in 1914, Carson's assistant was F.E. Smith, the brother of Warrington's MP.) Both Sir Edward Carson and F.E. Smith visited the Parr Hall at the height of the Home Rule crisis. Their speeches made the "audience almost delirious with enthusiasm": a torchlight procession was made through the town, headed by the Band of the Young Unionists. Button badges were worn carrying the Union Jack with 'Support Loyal Ulster' printed around it.⁽⁴⁰⁾

38. *Warrington Guardian*, 13 January 1900.

39. *Warrington Guardian*, 14 August 1889.

40. Francis O. Stansfield, *Early Life of an Old Warringtonian* (Warrington: W. Williams, Gregson & Co., 1969), pp.75-6.

CROMWELL'S STATUE

The Home Rule movement and the politics of Empire absorbed most of the energies of radicals and nationalists. What follows provides an illustration of how the opposing interpretations of history of English radicals and Irish nationalists continued to lead to tensions between the English and Irish in Warrington. Tensions were stirred following the council's decision to accept the gift of a statue of Oliver Cromwell, to be erected in the town for the tercentenary of his birth. Cromwell's connection to Warrington was slight, amounting to a short visit during the Civil War when he had stopped by for three days to write letters to Parliament after defeating the Scots at Warrington Bridge. Cromwell was nevertheless a Liberal hero to Frederick Monks, local industrialist and town councillor, who offered to buy the statue, asking only that the council formally accept it and approve a site for its location. The council did so, choosing a site overlooking the bridge, with only two councillors voting against the plan. But this action caused a long political controversy between those who subscribed to a Cromwellian version of history, and Warrington's Catholic Irish.⁽⁴¹⁾

During the Council debate, the Liberal Alderman Henry Roberts had proclaimed Cromwell a hero, the founder of the modern English state: "he placed upon foundation that were irremovable the liberties of the people of this country, civil and religious."⁽⁴²⁾ Roberts claimed that respect for the English monarchy, for English laws, its army and naval strength were all due to Cromwell's success in ridding the country of arbitrary rule, and replacing it with the constitutional framework for England's domestic and imperial institutions. But the Catholic Irish did not see Cromwell in heroic terms, citing particularly his actions in the massacres of civilian populations in Drogheda and Wexford. The two councillors who had opposed the statue, Councillor Dr Cannell and

41. *Warrington Examiner*, 11 February, 4 March 1899; *Warrington Observer*, 11 February 1899.

42. *Warrington Observer*, 11 February 1899.

Alderman Hutchinson described Cromwell as “a diabolical scoundrel” and “an absolute murderer” of over 3,000 people, and protested that the suggestion that the town honour such a man would be “an insult to three fourths of the people of Warrington.”⁽⁴³⁾

Within three weeks, a deputation of Catholic clergy, consisting of Frs. Whittle, Wilson and McGrath, presented the Mayor with a formal appeal arguing that the council’s decision should be reversed. Two thousand and twenty one Catholics had signed a petition presented to the mayor, which stated:

we should regard the erection of the statue only as an outrage on our feelings, calculated to awaken anew and to perpetuate in our minds the bitter remembrances of the wrongs wrought by Cromwell, a remembrance which all his greatness and the lapse of two hundred and fifty years have not been able to efface.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Essentially, there was no difference of opinion between the two camps concerning Cromwell’s record in Ireland. Alderman Roberts, in welcoming the statue admitted that “he knew that Cromwell did certain things which he (the speaker) would be glad to wipe out of the history of the country altogether. He should be glad to wipe out Cromwell’s action in regard to his Irish campaign.” And the *Warrington Observer* commented in its editorial: “we take it in that accepting the statue, the Council are not endorsing in any way the acts of Cromwell or even doing homage to his memory.” Most people, the editor thought, would find fault with much that Cromwell did but, nonetheless, Cromwell should be honoured for the good that he had done.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The issue was not what Cromwell had done; it was history as celebration or history as memory. The Catholics were accused of harbouring “worn-out prejudices” and of not

43. *Warrington Examiner*, 11 February 1899.

44. *Warrington Examiner*, 5 March 1899.

45. *Warrington Observer*, 11 February 1899.

adopting “a real study of history.”⁽⁴⁶⁾ The Cromwellians on the other hand saw themselves as progressives who had the capacity to acknowledge historical error, thus retaining a balanced view of history, whilst celebrating their place in the grand liberal narrative. The English had history, the Irish had prejudice.

