

**CULTURE AND COMMERCE: Liverpool's merchant elite c.1790-1850**

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Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy



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## Notes on Sources

The Liverpool Record Office and the University of Liverpool were the main sources for material. The *Holt and Gregson Collection* is extensive and useful for information on eighteenth-century Liverpool. The *Roscoe letters and papers* letters, although well trawled, are important not only for shedding light on William Roscoe but on the wider cultural and political arena.

Minute books and annual reports were the most useful source for the societies, with the exception of the Liverpool Philomathic Society, most of whose early records have been lost. Subscription lists proved variable, often giving names but no addresses.

Many of the records of the Liverpool Royal Institution were lost in the bombing of 1941, making a full account difficult. However, much information is to be found in the annual reports and resolutions.

The *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* are a rich vein of information for anyone interested in the history of Liverpool.

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>BAAS</b>	<b>British Association for the Advancement of Science</b>
<b>L.R.O.</b>	<b>Liverpool Record Office</b>
<b>Lit. and Phil.</b>	<b>Literary and Philosophical Society</b>
<b>O.U.P.</b>	<b>Oxford University Press</b>
<b>S.J.L.</b>	<b>Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool</b>
<b>T.H.S.L.C.</b>	<b>Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire</b>
<b><i>T.U.H.S.</i></b>	<b>Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society</b>

## Introduction

*Time was when 'gentleman' was looked upon as a title inherently belonging to Liverpool men.<sup>1</sup>*

Recent years have seen something of a growth in studies of the English middle classes. A major factor in this upsurge of interest has been the development of approaches seeking to explain the perceived crisis of British capitalism. Much ink has been expended on this theme, which, originating in the 1960s with the 'New Left' critique of Anderson and Nairn, was revived by historians such as Martin Wiener and W.D.Rubinstein in the Thatcher years.<sup>2</sup> Although sharply differentiated in terms of aims and assumptions, they nevertheless share the same pervasive themes - the failure of the middle classes to recognise their hegemonic potential, that England remained dominated by the *noblesse oblige* of aristocracy and Eton, and the calamitous effects this had on the state of the British economy and society.<sup>3</sup>

Cain and Hopkins, on the other hand, argue that gentlemanly capitalism

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<sup>1</sup>The Roscoe Magazine, 1st March 1849, p.13

<sup>2</sup>P.Anderson, 'Origins of the present crisis', *New Left Review*, 23, (1964); T.Nairn, 'The British political elite', *New Left Review*, 23,(1964); M.Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*, (Cambridge, 1981); W.D.Rubinstein, 'Wealth, elites and the class structure of Britain', *Past and Present*, 76, (1977).

<sup>3</sup>Simon Gunn, 'The "failure" of the Victorian Middle Class; a critique', in Janet Wolff and John Seed (eds.), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and The Nineteenth Century Middle Class*, (Manchester, 1988), p.18.



emerged not as a response to industrialisation but as a result of an alliance formed in the eighteenth century between the landed elite, and the city and southern investors to further the cause of British overseas expansion.<sup>4</sup> W.D.Rubinstein asserts that contrary to the idea of Britain as the workshop of the world, it was never fundamentally an industrial or manufacturing economy at all but always essentially a commercial, financial and service based one, centred in and around the metropolis.<sup>5</sup> This division between the commercial south and the industrial north, it is suggested, manifested itself not only in source of income but also in terms of attitude and behaviour.

Both these approaches have stimulated much lively debate on the 'making' of the British middle class<sup>6</sup> and they have been accompanied by a number of important empirical studies which have been concerned not only with the economic and political agenda but which have emphasised the importance of cultural forms and practices in the creation of an élite.<sup>7</sup> Efforts to redress the perceived image of a philistine industrial middle class and challenge this

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<sup>4</sup>P.J.Cain and A.G.Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas; 1. The Old Colonial System 1688-1850', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 39, 4, (1986), pp.501-525.

<sup>5</sup>W.D.Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain*, (London, 1993).

<sup>6</sup>See for example M.J.Daunton, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism" and British Industry 1820-1914', *Past and Present*, 122, (1989), pp.119-158, and Daunton's exchange with W.D.Rubinstein, 'Debate; Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Industry 1820-1814', *Past and Present*, 132 (1991), pp.151-187; and most recently 'Aspects of the History of the British Middle Class c.1750 to the Present'. A Conference held at Manchester Metropolitan University, 12-13 September 1996.

<sup>7</sup>See for example, Theodore Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge, 1990); R.J.Morris, *Class, Sect and Party. The Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds 1820-1850*, (Manchester, 1990); Janet Wolff and John Seed (eds.), *The Culture of Capital*. John Seed, 'Unitarianism, political economy and the antinomies of liberal culture in Manchester, 1830-1850', *Social History*, 7,1, (January, 1982), pp.1-25.

distinction between industrial and commercial England have seen a great deal of this attention focus on the north. Liverpool, whose prosperity was founded on commerce rather than manufacturing has been seen as atypical and its cultural forms and practices have featured little in this work.<sup>8</sup>

However, Liverpool, it could be argued, has the classic credentials to fulfil a role in treatises that assert the primacy of commercial enterprise over spinning and smelting in England's rise to pre-eminence. Yet, as John Belchem points out, for Cain and Hopkins 'gentlemanly capitalism seems not to have extended beyond the City of London and the Home Counties' and Liverpool, once again, is rendered exceptional, this time not by the source of her wealth but by her geographical location.<sup>9</sup> With the idea of two middle classes increasingly being deemed too simplistic and unsatisfactory,<sup>10</sup> a study of the culture of Liverpool, may well serve to emphasise that the middle class was 'made' in many different ways and in a variety of different contexts.

Liverpool's rise from an insignificant seaport at the start of the eighteenth-century to a position at its close where the town was vaunting its position as

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<sup>8</sup>Certain themes have been addressed but these have mainly concentrated on economic issues and the political and sectarian divisions within the city, for example, P.J.Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism; A political and social history of Liverpool 1868-1839*, (Liverpool, 1981); Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914*, (Manchester, 1988); John Belchem (ed.), *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool history 1790-1940*, (Liverpool, 1992).

<sup>9</sup>John Belchem, 'Second Metropolis: the Middle Class in Liverpool c.1780-1914', unpubl. paper, read 12 September 1996, Manchester Metropolitan University.

<sup>10</sup>This point was well argued by Robert Gray, 'Professionalism, Cultural Networks and the Middle Class in Industrial Towns, c.1830-1860', unpubl. paper, read 12 September, 1996, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Britain's second city, could well be described as meteoric. For most of this period, the first line of self-definition for the newly-rich merchants was through material possessions, conspicuous consumption and spatial separation from their fellow townsmen. However, out of increased wealth grew increased civic pride. Identifying its wealth firmly with commerce rather than manufacturing, Liverpool's merchant classes began to define themselves against industrial Manchester, while turning envious eyes towards the metropolis. The cultural development of Liverpool was to bear the mark of this ambition from the last years of the century onwards.

After a survey of the background to, and origins of, Liverpool's self-transformation of cultural identity, the attention of the thesis focuses on the remarkable figure of William Roscoe, who, for almost half a century, was a consistent and continuing factor in the evolution of Liverpool's intellectual life. Finding his inspiration in the glories of Renaissance Florence, Roscoe sought to remake Liverpool in its image and in doing so, became the embodiment of Liverpool's cultural aspirations for a generation and beyond.

Central to Roscoe's thinking was the creation of institutions, societies and academies both to promote the arts and to create a new generation of scholar-businessmen.<sup>11</sup> The central part of the thesis explores their role, not only in providing a public platform for cultural activities which would bring much

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<sup>11</sup>The Liverpool Royal Institution School which was created to this end, is discussed in Chapter 3.

coveted outside recognition to the town but also in forging a shared sense of consciousness amongst, and directing the collective will of, an otherwise diverse section of Liverpool's society. The importance of these cultural forms as key factors in the 'making' of the middle class are being given increasing recognition.<sup>12</sup> In looking at the emphasis and effectiveness of the Liverpool organisations this thesis aims to make a contribution to this wider debate.

Chapter five explores the importance of visual representation in the form of art exhibitions and architecture. Finally, conscious that in concentrating on intellectual and artistic activity 'culture' has been used in its narrowest sense, the thesis concludes by looking at the involvement of the élite in the more social arts of music and the theatre and their role in helping to legitimise the status of Liverpool's aspiring gentlemen.

Early signs of a cultural separation between Manchester's men and Liverpool gentlemen were perceived by William Hazlitt, who experienced life in Liverpool society during the 1790s. Although he professed little liking for either town, on balance he claimed to prefer Manchester over Liverpool, for in the former:-

**you are oppressed only by the aristocracy of wealth; in the latter by the aristocracy of wealth and letters by turns. You could not help feeling that some of their great men were authors among merchants and merchants among authors. Their bread was buttered on both sides and they had you at a disadvantage either**

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<sup>12</sup>See in particular, Robert Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*; Dror Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 17, (1992), pp.43-72.

way.<sup>13</sup>

Whether fact or myth this image was to prove enduring. In 1853, for example, an article on 'Manchester by a Manchester Man', referred to 'the old stage-coachman who gravely described his "insides" as "a Liverpool gentleman, a Manchester man, a Bolton chap, and a Wigan fellow"'.<sup>14</sup> Numerous other such examples can be cited. In looking at Liverpool's cultural identity, this thesis is not concerned to explore the reality of this image but to examine the cultural forms and practices with which it was constructed.

Inevitably, I am aware more of what has been omitted in my research than what has been included. The first half of the nineteenth-century was an age of societies - 'societies to inform, reform, propagate, restrict, convert, establish, oppose, encourage, and improve'.<sup>15</sup> This thesis has confined itself to looking only at those of a cultural nature. Gender, which has been shown to play an important role in the construction of middle class identity has also not featured to any extent.<sup>16</sup> However, in justification, I would plead that Liverpool's learned societies were very much a men-only affair during the first half of the nineteenth-century and in some cases well beyond this date. The professional

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted in P.J.Waller, pp.113-114. Similar cultural differences had been noted even earlier, by the singer and composer Charles Dibdin, only this time the preference was firmly in Liverpool's favour. See Chapter 6, p.221.

<sup>14</sup>Donald Read, 'Review Article; Manchester Men and Liverpool Gentlemen', *Northern History*, 7, (1972). This is just one of a number of such quotes that I have collected.

<sup>15</sup>Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of Provincial Art; Art, Patrons, and Institutions outside London, 1800-1830*, (Oxford, 1974), p.9.

<sup>16</sup>The key text here is Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London, 1987)

men, on the other hand, who were very much involved in these organisations have also received little consideration, but as Harold Perkin points out, during the first part of the century they could be quite readily be fitted within the entrepreneurial ideal and in many cases differed little in basic outlook from the businessmen they lived and worked amongst.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, I am conscious of having interchanged terms such as middle class, elite, local aristocracy and wealthy citizens. All, I would argue, are applicable to Liverpool's merchant community. For while in the national context they belonged more to the middle ranks of society, in the local context they were seeking to establish themselves as the new commercial aristocracy.

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<sup>17</sup>Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (London, 1969), p.428.

## **Chapter 1:- Setting the Scene: Economic Rise and Cultural Beginnings.**

*On the floating wings of commerce, the inhabitants have extended their intercourse with the world, which has enlightened their ideas and given them not only the pride of imitation, but the ambition of equality.*<sup>1</sup>

Eighteenth century Liverpool was a town of recent and remarkable growth. Although granted borough status by King John in 1207, in recognition of its strategic importance in relation to Ireland,<sup>2</sup> Liverpool had 'remained a small and relatively unimportant outport' until about 1660.<sup>3</sup> Up to the reign of Elizabeth, the chief occupations of the inhabitants of Liverpool (estimated at this time at about 500) were agriculture and fishing, and even in the sixteenth century only a small number of ships could be claimed as merchant ships.<sup>4</sup> Its geographical position, poor communications and an undeveloped hinterland all conspired to hamper Liverpool's economic growth. What trade there was in the north-west tended to be concentrated at Chester which was designated as the principal head-port of the region.<sup>5</sup> However, from the fifteenth century onwards, Chester

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<sup>1</sup>James Wallace, *A General and Descriptive History of the Antient and Present State of the Town of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1795), p.191.

<sup>2</sup>J.Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, (London, 1907), p.16, claims Chester was 'too much under the control of its powerful and independent Earl'. However, C.Northcote Parkinson, *The Rise of the Port of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1952), pp.10-11, notes the granting of three charters to Chester between 1189 and 1201, implying a general approval of the port and that John may have sought an additional rather than an alternative embarkation point.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in D.J.Pope, *Shipping and Trade in the Port of Liverpool 1783-1793*, unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Liverpool, 2 vols. 1970, ii, p.1.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey; the development of a port 1700-1970*, (Newton Abbot, 1971), pp.1-2. In his *Essay Towards the History of Liverpool*, (Warrington, 1773), p.11, William Enfield states that in 1565, 'there were in Liverpool only 138 householders and cottagers'. A rate levied on the inhabitants showed only seven streets were inhabited. In 1558, the town's inhabitants owned 13 vessels, in 1572, 16. Pope, p.5.

<sup>5</sup>Not only the havens and creeks of Lancashire and Cheshire were subordinated to Chester, but also those along the whole coast of North Wales. Liverpool finally gained recognition as a  
(continued...)

was faced with the recurring problem of the silting of the River Dee which made it difficult for vessels to reach the port. Chester's ill-luck was Liverpool's good fortune, for despite attempts to improve navigation of the river, this proved a factor in Chester's decline and the diversion of much of its trade, particularly its Irish trade, to Liverpool.<sup>6</sup> The more settled state of Ireland in the sixteenth century,<sup>7</sup> the lower dues payable at Liverpool and the demands of the growing Lancashire textile industry, all combined to further increase Liverpool's share of this trade - a fact noted in 1540 by the antiquary John Leland:

Irish marchantes cum much thither as to a good haven...at Lyrpole is small custume payed, that causith marchantes to resorte thither. Good marchandis at Lyrpole, and moch Yrish yarn that Manchester men to by ther'.<sup>8</sup>

Ireland remained Liverpool's main trading partner throughout the sixteenth century,<sup>9</sup> but Liverpool merchants also traded coastwise (especially with ports in North-West England and North Wales) and with Europe, Scotland and the Isle

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<sup>5</sup>(...continued)

port, as distinct from a creek of the port of Chester in 1660. R.C.Jarvis, 'The Head Port of Chester; and Liverpool, its creek and member', *T.H.S.L.C.* 102,(1951), p.73.

<sup>6</sup>Pope, p.3. For an account of early efforts to improve the River Dee, see Northcote Parkinson, pp.66-67.

<sup>7</sup>During the fifteenth century, the disturbed state of Ireland, had seen Liverpool experience something of a decline. George Chandler, *Liverpool*, (London, 1957), p.268.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted Enfield, p.10.

<sup>9</sup>The Irish trade remained a vital element in Liverpool's trading pattern. Between 1788 and 1791, Ireland and the Isle of Man 'accounted for one-third of all the shipping engaged in foreign trade to and from Liverpool...more than the Africa, North America, and West Indies trades combined'. J.Langton, 'Liverpool and its hinterland in the late eighteenth century', in B.Anderson and P.Stoney (eds.), *Commerce, Industry and Transport: studies in economic change on Merseyside*, (Liverpool, 1983), p.2.



of Man.<sup>10</sup>

Although the volume of this trade was still modest, by the end of the century Liverpool had overtaken Chester<sup>11</sup> and by 1626 'Liverpool's superiority to Chester, in shipping, was beyond question; and its superiority in trade was probably still more manifest'.<sup>12</sup> Nationally, however, Liverpool still remained a relatively insignificant seaport<sup>13</sup> and 'during the whole of the period Liverpool continued to be contained substantially within the framework of the original streets as laid out by King John in 1207'.<sup>14</sup>

Liverpool's entry into trans-oceanic commerce during the last decades of the seventeenth century was to herald the beginning of the rapid transformation of the town.<sup>15</sup> Visitors to the town were impressed with the physical evidence

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<sup>10</sup> Liverpool exported coal, salt, cloth, ironware, soap, leather goods, haberdashery in exchange for barley, rye, wheat, herrings, linen cloth, linen yarn, wool, hides and tallow. Pope, ii, p.4; George Chandler, pp.268-278; Muir, p.84.

<sup>11</sup>Northcote Parkinson, p.29. However, Northcote Parkinson quotes the conclusions of Thomas Baines - that although Liverpool had outstripped Chester 'in point of commerce', it was 'still greatly inferior to that venerable city in point of wealth, reputation and dignity'.

<sup>12</sup>Northcote Parkinson, p.42.

<sup>13</sup>Customs receipts for the year 1634-35 were only £15, in comparison to London £11,475, the County of Lancaster £475 and Lancaster itself, £8. Northcote Parkinson, p.37.

<sup>14</sup>George Chandler, *Liverpool under James 1st*, (Liverpool. 1960), p.9. The seven were Water, Dale, Chapel, Tithebarn, Old Hall, Castle and High Streets.

<sup>15</sup>By the 1680s trade in tobacco and sugar was well-established. See Paul Clemens, 'The Rise of Liverpool, 1665-1750', *Economic History Review*, 29, (1976), pp.211-225; Francis Hyde, pp.25-42; Pope, pp.9-17. By 1700 Liverpool had its own customs house which allowed her virtually complete administrative control over its own affairs. Hyde, p.9. Between Michaelmas 1676 and Michaelmas 1677, Liverpool paid £3,507 in customs dues; by 1685, the port was paying £14,850 and by the end of the century claimed to yield £50,000. Cited in M.Mullett, 'The Politics of Liverpool, 1660-88', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 124, (1972), p.32.

of this growing prosperity. In 1698 Celia Fiennes declared:-

Liverpool which is in Lancashire is built just on the river mersy, mostly new built houses of brick and stone after the London fashion (i.e.since the fire);the first original was a few fishermen's houses and now is grown to a large fine town....its a very rich trading town, the houses of brick and stone built high and even, that a street quite through looks very handsome...its London in miniature as much as ever I saw any thing'.<sup>16</sup>

Twenty years on, Daniel Defoe marvelled at the speed with which these changes were taking place:-

Liverpoole is one of the wonders of Britain...the town was, at my first visiting it, about the year 1680, a large, handsome, well-built and encreasing or thriving town; at my second visit, anno 1690, it was much bigger than my first seeing it....but at this my third seeing it...it was more than double what it was at the second...what it may grow to in time, I know not'.<sup>17</sup>

However, despite his enthusiasm, in Defoe's estimation Liverpool still did not compare with Bristol which he cited as 'the greatest, the richest, and the best port of trade in Great Britain, London only excepted'.<sup>18</sup> However, as the century wore on there was a growing awareness that Bristol's trading position was being challenged and by the end of the century Bristol had been forced to surrender this status.<sup>19</sup> It was now Liverpool that was acclaiming itself as 'the first town in the kingdom in point of size and commercial importance, the

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<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Northcote Parkinson, p.68.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted *Ibid*, p.84.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Walter Minchinton, 'The Port of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century', in Patrick McGrath (ed.), *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, (Newton Abbot,1972), p.134.

<sup>19</sup>Peter T.Marcy, 'Eighteenth century Views of Bristol and Bristolians', in Patrick McGrath (ed.), pp.14-16. Paradoxically Bristol's 'golden age', was also to be the era that witnessed the beginning of its relative eclipse. P.J.Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*, (O.U.P.,1982), p.39.

Metropolis excepted'.<sup>20</sup> Although Bristol's commerce had continued to grow during the eighteenth century, this expansion had been far less rapid than that of her northern rival. The tonnage of shipping entering Liverpool rose from 14,600 tons in 1709 to 450,000 tons in 1800 - a thirty-fold increase in the course of the century<sup>21</sup> and was closely allied with an exponential growth in population - from less than 7000 in 1709 to 77,653 in 1801.<sup>22</sup> The diverse base of Liverpool's trading economy, the implementation of an innovative dock building programme, improved communications with a rapidly industrialising hinterland,<sup>23</sup> a major raw material for export<sup>24</sup> and entry into, and domination of, the slave trade all contributed to ensure that by the early 1790s 'Liverpool had gained, beyond question, the status of England's largest outpost in foreign and foreign coasting trade....Its rise had to that extent been accomplished. The way for its further rise had been prepared'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>William Moss, *The Liverpool Guide; including a sketch of the environs; with a map of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1796), p.1.

<sup>21</sup>Sheila Marriner, *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside*, (London, 1982), p.11. As early as 1750, Liverpool stood second only to London in the volume and value of its Anglo-American trade; see, Clemens, p.216. According to Minchinton, p.129, the total tonnage of shipping entering the port of Bristol in 1700 was 19,878 tons, rising by 1791 to 76,000 tons - a four-fold increase.

<sup>22</sup> Compared to Manchester (exc.Salford), 70,409; Birmingham, 69,384; Sheffield, 31,314; Leeds, 30,669; Newcastle, 28,366. Source, C.W.Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England*, (London, 1974), pp.336-339. Bristol's population rose threefold, from circa 20,000 in 1700 to c.64,000 in 1801. Minchinton, p.128.

<sup>23</sup>See, J.Langton, 'Liverpool and its hinterland in the late eighteenth century', in, B.Anderson & P.Stoney (eds.), pp.1-25.

<sup>24</sup>Rock Salt from Cheshire, discovered in 1670. One observer in the 1790s labelled the salt trade as 'the Nursing Mother' of the port, contributing more to Liverpool's commercial success 'than any other article of commerce'- not an overly great exaggeration. T.C.Barker, 'Lancashire Coal, Cheshire Salt and the Rise of Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 103, (1952), p.1.

<sup>25</sup>Northcote Parkinson, p.2.

Although there appears to be general agreement amongst Liverpool's historians that the enterprise and foresight of Liverpool merchants was a dynamic element in this economic success story,<sup>26</sup> as Michael Power points out 'our knowledge of them is disappointingly patchy'.<sup>27</sup> When such men left records, these generally concerned their business affairs. While a few can be traced to families of long-standing in the town - descendants of 'the nest of rogues' referred to in Sir Edward Moore's rental of 1670,<sup>28</sup> the majority appear to have been lured by the town's increasing prosperity. They migrated to Liverpool from Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire and North Wales and were said to include 'many gentlemen's sons'.<sup>29</sup> Others came from Scotland and Ireland,<sup>30</sup> while the appearance of names such as Becken, Busch, Wilckens, Zuill and Zinck in the 1790 directory indicate the increasingly

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<sup>26</sup>See for example, Hyde, p.42; Power, pp.26-27; Pope, ii, p.476; Clemens, p.219; Minchinton, p.158. In 1799, Thomas Telford, the engineer and road-builder, compared 'young and vigorous' Liverpool to Bristol, which he claimed was 'sinking in commercial importance; its merchants are rich and indolent, and in their projects they are always too late'. Quoted in George S. Veitch, *The Struggle for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway*, (Liverpool, 1930), p.22.

<sup>27</sup>M.J.Power, 'The Growth of Liverpool', in John Belchem (ed.), *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour; Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940*, (Liverpool, 1992), p.26. Evidence as to their numbers is also limited. In 1766, *Gore's Liverpool Directory*, listed 'an alphabetical list of the merchants, tradesmen and principal inhabitants' but gave no indication of the criteria he used to make his selection. A total of 1134 names appear - less than one fifth of the estimated number of householders - 188 men are listed as merchants. By 1790 this had risen to 619 merchants out of a total entry of over 7,000 names from a population of c.55,000.

<sup>28</sup>For example the Tarleton, Clayton and Williamson families.

<sup>29</sup>The case of the Corporation of Liverpool, in relation to a bill for making a new parish and erecting a new church there', (circ.1699), in Thomas Heywood, (ed.), *The Moore Rental*, (Chetham Society, Manchester, 1847), p.77. The petition also claims that 'several ingenious men' came to Liverpool from London after the Great Fire of 1666 'which caused them to trade with the plantations and other places, which occasioned sundry other tradesmen to come and settle there'.

<sup>30</sup>For example the Ewarts and Gladstones originated from Scotland; William Brown from Ballymena, County Antrim. See also biographical appendix.

cosmopolitan nature of the merchant community.<sup>31</sup> The formal route to the position of merchant was through apprenticeship in which bonds of consanguinity and membership of a particular religious body often played an important part.<sup>32</sup> However, other merchants came from adjacent occupations, such as shipbuilding, retailing and seafaring.<sup>33</sup> Although anecdotes of 'rags to riches' can be recounted,<sup>34</sup> these were the exception not the rule. In general those in the best position to make a fortune were men in possession of at least a modest amount of capital rather than those with none.<sup>35</sup>

It was the interests of these increasingly prosperous men which directed the politics of the town. In the late seventeenth-century the town secured its independence from the local landed interest and (with the granting of the 1695 Charter) the reins of political power were securely in the hands of its leading

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<sup>31</sup>*Gore's Liverpool Directory*, (Liverpool, 1790).

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Fletcher, for example, was apprenticed to James France, a Jamaica merchant, on the recommendation of his minister at Key Street Chapel, Rev. John Yates. He later obtained a share in the firm with money loaned in part from a fellow Unitarian, Matthew Nicholson. *Autobiographical Memoirs of Thomas Fletcher of Liverpool (obit 1850); Written in the year 1843*, (Liverpool, 1893), p.33.

<sup>33</sup>Of Liverpool it was said that 'no town in England has so many merchants in it who rose from Saylor's'. Quoted Northcote Parkinson, p.75. In a sample group of captains from 1785 to 1807 at least 45 Liverpool slave-ship captains became Liverpool merchants. S.D.Behrendt, 'The Captains in the British Slave Trade from 1785 to 1807', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 140, (1990), pp.112-113. See also Averil McKenzie Grieve, *The Last Years of the English Slave Trade*, (London, 1968).

<sup>34</sup>See biographical appendix for Richard Watt and William Boates, both reputed to have acquired large fortunes against all odds.

<sup>35</sup>W.E.Minchinton, 'The Merchants in England in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Entrepreneur: papers presented at the Annual general Conference of the Economic History Society at Cambridge, England, April 1957*, (Cambridge, 1957), p.23.

merchants.<sup>36</sup> Through the self-elected and self-perpetuating Common Council, a narrow oligarchy of well-established merchant families demonstrated their 'single minded devotion to furthering commerce'.<sup>37</sup> Thus although the Common Council was castigated by its opponents as a 'family compact'<sup>38</sup> and newcomers might be resentful of their exclusion from 'the charmed circle' that controlled the corporation, in essence, it can be argued, they were the same sort of people, 'sharing the same economic and political objectives', firmly supporting the principles of the Established Church, prominent in Liverpool society and associated with local charities and good works.<sup>39</sup> Obviously not all Liverpool's merchants conformed neatly to this pattern. However, on occasion even some of those merchants (mainly dissenters of the Unitarian and Quaker persuasion),<sup>40</sup> who did wish for change - a more liberal economic policy and a measure of social and political reform - judged the economic issues

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<sup>36</sup>For the efforts of this increasingly prosperous oligarchy to throw off all landlord control, in particular the domination of the mayoralty and parliamentary representation of the borough by the Stanleys and the archaic situation which allowed the Viscounts Molyneux, constables of the castle and legatees of the manorial system to benefit from rising land prices, see, M. Mullett, 'The politics of Liverpool, 1660-88', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 124, (1972), pp.31-56. The Molyneux settlement, whereby the borough gained a lease of his rights for a thousand years, in return for an annual payment of £30 ended in 1777 when the borough paid Lord Molyneux's descendant, then Earl of Sefton, a lump sum of £2,250 in commutation for their annual payment. Muir, p.145.

<sup>37</sup>Power, p.25-26, who cites in particular the dock building schemes, investment in improved transport links and the actions of the Council in supporting the merchants during the commercial panic of 1793. In the period 1780-1800 57 out of 73 men who served on the Council were merchants. Pope, ii, p.451.

<sup>38</sup>Families such as the Gildarts, Crosbies, Gregsons, Poles and Blundells were always well represented on the Council during the second half of the century and they and other members of the Council were related by marriage. F.E.Sanderson, 'The structure of politics in Liverpool 1780-1807', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 127, (1978), p.66.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid*, p.66.

<sup>40</sup>See Ian Sellers, *Liverpool Nonconformity 1786-1914*, unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Keele, 1969, in particular Chapter 9, 'Unitarianism - the Aristocracy of Dissent'.

that confronted them 'by the law of the survival of their House'.<sup>41</sup> It was only in times of crisis, when feelings ran high in the town that the more radical of the Reformers were 'abused and ostracised'.<sup>42</sup>

Checkland characterises a 'typical' Liverpool merchant of the last quarter of the century as a 'mercantilist, a materialist, and an empiricist'<sup>43</sup> and both contemporary and more recent accounts depict an elite characterised 'by the philistinism of self-made men'. Wealth was regarded as 'unabashedly the overwhelming concern and the principal source of self-esteem'.<sup>44</sup> However, as Checkland emphasises, this preoccupation with money-making, although often subjected to criticism, is not surprising. From the outset, Liverpool trade, based on West Africa and the West Indies, was highly speculative, bringing riches or ruin on an enormous scale'.<sup>45</sup> As one contemporary observed:-

As commercial pursuits are in their nature hazardous, the annals of a town of such extensive commercial dealings as Liverpool may be naturally expected to exhibit most striking instances of the vicissitudes of fortune. It often happens that the servant rises while the master falls. Today a man is a merchant, all spirit and enterprise, and living in splendour and luxury - tomorrow he is a

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<sup>41</sup>The Unitarian corn merchant Thomas Booth, 'could be as enthusiastic as anyone about the Corn Bill of 1789', which would 'in great measure secure to British ships the carriage of foreign corn to this country'. S.G.Checkland, 'Economic Attitudes in Liverpool 1793-1807', *Economic History Review*, 2nd.series, 5, (1952-53), p.65.

<sup>42</sup>Sanderson, p.67. See also I.Sellers, 'William Roscoe, The Roscoe Circle and Radical Politics in Liverpool 1787-1807', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 120, (1968), pp.45-62. I.Sellers, *Liverpool Nonconformity*, Chapter 10. 'The City Scene - Radicalism in a Hostile Clime'.

<sup>43</sup>Checkland, p.58.

<sup>44</sup>Seymour Drescher, 'The Slaving Capital of the World: Liverpool and National Opinion in the Age of Abolition', *Slavery and Abolition*, 9, no.2, (1988), p.131. See also Muir, pp.282-284, Wallace, p.283-284.

<sup>45</sup>Checkland, p.59.

bankrupt, humbly requesting the signature of his certificate, or soliciting for some scantily salaried situation in the customs or excise. Families, which twenty or thirty years ago took the lead in the circles of Liverpool fashion, are now reduced, forgotten, and unknown.....In Liverpool, the prophecy may at any given time be safely pronounced - "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." In this town, few families can count three opulent or successful generations.<sup>46</sup>

Thus before a merchant could invest his time and energy in less material pursuits it was first necessary to acquire the security and surplus wealth which would allow him do so. Even then investment in dock-building schemes, transport links and the new industrial undertakings all had prior claim on capital over investment in 'the more refined pursuits of a leisured class'.<sup>47</sup>

Mid-century however, selective improvements in the physical fabric of the town do begin to indicate a developing sense of civic pride. The choice of John Wood, the architect of Bath, to design a new Exchange and Town Hall reflects a growing awareness of life outside the confines of Liverpool and its immediate environs, despite its geographical isolation. The building, not surprisingly, celebrated the fount of the town's prosperity and was ornamented with heads and emblems of commerce. 'The Genius of Commerce is the proper representation of the prosperity and importance of this town, and of which the erection of this magnificent pile is a memorable instance', enthused one of

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<sup>46</sup>'State of Society and Manners in Liverpool, by Rev. William Shepherd', from the *Monthly Magazine*, no.67, January 1st., 1801, in *Holt & Gregson Papers: Materials towards a History of Liverpool collected by John Holt and Matthew Gregson*, 5, 942 HOL, Fq 2091, L.R.O..

<sup>47</sup>Hyde, p.25.



Liverpool's early historians.<sup>48</sup> The opening, in 1754, was accompanied by a week-long extravaganza - a show of grandeur which demonstrated the merchants' clear recognition of the importance of overt display and ceremony in establishing the image and reputation of their burgeoning town.

The ceremony was performed on Monday; on this occasion there was a most magnificent Ball, at which no less than 342 ladies were present who made a most brilliant appearance. The next Day we had a concert. The succeeding day a ball, The following day a concert and last night a very grand ball was given by our Mayor Mr. Crosbie....Every morning there was publick breakfasts at the expense of Mr.Ellis Cunliffe and Miss Clayton and every Day boat-racing on the River for the diversion of strangers. The whole of this long Festival has been conducted with the utmost elegance and order far exceeding everything that has yet appeared in these parts.<sup>49</sup>

The new building quickly became central to the social life of the town. When Samuel Derrick, master of ceremonies at Bath, visited the town in 1760 he reported that the assembly room in the town hall was 'grand, spacious and finely illuminated, here is a meeting once a fortnight to dance and play cards; where you will find some women elegantly accomplished and perfectly well dressed'.<sup>50</sup> From the mid-1760s, the town's wealthier residents could also mingle at the Ranelagh Gardens while they listened to music, watched the occasional firework display or enjoyed a strawberry tea-party. The more active could enjoy archery, tennis, bowls or horse-racing at nearby Crosby.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Thomas Troughton, *The history of Liverpool from the earliest authenticated period down to the present time*, (Liverpool,c.1810), p.286.

<sup>49</sup>'Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Liverpool to his friend in Jamaica, dated September 20th, 1754'. *Holt and Gregson Papers*, 19.

<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Muir, p.186.

<sup>51</sup>There were two tennis courts, a number of bowling greens attached to various taverns and an archery ground in Cazneau Street, which supported a club, called the 'Mersey Bowmen'.  
(continued...)

From the 1760s the town's domestic as well as public architecture began to concern the mercantile community as they sought to live in a style commensurate with their influence:-

The extension of commerce, and the consequent increase of its wealth, have introduced a taste for ornament and splendor, which has of late appeared in a variety of forms, and particularly in its buildings both public and private.<sup>52</sup>

In the first half of the century, even the most opulent merchants usually lived near the centre of the town, either above or adjacent to their business premises. Now, however, the wealthier residents of the town began separating themselves spatially from their less prosperous fellows and distinct new middle-class areas began to emerge.<sup>53</sup> Duke Street was described as 'the first attempt at embellished extension, the town experienced; and was considered an airy retreat from the busy and confined parts of the town'.<sup>54</sup> In the 1790 directory, Duke Street, Hanover Street, Bold Street, Church Street and Clayton Square accounted for the names and addresses of 103 merchants or one sixth of those listed, with 43 merchants residing in Duke Street alone.<sup>55</sup> Some wealthy merchants retreated outside the town, building mansions in Everton, Wavertree

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<sup>51</sup>(...continued)

Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as it was during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, 1775-188*, (Liverpool, 1853), p.86-88; 263-269.

<sup>52</sup>Enfield, p.21.

<sup>53</sup>See Iain Taylor, *Black Spot on the Mersey; A study of environment and society in eighteenth and nineteenth century Liverpool*, Unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Liverpool, 1976, pp.29-36.

<sup>54</sup>William Moss, *The Liverpool Guide; including a sketch of the environs: with a map of the town of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1796), p.19.

<sup>55</sup>Analysis from *Gore's Liverpool Directory, 1790*.

and Toxteth Park.<sup>56</sup> As early as 1768 the Yates and Perry map shows thirty two 'country seats' within a four mile radius of Liverpool<sup>57</sup> and by 1795 John Aikin was claiming that 'all the villages in the vicinity of Liverpool are filled with the country seats and places of retirement of the merchants and other inhabitants of Liverpool'.<sup>58</sup> The township of Everton proved to be particularly popular - 'The village of Everton has of late years become a very favourite residence and several excellent houses are built along the western declivity of the hill'.<sup>59</sup>

According to Ramsay Muir, it was 'the pleasures of the table' that provided the chief relaxation of Liverpool's eighteenth century merchants 'from the exacting labours of commerce' - a conclusion which owed much to the frequently quoted opinion of Samuel Derrick:-

Though few of the merchants have more education than befits a counting-house, they are genteel in their address, very friendly to strangers, even those of whom they have the least knowledge. Their tables are plenteously furnished, and their viands are well served up; their rum is excellent, of which they consume large quantities.<sup>60</sup>

If a merchant joined a club it was of the convivial rather than cultural variety.

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<sup>56</sup>Enfield, p.114.

<sup>57</sup>Taylor, p.36.

<sup>58</sup>John Aikin, *A description of the country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester*, (London, 1795; Repr. Newton Abbot, 1968), p.331.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid*, p.376. The directory of 1790 includes the names of 13 merchants with addresses in Everton.

<sup>60</sup>Quoted in Thomas Baines, *History of the Commerce and Town of Liverpool*, (London, 1852), p.475.

Drinking, dining and gossip appear to have been the main activities. One of the earliest of these, the Ugly Face Club, founded in January 1743, left a record of the physical characteristics of 55 of its members, a large proportion of whom were merchants. As the most favoured qualifications for membership were 'a large Mouth, thin Jaws, Blubber Lips, little goggling or squinting eyes', with a 'large carbuncle Potatoe Nose being esteemed the most honourable of any', one suspects that exaggeration was the order of the day and it is to be hoped that these accounts can be judged merely as caricatures of the merchant community.<sup>61</sup>

In 1753 a dining club was founded which attracted 'gentlemen of the first families of the town; many of them were members of the Council, and several afterwards served the offices of mayor and bailiff of Liverpool'. The Unanimous Club, met every Saturday evening, from the first Saturday in September to the last Saturday in April at a local coffee house, on occasion venturing further afield to dine at inns in Prescot, Ormskirk and Warrington.<sup>62</sup>

Another popular club, The Mock Corporation of Sefton, which continued from 1753 to 1829, attracted more than three hundred Liverpool citizens during its

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<sup>61</sup>The descriptions were of 24 merchants; 4 doctors; 2 clergymen; 10 sea-captains; 1 architect; 3 army officers; 1 lawyer; 2 drapers; 8 unknown. *Records relating to Ye Ugly Face Club 1743-1757*, 367/UGL Acc.502/1/1, L.R.O. See also Edward Howell, *Ye Ugly Face Club, Leverpoole 1743-1757, A verbatim reprint from the original Mss, in the collection of the late Joseph Mayer*, (Liverpool, 1912).

<sup>62</sup>*Liverpool Unanimous Society 1753-1778*, 367/UNA/1, L.R.O. The membership included Thomas Golightly, mayor in 1772; George Case, mayor in 1781; Joseph Brooks Jun.; William Pole, mayor in 1778. A full account of the club is given by Richard Brooke, pp.290-298.

life-time, nearly two thirds of whom appear in *Gore's Directory* under the title of merchants, tradesmen and gentlemen.<sup>63</sup> Unlike mock corporations in other towns, its programme was social rather than political.<sup>64</sup> The first session of the Corporation was held at the Sefton Inn (later demolished) in the grounds of Sefton Church and later at the Punch Bowl Inn in Sefton. It is unclear why Sefton was chosen as a venue. Possibly the Liverpool men saw it as a day out in the country. They travelled on horseback, in a gig or by carriage. An alternative venue was Baxter's Coffee House in Bootle, probably chosen because it was more accessible in the winter months. The numbers attending the Sunday meetings varied from between three to forty. It had a pew in church (although this religious commitment was tempered by the members custom of timing the sermon with a stop-watch), elaborate rituals and a distaste for party disputes - in March 1784 Pitt and Fox were simultaneously voted the freedom of the Corporation. The involvement of many of the members in the slave trade is evinced by the minutes of the 7th June 1789 which record the 'Corporation's indignant sense of the ridiculous notion for abolishing the slave trade proposed by fanatic Wilberforce'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Pope, ii, p.460.

<sup>64</sup>Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1798*, (Oxford, 1991), pp.218-219.

<sup>65</sup>An excellent account can be found in W.D.Caroe,/E.J.A.Gordon/Engelbert Horley, *Sefton: a descriptive and historical account comprising the collected notes and researches of the late Rev. Engelbert Horley, together with records of the mock corporation*, (London, 1893): see also *Sefton Mock Corporation, 1753-1829*, 367/SEF/1.2. L.R.O.; Rev.Engelbert Horley, 'The Mock Corporation of Sefton', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 33, (1880-81), pp.233-46, and 34, (1881-82), pp.25-38; E.B.Saxton, 'Early Records of the Mock Corporation of Sefton', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 100, (1949), pp.73-89; Langford, p.219.

However, on occasion these clubs were also organs for philanthropic enterprise - in 1760, for example, The Noble Order of the Bucks,<sup>66</sup> a social club which met at the Golden Fleece Inn in Dale Street from 1756, was recorded as having subscribed £70 towards the clothing of 'our brave troops abroad and the relief of the widows and orphans who fell nobly in their country's and liberty's cause' and later 50 guineas to the Marine Society.<sup>67</sup>

Not surprisingly, the branches of the arts which held most appeal to Liverpool's merchants were also the most public and the most social, notably the theatre.

Encouragement to theatrical exhibitions is not confined solely to the metropolis. The inhabitants of the town of Liverpool, showed an early partiality, and as their notions refined a more splendid exhibition of these favourite amusements was liberally patronized.<sup>68</sup>

The need for a well-built theatre in Liverpool - a prerequisite for every town of any pretension - was met at mid-century.<sup>69</sup> Although the site of the earliest theatrical performances in the town is a matter of some dispute among the early historians of Liverpool,<sup>70</sup> there seems general agreement that around 1742 a

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<sup>66</sup>Branches of the society appear to have existed in other towns, the most numerous being in London. *Peter Entwistle Collection of materials for a History of Liverpool potteries*, 942 ENT/Fq 2572, 37, L.R.O..

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid*,37. Merchants were prominent in local charities and charitable institutions including the Liverpool Bluecoat Hospital for the education of orphans (1709) founded by the merchant Bryan Blundell, the Infirmary, (1749) and the Liverpool Dispensary (1776). Pope, ii, pp.454-457.

<sup>68</sup>*Holt and Gregson Papers*, 12.

<sup>69</sup>Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J.H.Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society; The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England*, (London, 1982), p.277.

<sup>70</sup>The candidates are the Castle, a barn in Cockpit Yard, Hugh Dean's Cockpit, and a room in the Old Ropery. David George, 'Early Playhouses at Liverpool', *Theatre Notebook*, (1989), vol.43, no.1, pp.9-16.

theatre was built in Old Ropery by Alderman Thomas Steers, the constructor of the first dock. This building proving too small, a new theatre was opened in 1749 and in common with other provincial towns, Liverpool began to 'put on London airs', naming the theatre Drury Lane and an adjoining thoroughfare Covent Garden.<sup>71</sup> The house had a pit and a gallery, priced at 2s and 1s respectively, but no boxes. In 1759 the theatre was reconstructed and renamed the New Theatre in Drury Lane. It was described as a 'handsome structure...elegantly furnished, with the scenes extremely well painted by London artists'.<sup>72</sup> Boxes, priced at 3s, were now added to the auditorium and placed around the pit. From here the wealthy could hope to comfortably display themselves to their fellow-citizens while avoiding any direct contact.

A just partition for the better sort to withdraw from the near contact of drunken sailors and their female associates, who by paying two shillings, which many could and would afford, for the honour of mixing with their employers and their families.<sup>73</sup>

London artistes were engaged and Shakespearean tragedies vied with farces to entertain the mixed audience of theatre-goers.<sup>74</sup> Attendance at the theatre was apparently as much a social as a cultural experience. Samuel Derrick reported in 1760:-

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<sup>71</sup>See Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (rev.edn. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1990), pp.223-224.

<sup>72</sup>James Stonehouse, 'Dramatic Places of amusement in Liverpool a Century Ago', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 5, (1852-53), p.194.

<sup>73</sup>*Memoirs of Charles Lee Lewis*, (1805), vol.1, p.43, quoted in R.J.Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool Stage; from the earliest period to the present time*, (Liverpool, 1908), p.36.

<sup>74</sup>On the evening of June 13th, 1766, the programme included, *Romeo and Juliet*, an interval of various dramatic readings and dance, followed by a farce, *The Contrivances*. Brooke, pp.84-85.

The Liverpool playhouse which is very neat will hold about £80. Here a company of London performers exhibit during the summer season, and acquire a great deal of money. I saw several pieces really well done....they play three times a week; and behind the boxes there is a table spread, in the manner of a coffee-house, with tea, coffee, wines, cakes, fruit and punch.<sup>75</sup>

In the early 1760s the manager of the theatre, Mr.Gibson, drew up a petition to the Corporation asking for support for his application to Parliament to build a theatre 'more worthy of the town', to which Royal letters Patent would be granted. The Corporation agreed and parliamentary approval was finally gained in 1771. The cost was estimated at about £6,000, which was raised in shares of £200. The amount necessary for the venture was achieved in less than an hour after the list was opened,<sup>76</sup> an indication that dedication to the arts was allied with a keen eye on investment potential - the shareholders drew a regular 5% interest and the capital value of the shares rose steadily.<sup>77</sup> The foundation stone was laid by the mayor, John Sparling in 1771 and on June 5th 1772 the Theatre Royal, on the north side of Williamson's Square, was opened 'with great *éclat*. All the elite of the town were present on this very auspicious occasion and the initial performance was a great success'.<sup>78</sup> The prologue, written by George Colman,<sup>79</sup> spoken by Mr.Younger, began by paying tribute to the connection between culture and commerce - 'Whenever commerce

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<sup>75</sup>Quoted Broadbent, p.39.

<sup>76</sup>Of the proprietors, 20 were prominent merchants, the remainder included of 1 surgeon, 1 mercer, 1 clerk, 1 upholsterer and 5 'gentlemen'. *Ibid*, p.60.

<sup>77</sup>Arthur C.Wardle, 'Liverpool's First Theatre Royal', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 90, (1939), pp.207-209.

<sup>78</sup>Broadbent, p.55.

<sup>79</sup>George Colman (1732-1794), playwright and manager of Covent Garden and the Haymarket theatres, London.



spreads her swelling gale, Letters and arts attend the prosperous gale'- an early intimation in verse of the motif that was to become central to the development of Liverpool's intellectual life in the early nineteenth century.

As with the theatre, so with music, which attracted the patronage of the wealthy and on occasion of the Council from early in the century.<sup>80</sup> In 1766 the opening of a new organ in St.Peter's was the occasion for a performance of the first Grand Oratorio to be performed in Liverpool (the *Messiah*) in front of 'a crowded and genteel audience consisting of the principal nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood, the Mayor and the Magistrates'.<sup>81</sup> Support for a building designed to reflect this musical interest attracted willing investors and 1786 saw the erection, by public subscription, of a purpose built music hall in Bold Street. The 1780s also saw the first of the great triennial music festivals which quickly established themselves as major social occasions for the gathering of the leaders of fashion in the town. However, with tickets priced at one and a half guineas for five performances, they cannot be said to have done much for the diffusion of music in the town at large.<sup>82</sup>

Despite Samuel Derrick's strictures on the narrowness of the Liverpool merchants' education and the surviving anecdotes which support his

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<sup>80</sup>For example, in 1704 when the churchwardens of St.Peter's church asked the Council to fund the salary of an organist to play the organ which had been purchased with £400 collected by private subscription, the Council agreed to contribute £40 per annum. Chandler, p.432.