This Cromwellian group, made up of the more radical Liberals and Nonconformists occupied a political space close to the Catholic Irish. Frederick Monks had campaigned in the previous year on behalf of the West of Ireland Distress Fund. Alderman Roberts had taken part in the “Indignation meeting against the treatment of W. O’Brien and the Irish Political Prisoners”.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Warrington’s Unionists and Orange Lodges did not become involved in the statue controversy.

Liberals, whilst publicly, and sincerely supporting the nationalist cause were nevertheless reluctant to concede that their image of England, of its religious tolerance, humanitarianism and progressive policies was only sustainable if the nationalist case was argued away. Alderman Hutchinson was entirely suspicious of Monks’s motives in donating the statue to the town. He argued that the statue was not simply a historical monument but an ideological symbol, claiming that “the movement in connection with the statue was political and he opposed it, tooth and nail.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

The Warrington statue was one of three which were proposed as memorials for the tercentenary. A public subscription was opened in Huntingdon, Cromwell’s birthplace, but was closed when insufficient funds were collected. The proposal to place a statue in Westminster Hall Gardens triggered similar responses in the House of Commons to those heard in Warrington. One nationalist asked “whether there is any precedent for granting a site in the vicinity of this House for the erection of a statue to a murderer?” Another MP

46. *Warrington Observer*, 11 February 1899.

47. *Warrington Examiner*, 9 February 1889.

48. *Warrington Observer*, 11 February 1899.

welcomed the statue, but suggested it be erected in the nearest gaol, which was where Cromwell belonged.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The minister at Cairo Street Chapel, William Hamilton Drummond, the product of Belfast Presbyterianism and English nonconformity, delivered a sermon on the Cromwell tercentenary in Warrington in May 1899, a sermon which was reprinted in the local press and in which he asked whether Cromwell's religious policy had really been "marked by an absence of toleration, if not by arbitrary harshness?" Referring to Irish suspicion of Cromwell, Drummond claimed that

That was an opinion founded on prejudice and hearsay and not upon a real study of history. The history of English religion for the last two hundred years had born upon it the impress of principles which the Great Protector first clothed with reality for the English mind.⁽⁵⁰⁾

But to the Catholic Irish, Cromwell's religious intolerance was precisely the point, and was a matter of historical record. Despite their protests, Warrington's statue, ten feet high and weighing two tons, was finally cemented into place in August 1899.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has extended some of the themes—of local identity and its components, of popular memory and history, of political legitimacy through historical narrative—that were established in the previous chapter. The English historical view that was developed by the local middle class stressed Irish disloyalty, whilst the Irish view of their history was of persecution, famine, poverty and powerlessness.

Neither chapter has been a systematic inquiry into relations between the English and Irish working-class. Even if such distinctions were rigidly sustainable by the late-

49. *Warrington Examiner*, 4 March 1899.

50. *Warrington Examiner*, 6 May 1899.

nineteenth-century, the fragmented character of work in Warrington and the relatively poor level of working-class organisation would make such a study difficult. However, the emphasis that is placed here on the role of the local middle class in negotiating how the Irish were treated in municipal politics and municipal culture and in their claims for municipal services is no less important in attempting to piece together evidence of the Irish experience at local level. Some anecdotal evidence here suggests that there remained a distance between the English and Irish working class. Councillor Maginn's comments and the general sense that English workers could not or would not comprehend Irish grievance are all that can be gleaned here, and need to be treated carefully. My guess would be that Home Rule archives would produce more concrete answers to questions about Irish and English class relations and popular politics, and may open out important questions about grass-roots opinion on imperial matters also. In particular, the Irish challenge to the British self-image of tolerance and liberal institutions may have played a role in cross-fermenting socialist and radical ideas about institutional reform. For instance, as a speaker in a meeting of the Irish National League in Widnes suggested, it was "useless to say that England owed its position to its institutions: it would have grown much quicker if they had had no House of Lords, Royal Family and Established Church."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Irish sought to challenge the myth of liberal England which sustained so much of the political and cultural rhetoric of nineteenth-century Britain. Those who researched and broadcast the local histories that are here outlined also controlled the political system which determined actual conditions. Their stories of the town's heritage had corollaries in real economic and social forces and manifestations. For the Irish, their history also explained their world to them, and their place in it: Owen Devin and the lack of

51. *Warrington Guardian*, 31 July 1889.

democracy, an arbitrary police force and other manifestations of municipal discrimination and corruption, indifference to poverty and suffering linked to Orange politics through the brewing interest, and then a two-ton statue of Cromwell, plonked in the middle of the town.