<sup>81</sup>*Holt and Gregson Papers*, 24.

<sup>82</sup>For the importance of the Liverpool Music Festivals to the social and cultural life of the town, see, Chapter 6, pp.216, 222-225.

conclusions,<sup>83</sup> evidence can be found to suggest that for some merchants at least, rising affluence did encourage a desire for self-improvement. The second half of the century witnessed the beginning of public lecturing in Liverpool, a phenomenon that became common in provincial towns in the eighteenth century - 'knowledge is become a fashionable thing', claimed one top lecturer.<sup>84</sup> Natural Philosophy was the most usual content of these lectures. The first course known to be held in Liverpool was given by Adam Walker, a self-educated Yorkshire schoolmaster in 1771. It consisted of twelve lectures delivered two hours daily for a fortnight with a fee of one guinea. Walker was careful to stress the entertainment value of his course - it 'consists of all the most curious, useful, new and entertaining parts of Philosophy; 'tis an Epitome of the whole *Æconomy of the Universe*'. Such lecture courses were often accompanied by spectacular experiments and demonstrations and they appear to have been attended mainly by the well-to-do merchants and professional men of Liverpool and their wives.<sup>85</sup> Debates in local coffee houses also attracted a good response in the town. Although commercial topics such as 'To which is Liverpool most indebted for its present commercial importance, the salt trade, the African trade or the admission of strangers?', were discussed at Banner's Great Room Debates, held at the Fleece Inn in Dale Street, the agenda also

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<sup>83</sup>A leading merchant, Joseph Leigh, was reputed to be 'marvellously at home in arithmetic, compound addition, the rule of three, multiplication and so forth', but subjects such as history and literature were considered 'the exotics of education'. Leigh was said to buy his books as he bought his cloth, 'by the foot'. David Wainwright, *Liverpool Gentlemen: A History of Liverpool College; an independent day school from 1840*, (London, 1940), p.20.

<sup>84</sup>Quoted Porter, p.240.

<sup>85</sup>Thomas Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool: A narrative of two hundred years*, (Liverpool, 1960), p.9-10.

included debates on less material matters, for example, - 'Has the cultivation of a taste for the beauties of nature and of the Fine Arts, an influence favourable to morality?' - heralding, perhaps, a broadening cultural and intellectual awareness on the part of the town's wealthier residents. Although there is no evidence as to the composition of the audience and the debates were free, the considerable sums raised for charity on these occasions suggests that in the main the participants were drawn from the wealthier stratum of society.<sup>86</sup>

An increasing demand in Liverpool for the 'amenities of civilised life', was also reflected by a growing demand for books, newspapers<sup>87</sup> and periodicals. In 1758 the Liverpool (later referred to as the Lyceum) Library,<sup>88</sup> was founded and survived until 1941. This was the first of the English gentlemen's subscription libraries, and was widely imitated in other provincial towns.<sup>89</sup> The Library emerged from the amalgamation of three informal discussion groups. The

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<sup>86</sup>*Papers of William Heaton Wakefield (1861-1936)*, 5, 942 WAK. acc.0137, L.R.O. Other early debating societies included the Conversation Club, which met at George's Coffee House, Castle Street; the Free Debating Society which met at a hotel in Lord Street in the 1780s and the Debating Society, attended by Roscoe and Currie, which lasted from 1795-7 and met at the Large Room in Marble Street (off Williamson Square). Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool*, p.12.

<sup>87</sup>The first Liverpool newspaper was the *Liverpool Courant* (1712), but it was only shortlived. The first edition of Williamson's *Liverpool Advertiser and Mercantile Register*, appeared on May 28th 1756 and continued under a number different names until 1856. Chandler, *Liverpool*, p.462.

<sup>88</sup>The first library founded in Liverpool was in 1715, but this was a small theological library in St.Peter's Church resulting from the gift of £30 from John Fells, a mariner. *Manuscript Collections towards a History of Liverpool by John G.Underhill 1828-1834*, 942 UND, 2, F561, L.R.O..

<sup>89</sup>Followed by Warrington (1760), Manchester (1765), Lancaster, Carlisle, Leeds, and Halifax (1768), Rochdale and Settle (1770), Sheffield (1771), Bradford (1774). Others founded before the close of the century include Birmingham (1779), Newcastle (1787) and York (1794). The first subscription library in Britain was founded in Scotland in 1741. Thomas Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*, (Liverpool, 1970), p.86.

foremost of these groups had been meeting at the home of Mr William Everard (school-teacher and mathematician) in St Paul's Square from about 1756. Discussions at the meetings invariably centred on literary topics - in particular the articles in the newly published *Monthly Review* which the group decided to purchase on a regular basis. More books were purchased and stored in a chest in Mr. Everard's parlour. The other two groups met at the Merchants' Coffee House and the Talbot Inn and both at this time appear to have been in possession of their own store of literature - an indication of the important role of the coffee houses, and on occasion taverns, as informal newsrooms and literary centres.<sup>90</sup> In 1758 the three groups decided to pool their resources and to launch the Liverpool Library in Princes Street. In 1759 the Library moved to (North) John Street, and in 1787 to a new building in Lord Street. This building was subscribed for by individuals in 75 shares, on the principle of a tontine with the subscribers to the library paying 4s 6d each for the fittings of the room.<sup>91</sup>

In November 1758 the Library published its first catalogue which listed 450 volumes and pamphlets. The subscriber list, which was said to include 'most of the chief persons of the town',<sup>92</sup> gave the names of 109 members, 47 of whom were merchants.<sup>93</sup> By 1760 this number had risen to 140 and the

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<sup>90</sup>A.H.Arkley, 'The Early Coffee Houses of Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 64, (1912), pp.11-13.

<sup>91</sup>Brooke, pp.89-92.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid*, p.90.

<sup>93</sup>It also included 5 brewers, 5 drapers, four attorneys, 1 physician, 3 surgeons, 4 schoolmasters and 7 gentlemen. Shelagh Murphy, *The Liverpool Library 1758-1941: Its Foundation, Organisation and Development*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1983, appendix 1, pp.90-92. In the 1781 Chamber of Commerce, half of the twenty positions were held by library members. Murphy, p.34.

preface to the catalogue for that year enumerated the benefits to be gained from membership, neatly combining an appeal to both the commercial and cultural instincts of prospective members:-

As many kinds of useful and polite knowledge cannot otherwise be acquired than by Reading, an attempt to furnish the public with an ample fund of amusement and improvement of this kind at the easiest Expense, can hardly fail of general approbation...the terms are moderate; and prospects of Advantage are obvious and extensive.<sup>94</sup>

The increase in members to 950 by the end of the century suggests that these dual advantages had been recognised by those of Liverpool's citizens who could afford the privilege. For despite the proviso in the catalogue, entry fees did ensure a certain exclusivity. Initially set at one guinea with an annual subscription of five shillings, it steadily rose as the century progressed<sup>95</sup> and exclusivity remained a feature in the nineteenth century. In 1837, for example, the young Herman Melville arrived in Liverpool and searching for a congenial place to read endeavoured to enter the Liverpool (Lyceum) Library, thereby earning himself a swift and forcible exit:-

Up stepped a terribly cross man....who throwing down some papers which he had been filing, took me by my innocent shoulders, and then putting his foot against the broad part of my pantaloons, wheeled me right out into the street, and dropped me on the walk, without so much as offering an apology for the affront. I sprang after him, but in vain; the door was closed upon

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<sup>94</sup>*A Catalogue of the Present Collection of Books in the Liverpool Library: To which is prefixed a Copy of the Laws and a List of the Subscribers*, (Liverpool, 1760), pp.3-4.

<sup>95</sup>In 1770 the initial fee was raised to a 1½ guineas; in 1772 to 2 guineas; in 1777 to 3 guineas; and in 1784 to 5 guineas. The annual subscription also increased from 5s to 10s-6d in 1794.

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The opening of the Free Public Library in 1852 served to ensure that membership of the Library was somewhat less of a privilege. It is interesting to note, however, that from the beginning the library, unlike the dining clubs and the early Learned Societies, was not a men-only organisation. On the 3rd February 1758 the first advertisement for the scheme in the *Liverpool Chronicle and Marine Gazeteer* was addressed 'To all Gentlemen and Ladies, who desire to encourage the progress of useful Knowledge', and the names of four appear in the first list of subscribers - including Sarah Clayton, a noted figure on the Liverpool business scene.<sup>97</sup> From 1774 until 1828 when the custom was allowed to lapse, the President of the Library was allowed to nominate a Lady patroness (invariably single) for the duration of his year of office. However, although the lady concerned was granted all the rights and privileges of a member and presented with a handsomely bound catalogue for her pains, the position was purely decorative and women do not appear to have played an active role in the administration of the Library's affairs.<sup>98</sup>

By 1801 the number of volumes had increased to 8,150 and by mid-nineteenth century this had more than quadrupled to 36,750. A need for new premises was evoked partly from the increased size of the library but also from the

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<sup>96</sup>Herman Melville/Harold Beaver,(ed.), *Redburn: his first voyage: being the sailorboy confessions and reminiscences of the son-of-a-gentleman in the merchant service*, (Penguin, London, 1986), p.285.

<sup>97</sup>For Sarah Clayton see biographical appendix. The others were Mrs Elizabeth Heywood, Mrs Elizabeth Lawrenson and Mrs Margaret Pettie.

<sup>98</sup>Murphy, p.38-39.

example of the Liverpool Athenaeum and in May 1800 the A.G.M. proposed to raise funds for the erection of a building in Bold Street, designed by Thomas Harrison of Chester in the classical tradition, incorporating the library, a newsroom and a coffee-room under one roof. It was formally opened in 1803 and continued to house the Library until 1941.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Library did act to some extent as an informal literary club when committee meetings of the library took place, generally in the 'Star and Garter Hotel' in Paradise Street. Here, men such as William Roscoe, James Currie, the fourth William Rathbone and Dr. John Rutter met together for business, dinner and conversation. These became celebrated occasions as much for the brilliance of their literary and intellectual content as for the business transacted.<sup>99</sup>

Efforts to found more formal literary and scientific societies with less obvious advantages were not as successful. In 1779 a society calling itself the Liverpool Philosophical and Literary Society was inaugurated. Among the list of members were James Currie, William Rathbone, Rev. John Yates, William Clarke jnr. and Matthew Gregson. The Society met at a number of different venues and a variety of papers were read.<sup>100</sup> However, the Society proved short-lasting and in 1783, it was agreed that the Society should be dissolved - 'This conclusion was submitted to with regret by some of the members, but the almost total

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<sup>99</sup>Kelly, *Adult Education, A Narrative*, p.7-8.

<sup>100</sup>For example, 12th March 1782, *On the Human Mind*; 3rd April 1782, *On Architecture*, 3rd May 1782, *On the Merits of Biography*. *Holt and Gregson Papers*, 10.

want of zeal and attention in the larger number seemed to leave no alternative'.<sup>101</sup> This early society is interesting in that it preceded the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society which was founded at the house of Dr. Thomas Percival in 1781 and which became the prototype for similar middle class societies throughout the provinces. In 1784 a new society was founded which eventually took the name of the Literary Society. Members met at each other's houses for discussions on literary and scientific subjects. Among these were William Roscoe, The Rev. William Shepherd, James Currie, the Rev. John Yates, William Rathbone, William Smyth (afterwards Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge) and probably also the blind poet Edward Rushton who was said to have belonged to a group of this kind in 1790. It was these men who were to take the lead in the cultural advancement of Liverpool - in politics Reformers, in religion predominately Unitarian or Quaker.<sup>102</sup> The Society, however, came to an end in the early 1790s, when the suspicious atmosphere engendered by the French Revolution made such meetings open to the accusation of sedition.<sup>103</sup> However, when the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society resurfaced in 1812, of the first names enrolled the Reverends John Yates and Joseph Smith had belonged to the 1779 society and six other members, W.W. Currie, William Rathbone, Richard Rathbone, Joseph B. Yates, J.A. Yates and Thomas Binns (5 merchants and a broker) were the sons

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Kelly, *Adult Education, A Narrative*, p.11.

<sup>103</sup> See Chapter 2, p.57.



of gentlemen who belonged to the earlier society.<sup>104</sup>

Efforts to institute societies devoted expressly to art suffered a similar fate - despite the fact that many of Liverpool's merchants were now actively seeking to commemorate themselves and their families on canvas, attracting artists such as Joseph Wright of Derby to seek patrons in the town.<sup>105</sup> However, these early societies proved influential in directing the development of their nineteenth-century counterparts. Spurred on by the foundation of London's Royal Academy in 1768, a group of men who were 'desirous of promoting a taste for the fine arts' founded a society in Liverpool in 1769. A room was taken in John Street over the subscription library and furnished with a collection of prints and plaster casts. In the forefront of the society were drawing masters and businessmen who were interested in the improvement of product design, notably those connected with the earthenware and watch trades - P.P.Burdett, a cartographer and aquatint engraver much employed at the potteries was president and among the twenty one members was the watchmaker John Wyke.<sup>106</sup> The scheme was destined to last only a few months however and by 1770 patrons, students and artists had ceased to attend the meetings. In

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<sup>104</sup>*The Liverpoolian*, vol.6, no.10, October, 1937, p.9. For the impact of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society in Liverpool's cultural history, see Chapter 4.

<sup>105</sup>Joseph Wright spent three years in Liverpool (1768-71), staying at the home of the merchant Richard Tate. His account book lists the names of twenty eight sitters, including Sarah Clayton and the Ashton family. Many of the names are on the list were connected with the slave trade. C.P.Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire 1760-1860*, (Manchester, 1976), pp.23-25.

<sup>106</sup>The pottery and clock and watch making trades were important craft industries in Liverpool in the second half of the century. Hyde, pp.19-21. By the early 1790s Liverpool had a sizeable manufacturing capacity, including brewing, glassworks, ironfoundries and copperworks. See Langton, pp.15-20.

1773 the society revived under the presidency of William Caddick, a portrait painter, with an increased membership of fifty nine - 'the most important of these upheld the classical tradition and the direction the institution took was to a large extent determined by their taste'. A lecture course was inaugurated with Mr. William Everard speaking on architecture, Dr. Turner on anatomy, P.P. Burdett on perspective and Dr. Renwick on chemistry and colours.<sup>107</sup> In August 1774 the society held its first exhibition, the first of its kind outside London in the country. The organisers of the exhibition limited their selections to members of the society - 'the productions of a small private society, resident in a remote spot, to which the Muses have recently been invited'.<sup>108</sup> Although the total number of exhibits was only small (eighty five), they included not only landscapes, portraits in oils, engravings, Indian ink and chalk drawings, models of ships but also furniture designs submitted by the upholsterer (later antiquary) Matthew Gregson. Unlike the dominant conservative element, Gregson wanted to link the development of the academy with the industrial developments of the day and was concerned both to improve the artistic taste of the provincial merchants and to improve the designs of local artists and craftsmen. His dream was of a Liverpool Academy which would offer a vigorous teaching programme in industrial design and promote exhibitions as a showcase for applied art. At a time when England stood on the threshold of mass production, Matthew Gregson was representative of those in the eighteenth century who foresaw or feared the subsequent divorce of design from utility and the emergence of a

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<sup>107</sup>Darcy, pp.25-26.

<sup>108</sup>Joseph Mayer, *Early Exhibitions of Art in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1876), p.21. The catalogue went through two editions, an indication of the exhibition's success. *Ibid*, p.31.

'genteel' high art.<sup>109</sup> However, in 1775 the society again collapsed and its effects were sold off amongst the members for £11-1-9d. William Roscoe attributed this failure to 'the loss of a very ingenious and spirited member now resident in Germany' and hoped that some day it would be re-established.<sup>110</sup> But these also were years of severe economic adversity, Liverpool's trade being adversely affected by war with America and France. In times of straightened circumstances, even those merchants who were prepared to invest in the arts in this period would doubtless have seen this as one of the first areas in which to practise economy.

With the restoration of peace, a fresh start was made in 1783, this time as the 'Society for Promoting the Arts in Liverpool'. The president was Henry Blundell of Ince (a member of the local gentry) with William Roscoe as vice-president, the merchant Thomas Taylor as secretary and members consisting 'to a great extent of gentlemen residing in the town'. The introduction to its prospectus echoed the sentiments of Matthew Gregson :-

The advancement of the Arts of Painting and Design, though an object in itself sufficiently important, appears of still greater consequence when it is considered that almost every mechanical profession is indebted to those Arts for the propriety and beauty of its ornaments, and that some knowledge of them is now become, in a greater or less degree, necessary in almost every business that has any relation to the convenience or elegancies of life....The cultivation of taste is another object which this

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<sup>109</sup>H.A.Taylor, 'Matthew Gregson and the Pursuit of Taste', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 110, (1959), pp.157-159.

<sup>110</sup>H.C.Marillier, *The Liverpool School of Painters; an account of the Liverpool Academy from 1810 to 1867, with memoirs of the principal artists*, (London, 1904), p.5. The member Roscoe was referring to was probably P.P.Burdett, who entered the service of the Marquis of Baden in 1774.

institution has in view.

But the institution now also set out to make a deliberate appeal to the commercial men of the town, promising to provide 'a rational and liberal amusement for those few hours of leisure which an active and mercantile place affords its inhabitants'.<sup>111</sup> In 1784 the society held an exhibition and its catalogue paid lip-service to the importance of applied art:-

It is the aim of the present times to unite beauty with utility; and even the mechanic who would wish to arrive at eminence ought not only to cultivate his taste, but to acquire the practical knowledge in the art of design, without which abilities may frequently be misapplied and industry fail of its reward.<sup>112</sup>

However, the actual exhibits served to illustrate how far the society had come from the original intentions of its founders. Painting and for the most part romantic painting was the dominant element. There were no examples of industrial design and no exhibits from Matthew Gregson. For this exhibition the organisers invited both provincial and London artists to show their work - Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Academy responding by sending his portrait of Colonel Banastre Tarleton. The exhibitions, wrote Roscoe's brother-in-law Daniel Daulby, had 'increased the taste of the town for the arts', and many pictures which had been exhibited 'without any particular interested view, (but merely to promote a general taste for the arts) have been purchased and remain in the town'.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>*Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>112</sup>Mayer, *Early Exhibitions*, p.46.

<sup>113</sup>Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its commerce, statistics and institutions: with a history of the cotton trade*, (Liverpool, 1825), p.338.

The Society now appeared to be set on the road to permanency, reintroducing a lecture course and in 1787 holding a second exhibition on similar lines to its predecessor. However, inexplicably in a few years the society was no more. Daniel Daulby explained that 'in a mercantile town like Liverpool, it is extremely difficult to meet with gentlemen who have leisure to conduct such a society'. Henry Smithers attributed its demise to outside events, 'from the year 1792 all was convulsion, anarchy, and tumult' and 'no fragments of time or of attention remained to cultivate steadily the civilising arts of peace'.<sup>114</sup> However, the ethos which was to dominate the nineteenth century institution had been established, and when the Liverpool Academy re-emerged in 1810, it was firmly wedded to the classical tradition.<sup>115</sup> Gregson's efforts to further the cause of applied art through the Academy is nowhere better illustrated than by the comments of Joseph Mayer, a founder member of the 1810 Academy who, in 1876, reprinted the catalogue of the 1774 exhibitions and included biographical details on the exhibitors. When he came to Matthew Gregson, he remarked tartly, 'Matthew Gregson was an upholsterer, dwelling on the west side of Castle Street. He might have chosen works very much more creditable to his taste and spirit than Palmyrean bedsteads'.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Smithers, p.338.

<sup>115</sup>In 1783 a College of Arts and Sciences was founded in Manchester. Here, the 'arts' upon which the improvement of manufactures was felt to be based were 'chemistry and Mechanism'. Here too, 'applied design was ignored, this time in favour of technology'... Thus both Liverpool and Manchester abandoned any attempt to teach applied art - the 'gentlemen' following after high art; the 'men' bent on higher production'. Taylor, pp.168-9.

<sup>116</sup>Quoted *ibid*, p.157. Gregson's attempts to link Liverpool with industrial development were finally rewarded in 1838, with the Liverpool Polytechnic Society, whose members were representative of a new section of the middle classes, See Chapter 4, p.166.

It was the failure of these cultural initiatives that led one commentator in the early 1790s to the conclusion that:-

Arts and sciences are inimical to the spot, absorbed in the nautical vortex, the only pursuit of the inhabitants is COMMERCE; ....Liverpool is the only town in England of any pre-eminency that has not one single erection or endowment, for the advancement of science, the cultivation of the arts, or promotion of useful knowledge; they have been proved truly exotic, and so little deserving cultivation when attempts have been made to fertilize them, that they have been suffered to wither and decay, and finally to be neglected and forgotten.....the liberal arts are a species of merchandize in which few of the inhabitants are desirous to deal, unless for exportation.<sup>117</sup>

Yet within a few years, plans for the first of the cultural institutions, which were to provide the mainframe of Liverpool's nineteenth century cultural infrastructure, (and which came primarily through the initiatives of socially marginal men), gained enthusiastic support from both the merchant community and the Council.<sup>118</sup> By mid-century J.W.Hudson was making a very different assessment on Liverpool's cultural development:-

There is no town in the Kingdom in which there are so many temples dedicated to the improvement of mankind as in Liverpool, nor can any city provide equal evidence of the zeal of its Merchant Princes in raising mansions for the advancement of civilisation.<sup>119</sup>

Although hyperbole played its part in both these judgements, they nevertheless are indicative of a dramatic 'sea-change' in outside perceptions of Liverpool's civic and cultural identity. The motivation for this redefinition can, in part, be

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<sup>117</sup>Wallace, pp.283-4.

<sup>118</sup>The Athenaeum was opened in 1799, the Botanic Garden, 1802, the Lyceum, 1803, the Royal Institution 1817, the Literary and Philosophical Society was inaugurated in 1812.

<sup>119</sup>J.W.Hudson, *The History of Adult Education*, (London, 1851), p.96.

explained by 'Liverpool's evolution into a metropolitan centre and cosmopolitan crossroads' towards the close of the eighteenth century, but it can also be argued that the depth of this commitment may well also be bound up in the association of Liverpool's prosperity with the slave trade.<sup>120</sup>

For much of the century Liverpool's share of the slave trade had been 'a thing to be envied, the legitimate reward of enterprise which everyone would have been delighted to share'.<sup>121</sup> However, the inauguration of the national abolitionist movement in 1787 saw public opinion change and Liverpool now found itself becoming increasingly isolated and facing not just threat to its economic base but to its cultural identity.<sup>122</sup> As early as 1788, a London correspondent of Matthew Gregson's categorised the pro-slave trade Gregson as 'a proper Liverpool man', while dubbing himself 'humanity man' - the inference being that to the outside world the two terms were incompatible.<sup>123</sup> The town found itself subjected to public opprobrium in Parliament, branded as 'the metropolis of slavery', with visitors to the town expressing similar moral distaste. When Fuseli visited Liverpool in 1804 and was shown the sights, he declared - 'I viewed them with interest, but methinks I smell everywhere the

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<sup>120</sup>Drescher, pp.129-133.

<sup>121</sup>Muir, p.193. In 1773, Enfield's analysis of the slave trade showed no trace of self-consciousness about the slave trade. 'His comparisons with other trades were quantitative not qualitative'. Drescher, p.132.

<sup>122</sup>Drescher, p.129.

<sup>123</sup>David Samwell to Matthew Gregson, *Gregson Correspondence*, 920 GRE/17/41. n.d.1788.

blood of slaves'.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, an actor, hissed for appearing drunk on a Liverpool stage answered his audience by declaring that he refused to be insulted 'by a pack of men every brick in whose detestable town was cemented by the blood of a negro'.<sup>125</sup> Although as Seymour Drescher concedes, the twenty years before abolition witnessed Liverpool's merchants unceasingly petition Parliament against abolition,<sup>126</sup> and their involvement in the trade far from diminishing actually increased, he draws on contemporary descriptions and local guides to suggest a growing disquiet at this alleged 'stain' on Liverpool's reputation. In the Liverpool Guide of 1796, for example, William Moss showed few qualms about justifying the trade. However, by 1799 the Guide had discovered that the trade was conducted mainly by outsiders and Moss took care to emphasise that only a few Liverpool merchants were involved - 'Much illiberal and ungenerous reflection has been indiscriminately been cast upon the town on account of this trade, which must have arisen from ignorance, since it is limited to a very few of the merchants' - an obvious manipulation of the truth. A new Liverpool guide appearing in 1805 reflected even greater eagerness for disassociation.<sup>127</sup> If 'humanity man' and 'Liverpool man' could not be reconciled, how much more important it may have seemed to legitimize the status of 'Liverpool gentlemen'.

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<sup>124</sup>Quoted in Emily A.Rathbone, (ed.), *Records of the Rathbone Family*, (Edinburgh, 1913), p.36.

<sup>125</sup>Muir, p.204.

<sup>126</sup>Internal communal solidarity was also reinforced within the town itself. At formal dinners and civic occasions toasts were drunk to the African Trade and when the first Abolition Bill was defeated in 1791, church bells were rung for the occasion. Drescher, p.133.

<sup>127</sup>Drescher, pp.133-140.



The eighteenth-century saw the foresight and acumen of Liverpool merchants play a major role in steering the town to economic prominence. When seeking to invest in cultural endeavour, it seems likely that these same traits would now be brought to bear in the establishment of Liverpool's cultural pre-eminence. Nowhere is this more evident than in their apparent willingness (at a time when feelings in the town ran high) to adopt the cultural formulae laid down by the small group of intellectuals - Radicals, Dissenters and Abolitionists - who had been at the forefront of the embryonic cultural societies of the eighteenth-century. Of these men, the one who more than any other came to personify (both to his fellow-Liverpudlians and the world at large) the union of commerce with culture, was William Roscoe - a circumstance that was to award Roscoe, almost saintly status in Liverpool's subsequent hagiography and historiography.

## **Chapter 2:- Liverpool's Cultural Icon; William Roscoe and the Florence of the North**

*His literature and love of fine art have cast a halo round the name of Liverpool, which is felt in conjunction with its commercial power, in every part of the world; its taste for elegant embellishment and accomplished literature, can never die, while each successive generation pronounces with respect and gratitude the name of Roscoe, the father of its accomplishments and its taste.<sup>1</sup>*

In 1753, the year of William Roscoe's birth, cultural organisation in Liverpool was negligible. In March 1853, a celebration was held in Liverpool to commemorate the centenary of Roscoe's birth. The organising committee was comprised of delegates from the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, the Liverpool Polytechnic Society, the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, the Architectural and Archaeological Society, the Chemists' Association and the Royal Institution. The day began with a public breakfast in the Philharmonic Hall, presided over by the Lord Lieutenant of the county who, together with five hundred and sixty guests listened to eight distinct panegyrics. Throughout the day cultural institutions opened their doors to the town's inhabitants and the day's festivities ended with a 'brilliant soirée' at the Town hall attended by over a thousand of Liverpool's leading citizens, honouring the memory of a man who had established or helped to establish all of Liverpool's early learned foundations.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fears voiced by Joseph Mayer in 1876, that 'a generation is fast springing into manhood which will not know his very name',<sup>3</sup> Roscoe continued to be remembered by his native town. An annual

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<sup>1</sup>B.R.Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, (London, 1846), vol.11, Lecture 10, p.116.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Mayer, 'Roscoe and the influence of his writings on the Fine Arts', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 5, (1853), p.143.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Mayer, *Early Exhibitions of Art in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1876), p.7.

oration was dedicated to his honour; in 1906 Professor Ramsay Muir, on his election to the Chair of Modern History at the University of Liverpool, chose Roscoe as the subject of his inaugural lecture; the centenary of Roscoe's death was marked by a public exhibition in the town and in 1953, the bi-centenary of his birth, the City Council commissioned George Chandler to prepare a new biography of William Roscoe. In 1971 a noted historian of Liverpool wrote, 'If a description of the spirit of Liverpool between 1790 and 1820 were to be sought, it could not be better described than by the term "Roscoe's Liverpool"'.<sup>4</sup>

Roscoe's achievements were, indeed remarkable. The son of an innkeeper and market gardener, he rose to become an historian of international repute - 'within a generation Roscoe's name was as internationally famous as Gibbon's'.<sup>5</sup> A renowned botanist, minor poet, artist and art lover, radical politician and opponent of the slave trade, he was also lawyer, banker and businessman,<sup>6</sup> and as such involved and concerned for the commercial success of the port. In addition, he appears to have been a charming and likeable man, whose personal qualities were never in doubt, 'a man of the most fascinating manners...good sense, sweetness, simplicity, hilarity, joining in a literary man who is a good

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<sup>4</sup>F.E.Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: the development of a port 1700-1970*, (Newton Abbot), 1971), p.43.

<sup>5</sup>J.R.Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, (London, 1954), p.85.

<sup>6</sup>Roscoe was involved in the coal and iron smelting industries and in land reclamation at Chat Moss. For Roscoe's career as a banker, see, John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*, (Liverpool, 1906), p.64.

Husband and the excellent Father of nine children'.<sup>7</sup> Despite his humble origins and 'strong provincial accent which at once destroys all idea of elegance',<sup>8</sup> Roscoe corresponded with and in many cases became a personal friend of many of the leading figures of the day, including Henry Brougham,<sup>9</sup> Lord Lansdowne, Lord Holland, Thomas Jefferson, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Robert Burns. Even William Hazlitt, irritated as he was by the literary pretensions of the Liverpool merchants, conceded Roscoe - 'a very excellent man'.<sup>10</sup>

Roscoe's historical writings, particularly his 'Life of Lorenzo de Medici', ensured him, and by association his native town, recognition in the international arena, notably in America. Although Roscoe's ability to combine the literary and business worlds proved perplexing to the American author Washington Irving - 'To find therefore the elegant historian of the Medici mingling among the busy sons of traffic, at first shocked my poetic ideals'<sup>11</sup> - it was this very ability which appealed so strongly to many of America's aspiring businessmen. The fact that Roscoe was a self-made man, who now owned 'the very estate where his father was gardener and his mother housekeeper', made him an attractive

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<sup>7</sup>Earl Leslie Griggs, (ed.), *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, (London, 1932), vol.1, p.149; Coleridge to Samuel Purkis, July 29th, 1800.

<sup>8</sup>Christina Colvin (ed.), *Maria Edgeworth: Letters from England 1813-1844*, (Oxford, 1971), p.10. To Mrs Ruxton, April 6th 1813.

<sup>9</sup>Brougham judged Roscoe to be 'in some respects one of the most remarkable persons that have of late years appeared in either the political or literary world'. Quoted in John Willet, *Art in a City*, (London, 1967), p.24.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in P.J.Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism. A Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868-1939*, (Liverpool, 1981), p.13.

<sup>11</sup>Washington Irving, *Sketch of William Roscoe*, (Liverpool, 1853), p.6.

role model for aspiring American merchants and professionals seeking to establish their civic and social position. For many Bostonians he symbolised 'the intellectual breadth and elegance which might lift a Boston businessman to a loftier social and cultural level'. Numerous Americans visited or corresponded with Roscoe and at least two Bostonians named their sons after him.<sup>12</sup>

Roscoe, the historian and litterateur did not, however, meet with universal acclaim. Following the publication of Roscoe's *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth* in 1805, the *Edinburgh Review*, although praising Roscoe's industry and the extensive research, criticised Roscoe's use and organisation of his material - 'the nice discrimination and selection of incidents, form no part of Mr. Roscoe's ideas of historical excellence....the author...has no pretensions to the title of an historian'. However, the reviewer did concede that Roscoe's writings 'impress us with one uniform conviction, that he is a truly amiable and benevolent man', although by implication this was scarcely an adequate substitute for rigorous historical scholarship or likely to gain Roscoe literary immortality.<sup>13</sup> A more personal attack on Roscoe's literary pretensions came from Thomas De Quincey. In his *Autobiographical Sketches*, published in 1837, he portrayed the entire Roscoe circle as a group of pseudo intellectuals suffering from delusions of grandeur. De Quincey's impressions were based on youthful reminiscences of a holiday in 1801, spent at a cottage in Everton opposite to

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<sup>12</sup>Ronald Story, 'Class and Culture in Boston: The Athenaeum, 1807-1860' *American Quarterly*, 27, no.2, (1975), p.185. Roscoe's father may have been a butler at Allerton Hall prior to becoming an innkeeper. R.Stewart Brown, *A History of the Manor and Township of Allerton*, (Liverpool, 1911), p.64.

<sup>13</sup>*The Edinburgh Review*, vol.7, no.14, (1806), p.336.

the home of William Clarke, a close friend of Roscoe. Clarke made the precocious De Quincey welcome in his house and invited him to join in the literary and political discussions which often took place there. Clarke's kindness was repaid with a bitter diatribe in which De Quincey reduced Roscoe and his friends to a group of transient caricatures. Roscoe, he dismissed as a 'mere *belle-lettrist*' and he scorned Roscoe's poetry, secretly amusing himself with the reflection that although these men lauded Roscoe as a poet of some significance not one of them had ever heard of Wordsworth. De Quincey's article caused great offence in Liverpool and a spirited defence was launched by Dr. William Shepherd (the only member of the coterie still alive in 1837), who ascribed De Quincey's vitriol to his opium addiction.<sup>14</sup> However a more recent assessment suggests that De Quincey's condemnation of Roscoe's poetry is more fairly viewed in the light of a natural reaction of a new generation against the taste of its predecessors.<sup>15</sup>

In a biography of his father, Henry Roscoe suggests that in many ways it was Roscoe's early years which were largely responsible for shaping the principles and interests that came to dominate his mature life. His formal schooling ending at the age of twelve, Roscoe valued education highly - a trait shared by many of the self-taught. Henry Roscoe believed that this lack of educational

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<sup>14</sup>Paul Masson, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, (London, 1996), vol.11, pp.123-137.

<sup>15</sup>George Chandler, 'The Published and Unpublished Poems of William Roscoe, 1753-1831; A Study in Literary Taste in an Age of Transition', *Liverpool Bulletin*, vol.2, (1952), p.5. The best known of Roscoe's poems is the children's classic, *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshoppers Feast* (1807), characterised 'by the comparative simplicity of its language and by the absence of the stilted imitation of previous poets.' Chandler, p.23.

constraints allowed his father's mind to 'remain unshackled by the prejudices or the interests of those around him'.<sup>16</sup> The young William Roscoe was eclectic in his search for knowledge, taking lessons in painting and engraving from the workers in a neighbouring china works. His interest in botany began during the three years spent labouring on his father's market garden. Any leisure he devoted to reading. Roscoe even claimed to have developed into 'a tolerable joiner', building himself a bookcase, which he filled with 'several volumes of Shakespeare, a great part of whose historical plays, I committed to memory..and other valuable works, which I perused with great pleasure'.<sup>17</sup> It was during these early years, that William Roscoe developed his abhorrence to all forms of cruelty. On a shooting expedition in his youth Roscoe killed a thrush. He was so appalled by the sufferings of the dying bird - that he was never to go shooting again.<sup>18</sup>

Perceiving his son's love of reading, Roscoe senior apprenticed him to a local bookseller<sup>19</sup> but William Roscoe apparently found this uncongenial for he remained there only for one month. In 1769 aged sixteen, he became an articled clerk of Mr.John Eyes, a local attorney (on whose death he transferred to Mr.Peter Ellames). Early mornings found Roscoe and a few like-minded friends,

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<sup>16</sup>Roscoe, Henry, *The Life of William Roscoe*, 2vols., (London, 1833), 1, p.76.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid*, 1, p.10.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid*, pp.11-12.

<sup>19</sup>John Gore, who published the first Liverpool directory in 1766.

including Francis Holden, a young schoolmaster and William Clark,<sup>20</sup> gathering before work to study literature, the classics, and modern languages. It seems likely that it was from this period that Roscoe's interest in the Italian Renaissance and the Medici developed, helping to shape his belief in the potentialities of the individual and the power of education to produce the complete man - a man of action who was also the master of all the culture of his age.<sup>21</sup>

His family's attendance at the dissenting chapel at Benn's Garden was another formative influence on the young Roscoe. The congregation was at this time 'said to have been one of the most numerous and respectable of the Liverpool Dissenters'<sup>22</sup> and to have included some of the leading families of the town.<sup>23</sup> Here he would have listened to the sermons of William Enfield, minister at the chapel from 1763-1770, before his removal to the post of Rector and tutor in *belles-lettres* at Warrington Academy, an institution which had from its outset enjoyed links with Liverpool dissent. Morality was the central theme of Enfield's sermons - 'It is indeed my opinion that morality, as it includes all the duties we owe to our Maker, our fellow creatures and ourselves, should be the

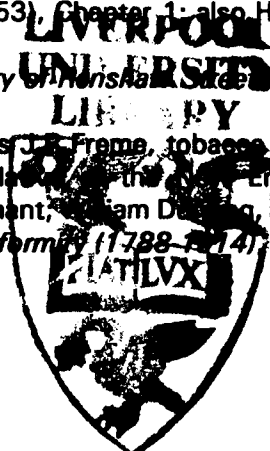
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<sup>20</sup>See Biographical Appendix.

<sup>21</sup>For a full account of Roscoe's youth and Adolescence, see George Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, (London, 1953), Chapter 1; also Henry Roscoe, *The Life*.

<sup>22</sup>George Eyre Evans, *A History of the Dissenting Chapel*, (London, 1887), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> These included men such as J.E. Frame, tobacco merchant and politician; Thomas Holt, merchant; Thomas Mather, a relative of the England Mathers; Thomas Booth, corn merchant; William Thornley, merchant; William Deane, a member of a very old Liverpool family. See, Ian Sellers, *Liverpool Nonconformity (1788-1814)*; Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1969, pp.8-92.





principal subject of preaching'.<sup>24</sup> Enfield may be something of a mentor to the young Roscoe, the association of cultural endeavour with moral improvement always being an essential part of Roscoe's thinking. Roscoe maintained contact with Dr.Enfield after his removal to Warrington and submitted one of his earliest poems 'Mount Pleasant'<sup>25</sup> to the 'cultivated judgement of Dr.Enfield'.<sup>26</sup> As the poem was published in Warrington, Roscoe would probably have combined visits to the Academy with visits to his publisher.<sup>27</sup> Warrington Academy was one of the most distinguished of the eighteenth century Dissenting Academies. It was renowned for the eminence of its tutors of whom Joseph Priestley was perhaps the most famous and for the spirit of companionship and rational inquiry which prevailed there.<sup>28</sup> Although classical learning always stood at the centre of the curriculum,<sup>29</sup> an innovation at Warrington was an attempt to introduce a business course in line with the new commercial spirit of the age.<sup>30</sup> One third of students went on to become merchants, bankers, or manufacturers -although conversely one third went on

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<sup>24</sup>Anne Holt, *Walking Together: A Study in Liverpool Nonconformity, 1688-1938*, (London, 1938), p.128.

<sup>25</sup>Published in 1777, *Mount Pleasant* included an attack on the slave trade and a condemnation of the merchants' obsession with money.

<sup>26</sup>Henry Roscoe, vol.1, pp.33-34.

<sup>27</sup>Further attestation to Roscoe's association with the Academy is given by Lucy Aikin, *Memoir of John Aikin*, 2 vols., (London,1823), 1, p.300.

<sup>28</sup>Henry Bright, 'A Historical Sketch of Warrington Academy', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 13,(1861), pp.14-15.

<sup>29</sup>The value of a classical education was firmly defended by William Roscoe in 'A Vindication of Classical Learning', *Roscoe Papers* 1110.

<sup>30</sup>Herbert McLachlan, *Warrington Academy, its history and influence*, (Manchester, 1943), p.104.

to become 'gentlemen'.<sup>31</sup> At Warrington, Roscoe came into contact with John Aikin, M.D., and a life-long friendship developed between the two men. In a letter to John Aikin's daughter, Lucy, after her father's death, Roscoe acknowledged Aikin's influence on his intellectual development. Roscoe wrote that it was Aikin who had first directed him to 'the perusal of the modern writers of Latin poetry'.<sup>32</sup> From a letter to Dr. James Currie in 1794, it is clear that Aikin placed an equal value on his links with Liverpool - 'There are few of my old acquaintances to whom I look with more affection than the knot of select men at Liverpool'.<sup>33</sup>

It was with like-minded men, mainly from the Dissenting Congregations, that Roscoe joined in discussion circles and early cultural initiatives<sup>34</sup> - men such as William Rathbone IV, the Unitarian ministers James Yates and William Shepherd, Edward Rushton, William Smyth (an Anglican) and James Currie. These early institutions served as a common forum for intellectual improvement, observation and debate. William Roscoe and James Currie, a physician who studied at Edinburgh and settled in Liverpool in 1780, became close friends, and it is Currie who has been credited as the 'genuine philosopher' of the group.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>The gentlemanly ethos of the Academy is suggested by the fact that some of the 'young gentleman' kept their own horses, and fencing classes were part of the curriculum. H. McLachlan, 'Sport and Recreation in Nonconformist Academies', *Essays and Addresses*, (Manchester, 1950), pp. 199-200.

<sup>32</sup>Herbert McLachlan, p.85.

<sup>33</sup>John Aikin to James Currie, 1st July, 1794, *Currie Papers*, 56.

<sup>34</sup>See Chapter 1, for a full discussion of these early cultural forays.

<sup>35</sup>'Currie is a genuine philosopher', Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Unpublished Letters*, to Thomas Poole, July 24th, 1800.

Cut off from his former involvement amongst the Edinburgh intellectuals,<sup>36</sup> the company of Roscoe and his friends provided some compensation - 'I lived in a small circle of friends in Liverpool remarkable for their prompt discussion and open declaration of their opinion on public questions'.<sup>37</sup> Despite Roscoe's protestations to the contrary,<sup>38</sup> it seems inconceivable that political questions did not come under discussion and for Checkland the group provided the Liverpool Radicals with their nearest approach to a corporate identity. Although the fears engendered by the French Revolution and its aftermath led to these meetings being abandoned, when the Literary and Philosophical Society resurfaced in 1812, many of these men were amongst its earliest members.<sup>39</sup> William Roscoe held the position of president from 1817 until his death in 1831 and presented several papers before the Society in which, characteristically, morality was a dominant theme - notably an eloquent plea for the principles of morality to be as applicable to the public dealings between nations as to the private dealings between individuals.

Roscoe's lack of private means ensured that he did not neglect his legal career and in 1774 he was admitted an attorney of the Court of King's Bench. He

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<sup>36</sup>At Edinburgh, Currie had been an 'outstanding member' of the Speculative Society. Checkland states that it was Currie who did most to make explicit in Liverpool, the current trend in Scottish thought in social and economic matters, and he designates Currie as the 'philosophic light and sage' of the group. S.G.Checkland, 'Economic attitudes in Liverpool', *Economic History Review*, 2nd.series, 5, 1952-3, pp.69-74.

<sup>37</sup>W.W.Currie (ed.), *Memoir of the Life, Writing and Correspondence of James Currie, M.D., F.R.S. of Liverpool*, (London, 1831), 2 vols., 1, p.500.

<sup>38</sup>'The object of our meeting was merely literary', William Roscoe to the Marquis of Lansdowne, n.d., c.1792, *Roscoe Papers*, 2343.

<sup>39</sup>See Chapter 1, p.33.

entered into partnerships successively with Mr. Bannister, Samuel Aspinall and Joshua Lace. He used part of his salary to collect Italian books and prints despite the fact that by now he had met his future wife, Jane Griffies, who fortunately shared Roscoe's literary interests.<sup>40</sup> Aged twenty, Roscoe was instrumental in the foundation of a 'Society for the Encouragement of Designing, Drawing, Painting etc'. He composed an inaugural ode, read before the Society on the 13th December 1773, in which he emphasised, in verse, his belief in the civilising and moral influence which art could effect on society at large - a proposition widely held and propagated throughout the eighteenth-century in England as well as on the continent.<sup>41</sup> Roscoe stressed that the study of great works of art would enrich both the personalities and the lives of businessmen and he characterised the artists themselves as 'potential agents of morality and bulwarks of the honest state'.<sup>42</sup>

The Society held an exhibition in 1774, (the first of its kind outside London) at which Roscoe exhibited an indian ink drawing entitled 'The Mother'. Although this Society floundered, Roscoe was subsequently associated with every attempt made in Liverpool to establish an academy and annual exhibitions. In 1783, he was vice-president and treasurer of the Society for Promoting Painting and Design in Liverpool, and in 1810 was deeply involved in a fresh initiative that launched the Academy of Arts (he became treasurer). In 1817, he delivered

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<sup>40</sup>They finally married on the 22nd February, 1781. Jane was the second daughter of William Griffies, linen draper and barber, of Castle Street, Liverpool.

<sup>41</sup>Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of Provincial Art; Artists, Patrons, and Institutions outside London, 1800-1830*, (Oxford, 1974), pp.4-5.

<sup>42</sup>C.P.Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire 1760-1869*, (Manchester, 1976), pp.26-27.

the inaugural address at the opening of the Royal Institution, of which the Academy, reactivated, was a part.<sup>43</sup> Roscoe firmly believed in a system of regional academies as the best means of promoting English art, his admiration and belief in the influence of the Florentine Academy of Lorenzo de Medici shaping this conviction:-

To this institution, more than to any other circumstance, we may, without hesitation, ascribe the sudden and astonishing proficiency which, towards the close of the fifteenth century, was evidently made in the arts, and which commencing at Florence, extended itself in concentric circles to the rest of Europe.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout his life Roscoe continued as an avid collector of works of art and prints and like his hero Lorenzo (according to the Roscoe interpretation ) with a specifically didactic purpose. His collection, he claimed was, 'chiefly for the purpose of illustrating, by a reference to original and authentic sources, the rise and progress of the arts in modern times'<sup>45</sup> - an 'instructive and informative' collection rather than one to 'delight and move'.<sup>46</sup> To this end, his paintings and prints were arranged in historical order at his home at Allerton Hall. Roscoe was a generous patron and developed a close association with Henry Fuseli - Fuseli once describing Roscoe as 'the man nearest my heart'<sup>47</sup>. Roscoe gave

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<sup>43</sup>Fawcett, pp.95-96.

<sup>44</sup>William Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de Medici, called the Magnificent*, 7th edition, (London, 1846), p.333.

<sup>45</sup>Henry Roscoe, vol.2, p.128.

<sup>46</sup>Fawcett, p.96. See also Michael Compton, 'William Roscoe and Early Collectors of Italian Primitives', *Liverpool Bulletin*, vol.9, (1961), pp.27-51.

<sup>47</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 1664.

Fuseli both practical advice and help<sup>48</sup> and considerable financial support.<sup>49</sup> He encouraged the sculptor John Gibson to visit Allerton Hall to study original drawings and engravings from his collections - inspired perhaps by Lorenzo's patronage of the young Michelangelo.<sup>50</sup> Roscoe's knowledge and taste impressed itself on his fellow citizens and he became 'the most important single influence guiding art patronage' in the first thirty years of nineteenth-century Liverpool.<sup>51</sup> When, in 1816, financial pressures forced Roscoe to dispose of his collection, a group of leading merchants joined together to purchase thirty five of Roscoe's early-Italian paintings and presented them to the Royal Institution. This was a tribute not only to Roscoe the man, but also to Roscoe the art connoisseur.<sup>52</sup>

In 1787, the publication of Roscoe's poem, 'The Wrongs of Africa', heralded the start of his well-documented career as opponent of the slave trade and

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<sup>48</sup>At least forty of Fuseli's paintings were imported into Liverpool by William Roscoe, for sale to his friends - he owned fifteen himself. Roscoe's dining-room at Allerton Hall was reputed to be hung solely with Fuseli's paintings. Edward Morris, 'William Roscoe and Medici Florence', in Pat Starkey, (ed.), *Riches into Art; Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, (Liverpool, 1993), p.24.

<sup>49</sup>This amounted to £700 between 1790 and 1800. Hugh Macandrew points out that when Roscoe was in financial trouble, there is little evidence to suggest that Fuseli reciprocated this generosity. Hugh Macandrew, 'Henry Fuseli and William Roscoe', *Liverpool Bulletin*, vol.8, (1960), p.20.

<sup>50</sup> In his *Life of Lorenzo*, pp.333-9, Roscoe describes Lorenzo's patronage of the young Michelangelo, and stresses the importance of patronage in the furtherance of the arts. It was Roscoe who devised the plan for Gibson to visit Rome for three years and provided him with vital introductions. Fawcett, p.51.

<sup>51</sup>C.P.Darcy, p.34.

<sup>52</sup>Morris, pp.19-20.

politician.<sup>53</sup> In a town which considered its prosperity so dependent on the slave trade,<sup>54</sup> it is not surprising that Roscoe's opposition to the trade led to him being considered by many of his fellow-townsmen as 'a busy-body, as a meddler, as a mischief-monger, whose wish and object were to injure and destroy the town and trade of Liverpool'.<sup>55</sup> Even among the Unitarians, a sermon against slavery by the Rev. John Yates in 1788 'gave great offence to many influential members of his congregation'.<sup>56</sup> As Sanderson points out, respectable and prosperous dissenting merchants such as the Heywoods, Boltons, Booths and Fletchers 'were chiefly interested in the reform of the Test and Corporation Acts and in gaining access to the patronage of the municipality' - Roscoe, Rathbone, and in particular Currie, Shepherd and Rushton made rather uncomfortable political bed-fellows.<sup>57</sup> The early 1790s saw Roscoe even further at odds with the prevailing political opinion in the town. He welcomed

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<sup>53</sup>The career of Roscoe as anti-slaver and politician will be addressed only in the light of the effect it had on his position in Liverpool society. For more detailed accounts see, Ian Sellers, 'William Roscoe, The Roscoe Circle and Radical Politics in Liverpool 1787-1807', *T.H.S.L.C.*, vol.120, (1968), pp.45-62; R.B.Rose, 'The "Jacobins" of Liverpool 1789-1793', *Liverpool Bulletin*, vol.9, (1961), pp.35-49. F.E.Sanderson, 'The Liverpool Abolitionists', in Roger Anstey, P.E.H.Hair, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, (Liverpool, 1976).

<sup>54</sup>If the slave trade was abolished, 'Grass it was freely predicted, would soon be growing in her streets'. Emily.A.Rathbone (ed.), *Records of the Rathbone Family*, (Edinburgh, 1913),p.44. In 1787 at the start of the abolitionist campaign in parliament, 37 out of the 41 councillors were slaveship owners or major investors and suppliers to the trade. All of the 20 mayors of the borough between 1787 and 1807 had some connection with the slave trade. Sanderson, p.66.

<sup>55</sup>James Aspinall, *Liverpool a few Years since by An Old Stager*, 3rd. edn. (Liverpool, 1885), p.64. Roscoe also received criticism for being too passive a member of the anti-slavery lobby. In refuting this charge, Northcote Parkinson makes the point that that 'in opposing the trade', the Liverpool group were 'opposing all their neighbours', a feat which took considerable courage. C.Northcote Parkinson, *The Rise of the Port of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1952), p.141.

<sup>56</sup>Raymond V.Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England*, (London, 1938), p.135.

<sup>57</sup>Sanderson, p.72.

the revolution in France , his poem 'Ode to the People of France' being published in 1789. His continued support, however, led to Roscoe and his circle being dubbed the 'Liverpool Jacobins' by their opponents. Although he was to become disillusioned with his fellow-men by the excesses of the Revolution,<sup>58</sup> he remained convinced of its original justification. He felt that the escalation of violence resulted from the 'degraded and servile state in which the people had long been plunged' - they now had no conception of how to behave in a just society.<sup>59</sup> He was, however, no ardent republican - 'I think that a monarchy is capable of being as well constituted for the happiness of a people as a republic'.<sup>60</sup> To Roscoe, who hated all warfare, the war with France was doubly odious. For those holding such anti-establishment views, the early 1790s were a dangerous time,<sup>61</sup> and the 'Liverpool Jacobins', opting for discretion, retreated from the political arena, calling a halt even to their literary society meetings - 'suspicion has for some time gone abroad about us....and, in the present state of things, we have thought it expedient to suspend our future meetings'.<sup>62</sup> The Reverend William Shepherd advised Roscoe to retire from the 'intestine broils and foreign rage' to the enjoyment of his 'domestic comforts' -

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<sup>58</sup>The events in France gave Roscoe 'a dislike not only to the French but to my species. Sorry I am to say that this dislike is not much removed by anything I can see in my own country'. *Roscoe Papers*, 2322.

<sup>59</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, p.114; *Roscoe Papers* 2322.

<sup>60</sup>William Roscoe to Lord Lansdowne, December 23rd, 1793. *Roscoe Papers* 2322.

<sup>61</sup>The Liverpool 'Jacobins' were also identified with the campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Although Liverpool did not witness any violence on the scale of the Priestley Riots, James Currie made inquiries about a property in Virginia and William Shepherd secured a property in Kentucky in case of a need for flight. Sellers, *William Roscoe*, pp.52-53.

<sup>62</sup>*Roscoe Papers* 2343.



advice that Roscoe prudently accepted.<sup>63</sup> He was now to devote the greater part of his leisure time to a literary project, a biography of Lorenzo de Medici - a pioneering study of its subject in English, highlighting the Anglo-Florentine entente between commerce and culture.<sup>64</sup>

Roscoe's long interest in Italian writings and poetry had drawn him to the conclusions that 'every thing great and excellent in science and in art, revolved round Lorenzo de'Medici, during the short but splendid era of his life'.<sup>65</sup> Spurred on by 'the real admiration I have of the character of my hero', Roscoe believed it was his mission to make 'so extraordinary a man more generally known to my countrymen'.<sup>66</sup> Roscoe saw in Florence and its ruler the apotheosis of the union between culture and commerce:-

Earnest in the acquisition of wealth, indefatigable in improving their manufactures and extending their commerce, the Florentines seem not, however, to have lost sight of the true dignity of man, or of the proper objects of his regard.<sup>67</sup>

He proclaimed his interest as literary and cultural rather than political:-

It appeared to me that the mere historical events of the fifteenth century, so far as they regarded Italy, could not deeply interest my countrymen in the eighteenth; but I conceived that the progress of letters and of arts would be attended to with pleasure in every

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<sup>63</sup>Quoted in Sellers, p.16. The 'Liverpool Jacobins' were not alone in pursuing a policy of caution. Radicals in other towns were also forced to adopt a policy of 'quiet resignation'.see, D.Read, *The English Provinces c.1760-1960; A study in influence*, (London, 1964), p.50.

<sup>64</sup>Roscoe never travelled outside Britain, but relied on friends for help with his research. He was particularly indebted to William Clarke, who, for health reasons, resided abroad for long periods and signed his letters to Roscoe, G.Le Clerc. *Roscoe Papers*, 832, 833.

<sup>65</sup>William Roscoe, *Life*, preface, p.xiii.

<sup>66</sup>William Roscoe to Lord Lansdowne, 23rd December, 1793, *Roscoe Papers*, 2322.

<sup>67</sup>William Roscoe, *Life*, p.110.

country where they were cultivated and protected.<sup>68</sup>

Roscoe also disclaimed the book had any relevance for contemporary problems; 'the truth is, it is a tale of other times, bearing but little on the momentous occurrences of the present day'.<sup>69</sup> This denial, however, may have been Roscoe's only way of reconciling his adulation of Lorenzo's cultural achievements, with the autocratic means by which Lorenzo controlled and maintained power. The book tapped into a willing and ready market of readers and became an immediate success.<sup>70</sup> Roscoe sold the copyright for £1,200 and by 1799 the book had been translated into French, German and Italian, an edition appearing in the United States in 1803. The book stimulated English interest in the Italian Renaissance and earned Roscoe a national and international reputation as a writer and historian. Horace Walpole considered Roscoe, 'by far the best of our historians both for beauty and style and for deep reflections'.<sup>71</sup> William Roscoe now stood as a living symbol that humble origins, a remote northern birthplace,<sup>72</sup> and the pursuit of a business career were not incompatible with the highest intellectual achievement:-

I can scarcely conceive a greater miracle than Roscoe's history - that a man whose dialect was that of a barbarian and from whom

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<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*, preface, p.xvi.

<sup>69</sup>William Roscoe to Lord Lansdowne, nd.(c.1795), *Roscoe Papers* 2327.

<sup>70</sup>For the eighteenth-century interest in Italy, see, Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People; England 1727-1783*, The New Oxford History of England Series, (O.U.P., 1989), pp.312-313. For London and the cult of Venice, see, Linda Colley, *Britons; Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (London, 1992), pp.62-64.

<sup>71</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, p.162.

<sup>72</sup>In the preface to the book, Roscoe wrote of the difficulties of living in 'a remote part...deprived of many advantages peculiar to seats of learning'. *Life*, p.xiii.

in years of familiar conversation I have never heard an above average observation, whose parents were servants.....that such a man should undertake and write the history of the 14th and 15th centuries, and the revival of Greek and Roman learning, that such a history should be to the full, as polished in style as that of Gibbon and much more simple and perspicuous...is really *too*<sup>73</sup>

The book also brought some reappraisal of Liverpool's image. One critic marvelled that this 'model of literary endeavour' had been written and printed 'in the remote commercial town of Liverpool, where nothing is heard of but Guinea ships, slaves, blacks and merchandise'.<sup>74</sup> On Roscoe's insistence the book had been published in Liverpool, under his control.<sup>75</sup> He believed that 'the town which cannot produce books finely must remain a mere intellectual suburb of the town that can', and the printing of the book did much to prove 'to the world that London itself could not surpass this town in some kinds of elegant typography'.<sup>76</sup>

The acclaim accorded to William Roscoe can scarcely have failed to impress Liverpool's elite. The equating of Liverpool with Renaissance Florence must also have been gratifying. For despite Roscoe's assertions that the book had no contemporary relevance, it was surely to Renaissance Florence that Roscoe looked for a role model for his native town. The efficacy of Lorenzo's

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<sup>73</sup>Sir Herbert Maxwell (ed.), *The Creevey Papers. A Selection from the Correspondence and Diaries of Thomas Creevey, M.P. born 1768- died 1838*, 2 vols. (London, 1904); 2, pp.256-7.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Henry Roscoe, 1, p.169

<sup>75</sup>Roscoe had encouraged John M'Creery to establish a press in Liverpool. The two men developed a life-long friendship. M'Creery died in 1831, the same year as Roscoe. Henry Roscoe, 1, p.152.

<sup>76</sup>Graham Murphy, *William Roscoe: His early ideals and influence*, (Liverpool, 1981), p.26. See also *Roscoe Papers* 2320. P.McIntyre, 'Historical Sketch of the Liverpool Library, T.H.S.L.C.', 9, (1857), p.238.

academies, schools, libraries, associations, providing Roscoe with the blueprint for the future construction of a similar infrastructure in Liverpool. Looking to Renaissance Florence for a role model rather than to the metropolis, would have been particularly appealing to Liverpool's merchants, who sought to rival rather than emulate London.<sup>77</sup> The wide impression made by Roscoe's Italian vision is shown by the way it continued to be evoked, after his death, by men of all shades of political and religious opinions - in public speeches, lectures, and in papers read at Liverpool scientific and literary societies.<sup>78</sup> Northcote Parkinson believed that the importance of the publication of Roscoe's book cannot be overemphasized - it was 'undoubtedly a turning point - if not the starting point of Liverpool's cultural life'<sup>79</sup>

In 1796 Roscoe retired from the practice of law - a profession which he claimed to have found little to his taste.<sup>80</sup> However, as Roscoe still had a large family to educate and support it is to be assumed that it had at least proved very

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<sup>77</sup>For the growing assertiveness and competitiveness of provincial towns *vis-à-vis* London, see P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*, (O.U.P., 1982), pp.9-16. Although contemporary observers in other provincial towns drew analogies with Italy, only Liverpool was in the fortunate position of having the country's acknowledged leading authority on the Medici, as a native.

<sup>78</sup>For example, Samuel Holme, a staunch Anglican and one of the architects of popular Toryism in Liverpool in the mid-nineteenth century. see, John Belchem, 'The Church, the Throne and the People: Ships, Colonies and Commerce: Popular Toryism in early-Victorian Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 134, (1994). Solomon Gibson, *On the Public Improvements of Liverpool*, A paper read before the Liverpool Polytechnic Society, 11th November, 1844.

<sup>79</sup>C. Northcote Parkinson, p.3.

<sup>80</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 3490, 3491, 1335. Despite his dislike of his profession, Roscoe was evidently a successful and busy lawyer. *Roscoe Papers*, 224, 226. In 1797, Roscoe entered his name as a member of Grey's Inn, presumably with the aim of being called to the Bar, but he never followed this up. See, Thomas Stewart Traill, *Memoir of William Roscoe*, (Liverpool, 1853), p.24.

profitable.<sup>81</sup> His book having established his position in the literary world, he now proposed to devote the major part of his time to literary studies,<sup>82</sup> his collection of paintings and prints,<sup>83</sup> his land reclamation schemes at Chat and Trafford Mosses and botanical science. In 1797, Roscoe visited London where he was welcomed into the leading literary circles and had meetings with Lord Lansdowne, Fox and Grey. In his home town Roscoe remained on the defensive, opposed to prevailing political opinion in the town. He was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the political scene:-

I much fear the predominating idea of men of all parties is individual personal aggrandizement, and that the welfare of the country is only a secondary consideration; or rather perhaps a cloak to cover their real purpose.<sup>84</sup>

Evidence that Roscoe's new found cultural eminence had impressed his fellow townsmen came in 1797, with the founding of the Liverpool Athenaeum.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Sellers states that the source of Roscoe's large fortune is not altogether clear, but there is no suggestion that he was ever involved in the slave trade. Roscoe denied ever having 'any share in a shipping adventure'. *Roscoe Papers* 1758. Fortunes could be, and were, made in the legal profession at this time. See Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (Penguin, London, 1990), p.75-6.

<sup>82</sup>In a letter to the Earl of Orford, Roscoe had complained of his exhaustion in trying to complete his book while fulfilling his business commitments. *Roscoe Papers* 2834, April 15th, 1795.

<sup>83</sup>Roscoe's fondness for collecting led to some sly teasing from William Rathbone - 'I told my wife last night how pleasantly you argue on the folly of toiling for wealth and yet how happily you indulge yourself in all that wealth can purchase...I cannot help but smile that you should so earnestly contend for avoiding the toil of wealth and yet cultivate the relish in yourself'. *Roscoe Papers* 3051, William Rathbone to William Roscoe, December 13th, 1796.

<sup>84</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, p.214.

<sup>85</sup>The original idea for the Athenaeum is credited to Edward Rogers who had visited a similar institution in Newcastle Upon Tyne - possibly the Literary and Philosophical Society, Dr. John Rutter, and Thomas Taylor. For a full account of the founding of the Athenaeum, see, George T. Shaw, *History of The Athenaeum Liverpool 1798-1898*, (Liverpool, 1898); F. Harlan Taylor, *Liverpool and the Athenaeum*, (Liverpool, 1965).

The Athenaeum was to consist of a newsroom<sup>86</sup> and reference library. Although a circulating library had existed in the town since 1758,<sup>87</sup> it was considered to be 'not sufficiently select in its choice of books' and to have too many subscribers.<sup>88</sup> Roscoe attended a meeting at the Theatre Tavern,<sup>89</sup> where a prospectus outlining the proposals was drawn up and later circulated to the leading 500 citizens of the town to ascertain public support.<sup>90</sup> Despite the presence among the founders of men associated with reform and dissent the proposals met with an immediate response. Civic pride apparently overcame any reservations and the Common Council proceeded to look on the Athenaeum with favour, seeing it as a decided ornament to the town and granting it the reversionary interest in its premises. The first president, George Case, was himself a member of the Council and the Mayor was elected an honorary member. The initial issue of 350 shares at ten guineas was quickly taken up. In 1799, 75 more shares were offered, but now at twenty guineas, these were taken up in forty eight hours. The following year another 75 shares were offered at thirty guineas and this time it took only twenty four hours for them to be taken. The subscription list then closed and the value of the shares jumped

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<sup>86</sup>There was only one newsroom in the town at this time, attached to Bates'Hotel. Dr.Rutter, a subscriber, complained that it was constantly overcrowded and used by soldiers and visitors. Shaw,p.2.

<sup>87</sup>See Chapter 1.

<sup>88</sup>'Outlines of a Plan for a Library and Newsroom', *Holt and Gregson papers*, 8, L.R.O..

<sup>89</sup>Also present were William Clarke, Joshua Lace (solicitor and Roscoe's ex-partner), Dr.Rutter, Edward Rogers and Thomas Taylor. Dr.Currie was absent through a professional engagement.

<sup>90</sup>This number is a useful indicator of those who were considered by their contemporaries to comprise the Liverpool élite.

immediately to thirty five and even forty guineas. Inside two years, membership of the Athenaeum had become an essential emblem of status for Liverpool's commercial aristocracy.<sup>91</sup> This legitimation may have been all the more important to those merchants who were concerned to refute the accusations of the anti-slavery lobby that Liverpool man and humanitarian man were incompatible terms.<sup>92</sup> The catalogue of the Athenaeum of 1864 is at pains to point out that:-

although the proposal for founding the Athenaeum was brought forward at a time of great political excitement....this state of public feeling was not allowed to prejudice the design. On the contrary, men of all shades of opinion, political and religious, concurred with equal zeal in promoting the success of an institution designed to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

An analysis of the initial subscription list confirms that this judgement is based on fact rather than rhetoric.<sup>94</sup> The newsroom opened on January 1st 1799, and the Library on July 1st of the same year - 'It was then and still remains a favourite and exclusive resort of Merchants and other gentlemen of position in Liverpool, and is therefore looked upon as one of the finest institutions of its

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<sup>91</sup>Thomas Fletcher was one of the original members. After the collapse of his business in 1833 he was forced to relinquish his share. The importance attached to membership is reflected by the action of his fellow-Unitarian Charles Booth, who presented Fletcher with a share as a gift. *Autobiographical Memoirs of Thomas Fletcher of Liverpool obit 1850: written in the year 1843*, (Liverpool, 1893), p.67.

<sup>92</sup>See Chapter 1, pp.40.

<sup>93</sup>*Catalogue of the Athenaeum Library, Liverpool*, (London, 1864), Preface xiii. In 1800, Samuel Taylor Coleridge noticed the way the foundation of the Athenaeum had 'stifled party spirit' in the town. Coleridge to Thomas Poole, July 24th, 1800, Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, 1, p.145.

<sup>94</sup>The committee included six members of the Council, the Rector of St Peter's Church, James Currie and William Clarke.

kind in the town'.<sup>95</sup> William Roscoe was vice-president of the Athenaeum from 1799-1801 and president 1803-1804 and remained an active committee member, devoting much time and attention to the Athenaeum library. In 1817, as a consequence of Roscoe's financial troubles, a number of his personal books were purchased by his friends and donated to the Athenaeum to form a 'Roscoe Collection'.<sup>96</sup>

The founding of the Athenaeum and its Roscoe connection also helped to establish Liverpool itself, as a cultural role model. The Boston Athenaeum, founded in 1807 based its laws on the Liverpool institution, with one of its founders claiming the intention to 'make ours as much like that as the different circumstances of the countries will admit'.<sup>97</sup> The Bostonian, Joseph Buckminster, reported to his Anthology Society in 1806:-

The City of Liverpool has now reached that point of wealth, at which societies, which have been hitherto merely mercenary and commercial, begin to turn their attention to learning and the fine arts, that is they perceive that something more than great riches is necessary to make a place worthy of being visited, and interesting enough to be admired.<sup>98</sup>

In 1799 Roscoe purchased Allerton Hall, six miles from Liverpool, where he

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<sup>95</sup>James Touzeau, *The Rise and Progress of Liverpool from 1551-1835*, 2 vols., (London, 1864), 2, p.684. In 1803, the Athenaeum was emulated by the Lyceum, which was opened in Bold Street and housed the Liverpool Library. The Athenaeum was, however, regarded as more exclusive than the Lyceum. see B.G.Orchard, *Liverpool's Legion of Honour*, (Birkenhead, 1893), p.54.

<sup>96</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 454.

<sup>97</sup>Quoted in Storey, p.186.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid*, p.184. Interestingly, Storey, although stating that there were also institutional analogies with London, claims that 'London and the Londoners were, in a sense, merely Liverpool and William Roscoe writ large.'



commenced writing his *Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth*<sup>99</sup> and settled down to enjoy rural pursuits. His retirement from the business world, however, was to be short-lived. The bank of his old friend William Clarke experienced difficulties and Roscoe's assistance was requested to regularise the bank's legal affairs. With his friend's bankruptcy a real possibility, Roscoe felt it was impossible to refuse - 'The step I took was not a matter of choice and inclination, but of imperious necessity .... it was the irresistible claim of friendship'.<sup>100</sup> Roscoe's intervention proved successful and the admission of the wealthy merchant Thomas Leyland as a partner in 1802 further secured the bank's position.<sup>101</sup> In the same year came the successful launch of a long-held ambition of Roscoe's - the opening of a Botanic Garden in Liverpool.<sup>102</sup>

Roscoe first considered the viability of a Botanic Garden for Liverpool in 1799. It was to be funded by subscription and the allotting of shares. In conjunction with his friends Dr.Rutter and Dr.Bostock, Roscoe drew up a prospectus in which he made clear the importance he placed on the study of nature in man's artistic and cultural development:-

Even the cultivation of the fine arts, however alluring in its progress, and dignified in its object, must yield the superiority to the study of nature; for who will venture to compare the most

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<sup>99</sup>Here again Roscoe remained in England and was indebted to his friends for his research. *Roscoe Papers*, 2236, 2237, 2238,2239, 2240.

<sup>100</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, pp.247-8.

<sup>101</sup>In 1802 the bank traded as 'Leyland, Clarkes and Roscoe'. For a full account see John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*,(Liverpool, 1906), pp.56-83.

<sup>102</sup>Roscoe was again following an Italian example - the first Botanic Gardens were laid out in Pisa in 1543, Florence and Padua in 1545, Bologna in 1567. Britain followed suit in Oxford,1621; Edinburgh,1667; Chelsea, 1673 and Kew,1759.

finished productions of the painter and the sculptor with the originals whence they derived their ideas of beauty and proportion?<sup>103</sup>

However, Roscoe the businessman, did not lose sight of the economics of the situation and took care to appeal to the commercial instincts of the town's wealthy merchants as well as their cultural aspirations. The garden would be a place of beauty and a source of 'elegant amusement', but it could also, through botanical experiments, contribute to advances in medicine, agriculture and manufacturing. Even the subscription might be recouped by the distribution of rare seeds and surplus plants amongst the subscribers. This two-pronged appeal (beauty allied to utility), proved successful and the shares in the garden, priced at twelve guineas with an annual subscription of two guineas, were quickly appropriated. As with the founding of the Athenaeum, civic pride allied with self-interest again overcame any antipathy towards the founders and the subscription list was representative of wealthy men of all shades of political and religious opinions.<sup>104</sup> A triangular plot of five acres of land, bounded by Myrtle Street, Melville Street and Olive Street, was granted by the Corporation for the use of the institution and the Garden was opened in the summer of 1802. Roscoe, now president, gave the opening address in which he outlined plans for a library of works of natural history and a first class herbarium (a reference

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<sup>103</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, p.254.

<sup>104</sup> William Roscoe was the first president, with the committee including members of the Town Council (Thomas Earle) as well as members of the Roscoe circle (James Currie, William Clarke, Rev. John Yates, William Rathbone). Of the subscribers whose occupation is linkable, 102 were merchants or brokers; 9 medical men; 6 clergymen; 4 bankers; 4 attorneys; 2 manufacturers; 2 sailmakers. By 1810 the number of subscribers had increased to 450.

collection of preserved plant specimens).<sup>105</sup> Liverpool's Botanic Garden had already, claimed Roscoe, 'excited a spirit of emulation in some of the principal towns of the Kingdom, where proposals have been published for institutions on a similar plan'.<sup>106</sup> Promoting and extending the collection of plants became a prime concern of Roscoe's. Together with the curator John Shepherd, Roscoe enlisted the help of ship's captains and travelling merchants to bring back rare plants from overseas and Roscoe entered into correspondence with anyone whom he felt might further the Garden's cause. One of the first of his correspondents was Sir James Edward Smith, then President of the Linnaen Society of London and the foremost botanist of his time. A life-long friendship developed between the two men and Smith visited Liverpool on a number of occasions, delivering lectures to the proprietors - 'My lectures are numerous and brilliantly attended and seem to stir up a great ardour and taste for botany'.<sup>107</sup> Roscoe was elected a Fellow of the Linnaen Society in 1804<sup>108</sup> and in 1806 travelled to London to present the first of three papers before the Society. The publication of this paper served to establish Roscoe's name in

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<sup>105</sup>Roscoe had purchased for himself the herbarium of Dr. Forster of Halle, consisting of plants collected during Captain Cook's second voyage around the world. He presented this to the Botanic Garden. Henry Roscoe, p.259.

<sup>106</sup>*An Address delivered before the Proprietors of the Botanic Garden in Liverpool, previous to opening the Garden, May 3rd 1802*, Liverpool, 1802, p.29. This did not only apply to Britain. The Botanic Garden at Philadelphia, for example, was also based on the plan of the Liverpool institution. Henry Roscoe, 2, p.455.

<sup>107</sup>Henry Roscoe, 1, p.263. Other correspondents included sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society; Dr. Nathaniel Wallich (1786-1854), Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden; Dr. William Carey (1761-1834), who established a garden at Serampore which became famous. There are over 200 letters in the Liverpool Record Office between William Roscoe and his botanical associates.

<sup>108</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 2398.

botanical circles in London.<sup>109</sup> In 1808, at Roscoe's instigation, the committee of the Botanic Garden agreed to fund, an innovative expedition to mid-west America, led by John Bradbury, to collect rare American plants. Bradbury was away three years (1809-11) returning to Liverpool in 1811 with a unique collection of plants.<sup>110</sup> By 1820, the Botanic Garden was becoming renowned for the cultivation of many species of orchids and Liverpool became widely regarded as the main centre for orchids in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>111</sup> The Garden also fulfilled a social role, special functions being organised, which were attended by the proprietors and their families, who would wander round the grounds or through the conservatories to the strains of music provided by a band hired for the occasion.<sup>112</sup> The Garden attracted distinguished visitors, including the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence<sup>113</sup> and was seen by a contemporary historian as affording 'an additional proof of the advances made by the inhabitants of Liverpool in the

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<sup>109</sup>A new arrangement of Plants of the Monandrian Class usually called Scitamineae', published in the *Transactions of the Linnaen Society*, vol.8, 1807, pp.330-357.

<sup>110</sup>For an account of this unusual expedition see.H.Stansfield, 'Plant Collecting in Missouri; A Liverpool Expedition, 1809-11', *Liverpool Bulletin*, Vol.1, October, 1951.

<sup>111</sup>Although popularity of orchids waned around 1890, an orchid collection remained a feature of the Garden until the glasshouse collection was destroyed during the second world war. The work of rebuilding the collection was started at Calderstones and Harthill after the war. *Liverpool International Garden Festival Official Guide*, (Liverpool,1984), p.200.

<sup>112</sup>According to Maria Edgeworth it was this social aspect 'as a public parade walk to shew themselves' which held the most appeal for the Proprietors and their families. Maria Edgeworth to Mrs Edgeworth, 16th October, 1830, *Letters*, p.416. Access to the garden was restricted and it was not until 1840, when the Garden had moved to a larger plot in Edge Lane, that the Corporation purchased the right of free access for the whole of the town's population on a Sunday and one week-day.

<sup>113</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 176.

cultivation of taste and the liberal arts'.<sup>114</sup> It was important in providing a role model, not only for other towns, but as an inspiration to succeeding generations of Liverpool citizens to endow open spaces and parks in their native town.<sup>115</sup>

In 1805, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth* was published<sup>116</sup> Roscoe's established reputation ensured the book's success, but reviews were less favourable. Roscoe was accused of inaccuracies, misrepresentation and using the work as a vehicle to express his own beliefs and opinions.<sup>117</sup> Roscoe answered his critics in a preface to the second edition but denied being perturbed by his critics - 'To malicious interpretations, ignorant cavills, and illiberal abuse, I entertain the most perfect indifference'; however, significantly, he now turned his attention away from any further historical writings on Italy.<sup>118</sup>

1806 heralded Roscoe's return to the political spotlight with his election as M.P.

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<sup>114</sup>Thomas Troughton, *The History of Liverpool, from the Earliest Authenticated Period to the Present Time*, (Liverpool, 1810), p.208.

<sup>115</sup>See Murphy, p.32.

<sup>116</sup>The book was again published in Liverpool by M'Creery. Roscoe sold one half of the copyright to Cadell and Davies for £2,000. It was translated into French, German and Italian.

<sup>117</sup>The *Christian Observer* declared that Roscoe was 'uniformly hostile to Christianity' and charged him with having 'received a retaining fee from the Pope'. The Pope showed his opinion by placing the Italian translation on his list of banned literature. See Edward Baines, *The History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster*, 2 vols, (London, 1870), 2, p.378.

<sup>118</sup>Thomas Roscoe, 'Memoir of the Author', *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, (London, 1836 edition), p.xli. 1805 was a particularly sad year for Roscoe, it saw the death of James Currie and William Clarke, two of his closest friends.

for Liverpool.<sup>119</sup> Roscoe's election was not indicative of a sea-change in attitudes among his fellow-townsmen - references to the slave trade were minimal throughout the electoral campaign. With Roscoe now 'in the very zenith of his career', his standing in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen was such as to convince his supporters, that any political prejudices of the voters would be outweighed by their respect for Roscoe, the cultural and philanthropic icon.<sup>120</sup>

The Liverpool freemen were urged to:-

**View him as a HUSBAND, a FATHER, a FRIEND, a COUNSELLOR; the Votary of Science, the Promoter of the Arts!...Look at the School for the Blind, the ATHENAEUM, the LYCEUM, the BOTANIC GARDEN...Such is MR.ROSCOE; such FREEMEN OF LIVERPOOL! is the Man now offered to your choice. His Virtues and his Deeds have already immortalized his Name. It will be recorded and revered by your latest Posterity<sup>121</sup>**

Roscoe's success, however, probably owed most to the unpopularity of the other candidates and to extensive bribery.<sup>122</sup> In the Commons, Roscoe spoke and voted against the slave trade; advocated concessions to Catholics and in a debate on the Poor law raised the question of a national system of education.<sup>123</sup> On the fall of the government over Catholic emancipation in April 1807, Roscoe returned to Liverpool, which was now facing the effects of abolition. He was greeted by a hostile crowd (mainly seamen from the slaving

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<sup>119</sup> Although Roscoe had played no active role in the political arena since 1793, he had gained a reputation as an anti-war pamphleteer.

<sup>120</sup> James Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1875), 1, p.271.

<sup>121</sup> 1806 Election handbill; *Rathbone Family Papers*, 11.4.16., p.89.

<sup>122</sup> About £12,000 was paid out, most of it in direct bribery. Sellers, p.56.

<sup>123</sup> Roscoe also urged the opening up of the East India trade, to compensate the Liverpool merchants for any losses incurred by the abolition of the slave trade.

ships) and in the ensuing mêlée one of Roscoe's supporters was killed.<sup>124</sup> Roscoe who had been far from happy in London,<sup>125</sup> his difficulties compounded by business problems (Thomas Leyland withdrew his investment in 1806 and entered banking on his own account), declined to stand again. Despite Roscoe's protestations, his supporters submitted his name with the outcome of the election resulting in a heavy defeat for Roscoe. This time the image of Roscoe the 'townsman' was superseded by that of Roscoe the politician - one workman was said to have exclaimed, 'He is an ornament to the town, but what have we poor folk to do with ornaments?'.<sup>126</sup> Roscoe retreated from active politics<sup>127</sup> and refused, on religious grounds, the offer of a deputy-lieutenancy, from the Earl of Derby.<sup>128</sup>

In 1814, Roscoe was a founder member of the Liverpool Royal Institution.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>For an account of the riot, see, Emily A.Rathbone, pp.290-291.

<sup>125</sup>Roscoe was very apprehensive over his ability to fulfil the expectations of his Liverpool supporters. *Roscoe Papers*, 3550, 3548, 3549, 3552, 3553, 3054. William Rathbone, in particular urged Roscoe to make his voice heard in the Commons *Roscoe Papers*, 3054, 3058,3059,3060. These fears were compounded by the separation from his family and brought on a recurrence of a nervous disorder. Jane Roscoe's arrival in London did much to restore his equilibrium,. *Roscoe Papers*, 2775, 3073.

<sup>126</sup>Quoted in Sellers, p.61.

<sup>127</sup>Although Roscoe's career as an M.P. was now at an end, this did not signal an end to his interest in politics and he continued writing political pamphlets,his anti-war activities and his support for reform. For an account of Roscoe's political life after 1807, see C.D.Watkinson, *The Liberal Party on Merseyside in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1967, pp.45-68.

<sup>128</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 1190, 1191. Roscoe was debarred from office under the Test Act. He felt that it was only by people, such as himself, adhering strictly to the letter of the law, was their any hope of a repeal.

<sup>129</sup>For a full account of the founding of the Royal Institution and its place in the cultural infrastructure of Liverpool, see Chapter 3.

He was the chairman of the General Committee formed in 1814 and the first president in 1822 - despite acute personal financial problems, culminating in bankruptcy in 1820.<sup>130</sup> As with the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden, the venture unified the town's elite and gained wide support.<sup>131</sup> The plan of the Royal Institution was a reflection of Roscoe's broad intellectual interests in literature, art, science and education. Roscoe was asked to assume the mantle of professor of history, a position he accepted although he declined to lecture. On the 25th November 1817, at the opening of the Royal Institution, William Roscoe delivered an inaugural address before a large audience, including members of the Town Council.<sup>132</sup> In this address, he questioned the idea of 'art for art's sake', and attempted to justify his thesis that literature and art could not and should not be disassociated from commerce:

If you will protect the arts, the arts will, and ought to remunerate you. To suppose that they are to be encouraged upon some abstract and disinterested plan, from which all idea of utility shall be excluded, is to suppose that a building can be erected without a foundation. There is not a greater error, than to think that the arts can subsist upon the generosity of the public.....Utility and pleasure are thus bound together in an indissoluble chain, and what the author of nature has joined let no man put asunder.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>The failure of Roscoe's bank was a factor in the delay in the opening of the Royal Institution. It finally opened in 1817.

<sup>131</sup>Roscoe's contribution to his native town was officially recognised in 1815 when he was granted the freedom of the town, 'in testimony of the high sense entertained by the Council, not only of his great literary talents but of his private worth and value as a member of society, so justly appreciated by all his fellow-townsmen.' *Liverpool Town Book, 1804-1815*, 6th April 1815, p.503.

<sup>132</sup>Roscoe stated that the Royal Institution 'has received the liberal support of the Municipal Authorities of the place in which we live, whose members now honour us with their presence.' William Roscoe, *On the Origin and Vicissitudes of Literature, Science and Art and their Influence on the Present State of Society; a Discourse, delivered on the opening of the Liverpool Royal Institution, 25th November, 1817*, (Liverpool, 1817), p.7.

<sup>133</sup>*ibid*, pp.56-7, 72.



He traced a historical link between intellectual improvement and commerce, concluding that 'in every place where commerce has been cultivated upon great and enlightened principles, a considerable proficiency has always been made in liberal studies and pursuits'.<sup>134</sup> He reiterated his belief in the significance of cultural associations, using Liverpool's Athenaeum and Lyceum as contemporary examples of the efficacy of such organisations. The Royal Institution would now confirm Liverpool as a cultural as well as a commercial centre of excellence:-

It is to the union of the pursuits of literature with the affairs of the world, that we are to look forwards towards the improvement of both; towards the stability and foundation of the one, and the grace and ornament of the other; and this union is most likely to be effected by establishments in the nature of the present Institution.<sup>135</sup>

If Roscoe's celebration of commerce was pleasing to his merchant audience, his contention that manufacturing was less suited to intellectual development would have also ensured him a warm reception:-

The effect of manufactures is different and on the whole not so conducive ..to the formation of intellectual character...it is much to be feared that the unavoidable tendency of these employments is to contract or deaden the exertions of the intellect, and to reduce the powers both of body and mind to a machine, in which the individual almost loses his identity and becomes only a part of a more complicated apparatus.<sup>136</sup>

This was reassurance indeed for Liverpool's gentlemen and a heart-warming

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p.46.

<sup>135</sup> *On the Vicissitudes*, p.74.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, p.44.

contrast with the neighbouring Manchester men!<sup>137</sup>

A printed version of the Discourse was published and received wide reviews. Roscoe was recognised as 'a living witness that in no situation is elegant literature irreconcilable with attention to the more active duties of life'.<sup>138</sup> The Liverpool merchants received equal praise as a reward for their investment:-

Of all examples of prompt and enlightened liberality among English merchants, we do not hesitate to say, that we consider this as by far the most remarkable. If things go on as they have begun, we expect that ere long the effects of their exertions will be such as not only to create a mighty improvement in their own neighbourhood, but to excite in many other quarters a spirit of honourable emulation.<sup>139</sup>

From America, came praise from Thomas Jefferson, who recognised the Institution as a prototype for the new university he was then establishing.<sup>140</sup> Dr. Aikin writing to congratulate Roscoe on the Discourse, was equally certain of the importance of the new Royal Institution, seeing its potential to 'one day convert Liverpool into an Athens or a Florence'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>This may well have been rhetoric on Roscoe's part, aimed at pleasing his audience. In the printed version of the address, Roscoe, avoids giving offence to a wider readership by adding a footnote, in which he claims that recent improvements in manufacturing rendered his comments inapplicable to the present day.

<sup>138</sup>'William Roscoe... was always cited as an example to be followed by the Bristol merchant classes'. Michael Neve, 'Science in a commercial city: Bristol 1820-60', in Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province; Science in British culture, 1780-1850*, (London, 1983), p.202.

<sup>139</sup>*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol.ii, February 1818, pp.537, 535.

<sup>140</sup>Thomas Jefferson to William Roscoe, 27th December 1820, *Roscoe Papers* 2207.

<sup>141</sup>Henry Roscoe, p.163.

Roscoe's bankruptcy in 1820 finally relieved him of his business commitments<sup>142</sup> and his last years were devoted to intellectual pursuits - writings on prison reform, the publication of a monograph on Monandrian Plants and the cataloguing of Thomas Coke of Holkham's collection of Italian manuscripts. He died at his home in Lodge Lane on the 30th June, 1831, eagerly looking forward to the anticipated Reform Bill. William Roscoe was buried in the grounds of Renshaw Street Unitarian Chapel, his life-long friend, the Reverend William Shepherd conducting the funeral service.<sup>143</sup> In an obituary in a local newspaper, July 15th, 1831, Liverpool proudly claimed him as their own:-

The Learned of all countries have heard with surprise that Liverpool, once only known for its commercial wealth, and its local and political importance, has given birth to the most distinguished of the historians of Europe: and that, from this great mercantile city, as from a second Florence, have issued works which have shed light upon the most important era in the annals of Italy.... Here he has lived and here he has died; here he commenced his literary labours, and pursued and perfected his historical researches.<sup>144</sup>

During his lifetime, William Roscoe had, indeed, exercised a remarkable influence in his native town. This influence seems all the more remarkable in the light of Roscoe's political and religious opinions. 'Church and State. King and

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<sup>142</sup>The commercial panic at the end of the end of the Napoleonic war in 1816 caused a run on the bank. After four years of struggling to realise his assets, Roscoe was declared bankrupt in 1820. Roscoe moved to a small house in Lodge Lane. He lived on an annuity purchased by a group of his friends, and £100 p.a. pension as 'Royal Associate' of the Royal Society of Literature. Hughes, pp.64-69.

<sup>143</sup>Henry Roscoe, pp.421-422.

<sup>144</sup>Quoted in Henry Roscoe, pp.477-478.

Constitution'<sup>145</sup> was the creed of the majority of Liverpool's merchants and yet these same men offered enthusiastic support for Roscoe's cultural foundations. Although there is ample attestation as to Roscoe's personal qualities, it is doubtful whether these would have carried sufficient weight to overcome the merchants' prejudices, and the historiography on Roscoe does little to explain their support.<sup>146</sup> It seems likely, however, that although the typical Liverpool merchant may well have been a 'mercantilist, materialist and an empiricist',<sup>147</sup> he was also a pragmatist and the same flair and judgement which Liverpool's merchants showed in the economic rise of the port would surely have also been in evidence in their efforts to construct a cultural identity consonant with their economic status. Roscoe, with his national and internationally acknowledged cultural credentials and his generalist approach to the arts,<sup>148</sup> was recognised by the merchants as the best man, in the right place, at the right time and they were happy to adopt Roscoe, the man of letters as a cultural icon, while rejecting Roscoe, the radical politician. His analysis of the Medici, which rewrote history in a way that allowed the merchants to celebrate themselves further confirmed his selection as the cultural leader of the town. Roscoe's dream, however, of fusing culture with commerce was always

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<sup>145</sup>Checkland, p.59.

<sup>146</sup>Most recently Edward Morris suggests that Roscoe stood out in Liverpool, because 'there were not many other likeable men in early nineteenth-century Liverpool', but Morris admits reaching this conclusion only in the absence of any other explanation. Morris, p.11.

<sup>147</sup>Checkland, p.58.

<sup>148</sup>In his broad intellectual interests, Roscoe belonged more to the eighteenth century classical humanitarian school, than the mercantilist and industrial nineteenth. This approach was to hold less appeal to later aspirants of middle class status. Hence the growth of more specialist societies from the late 1830s. See Chapter 4.

based on his optimistic view of human nature rather than on reality, and as he shut his eyes to some of the less attractive features of Lorenzo's Florence, so too, he may have shut his eyes to the reasons behind the merchants' support. Altruism played little part in many of the merchants search for culture. For these men, polite culture was a means of defining themselves as the elite of the town; a valuable accoutrement to their status as gentlemen, a symbol of a divided order.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>See Chapter 3 for the juxtaposition of the Royal Institution with later cultural institutions.

### **Chapter 3:-The Scholar Businessman - The Liverpool Royal Institution**

*An attempt to institute in the midst of a great trading city a place which should be a perpetual focus for every intellectual interest, a perpetual radiator of sane and lofty views of life, a perpetual reminder of the higher needs and aspirations of men in the midst of the fierce roar of commercial competition and the clangorous appeal of those surroundings to the vulgar lust of money.<sup>1</sup>*

The founding of the Liverpool Royal Institution was the culmination of a generation of cultural endeavour - a realisation of William Roscoe's dream of establishing a prestigious cultural centre which would exemplify the Liverpool conjunction of commerce and culture. Although, as the choice of name suggests, it was partly inspired by its London namesake, it was never planned as purely a scientific establishment.<sup>2</sup> From the outset its stated aims were 'uncompromisingly cultural in character', a reflection of Roscoe's generalist approach to the arts. It played a significant part, particularly in its early years, in enhancing Liverpool's status by gaining recognition as one of the major provincial organisations devoted to the diffusion of learning.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of the Institution had been considered in 1813, but the first evidence of communal action came on 28th February 1814, when William Corrie invited thirty-six men to meet at the Liverpool Arms, Castle Street, to consider 'the expediency of establishing in Liverpool an Institution for the delivery of lectures

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<sup>1</sup>J.Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, (London, 1907), p.293.

<sup>2</sup>London's Royal Institution was established in 1799 with the aim (even though it did not in fact develop on such strictly technological lines) of diffusing a knowledge of applied science. Thomas Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*, (Liverpool, 1970), pp.113-114.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p.114.

on Literary and Scientific subjects'.<sup>4</sup> The meeting was chaired by the Unitarian banker Benjamin Arthur Heywood, with William Corrie acting as secretary. The scheme met with approval and after further preliminary discussions,<sup>5</sup> a public meeting was held on the 31st March 1814 at which the proposals were outlined and a unanimous resolution passed that 'a Society for promoting the increase and diffusion of Literature, Science, and the Arts, shall be established in Liverpool'. An application for a Charter of Incorporation was to be prepared, on the granting of which the new foundation would take the name of the 'Liverpool Royal Institution'. Future plans included the erection of a building which would house a museum and scientific apparatus, and the compilation of a lecture programme on varied subjects. Close co-operation with local cultural societies was to be a particular aim of the Institution, helping to co-ordinate and encourage cultural provision within the town. The figure of £20,000 was fixed as the target required to adequately fund the enterprise - a sum which the founders hoped to raise in shares of £100 and £50. Proprietors holding £100 shares were to be entitled to a silver ticket which granted free admission to the Institution to the shareholders and members of his family, with holders of £50 shares paying half price. The term 'family', the Resolution stipulated, was to

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<sup>4</sup>Although the original idea of the scheme has variously been attributed to Dr. Thomas Stewart Traill; William Corrie, a Liverpool broker; John Theodore Koster, an English merchant who had taken refuge in Liverpool after being driven from Lisbon by the French armies; and Major-General Alexander Dirom, a former Indian officer, at this time commander of the Liverpool garrison, all accounts acknowledge the importance of William Roscoe's influence. A.T.Brown, *Some Account of The Royal Institution School Liverpool; with a roll of masters and boys (1819-1892,A.D.)*, 2nd edn. (Liverpool, 1927), pp.8-10.