These competing interpretations were played out in an imperial context: in the last few years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, local historians celebrating the centenary of the Volunteers retold the story of the Battle of Bridge Street at the same time that Volunteers were being sent to South Africa to serve in the Boer War. The South Lancashire Regiment included Warrington's Irish Catholics among its ranks.⁽⁵²⁾ Their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel McCarthy O'Leary, killed at Spion Kop, was an Irish Catholic and an impressive Requiem mass was held for him at St. Mary's, Buttermarket St.. Philanthropic efforts for India overlapped with renewed awareness of distress in the West of Ireland and memories of the famine in Ireland. Nationalists dreamed of a return to a prosperous Ireland which governed itself at the same time that they built their new churches. Local families retained memories of their connections to Ireland: the architect of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Latchford was Robert Curran, another of John Philpott-Curran's Warrington descendants.⁽⁵³⁾

I began this analysis of the Irish in Warrington by questioning the underlying assumptions which have often restricted the ability to understand the immigrant experience, assumptions which have concentrated on assimilation into a 'host' society. This approach has been particularly influential in the context of the Irish in Britain, partly because the migrants have been thought to have quickly adopted a 'modern' class outlook, and to have rejected overt anti-Britishness more quickly than their counterparts

52. *Warrington Observer*, 28 April 1900.

53. Correspondence and biographical notes relating to Robert Curran of Warrington. [WAL.SC: PS2262]

in America, Australia and Ireland itself. Instead, the Irish in Britain are considered to have been a relative success story, evidence that British tolerance was not a myth. These ideas have been constructed from images of British towns and cities as relatively enclosed and self-contained. My approach has instead focused upon the connections between the town and the outside world, upon travel, migration, and global political issues. The many local connections to Ireland described here can be used to argue that whilst the building of communities was important, the maintenance of networks was equally so. Both communal solidarity and networks were bound by a shared historical past which suggests that migrants and their children retained a capacity to think Irish whilst at the same time contributing to community development through parish and politics.

CONCLUSION

Warrington is one of the oldest towns in the country, and has passed through Britain's historical stages roughly in time with the rest of the nation. This study has been concerned with the town in the modern era, in particular with the charting of the self-conscious development of local pride as a factor in political life. It has taken the widest possible perspective on what constituted the components of local pride, and has identified three processes at work. Firstly, the town provided its own internal dynamic to change, in the disappearance of the traditional forms of social relations and the emergence of a new middle class with pretensions to social leadership built on willingness and ability to uphold the values of public service, now invested in the new municipal institutions. This, at least, was the language in which the political activism of this class was expressed. Secondly, the changes which brought this class to political prominence were paralleled by the writing of a local history which in part located the townspeople in great national events and processes, but also aimed to cement the particular ideological vision of this elite group and their kind. Thirdly, local-imperial links developed with the town, providing further cause for the expression of local pride. Warrington was a very tiny dot on the imperial map, yet it played a role in all of the major impulses which propelled imperialism outwards: economic, military, demographic, missionary, humanitarian. In so doing, a particular set of municipal values were advanced and the claims of civic leadership enhanced. The network of relationships which the local area sustained with other parts of the Empire were as important as the growth of community politics and culture to the building of a sense of local pride, but the role of such networks in local history have received little attention from historians.

By the end of the nineteenth century, this local pride had become more than the

simple correlative of municipal advance; it now became the concept of local patriotism and local imperialism, linking community to nation and empire. Community values were put at the centre of the enthusiasm for Empire, particularly amongst those who were not motivated by the more aggressive forms of imperial policy. The moral framework of Empire developed this local dimension in three areas: the regional contribution of Lancashire in ending slavery, the local recruitment of soldiers who saw colonial service, and the application of civic philanthropy for imperial purposes. Local imperialism became politicised after the Boer War, when it was used as part of a coalition of ideas to reposition and rebuild liberal political principles, and was promoted as a counterforce to the imperialism of the millionaires of the City of London who stood accused of waging war for private profit. Local community values were held up against the motives of the shareholding rich, who were now deemed to be unpatriotic and whose imperialist motives were labelled as both dangerous and vulgar. As a result popular politics shifted, and the moral ground was reclaimed for liberalism. The immediate outcome of this was the defeat of the Conservative and Unionist government, but in the medium term, the shift advanced the arguments of radicals. Perhaps it was not a coincidence that the name associated most closely with this movement, J.A. Hobson, wrote for the *Manchester Guardian*.