<sup>5</sup>Roscoe was not present at all the preliminary meetings but communicated by letter and was kept abreast of events by Heywood. 'B.A.Heywood to William Roscoe, 26th March 1814', *Liverpool Royal Institution Archives 1813-1822* (hereafter R.I. Arch) 50.4, Special Collections,S.J.L., University of Liverpool.

include wives, children, brothers and sisters of the Proprietors, but definitely 'not Housekeepers'- an indication from the outset that the Institution did not intend to draw its patrons from the lower classes.<sup>6</sup> In order to publicise and stimulate investment in the scheme, it was decided to print a report of the meeting's proceedings in the town's local newspapers.<sup>7</sup>

The response was immediate and favourable, with £13,500 being raised in the ensuing four weeks. Encouraged by this initial success, an eight member committee<sup>8</sup> prepared an address to the public, citing the rapid growth of the town as a major factor in the foundation of the Institution - 'Liverpool having tripled its population within the last forty years'. The Committee hoped that the Institution's role would prove multi-functional - providing not only increased educational facilities but also helping to upgrade Liverpool's cultural profile and possibly even bringing current and future commercial benefits to the town. The proposed schools, for example, would not only relieve local parents from 'the expence and anxiety of sending their Children to a distance', but might also attract trade to Liverpool from outlying areas by encouraging 'Strangers to bring their families here for that purpose....especially such as may intend any of their

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<sup>6</sup>This is confirmed by an analysis of the list of 202 subscribers in 1822. Out of the 170 subscribers whose occupation can be traced, 111 were engaged in business as merchants, brokers or bankers. Others included 6 physician/surgeons; 9 lawyers; 8 clergymen (4 Anglican, 4 Dissenting), and 12 who classified themselves as gentlemen. There were 4 lady proprietors including Mrs.Rathbone.

<sup>7</sup> *Resolutions, Reports and Bye-laws of the Liverpool Royal Institution, March 1814-March 1822*, 31st March 1814, (Liverpool,1822), pp.3-5. G34.32 (5), Special Collections, S.J.L. University of Liverpool.

<sup>8</sup>The members were B.A.Heywood, William Roscoe, John Gladstone, William Corrie, (business interests), Major-General Dirom, Rev.Theophilus Houlebrooke, Rev.William Shepherd, (Unitarian ministers), Dr.John Bostock.



Sons for Trade, as they could then unite here, in some measure, Scientific with Commercial Education.’<sup>9</sup> The Institution’s educational programme, however, was not aimed solely at the younger generation. Through its lecture courses, the Institution hoped to become ‘a rational source of Information and Recreation for Persons farther advanced in life’, keeping them abreast of the ‘rapid progress of Literature and Science which characterizes the present age’. Liverpool, the report concluded, had already achieved a measure of recognition as a literary centre and the wide-ranging lecture courses<sup>10</sup>would not only further enhance this reputation but would also gain Liverpool a correspondingly high scientific profile, and thus ‘in time render this great Commercial Town no less distinguished as a Seminary of Science, than as an Emporium of Commerce.’<sup>11</sup>

By the 20th June 1814 the target had not only been achieved but surpassed and at a meeting of the subscribers it was agreed that this figure should now be raised to £30,000, a third of which would be assigned to the building or purchasing of suitable premises.<sup>12</sup> A new twenty one man committee (chaired by William Roscoe) was appointed to direct and oversee the future development of the project. This committee included West India and American merchants,

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<sup>9</sup>The original aim of the founders was to design a school on a new model, incorporating commercial subjects into the curriculum. A.T.Brown, p.22.

<sup>10</sup>For the proposed lecture courses, see *Detailed Plan of the Liverpool Institution*, Appendix 2, p.252.

<sup>11</sup>*Address At a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Liverpool Institution, held on the 28th April*, (Liverpool, 1817), R.I.Arch. 50.9.

<sup>12</sup>This amount was never to be achieved, see, H.Ormerod, *The Liverpool Royal Institution; A Record and a Retrospect*, (Liverpool, 1953), p.11.

clergymen from the Established Church, Unitarian ministers and members of the Town Council,<sup>13</sup> reflecting from the outset the scheme's success in rallying support from, and unifying, otherwise divergent groups within Liverpool middle class society. A promise of financial help from the Town Council gave an early indication that the civic authorities too, recognised the benefits that such an Institution might bring - not only to the subscribers but to the civic and cultural image of Liverpool in the national and international arena.<sup>14</sup> Confident now of the viability of the project, the Committee set to work to prepare a 'Detailed Plan' of the new Institution in which it underlined its commitment to the 'promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts' and outlined the methods by which it was hoped this could be accomplished.<sup>15</sup>

However, it was three years before any further progress reports were issued. One reason for this delay was the failure of the firm of Roscoe, Clarke and Roscoe, the Institution's bankers, which resulted not only in a considerable loss of funds<sup>16</sup> but also enforced the retirement of William Roscoe from public life for twelve months. His financial plight and its repercussions on the Institution

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<sup>13</sup>*Resolutions and Reports etc.*, 20th June, 1814, p.7. The committee included four members of the Town Council, Samuel Staniforth, J.B.Aspinall, Thomas Earle and James Gerard M.D.; three Anglican clergymen and three Unitarian Ministers.

<sup>14</sup>'John Foster to William Roscoe, February 28th, 1815', R.I.Arch 50.23.

<sup>15</sup>The main areas were 'academical schools', public lectures, encouragement of local cultural societies, collections of books, specimens of art and natural history and a scientific laboratory. See 'Detailed Plan', Appendix 2, p.252.

<sup>16</sup>A meeting of the bank's creditors was advertised in the local press on 1st February 1816. The partners struggled to realise their assets, but were formally declared bankrupt in 1820. John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*, (Liverpool, 1906), pp.63-68. The amount lost to the Institution was about £5,000. Ormerod, p.12.

do not appear to have diminished the respect and high esteem which the Committee members felt for their chairman, and it has been seen as 'a tribute to his (Roscoe's) hold upon his associates that during those twelve months the Committee did little more than mark time'.<sup>17</sup> It was July 1817 before the Committee was able to report that preparations for the opening of the new Institution were now near to completion. Much time had been spent on the search for premises. The Town Council had initially agreed to provide a plot of land for the erection of a purpose-built building, but when none proved suitable, donated £1000 in lieu to the Institution's funds, a gesture - 'considered not only as proof of the liberality of the donors, but as evincing an opinion on their part, that this Institution is likely to prove an additional source of honour and utility, to the community over which they preside'.<sup>18</sup> The decision was then made to purchase a house in Colquitt Street for £9000<sup>19</sup> and to undertake major reconstruction work to the designs of the architect Edmund Aikin.<sup>20</sup> The lavish scale of the alterations was reflected in an expenditure of £11,020, making a total outlay considerably in excess of the previously agreed budget. The redesigned mansion included provision for a 'handsome apartment' for the use of the subscribers - 'supplied with such periodical works, on literary and scientific subjects as the Committee...may think proper', a large lecture theatre

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<sup>17</sup>A.T.Brown, p.12.

<sup>18</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.*, 17th July, 1817, p.11.

<sup>19</sup>Originally erected in 1799 as the house and offices of the merchant Thomas Parr.

<sup>20</sup>Edmund Aikin (1780-1820) was born in Warrington, the youngest son of John Aikin, M.D., a close friend of William Roscoe. His grandfather, John Aikin, was a tutor at Warrington Academy. See D.N.B.

capable of holding 500 people, committee rooms, a library, a museum, an observatory, a laboratory and a meeting room for the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. The entire second floor of the Institution was to be reserved for the establishment of the Academical Schools, with the Committee planning 'to carry into effect with the least possible delay so important a measure'.<sup>21</sup> Provision was also made for the Liverpool Academy of Artists.<sup>22</sup> Co-operation between the new Institution and the Liverpool Academy had always been an ambition of the founders<sup>23</sup> who believed that this could best be achieved by the offer of permanent accommodation:-

Hopes are also entertained, that by providing Apartments for the Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture, and for Schools of Practice, the Academy for encouraging these elegant Arts might be usefully connected with the Institution; and that other Branches of Drawing might there be taught, tending to improve the Taste in various departments of the Manufactures in this part of the kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

The Committee hoped to offset the cost of the planned 'spacious and elegant exhibition room' and proposed drawing school by reaching agreement with the trustees of the estate of Henry Blundell to invest a bequest of £1600 (plus £200 accrued interest) in the building fund of the Royal Institution.<sup>25</sup> Although investigations in 1817 revealed that the Academy had ceased to hold any

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<sup>21</sup>A.T.Brown, p.12.

<sup>22</sup>The Liverpool Academy of Artists was founded in 1810, with Henry Blundell as patron and William Roscoe as treasurer. For its eighteenth-century predecessors, see Chapter 1, pp.34-38.

<sup>23</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.* 31 March 1814, p.5.

<sup>24</sup>*Address....28th April, 1814*, R.I.Arch. 50.9.

<sup>25</sup>William Roscoe had announced the bequest at a banquet prior to the opening of the Academy's second exhibition in 1811. B.H.Grindley, *History and Work of the Liverpool Academy*, (Liverpool, 1875),p.4. The report of 17 July 1817 states that Henry Blundell intended the money to be used for the erection of a building for the artists of Liverpool. Whether the Royal Institution ever received the money remains unclear. See Ormerod, pp.78-79.

meetings, the Committee remained undeterred in its commitment to promote the cause of art in Liverpool, and five members of the Royal Institution Committee elected to join the Blundell trustees in drawing up a plan for the revival of the Academy, which they considered 'in many points of view, of such essential importance and utility...for diffusing just principles of taste'. The revived Academy was not to be incorporated into the Institution but would preserve its own distinct identity, with any funds accruing from exhibitions and private contributions (apart from the Blundell bequest) being kept entirely separate from those of the Institution.<sup>26</sup>

The Committee planned to launch the Institution's activities with a series of public lectures, the first of which would be delivered by the chairman William Roscoe. Approaches had already been made to a number of eminent men, including Sir James Edward Smith, president of the Linnaean Society, and to the poet Thomas Campbell, to visit the Institution and to organise lecture courses.<sup>27</sup> The man mainly responsible for drafting this report was William Roscoe<sup>28</sup> and its concluding paragraph can thus be seen as a reflection of Roscoe's personal hopes and ambitions for the future influence of the Royal Institution on his fellow citizens and on his native town.

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<sup>26</sup>The exact date the reformed Academy came into being is uncertain. It was not in existence in October, 1819, but was mentioned in the report of 1820. *The Kaleidoscope or Literary and Scientific Mirror*, October 12th, 1819, vol.2, p.60.

<sup>27</sup>'William Roscoe to Thomas Campbell, 16 June 1817', R.I.Arch.50.4. Sir J.E.Smith delivered two lecture courses of twelve lectures in 1818 and 1820; Campbell delivered twelve lectures on Antient and Modern Poetry in 1818. Ormerod, pp.17, 20.

<sup>28</sup>Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe*, 2 vols. (London, 1833), ii, p.154.

It is intended to unite the benefits of a strictly academical education with domestic and social habits, and a knowledge of the manners and affairs of public life; to perpetuate the acquirements of youth beyond the limits of school; to diffuse a more general taste for scientific and literary subjects, so as to enable the town of Liverpool to keep pace with, if not excel, other populous communities, as well abroad as at home.....and to promote in the most efficacious manner those studies and occupations which confer honour on the human character, and add no less to the dignity than to the rational pleasures of life.<sup>29</sup>

On 4 August 1817 Royal permission was granted for the adoption of the title the Liverpool Royal Institution and the formal opening ceremony took place on 25 November, 1817. His severe financial problems and the threat of bankruptcy made William Roscoe initially reluctant to preside at such a public and auspicious occasion. However, persuaded that it was his duty and assured by his friends of their unswerving support, he delivered the opening discourse.<sup>30</sup> In front of 'a very numerous assembly, which filled every part of the large lecture-room of the Institution, he was received with the most flattering applause, which was repeated at the conclusion of the lecture'.<sup>31</sup> When the Royal Institution finally received its Charter of Incorporation (in 1822),<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.*, 17 July 1817, p.22.

<sup>30</sup>see Chapter 2, pp.73.

<sup>31</sup>Henry Roscoe, *Life*, pp.155-156. Amongst the audience was the eight year old William Gladstone and his family. S.G.Checkland, *The Gladstones; A Family Biography 1764-1851*, (Cambridge, 1972), p.94.

<sup>32</sup>The trustees were William Roscoe; John Gladstone, M.P., William Corrie, William Ewart, Isaac Littledale, Thomas Martin, William Rathbone (merchants); Jonathan Brooks, William Blundell, (Anglican clergymen); William Shepherd, John Yates, (Unitarian ministers); David Gladstone, (brewer); B.A.Heywood, (banker); Thomas Moss Tate, (gentleman); Lieut.Gen.Alexander Dirom; Thomas S.Trail, James Gerard, William Briggs, (physicians); Fletcher Raincock (barrister); Thomas Earle esq.; Charles Turner. *Charter of Incorporation* (Liverpool, 1822), S.J.L. GRI.2(3).

William Roscoe's position as Liverpool's cultural leader was reaffirmed with his appointment as the Institution's first President. It is worth noting, however, that this appointment did not meet with universal approval. John Gladstone expressed the view that the time had now arrived for a change in Liverpool's cultural hierarchy, allowing new and younger men to take over the leadership of Liverpool's intellectual life. Despite his professed admiration for Roscoe's abilities, he believed that his nomination as president was 'tantamount to the chair being placed 'in perpetuity':-

Do not suppose that I do not feel all the respect for Mr.R. that you or any of your warmest friends can entertain, but I have a conviction we are injuring the interests of the Institution, by this, as it were monopolising those situations.<sup>33</sup>

However, although Gladstone proclaimed his own readiness to resign from the Committee in favour of new blood, he allowed himself to be nominated as vice-president. While his view may have been entirely altruistic, it is possible (despite his rhetoric) that his increasing personal animosity towards Roscoe may have influenced his opinion.<sup>34</sup> In the event, Roscoe held the presidency for one year only, being succeeded in 1823 by Benjamin A. Heywood, although he remained concerned to promote its aims until his death in 1831.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *John Gladstone to Thomas Martin, 7th March, 1822, R.I. Arch, 51.41.*

<sup>34</sup> In his early years, Gladstone had responded, at least in part, to the ideas of Roscoe and Currie. However, he later became hostile to them. As the owner of large West Indian plantations, Gladstone found Roscoe's chairmanship of the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Society a particular grievance. By the end of the 1820s, Gladstone considered Roscoe to be 'a senile and detested meddler'. Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p.224. Both men, however, shared similar aspirations for Liverpool's intellectual development which enabled them to work in tandem to ensure the well-being of the Royal Institution.

<sup>35</sup> Roscoe had been chairman from 1814-1821, with John Gladstone as his deputy.

By 1820 the major part of the Institution's programme had been achieved. Lecture courses had commenced and been well received. The Classical and Mathematical Schools had been opened<sup>36</sup> and a Museum of Natural History established. The Literary and Philosophical Society was now housed in the Institution and - 'we unite with them under this roof in promoting and extending the knowledge of the Arts and Sciences'. Particular attention had been given to the Exhibition Room for the Liverpool Academy, which was furnished with the casts<sup>37</sup> and pictures belonging to the Institution, with rooms appointed for the use of art students.<sup>38</sup> The role of the Royal Institution in promoting art and architecture was believed to be particularly important at a time when the town was in a period of rapid physical expansion. Many of the Institution's proprietors were on building committees for new civic and business edifices and it was considered vital for the future architectural heritage of Liverpool that they had the knowledge to make informed choices - 'it is highly important in this growing town, to adhere to what is correct in architecture, and cultivate the taste to appreciate and adopt what is excellent'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>The opening was on 1 February 1819. A.T.Brown, p.14.

<sup>37</sup>The value of casts was widely recognised, not only to the artist as classical models, but 'as ornaments edifying to the whole town and neighbourhood.' Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of English Provincial Art; Artists, Patrons and Institutions outside London, 1800-1830*, (Oxford, 1974), p.46. Among the Institution's collection were casts of the Elgin Marbles, presented by George iv in 1821.

<sup>38</sup>The Academy of Art moved to its own rooms in Post Office place in 1831, although the School of Design remained at the Royal Institution. Despite the efforts of the Committee, the Academy had not been entirely happy with their accommodation - they considered the lighting to be unsatisfactory and access to the Exhibitions was via a back door and back staircase. *The Kaleidoscope*, 2nd September, 1823; 23rd August, 1831.

<sup>39</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.*, 14 March 1820, p.14.



Two years later, Benjamin A. Heywood felt able to assure his audience that the Institution was already proving influential, both in stimulating intellectual development amongst the citizens of Liverpool, and in helping to redefine Liverpool's cultural identity, claiming - 'At this moment it has a higher literary character than most provincial towns, and there is undoubtedly more general desire of mental improvement'. Although the Institution was still in its infancy, Heywood believed that the signs all augured well for its permanent success. He ascribed the problems that had beset the short-lived eighteenth-century cultural organisations to the fact that Liverpool, at this time, was still primarily pre-occupied with establishing its commercial position. He reassured his listeners that the town had now reached 'a more mature era' of prosperity and that the lessons of the past would serve to ensure that cultural provision in Liverpool would 'extend and flourish, delayed for a time, only to be achieved with the more perfect success.' Heywood also recognised the value of communal cultural projects in helping to forge a strong sense of civic identity in a town whose ranks were constantly swelled by fortune-seeking newcomers:-

This earnest seeking after something more and better, makes Liverpool what it is; and its readiness to respect and adopt valuable suggestions, gives to *intelligent*<sup>40</sup> settlers their best welcome and imbues the perfect stranger with as lively an interest in the prosperity of his adopted town, as though it had been the scene of his earliest associations.<sup>41</sup>

The year 1822-23 saw the Institution attract visitors not only from Britain, but

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<sup>40</sup>My italics.

<sup>41</sup>*Resolutions, Reports, etc.* 27th February 1822.

also from America, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark, Jamaica, Russia, Italy, Peru, France, Germany and Canada.<sup>42</sup> In 1824 Heywood took particular pleasure in asserting the Institution's status (and by association the proprietors' and the town's) as a role model for 'the numerous institutions.....which have been founded upon similar plans in various parts of the kingdom'.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, he contended, this 'had not been confined within the limits of this country', quoting in justification of his claim an Address of a committee in New York who were planning to establish a similar institution in their city:-

The example of Liverpool has been frequently held out to our citizens as worthy of imitation, and none can be more adduced more apposite. The two cities have risen into importance almost *pari passu* - have been mutually conducive to each other's progress, and are most intimately connected in the bonds of a constant and ever active intercourse. <sup>44</sup>

However, despite the optimism of the early annual reports and addresses, it was apparent, even in the 1820s that the original aims of the founders were to be subjected to modifications. For many of the founders the primary purpose for which the Institution had been created was the provision of systematic lecture courses on literature and science, and for more than twenty years a determined

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<sup>42</sup>*Book for Inserting the names and places of abode of Strangers, April 1822-1834, R.I.Arch.19.*

<sup>43</sup>*Addresses delivered at the Meetings of the Liverpool Royal Institution on the 27th February, 1822 & 13th February, 1824, by B.A.Heywood, Esq. President, (Liverpool, 1824), S.J.L. R.5.29. (spec.). The Plymouth Institution, for example, based its rules and regulations on those of the Liverpool Institution - the Rev.Robert Lampen of Plymouth declaring, 'The Liverpool Institution excites both astonishment and admiration'. Roscoe Papers 2300, 2302.*

<sup>44</sup>*Address delivered...on the 11th February 1825 by B.A.Heywood Esq. President, S.J.L., S/DA690.L8.R.*

but ultimately unsuccessful effort was made to realize this.<sup>45</sup> Even before the formal opening of the Institution, the Committee had organised a course in Physiology by Dr.Bostock in February 1816, and on the Elements of Natural History by Dr.Traill in January 1817. The Lectures were 'to be open to the public on such terms as may be from time to time be approved by the Committee', and it was intended that the lecture programme should, for the most part, be self-supporting. The average price of the tickets was 5s. for a single lecture and two guineas for the course. The cost, coupled with the fact that many of the lectures were scheduled in the middle of the working day (the botanical lectures of Sir J.E.Smith, for example, were given at 11am), ensured that the audiences patronising the lecture programme would be drawn almost entirely from Liverpool's middle classes. The founders intended to appoint a permanent staff of lecturers, who would be given the title of Professor. Four professorships in science subjects were confirmed in 1822<sup>46</sup> and two in the arts in 1824 - Roscoe was appointed Professor of History, and John Foster (the first president of the reformed Academy), Professor of Ancient and Modern Architecture, although both declined to lecture at that time. The arts lecture programme covered a wide range of subjects, including English poetry, Italian, French and German literature, ancient and modern history, philosophy, political economy and music. In addition, the Institution's association with the Liverpool

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<sup>45</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.*, Report by the Secretary, 27th February, 1822. See also Ormerod, 15; Thomas Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool; A narrative of two hundred years*, (Liverpool, 1960), p.16.

<sup>46</sup>Three of the Professorships merely confirmed appointments first made in 1819 - Dr.Traill, Chemistry; Sir J.E.Smith, Botany; Dr.Bostock, Physiology. The fourth was Richard Formby, Anatomy. *Resolutions, Reports etc.* 27th February, 1822. The four men had all studied medicine at Scottish Universities.

Academy and its School of Design resulted in attempts to arrange lectures on the Fine Arts and on Architecture, which would be interesting and instructive to the art students, the Proprietors and the general public alike. Lectures in scientific subjects were also given fairly frequently during the early years of the Institution,<sup>47</sup> although it was only in medical subjects that the Institution provided anything like systematic coverage - a development that was largely responsible for the establishment (within the Institution) of the Liverpool Medical School in 1834, the forerunner of Liverpool University's Faculty of Medicine. Other science courses included geology, astronomy, zoology, botany, electricity and courses on miscellaneous science subjects such as 'Lectures on the Atmosphere', which was amusingly advertised as an attempt to draw public attention 'to the important but much neglected subject of ventilation...neither the subject nor the mode of Discussion will preclude the attendance of females'.<sup>48</sup>

This aspect of the Institution's work was certainly impressive and of great educational value. In his detailed analysis of the Institution's lecture programme Professor Ormerod concludes that the Royal Institution had quickly 'developed within itself at least the nucleus of a modern University College.....which if circumstances had been more favourable, might well have come into existence much earlier than was actually the case.'<sup>49</sup> However, this potential of the

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<sup>47</sup> Among notable visiting lecturers was Dr.P.M.Roget (later famous for his *Thesaurus*), who lectured on physiology in 1829. Ormerod, p.18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p.19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.27.

Institution to function as the north of England's first university college was also recognised by contemporary observers. In 1818 Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine pointed out the difficulties that beset parents in northern England who sought higher education for their offspring and believed that the Liverpool Royal Institution was admirably fitted to remedy this situation. It claimed that of all the cultural projects supported by the town's merchant community the Royal Institution was 'infinitely more worthy of all their exertions and all their liberality than any which has ever before become candidate for their approbation'.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the Institution, itself, seemed unable to decide whether the prime function of the lecture programme was 'to provide professional education of a university type for young people or supplementary education in liberal studies for adults'.<sup>51</sup> For the former, the courses needed to be regular, comprehensive, of a high academic standard and not constrained by the need to attract sufficient numbers. For the latter, comprehensiveness and regularity were less important, the main demand being for short courses or single lectures, delivered in the evenings, which although instructive also contained an element of entertainment. The Institution endeavoured to realise both objectives, and possibly would have succeeded if it had possessed adequate financial resources to carry it out properly. Sadly, this was not the case, for apart from a grant of £150 from the Town Council and a few hundred pounds from investments, the

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<sup>50</sup>*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol.ii, February, 1818, pp.535-6.

<sup>51</sup>This appears to have been a dilemma from the outset. A correspondent to *The Kaleidoscope*, in December, 1818, claiming - 'The world has not yet been informed whether the lectures to be delivered are for a popular audience, or for classes of regular systematic students - whether they are to be accompanied with the stimulus of exercises, tasks, and fines, etc. as in our regularly conducted Universities, or to sink down to the rank of merely pleasing amusements'.

Institution was entirely reliant on fees paid by students other than proprietors (£100 shareholders being granted free admission) to fund the lecture programme.<sup>52</sup>

Calls for an overhaul of the lecture programme began in 1824 when a correspondent to the Committee insisted that 'provision for *regular* succession of lectures (ought to be) the principal object of our attention', and outlined a plan whereby this could be accomplished. However, no such reorganisation was carried out.<sup>53</sup> Similar criticisms of the Institution's failure to provide systematic higher education courses were voiced two years later by the Rev. Andrew Wilson, the minister of the Church of Scotland in Rodney Street. Although he accepted that to attract large audiences, lectures (particularly on scientific subjects) 'delivered to a general audience must be what are called *popular* - in plain language *superficial* - in order to be intelligible' and he was quite prepared to give such lectures to the right audience,<sup>54</sup> he insisted that for the sons of the local higher classes it was imperative that the Institution should function as a university.

In 1827 the Royal Institution's sub-committee on education submitted a report

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<sup>52</sup>Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool*, p.17-18.

<sup>53</sup>He proposed annual lecture courses on anatomy, general chemistry, natural philosophy and some branches of the fine arts. Biennial courses on philology, natural history, geology, mineralogy; three yearly coverage of *belles lettres*, with occasional lectures on history, moral philosophy, political economy and various miscellaneous subjects. *Documents*, R.I.Arch.14., p.17.

<sup>54</sup>For example, he gave a popular course on Mechanical Philosophy in 1827. *Addresses and Reports of the Liverpool Royal Institution*, February, 1827, (Liverpool, 1827).

which responded to Wilson's ideas. It proposed to inaugurate regular, systematic and comprehensive courses of lectures, delivered in the daytime, as 'successfully pursued in the University of Glasgow and in other Universities, both in this country and on the continent, with such modifications as may hereafter be found expedient'. The Report, acknowledging the importance of the commercial community, also planned to offer special evening classes - 'in some branches of knowledge most useful and interesting to Merchants, for young men who are engaged in business as apprentices or otherwise, during the day'.<sup>55</sup> Further, motivation for such proposals may well have come from the fact that the Report was prepared at a time when discussions were taking place in the metropolis on the foundation of University College, London. For those members of the Liverpool élite ambitious for their town's status in the wider arena, the foundation of a similar institution in the nation's second city, may have been particularly appealing. However, financial prudence prevailed and the General Committee amended the Report to make it applicable only to the existing Royal Institution School, by which it was seemingly largely ignored. Ormerod regretfully concedes the wisdom of this decision, both on financial grounds and also arguing that 'years of patient work in building secondary education in Liverpool were required before the University College became a reality. An attempt to create it at this stage would have been foredoomed to failure'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>*Documents Referred to in the Book of Proceedings of the Committee, R.I.Arch.14.*  
Ormerod, p.82-85.

<sup>56</sup>Ormerod, p.31.

The strain of the lecture programme on the Institution's financial resources was, in fact, becoming evident as early as early as 1830. In his annual address, the President, Thomas Langton, regretted that the 'initial enthusiasm shown by the town's citizens in setting up the Royal Institution' was already beginning to wane. Although the intention was for lecturers to be remunerated from the subscriptions received, this was usually insufficient to satisfy the more distinguished guest speakers. The Committee attempted to alleviate this problem by 'utilising local talent', rather than paying for crowd-drawing 'big names' - a measure which, while making economic sense, may well have been counterproductive.<sup>57</sup> Numbers continued to diminish, despite various attempts to improve matters by lowering admission charges.<sup>58</sup> In 1837 the president was reporting that 'in nearly every instance, the lectures have been addressed to half-filled and sometimes almost empty benches; and ...they had invariably to remunerate the lecturer from the funds of the Institution'. After a final attempt to revive the lecture programme in 1839 - £120 being specially allocated to lectures for that year - the General Committee accepted that public taste was changing and decided in 1840 to incur no further expenditure on lectures. The programme was reluctantly abandoned, although occasional courses of lectures were sometimes organised independently.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*Resolutions and Reports etc.*, 12th February, 1830.

<sup>58</sup>In 1835, schools and young persons were being admitted at half-price and in circa 1837, the fee for evening lectures was fixed at 1s. Ormerod, p.26.

<sup>59</sup>The Collegiate Institute began a lecture programme in 1840 but it only lasted a few years. The failure of the lecture programme of the Mechanics' Institution in 1851 was attributed by a contemporary observer, to 'a change in public taste'. J.W.Hudson, *The History of Adult Education*, (London, 1851), p.101. The decline in institutionalised lecturing (particularly in science subjects) in the second half of the century was also reflected nationally. In London, for example,

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However, the aim of the founders to provide secondary education for sons of the local middle classes proved longer-lasting and pioneering. The 'Establishment of Academical Schools' had been the first objective listed in the Detailed Plan of 1814,<sup>60</sup> aiming to give the Proprietors and their social compeers the opportunity of educating their sons 'in the highest departments of science and literature, without the necessity of sending them to distant and expensive establishments'. Notwithstanding the emphasis on economy, the school was not, as Charles Turner pointed out in 1830:-

intended for the lower orders of tradesmen and retail shopkeepers. It was expected that the clergy, gentry, merchants and wholesale traders of the town might be induced to place their sons where they might derive nearly all the advantages of public and private education combined together at a very moderate expense, compared with the great public school bills and I speak from experience, as the father of a large family, when I say, that I can perceive no essential advantages of Eton and Westminster, Harrow and Winchester, over this Institution, beyond those arising from a more mixed, perhaps a more polished society.<sup>61</sup>

Here too, however, the founder's hopes were not to be fully realised. The original plan of 1814 indicated that they favoured a school which would be innovative in its curriculum, moulding young Liverpool gentlemen who would

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'the scientific lecturer and his institutions...fell between the appeals of the exhibition and the university'. J.N.Hays, 'The London lecturing empire, 1800-1850', in Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell, *Metropolis and Science; Science in British Culture, 1780-1850*, (London, 1983), pp.91-119.

<sup>60</sup>The old grammar school in Liverpool, founded under the will of John Crosse, had closed in 1803. The first mention of the Institution Schools came on the 21 July 1814 when 'That part of Mr. Roscoe's proposed plan relating to the schools was read and discussed'. A.T. Brown, pp.10-11.

<sup>61</sup>*Address Delivered on the 11th February, 1831, at the General meeting of Proprietors of the Liverpool Royal Institution, by Charles Turner, Esq. Vice-President*, (Liverpool, 1831). The cost to John Gladstone of keeping his eldest son Thomas at Eton was c.£261. At the Liverpool Royal Institution School, instruction, clothes and lodging for a year were less than £100. Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p.139.

exemplify the tenet that the union of commerce and culture was both possible and desirable, a theme reiterated in Heywood's addresses of the early 1820s - 'The successful union of commercial and mechanical knowledge with literature is of all others the most congenial object of our contemplation'.<sup>62</sup>

The school was to have no religious or political affiliations - 'the object of the Liverpool Royal Institution being altogether unconnected with Political or other Party.'<sup>63</sup> Although Roscoe, in particular, remained convinced of the importance of a classical education,<sup>64</sup> the pupils were also to be given the opportunity to study scientific and commercial subjects. The 'Detailed Plan' allowed for three departments, literary, scientific and a school of design, which were intended 'to supply the higher advantages of Education, as preparatory either to entering at a university or engaging in business', with the minimum age of entry being twelve. This broad field of studies suggests that the role model adopted by the Committee of 1814 owed as much to the influence of the dissenting academies of the eighteenth-century as the example of the established public schools.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>*Addresses delivered ....by B.A.Heywood, President, 13th February 1824. See also Addresses of 27th February 1822, 11th February 1825.*

<sup>63</sup>*Minutes, 29th March, 1820.* The boys came from homes of differing political opinions and in 1820 about 40 of the boys scandalized the Committee by leading a procession through the town in favour of Canning, with one of their banners bearing the motto 'Church and King'. The Headmaster was reprimanded and not until 1870, at the unveiling of Queen Victoria's equestrian statue on St. George's Plateau were the boys seen again in public procession. A.T.Brown, pp. 15-16.

<sup>64</sup>See, William Roscoe, 'A Vindication of Classical Learning', *Roscoe Papers* 1110.

<sup>65</sup>For the influence of Warrington Academy, see Chapter 2, p.49; The commitment to combining commercial and classical education led to the plan of the Liverpool Royal Institution School becoming a role model for the new proprietary day schools founded in other large provincial cities -by 1864 there were about one hundred of them. Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (London, 1969), pp.296-7.

However, when the school opened in 1819, it was organised in only two departments, classical and mathematical,<sup>66</sup> and within a short time these had been combined into a single school which throughout the 1820s became increasingly wedded to the classical tradition. For example, Italian, French and Spanish teachers were appointed in 1820 and a German master in 1824, but after 1829 the teaching of modern languages was forced off the timetable to allow added concentration on the classics.<sup>67</sup> Although these changes did not go unchallenged,<sup>68</sup> the proprietors in general did not appear perturbed by this departure from the original plan, apparently less convinced than some of their committee of the value of science in an effective education. Within a year of its foundation, the classical school was reported as 'already enabled to support itself'<sup>69</sup> and amongst the first pupils were the sons of a number of leading Liverpool merchants, including Charles Horsfall, William Laird and Robert Gladstone.<sup>70</sup> Now, according to A.T.Brown, a school 'deliberately designed on

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<sup>66</sup>A School of Design was opened circa 1823, but it was under the auspices of the Academy of Art.

<sup>67</sup>Although the masters were allowed to arrange extramural classes. A.T.Brown, pp.20-21. The Italian master at the school from 1824-28 was Anthony (later Sir Anthony) Panizzi. In 1828, he left Liverpool to become Italian professor at University College, London. In 1831 he was appointed assistant librarian and later chief librarian (1856-66) at the British Museum, where he designed the Reading Room and undertook a new catalogue. His lecture courses were popular and he was invited back three times after he left Liverpool to give courses in Italian literature.

<sup>68</sup>Three members of the Committee resigned in protest, including Dr. Traill, a strong supporter of a wide curriculum and the teaching of natural science. However, he quickly returned and the fact that he entered his sons in the school in 1831, suggests that he still considered the school to provide the best education on offer in Liverpool. In 1832 William Rathbone unsuccessfully moved to extend 'the present classical &c., school...to objects of commercial pursuits'. Brown, pp.21-22.

<sup>69</sup>*Resolutions, Reports etc.*, 14th March 1820, p.9.

<sup>70</sup>See Appendix 3, p.255. for a list of the pupils of the school 1819-1829, and their subsequent careers.

a new model had been brought into the purely classical groove' and was attempting 'without their obvious prestige to produce the same type of scholar'.<sup>71</sup> However, although the school undoubtedly enjoyed considerable success at local level, in terms both of numbers and educational attainments<sup>72</sup> and provided a valuable educational facility for the sons of Liverpool's middle classes, it did not achieve the status of a nationally recognised public school. Certainly, John Gladstone, for one, remained convinced that entry into 'the world of easy social intercourse and real political power' was still best achieved via the traditional route of Eton and Oxford.<sup>73</sup> In 1837 the school moved to new premises on the opposite side of Colquitt Street, the major part of the funding coming from a loan from the Institution's funds, although it was made clear that the school was to be self-supporting and that the loan was to be repaid with interest.

In 1840 the school's curriculum was broadened, reintroducing modern languages and adding modern history and the 'analysis of scientific papers', although the classics still retained the central focus:-

Education should have in view two objects:- First the cultivation of the mind and the power of concentrating its energies upon a single point. What are....the proper implements for our purpose? Surely the study of the classics....I much doubt whether the same could

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<sup>71</sup>Brown, p.22.

<sup>72</sup>Numbers rose from around 30 in 1822 to 140 in 1851. In one year an Oxford Fellowship, two Cambridge scholarships, and two Wranglerships were gained. *Ibid*, p.27.

<sup>73</sup>Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p.129. In the second half of the century, the school, became increasingly the preserve of the middle ranks of business and the professions.'Any pretension to a more than purely local eminence required education in public schools'. Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire*, (London, 1987), p.65.

be said...of any system of instruction in Physical Science yet adopted.<sup>74</sup>

Despite a setback in 1843, which Brown ascribes to the opening of the Collegiate Institution in Shaw Street,<sup>75</sup> the school survived and, in fact, enjoyed some of its most successful years between 1850-1870. However, the failure of the Institution's committee to accede to the headmaster's repeated requests to move the school to more salubrious surroundings sowed the seeds of its eventual demise.<sup>76</sup> In 1883, the upper school of the Collegiate seized the initiative and moved to new buildings near Sefton Park, gradually assuming the position previously held by the Royal Institution School. In 1892 the school originally founded to provide an education uniquely tailored to meet both Liverpool's commercial and cultural aspirations and then to earn the town status as the domicile of a nationally ranked public school was forced to close its doors never really having realised either of these objectives.

However, although neither the school or the lecture programme fulfilled the hopes of the founders, the school did provide Liverpool with much needed educational facilities for the middle classes and the demise of the lecture programme had a silver lining in that it increased the level of funding available to develop other cultural departments of the Institution. While the scheme to

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<sup>74</sup>A.T.Brown, p.25.

<sup>75</sup>Opened in January 1843 to supply an education based on the principles of the Established Church. The upper school (aimed at the middle classes) competed at once with the Royal Institution School. Brown, p.27.

<sup>76</sup>This was at a time which was witnessing a revival of the English public school model, with playing fields as an integral component - Cheltenham, 1841; Marlborough, 1845; Radley, 1847; Wellington, 1853; Haileybury, 1864. Brown, p.34.

build an observatory proved abortive and the library, valuable as it was, never became a prominent feature of the Institution, in its Museum of Natural History and Art gallery the Institution developed significant collections 'which fulfilled a valuable function at a time when public galleries and museums were practically non-existent'.<sup>77</sup> Here too, was a golden opportunity for the middle classes to display their talents as cultural collectors and to celebrate wealth, travel and trade.<sup>78</sup>

The Museum of Natural History, proved one of the most popular of the Institution's activities. At its inception, the Committee was fortunate in acquiring the services of William Swainson, the well-known naturalist and bird illustrator,<sup>79</sup> who undertook the task of arranging the collections which had already been obtained. Swainson planned to utilise Liverpool's overseas connections to develop the Museum's collections, drawing up a short manual on the best ways of collecting and preserving zoological specimens (two hundred of which were distributed to local sea-captains and others who might be likely to bring specimens home) which neatly summarized the different motives that lay behind the support for the enterprise:-

The establishment of a Public Museum in this large and opulent town, has induced the author to draw them up, under the hope that they may facilitate the intentions of those, who ....may be

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<sup>77</sup>Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool*, p.18.

<sup>78</sup>Robert Morris, *Class Sect and Party; The making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850*, (Manchester, 1990), p.234.

<sup>79</sup>Swainson (1789-1855) was born in Hoylake, Cheshire, and began his working life as a junior clerk in the Liverpool Custom's Office. He then obtained a post in the army commissariat in Malta and Sicily, where he amassed a large collection of zoological specimens. See *D.N.B.*

desirous of increasing the foundation already laid for this Museum; and which, whether as a repository for scientific inquiries - a rational and instructive source of amusement - or as an ornament to the town - has every claim to their interest and amusement.<sup>80</sup>

The Museum's success owed much to the enthusiasm of Dr. Traill, who was appointed Keeper in 1822 and Curator in 1829, by which time a remarkable collection had been accumulated. The first printed catalogue (1829) listed 2467 specimens of rocks and minerals (over a quarter of which were deposited by the Literary and Philosophical Society), 99 mammals and 826 birds. A large number of the specimens were of foreign origin - an indication that Swainson's efforts to involve the seafaring and commercial community in the Museum's welfare had proved successful.<sup>81</sup> When Dr. Traill left for Edinburgh in 1833 he was succeeded firstly by Dr. Reynolds and then in 1834 by a salaried Curator, who was responsible to the newly-established Museum Sub-Committee.

Apart from specific grants for special purchases, the Museum relied for its funding on admission charges (normally 1s.) and subscriptions, many of the latter coming from members of the Natural History Society, founded in 1836, which collaborated closely with the Royal Institution and the Museum. The Society was represented on the Museum Sub-Committee by three associated members and among the numerous gifts it donated to the Museum were 150

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<sup>80</sup>*Instructions for Collecting and Preserving Zoological Subjects, in the most simple and expeditious manner, with directions for sending them to this country, (Liverpool, 1820). S.J.L., Spec.GRI.2.(3).*

<sup>81</sup>The Institution mainly depended on gifts to extend the collection, although some did come by way of exchange, for example with the Museum of the Zoological Society of London. Ormerod, pp.36-37.

specimens of monandrian plants from the Roscoe collection.<sup>82</sup> Although, in common with other Liverpool cultural societies, membership appeared to solidly male, it is interesting that for one contemporary historian of Liverpool this was a matter of regret, as in his opinion this was the one branch of science which was particularly suited for females:-

It is to be regretted, that this valuable branch of science does not engage more attention in female education: in its various ramifications, it is calculated to enliven every rural walk, and to interest when youth and beauty shall have faded.<sup>83</sup>

Although the number of fee-paying visitors was not large, when the Committee opened up the Museum free of charge to the general public on Coronation Day 1838, the experiment proved to be an outstanding success, with 12,300 visitors passing through the Museum in the course of the day. As a result, from January 1839 a free day on the first Monday in each month was instituted and during the year 1839-40, 41,161 visitors were admitted. In the Institution's Report for that year, the Committee took particular pains to point out the benefits the Institution was now bestowing on all sections of Liverpool society, while at the same time taking care to reaffirm and justify their own position in the existing social order:-

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<sup>82</sup>The Natural History Society was founded in 1836 and held its meetings in the Royal Institution and amongst the members listed on the Committee was Dr.W.H.Duncan, Liverpool's first Medical Officer of Health. It amalgamated with the Literary and Philosophical Society in October, 1844. Annual subscribers of one guinea were entitled to free admission to the museum for themselves and their families. Income accruing solely from admission charges was only small being £29-10s-0d. in 1842 and £14-18s-9d. in 1848. Expenditure on specimens varied but was usually in the order of £80-100. Ormerod, pp.37-8.

<sup>83</sup>Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its commerce, statistics, and institutions, with a history of the cotton trade*, (Liverpool, 1832), p.332.



The Committee contemplate no part of the experience of the past year with so much satisfaction as the success that has rewarded their attempt to bring the poorest classes of the community into connection with the pure and exalting influences to which this building is devoted. Their faith in the good feeling of the public, and in the aptitude of all minds, even the lowest, to receive refined and elevating impressions, has not disappointed them.....The uniform propriety and intelligent curiosity of their vast numbers demonstrates that nothing is wanting but the opportunities of forming tastes, and a generous and respectful spirit of sympathy, manifested towards them. In opening these opportunities to the labouring classes, this Institution cannot but feel that it occupies the place of public benefactor and instructor, awakening in uncultivated minds, feelings and ideas calculated to soften the rudeness of manners, and to increase the happiness and virtue of life....And it is, to ourselves, a justification of these expensive and refined tastes, that they are not selfish and exclusive indulgences, but provided for others, as well as ourselves, and capable of diffusing their influences and blessings through the whole community.<sup>84</sup>

The number of people taking advantage of the free day remained high and although the crowds were reported to have behaved in an exemplary fashion, the Committee felt that the force of numbers precluded any intelligent study of the collections. Accordingly, in June 1843 the Museum was opened to 'artisans' on the Friday evening preceding the free day, at a fee of 3d. This measure did not fulfil the Committees expectations, the Museums Committee reporting in November of that year that 1450 persons had visited the Museum on the free Monday, but no persons had done so on the Friday. It appeared that the working classes were prepared to respond to the Royal Institution's efforts to educate their moral sense, as long as they were not required to pay for this

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<sup>84</sup>*Addresses and Reports*, 14th February, 1840, p.10.

paternalistic largesse.<sup>85</sup>

Art was the other main beneficiary of the abandonment of the lecture programme. The decision to erect a permanent gallery of art to house both the Institution's paintings and casts, and to make additional funds available to extend the collections came in 1840. The nucleus of the Institution's art collection had been formed in 1819, when a group of members had presented it with thirty seven of Roscoe's pictures, which he had been forced to sell to stave off his impending bankruptcy. Roscoe's purpose in collecting his pictures had been primarily didactic<sup>86</sup> and a similar intent appears to have guided the intentions of the donors:-

**A few individuals conceiving, that as the following PICTURES form a series from the commencement of Art to the close of the fifteenth century, their value would be enhanced by being preserved together, have united in purchasing and presenting them to the Liverpool Royal Institution in the hope that by preventing the dispersion of a collection interesting to the history, and exemplifying the progress of Design, they may contribute to the advancement of the FINE ARTS in the Town of Liverpool.<sup>87</sup>**

This communal action by a group of Liverpool men immersed in the world of commerce, was significant and innovative, for it meant that - 'for the first time in Britain a group of important old master paintings had been bought and placed

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<sup>85</sup>*Museum Committee Minutes*, vol.2. 12th June, 1843 and 13th November, 1843. *Liverpool University Archives*, D145/8.

<sup>86</sup>See Chapter 2, p.54.

<sup>87</sup>*Catalogue of a series of pictures illustrating the Rise and Early Progress of 'The Art of Painting' in Italy, Germany etc. collected by William Roscoe Esq. and now deposited in the Liverpool Royal Institution*, (Liverpool, 1819). The subscribers were listed as William Ewart, G.P.Barclay, Robert Benson, Charles Tayleur, Jos.Sandars, Jos.Reynolds, B.A.Heywood, all of whom were engaged in business.

on permanent exhibition with the avowed intention of improving public taste'.<sup>88</sup>

During the 1820s when the Committee's attentions were concentrated on developing the lecture programme and the Academy's exhibitions, the permanent collection of art did not increase significantly.<sup>89</sup> With the abandonment of the lecture programme, the Committee now proposed to give £1200 towards a permanent gallery of art if a similar sum was collected public subscription. A prospectus was prepared by Thomas Winstanley, Roscoe's dealer and friend, and the sum of £1100 was raised allowing the construction of a purpose-built building on the east side of Colquitt Street. A committee was appointed to supervise the proceedings and to purchase new works of art.<sup>90</sup> The building was finally opened in January 1843 the normal charge for admission being 1s., although by arrangement with the Town Council, the gallery was opened free to the public on one, later two, Mondays in the month.<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, the gallery never succeeded in attracting the general public, a circumstance ascribed in a report of 1844 to the fact that 'The

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<sup>88</sup>Edward Morris, 'The Formation of the Gallery of Art in the Liverpool Royal Institution, 1816-1819', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 142,(1992), p.88.

<sup>89</sup>Although important additions did come in 1823 with the gift (from the artist's son) of eighteen Romney cartoons and the presentation of four paintings by Calabrese in 1829, by 'eleven public spirited gentlemen' who thought the pictures 'would be highly useful connected with the study of the Fine Arts. As the object of the Institution is to assist and promote general science and the progress of the Fine Arts'. *Addresses and Reports*, February 1829.

<sup>90</sup>Thomas Winstanley acted as artistic advisor to the Institution at this time and another eighty or so works, including a Signorelli and a Bellini were added to the collection. Various sums were allocated for this purpose, e.g. £500 in March 1842 and £200 in July 1842. Ormerod, p.33.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid*, p.34.

collection, from the principle upon which it was made, is less suited to the public taste, perhaps, than if it consisted of more modern or more striking pictures'.<sup>92</sup> After the activity of the early 1840s the interest of the proprietors also waned, although the gallery proved of great value to artists and art students. It was, however, appropriate that one exhibit that did prove popular with a large number of visitors was the statue of William Roscoe by Chantrey, which was presented to the Institution by the Roscoe Memorial Committee in 1841 and was initially placed in the new gallery, attracting 1290 persons during the three days it was on view.<sup>93</sup> It was only when a large part of the Institution's collection was passed to the Walker Art Gallery in 1893 that scholars and the public truly began to realise the full worth of the efforts of Roscoe and Winstanley.

While many of the departments of the Royal Institution could not be said to have fully fulfilled the high hopes of the founders, it did succeed in establishing itself as the domicile of many of the town's literary and scientific societies. A survey of local institutions in 1848 reported that the Royal Institution 'ranks deservedly high in the public esteem, from the cordial and liberal support it has uniformly yielded to numerous institutions and societies of an intellectual nature....each in its own sphere promoting the same general end'.<sup>94</sup> From the outset, the Literary and Philosophical Society had been granted free, permanent

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<sup>92</sup>*Addresses and Reports*, 9th February 1844.

<sup>93</sup>*Addresses and Reports*, 11th February 1842; *Museum Committee Minutes*, 25th April, 1842. It is now in St George's Hall.

<sup>94</sup>*The Roscoe Magazine*, March 1 1849, no.1, p.2.

accommodation in the Institution and the relationship between the two organisations was close and mutually supportive,<sup>95</sup> the President of the Royal Institution claiming in 1824:-

The flourishing state of this (the Literary and Philosophical) Society affords a gratifying proof of the extension amongst the inhabitants of Liverpool of a desire for knowledge, and whilst it demonstrates the propriety and utility of its plans, is no slight panegyric upon our own.<sup>96</sup>

It was the Literary and Philosophical Society which suggested introducing a social as well as cultural function to the Institution's programmes, by the holding of regular soirées, a proposal readily agreed to by the General Committee who saw them as a way of earning added recognition for the cultural achievements of the Institution - 'As a more extended interest in the objects of the Institution was the principal end to which these soirees were established, the rates of admission have been fixed at a very low rate'. The soirées were held annually for four years and were reported to be very successful. However, in 1843, they were discontinued as attendance had fallen off - whether from the establishment of other similar meetings in the town or from decline in their novelty value is unknown.<sup>97</sup> The Royal Institution offered encouragement and accommodation (at a moderate rent) to other societies 'whose objects are in perfect harmony with the design of the Institution', with the usual proviso that

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<sup>95</sup>Out of the twenty one man Royal Institution committee appointed in 1814, ten of the men were among the founder members of the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1812. The Literary and Philosophical Society repaid the Institution with gifts of specimens, books and a set of casts. *Ibid*, February 1829, February 1847.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid*, 13th February 1824.

<sup>97</sup>*R.I.Arch.51.52; Addresses and Reports*, 11th February 1842. For the efforts of the Literary and Philosophical Society to revive the soirées at mid-century in order to foster links between the various societies then meeting in the Royal Institution, see Chapter 4, p.172.

controversial theology and party politics were to form no part of the societies' agendas. In 1847, four societies were reported to be meeting in the Royal Institution,<sup>98</sup> by 1868 this had risen to nine societies with a total membership of 2,000 and by 1880, this number had doubled.<sup>99</sup>

However, this proliferation of societies could also be said to reflect the failure on the Institution's part to act as a co-ordinating centre for this aspect of the town's cultural development. By the 1840s, many Literary and Philosophical Societies were in decline<sup>100</sup> and in Liverpool, the Rev. Abraham Hume, recognising that strength lay in unity, called on the local Liverpool societies to unite and form a new broad society, based in the Royal Institution, which would be capable of achieving national status. He believed that failure to do so would result in the growth of small specialist societies, with limited impact outside their particular sphere of interest. The failure to bring this union to fruition meant that Hume's predictions were to prove prophetic.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from the societies, the Royal Institution could also fairly claim to have been the base from which inspiration sprang for a number of other important

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<sup>98</sup>In 1837 six societies were reported to be meeting in the Institution, but are not named in the report of that year. In 1847 the societies listed are the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Philomathic Society (which had been meeting there since 1826), the Polytechnic Society and the Union Essay Society. *Ibid*, 12th February 1847.

<sup>99</sup>For a list of the societies meeting in the Royal Institution by 1888, see Appendix 4, p.259.

<sup>100</sup>Hudson, p.167-8.

<sup>101</sup>Abraham Hume, *Suggestions for the advancement of learning and literature in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1851), p.48. For the failure of the efforts to bring about the union, see Chapter 4, p.178.

educational and cultural initiatives in Liverpool, notably the founding of a Mechanics' Institution. The first reference to such an enterprise came in an address by the Institution's president, B.A. Heywood in 1824, who, having urged the committee to 'promote the interests of the Apprentices' Library which has been lately formed in this town',<sup>102</sup> reported that 'Dr. Traill, vice-president of the Royal Institution has offered his services to assist and arrange the meetings of a Mechanics' Institute'. Three weeks later, on March 9th 1825 the Royal Institution Committee called a special meeting to which various master tradesmen were invited, to consider how far the formation of a Mechanics' Institution could be promoted by the Royal Institution. A resolution was passed that:-

The formation of a Mechanics' Institute in Liverpool appears to this Committee highly desirable: though the Committee are not able to make any specific arrangements for the purpose, they will do everything in their power to promote an establishment calculated to be so beneficial to the operative classes of the community.<sup>103</sup>

A public meeting was held in the Concert Hall, Bold Street on June 8th 1825 which was chaired by Alderman Thomas Case and attended by 'over 1,000 mechanics and three hundred influential gentlemen'. The new institution was to be given the title of the Liverpool Mechanics' School of Arts, a name it retained until 1832 when it became the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution. The presidency was offered to William Huskisson, with three vice-presidents (influential

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<sup>102</sup>Founded in July 1823, mainly through the efforts of Egerton Smith, the editor of the Liverpool Mercury. It was officially adopted by the town in 1824 and was reputed to have over 800 readers by February 1825. The Library's treasurer in 1825 was William Roscoe's son. *The Kaleidoscope*, 1st March 1825. A Female apprentices' library was founded by a group of ladies (including Miss Roscoe) circa 1824.

<sup>103</sup>Herbert J. Tiffen, *A History of the Institute Schools 1825-1935*, (Liverpool, 1935), p.21.

members of the Royal Institution) appointed to oversee the initial organisation.

As Thomas Kelly has stressed, the motives that inspired the middle-class founders of the early mechanics' institutes were undoubtedly varied and often mixed. Philanthropists believed that they would help alleviate the plight of the impoverished working classes; employers sought a more efficient and industrious workforce; political leaders such as Brougham hoped they would provide training in self-government; clergymen (among others) looked to them to educate the workmen to become accepting and law-abiding members of the community - 'only a minority of people regarded the institutes, as Birkbeck did, primarily as agents of cultural education'.<sup>104</sup> This was reflected in Liverpool, where Dr. Traill, for example, while emphasising the 'importance of communicating instruction to mechanics and artizans in those branches of science which are of practicable application in the exercise of their several trades', also underlined the moral aspect - 'I should reckon our labours sufficiently rewarded, could we supply in the lecture-room or library a less dangerous resort than the ale-house or the tavern to the industrious classes'.<sup>105</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by the Rev. Andrew Wilson, who with Dr. Traill, delivered the first lecture courses at the Liverpool Mechanics' School of Arts. He wanted the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution to

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<sup>104</sup>Kelly, *Adult Education in Great Britain*, p.123.

<sup>105</sup>*Liverpool Mechanics' Institute Reports*, vol.1, 1825-38, p.vii. L.R.O., 373 Ins 9/1.



become 'a regular college for the education of the working classes',<sup>106</sup> while claiming that 'no one who had been educated at any of the Schools of Arts or Mechanics' Institutions would be found joining in the senseless clamour against the use of machinery'.<sup>107</sup> Added rationale for a Mechanics' Institution in rapidly expanding Liverpool came from the Royal Institution's concern with the physical structure of the town - its efforts to mould the proprietors artistic and architectural tastes being ultimately dependent on a workforce sufficiently skilled to execute the designs:- 'In a town...where so many new and ornamental buildings are constructed from year to year, it is of great importance that the builders and joiners should unite with the dexterous and accurate workmanship on metal, wood and stone'.<sup>108</sup>

Dr. Traill and his supporters estimated the cost of establishing a Mechanics' School of Arts at £3,500 - considerably less than the £20,000 deemed necessary for the establishment of the Royal Institution.<sup>109</sup> The founders planned to achieve their aims by lectures, a library, the purchase of apparatus for use in scientific demonstrations, evening classes and a museum. They recognised that if the Institution was to succeed, two classes of subscribers were necessary - the non-participating well-to-do, who by contributing ten

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<sup>106</sup> *Liverpool Institute Schools; Directors' Minute Book 1825-1837*, L.R.O. 373 1/1/1, 22nd October 1827.

<sup>107</sup> *The Kaleidoscope*, June 28th 1825, p.438. Wilson had lectured in mathematics and mechanical philosophy at the Edinburgh School of Arts. *Ibid*, p.346.

<sup>108</sup> *Directors Minute Book*, Report of 11th March 1828.

<sup>109</sup> 'Object and Plan of the Institution', *Reports*, 8th June 1825, p.3.

guineas became life-members, and the annual subscribers of sixteen shillings or one guinea who, with their families, would make full use of the facilities on offer.<sup>110</sup>

The valuable support given to the Royal Institution by the Town Council,<sup>111</sup> which had moved its president to declare - 'The most important benefactors to our establishment are the lords of the soil - the Corporation of Liverpool',<sup>112</sup> encouraged the Directors of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution to hope that a similar attitude might greet their efforts to establish this new project. In this they were to be sadly disappointed - the proposed Mechanics' Institution obviously not being regarded by the majority of the Councillors as likely to be either an ornament to the town or to significantly add lustre to Liverpool's cultural image. The association of Liverpool's cultural reputation with commerce rather than manufactures, was now adroitly adopted by the opponents of the Mechanics' Institution, who insisted that 'Liverpool not being a manufacturing town, such an institution is not here requisite'.<sup>113</sup> The original motto of the Mechanics' Institute - 'Knowledge is power' - probably also harmed its case. This was reported to have caused alarm among the less enlightened members of the

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<sup>110</sup>By March 1826 the former had contributed £858 13s 6d. towards the initial expenditure, and £260 16s 6d. had been paid in annual subscriptions. The Institution began in an old chapel in Sir Thomas Street, with supplementary accommodation at the Parker Street School. In 1827 the Institute transferred to the Union Newsroom, at the corner of Duke Street and Slater Street. *Reports*, 1st March 1826, p.17.

<sup>111</sup>In 1823 in addition to the £1000 for the building fund, the Town Council had granted the Royal Institution a further £1000 towards the purchase of philosophical apparatus, and an annual grant of £150 towards the day-to-day running costs of the Institution.

<sup>112</sup>*Addresses*, 13th February 1824.

<sup>113</sup>*The Kaleidoscope*, 5, 21st June 1825, p.430.

Corporation, who are supposed to have said, 'If you go on in instructing the working classes, they will be so much enlightened that they will be treading on the heels of their superiors'.<sup>114</sup> Despite the presence among the founders of Alderman Thomas Case (mayor in 1817), a request to the Corporation for a grant of £500 in 1825 was 'negatived by a large majority'.<sup>115</sup> The Mayor refused permission for the general meeting of June 1825 to be held in the Town Hall, 'though he was requested to do so by a requisition signed...by a great number of parties', and in the same year the Earl of Derby declined to contribute.<sup>116</sup> Support from the town at large was also less than had been expected, many of the established élite proving far less willing to help the School of Arts than they had been to aid the Royal Institution. Although the Directors recognised that the economic distress in 1826 was one cause of the slow rate of fund raising, they also reported that 'they had to encounter prejudices from some, and indifference from others'.<sup>117</sup> It appeared that for many of Liverpool's wealthy, investment in cultural enterprise was firmly allied with self-interest. When a further petition to the Council for financial assistance in 1829 was rejected by 18 votes to 8, the Directors reflected bitterly on the

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<sup>114</sup>Quoted in, John Willett, *Art in a City*, (London, 1976), p.30. This attitude was, of course, not peculiar to Liverpool. Canning was a critic of Brougham's views on the need for the spread of popular education, and scores of pamphlets were written warning of the danger of education 'exalting' the poor 'above their humble and laborious duties'. *The St. James Chronicle*, wrote of Mechanics' Institutes; 'A scheme more completely adapted for the destruction of this Empire could not have been invented by the author of evil himself.' Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1883-1867*, (London, 1959), pp.223-4.

<sup>115</sup>*Directors' Minute Book*, 4th August 1825.

<sup>116</sup>*The Kaleidoscope*, 5, 7th June 1825, p.413. *Directors' Minute Book*, 7th September 1825.

<sup>117</sup>*Report*, 1st March 1826, p.5.

attitude of the Town Council and on those fellow-citizens who seemed to believe that the construction of a cultural and civic identity for Liverpool would not be achieved with projects aimed primarily at the working classes:-

They cannot but lament to observe that this feeling does not appear universally to pervade in this town as might naturally have been hoped for in the present comparatively enlightened state of society...With the wealthy, an aversion to admit their inferiors in station to participate in the benefits of education, ..is still to be found, and has been unhappily manifested during the past year, in a rejection by the Corporation of this town, of a petition from the members of this Institution for pecuniary aid; while other applications in favour of mere amusement have been, as your Directors cannot forbear to notice, liberally countenanced.<sup>118</sup>

In 1832 the need for new premises resulted in a fresh petition for a grant of land but this met a similar fate to its predecessors. The Directors now decided to call on all the members of the Town Council individually to lobby for their support and to organise a deputation to the mayor. Finally, after a determined fund-raising campaign, the Town Council agreed to allow the Mechanics' Institution to purchase a site of 3000 square yards in Mount Street for £2,942. It was only after the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, that the Mechanics' Institution received any municipal funding, when the new Council agreed to transfer the land free of charge, on the sole condition that the land should revert to the Corporation in the event of the buildings to be erected on it not being used for educational purposes.<sup>119</sup> The foundation stone for the new building

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<sup>118</sup>*Directors' Minute Book*, 29th September 1829.

<sup>119</sup>The deed conveying the land was completed on 6th December 1837. The first reformed Council, elected 1835/6, saw the old Tory oligarchy ousted, with only 7 Conservative Councillors re-elected. However, the occupational pattern showed little alteration, 43 out of 64 members being merchants; religious affiliation included 28 Anglicans, 24 Dissenters (15 of whom were Unitarians), 3 Roman Catholic and 8 unknown. Source, C.D.Watkinson, *The Liberal Party on Merseyside in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Liverpool,

was laid by Lord Brougham on July 20th 1835 and it was opened on 15th September 1837 (planned to coincide with the visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, to the town), with an address delivered by Thomas Wyse, M.P. for Waterford.<sup>120</sup>

Despite the initial lack of enthusiasm from Town Council and the middle classes at large, the Committee of the Royal Institution (although never contemplating any form of union between the respective Institutions) did continue to offer support. As well as organisational expertise, it offered to loan the new Mechanics' Institution apparatus and equipment and on occasion accommodation - in 1834, for example, the chemistry class had only been saved by the proprietors of the Royal Institution allowing it to be held in their laboratory.<sup>121</sup> Although in its early years the growth of the Mechanics' Institution was slow,<sup>122</sup> during the 1830s and 1840s both its lectures and classes enjoyed considerable success.<sup>123</sup> It emulated the Royal

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1967, pp.508-510.

<sup>120</sup>In his address, Wyse praised Liverpool as 'a sort of second London; we have already in its proportions the characteristics of a metropolis'. *Reports*, 'Speech delivered at the opening of the new Mechanics' Institution, 15th September, 1837 by Thomas Wyse', p.24.

<sup>121</sup>Tiffen, p.35.

<sup>122</sup>Although 1090 names were entered in the books by January 1826, average attendance was circa 250. *Directors' Minute Book*, 31st January, 1828.

<sup>123</sup>The classes met from 7 to 9pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, with Wednesdays and Saturdays reserved for lectures. From 1841 to 1847 the average daily attendance varied between 350 to 400 with 26 to 29 teachers. The total membership of the Institution at this time was over 3000. From 1837 to 1849 between 80 to 90 lectures were delivered annually. Neither in its lectures or its classes did it remain exclusively scientific, its programme being remarkably similar to that of the Royal Institution. The 1847-1848 programme included 33 literary lectures, 25 scientific, 8 music, 8 art, 4 history and 4 oratory. Eminent speakers including Ralph Waldo Emerson and James Sheridan Knowles. Tiffen, pp.54-59.

Institution with its museum of natural history, sculpture gallery, library (which by 1850 had over 15,000 volumes and an annual issue of 40,000, the largest of any mechanics' institution outside London) and day schools. No other mechanics' institution except that at Leeds organised day schools on anything like the same scale.<sup>124</sup> Successful exhibitions were mounted by the Directors in 1840, 1842 and 1844 to raise money to pay off the debt incurred by the new building and attract new subscribers. The first of these proved the most most profitable, the last the most extravagant, including an artificial ice-rink where visitors could skate amid scenery representing Lake Lucerne and a diving-bell in a large tank which had been excavated from solid rock in the school yard. Not surprisingly the net proceeds were down and the Directors did not repeat the experiment.<sup>125</sup> After 1850 the Mechanics' Institution (as was the case nationally) became increasingly less important, its fortunes in many respects mirroring those of the Royal Institution.

Signs that both the Royal Institution and its offspring the Mechanics' Institution were failing to cater for, or to incorporate many of the new generation into their ranks, were evident in 1847, with the formation of a new institution specifically

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<sup>124</sup>Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool*, p.24. The first boys school, the lower school, was opened in 1835 in the rooms in Slater Street. In 1838 the High School for Boys, (renamed the Liverpool Institute in 1856) in Mount Street was opened, to be followed by the High School for Girls, at Blackburne House in 1844. In 1857 a new department, Queen's College was opened 'to afford facilities in Liverpool for acquiring academical degrees without residence elsewhere'. In 1851 Manchester had acquired Owen's College - Liverpool must not lag behind. It survived until 1881 (when the movement to found a university had already begun) but was always financially insecure and few boys availed themselves of its opportunities. For a full history, see Tiffen, pp.117-125. The schools survived into the 1970s, the boys school reopening in 1996 as the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, the girls school now a centre for women's education.

<sup>125</sup>Tiffen, p.52.

aimed at the social and cultural aspirations of the growing number of young clerks and tradesmen in the town.<sup>126</sup> Based on principles similar to those of the Manchester Athenaeum and London's Whittington Club, it sought to combine 'the advantages of a social club with those of a literary and scientific nature. Its prospectus included plans for a library, newsroom, lectures, essays and discussion societies, classes in languages and the fine arts, conversazioni, a gymnasium, a coffee room and 'occasional concerts and soirees of an elevated nature'.<sup>127</sup> However, the importance still placed on the influence of the Royal Institution and of William Roscoe by the new institution was reflected both in its name and its organisation. The first president and the three vice-presidents of the 'Roscoe Club and Liverpool Athenaeum' were all prominent proprietors of the Royal Institution<sup>128</sup> and according to the Roscoe Club committee, the widespread support the scheme received owed much to its association by title with its namesake.

Whenever the Roscoe Club has been mentioned, an immediate and lively interest has been excited, a hallowing influence seems to be associated with the name of Roscoe, and to this perhaps, as well as to the growing desire to progress in mental, moral and social improvement, may be attributed the fact that within the short space of time that has elapsed since the first meeting so many members have enrolled themselves.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>In this it appears to have been successful. Of the first 250 members, 154 occupations are listed, 115 of whom came from the retail, clerical and manufacturing trades. *Liverpool Roscoe Club Register*, 360ROS 3.

<sup>127</sup>*Liverpool Roscoe Club Minute Book 1847-48*, 11th March 1848, L.R.O. 367ROS 1/1.

<sup>128</sup>Henry Sandbach, J.A.Tinne, Thomas Blackburn, William Brown. J.A.Tinne was president of the Royal Institution in 1854.

<sup>129</sup>*Roscoe Minute Book 1847-50*, Report of July 1847, 367 ROS 1/2

The club was established at a public meeting on 22nd April 1847 chaired by the Mayor and attended by Dr. Traill who happened to be in Liverpool at the time. The provisional committee canvassed support from the heads of leading local firms, promoting the value of the scheme, which, they emphasised, would 'afford so much moral and intellectual advantage'. By July 1847, 570 members, of whom 30 were life members, had been enrolled<sup>130</sup> and with rhetoric redolent of the preceding generation, the Committee declared that this support:-

proves that here in the very focus as it were of trade and commerce the Mercantile spirit is not necessarily the Foe of Intelligence, and that the temporal interests of the purse do not supersede the enduring interests of the mind.<sup>131</sup>

The club opened on 1st October 1847 in rented premises in Bold Street (with additional accommodation in the Royal Institution), before moving to the Clayton Arms' Hotel in October 1848. Here members had the use of coffee and dining rooms,<sup>132</sup> a newsroom, library, gymnasium and baths. In addition to intellectual pursuits, the club offered social evenings and recreations such as billiards and cricket. The club proved immensely popular - in three years attracting a total membership of 2170 and among its life-members, were leading merchants such as William Rathbone, Thomas Booth and Robertson Gladstone.

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<sup>130</sup>Life members paid ten guineas, annual subscribers, 25s. Ladies were entitled to use the library and admission to lectures for a reduced fee of 10s 6d. However, there appeared to be a division of opinion on whether they should be allowed full participation, and the matter appears to have been shelved. *Minutes*, 10th February 1848.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup>The menu (including alcoholic beverages) was extensive and cheap, with the Committee trying to keep prices lower than in other public dining rooms in the town. However, this resulted a constant battle to keep the coffee-room solvent. Fascinating (and mouth-watering) detailed reports on the menu etc. can be found in *Minutes of the House Committee 1847-50*.



Unfortunately, the ambitious nature of the club meant that expenditure was always likely to exceed income. The Royal Institution, with its prior claim on its proprietors pockets, was also struggling financially at this time, and in September 1850, despite valiant attempts to rescue it, the Roscoe Club was forced to close its doors.

With the late 1840s heralding the beginnings of state involvement in cultural enterprise, the failure of the Roscoe Club can be seen as an indication that the position of privately funded institutions in Liverpool's cultural hierarchy was likely to be open to challenge. Although cultural enterprise was always liable to suffer in times of economic stress, it seemed probable that public rather than private institutions would be better equipped to withstand the pressures. This was recognised as early as 1846 by the Royal Institution's President, Samuel Turner, who determined to take the initiative. In his annual address, he drew the proprietors' attention to the Museums Act of 1845, which made possible the establishment of rate-aided municipal museums. Acknowledging that the Royal Institution, with its slender resources, could not hope in the long run to compete with publicly funded institutions, he realised that some form of compromise with the Town Council was going to be necessary if the Institution was to retain some control over the direction of Liverpool's future intellectual development. He hoped that the Corporation might be persuaded to increase its financial aid to the Institution, in return for which the Proprietors would pledge to 'devote our Institution to public purposes, and cordially join with the Town Council... in carrying out, to the utmost of our power the benevolent views of the

legislature'.<sup>133</sup>

Although there was no immediate outcome to these proposals, in 1850 shortly before the passing of the Public Libraries Act, fresh overtures were made - this time from the Town Council's side. In April 1850 a special Library (later Library and Museum) committee was appointed, under the chairmanship of J.A.Picton (later Sir James Picton) to consider 'the practicality of the establishment of a public library in Liverpool freely open to all classes'. This Committee believed that the 'Royal Institution taken as a whole, would form an admirable nucleus for a public institution worthy of the town of Liverpool'.<sup>134</sup> It is noteworthy that James Picton, although not himself a proprietor of the Royal Institution, linked the new venture to William Roscoe, seeing it as a way of ensuring that 'the great object proposed by Mr. Roscoe in the establishment of the Institution - the encouragement of art and science in a commercial community' would be continued by future generations.<sup>135</sup>

After a series of preliminary negotiations, the Library Committee presented a Report to the Town Council on 4th September 1850 which proposed that the Royal Institution and its collections (with the exception of the schools) should be transferred to the Town Council under joint management, thus providing the

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<sup>133</sup> *Addresses and Reports*, 13th February 1846, pp.15-18.

<sup>134</sup> A conclusion, no doubt influenced by the fact that four of the nine member committee were proprietors of the Royal Institution who 'warmly supported the idea' - Aldermen, James Lawrence, T.B.Horsfall; Councillors, Thomas Avison, Hugh Hornby.

<sup>135</sup> James Picton to Theodore Rathbone, June 8th 1850. *R.I.Arch.* 53.

Town with a free public museum, gallery of art and library, 'which shall eventually be to Liverpool what the British Museum is to the Metropolis...an honour to the town of Liverpool, and a constant source of interest and improvement to the inhabitants'. Urging his fellow councillors to adopt the Report, Picton used the same blend of cultural and commercial persuasion that had so characterised the earlier self-appointed leaders of Liverpool's intellectual life. - the Council must 'give thought and afford opportunity for the intellectual and moral advantage of the community', but 'viewing...from an economic standpoint, the benefit of an institution to those engaged in commercial and industrial pursuits would be manifest'. The report was accepted by the Council by 37 votes to 10 and a Bill was promptly drafted and introduced in Parliament. However, during its progress through the House, discussions were raised in the Town Council over the financial clauses, which some Councillors considered not sufficiently favourable to the rate payers. Despite several efforts by James Picton to effect a compromise, the Bill was abandoned.<sup>136</sup>

Renewed initiatives came in July 1851, with the presentation to the town, by Lord Derby, of his father's natural history collection, which required suitable

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<sup>136</sup>Peter Cowell, *Liverpool Public Libraries; a history of fifty years*, (Liverpool, 1903), pp.14-22. There was also some uneasiness about the subject of control being partly in the hands of people not members of the Council. The withdrawal of the Bill aroused great indignation among some of the proprietors of the Royal Institution, particularly men like Theodore Rathbone, J.H.Thom and William Rathbone, who insisted in all later discussions that no arrangements were acceptable which would fail to guarantee the extension of the collections, mere conservation would not meet their moral obligations as proprietors. *Ormerod Correspondence, notes and papers c.1950*, unpublished papers, Liverpool University Archives, D145/8.

premises to house it.<sup>137</sup> It was now proposed that the Council would purchase the school buildings and land for £4000,<sup>138</sup> on which a new building would be erected for both the new library and the Derby Collection. In the meantime, the Derby Collection was to be housed in the Union Newsroom which had been purchased by the Corporation for £2500. Once again however, financial considerations proved to be a stumbling block, with William Rathbone at a meeting of the Royal Institution proprietors, insisting on an amendment that would safeguard the future extension of the collections. Although opinion was sharply divided, this was carried by the casting vote of the president, Theodore Rathbone. Certain facetious remarks made at the meeting (and reported back to Picton) about the suitability of the Councillors to manage museum collections indicates too, that the issue was one of control as well as finance.

Angry by what he saw as the repudiation of an agreement, Picton spoke very emphatically to the Town Council in favour of stopping all further negotiations and finding a new site - the Council voting with him unanimously.<sup>139</sup> The Town Council would now only continue negotiations if they were unconditional and the resulting stalemate ensured that nearly two years of protracted

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<sup>137</sup>The collection consisted of 8000 stuffed specimens, and around 7000 skins ready for stuffing, *Ibid*, p.29.

<sup>138</sup>As Ormerod, p.53, points out, the sale of the building, would have enabled the School to move from a locality, described by the headmaster as 'a constant clog upon all our efforts at improvement'. This might well have ensured the School's survival.

<sup>139</sup>This probably explains Picton's negative description of the Royal Institution in his *Memorials of Liverpool*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1875), vol.1, p.319, in which he criticises the exclusive nature of the Institution and records that 'in the course of a few years the establishment sank into a torpid semi-fossilised condition, from which for any active purposes it seems impossible to emerge'.

negotiations ended in failure. The breakdown of the negotiations eventually saw the town lose a number of the Institution's important collections, although fortunately it retained a large part of the art collection which was transferred on deposit to the Walker Art gallery in 1893.<sup>140</sup> However, the imposing range of buildings that were erected in the second half of the century to house the William Brown Library and Museum (1860), the Walker Art Gallery (1877), the Picton Reference Library (1879) and the Hornby Art Library (1906), make Ormerod's description of the failure of the negotiations as 'tragic' appear rather overstated.

Although there were no immediate repercussions on the Royal Institution and it continued in its self-appointed cultural mission,<sup>141</sup> in reality it was fighting a losing battle against the rising tide of public enterprise. Its waning fortunes can also be seen as a reflection of J.W.Hudson's analysis, that 'Institutions like all great works, flourish or decay in proportion to their value and utility to the age in which they exist'.<sup>142</sup> Liverpool's merchant elite were now legitimated and secure and consequently less concerned with asserting their group identity through joint cultural enterprise. It was during its early years when possession

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<sup>140</sup>The collection of mammals was sold to Nottingham Museum in 1877 and most of the remaining zoological, botanical and mineral collections to Bootle in 1886. The Traill Collection of rocks and minerals were saved and transferred in 1942 to the Geology Department of Liverpool University. Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool*, p.29.

<sup>141</sup>However, the only new venture was a Museum of Applied Science founded in 1857 - 'an attractive resort and intellectual enjoyment for the proprietors and public, more especially the commercial and mercantile communities' - which attracted 1354 visitors in its first two months. However, it was also the first to go, being transferred to the Liverpool Institute in 1868. *Resolutions and Reports*, 1857, 1869.

<sup>142</sup>Hudson, p. 168.

of a silver ticket, like membership of the Athenaeum, was regarded as an impressive badge of status and when the Royal Institution was earning outside renown as a role model that it enjoyed most support and success. However, if it failed in its hopes of remaining as the spearhead of Liverpool's intellectual life in the second half of the century, its founders would have found comfort not only in the knowledge of the formative role it had certainly played in initiating cultural and educational facilities in the town but also from the fact that their hopes of making Liverpool an example of the union of commerce and culture still remained alive. That this motif had survived the Roscoe generation was illustrated in the building of the new art gallery, the gift of the millionaire brewer, A.B.Walker. Surrounding the gallery's porch are three statues - Raphael on one side, Michelangelo on the other and Commerce on the top!

## Chapter 4:- Liverpool's Learned Societies

Although the second half of the eighteenth-century had seen a number of attempts to found societies in Liverpool devoted to literary and scientific pursuits, these had proved short-lived and had faded away in the repressive atmosphere engendered by the French war.<sup>1</sup> However, the growing interest in redefining the town's cultural image, which had manifested itself in the widespread middle-class support given to the Athenaeum, the Botanic Garden and the Lyceum, encouraged renewed efforts to provide Liverpool with a cultural forum where mercantile, literary and philosophical interests could effectively be united.

### The Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society<sup>2</sup>

*The Literary and Philosophical Societies were proud of their role as the local cultural elite. Their presence or absence in the nineteenth-century cities (or the date when they came into existence) was of considerable cultural and civic importance.<sup>3</sup>*

The Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society (henceforth Lit.and Phil.) was founded in 1812, although local chroniclers invariably point to its connecting links

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<sup>1</sup>For the history of these early societies, see Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup>This is generally designated as the first of the enduring, nineteenth-century Liverpool middle class learned societies. According to Troughton, renewed efforts to establish a literary society were made in 1803, 'but...did not meet with sufficient encouragement...a community must arrive at a high degree of refinement, to relish the beauties, or cherish the benign effects of literature'. Thomas Troughton, *The History of Liverpool, from the Earliest Authenticated Period to the Present Time*, (Liverpool, 1810), p.236. A Philosophical Society was said to have been founded by the architect Thomas Rickman, the printer James Smith, and a number of others in 1809 but proved short-lived and both men subsequently joined the Literary and Philosophical Society of 1812. T.M. Rickman, *Notes on the life and on the several imprints of the work of Thomas Rickman, F.S.A., architect*, (London, 1901), p.9.

<sup>3</sup>Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, (Penguin Books, 1968), p.47.

with the short-lived Liverpool Philosophical and Literary Society which existed in the town from 1779-83.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society (which developed from private informal meetings at the house of Dr.Thomas Percival in 1781) that it is generally acknowledged as the prototype for many of the later societies of a similar type.<sup>5</sup> This has led to the conclusion that their development was closely associated with the new interest in applied science arising from the Industrial Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Although Thackray questions this assumption and suggests that the main impetus for the Manchester Society stemmed from the demands of the new industrial middle classes for a cultural forum where they could forge their own distinct identity, nonetheless it was science that they chose as their cultural mode of self-expression.<sup>7</sup> Science was also the dominant ethic in the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society (1793) where its progenitor, the Unitarian minister, William Turner, unequivocally saw the prime purpose of his Society as bringing science to bear on the primary

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<sup>4</sup>For the familial links with the Philosophical and Literary Society, see Chapter 1, p.33.

<sup>5</sup>Societies which included the words literary and philosophical in their title were founded in Manchester (1781); Newcastle (1793); Liverpool (1812); Leeds (1818); Sheffield, Whitby, Hull (1822); Bristol (1823); Wakefield (1826); Halifax (1830); Leicester (1835); Barnsley and Rochdale (1833). A number of other societies omitted the word 'literary' from their title, e.g. the Derby Philosophical Society (1783); Glasgow (1802); Yorkshire/York (1822). Dates of foundation tend to vary in different accounts according to whether the author is referring to initial moves or to some later and more formal stage of establishment.

<sup>6</sup>See for example, Thomas Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Britain*, (Liverpool, 1970), p.105; C.P.Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire and Cheshire 1760-1860*, (Manchester, 1976), p.95.

<sup>7</sup>Arnold Thackray, 'Natural Knowledge in a Cultural Context: The Manchester Model', *The American Historical Review*, 79, (1974), pp.672-709. In 1822, John James Taylor, a member of the Manchester Society, observed, 'Mechanics and chemistry are all the vogue in this district...literature is quite beaten off the field by science - even though we have a Literary and Philosophical Society'. In 1924, in his *History of Manchester and Salford*, Dr.F.A.Bruton, remarked - 'The Literary and Philosophical Society has been so much more scientific than literary that its title is almost a misnomer'. Quoted in Rev.H.McLachlan, 'John Dalton and Manchester, 1793-1844' in *Essays and Addresses*, (Manchester, 1950), p.68.



economic needs of the district and placed papers on coal and lead firmly at the head of his agenda.<sup>8</sup>

The pattern of the Liverpool Lit.and Phil., was to be markedly different, with Liverpool's gentlemen seeking to define themselves through a general intellectual and literary culture in which science and the arts were to be allotted equal attention. Although the Liverpool Lit.and Phil. never achieved the eminence accorded to the Manchester and Newcastle Societies,<sup>9</sup> it nonetheless fulfilled an important role in Liverpool's intellectual life, attracting an élite and prestigious membership and orchestrating a number of public cultural activities which helped Liverpool earn recognition in the wider intellectual arena.

The initial move came on 21st February 1812 when a preliminary meeting was held in the King's Arms in Castle Street, which attracted sixteen of the town's citizens, many of whom were already associated with the existing cultural ventures in Liverpool. Eight were prominent merchants, including William Rathbone and Robert Benson (both leading figures in the American Chamber of Commerce), the remainder of the group comprising two brokers, two Unitarian ministers, three doctors and one solicitor.<sup>10</sup> Of this number, half can be identified as non-

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<sup>8</sup>R.S.Watson, *The History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle Upon Tyne (1793-1896)*, (London, 1896), p.36.

<sup>9</sup>John Dalton read a total of 116 papers before the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society raising it 'in the esteem of scientists at home and abroad, from a provincial meeting of more or less reputable scholars interested in a curious variety of subjects, to one from whose proceedings they had much to learn'. Rev.H.McLachlan, p.67-8.

<sup>10</sup>*Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society Minute Books*, 21st February 1812, L.R.O., 060/LIT/1/1. A valuable list of members, with brief biographical details and date of entry into the (continued...)

Anglicans, while five had been 'Jacobins' or members of the Anti-Slavery Society - clearly setting them outside the established elite of town.<sup>11</sup> The business of this first meeting was primarily concerned with the selection of a committee, which was given the task of devising an acceptable format and rules to govern the new society. It also saw the appointment of the first president, the Unitarian minister Theophilus Houlbrooke, who was already distinguished as president of the Athenaeum.

The Society arranged to meet on the first Friday of each month from October to May, between the hours of 7pm and 9.30pm.<sup>12</sup> From October 1812 until the opening of the Royal Institution in 1817, meetings were held in the Freemasons Hall in Bold Street. Membership was offered to all those who resided within five miles of Liverpool, at an entrance fee of one guinea and an annual subscription of half a guinea, which in comparison with other societies was fairly cheap, for example, Newcastle where the annual subscription was one guinea. Ability to pay, however, was not the sole criteria for membership. All prospective members were

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<sup>10</sup>(...continued)

Society can be found in the *Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society Centenary Roll 1912-1912*, compiled by the keeper of the records, J.Hampden Jackson, 1912, 2 vols., L.R.O. 060 LIT 3/1/2. This proportion of commercial men in the founding group was higher than had initially been evident in Manchester, where the balance had been more even - of the 24 founder members of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 6 were physicians, 6 were surgeons and 2 were apothecaries, although the industrialists later became predominant. Thackray, p.684. Similarly in Newcastle, where although the Unitarian minister William Turner was the principal founder, the proportion of medical men was higher. Kelly, *Adult Education*, p.108.

<sup>11</sup>Guy Kitteringham, 'Science in Provincial Society: The Case of Liverpool in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Annals of Science*, 39, (1982), p.335.

<sup>12</sup>The Society increased the meetings to bi-monthly in October 1818, but this experiment evidently proved unsuccessful as the decision was rescinded in March, 1819. This format continued until October, 1835, when bi-monthly meetings were reintroduced.

balloted for, and three quarters of the votes had to be in a man's favour before he could join. From 1814 the required proportion was increased to four fifths and the minutes record that at least one prospective member fell foul of this regulation in the early years of the Society.<sup>13</sup> Membership was an all-male affair and continued to be so for most of the nineteenth-century. It was not until October 1883 that the first women were elected to full membership, even then women customarily attended only the less academic lectures and no woman was appointed to the Society's Council until about 1927.<sup>14</sup>

At the second meeting of the Society on 13th March 1812 the regulations were confirmed and fifty six men were enrolled as members. This initial membership was drawn overwhelmingly from the middle classes and from a narrow occupational base. It reflected the bias of the original sixteen with merchants and brokers the dominant grouping, followed by the old professions of the church and medicine (see Table.1). The roll included a number of men who were to become prominent in local and national affairs. John Bostock held the office of President of the Geological Society and Vice President of the Royal Society after he moved to London in 1817; Thomas Stewart Traill became Professor of Medical Jurisprudence

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<sup>13</sup>*Laws and Regulations of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool (1812)*, recorded in *Minute Book*, 1, on 13th April 1812; *Laws and Regulations of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool (1815)*, (Liverpool, 1815), O60 LIT 4/3; *Minute Book*, 1, 3rd February 1815.

<sup>14</sup>The first women elected were Miss Jessie McGregor and Mrs John Sefton (wife of the headmaster of the Liverpool Institute School), Dr. Lucy Craddock, a medical pioneer, joining in 1884. *Outlook, The University of Liverpool Bulletin of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies* 3, no.5, Winter, 1962, p.2. Although women are recorded as attending a small debating society in the town in the 1790s, its closure was attributed by Thomas Troughton to 'defects in its organisation, particularly the admission of females, by which it was supposed to be injurious to morals'. Quoted in Thomas Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool; A narrative of two hundred years*, (Liverpool, 1960), p.13.

at Edinburgh University in 1833, President of the Royal College of Physicians in 1852 and editor of the eighth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica; John Ashton Yates and Thomas Thornely both entered parliament; William Wallace Currie became the first Mayor after the passing of the Municipal Reform Act, an office also to be held by William Rathbone (1837) and David Hodgson (1845).<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1. Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society; Membership Occupational Structure - March, 1812.**<sup>16</sup>

Merchants	25		Law	2
Brokers	6		Teacher	1
Banker	1		Printers	2
Brewer	1		Gentlemen	3
Medical	7		Unknown	3
Clergy	5		Total	56

One notable absentee from the initial membership roll was William Roscoe, particularly as the founding group included many of his close friends, who had been associated with him in the embryonic literary societies of the eighteenth-century. The most likely explanation for this omission was the bout of ill-health he suffered during the year of the Society's inauguration, which kept him confined to his home.<sup>17</sup> A poem written by one of the founder members in 1812, however, indicates that the Society considered him their mentor and the formative influence

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<sup>15</sup>'Centenary Banquet Report', *Centenary Roll*, vol.1. This Report states 'since that early period the roll of the Society had recorded the names of 9 more Mayors and 7 Lord Mayors, nearly all of whom were active members....some 59 Councillors and Aldermen of the city and eight Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce had been members.'

<sup>16</sup>These figures have been taken from the *Minute Books*, vol.1. In his *Centenary Roll*, J.Hampden Jackson lists only 55 members enrolled at the first meeting - with the enrolment date of the banker Edward Rogers (son of one of the proposers of the Liverpool Library) given as 1st May 1812.

<sup>17</sup>Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe*, 2 vols. (London, 1833), 2, p.55.

on the Society's intellectual development:-

Long may attention's raptured ear  
Our Roscoe's tuneful numbers hear;  
The beauties of his native stream  
At once his pleasure and his theme.<sup>18</sup>

Roscoe's entry into the Society appears to have been further delayed by his involvement with the founding of the Royal Institution and by his impending bankruptcy. His application was finally received in 1817 when the Society moved to its new accommodation in the Royal Institution.<sup>19</sup> The Society immediately offered Roscoe the presidency, a position which he accepted and retained until his death in 1831. Although ill-health and business worries prevented him from attending as regularly as he would have wished,<sup>20</sup> he chaired a number of meetings and presented six papers before the Society on themes particularly close to his heart - notably in 1819 'On the Effects and Impolicy of War' and in 1829 on 'The Principles of Morality applied to the Intercourse of States', in which he attacked the concept of political expediency, insisting that moral principles were equally applicable in both personal and public life.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>*Minute Book*, 1, 1st May 1812. The author is not named but in his *Centenary Roll*, J.Hampden Jackson ascribes it to William Shepherd. However, the *Kaleidoscope, or Literary and Scientific Mirror*, New Series 4 (1824), p.188, cites the Quaker merchant Thomas Binns as the author.

<sup>19</sup>The accommodation granted gratis to the Lit.and Phil. by the Royal Institution was of great financial benefit to the Society, negating the need to build or rent premises.

<sup>20</sup>In 1825 Roscoe offered his resignation as President (although he wished to remain a member) as he felt that ill-health and old age prevented him from carrying out his duties efficiently. The Society persuaded him to remain on the understanding that he need only attend when his personal circumstances permitted. Henry Roscoe, *Life*, 2, p.164.

<sup>21</sup>The other four papers were 'An Account of the Plymouth Institution' (1819); 'On the Principal Treasures of the MSS. Library at Holkham (1821); 'His Preface (before publication) to the author's edition of Pope's Works' (1825); 'The Holkham Library; an account of its foundation, and some of its important MSS.' (1829).

Although the initial membership of the Lit. and Phil. included a high number of reformers and Dissenters (eighteen known Unitarians, three Quakers), it also included men of conservative political opinion and men of conformist religious beliefs<sup>22</sup> and it continued to elect to membership West Indian merchants, Anglican priests<sup>23</sup> and a wide variety of other men from established sections of the middle class. This has led to the suggestion that an important aim of the Society was to provide a forum where as broad a section as possible of Liverpool's wealthier classes could join together to discuss literary and scientific topics in a relatively informal, congenial and non-controversial atmosphere,<sup>24</sup> helping to create a sense of common consciousness amongst Liverpool's divided higher classes.<sup>25</sup>

The rationale offered by the Society's president, Theophilus Houlbrooke, for the formation of literary societies has been used in support of this supposition. He

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<sup>22</sup>For example, the corn merchant, David Hodgson, a staunch Tory; William Corrie, who seconded General Tarleton's nomination at the 1812 election, against the Reformers' candidates, Brougham and Creevey; the Rev. James Hamer, chaplain of St. Michaels. *Centenary Roll*, vol. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Rev. R.P. Buddicom (1815); Rev. J.C. Prince (1819); Rev. J.B. Monk, headmaster of the Royal Institution School and Chaplain of St. George's Corporation Church (1820); Rev. Thomas Tattershall (1823). *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Kitteringham, p. 335-6. Law 23. of the Society reads - 'Papers, or subjects for conversation, may be selected from any branch of philosophy, or general literature: but all discussions on the particular party politics of the day, and the peculiar creed of any sect of Christians, shall not be admitted by the society'. *Laws*, 1815.

<sup>25</sup>Divisions between Liverpool's American and West Indian merchants had been intensified in the years leading up to 1812, by the effects of the Orders in Council. America's Embargo Act had left Liverpool's American merchants fearing for their livelihood, while the West Indian merchants were delighted that America had cut off its own trade with Europe and the colonies. Many of the American merchants were Dissenters (to avoid the taint of slavery). Of 14 presidents of the American Chamber of Commerce between 1801-1821, 6 were Unitarians, 2 Quakers, 3 religion unknown, but they were prominent reformers. See, C.D. Watkinson, *The Liberal party on Merseyside in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1967, pp. 48-49.

regarded their main function as being - 'to correct long established error; to prevent the establishment of erroneous theories and opinions; to collect and communicate literary and philosophical intelligence of all sorts!'<sup>26</sup> These objectives have been interpreted as amounting 'to the formation and propagation of an agreed body of knowledge and opinion', which if achieved would have done much to ameliorate divisions within the educated members of Liverpool society.<sup>27</sup>

The reminiscences of the founder members confirm that the early meetings were friendly, pleasant occasions. Many years later the Rev.H.Higgins recollected that William Rathbone 'had often spoken to him of the delightful associations of those early times, when members of the Society frequently met in each other's houses, and, after spending the evening in literary and scientific discourse, concluded with oysters and porter'.<sup>28</sup> Similar fond memories were held by Dr.Traill - 'Among the most delightful recollections of this Society are the *noctes alticae* of a select party of the members that met at supper, at the houses of Mr.William and Richard Rathbone'.<sup>29</sup>

However, the Society did not attract the immediate support that had greeted the Athenaeum (and later the Royal Institution). The rule of 1812 that 'no gentleman can be balloted for membership, who has not previously submitted a paper' was probably a major factor in this slow beginning. The commitment of many of

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<sup>26</sup>Minute Book, 1, 6th February 1813.