The intention throughout this study has been to value local detail and experience, and to set out why these local details continued to matter even as advances in transport and communications seemed to bring the rest of the country and the rest of the world nearer. Local identity was not subsumed beneath national or imperial loyalties, although the interplay between the three levels was complex. The local provided its own dynamic and built its own networks, not without reference to regional and national trends, but not in rigid uniformity with them either. Nothing illuminates this better than the impact of

Irish residents in Warrington, whose religious, political and historical beliefs contributed, not always comfortably, to the debates on nation and empire.

This raises the question which the writers of local history are expected to answer: from the national perspective, was the area studied typical or exceptional? My introductory chapters set out that the aim of this local study has not been to enable conclusions to be read off from the smaller to the larger scale, but to suggest some ways in which the local maintained an autonomy within national culture and politics. Allowing a town or group of towns to represent the nation may only work at the cost of minimising this local autonomy and identity. All towns are in some ways both part of a general pattern and unique to themselves. Warrington's development followed paths which were in some ways typical of Lancashire, in its social changes, for instance, but untypical of Lancashire in its lower rate of factory production compared to neighbouring cotton towns, and so more fitting to the national than the prevailing regional pattern. Typicality and uniqueness could operate in strange ways. Warrington was unique in its having the Warrington Academy, but the evidence suggests that its effect was perverse: in the case of the library, for instance, the cultural elite claimed an Academy heritage for the municipal library, but maintained an iron grip on control in order that middle-class access, funded from the rates, would not be disturbed. The Academy in this sense held back the growth of popular literacy.

Nonetheless, the Academy and the Eyre's Press attracted a number of intellectuals to the town and provided a seedbed for radical ideas and subsequent careers. But the growth of a radical culture was not unique to Warrington in the late eighteenth century, and Warrington departed from the national pattern only in respect of the higher numbers of radicals involved and their subsequent (selective) demonisation. Timing differed, too, for Warrington's Academy radicals were roughly a generation ahead of national trends,

evidence that in trying to fit local into national outlines, chronology also needs to be explained: it is not always what happened but when it happened that enlightens the historical process.

The issue of typicality is not therefore straightforward, and depends on perspective. When Beamont and Kendrick and others began to write the history of Warrington in the nineteenth century, they took for granted that it was their job to illustrate Warrington's contribution to national success as well as describing local singularities and peculiarities. No town wants only to be typical; it also wants to be different. Local identity is made up of the singular, the special and the ordinary.

The emotional pull of the ordinary and the special which characterises local identity would be just a matter for cultural specialists were it not for two further implications. Firstly, localisation had political significance even as the span of state power grew. The strength of local loyalty was used by the military, and municipal structures were used in all manner of social legislation. Secondly, the local perspective has allowed a number of sources to be exploited; uncharted anti-slavery networks, the production of local history, letters from soldiers in the Boer War, Irish popular politics, which could be extended to shed new light on social history debates.

My final comments concern the subject of class and its political significance. The development of local consciousness and municipal loyalties was part of the class dynamic as urban society developed. In Warrington, as in the rest of the country, manorial systems of control and social cohesion and the ancient families who sustained them were disintegrating by the eighteenth century, to be replaced by a new middle-class, parvenues of the gentry, shop and trade, and professions, who cemented their local power through municipal institutions, forging political alliances with the older families and forming a broad coalition of interests with the town's major employers. In Warrington's case, the

writing of local history and the control of cultural provision facilitated these changes, whilst the rhetoric of municipal progress disguised the exclusions and corrupt practices which were the real political conditions in the town. The disguise was, however, thin to working-class political activists who mounted sporadic, sometimes successful challenges. Demands for accountability and access were heard throughout this period and show that, in this sense, municipal politics was an accurate indicator of the mood of popular politics in the nineteenth century.

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