<sup>27</sup>Kitteringham, p.337. As Kitteringham points out, these aims were utopian and, inevitably, divisions continued within Liverpool society.

<sup>28</sup>*Centenary Roll*, under William Rathbones's name.

<sup>29</sup>David Thomson, *The Stranger's Vade Mecum, or Liverpool Described*, (Liverpool, 1854), p.44.

Liverpool's middle class seekers of polite culture was apparently more rhetorical than real and membership of the Athenaeum, an appearance at a musical or theatrical concert, or even attendance at a lecture were all less demanding ways of making a cultural statement than active participation in a learned society. Significantly this law was omitted from the revised code of 1814 and membership then began to increase, although, as in the majority of societies, the main work of the Lit. and Phil. seems to have fallen on a small group of activists and in 1817 the secretary felt impelled to 'make some remarks on the attendance...and on the small number who have taken a part in its public business'.<sup>30</sup> By 1821, however, the names of one hundred and forty six members had been entered on the roll and numbers then stabilised at between 120-145 members (including corresponding members).

From the outset the Liverpool Lit. and Phil. sought to dignify its status in the wider intellectual arena by electing as honorary members, distinguished men from both at home and abroad (see table 2).

**Table 2. Honorary Members of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, 1812-1817.**

U.S.A.	6	Birmingham	2
London	5	Bath	1
Edinburgh	2	Cambridge	1
Wales	2	Manchester	1

Here was further attestation of the respect held by the port's main trading partner

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<sup>30</sup>*Minute Book*, 2, 3rd October 1817.



for William Roscoe's Liverpool.<sup>31</sup>

However, the Society seemed less anxious to attract aristocratic patronage.<sup>32</sup> It had only been in the latter half of the eighteenth century that Liverpool's merchants had finally secured their independence from the local landed elite.<sup>33</sup> If cultural organisation was to have a role in securing their status as the new aristocracy of the town, it was essential that at least in its initial organisation they should be seen to be playing a formative part. The appearance on the membership roll of a number of members of the landed aristocracy in the mid-1830s,<sup>34</sup> can be interpreted as a sign that the commercial élite now felt their position in Liverpool society was assured, and also as an early indication that the social composition of the hierarchy of the Lit. and Phil. was beginning to change.<sup>35</sup>

Further links with the wider intellectual community were fostered by activities such as the collection of unusual artifacts and in particular minerals, which was begun

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<sup>31</sup>The first honorary member, a resident of Boston, was elected at the second official meeting in April 1812. Other honorary members in the early years included Peter Mark Roget (1812); Benjamin Rush, M.D. and politician of Philadelphia (1813); William Buckland, clergyman and geologist, later Dean of Westminster (1814).

<sup>32</sup>Robert Morris makes a similar point about the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, differentiating it sharply from the York Society where the patronage of wealthy local landowners was welcomed. He further points out that the middle classes usually offered the working classes just the sort of patronage which they had rejected for themselves. R.J.Morris, *Class, Sect and Party; The Making of the British middle class, Leeds 1820-1850*, (Manchester, 1990), p.233.

<sup>33</sup>The fee-farm lease was finally secured in 1777, when the borough paid the Earl of Sefton a lump sum of £2,250, in commutation for their annual payment. J.Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, (London, 1907), p.143. For political relationship between the merchants and the local landed élite, see, M.Mullett, 'The Politics of Liverpool, 1660-88', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 124, (1972), pp.31-56.

<sup>34</sup>November 1835 - November 1836 - Duke of Devonshire; Earl of Derby; Earl of Mount Norris; Lord Francis Egerton, later Earl of Ellesmere. *Centenary Roll*, vol.1.

<sup>35</sup>For an analysis of the membership roll of 1844, see Table 5, p.151.

by the Liverpool Lit.and Phil. at its inception.<sup>36</sup> Interest in geology was common to many of the provincial societies which were scattered about the country in areas of widely varying geological character. Comparison of their different geological situations, by means of correspondence provided an excellent way of establishing contact with each other and more traditional centres.<sup>37</sup>

Eliciting the support of other societies on matters of national scientific concern performed a similar function. In 1824, for example, William Rathbone mobilised the Society to lobby parliament and the King, for a change in the law regarding the procurement of dead bodies for medical research and circulated the petition round the other provincial societies.<sup>38</sup> Collective action of this kind by the Society not only promoted common feeling with the outside intellectual world but also helped to create a sense of common identity within the Lit.and Phil. itself.

During the Society's first ten years, a total of 117 papers were presented before the Society by 40 individuals, with 95 written communications also being received. The occupational status of the presenters reflected the bias of the membership roll, with merchants and brokers as the largest group, followed by medicine and the

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<sup>36</sup>In 1813, for example, the Rev.Warner of Bath presented the Society with a collection of minerals from his locality. *Minute Book*, 1, 1st October, 1813.

<sup>37</sup>Jack Morrell and Arnold Thackray, *Gentlemen of Science: Early Years of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, (Oxford, 1981), p.39. When the Lit.and Phil. moved to the Royal Institution in 1817, the collection was deposited in the Institution's Museum of Natural History, with Lit.and Phil. members being granted free access on the on the day of their meeting. *Minute Book*, 1, 5th December 1817.

<sup>38</sup>Rathbone asked that unclaimed bodies in workhouses, hospitals and prisons should be allowed to be used for anatomical purposes, 'under proper restrictions and with a decent burial to follow'. Dr.Traill claimed that there was a precedent for the government being influenced by groups such as the literary and philosophical societies. He believed that a paper read by him before the Liverpool Lit.and Phil. relative to the customs duties on minerals had been the means of obtaining a reduction in that duty. *Minutes*, 3rd November 1824 - May 1825.

church (see table 3.). The high number of paper contributed by the medical men is accounted for by the contribution of Dr. Traill, who was by far the most prolific member of the Society, delivering 21 of the first 117 papers.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 3. Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. Occupational analysis of the contributors of papers and the total of papers presented by each group 1812-21.<sup>40</sup>**

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>No. in group</u>	<u>Papers given</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>No. in group</u>	<u>Papers given</u>
Merchant/Broker	10	20	Accountant	1	2
Physician/Surg.	6	33	Optician	1	3
Clergy	4	10	Engraver	1	1
Brewer Distiller	2	6	Banker	1	3
Architect	2	15	Army	1	1
Printer	2	9	Explorer	1	3
Barrister	1	3	Joint Discussion	1	1
Gentleman	1	1	Unknown	5	6
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>117</b>

The analysis of the content of papers presented (see table 4) shows a wide ranging programme covering both the arts and the sciences, a policy which was set at the first meeting, with the arts represented by a paper on architecture and the sciences by a paper on galvanism.

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<sup>39</sup>Dr. Traill read a total of 68 papers to the Lit. and Phil. before his departure to Edinburgh in 1833. He did not confine himself to science, offering papers on architecture, sculpture and history.

<sup>40</sup>*Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool; Selected list of the 117 papers read before the Society at its monthly meetings during its first ten years (1812-1821) and a summary table of the other 95 'literary and philosophical' communications made to it during the same period by members and visitors. L.R.O., 060 LIT 8/3.*

**Table 4. Summary of the contents of the papers delivered before the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society during the years 1812-1821.<sup>41</sup>**

<u>Subject of paper</u>	<u>No.of Papers</u>	<u>Subject of paper</u>	<u>No.of Papers</u>
Science & Maths.	18	History/Archaeology	13
Medicine	8	Philosophy	15
Geology	5	Art & Architecture	17
Geography	3	Education	2
Environmental	1	Mercantile	2
Mechanics	2	Miscellaneous topics	17
Lang & Literature	10		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>

The number of papers on architectural themes, which was a feature of the Society's programme in its first years, was indicative both of the concern of the members with the physical fabric of their rapidly expanding town and the presence in the Society of the architect Thomas Rickman, who delivered thirteen papers to the Society during its first ten years.<sup>42</sup> Rickman (like many others at that time), was at work on the actual facts and principles of the Gothic style. Considerable time and energy went into the problems of terminology and there was also a debate on the origins of the pointed arch. Rickman examined both of these

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<sup>41</sup>Source:- *Ibid.* The society also received 95 written communications during this period, 59 of which were the contribution of Dr. Traill, which is reflected in the fact that zoology and chemistry accounted for over 30% of the subject matter.

<sup>42</sup>Rickman was born in Maidenhead, the son of a Quaker druggist. He came to Liverpool in 1807, looking for work. He was employed as an accountant by a prominent merchant, J. Ashton Case. In 1812 he was elected Professor of Architecture at the revived Liverpool Academy and delivered a course of lectures. Having joined the Lit. and Phil. in 1812 he was elected treasurer in 1817. He resigned this position and also that of assistant secretary when he opened up an office in Birmingham in 1820. For full biographical details, see entry in *D.N.B.*

questions and presented his findings to the members of the Lit.and Phil.. In 1817 the information that Rickman had initially transmitted to the gentlemen of Liverpool, he spread abroad with the publication of his book, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture, from the Conquest to the Reformation*, which became the corner-stone of the Gothic Revival. The book provided a framework for the development of an authentic Gothic vocabulary with a system of classification by periods, and his terminology 'Early English', 'Decorated', and 'Perpendicular', quickly passed into common usage.<sup>43</sup> It has been claimed that it was through the work of Thomas Rickman that 'a play style of the eighteenth-century became a demonstration of serious intent'.<sup>44</sup>

Amongst the audience at the Lit.and Phil. would have been wealthy men on building committees for new public buildings and churches, and although they were not to repudiate the neo-classic form, it has been argued Rickman's influence ensured that it was Liverpool which witnessed 'the birth....of the Gothic Revival'.<sup>45</sup> Rickman taught by example as well as by words, forging a friendship with the Liverpool iron founder John Cragg and designing a number of Liverpool churches using cast iron both inside and out.<sup>46</sup> After Rickman moved to

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<sup>43</sup>C.P.Darcy, p.99-100.

<sup>44</sup>Quentin Hughes, *Seaport; Architecture and Townscape in Liverpool*, (London, 1964), p.116.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid*, p.116. Hughes claims that Liverpool also saw the death of the Gothic Revival, citing the town's Anglican Cathedral as tolling the Gothic Revival's death knell - 'a final blaze of Gothic, in scale unprecedented - a fitting consummation of a great period'.

<sup>46</sup>St George's, Everton, (1814); St Michael-in-the-Hamlet (1814), St Philip's, Hardman Street (1816). According to Hughes, these three buildings led to the development of the pre-fabricated cast-iron church which was shipped in such numbers from Liverpool and Bristol, to be erected in America and Australia. Hughes, p.144.

Birmingham at the beginning of the 1820s, papers on architecture became markedly less frequent. However, the platform of the Lit.and Phil. continued as a sounding board for the discussion of architectural projects for the town - it was, for example, before the Society, that Sir James Picton first formulated a scheme for a Liverpool Cathedral.<sup>47</sup>

The major contributors to science papers in the early years were the Edinburgh trained physicians, Dr.Traill and Dr.John Bostock, before the latter moved to London in 1817. It has been suggested that in some societies science was pursued and patronized by members more as polite learning than as a direct agent of technological and economic change.<sup>48</sup> However, motivated by the town's shipping and mercantile interests, the Liverpool Lit.and Phil. did appear to offer a sense of the utility of science. Papers were delivered on subjects such as the 'The Destruction of Copper Sheathing in Iron Fastened Ships'(1816), with discussions being held on the current state of research in that field. The members of the Lit.and Phil. appeared to show less interest in applying scientific knowledge to industrial situations - a discussion on 'The Utility of Gas Lights', for example, being summed up in the minute book:-

A general conversation took place on the utility of gaslights - and it seemed to be the opinion of several gentlemen that the pipes now laid in this place for conveying gas are not being buried sufficiently deep in the streets to prevent accidents from heavy loads passing

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<sup>47</sup>*Outlook*, p.2.

<sup>48</sup>Jack Morrell, 'Economic and ornamental geology: the Geological and Polytechnic Society of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1837-53', in I.Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province; Science in British culture, 1780-1850*, (London, 1983), p.231.

over them.<sup>49</sup>

The merchant influence in the Lit. and Phil. also saw the Society acting as a sounding board for various improvement schemes designed to increase the efficiency and prosperity of the port - 'The Proposal for a Floating Pier' (1825), 'Suggested Improvements in Warehouses to facilitate Loading and Unloading' (1827), and 'Plans for Docks and a Ship canal at Wallasey Pool' (1828) - all presented to an audience who not only had a vested interest in such matters but were in a position to exert their influence to effect any relevant improvements.

Many of the papers offered under generalised headings were used both to stress the importance of literary and scientific pursuits in enhancing personal worth and to reiterate the motif of the compatibility of culture with commerce. In 1814, for example, William Dixon, used his paper, entitled 'The Advantages of the Interchange of Ideas in Literary Societies' to emphasise this latter theme and:-

refute an assertion which has not infrequently been advanced, that the pursuits of literature, the investigations of sciences, or the gratifying researches of natural philosophy, are repugnant to those habits of plodding industry, which are deemed most essential to commercial prosperity.

He also seized the opportunity to offer a spirited defence of the Liverpool merchants against the 'illiberal and unjust aspersion which has not infrequently been advanced, that, they are as conspicuous for ignorance as for wealth'. That Dixon felt it necessary to do so, implies that the merchants both resented and recognised, a need for redefinition of their image in the outside arena. His glowing panegyric testifying to the true character (in his opinion) of Liverpool's merchant

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<sup>49</sup>Kitteringham, p.337.

community would have helped to contribute to a sense of solidarity amongst his listeners:-

That the merchants of Liverpool are conspicuous, is a fact, which in the four quarters of the globe, will find ample attestation - not that they are conspicuous for ignorance, but for liberality and a high sense of honour in commercial negotiations - conspicuous for zeal and ability in the conducting of business; conspicuous for a spirit of lauded enterprise and exalted comprehension; conspicuous for that mercantile morality which extends its benign influence through the multiplied operations of this great commercial town.

Dixon went on to praise Liverpool's cultural institutions, in particular the proposed Royal Institution (in the foundation of which many of the Lit. and Phil. were taking an active part)<sup>50</sup> as examples of the burgeoning interest in literary and scientific pursuits amongst the citizens of Liverpool. This, it might be suggested was one presenter who need have no qualms about the warmth of his reception!<sup>51</sup>

Further reassurance for the merchants came from the President Theophilus Houlbrooke. Although, as befitted his calling, he sounded a note of caution over certain merchant practices which he considered bordered on the unethical, nevertheless, he was prepared to offer mitigating factors for such behaviour - 'the circumstances of the times, the various impediments of commerce and the threatening aspect of America'. He assured his audience that he was confident that those merchants who were now involved in cultural as well as business pursuits would act as a vanguard in the town and he saw 'the happy influence of

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<sup>50</sup>Of the Committee appointed in June 1814 to oversee the organisation of establishment of the Royal Institution, 10 out of the 21 members were already members of the Lit. and Phil..

<sup>51</sup>*Minute Book*, 1, 6th May 1814. Other papers on a similar theme include Rev. T. Houlbrooke, 'The Utility of Literary Societies', 5th May 1813; Adam Hodgson, 'On the Advantages of Combining Literary and Commercial Pursuits', 3rd November 1815.



their example and the efficacy of their conversation as the probable means of restoring the lustre of the merchant character.'<sup>52</sup>

A more public opportunity to boost the image of the Society, its members and the town of Liverpool came in 1837, with the visit to the town of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). The BAAS had been founded in 1831 at the instigation of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, with the aim of 'combining the Philosophical Societies, dispersed throughout the provinces of the empire, in a general co-operative union'.<sup>53</sup> The inaugural meeting held in York in September 1831 had proved a triumphant success not only in ensuring the future of the BAAS, but also for the town of York and its Philosophical Society. The need for the BAAS to establish its academic credentials ensured that the traditional centres of learning, Oxford and Cambridge, would play host for the first two years, but competition to play host became increasingly lively. The provincial associations were quick to realise the potential of the week long meetings as occasions for displaying local resources and local organisations to a nationwide audience - attendance at the Liverpool meeting was close to two thousand.

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<sup>52</sup>Rev.T.Houlebrooke, 'On Mercantile Morality', *Minute Book*, 1, 3rd March 1815.

<sup>53</sup>*Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the British association for the Advancement of Science, 10-15 August 1835*, (Dublin, 1835), p.10. Women were not admitted to the early scientific meetings of the BAAS. This became a burning question. Discussing the second meeting, William Buckland claimed 'everyone I spoke to on the subject agreed that if the meeting is to be of scientific utility, Ladies ought not to attend the reading of papers - especially in a place like Oxford - as it would at once turn the thing into a sort of Albemarle-dilettanti meeting'. Quoted in, O.J.R.Howarth, *The British Association for the Advancement of Science; A Retrospect 1831-1931*, (London, 1931), p.16.

The Liverpool Lit.and Phil. was amongst the first of the contenders.<sup>54</sup> The Society's President, Joseph B.Yates, recognised that the BAAS's patronage would offer the town a means 'to extend its reputation and develop its resources' and would also serve to engender civic pride and bring unity through shared endeavour to the town's wealthier residents.<sup>55</sup> The BAAS, however, did not dispense with tradition but opted for Edinburgh and Dublin in 1834 and 1835. The Dublin meeting saw invitations from Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle. The enhancement of status, that a visit from the BAAS conferred on a town is reflected in the efforts made by the Bristol Institution (and its satellite the Philosophical and Literary Society) to win the nomination. From 1833 onwards the Bristol Institution was heavily in debt but the need to be the first non-university city to be visited (after York) remained paramount.<sup>56</sup> Although the success of Bristol's bid may have had as much to do with its geographical position as its intellectual profile, the decision of the BAAS was a major blow to Liverpool. Having long outclassed Bristol on the economic front, Liverpool would have welcomed some recognition of its efforts to perform a similar feat on the cultural front.

Liverpool received some recompense the following year when competition to host the 1837 meeting proved equally as intense, with Manchester, Liverpool's neighbour and rival, seeking to become the first industrial city to be visited by the

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<sup>54</sup>The first mention of the Lit.and Phil. endeavouring to bring the BAAS. meeting to Liverpool comes in 1833, with the appointment of a deputation (the merchants J.B.Yates and William Lawson) to lobby for Liverpool as a venue. *Minute book*, 3, 3rd June 1833.

<sup>55</sup>*Address by the President, Mr.J.B.Yates 16th October 1837*, included in *Minute Book*, 4, 1837.

<sup>56</sup>Michael Neve, 'Science in a commercial city: Bristol 1820-60', in I.Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds.), pp.193-4.

BAAS.. The BAAS., despite its declared aim in the common interests of the academic and the industrialist, opted (on its first visit to the north of England apart from its inaugural meeting in York) for commercial Liverpool<sup>57</sup> and the town set out to prove that anything that Bristol had offered in 1836, Liverpool could more than outmatch in 1837. Civic pride helped to ameliorate old divisions, with the Town Council as well as the Lit. and Phil. contributing funds for the occasion. That these divisions were apparent outside the town was illustrated by the fears held by leading figures in the BAAS that religious and political differences would hinder the organisation of the visit. In the event, however, these proved groundless, with the secretary of the BAAS able to report to his colleagues that 'all the notions of political feeling have been falsified by the event... There is good feeling among the public bodies, and I expect a fair subscription for expenses'.<sup>58</sup>

Entertainment was planned on a grand scale, with lavish civic and private dinners, including a 'splendid dinner or déjeuner to 2500 persons in the Botanical Gardens'.<sup>59</sup> BAAS ticket holders were invited to visit institutions, public and commercial buildings, churches, sculpture, gardens, shipyards and manufacturing works. Excursions ranged from a tour of James Muspratt's chemical works to a trip to view the Earl of Derby's collection of animals at Knowsley.<sup>60</sup> The *pièce de*

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<sup>57</sup>Manchester finally hosted the event in 1842, being preceded by Newcastle, Birmingham, Glasgow and Plymouth.

<sup>58</sup>Jack Morrell & Arnold Thackray (eds.), *Early Correspondence of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, (London, 1984), p.248.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid*, p.255.

<sup>60</sup>This contribution by Lord Derby bore out the prediction of the assistant secretary of the BAAS. - 'Lord Derby has written to offer all the help he can give, but this is not thought likely to amount  
(continued...)

*résistance* came on the final morning when eighty members of the BAAS were lowered three hundred feet below ground at the salt mines at Northwich. Here, they were treated to a great firework display and 'a very elegant déjeuner' accompanied by numerous toasts. The underground spectacle was formally concluded with the singing of a psalm and the National Anthem, before the visitors were returned to Liverpool in time for tea.<sup>61</sup>

The Society's president J.B.Yates emphasised the role the Lit. and Phil. had played in securing this honour for Liverpool. It had been brought about by:-

the persevering efforts of this Society, which for five successive years sent delegates with invitations and tenders of assistance, and which omitted no opportunity of urging upon the municipal authorities that co-operation which was at length conceded. But for the efforts of this Society, the late meeting would not have been held in Liverpool. Towards the expenses of its reception our funds contributed liberally, and our individual exertions were, we trust, considered effective.<sup>62</sup>

The members of the Lit. and Phil. were also congratulated by their president for their academic contribution to the meeting - 'Of the scientific communications made by our townsmen to the sections, all (I believe), but one were contributed by members of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool'. This was seen by Yates as clear evidence of the success of learned societies in widening the intellectual interests of their members. As 'a native of Liverpool - anxious to extend

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<sup>60</sup>(...continued)

to more than an inspection of his Aviary as the Old Lord gives no money even to charity without grave consideration'. *Ibid*, p.249.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.160.

<sup>62</sup> Address by the President Mr.J.B.Yates, 16th October 1837', included in *Minute Book*, 2, 16th October, 1837.

its reputation and develop its resources', Yates made a special plea to the younger generation to continue the work begun by men such as Roscoe, Currie, Traill and Bostock, and to bear in mind their belief that 'no idea can be more erroneous than that the pursuit of knowledge is incompatible with habits of business'.<sup>63</sup>

The years immediately following the visit of the BAAS. saw an increase in the number of papers on scientific matters<sup>64</sup> but this probably owed more to the changing occupational pattern of the Society, which by 1844 saw the town's medical men ousting the town's business-men as the dominant group (see table 5). The age in which Liverpool's intellectual life had been influence by Liverpool's merchant élite and Roscoe's generalised approach to the arts now appeared to be drawing to a close. In 1844 the Society's president, the merchant J.B.Yates, urged the Society to guard against any polarization of interests which might lead to the eventual creation and proliferation of small specialist societies within the town - 'The fashion of the day may, perhaps, just for the present set in favour of science. But science must and will generally proceed hand in hand with the arts'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>This contrasts with the experience of Leeds where in 1822, 13 out of 16 lectures had been on scientific subjects. In the early 1830s the balance had been about even. By the late 1840s only 3 or 4 out of the lectures were scientific. Even those that remained tended to turn science into a form of entertainment. Morris, p.232.

<sup>65</sup>*Report and Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool for 1844-45*, (Liverpool, 1845), L.R.O. 060LIT 12, p.1. The committee for the year 1844-45 was composed of 3 doctors, 3 clergymen, 2 gentlemen, 1 dental surgeon, 1 architect/engineer, 1 chemist, with the president, J.B.Yates, being the sole representative of the business community.

**Table 5. The Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society; Membership Occupational Structure, 1844.**

Physicians/Surgeons	35		Bank Manager	2
Merchant/Broker	30		Optician	1
Church	10		Civil Engineer	1
Education	8		Gentleman	1
Architect/Landscaper	3		Navy	1
Attorney	3		Prison Governor	1
Chemist/Druggist	3		Notary	1
Commission Agent	3		Magistrate	1
Printer/Stationer	3		Brewer	1
Sculpture/Artist/Mason	3		M.P.	1
Insurance	2		Surgeon-Dentist	1
Shipschandler	2		Auctioneer	1
Jeweller/Silversmith	2		Newspaper Proprietor	1
Manufacturer	2		Unknown	12
			<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>

The influence of the medical profession also saw a rise in the number of papers on environmental themes. The rise of civic science in the 1840s has been connected with the reform of municipal government and the increased standing of the medical profession.<sup>66</sup> In Liverpool, the problems posed by the rapid growth of the town's population and the resulting strain on resources were becoming alarmingly obvious by the 1840s and 'the great sanitary excitement in the public mind began to set

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<sup>66</sup>Ian Inkster, 'Aspects of the history of science and science culture in Britain, 1780-1850 and beyond', in Inkster and Morrell, p.34

in with great force'.<sup>67</sup> The Society was obviously considered a fitting venue for the presentation of detailed, statistical and revealing reports on local problems and discussion on contemporary urban problems. Papers were delivered on subjects such as 'On the Sanitary State of Liverpool, the Causes of its alleged Great Mortality, and the means of Lessening them' (1840); the town's water supply (1846); 'Sanitary Reflections, especially on the ventilation of the chimney' (1849), and it was the platform of the Lit. and Phil. that the town's (and the Country's) first medical officer of health, Dr. Duncan, chose to present his influential three part paper 'On the Physical Causes of the High Rate of Mortality in Liverpool'. This paper was subsequently published by the Society, with an abridged version being printed in the First Report of the Health of Towns Commission in 1844 and was certainly recognised locally as having helped to promote the sanitary cause.<sup>68</sup> Although the Society can in no sense be regarded as a reform body, it did have a valuable role in disseminating such information to wealthy men, the majority of whom now lived away from the crowded town centre.

The town's burgeoning population and the consequent growing number of aspirants of middle class status did not, however, see any corresponding rise in the membership of the Lit. and Phil.. In 1846, the president, the Rev. James Booth,

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<sup>67</sup>James Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1875), 2, p.198. In 1846 the president of the Lit. and Phil., the Rev. James Booth, declared - 'Our social evils have grown to such a magnitude, and with such alarming rapidity, that an effort must be made to stay them; to eradicate them is I fear hopeless'. *Proceedings*, 1846-7.

<sup>68</sup>Dr. Duncan had been elected a member of the Lit. and Phil. in January 1837. He read his paper was read on February 6th and 20th and March 6th 1843. For the importance and effect of both his paper and his work in Liverpool, see, Gary Kearns, Paul Laxton and Joy Campbell, 'Duncan and the Cholera Test; public health in mid-nineteenth century Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 134, (1994), pp.87-115.

recognised the need for the Society to increase its efforts if it was to retain its position as Liverpool's premier learned society and to retain its influence on the future course of the town's intellectual development:-

I am of the opinion, that we should propose to ourselves, whether we obtain it or not, a high standard of excellence; that we should endeavour to elevate the character of our proceedings and that we should strive to make them worthy of this rapidly increasing town.<sup>69</sup>

However, a year later, a harsh critique of the performance of the Society's council came from one of its own members, the Rev. Abraham Hume, who resigned from the committee, although he elected to remain an ordinary member of the Society.<sup>70</sup> He attacked the Lit. and Phil. for its continuing failure to attract the growing number of eligible, prospective members in the town:- -

There are, by the Liverpool Directory, more than 120 graduates in town, in arts, laws and divinity; there are about a dozen in the society. There are also 237 surgeons in town, 51 physicians, 162 attorneys, 15 barristers, 14 members of metropolitan societies (all men of education and in general eligible,) about 90 official persons (Rectors, Mayor, Members for the Borough and Southern Division of the County, Bishop, Archdeacon, Justices for the borough, County Justices resident in the Hundred &c.,) and probably 500 others, (in a population of 300,000,) friends to literature and science. Thus out of about 1200 eligible persons...we have 130...*Is this representing literature and science in Liverpool?*<sup>71</sup>

Although Hume conceded that the Lit. and Phil. had previously played an important role in developing Liverpool's intellectual life, and was now 'known and respected at a distance', he believed that it was either unable or unwilling to adapt to changing times. He accused the council of insularity and a lack of dynamism which

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<sup>69</sup>*Proceedings*, 1846.

<sup>70</sup>Rev. Abraham Hume joined the Lit. and Phil. in December 1841.

<sup>71</sup>Rev. A. Hume, *Facts and Documents, illustrating both the public and private history of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, edited from the originals by A. Hume*, (Liverpool, 1847), p.36.



seemed destined to lower the status of the Society 'down to a petty club, for puerile conversation and for imbibing tea and coffee'.<sup>72</sup> Hume urged the society to offer a more comprehensive programme, fearing as Yates had done, competition from small specialist societies, none of which on their own would be capable of achieving national status. In 1844 Hume had circulated an address to the Natural History Society and the Polytechnic Society suggesting a union. Although the Polytechnic Society 'had stood aloof', the Natural History Society had agreed and Hume felt that its incorporation had greatly strengthened the standing of the Lit.and Phil.. However, a stipulation of the union had been that one third of meetings was to be devoted to natural history, a proviso which much to Hume's annoyance had largely been ignored and he argued that science, literature and natural history must be given equal representation both on the council and in future programmes.<sup>73</sup>

In 1848 Hume became a founder member of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire,<sup>74</sup> indicating that he saw little immediate prospect of his suggestions

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<sup>72</sup>*Ibid*, p.39. Much of the acrimony between Hume and the other members of the council initially centred on Hume's efforts to ensure the annual publication of the Society's transactions. The first volume was finally published in 1845, although the first mention of intended publication was made twelve years earlier. *Minutes*, 3, 11th October 1833. There appeared to be particular ill-feeling between Rev.Hume and the treasurer Dr.Duncan, both of whom appear to have been men of decided opinions.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid*, p.37. In his Report of February 1848, the President of the Royal Institution, Dr.Raffles, called for the formation of a historic society in the town, suggesting that this was another area that the Lit.and Phil. was not considered able to adequately cover. In 1851 the President refuted these charges, claiming that each of the sections was given equal attention, *Minute Book*, 3, 5th May 1851. In 1862 the Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club was founded, dedicated solely to the study of natural history and by 1888 it had attracted 420 members.

<sup>74</sup>The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire had been founded in June 1848, by Rev.Abraham Hume, Henry C.Pidgeon and Joseph Mayer for the purpose 'collecting, preserving, arranging and publishing such Historical Documents, Antiquities, Objects of National History, (continued...)

being acted upon. However, in 1851 he returned to his theme, calling for *'union, instead of separation; concentration and strength, instead of diffuseness and weakness; system, instead of casual efforts and capricious arrangements'*. He believed that it was only through such measures that, what he considered to be, an increasing gap between the town's intellectual profile and its commercial position would be narrowed - *'Out of the metropolis, Liverpool, which is second in population, and first in general as well as commercial importance is at least tenth in respect to enlightenment'*.<sup>75</sup>

Hume's criticisms can, to an extent, be judged as overly harsh, in that they ignored the fact that societies in other parts of the country were experiencing a similar decline in their influence during the 1840s,<sup>76</sup> a circumstance that led J.W.Hudson in 1851, to the (in the event, unduly pessimistic) conclusion that *'the Provincial Literary and Philosophical Societies of England have completed their career, they are the debris of an age passed away'*. He attributed their decline to a failure to amalgamate with more practically based societies.<sup>77</sup> The Liverpool

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<sup>74</sup>(...continued)

Specimens of Antient and Mediaeval Art, etc. as are connected with the Counties Palatine of Lancaster and Chester'. Meetings were first held in the Collegiate Institution but the Society later moved to the Royal Institution. By the end of its first year membership had reached 251 although only half of this number were residents of Liverpool. Bertram B.Benas, 'Centenary of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire; A Retrospect', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 100 (1950), pp.1-27.

<sup>75</sup>Rev.Abraham Hume, *Suggestions for the Advancement of Literature and Learning in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1851), pp.6-11.

<sup>76</sup>For example, the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society 'languished in the 1840s' although it later revived under the presidency of the Leeds solicitor, John Shaw Hope. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p.160. The same period saw a decline in the fortunes of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, in 1849 'the position of the Society never seemed less secure'. R.S.Watson, p.128.

<sup>77</sup>J.W.Hudson, p.167-8. Both Hudson and Hume ignored the effect of the economic crises of the 1840s on the business community's investment and participation in cultural activity.

Lit.and Phil. was, in the event, to survive until 1979, with the period from 1860 to 1900 seeing its membership increase.<sup>78</sup> However, the rise of the Philomathic Society, (which had posed no challenge to the Lit.and Phil. during its early years) and the establishment of many new societies<sup>79</sup> during the second half of the century, suggest that an opportunity for the Lit.and Phil. to lead a new society, with metropolitan status, had been lost.

### The Liverpool Philomathic Society

*For a length of time we were not recognised as one of the learned societies of Liverpool - whatever was the obstacle I know not - but our steady and unobtrusive perseverance brought us into notice, and we took our place among, and were recognised by other societies of a kindred nature.<sup>80</sup>*

The Liverpool Philomathic Society was founded in 1825.<sup>81</sup> Although during its early life it did not achieve the status accorded to the Lit.and Phil., it later became recognised as one of Liverpool's learned societies, becoming by the end of the century an integral part of the life of the city. In its early years, the Philomathic Society's recognition and apparent acceptance of the cultural hegemony of the Lit.and Phil. was implicit in an address given by its president in 1828.

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<sup>78</sup>In 1865 the Society had 198 members, 38 honorary members and 13 associates. Members were increasingly being drawn from outlying suburbs, a reflection of improving local transport facilities. By 1885 membership figures were 225, with 40 honorary members, 13 corresponding members and 17 associates.

<sup>79</sup>For membership figures of societies meeting in the Royal Institution by 1888, see Appendix 4, p.258.

<sup>80</sup>Inaugural Address by the President, R.A.Payne, *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomathic Society 1878-79*, vol.24, (Liverpool, 1879), p.vi..

<sup>81</sup>A full history of the Philomathic Society is rendered difficult due to the disappearance of the MS.Journals which were its sole official record of proceedings for the first thirty years of its existence. See, James Kidman, 'A Philomathic Retrospect', in *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomathic Society*, vol.45, 1899-1900, (Liverpool, 1900), p.viii. The Society first began to publish its proceedings in 1855.

We presume not to a comparison with institutions in which wealth and patronage and leisure, combine to explore and propagate science. With chimerical ambition we are not to be charged. Our institution is not presumptuous; it is formed more to collect than dispense light...we disclaim pretensions to rank with higher literary societies.<sup>82</sup>

The Philomathic Society was originally established purely as a debating society, the words, 'The object of the Society is the attainment of knowledge by discussion', which were originally prefixed to its laws, defining its character and limiting its sphere of operations. However, despite its seemingly modest aspirations, the Society clearly regarded itself as a serious intellectual society, seeking 'to enjoy all the advantages arising from regular and well-conducted debate, without bringing on themselves the ridicule cast upon spouting societies'.<sup>83</sup> The Society shared common themes with the Lit.and Phil., notably the idea of the enhancing effect of intellectual endeavour on individual worth - 'the very pursuit of which is in itself ennobling and apart from the nature of the knowledge obtained, is productive of moral power and intellectual superiority'.<sup>84</sup> It also echoed the concern of the Lit.and Phil. (and the Royal Institution) with Liverpool's cultural image - 'Liverpool, proud in all that can exalt the enterprising, should yield to none in aspirations after literary excellence'. Claiming to be 'the only society in Liverpool established for the cultivation of rhetorical talent', it felt

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<sup>82</sup> *Addresses delivered by the Presidents of the Liverpool Philomathic Society at the Royal Institution on the opening and closing of the sessions 1828-1831*, (Liverpool, 1832, reprinted, Liverpool, 1884)), September 1828, p.11-12.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, September 1829, p.28

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, September 1831, p. 62-3

that 'a high responsibility, therefore, devolves upon us'.<sup>85</sup> The importance of oratorical skill to all walks of life was stressed by the Society's president:-

Assuredly the man of moderate attainments, with a ready utterance, is far more influential in society, more equal to the common business of life, than the more learned individual who is incapable of readily dispensing his knowledge, or of *reproducing*, as it were, the results of this study.<sup>86</sup>

The initial steps for the Society's establishment were taken at a meeting held on 20th December 1825, and at a second meeting held on the 28th of the same month, the Philomathic Society assumed its title, adopted its code of laws and completed all its official arrangements. The Society began with only six members all of whom belonged to the business community.<sup>87</sup> In his inaugural address delivered on the 24th February 1826, the first president (and obviously far from unassuming) Robert McAdam, described himself as 'selected from a body of gentlemen distinguished among their fellow citizens for their intelligence, their worth and respectability' and he declared his intention of 'nurturing an establishment which in time may have a favourable influence on the taste and conduct of those who follow us'. Significantly, he concluded his address with a tribute to William Roscoe (never a member) underlining how important the Roscoe

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<sup>85</sup>*Ibid*, September 1830, p.47. Thomas Kelly, *Adult education in Liverpool; a narrative of two hundred years*, (Liverpool, 1960), pp.12-13, describes several debating societies which met in the town at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, notably the Liverpool Forum, which was formed under the presidency of a retired actor, S.W.Ryley. However, this became increasingly political in tone and in 1813 gave way to a working class Radical society, the Independent Debating Society, to which admission was free. This society fell victim to the Seditious Meetings Bill of 1817.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid*, May 1828, p.4.

<sup>87</sup>Robert McAdam, merchant; Charles Dunlevie, merchant; William Hurry, merchant; James Aikin, shipbroker and merchant; Joseph Shipley, merchant; William Alexander Brown, merchant. Of these men, only James Aikin was to play a leading role in the public life of the town. See biographical index, Appendix 9.

connection was judged to be in Liverpool by organisations's seeking to establish their intellectual credentials.<sup>88</sup>

Sessions were held from 7pm. to 11pm. on the second and fourth Friday of the month, from September until the end of May in the Royal Institution, a venue which did allow the Society some scope to associate itself with Roscoe - 'It holds its sittings in an Institution planned by a master mind...who..gives a halo to Liverpool which wealth cannot purchase'.<sup>89</sup> There was an admission fee of one guinea with an annual subscription of half a guinea, members being balloted for, with six sevenths of the votes required for admission.

The Society sought to attract men 'who follow the busy vocations of life, whose time is devoted to commercial, and the more active professional pursuits'.<sup>90</sup> However, the society's regulations were scarcely calculated to attract recruits as fines were inflicted on a lavish scale, suggesting that the members, of necessity, would be drawn from the wealthier classes of society.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, by the end

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<sup>88</sup>F.D.Paterson, 'The First Fifty Years of the Society', *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomathic Society*, vol.25, 1956-7, (Liverpool, 1957), pp.16-27. The wish to associate the Society with William Roscoe appears to have endured. Despite the lack of evidence, Paterson concludes - 'I suspect that our true father never became a member of the Society. The man who provided the idea for our creation was in my view William Roscoe'. He then goes on to indulge in a flight of fancy, picturing Roscoe inviting Robert McAdam to his home and 'urging him to gather a few friends to form a society which might usefully occupy a room or rooms in the Royal Institution'.

<sup>89</sup>*Addresses*, September 1830, p.46. The meetings appear to have been held in the room of the Lit.and Phil.. *Minutes*, 3, 6th January 1827.

<sup>90</sup>*Addresses*, September 1828, p.11.

<sup>91</sup>A fine of 1sh. was inflicted upon every member who did not, at the first meeting of every month 'file one or more questions for the consideration of the Committee'. Any ordinary member who was not present when the President took the chair was fined 2s.6d. and if he was absent the entire evening the fine was raised to 5s. Any opening debater who failed to appear in his place at  
(continued...)

of 1826 the membership roll had reached thirty and included twenty merchants and brokers, a doctor, a barrister, a shipbuilder, a ships' chandler and six whose occupation is unknown.<sup>92</sup> This confirms a later view that most of the earlier members were men 'established in business on their own account'.<sup>93</sup> At the opening of the fifth session in September 1829 the number had risen to forty and according to the president the Philomathic Society included among its numbers 'some of the most rising talent of this great town'.<sup>94</sup> The Society appears to have followed the Lit. and Phil. in electing a number of honorary members, with the first printed volume of its proceedings listing the name of Sheridan Knowles in 1827 and Dr. Thomas S. Traill in 1832.<sup>95</sup> However, it was to prove more obdurate than the Lit. and Phil. and other later societies in its attitude towards the admission of the female sex, with women not being granted membership until 1920.<sup>96</sup>

The suggestion that cultural endeavour was seen as a way of ameliorating

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<sup>91</sup>(...continued)

the correct time, unless he sent in an essay or provided a substitute was fined 21s.. *Proceedings*, vol.1, 1855-56, pp.3-4. In 1830 the laws were revised and the system of fines modified.

<sup>92</sup>This analysis has been taken from a list of members in a notebook mainly concerned with the Literary and Philosophical Society and which appears to be the only surviving record of the early membership roll of the Philomathic Society. *Philosophical Society Notebook*, Special collections, S.J.L., LPS.1. The name of only one member appears on the roll of the Lit. and Phil. at that time.

<sup>93</sup>*Proceedings*, vol.24, 1878-79, p.vi.

<sup>94</sup>*Addresses*, September 1829, p.29.

<sup>95</sup>*Proceedings*, vol.1, 1855-56.

<sup>96</sup>In 1863 it was decided that the presence of ladies would not be conducive to the Society's interests', a resolution reinforced in 1874. In 1900 the Society's president congratulated the Society on being 'one of the few remaining bulwarks against the flood of feminine invasion of men's privileges and prerogatives which has characterised the closing years of the century', *Proceedings*, 1899-1900, p.xxiv. The first lady officer of the society was Miss E.M.Platt elected as vice-president in the 1933-34 session.

divisions between the ranks of Liverpool's wealthier classes<sup>97</sup> receives support from the inaugural address of the Philomathic Society's first president. He regretted 'that the state of society in this community warrants me in the belief that the pursuits of its various classes are, by many, deemed to be well followed only upon principles of jealousy and distrust' but expressed the hope that the Society which was to discuss 'science, literature and commerce' would help assuage this problem by promoting 'the formation of personal friendships'.<sup>98</sup> In 1829, the then president, W.A.Brown, was proclaiming 'the good feeling which it (the Society) creates among its members towards each other, 'a feeling not confined within the walls of this Society, but carried into the more active and general scenes of life'.<sup>99</sup> By 1830 the Society claimed to be attracting a growing number of 'gentlemen connected with the professions', a circumstance that the president (Charles Holland) saw both as providing a valuable point of contact between the business and professional classes and giving the Society a 'literary tone which is highly improving'.<sup>100</sup>

The Philomathic Society welcomed a wide range of topics for debate 'the pursuits of trade and commerce - the discoveries of science and art - the history of men

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<sup>97</sup>See pp.135.

<sup>98</sup>Quoted by Kitteringham, p.337.

<sup>99</sup>*Addresses*, September 1829, p.29-30.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid*, May 1830, p.35. The lack of membership lists precludes any analysis of the occupational pattern of the Society in these years.



and manners - afford an ample range'.<sup>101</sup> Although party politics and controversial theology were excluded from discussion, the ban was apparently not total:-

There are two subjects from which we refrain to draw the express questions of debate - party politics and controversial theology. Upon these many persons get unduly warm; and prudence seems to dictate the avoiding of them....Our restrictions, however, do not unconditionally exclude politics and religion. From experience we find that we can trust our tempers in the various branches of political economy; and that even in religion, there is ground upon which we can all meet in good fellowship.<sup>102</sup>

By the close of the fourth session in 1828, the Society claimed to have discussed 'all the great questions of political and commercial policy, - the corn question, the currency, the policy of emigration, and of free trade'..and.. we have had the advantage of gentlemen theoretically and practically acquainted with their detail'.<sup>103</sup> However, any utopian vision of the Society as a haven of harmonious relationships was marred in 1834 when the Philomathic Society was split over the question of Church Establishments. The debate was twice adjourned but at a third meeting, when the debate should have been resumed, the question was raised whether 'the subject under discussion did not impinge (*sic*) upon the law which excluded "Controversial Theology" from the field of the society's inquiries'. By the chairman's casting vote it was decided that it did and the debate was brought prematurely to a close. As a result, a number of members seceded from the

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, September 1828, p. 11. The first debate recorded, in 1826, was opened by James Aikin, on the question, 'Was Elizabeth justifiable in her conduct towards Mary?'. The Society decided she was not. In 1827 the debate 'Is duelling justifiable on rational principles?' was decided in the affirmative.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 1828-31, p.12.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, May 1826, p.22.

Society and formed another and similar association called 'The Historic Society'. Although the schism proved short-lived and eighteen months later the two societies united, the congenial atmosphere indicated in the presidential addresses was clearly not always in evidence.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the efforts of its members to assert the worth of their contribution to Liverpool's intellectual life, membership was slow to grow with only fifty nine members being recorded in 1848. One factor in this may have been the formation, in 1843 of the Liverpool Chatham Society, on much the same lines as the Philomathic.<sup>105</sup> However, as Table 6. (p.37) illustrates, from mid-century the fortunes of the Society began to improve, membership reaching 163 in 1854,<sup>106</sup> of which only ten members also enjoyed membership of the Lit.and Phil.

However, despite being the town's second longest surviving society and its shared home with the Lit.and Phil., the Philomathic was not invited to participate in organising a joint soirée in the Royal Institution in 1852 although invitations had been extended to the Polytechnic Society and the recently formed Historic Society

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<sup>104</sup>Kidman, pp.xix-xx.

<sup>105</sup>The Chatham Society had 8 members at its founding but by 1848 this had risen to 44. One of its objectives was to afford 'encouragement and delicate consideration to young and inexperienced debaters'. From 1848, the Society no longer confined its activities to debating but introduced 'the admission of Essays and Papers to be read at the Meetings'. From 1851 the anniversary of its founding was celebrated by the holding of an annual ball. In 1873 the Chatham Society with 70 members was incorporated into the Philomathic Society. Among this number were J.B.Morgan, subsequently Mayor and T.B.Royden, later M.P. for one of the divisions of Liverpool. C.J.Drewe, *The Chatham Society (a history and retrospect)*, MS, in *Records of the Chatham Society*, L.R.O. 374 CHA 8/3.

<sup>106</sup>This compares with 154 ordinary members and 46 corresponding members of the Lit.and Phil..

**Table 6. The Liverpool Philomathic Society; membership and attendance 1847-1867.<sup>107</sup>**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Members at close of session</b>	<b>Largest attendance during session</b>	<b>Lowest attendance during session</b>	<b>Total attendance during session</b>
1847-48	59	27	11	349
1848-49	69	45	12	340
1849-50	70	27	9	266
1850-51	70	30	11	345
1851-52	79	31	15	394
1852-53	95	49	19	522
1853-54	137	46	26	705
1854-55	163	60	27	825
1855-56	192	60	29	861
1856-57	198	55	21	791
1857-58	162	49	25	654
1858-59	163	62	21	698
1859-60	189	63	33	777
1860-61	198	68	34	841
1861-62	213	66	31	863
1862-63	232	74	35	926
1863-64	240	69	23	953
1864-65	244	62	42	815
1865-66	221	59	30	731
1866-67	212	59	31	722

<sup>107</sup>Taken from *Proceedings*, 1855-56; 1872-73. The record of the actual attendance at the meetings is a salutary lesson in the unreliability of official membership lists in evaluating the true level of activity in this or indeed any other society, then or now.

of Lancashire and Cheshire, the Chemists' Association and the Architectural and Archaeological Society. A year later it was also excluded from discussions on proposals for a union of the town's learned societies, emphasising that as a debating society, and despite its age and its claims of serious intent it was still not considered to have earned the epithet of 'learned society'.

The failure of these other societies to co-ordinate their activities and to offer the growing number of middle classes a comprehensive programme was however, to prove a take-off point for the Philomathic Society. In 1855 a change in its laws was made to allow the reading of papers on literary and general subjects in the place of ordinary debates, in order to 'increase the interest and importance of its proceedings, and to elevate its character', the conclusion quickly being drawn that the 'Liverpool Philomathic Society has now attained a position superior, in all respects, to that which it has occupied at any previous period of its history'.<sup>108</sup> In 1863 came the formation of a reference library and by 1879 membership had reached 300. This was not confined only to established businessmen but drawn from a wide range of ranks within the town's emerging middle classes:-

Gentlemen of subordinate position were (and very properly) admitted to membership, because it was thought that young men of steady character ought to have the opportunity of joining the Society, to whom, in the development of their intellectual and general capabilities, it was calculated to be of essential service.<sup>109</sup>

In 1893 B.G.Orchard, in his celebration of Liverpool's leading merchants and public

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<sup>108</sup>*Proceedings*, vol.1, 1855-56, p.6.

<sup>109</sup>*Proceedings*, vol.24, 1878-79, p.vi..

figures, saw the Philomathic Society rather than the Lit.and Phil. (once the preserve of the merchants) as now most likely to attract the business community. Members of the Lit.and Phil., he claimed, were 'recruited to a larger extent from the ranks of the professions'. Thus, although 'Philomaths of the soberer sort, and with time enough to attend its meetings ', were amongst its members , there 'was less of an everyday practical tone in the proceedings, as estimated by ordinary followers of business and politics'. Although the Lit.and Phil. had 'always been regarded as somewhat more dignified ("not a mere debating society")', the Philomathic Society was now considered to rank as a society that 'a gentleman ..fond of intellectual excitement after business' would be equally inclined to join.<sup>110</sup>

### The Liverpool Polytechnic Society

*Then we have the Polyphemic which is a sort of cheap advertising institution for anyone who invents anything of which the unappreciating public will not recognize the worth.*<sup>111</sup>

The Liverpool Polytechnic Society (in contrast to the Philomathic) saw no reason to accept a subordinate position in relation to the Lit.and Phil.. Although in 1837, the Lit.and Phil. had boosted its position as Liverpool's premier learned society when it had played host to the BAAS, the announcement of a meeting in 1838, to discuss the formation of a new society, expressly devoted to 'encouraging

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<sup>110</sup>B.G.Orchard, *Liverpool's Legion of Honour*, (Birkenhead, 1893), pp.56. Guests at the annual dinner of the Philomathic society before the end of the nineteenth-century included Oliver Wendell Holmes and Lord Curzon. Kidman, p.lxxiii.

<sup>111</sup>*The Porcupine*, May 25th, 1861.

improvements in the useful arts'<sup>112</sup> may be seen as an indication that some of Liverpool's newer claimants of middle class status felt little empathy with a society seen as the preserve of the established merchant élite and the professional classes.

The chair of the meeting, held in the Medical Institute, Mount Pleasant, on 23rd October 1838 was taken by Henry Booth. Despite Booth's apparent affinity with the town's established cultural elite, he was a member of a leading Unitarian, merchant family and a founder member of the Lit.and Phil., his interests were firmly fixed in the new industrial age of science and technology. The life of a Liverpool corn merchant had been little to the taste of the mechanically minded Booth and the rapidly expanding railway system had provided a far more congenial sphere of activity in which to expend his considerable talents.<sup>113</sup> The formative role that he was prepared to adopt in this new organisation would suggest his personal lack of faith in the ability of the Lit.and Phil. to adequately represent the interests of the rapidly expanding field of applied science.

The inaugural meeting formally established the Liverpool Polytechnic Society, with an initial membership of 112. The objections raised to the proposed membership fee of 20s. per session would indicate that some members were anxious from the outset, to disassociate their society from any hint of exclusivity, at least on the financial level, the membership fee being promptly reduced to 10s. with no charge for admittance to individual meetings.<sup>114</sup> Paradoxically, however, members were to be balloted for and as with the Lit.and Phil. four fifths of the votes had to be in

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<sup>112</sup>*Liverpool Polytechnic Society Minute Book, 1838-1855*, L.R.O. 680POL 1/1, 23rd October, 1838.

<sup>113</sup> In 1826 Henry Booth was appointed secretary and treasurer of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company, later becoming Managing Director and taking an active part in the construction of the line. It was largely due to him that steam locomotive engines were fixed upon as the working power of the railway. To Booth, is due the suggestion of a multitubular boiler and also the coupling screws, spring buffers, and lubricating material for carriage axles. *D.N.B.* p.844-846

<sup>114</sup> *Minutes*, 23rd October 1838. This had been raised to 11s. by 1844.

the applicants favour before admission.<sup>115</sup> In January 1838 the Society produced its prospectus, explaining its *raison d'être*:-

The object of the society is to promote the useful and ingenious arts in Liverpool, by securing to their inventors those advantages which, in every department of science, have been found to result from mutual encouragement and co-operation and from the interchange of ideas in unreserved discussion.<sup>116</sup>

The invitation of honorary membership was extended to the Mayor and the Presidents of the Royal Institution and the Mechanics' Institute but the new society evidently preferred to establish its individual identity before extending a similar courtesy to the Presidents of either the Lit.and Phil. or the Philomathic Society. Future meetings were to be held in the Medical Institution on the second Tuesday of each month, beginning at 7pm.

This desire to establish its credentials as an autonomous organisation, on a par with, rather than subordinate to the Lit.and Phil. was to remain a feature of the newly formed Polytechnic Society at least until the mid 1850s. This independent stance was reflected in a membership which initially showed little interchange with that of the Lit.and Phil. Out of the membership of 112, in October, 1838, the names of only 10 men, simultaneously appeared on the roll of the Lit.and Phil.. This indicates that the majority felt little empathy with a Society that still remained firmly under the direction of the town's leading merchants, doctors and clergymen and who had shown little interest in the practical application of science to

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<sup>115</sup>In February 1839, a Mr.Franklin proposed that the ballot should be suspended for the first three months, any person could become a member of the Society simply by 'entering his name and paying his subscription'. The proposal was negatived by a large majority. *Minutes*, 12th February 1839. Once elected members were allowed to bring two friends to the meetings although they were not allowed to take part in the proceedings or discussions without the permission of the chairman.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, January 2nd 1839.

situations outside their immediate sphere of interest. In contrast, a prime objective of the Polytechnic Society was to 'to reduce the speculative sciences into practical arts; to guide those engaged in manual labour, by applying mental power in aid of the labours of the hand, with the greatest effect'.<sup>117</sup> It was to be through a celebration of their identification with the new technological age rather than as gentlemen of culture, that these engineers, builders, shopkeepers, small manufacturers and merchants, sought to assert their right to middle class status (see Table 7).

**Table 7. Liverpool Polytechnic Society, Occupational Structure, 1838.** <sup>118</sup>

Merchants & Traders	21		Retail trade	3
Manufactures/workshops	16		Banking & Finance	3
Builders & allied trades	8		Architects	2
Insurance	8		Auctioneers	2
Physicians/surgeons	8		Railways	1
Ironfounders	7		Book-keeper	1
Engineers	5		Ship-builder	1
Gentlemen	4		Unknown	18
Crafts	4		<b>Total</b>	112

From the outset, the men of the Polytechnic Society firmly disclaimed any intentions of seeking to emulate the cultural pretensions of the 'gentlemen' of the Lit. and Phil.. Although the Society's prospectus announced plans to 'embrace a wide and extensive range of subject matter', the fine arts were expressly excluded

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<sup>117</sup>S.Gibson, 'On the Public Improvements of Liverpool'. *Transactions of the Liverpool Polytechnic Society for the years 1844-1846*, (Liverpool, 1847), p.37.

<sup>118</sup>*Minutes*, 23rd October 1838; *Gores Liverpool Directory*. Many of the small merchants and traders may also have been directly engaged in the retail trade, e.g fruit merchants. Nearly two thirds of the members had connections with the aims of the Polytechnic Society.



from the programme.<sup>119</sup> However, applied art, the neglect of which was causing consternation at both national<sup>120</sup> and local<sup>121</sup> level, was considered an appropriate subject for inclusion:-

It will not comprise the fine arts of Painting or sculpture; but while it will have principally in view the useful mechanical arts, and those ingenious inventions which may be classed in some department of Natural Philosophy, it will not neglect the ornamental arts, by which our habitations are embellished, which refine taste and stimulate ingenuity, and by a gentle and unobtrusive influence contribute their part to individual and social happiness.<sup>122</sup>

In order to encourage the spirit of invention in Liverpool, prizes were to be given, with the highest award (ten pounds) being for 'the most useful mechanical invention.'<sup>123</sup>

In 1840, following successful negotiations with the Directors of the Royal Institution, the Polytechnic Society moved from the Medical Institute to share a

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<sup>119</sup>*Minutes*, January 2nd, 1839.

<sup>120</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 'Report from the Select Committee on Arts and Their Connection with Manufactures', Volume 9, 1836.

<sup>121</sup> H.A.Taylor, 'Matthew Gregson and the Pursuit of Taste', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 110, (1958), pp.157-176. Even the commitment of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute to the diffusion of mechanical science and industrial design amongst the working classes was becoming increasingly eroded from the late 1830s, with a change in emphasis in its programme which now included classes in history, music and the French, Latin and Greek languages. By 1840, out of a total of 90 lectures, 44 were concerned with the fine arts, music drama, literature and education. Kelly, *Adult Education*, pp.127-129.

<sup>122</sup>*Minutes*, January 2nd, 1839. For a list of subject matter suggested by the committee of the Polytechnic Society as suitable for discussion, see Appendix 6, p.263.

<sup>123</sup>Prizes to the value of £5 were to be given to the following categories:- the best new application of chemistry to manufacturing purposes; the best new specimen of cast iron produced from a Liverpool foundry; any decided improvement in the process of melting or casting iron; any decided improvement in the means employed for discharging vessels. *Minutes*, 11th July 1839. In 1844, it was decided that the prizes should be confined to members, their sons or their apprentices. *Ibid*, 16th September 1844.

common home with the Lit. and Phil. and the Philomathic Society. This proximity served only to increase the Polytechnic Society's determination that any fraternisation would be conducted strictly on equal terms. An invitation to co-operate with the proprietors of the Royal Institution in organising the soirées, usually held in the building during the winter months, was accordingly treated with some caution. After a long discussion 'in which the objections and inexpediency of establishing a precedent which would make this Society a popular one of such a character' were deliberated, it was resolved that:-

This Society, being decidedly a practical and scientific one, its interest will not be promoted, nor its character maintained, by mere popular exhibitions; that the President be therefore requested in his reply to the application, to state, that the council cannot recommend the Society to afford assistance as a body.<sup>124</sup>

In 1846 a request from the Philomathic Society for assistance in the purchase of a clock, to be placed in the room where the various societies held their meetings, was refused on the grounds of 'the Polytechnic Society having no need of one'.<sup>125</sup> While ever watchful for any hint of condescension from the Lit. and Phil., a contribution of £1-12s-6d towards the cost of putting a ventilator in the window of the small lecture room was declined on the grounds that 'the members present were unanimously of the opinion that this application was too paltry to be meant as anything more than a joke'.<sup>126</sup> The criticisms voiced by Rev. Abraham Hume on the amalgamation of the Natural History Society with the Lit. and Phil. in 1844

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<sup>124</sup> *Liverpool Polytechnic Society Council Minute Book, 'A', 1839-1873; October 25th 1842, L.R.O., 680 POL 2/1.*

<sup>125</sup> *Minutes, March 16th 1846.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid, March 27th 1848.*

may also have served to increase the Polytechnic Society's fears that closer ties with the elder society might lead to subservience. They had no wish to see the cause of mechanical science and applied art relegated to the subordinate position that natural history now allegedly occupied at the Lit. and Phil. - 'The subject of natural history, about which there was an express stipulation at the union of the two societies, is at present the worst represented of the three'.<sup>127</sup>

By mid-century, the Polytechnic Society's membership had risen to 167<sup>128</sup>, despite increasing competition in the late 1840s from the growing number of professional and special interest societies.<sup>129</sup> The confidence this numerical strength invoked in the society's identity, was reflected in its willingness to send delegates to a meeting to discuss a joint soirée with the Lit. and Phil. the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, the Chemists Association<sup>130</sup> and the Architectural and Archaeological Society.<sup>131</sup> The soirée was to be 'held under the auspices of the five societies, all meeting on equal terms in order that the

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<sup>127</sup> Rev. A. Hume, *Facts and Documents*, p.37.

<sup>128</sup> Compared to the Literary and Philosophical Society - 150, The Historic Society - 302.

<sup>129</sup> Attendance in 1841 had reached 200 on one occasion. However, in the mid-1840s, it declined (in common with both the local and national trend), picking up again by mid-century.

<sup>130</sup> The Chemists Association was established in 1849, when Jacob Bell, one of the founders of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain came to Liverpool with the idea of founding a similar organisation in the town. Membership had reached 87 by 1851, with 24 associates i.e. apprentices of members. J.H. Hirst, *The First Hundred Years*, (Liverpool, 1949), L.R.O., 615 CHE 15.

<sup>131</sup> The Architectural and Archaeological Society was founded in 1848 to promote the improvement of architectural taste and knowledge. The report of the Annual General Meeting of May 2nd. 1849, points to a certain amount of resentment from the existing societies, who felt that their programme already embraced architecture. By 1849 membership was 129, which would appear to vindicate the founders' claims of Liverpool's need for a specialised architectural society. *Proceedings of the Liverpool Architectural and Archaeological Society*, vol.1, Sessions 1848-1849, (Liverpool 1852).

members might cultivate the mutual acquaintance, and reciprocate kindly feeling betwixt each other'.<sup>132</sup> Anticipating the approval of the other societies, the Lit. and Phil. circulated a programme, the central features of which were a dramatic reading from Macbeth and a musical recital. In an accompanying letter, it was stated that the evening would be held under the presidency of J.B. Yates, and the auspices of the Lit. and Phil.. The Polytechnic Society's fears of inferior status immediately resurfaced and a strongly worded response was forwarded to the president of the Lit. and Phil.:-

In reply to the resolution of the council of the Literary and Philosophical Society.....this council must express their surprise at the terms thereof, as neither they, nor the society they represent, have as yet signified any desire to co-operate in the proposed soirée: they beg to say, that though they concur in the desirableness of promoting friendly intercourse between the five societies, they are of the opinion that such intercourse can only be permanently and satisfactorily maintained when based on the recognised equality of all.

Particular exception was taken to the arts bias of the programme and the council of the Polytechnic Society felt that they could not 'take any part in the proposed soirée on the terms of the above mentioned resolution'.<sup>133</sup> The value placed by the Lit. and Phil. on the participation of the Polytechnic Society is reflected in its willingness to resort to an apology and a compromise. The Lit. and Phil. claimed it had 'no intention of acting in any way unkindly.....and hope that there may be no interruption in that friendly feeling which should subsist among societies engaged in promoting the study of the several branches of Science, Art and Literature'.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>*Council Minutes*, February 21st 1850.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid*, March 16th 1852.

<sup>134</sup>*Literary and Philosophical Society Minute Book*, 5, March 25th 1852.

The evening's agenda was to be put before delegates from all the societies and if desired the dramatic entertainment would be withdrawn. This olive branch mollified the council of the Polytechnic Society, who were now 'unanimous in the wish to acquiesce and co-operate in any such schemes which conduce to the general objects and mutual good feeling of the literary and scientific societies of the town'.<sup>135</sup> However, total capitulation not being in the Polytechnic Society's repertoire, the council sought an assurance that the dramatic reading would now 'not occupy more than a subordinate part of the evening's entertainment'.<sup>136</sup> The final programme was calculated to appeal to all-comers and the Polytechnic Society deemed the whole evening 'so satisfactory, that it is hoped that this may be regarded as establishing a precedent for further unions of a similar kind'.<sup>137</sup>

In 1853, a further example of joint endeavour came with the celebration of the centenary of the birth of William Roscoe. Although William Roscoe had been personally concerned only in the Lit. and Phil., his memory was held in high esteem by all the societies. His multifarious talents and interests allowed each society to identify with him in its own particular proclivity. As one Polytechnic Society member was quick to point out, Roscoe had been far from blind to the commercial aspects of the arts:-

The late Mr Roscoe had also spoken ...of the benefits derivable from their pursuit, even in a commercial point of view, and referred to the late Benjamin West, who by his skill, and a few weeks industry, made a piece of canvas, which cost only a few shillings, sell for three

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<sup>135</sup>*Minutes*, March 25th 1852.

<sup>136</sup>*Literary and Philosophical Society Minute Book*, 5, March 25th 1852.

<sup>137</sup>*Council Minutes*, January 3rd 1853.

thousand guineas.<sup>138</sup>

The mutual goodwill engendered by the centenary celebrations served to underline the universality of the affection for the name of William Roscoe and may well have been one of the factors which in October 1853 led the architect, Joseph Boulton, to suggest a union between four of Liverpool's societies, the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Historic Society, the Polytechnic Society, and the Architectural and Archaeological Society. Despite the continuing lack of interchange of membership between the Polytechnic Society and the Lit. and Phil..<sup>139</sup> Boulton, as a member of both societies, may also have recognised another powerful common thread which could provide a possible basis for a union - namely that of civic pride.

The desire to 'render the external appearance of their town worthy of the exalted rank she seems destined to fill in the world of commerce'<sup>140</sup> was as central to the thinking of the members of the Polytechnic Society as it had been from the outset in the Lit. and Phil.. In 1843 Samuel Holme<sup>141</sup> spoke before the Society

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<sup>138</sup> J. Rosson, 'On Ecclesiastical Architecture, particularly with reference to Liverpool'. *Transactions*, 1844-1846, p.22.

<sup>139</sup> 1853-1854 Joint memberships:-  
Polytechnic Society/Literary and Philosophical Society = 10  
Polytechnic Society/Historic Society = 7  
Literary and Philosophical Society/Historic Society = 27

<sup>140</sup> J.A. Picton, *Liverpool Improvements and How to Accomplish Them*, (Liverpool, 1853), p.24.

<sup>141</sup> Samuel Holme was a prominent local builder and contractor in partnership with his brother James. He became a member of the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1837, but read only one paper before the Society in 1840. In 1838, evidently somewhat disillusioned with the Literary and Philosophical Society, he became a founder member of the Polytechnic Society in which he played a leading role. A staunch Tory, he became Mayor of the Borough in 1852. For a discussion of (continued...)

on the need for an overall architectural plan for Liverpool which would combine the heritage of the past with the technology of the future, concentrating on 'width of streets - beauty of elevation - harmony of parts - ventilation and drainage'. Although Holme, one of the prime architects of the enduring Popular Toryism of Liverpool, was eloquent in his demands for improved housing, parks and leisure facilities for the working classes, he was no less articulate over his desire to see St George's Hall and its environs developed as a 'most magnificent place in the centre of town, which every stranger entering from the railroad might look upon with admiration'. Nor did he cavil at expenditure in this pursuit of architectural excellence in the town's civic and ecclesiastical buildings, 'The truth is that cheapness has long been the grand desideratum and so long as this is the case, we can only deplore the circumstance'.<sup>142</sup>

Holme was not alone in his concern with Liverpool's image. In 1844 the marble mason, Solomon Gibson, pleaded for the provision of a 'Grand Geographical Gallery' in the town, using Liverpool's aspirations to be viewed as a second metropolis status, in justification. London, he explained, had two such establishments already. Gibson made it clear that not only would the inhabitants of Liverpool reap the benefit but so would the image of the town at large, even invoking the Italian connection so dear to Roscoe's heart:-

If such a gallery were raised here, those thousands of country visitors

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<sup>141</sup>(...continued)

Holme's political influence in Liverpool, see - John Belchem, 'The Church, the Throne and the People: Ships, Colonies and Commerce: Popular Toryism in Early Victorian Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 143, (1994), pp.35-55. See also biographical index.

<sup>142</sup>Samuel Holme, 'On the Public Improvements of Liverpool', *Transactions*, 1843, pp.31-33.

who come in summer by railroad, would be quadrupled, attracted by the gratification of such an exhibition....such monuments would elevate the glory of Liverpool, and regattas would celebrate the foundation, with boat races as splendid as those of Venice.<sup>143</sup>

In the same year, a paper, 'On Ecclesiastical Architecture, particularly with reference to Liverpool', urged upon the Society and the community at large, the benefits of devoting their attention to the advance of science and the arts. To illustrate his theme the speaker chose a quotation which exhorted a wealthy people 'who have risen in importance, to the cultivation of the fine arts, as calculated to check debasing and sensual influences and to elevate and improve the mind'.<sup>144</sup> These were sentiments which had found frequent expression in the papers read before the Lit.and Phil. and illustrates, perhaps, that despite the Polytechnic Society's ban on all things relating to literature and fine art, the members were not as immune to the influence of the established cultural elite as they might have preferred to suppose.

The Polytechnic Society also revealed itself as alert as the Lit.and Phil. in utilising any opportunity to consolidate and legitimise the status of both the Society and its members. One such opportunity came with the announcement of the Great Exhibition to be held in 1851. The Polytechnic Society recognised that here was an occasion peculiarly pertinent to their aims, asserting that 'The Polytechnic Society would be elevating itself in public estimation by setting an example on this

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<sup>143</sup> Solomon Gibson, 'On the Public Improvements of Liverpool', *Transactions*, 1844-46, pp.38, 43.

<sup>144</sup>J.Rosson, *Ibid*, p.22.



occasion'.<sup>145</sup> This was, declared their President, a chance to ensure that 'the Holmes, the Gladstones, Pilchers, Granthams, Bennetts, of so many lands, will not thus pass away'.<sup>146</sup> The Society's council urged fellow members to direct all their energies towards participation in the Exhibition in order to 'confer on this locality, still higher repute for the skill, taste and energies of its traders'.<sup>147</sup> The Polytechnic Society was particularly proud to be 'only body of its kind in Liverpool, which raised a fund for the purposes of the Exhibition'.<sup>148</sup>

These common spheres of interest were recognised by the committee of delegates, chaired by Henry Dawson, (a Polytechnic Society member), who were appointed by the societies, to consider the feasibility of a union. A table of comparison of the objects of the four societies was compiled on the basis of which the Architectural and Archaeological Society was the only one ruled out of the proposed amalgamation, 'being in a great measure professional. It views its subjects, rather in the practice of Architecture, than as a branch of liberal study'. In contrast, the objects of the Lit.and Phil. and the Historic Society were judged to be 'nearly identical; both occupying the same field of intellectual inquiry....the only subject which belongs exclusively to the Literary and Philosophical Society is abstract Philosophy'.

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<sup>145</sup>*Transactions*, 1849-52, p.83.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid*, p.39. These families were representative of Liverpool's builders, iron founders, small traders and engineers.

<sup>147</sup>*Council Minutes*, January 24th 1850.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid*, January 20th 1851. The fund did not realise initial expectations, with only 54 out of a total of 186 members prepared to contribute. The final sum raised was £66-15s-6d, which sum included 12s-6d, raised from workmen in the employ of members.

Given the Polytechnic Society's insistence on the distinctiveness of its profile, some reservations over its inclusion were inevitable but were viewed by the delegates as far from insuperable. After a careful comparison of the objects of the Polytechnic Society with those of the other two, the delegates concluded that the distinctions were based more on rhetoric than reality:-

The Polytechnic Society appears *prima facie* to coincide with these two, only in one great class of subjects; but 'the promotion of the useful arts' is an expression which embraces a very wide range. Accordingly, this Society does coincide with them in so many as seven of the fourteen general objects; and hence, a union which would embrace it also, is desirable and by no means impracticable'

The Report of the committee further suggested that far from the position of the Polytechnic Society being threatened by the union, in the area of finance and the publication of its Transactions it would be the greatest beneficiary -

On these points the Polytechnic Society would be a greater gainer than either of the other two Societies; for it has no Entrance Fee, its Transactions have not averaged 50 pages annually, and for the last seven years, the issue has been triennial. This is neither doing justice to that portion of the public who take an interest in Mechanical Science, nor to its own declared object.

However, the achievement of the Polytechnic Society in advancing the cause of mechanical science in the town, was given implicit recognition, with the decision that the new Society -

Whether formally embracing the Polytechnic or not, - it shall have a section mainly for Mechanical Science...so that opportunity and inducement may be given to members to produce information on this branch of knowledge, so peculiarly important in a commercial and manufacturing country like England.

The delegates were in no doubt that the combined numerical and financial strength of the new Society would allow it to claim national status, and to exert a powerful intellectual influence in the town. They were also convinced that the times were

particularly auspicious for a union:-

The Committee believe that the present time is a favourable one for the inauguration of a great Society in Liverpool. The town has recently established, and through its Corporation supports, a Free Public Library and Museum; and partly from public funds, partly from private munificence, a building will shortly be erected, adequate to their display.....other educational agencies are in process. The opening of St George's Hall...will introduce numerous improvements, public and social, which will affect the intellectual condition of the inhabitants and be influenced by it in return. The Committee believes that the position, population and influence of Liverpool, authorise and require the institution of a large Society, which, without forfeiting a single advantage of the separate and smaller ones, would possess much more than their united influence and usefulness...It would be gratifying too, if the Fellows of our local Society were able to exhibit to the members of the British Association, an organisation for good, analogous to their own; similarity of plan, without servile imitation; harmony of parts that strengthen each other in turn; and a well-founded promise of zealous working and varied usefulness<sup>149</sup>

The delegates support for the union may also have been influenced by the increasing evidence of local authority involvement in educational and cultural provision. If Liverpool's literary and scientific societies were to stand up against this rising tide of public enterprise, and maintain a central role in Liverpool's cultural development, class solidarity had to take precedence over inter-society rivalries.

The first society to reject the reports findings, was the Polytechnic Society, who still appeared to remain convinced that amalgamation was synonymous with subordination. Despite the success of the joint soirées, the Polytechnic Society was reluctant to accept any formal links. Immediately prior to the meeting of the delegates, the Polytechnic Society had found fresh ground for grievance with the

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<sup>149</sup>*Report of the Delegates from the Four Learned Societies which Publish Transactions, on The Subject of Union, (Liverpool, 1854).*

Lit.and Phil. over the arrangements for the 1854 British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting, which was to be held in Liverpool:-

The secretary... could not refrain from expressing his surprise that the local officers had been selected exclusively from the Literary and Philosophical Society, to the absolute non-recognition of any other Learned or Scientific Society in this town, although all the Societies had united in the invitation to the Association.<sup>150</sup>

Despite the explanation by the President of the Lit.and Phil., that such appointments were not under his jurisdiction, the members of the Polytechnic Society were far from appeased. This affair was scarcely calculated to prejudice the members towards the union, and in March 1854, it was decided:-

In the opinion of this meeting, the amalgamation of the Polytechnic Society, with any of the other local societies, is 'inexpedient', but that unity of action for common objects, which does not interfere with the individuality of each society, should be promoted whenever possible.<sup>151</sup>

In his closing address at the end of 1854 the Polytechnic Society President, James Newlands,<sup>152</sup> again underlined his Society's view, that elitism was still the prevailing ethos of the Lit.and Phil., 'Here no social distinctions separate us from each other; no party differences disturb us. We meet on the level, and the bond of our union is the brotherhood of intellect'.<sup>153</sup>

The deliberations of the Lit.and Phil. and the Historic Society took slightly longer.

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<sup>150</sup>*Minutes*, September 19th 1853.

<sup>151</sup>*Minutes*, March 13th 1854.

<sup>152</sup> James Newlands was the Borough Engineer. Despite his criticisms of the elitist nature of the Literary and Philosophical Society, he was one of the few members with joint membership. This, of course, might indicate that he was well qualified to offer an opinion.

<sup>153</sup>*Council Minutes*, December 4th 1854.

The Historic Society, appeared to be the one with least qualms over the proposed union. As the most recently Society, it had little tradition to sacrifice. It also had by far the strongest membership,<sup>154</sup> drawing its members from a wider catchment area than either of the other two Societies. In contrast the Lit.and Phil., with its close association with William Roscoe, took great pride in its origins, and in the leading role it had played in the creation of an elite led middle class culture in the early years of the century. Yet, if the decline of the provincial Literary and Philosophical Societies, which was evident to J.W.Hudson in 1851 was as he claimed, due to 'a failure to amalgamate' with the more practically based societies,<sup>155</sup> then the proposals for union were particularly relevant to the Lit.and Phil..

The members were evenly divided over the issue with the greatest stumbling block being over the question of a name for the new society. The Delegate's Report had tried to surmount this problem by recommending that none of the names of the existing societies should be considered. This was anathema to those members who cherished the traditions of the oldest Society, 'This one has been in existence for nearly half a century, the other barely the twentieth part of one'. Unable to assuage the fears that amalgamation would lead to dissolution, the Committee of the Lit.and Phil., somewhat regretfully, decided to shelve the idea *ad infinitum*.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Membership figures for 1853.  
Literary and Philosophical Society = 132  
Polytechnic Society = 167  
Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire = 331

<sup>155</sup> J.W.Hudson, p.167

<sup>156</sup> *Literary and Philosophical Society Minute Book*, 5, March to May 1854.

Although the Societies continued to organise their individual programmes, and endeavour to exert their influence on the cultural life of the town, they became increasingly relegated to the sidelines. In 1861, the *Porcupine* published a review of Liverpool's Societies, in which the Polytechnic Society was not the only victim of the Editor's sarcasm.<sup>157</sup> The Literary and Philosophical Society was labelled 'a mild society, harmless and inanely pompous', while the activities of the Historic, or in *Porcupine's* terminology, the 'Hysteric' Society' were characterised as 'forever explaining the characteristics of a Roman fibula found in the bog of Allen'.

Despite the ever growing number of small societies, the cultural image of the Liverpool merchants, which had been such a concern of the merchant elite in the first years of the century, was also subjected to the vitriol of *The Porcupine's* pen -

No, your Liverpool merchant does not go in for that sort of thing. He is for business in the week, and church on the Sunday (where he does not listen, but falls asleep, unless the sermon be very exciting); but your literature and stuff of that kind, he leaves to less practical and less genteel individuals.<sup>158</sup>

While it must be acknowledged that the jaundiced eye of *The Porcupine* can scarcely be regarded as an unbiased observer, there is no doubt that the end of the nineteenth century saw few of Liverpool's cultural institutions of the first quarter of the century survive with anything like their original vigour.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> See p.166.

<sup>158</sup> *The Porcupine*, 25th May 1861, pp.86-87.

<sup>159</sup> The Athenaeum and the Lyceum being the possible exceptions. The Polytechnic Society closed in 1898; in 1912, the membership roll of the Lit.and Phil. recorded 88 members, 14 honorary members and 10 associates, although it survived until 1979. The Historic Society still exists, but its meetings do not attract a wide attendance.

The early years of the Lit. and Phil. had allowed the merchants a celebration of wealth and commerce, providing an opportunity to consolidate their status as the town's cultural elite. The Polytechnic Society albeit on its own terms, performed a parallel function for the new middle class aspirants. The failure of these two groups to adopt a united stance, in the dawn of the era of mass culture and education, must in part be responsible for the decline of the cultural infrastructure, on which Roscoe had hoped would lie Liverpool's future cultural image as a centre of excellence for science, literature and art.

## Chapter 5. Liverpool and the visual arts.

*The leading citizens of Liverpool in the nineteenth century were conscious of art as an embodiment and an advancement of their society's aims...and as the century progressed they wanted its benefits to be more and more widely diffused. It was these feelings that provided the motive power of the city's artistic life.*<sup>1</sup>

The rise of art in Liverpool is inextricably linked with the figure of William Roscoe,<sup>2</sup> who for the first thirty years of the nineteenth-century played a major role in the establishment of art societies in the town and in guiding art patronage. Roscoe believed that art had a relevance to a community's hopes and ideals and that exposure to the fine arts would somehow help to civilise or reform society at large.<sup>3</sup> Although some of Liverpool's wealthier residents shared Roscoe's views, it seems reasonable to suppose that for others, art patronage was regarded more as a mark of social arrival, with their pictures being 'hung as trophies rather than for decoration'.<sup>4</sup>

Roscoe had always maintained that co-operative enterprises devoted to the

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<sup>1</sup>John Willett, *Art in a City*, (London, 1967), p.23.

<sup>2</sup>For Roscoe's art collection, see Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup>Roscoe was not alone in this belief; it was widely shared both at home and abroad in the eighteenth-century. See Trevor Fawcett, *The Rise of provincial Art; Artists, Patrons and Institutions outside London, 1800-1865*, (Oxford, 1974), pp.4-8. As Fawcett points out, the way this was to work was never really explained. Presumably it was to be by example. Once the upper classes were correctly motivated and inspired by art exhibitions etc., they would, through the reformation and raising of their own sentiments, inspire those around them and they others in their turn - 'thus a spirit of enlightenment would spread in ever-widening circles'.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Oppé, 'Art', in G.M.Young (ed.), *Early Victorian England 1830-1865*, (second imp., Oxford, 1951), 2, p.116. A friend wrote cynically to Constable, that the chief reason that men bought pictures was that others coveted them. *Ibid*.



cause of art were as valuable and necessary to the provinces as well as to London, and to this end he had played a leading role in the short-lived art societies and exhibitions of the late eighteenth-century.<sup>5</sup> Despite the failure of these early efforts, Roscoe's belief in the efficacy of such institutions remained unshaken and in 1810 he was instrumental in the founding of the Liverpool Academy. Although William Carey (a tireless advocate of British art) in his survey on the state of the fine arts in Liverpool, claimed that the re-emergence of the Liverpool Academy had 'been hastened by the successful institution of the Northern Society at Leeds', he nevertheless acknowledged the seminal role of Roscoe. Carey ascribed the failure of Roscoe's earlier efforts to their prematurity, but asserted that since that era, Liverpool had 'undergone extraordinary changes' and that the present times were far more propitious to success.<sup>6</sup> He reiterated Roscoe's belief in the importance of such institutions not only in furthering the cause of art, but in helping to foster a sense of local civic pride.

The institution of three or four Provincial Academies must prove a means of introducing British Art to a more general and intimate acquaintance with the public. A strong local interest would group up round and feel a pride in supporting them.<sup>7</sup>

If London could have its Academy and exhibitions, it was argued, so too could the provinces. Why should the arts be '*glutted* metropolis?....they

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<sup>5</sup>See Chapter 1.

<sup>6</sup>W.P.Carey, *Cursory Thoughts on the Present State of the Fine Arts Occasioned by the founding of the Liverpool Academy*, (Liverpool, 1810), p.1.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, p.39.

should be planted in *every apt soil*.<sup>8</sup>

Probably spurred on, as Carey suggested, by inter-town rivalry, the Liverpool Academy was established at a meeting of artists at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in April 1810, and immediately announced that it would hold an annual exhibition to encourage art and to raise the funds necessary for the establishment of an academy of painting, sculpture and architecture; it was also decided that 'the laws of the Royal Academy of London be considered the ground-work for the regulation of this institution'.<sup>9</sup> There were seventeen original members, four associates and two honorary members.<sup>10</sup> Henry Blundell of Ince, the collector of classical marbles and primitive Flemish and Italian masters, was the first patron, George Bullock, the sculptor, was president and William Roscoe the treasurer. Dr. Traill was appointed lecturer on anatomy, W. Strachan, lecturer on chemistry, and later, in 1813, Thomas Rickman on architecture.

The first exhibition was held in August 1810, in Thomas Winstanley's Gothic Rooms, Marble Street, and was surprisingly big and impressive, with 348 exhibits from 116 contributors. Eminent London artists were invited to submit works, including Benjamin West, William Etty and J.M.W. Turner, with local artists also making important contributions. This first exhibition appears to have

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Fawcett, p.9.

<sup>9</sup>B.H.Grindley, *History and Work of the Liverpool Academy of Arts*, (Liverpool, 1875), p.3.

<sup>10</sup>Among these were Charles Towne, the animal painter, Thomas Hargreaves and John Turmeau, both miniature painters.

been well supported as the takings were sufficient to cover all the expenses and leave a surplus of £200. Some Liverpool exhibits found purchasers but no London ones.<sup>11</sup>

The following year the Academy emulated the metropolis in holding a banquet before the opening of the second exhibition, which appeared to have attracted many of the town's élite - 'the company was numerous and of the highest respectability'.<sup>12</sup> This was an occasion for celebration, the efforts of Roscoe having succeeded in securing the patronage of the Prince Regent. Notification had also been received of a bequest of £1,600 from the estate of its recently deceased first patron, Henry Blundell, towards the cost of a permanent home for the Academy.<sup>13</sup> Roscoe in his address to the artists and patrons, stressed that increasing wealth, interest in the fine arts and the presence of well-trained artists in the community augured well for the Academy. He 'now looked forward with confidence to a period when the Liverpool Academy might produce artists of the highest talent, and perhaps might eventually rival the great Institution in the capital', and he envisioned a future when the name of the Liverpool Academy would be known throughout the world.<sup>14</sup> He then turned to a favourite theme, that art for art's sake was neither viable or desirable and he discussed what he saw as the realities of the current mode of patronage. He

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<sup>11</sup>Fawcett, p.173.

<sup>12</sup>*Liverpool Mercury*, August 16th 1811.

<sup>13</sup>See Chapter 3, p.85.

<sup>14</sup>Grindley, p.4.

stressed that while the artists of Liverpool could depend on the schools of the Academy for their education, they must then be prepared to stand or fall by their own merit, not by soliciting patronage of art as a matter of favour:-

No artist ought to expect as a bounty that which ought to be the reward of talent alone. No person ought to be expected to purchase a work of art for any other reason than because he approves of it. To act otherwise was in fact an injury to the artist who was thus led to content himself with mediocrity instead of aiming at excellence.<sup>15</sup>

In 1812, the exhibition catalogue informed the public that the Academy intended to open, as soon as possible, 'a School of Design for the instruction of Pupils in the art of Drawing from models and from Life', and Thomas Harrison exhibited a 'Design for the intended Liverpool Academy of Arts'.<sup>16</sup> The principles of high art (which had been laid down by its eighteenth-century predecessors) were to be the dominant ethic. Liverpool's gentlemen remained reluctant to see their new (hopefully) prestigious Academy link art with the industrial developments of the day, despite the efforts of Matthew Gregson, who continued the campaign that he had initiated at the first Liverpool exhibition of 1774.<sup>17</sup> He reiterated his fears that such single-minded adherence to high art would inevitably lead to the country falling behind its continental rivals and pleaded in a letter to the local press for 'the union of the different modifications of visible and intellectual beauty which were desirable, with the different

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<sup>15</sup>C.P.Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire 1760-1860*, (Manchester, 1976), p,37.

<sup>16</sup>*The Exhibition of the Liverpool Academy*, (Liverpool, 1812), p.14.

<sup>17</sup>See Chapter 1, p.35.

attributes of utility and comfort which were essential'. He further complained of having great difficulty in finding workman sufficiently skilled to carry out his designs.<sup>18</sup> However, the majority of his fellow patrons preferred to follow the laws of fashion and were content to support an educational programme for painters and exhibitions that emphasized the principles of high art. The artists, too, had no great desire to jeopardise their economic or social positions by admitting craftsmen and the problems of applied art.<sup>19</sup>

The Academy continued to hold annual exhibitions until 1814, on much the same lines as the first, with each time 300 to 400 works and always with good support from London and from the more artistically minded members of the town's élite.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that the finances of the Academy were always precarious, the exhibitions would probably have continued but for a new development - the plan to establish the Royal Institution, to which the Academy was to be invited to contribute.<sup>21</sup> Both Roscoe and Liverpool's merchants were now concentrating on the creation of this prestigious cultural centre devoted to the arts in general. When the Royal Institution was finally inaugurated in 1817, it was discovered that the Academy was defunct - an indication of the importance of the input of the lay community. A committee was immediately appointed to ensure that this occurrence was to be regarded as merely a

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<sup>18</sup>Matthew Gregson, 'On National Education in Drawing and Painting', 16th December 1813. *Holt and Gregson Collection*, 18.

<sup>19</sup>Darcy, p.39.

<sup>20</sup>With the exception of the exhibition of 1810, these were held in the Union Newsroom.

<sup>21</sup>*Liverpool Academy of Arts Catalogue, 1910*, (Liverpool, 1910), p.45.

temporary lacuna in the Academy's history.<sup>22</sup>

The exact date the Academy was reconstituted is uncertain, but it was mentioned in the Institution's report of 1820. Accommodation had been allocated to it by August, 1822, and a grant of money for the instruction of pupils (presumably in the school of design) was awarded to the Academy in December, 1822. Exhibitions commenced the same year, with seven exhibitions in all being held at the Royal Institution by the Academy.

The exhibition of 1822 was considered to be disappointing. Most of the exhibits were from local artists, some of which, according to a critic in the *Kaleidoscope* 'ought to have remained in the obscurity best suited to their humble pretensions'. He considered the exhibition to be 'decidedly inferior to those of the late Liverpool Academy at the Union News-rooms'.<sup>23</sup> This review appears to have represented the general consensus as only three sales were made.<sup>24</sup>

Much to the artists' chagrin, the following year the proprietors of the Royal Institution decided to stage an exhibition of Old Masters, rather than of contemporary works. This decision probably resulted from mixed motives. It might help to redress what they regarded as a slur on Liverpool's artistic

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<sup>22</sup>For the relationship between the Liverpool Academy and the Royal Institution, see Chapter 3.

<sup>23</sup>*The Kaleidoscope*, August 6th, 1822.

<sup>24</sup>Fawcett, p.174. Despite the fears of local artists that metropolitan contributions stopped their own getting bought, in fact, a prestigious display of London talent could be counted on to attract many visitors, thus helping to boost sales.

reputation left by the 1822 exhibition, it would give members of the town's élite a chance to display to the world at large their talents as discerning collectors,<sup>25</sup> and it would fulfil an educative function for both artists and the general public.<sup>26</sup> Such explanations did little to satisfy the artists who had hoped to benefit from the exhibition. The dealer Thomas Winstanley's reminder in the exhibition's catalogue to Liverpool's businessmen, that such works were gilt edged investments must have been even more galling. A correspondent to the *Liverpool Mercury*, under the pseudonym 'A Friend to British Artists', regretted that equal zeal could not have been displayed in arranging an exhibition of modern paintings - 'The respectability of the Institution and the gentlemen connected with it, would have been sufficient to induce the London artists to have contributed their works'.<sup>27</sup>

In the event, Liverpool gained a second exhibition, when the artists retaliated by holding one of their own at the Lyceum, (which received far better reviews than its predecessor in 1822). Sales were said to have picked up and a few

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<sup>25</sup>The exhibits nearly all came from local collectors. Out of 21 contributors whose occupations can be linked, 15 were merchants, brokers or bankers and included John Gladstone, Sir John Tobin, B.A. Heywood and J.B. and J.A. Yates. The exhibition was of a very high standard and the catalogue emphasised the importance of the study of such works. *Catalogue of the Paintings, the works of the Old Masters of the Various Schools, and of Deceased British Artists, Contributed by the Proprietors of most of the Principal Collections in Liverpool and Neighbourhood*, (Liverpool, 1823).

<sup>26</sup>Roscoe's views on the didactic purpose of art exhibitions and societies was shared by many. In 1824, B.A. Heywood, then president of the Royal Institution, suggested that education was the main function of an exhibition - 'probably its greatest use would be to instruct and improve the taste of the spectators'. *Addresses delivered at the Meetings of the Liverpool Royal Institution on the 27th February 1822 & 13th February 1824, by B.A. Heywood*, (Liverpool, 1824).

<sup>27</sup>*Liverpool Mercury*, 29th August 1823.

artists found themselves with commissions.<sup>28</sup> They now, astutely, appealed to the civic pride of the town's wealthier citizens to gain support for annual exhibitions - 'When an annual display is afforded to the Artists, there can exist little doubt of its leading to a favourable result: Liverpool cannot be less discerning in this respect than neighbouring towns possessing not a tithe of its consequences'.<sup>29</sup>

This tactic appears to have had the desired effect, the theme being taken up by leading figures in the Royal Institution, with Dr. Traill in 1824, pointing out the precedent for supporting art, that had been established by merchants of former times. Following this example, he claimed, might ensure similar lustre for the reputation of the Liverpool merchant community:-

Be it remembered that the arts cannot flourish without the encouragement of the wealthy.... Surely the high spirit of the British merchant ought not to shrink from what was nobly achieved by the inhabitants of the petty commercial states of ancient Greece or modern Italy.<sup>30</sup>

At the annual Academy dinner, the wealthy lay supporters appear to be recognising the value of the role of art in their quest to assert Liverpool's status, as they offered toasts galore to 'the fine arts and may the town of Liverpool, second only to the metropolis in commercial enterprise and opulence, hold the same rank in taste, judgement and liberality'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Fawcett, p.174.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Darcy, p.48.

<sup>30</sup>*Liverpool Mercury*, August 24th 1824.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*



Such hopes were not immediately realised, with the exhibitions of 1824 and 1825 being undistinguished, and in 1826 no exhibition was held 'owing to the exhibitions of 1824 and 1825 having been a mutual disappointment to the public and the Academy'.<sup>32</sup> Exhibitions, however, were a sensitive barometer, not only of the cultural aspirations and artistic activity of the town, but of its economic health as well,<sup>33</sup> and these were difficult years with a bout of liquidations and failures occurring first in the United States and spreading to Liverpool.<sup>34</sup>

The times seemed more propitious in 1827 when 'The fourth exhibition of the works of living artists' was advertised to open in 'the Rooms of the Academy of the Royal Institution'. A total of 270 paintings were exhibited (Copley, Fielding, S.Austen, Barber, Williamson and Mosses).<sup>35</sup> At a dinner on the 24th August to mark the opening of the exhibition, speaker after speaker emphasised the importance of art to the community and to the reputation of Liverpool. Thomas Winstanley appealed to the commercial instincts of his listeners by stressing the soundness of investment in English art, citing the large sums paid

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<sup>32</sup>Grindley, p.6.

<sup>33</sup>Fawcett, p.140. Interest in art was still apparent by the support shown for the one-man show, in 1826, by the American bird painter, J.J.Audubon, who arrived in England and proceeded to tour his watercolours through several towns. On July 31, he arranged them in sets in the Royal Institution, where he was allowed the room free of charge. On the first day visitors were admitted from 12pm to 2pm. The next day he had 413 visitors and from then on the exhibition was often crowded. The show continued for four weeks and Audubon netted £100. In gratitude, he gave the Institution a large painting of a turkey-cock. His next show was in Manchester, but he fared less well, claiming to have left poorer than when he arrived. *Ibid*, p.69.

<sup>34</sup>Darcy, p.48.

<sup>35</sup>Grindley, p.7.

for English works at the sale of the late Lord de Tabley's collection. He also noted that the Mayor and Common Council of Liverpool were seriously now considering ways by which they could support art. Possibly, these municipal leaders fully realised the implications of the failure of the previous exhibitions and were determined that Liverpool's artistic profile should be enhanced. At this exhibition, leading citizens not only viewed but purchased. On 27th August, the correspondent of the Mercury noted 'We are glad to learn that the attendance at the exhibition is considerably more numerous than it has been on former occasions, 150 daily - and the sales of pictures have been effected to a very considerable amount'.<sup>36</sup>

In 1828 municipal support for art in Liverpool appears to have been realised. At the second banquet at the Royal Institution, John Gladstone presided and nearly one hundred gentlemen including the mayor and bailiffs and several members of the Common Council were present. During the toasting John Gladstone, singled out the Mayor and Common Council 'for the public spirit and liberal conduct generally evinced by them, and in particular, for having given three premiums of 20 guineas each for the best specimens of painting, drawing and sculpture'.<sup>37</sup> Gladstone was sure that a town that had succeeded so triumphantly on the economic front, could excel equally in fostering the cause of art and artists in Liverpool, thus achieving a cultural identity to rival that of London:-

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<sup>36</sup>Darcy, p.49.

<sup>37</sup>*Liverpool Mercury*, 15th August 1828.

Liverpool had been distinguished for her enterprise and intelligence. She had made the name of her merchants known and respected in every quarter, nay, in every quarter of the world. She had even rivalled the metropolis of the British Empire in her most difficult undertakings. Though the metropolis had been protected by monopoly and other exclusive commercial advantages, yet Liverpool now treads close on her heels in general commerce, and, in some branches has even outstripped her. (*Loud cheers*) And might they not hope that the same spirit which had carried Liverpool to her present eminence, will, when another direction is given to it, produce similar effects in another field. Might they not expect to see her infant schools of art rising in importance, and equalling, if not rivalling the metropolis itself in the productions of the fine arts.<sup>38</sup>

In December, 1828, the Corporation voted the sum of 100 guineas to the Academy exhibitions - their careful stipulations as to how it was to be apportioned indicating the anxiety of some of its members to play a controlling role in directing art patronage in Liverpool.<sup>39</sup> An increasing interest in art at this time can also be evinced from the fact that six or seven Liverpool newspapers published critical opinion on the fine arts with more or less regularity.<sup>40</sup> It seemed that more men now came regularly to the aid of the artists and 'in the succeeding years not only were the exhibitions popular social events, but Liverpool's expenditure on art could be compared favourably with other cities'.<sup>41</sup> In his address to the Royal Institution early in 1829, Dr. Traill

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<sup>38</sup>*Ibid*, August 15th 1828.

<sup>39</sup> £20 each for the best historical picture and best landscape in oils; £12 each for the best watercolour drawing and woodcutting; three prizes of £9 and two of £6 for other exhibits. The works to which prizes were to be awarded had to be submitted to the Council for inspection. J. Touzeau, *The Rise and Progress of Liverpool from 1551-1835*, (Liverpool, 1910), 2, pp.769-70.

<sup>40</sup>*The Albion; The Kaleidoscope; the Liverpool Mercury, Chronicle, Courier, Advertiser and Times*. Occasionally, reports from one newspaper would be copied in another.

<sup>41</sup>Darcy, p.50.

declared himself delighted with the sales at the exhibition - they had amounted to £846 as against £487 in 1827.<sup>42</sup> Succeeding exhibitions were held in 1829 and 1830 in the Royal Institution before the Academy moved to new exhibition rooms in Old Post Office Place for the 1831 exhibition. Although the reasons for this move have been variously ascribed to the desire of the Academy to free itself from any undue influence from the Royal Institution<sup>43</sup> and dissatisfaction with their quarters there,<sup>44</sup> relations between the two bodies appear to have remained friendly.

An intimation that the beneficence of Liverpool's merchant élite was not entirely altruistic, came at the close of 1830, when a movement was made to form a 'Society of Amateurs' to assist and encourage art in the town'. By 1831, 'a society of gentlemen of taste and opulence', for the purpose of the 'encouragement of the fine arts' is on record. The mayor was the chairman, seven aldermen, twelve members of the Corporation and fifty four other leading citizens, many of whom were serious collectors, constituted the society.<sup>45</sup> A

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<sup>42</sup>Of all the provincial exhibitions at this time, it was Leeds that had the best reputation for sales, which had totals of £900 and nearly £1300 in 1823 and 1825 respectively. However, here again the relationship of cultural investment and the economy was in evidence, with the Leeds Intelligencer reporting in 1830 that 'the sale of pictures languishes exceedingly'. Quoted in Fawcett.p.140.

<sup>43</sup>H.C.Marillier, *The Liverpool School of Painters; An account of the Liverpool Academy from 1810 to 1867, with memoirs of the principal artists*, (London, 1904), p.14.

<sup>44</sup>For one thing the lighting was poor and for another, to reach the exhibition visitors were obliged to enter a back door and go up a back staircase. *The Kaleidoscope*, September 2nd 1823 and 23rd August 1831. However, there seems to have been no friction between the Academy and the Royal Institution over the move, *Exhibition Catalogue 1810*, p.48.

<sup>45</sup>*Catalogue of the Eight Exhibition of the Liverpool Academy*, (Liverpool, 1831). Of 56 occupations that can be traced, 43 were businessmen. The Committee consisted of the Mayor, Thomas Brancker, Aldermen Wright and T.C.Porter; Messrs C.Horsfall, Jos.Booker, R.Ellames,  
(continued...)

later Academy catalogue acidly commented that its inception 'was no doubt due to a desire on the part of members of the Corporation to have some say in the expenditure of money provided by the municipality'.<sup>46</sup> A sum of money was placed at the disposal of this committee by the Corporation and they dispensed some £100 to £150 yearly in prizes.<sup>47</sup> Although it seems inevitable that some of the influential members of the Society would be likely to adopt a proprietary attitude and antagonise the artists who preferred to be in charge of their own affairs, relations, at least on the surface, appeared to be cordial. In a preface to its catalogue, the Academy duly paid tribute to the contribution of the gentlemen, acknowledging:-

The importance of a cordial co-operation of the Amateurs and the profession.... it has already been shown by the Sub-Committee of the new society, having zealously taken a part in the arduous labour and responsibility attending the arrangement and hanging the Pictures in the Exhibition Room. To such cordial co-operation the Academy unreservedly pledge themselves.<sup>48</sup>

In 1832 the prizes were again awarded by this society but in 1833 no exhibition was held because of renewed financial difficulties and in 1834 the Society is not cited in the exhibition catalogue, although it stated that the mayor and committee had granted prizes to the amount of £135. In 1835 the Mayor and Corporation were thanked for their patronage, but from 1837 onwards, prizes came out of Academy funds - 'in consequence of the Corporation having

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<sup>45</sup>(...continued)

J.Foster, Jacob Fletcher, Francis Jordan, William Lawson, J.B.Yates, John Gladstone and the Rev.Jonathan Brooks. Thomas Winstanley was secretary.

<sup>46</sup>*Exhibition Catalogue, 1910, pp.47-48.*

<sup>47</sup>*Exhibition Catalogue, 1831.*

<sup>48</sup>Grindley, pp.7-8.

declined to contribute their annual grant of £100 for prizes at the exhibition, this Academy deems it incumbent to award out of its funds the sum of £50'.<sup>49</sup> However, municipal support was not entirely withdrawn, the Corporation having granted the Academy an annual sum to cover the cost of the rent on its exhibition rooms.<sup>50</sup> No further mention is then made of the Society of Amateurs which appears to have been disbanded. According to Darcy, this probably reflected (as in other towns such as Birmingham and Edinburgh) the almost inevitable incompatibility between the belief of the patrons that an informal lay-dominated academy met all the basic needs of art and the dislike of the artists of any form of lay control. The Liverpool artists may also have wished to stand alone, which they endeavoured to do, but only with the help of an art-union, organised in 1834, which still relied for success on the business community.<sup>51</sup>

The basic aim of the art-union was to extend patronage and encourage the cause of English art by offering additional encouragement to painters, sculptors and engravers. They were also a means for those who possessed a cultivated taste but did not have the financial resources to acquire works of art. Thus the art-union would have a dual function - it would help alleviate the lack of funding when times were hard, and also allow more pictures to remain within the town, improving the taste of the inhabitants. The art-union, in essence, was a form of

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<sup>49</sup>*Liverpool Academy of Arts Minute Book 1830-1848*, April 10th 1837, held in the Walker Art Gallery, A7.

<sup>50</sup>This continued until about 1860. Grindley, p.49.

<sup>51</sup>Darcy, p. 53.

lottery -subscribers contributed a fixed sum (circa £1) and lots were drawn for certain pictures in the exhibition. In Liverpool, subscribers were allowed to choose for themselves the works of art to the amount of their prize or even add sums out of their own pockets in order to take home higher priced works that appealed to their taste.

The impact on art patronage in Liverpool in the 1830s was considerable. From its inception, leading merchants, bankers and other businessmen <sup>52</sup> played an important role in its organisation, underlining their communal commitment to promoting the cause of art in Liverpool. Both they and the artists considered the art-union a supplement to private patronage, not a substitute, and in Liverpool in the 1830s and 1840s there was a healthy balance between private and art union patronage, with the art union proving a boon to the artists during the economic depression of the early 1840s, and also helping to sustain Liverpool's reputation as a promoter of the Fine Arts. In 1845, the secretary James Palmer announced in a paid advertisement that since the establishment of the art union in 1834, the sum of £8,734 had been subscribed, to which the additional sum of £2,425 was added by the prize holders, making a total of £11,159 beyond the amount of regular sales during the exhibitions. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, the art union continued to have businessmen sitting on the committee, although with the improvement of the economy in the 1850s, its importance declined.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>George Holt, J.P.Heywood, Jos.Booker and William Rathbone were four businessmen who were on the committee in 1845-6.

<sup>53</sup>Darcy, pp.80-85.

A tribute to the willingness of the Liverpool merchant élite to support the cause of art, (whatever the underlying motives) came from Benjamin Haydon, the great anti-Royal Academician, who lectured at the Mechanics' Institution on several occasions between 1830-1840. In September 1837, through the agency of Mr. Lowndes and with some help from Winstanley, Haydon was commissioned to paint *Christ Blessing the Little Children* (since lost) for the Asylum for the Blind in Hardman Street, while most of 1839 was spent painting the Wellington portraits now in St. George's Hall. He eulogised in one of his lectures:-

Liverpool is the only distinguished town since the Reformation which has the moral courage to employ native painters., on the true, thorough-bred principles of patronage, which produced such glorious results in Italy and Greece!....when the glory and fame which will accrue to Liverpool shall have spread all over the world for such a sound basis of proceeding, other distinguished towns will and must follow such an example.<sup>54</sup>

The reputation and patronage of individual collectors, as well as municipal and collective patronage, was an important factor in helping to assert the town's cultural redefinition. Many leading families commissioned portraits of themselves and their families as a lasting, visual representation of their success, for both present and future generations.<sup>55</sup>

Of the individual patrons of the early nineteenth-century, it is William Roscoe who is regarded as being the most outstanding. His collection of early Renaissance art is now regarded as one of the most significant private galleries

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<sup>54</sup>B.R.Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, (London, 1846), vol.11, Lecture X, pp.115-116. Haydon went on to offer a glowing panegyric of the influence of William Roscoe on the development of art and art patronage in Liverpool.

<sup>55</sup>See Chapter 1, p.34 for the commissions of Joseph Wright of Derby.



of Italian and Netherlandish 'primitives' formed in the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> However, there were other notable collectors and connoisseurs before 1800. These men purchased Old Masters and when their means were limited, they bought copies or commissioned artists to make prints for them. They include Daniel Daulby (Roscoe's brother-in-law) and leading merchants such as Edward Rogers, William and John Clarke, John and James Gregson and Richard Walker. Although some of their collections happened to be sold around 1800, most of them were repurchased locally, illustrating a growing recognition in the importance of art in cultural self-definition. The importance of a private collection in helping to define status is underlined by a description of the merchant Edward Rogers in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1795 - 'Fond of music and painting he devoted much of his leisure time to those pleasing pursuits, and a well-chosen collection of pictures evinces to the goodness of his taste'.<sup>57</sup>

John Gladstone enjoyed a considerable reputation as an art buyer. When he lived on Rodney Street, an inventory of his effects for 1813 disclosed in an entry that he had pictures, drawings and prints valued at £2000. Later at Seaforth he built a collection amongst which were landscapes believed to be by Salvator Rosa and Jacob Ruisdael. The Gladstone children all had to receive drawing lessons and sit for their miniatures to the principal Liverpool portrait

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<sup>56</sup>Edward Morris, 'William Roscoe and Medici Florence', in Pat Starkey, (ed.), *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, (Liverpool, 1993), p.15.

<sup>57</sup>The announcement of its sale emphasised that the collection contained 'undoubted pictures' by Dutch, French and English masters'. Darcy, p.130.

painter, Thomas Hargreaves.<sup>58</sup> In 1828, a local newspaper commends him for buying a picture 'straight off' at the private view of the Liverpool Exhibition and for subsequent purchases.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph Brooks Yates, a leading West India merchant and important figure in cultural circles, filled his mansion at West Dingle with canvasses of the Old Masters, manuscripts, early block letter editions and a rich collection of emblems. In 1814, his brother, John Ashton Yates, a Liverpool broker was buying paintings in occupied Paris and compiled a valuable collection of engravings and old masters.<sup>60</sup>

The catalogue of Old Masters at the Royal Institution in 1823, records that (amongst others), Jacob Fletcher, Sir John Tobin, William Duff and Francis Jordan, all leading merchants in Liverpool were the proud possessors of the works of the masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. While the compiler of the catalogue laid emphasis on how important the study of such works were to the artists in the community, the list of local collectors undoubtedly served to indicate the cultural inclinations of Liverpool's élite to outside visitors.

A major collector of the English School was the tobacco merchant John Miller.

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<sup>58</sup>S.G.Checkland, *The Gladstones: A Family Biography 1764-1851*, (Cambridge, 1971), p.162, 168, 171.

<sup>59</sup>*The Albion*, 25th August 1828.

<sup>60</sup>*Roscoe Papers*, 5376.

He was a member of the committee of the Liverpool art-union and also a member of the Hogarth Club, which had been founded to promote the principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. However, his collecting had begun before the Pre-Raphaelites emerged, and in the 1840s, he owned works by Turner, Etty, Linnell and Constable. In the purchase books of the Liverpool Academy Exhibitions, Miller's name appears as a regular buyer of paintings. He began acquiring Pre-Raphaelite works in the mid-1850s, including several paintings by Millais, including *The Blind Girl*.<sup>61</sup> In 1847, the journal the *Art Union*, felt able to report that 'Liverpool was a safe and sane market for works of art and that the merchants of that vast emporium spent money liberally on the purchase of objects of elegance and refinement, revealing much taste and discrimination in their selections.'<sup>62</sup>

By the 1840s, the hopes cherished by the merchants who had originally invested in the Academy, that its school would bring honour and glory to the name of Liverpool seemed about to be realised, as the young artists trained under this regime began to enter the Academy.<sup>63</sup> The example of these

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<sup>61</sup>Anne MacPhee, 'Two Patrons of Victorian Art', in Pat Starkey (ed.), *Riches into Art; Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, (Liverpool, 1993), pp.54-55.

<sup>62</sup>Darcy, p.159. A more jaundiced view of the participation in art by newly wealthy tradesmen was offered in 1861 - 'When a certain kind of honest, vulgar man has made a fortune, started a brougham, and furnished a house, he sets about buying pictures. He does not at first profess to know or care anything about them. He buys them because it is the right sort of thing to have pictures in one's house....Why in our days, a Liverpool secretary to a Fine Art Exhibition, or even a prominent committee man, is nearly as great an individual as a Mayor. *Porcupine*, Vol.2, no.48. Saturday , 31st August 31st 1861, p.253.

<sup>63</sup>William Huggins became an associate of the Academy in 1847, at the age of twenty seven; W.L.Windus the same year at twenty five, others included, Robert Tonge, James Campbell and A.W.Hunt.

promising painters, plus the institution of a £50 annual prize out of the Corporation's grant, now encouraged some of the most interesting artists to exhibit there - Millais from 1846, Holman Hunt from 1847 and Ford Maddox Brown from 1848. In 1851, mainly through the influence of William Windus, the Academy began to award its prizes to the Pre-Raphaelite exhibitors. The controversy aroused by this policy came to a head in 1857, with a number of artists, led by W.D.Herdman, forming a new Liverpool Society of Fine Arts, which was backed by the local establishment. After a short period of artistic competition, exhibitions by both organisations petered out<sup>64</sup> and Windus, the one really great painter to emerge from the Liverpool school seems to have been utterly discouraged and to have painted nothing to speak of between 1862 and his death in 1907.<sup>65</sup> In the final analysis it was to be Roscoe's collection rather than the structure of art in Liverpool which was to bring most distinction to this era.

It was, in fact, the more practical and functional medium of architecture, the most public of the arts, that allowed Liverpool's merchants to make the most ostentatious and enduring celebration of both their own status and that of their native town. Although it was in the second half of the century that Philip Rathbone spoke of 'quickening civic patriotism by appealing to men through

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<sup>64</sup>There were a few makeshift exhibitions in the 1860s, then from 1867 to 1897, there were none at all.

<sup>65</sup>Willett, pp.37-39.

their senses and making the visible city a place to be proud of'.<sup>66</sup>, this appears to have been a tenet adopted by the Liverpool élite from the early years. Even in 1786, architectural analogies had been drawn with mercantile Italy - the area behind the Town Hall being referred to as the 'Rialto where merchants do most congregate'.<sup>67</sup> Members of building and memorial committees began offering commissions to prominent architects and sculptors to adorn the city with commemorative statues and new buildings, befitting its new economic status.<sup>68</sup> Increasingly, ostentatious civic pride was to dominate the architectural scene. In 1848, *The Builder* reported the local architect and historian Sir James Picton as saying: 'Perhaps no town in the world, except London after the Great Fire, has undergone so active a renovation as Liverpool within the last fifty years'.<sup>69</sup>

Improvements to civic buildings had begun in 1795, initiated by the fire that gutted the Town Hall, reconstruction within the surviving shell being carried out by James Wyatt. He built the present dome crowned by the figure of Britannia

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<sup>66</sup>Willet,p.48. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the building of many new churches in the town, however, ecclesiastical architecture, which was inspired by faith as well as civic pride, is not addressed in the following discussion.

<sup>67</sup>Quentin Hughes, *Architecture & Townscape in Liverpool*, (London, 1984), p.41.

<sup>68</sup>Liverpool's first public sculpture, a memorial of Nelson, was erected in 1813. William Roscoe played a leading part in the project and such firms as Lloyds and the West India Association contributed generously to the cost which reached £9,000. The design, created by M.C.Wyatt was executed in bronze by Richard Westacott, R.A. *Liverpool Mercury*, 22nd October 1813. The Council contributed £1000 and in 1815 took over its permanent upkeep. Touzeau, p.730. Commercial considerations played their part - the drum was designed as a ventilator shaft for the bonded warehouse of which Exchange Flags was the roof. Liverpool Heritage Bureau, *Buildings of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1978), p.31.

<sup>69</sup>Quoted in, Robert Elwall, *The Victorian Architecture of Liverpool. An Essay..to accompany an exhibition of nineteenth-century engravings, reproduced from The Builder*, p.1, (1984).

in 1802, and the south portico was added in 1811. In 1801, the need for a new Exchange 'commensurate with the wants of the times' was recognised and Wyatt designed a quadrangle of commercial buildings to encircle the Town Hall and harmonize with it. The subscription list of £80,000 was filled up within three hours despite the fact that no individual was allowed to hold more than ten shares. Liverpool's eyes were firmly fixed on London, the buildings being claimed to 'occupy an area more than double that of the Royal Exchange in the metropolis'.<sup>70</sup> They were opened in 1803 and according to Picton, its distinctive features exhibited dignity and repose - 'The entire group from Castle Street to Old Hall Street as a combination of municipal buildings has never been surpassed'.<sup>71</sup>

Most of the new building in the town was imbued with the spirit of classicism, with the Foster family dominating the architectural scene.<sup>72</sup> Greek Revival architecture was seen as important both for display and as an educator of

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<sup>70</sup>Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its commerce, statistics and institutions, with a history of the cotton trade*, (Liverpool, 1825), p.357.

<sup>71</sup>J.A.Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, (Liverpool,1875), 2, pp.31-32. They were rebuilt in 1863-7 by T.H.Wyatt in the French Renaissance style. Picton declared - 'Those who remember the stately dignity and quiet repose of the former building will be inclined to sympathise with the Jews, who wept in comparing the second Temple to the first'. These in turn, gave way to what Hughes, p.81, describes as 'the present monstrosity', designed by Gunton and Gunton, begun in 1837 and completed after the war.

<sup>72</sup>John Foster snr. (c.1759-1827) became corporation surveyor in 1790, being succeeded in the post by his son John Foster jun. (c.1787-1846) in 1824. With the eldest son, Thomas, becoming town clerk in 1832, the hold of the family over the town's building affairs was so great that contemporaries joked that art in Liverpool was 'too much fostered'. John Foster sen. designed a number of public buildings in an elegant late Georgian style including the Athenaeum of 1799 and the Union Newsroom in 1800. His son was an exponent of the Greek revival, his best work being the Custom House (1828-35). Elwall, p.1. See also, Adrian Jarvis, 'The interests and ethics of John Foster, Liverpool Dock Surveyor 1799-1824', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 140, (1991),pp.141-160.

community taste. In 1824 the President of the Liverpool Royal Institution praised the appearance of so many neo-classical public buildings in the town:-

The early Grecian Doric in the portico of the church of the Blind Asylum, which is the first, and I believe the only specimen of the order in England; the Ionic of the Temple on the Ilyssus in the elevation of the new Infirmary, the Roman Corinthian of the columns of the temple of Jupiter Stator in the portico of St. Michael's Church, the Roman Doric in the new church of St. George; the elegant imitation of the temple of Sybil in the portico of the Wellington Rooms;<sup>73</sup> the Ionic of a temple in Asia Minor in the chapel now building in Rodney Street.<sup>74</sup>

The President claimed that the portico of the Royal Institution's own building, which had been executed in the Doric Order of the Parthenon, clearly demonstrated how public taste could be influenced and the town's physical fabric consequently be embellished - 'this decoration was hardly finished before it was imitated in the ornaments of various buildings in the town'.<sup>75</sup> James Picton later described how in early nineteenth-century Liverpool 'shop fronts, banks, gin palaces...everything was modelled from the Parthenon'.<sup>76</sup>

A new Infirmary was erected 1822-1824, to John Foster's design at a cost of

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<sup>73</sup>The Wellington Club was founded in 1814 and its premises (now the Irish Centre), designed by Edmund Aikin and erected by subscription, were opened in Mount Pleasant. The proprietors held single or double shares and the Club was the centre of social life in Liverpool, holding a regular series of balls throughout the season, which was from November to April. James Picton described the Wellington Rooms as the 'Almacks of Liverpool'. The proprietors were representative of the leading members of the town, including the Earles, Yates, Gladstones and Tobins. The Clubs activities ceased during the 1914-18 war and despite all efforts to revive it became defunct. *Records of the Wellington Club*, L.R.O., 367 WTN.

<sup>74</sup>*Addresses...B.A. Heywood, 1824*. Surprisingly Heywood omitted any mention of the magnificent Ionic Lyceum in Bold Street, designed by Thomas Harrison of Chester.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>Quoted in Hughes, p.84. Thomas Rickman, a founder of the Gothic Revival, did manage to breach Foster's personal and stylistic monopoly with three churches of importance. See chapter 4, p.141.

£27,000 exclusive of land - 'The classical Greek here reigns in all its dry severity',<sup>77</sup> and in 1823 the stone was laid on the site of the old dock for Foster's giant classical Customs House. At the time of building it was the largest structure in the city, and with the exception of St George's Hall and the Anglican Cathedral, remained so until it was destroyed by the bombing of 1941.<sup>78</sup> Picton was somewhat disparaging as to its architectural merit, declaring - 'Life is wanting - sadness and gloom predominate to an almost painful degree.... There are no indications, such as are stamped on every line in St George's Hall, of careful study and creative power'.<sup>79</sup> Lime Street Station was opened in 1836 with the Corporation contributing £2000 out of municipal funds towards the beautifying of its facade.<sup>80</sup>

However the most magnificent example of princely patronage in Liverpool was conceived in the mid-1830s, a celebratory symbol of the town's wealth, greatness and civic pride. A new hall in Birmingham had been begun in 1832 and in 1836 Liverpool determined to do likewise.<sup>81</sup> The foundation stone was laid in 1838 by the Mayor, William Rathbone, as a tribute to mark the coronation of Queen Victoria, although no designs for the building were as yet

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<sup>77</sup>Picton, 2, p.224.

<sup>78</sup>Hughes, p.77. The cost of the building rose from an estimated £175,000 to an actual figure of £269,000. During his lifetime, John Foster jun. completed more than eighteen large architectural projects in and around Liverpool. *Ibid*.

<sup>79</sup>Picton, 2, p.143.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid*, p.185.

<sup>81</sup>Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England; South Lancashire*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969), p.155.



in existence.<sup>82</sup> Voluntary subscriptions<sup>83</sup> were raised and a competition launched in March, 1839. In July, seventy five architects submitted proposals, with first prize going to the twenty five year old Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, who had been encouraged by Benjamin Haydon to offer a submission - 'They are noble fellows at Liverpool. Send in a design, and mind, let it combine grandeur with simplicity. None of your broken up and frittered abortion, but something grand'.<sup>84</sup>

In 1840 Elmes won a second competition for new Assize Courts in the town and it was then decided to combine St George's Hall and the Assize Courts into one vast building, with the Corporation assuming the major responsibility for its construction. The scheme met with universal approval. The revised designs, thought to be based on a study of the Thermae of Caracalla, were a masterpiece - 'in the design of St. George's Hall, Victorian classic reached its zenith'.<sup>85</sup> Work finally began on the building of the Hall in 1842, but sadly Elmes was never to see his work completed, dying of tuberculosis in 1847. C.R.Cockerell

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<sup>82</sup>The stone, in fact, has no connection with the actual building. It lies in the vacant space at the front. Picton, 2, p.180.

<sup>83</sup>The first committee of management was chaired by Rev.Jonathan Brooks and included leading merchants such as W.W.Currie, Hardman Earle and Henry Booth. The Deed of Covenant was signed by 455 leading members of the town in 1837. *Records relating to St George's Hall, Liverpool, 1837-1910*, L.R.O., 900 MD 19.

<sup>84</sup>Quoted in Darcy, p.102.

<sup>85</sup>A.E.Richardson, 'Architecture', in G.M.Young, p.192. Hughes, p.98, agrees that Elmes was likely to have drawn some inspiration from this source.

and the engineer Sir Robert Rawlinson were brought in to complete the project.<sup>86</sup> The former designed the pediment sculpture which symbolised all that Roscoe and his generation had endeavoured to present as the central motif of Liverpool's cultural identity - Britannia with Commerce and the Arts.<sup>87</sup> The building was finally opened in 1854, with a musical festival which extended over several days.

It would be hard to exaggerate the influence of St George's Hall on the architecture of Liverpool. In the second half of the century, when, as a result of highly commendable civic enterprise, the William Brown Street group of buildings were begun - 'it was for once felt that *noblesse oblige*, and that the buildings had to be created to form an appropriate foil for St George's Hall'. As a result they are mostly classical and 'are remarkably correct and restrained for their dates'<sup>88</sup> and Liverpool still continued to build classically many years after its rivals, such as Manchester, had espoused High Victorian Gothic.<sup>89</sup>

Commercial buildings were not given an equality of status with 'those great

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<sup>86</sup>In addition to St. George's hall, Elmes built two large houses, 'Allerton Towers' and 'Druids Cross', now both demolished, and the County Lunatic Asylum in Rainhill. He entered and won a competition for a design for the Liverpool Collegiate School, this time in the Gothic style. Hughes, p.101.

<sup>87</sup>The statue of William Roscoe by Chantrey found a home between the columns in the Great Hall.

<sup>88</sup>Pevsner, p.158. The buildings were the William Brown Library and Museum (1857-60); Walker Art Gallery (1874-77); Picton Reading Room (1875-79); Sessions House (1882-84).

<sup>89</sup>*The Builder*, in 1866, was unequivocal in its view that - 'The Anglo-classic style which distinguishes the architecture of Liverpool would probably...have stood a good chance of dying out with Foster had it not been for the erection of that classic masterpiece St George's Hall'. Quoted in Elwall, p.2.

works of public benefaction and munificence', the theatres, exchanges, customs houses, town halls and churches, until 1843. In that year, Liverpool saw the erection of Brunswick buildings, an office block modelled on the *palazzi* of the Medici, the Strozzi and the Pazzi, and one of the first English buildings to be specifically designed for this purpose. The *Companion to the British Almanac* of 1843, featured the building in its 'Major Works of Public Interest, declaring:-

Though not strictly coming under the heading of public structures, this piece of architecture is a very great public ornament, and so decidedly superior in taste to many erected at far greater cost, and for far more important purposes, that we consider ourselves fortunate in being able to give an accurate representation of it.<sup>90</sup>

Banks, insurance buildings and offices soon followed and by 1857, *The Builder* noted, 'New sets of chambers of great cost and extent are rising on all sides, and display an amount of decoration, externally, somewhat surprising.'<sup>91</sup> Now, it has been argued, the analogy with Renaissance Italy was complete - 'here was a city of merchant princes bestowing their munificence upon vast palaces of commerce and fine civic buildings'.<sup>92</sup>

When searching for a representation that would encapsulate the achievements of an earlier generation, it was to architecture rather than art that Alfred Frazer chose to look. In his paper read before the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, acknowledged the debt that the city owed to the men of this earlier

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<sup>90</sup>Quoted in Hughes, p.42.

<sup>91</sup>Quoted in Elwall, p.3. The article continued 'Whilst the prominent works of architecture in Manchester are warehouses, the Liverpool architecture is displayed chiefly in piles of buildings laid out in offices'. Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p.43.

era, he declared:-

**There is today, an absence of that patriotic and self-sacrificing spirit which fifty years ago led to the creation of St. George's Hall....had it been left to the present generation, I am very much afraid the hall would not have been erected on such an important scale.<sup>93</sup>**

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<sup>93</sup> Alfred H. Frazer, 'The Influence of Art', in *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, 1894-95*, (Liverpool, 1895), 49, p.278.

## Chapter 6. Liverpool and the Performing Arts.

*Liverpool is now the most musical and theatrical town in Great Britain, after London...our Philharmonic and Festival Choral Societies give oratorios and miscellaneous musical performances, often superior, in many respects, to anything heard in the metropolis.<sup>1</sup>*

Investment in organised musical provision offered Liverpool's merchants the opportunity to publicly display both their cultural inclinations and their wealth to their fellow-citizens and the world at large. In this branch of the arts, the influence of the Roscoe circle was to be little in evidence - 'From music he (Roscoe) derived but little pleasure, although he was a great admirer of the works of Handel'<sup>2</sup> - and in its musical life during the first half of the nineteenth-century, Liverpool was to follow the established trends of the day, rather than seeking to found a distinct musical culture of its own.

From the late sixteenth-century organised music in Liverpool had mainly been the province of the town's waits, musicians appointed by the Council to play both on civic ceremonial occasions and for simple entertainment. The position carried a clearly defined status, with its own silver insignia and regular payments from public funds, indicating that the Council fully acknowledged their importance to the town.<sup>3</sup> Although by the mid-eighteenth century their duties

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<sup>1</sup>*The Liverpool Year Book for 1856*, quoted in R.J.Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool stage from the earliest period to the present time*, (Liverpool, 1908),p.167.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe*, (London, 1833), 1, p.473.

<sup>3</sup>James Touzeau, *The Rise and Progress of Liverpool*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1910), 1, pp.129,156. That both parties to the agreement sometimes had cause for complaint was  
(continued...)

were now more readily performed by freelance musicians, working in the growing number of inns and taverns, or visiting companies of actors and musicians to the newly opened theatre,<sup>4</sup> an entry in the ledger of the Corporation, in 1775, records a payment of £24 0s 0d. paid to the waits for that year's salary.<sup>5</sup>

Enjoyment of the musical entertainment provided by the waits appears not to have been the prerogative of any one section of the town's inhabitants. The band would occasionally make its way through the town giving impromptu performances and was also in the habit of 'going to the houses of the masters of vessels on the day after that of their arrival in the port, and playing before their doors, by way of welcoming them home'.<sup>6</sup>

However, as organised musical activity within the town grew, it was increasingly to become the preserve of those who could afford it - in effect the town's emerging middle class élite. From the mid-1760s oratorios were performed in local churches, with the majority of programmes mirroring the

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<sup>3</sup>(...continued)

apparent in 1717, when the waits petitioned the Council for compensation for arrears in payment. The Council duly agreed to pay the sum of four guineas for the arrears and forty shillings per annum for their future services, but only on the understanding that the waits 'attend on public days better than they have done'.

*Ibid*, p.104.

<sup>4</sup>S.de B.Taylor, *Two Centuries of Music in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1976), p.1.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as it was During the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century*, (Liverpool, 1853), p.273.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, p.273.

nation-wide obsession with the works of Handel.<sup>7</sup> Concerts of a more popular type were held in the Ranelagh Gardens<sup>8</sup> to which the fashionable of the town flocked - serving to convince certain nineteenth century historians of Liverpool that this was an era when 'music was a great deal cultivated in Liverpool'.<sup>9</sup> It is impossible, of course, to ascertain the extent to which attendance at musical concerts was governed by emotional response and how much by a desire to be identified with, and be identified as, the élite of the town.

In 1784,<sup>10</sup> came the first of Liverpool's great music festivals held in St.Peter's Church in aid of local charities, which was to act as a blueprint for similar festivals held at regular intervals up to the late 1830s,<sup>11</sup> and where 'the opulent inhabitants of Liverpool gave a proof of their liberality and taste'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*Oratorios etc. Performed in Liverpool 1768-1822*, L.R.O., H783 ORA. The presence of a musical society in the town by 1777, is evidenced by advertisements for subscription concerts held every three weeks, beginning in October. Two tickets (subscriber and a lady) were one guinea. *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser and Mercantile Chronicle*, September 12th 1777; October 2nd 1778.

<sup>8</sup> Brooke, p.87, notes that performances in the Ranelagh Gardens were advertised from 1766. Taylor, p.1, cites an advertisement in a 1768 issue of the Liverpool Gazette for a performance of 'music for French Horns, clarionets (*sic*), bassoons, etc. to be followed by fireworks', in Ranelagh Gardens on 16th August.

<sup>9</sup> Brooke, p.269. See also J.A.Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, 2 Vols. (Liverpool,1875), 2, pp.235-236, 'At this time music was a great deal patronised in Liverpool'.

<sup>10</sup> According to Thomas Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool; A narrative of two hundred years*, p.10, this year was mistakenly thought to be the centenary of Handel's birth (1795) - not the best advertisement of the musical knowledge of the organisers.

<sup>11</sup> Printed evidence of Festivals can be found for 1784; 1790; 1799; 1805; 1813; 1817; 1823; 1827; 1830; and 1836. The Festival was revived in 1874, but the experiment was not continued.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Troughton, *The History of Liverpool, from the Earliest Authenticated Period to the Present Time*, (Liverpool,1810), p.169.

Admission charges<sup>13</sup> effectively ensured the exclusivity of the clientele, although these scarcely represented the true cost of participation - to cut a respectable figure on such occasions, large sums had also to be invested in physical and mental accoutrements.<sup>14</sup> Handel's oratorios provided the major contribution to the musical programme although the Festivals were by no means devoted to music alone, but quickly became major social events in the town's calendar, providing occasions on which the commercial elite could mingle with the local landed aristocracy,<sup>15</sup> displaying their taste for fashion as well as culture. Among the attractions on offer during the 1784 Festival were horse racing, a theatrical play and a grand fancy dress ball and supper.<sup>16</sup>

In 1785, the success of the growing number of musical ventures in the town prompted a scheme to give Liverpool its own purpose built concert hall. The

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<sup>13</sup>Subscription to the five performances, £1 1s.; to each oratorio, 7s 6d.; to the selection of sacred music and each of the miscellaneous concerts, 10s 6d. Receipts for the Festival were £2,000. The extent of this economic divide is illustrated by an entry in the receipt and account book of the Liverpool merchant Mr Joseph Brooks, recording the level of wages of a number of his employees, cited in Brooke, p.115: Labourer - 1s 4d / 1s 6d per day; seaman -25s/37s per month; gardener (1777&1778) - £4-4s per annum; clerk (1776 to 1778) - £30 per annum.

<sup>14</sup>Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance; Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770*, (Oxford, 1989), p.291-2.

<sup>15</sup> Unlike the founders of the literary and scientific societies and institutions, the organisers appeared to actively seek the patronage of the landed aristocracy. By 1827 the list of stewards included a duke, four earls, two lords, one viscount, one archbishop, two bishops, and eight knights. Although this list does not guarantee that they all attended the Festival, the names, for example, of the Earl and Countess of Derby, Earl Talbot and Lady Cecily Talbot, do appear among a list of arrivals in Liverpool for the 1827 Festival.

<sup>16</sup> For a full account of the Musical Festival of 1784, see Brooke, pp.270-273. The fancy dress ball was the first of its kind in Liverpool and its introduction had its critics - 'Among the various amusements, the moralist must with regret contemplate the first introduction of a masquerade into Liverpool... such levities, notwithstanding the sanction which they receive from *the Fashionable World*, have too great a tendency to relax the bounds of decency and decorum'. Troughton, p.171.



cost of the building was to be met by subscription, with the initial issue of shares set at ten guineas each, which proved so successful that the plan was extended to double its original intention.<sup>17</sup> On 12th June, 1786, the Bold Street Music Hall duly opened with a grand performance of Handel's 'Messiah'. Although the exterior of the Hall was said to have been unprepossessing,<sup>18</sup> internally, it was claimed, 'it is in extent and elegance, perhaps superior to any room, which is employed merely as a concert room, in the kingdom'.<sup>19</sup> Advertisements in the local press paraded its claims as 'the largest and most complete in the country, with auditorium seating for 1,400 and an additional 150 seats in the orchestra',<sup>20</sup> with the hall being said to have had 'exceptionally good acoustic properties'.<sup>21</sup> Twelve subscription concerts were given fortnightly from October (with occasional choral concerts in Lent), which from 1795 were held according to the lunar rather than the calendar month - 'to take the benefit of the moonlight'.<sup>22</sup> Annual subscriptions were two guineas for the twelve concerts, for which each subscriber had three tickets. Admission was carefully controlled with tickets only to be transferred to a lady or the son

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<sup>17</sup>J.A.Picton, 2, p.235.

<sup>18</sup> Brooke,p.385,describes - 'a plain brick building', and Troughton,p.326 - 'Externally this building possesses no architectural merit particularly deserving of notice'.

<sup>19</sup>Troughton,p.326.

<sup>20</sup>Taylor, p.99.

<sup>21</sup>Picton, 2, pp.235-6. The Music Hall cost £4,500 to build and fit out, including £315 for an organ built by Baumgarten of London and a Longman and Broderip grand pianoforte costing £75. Taylor, p.99.

<sup>22</sup>*Holt and Gregson Papers: Materials towards a History of Liverpool collected by John Holt and Matthew Gregson*, 12, 942 HOL, fq2091, L.R.O.. Taylor,p.99, describes a pit at the bottom of Bold Street, which might well have proved a hazard to concert goers on moonless nights.

of a subscriber if he was a minor. No gentlemen resident in the town was to be admitted unless he was a subscriber, although strangers to the town could purchase a ticket to one concert for 5s.<sup>23</sup> - here, once more, doing little for the diffusion of musical appreciation amongst the town at large. Liverpool society, like English society, appeared willing to spend a good deal of money on music and the hall was successful in satisfying its audiences' demands for 'excellent soloists and violinists' of national (and on occasion international) renown,<sup>24</sup> helping to boost Liverpool's musical reputation.

Evidence of the involvement of the merchant élite in musical enterprise, at this time, comes from a glowing testimonial to both themselves and the town offered by the singer and composer Charles Dibdin.<sup>25</sup> Dibdin visited Liverpool twice during 1787 as part of a nationwide musical tour, which he had undertaken in an attempt to raise funds towards a projected trip to India.<sup>26</sup> The response he met with from the merchant community led him to laud the town

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<sup>23</sup>In 1808, there were 300 subscribers. Picton, 2, p.236.

<sup>24</sup>Abroad, England was regarded as definitely an unmusical country, but one in which all foreign musicians might be certain of making their fortunes. E.J.Dent, 'Music in Early Victorian England' in G.M.Young, *Early Victorian England 1830-1865*, second impression, (Oxford, 1951), 2, p.252. Fees, then considered very high (in the range £50 -£75) were paid to such artists as Pasta, Braham, and Haydn's friend Saloman. But Catalani received £100 claiming she never sang for less. Taylor, p.99. Catalani could command up to £2000 for a festival. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th Ed. Vol 2, (London, 1954), pp.119-120.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Dibdin, 1745 - 1814, composer, author and entertainer. He made his debut in 1762 and by 1768 was firmly in favour. His sea-songs, especially popular during the Napoleonic Wars, earned him lasting fame, ('Tom Bowling' is still well known), and gained him the title 'the Tyrtæus of the British Navy'. *Groves*, pp.685-689.

<sup>26</sup>As a way of boosting the proceeds, Dibdin published (by subscription), a book of his experiences, in the form of 107 letters addressed to various friends and acquaintances, which included his observations on the social, commercial and political atmosphere of the places he visited.

as 'beyond all question the first town in the kingdom after London'.<sup>27</sup> While the number of Liverpool names on the subscription list for his book (second only to London) might suggest a possible reason for this partisanship, Dibdin strongly denied any such bias - 'It may be suspected, by the uncandid, that I am induced on this account alone to speak well of that truly spirited place. Those, however, who think liberally.....will see - as I have everywhere been just - that I give to Liverpool....only its due'.<sup>28</sup>

In the space of four performances in the town, Dibdin increased his audience from an initial thirty five to 'the very best room I have experienced at one place, since I first began my rambles'. His pointed tribute to the merchant community suggests that the audience was drawn largely from their ranks - 'Merchants, though expert at every qualification for the accumulation of profit, are in their minds like their traffic, extensive and expanded.....I look upon merchants to be the first of characters, and an English one to be the first of merchants'.<sup>29</sup>

The contrast between his Liverpool reception and the one he was next to be given in Manchester, ensured that for Dibdin, any comparison between the two towns and their inhabitants was to be greatly to Manchester's disadvantage. Although Dibdin laid much of the blame for the low attendances at his Manchester concerts on poor publicity and the lack of supporting musicians, he

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Dibdin, *A Musical Tour by Mr Dibdin*, (Sheffield, 1788), Letter LXV11, p. 277.

<sup>28</sup>Dibdin, Letter LX, p.247.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid*, Letter XL1X, pp.201,202.

was at pains to point out, that even when these factors played no part, musical concerts were generally not well patronised in the town. He illustrated his argument by reference to the opening of a new organ in the town's concert hall, the week following his own performances - 'When the grand day came, they had not - after such an expense and so long a notice - two thirds of the number that usually attend a common concert in Liverpool.'<sup>30</sup> Drawing on his experiences, Dibdin claimed to distinguish definite cultural differences between the two towns, differences which he ascribed to the connection between a man's occupation and the formation of his character - in essence the superior influence of commerce over the manufacturing or retail trade, the genesis of the well-known Lancashire adage, 'Manchester men, Liverpool gentlemen'.<sup>31</sup>

The narrowness that characterises the people of Manchester, is not confined to their pleasures, it is evidently apparent in their trade. Considering them as a community, they are like an army of mercenaries. At their head are a few individuals of consequence, under whom all the rest are doomed to live in perpetual subordination .....the tradesman-like plodding routine of whose business is to pay weekly wages and settle short credits - there cannot be the same extension of ideas, the same necessity for a large scale of calculation, for a competent knowledge of the comparative interests of nations, for clear and well digested general intelligence, and all those other important mental qualities which make up the broad, comprehensive pursuits of a merchant.<sup>32</sup>

As a national figure in the musical world, it seems safe to assume that Dibdin's book would have carried some weight in enhancing Liverpool and the

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<sup>30</sup> Dibdin attended a concert in Liverpool on his second visit declaring, 'I heard two acts from the Messiah performed much more respectably than I could have conceived....which between seven and eight hundred persons also present can testify'. Letter LX.

<sup>31</sup> Dibdin's observations precede those of William Hazlitt, (see Introduction, p. ) giving an early example of commerce/Industrial stereotyping.

<sup>32</sup>Dibdin, Letter L11.

merchants' cultural image, at a time when the efforts of the town's leading literary and artistic figures were being greeted with singularly little enthusiasm.

War and the concomitant commercial distress of the early 1790s ensured that economic survival rather than investment in the arts was the prime consideration during this period. However, 1799, the year of the opening of the Athenaeum, also saw a revival of the musical festivals for those who preferred to demonstrate their cultural proclivities in a more sociable arena. The benefits accruing to the Liverpool charities from the Festivals (gross profits of £6000 were recorded in 1823, rising to £9000 in 1827)<sup>33</sup> brought the added bonus of public confirmation of their philanthropic impulses. Musical programmes still focused on Handel and Haydn but with the addition of Beethoven, Rossini, Weber and Mozart, with nationally and internationally recognised soloists invited to take part.<sup>34</sup>

The anxiety of the merchant élite to participate in these functions is evidenced by the demand for tickets for the opening night ball at the Wellington Rooms in 1827, with touts able to demand eight and even ten guineas per ticket on the day. The 1827 Festival included such diversions as an art exhibition at the Royal Institution and a balloon ascent from Brownlow Hill - one of the few

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<sup>33</sup>*History of the Liverpool Music Festival, October 1st. to the 5th inclusive, (Liverpool 1827).*

<sup>34</sup>The composer, conductor and one of the founders of the Philharmonic Society of London, Sir George Smart, conducted a number of the festivals, including, in 1836, a performance of Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, the first time it had been performed in the country. Soloists at the festivals included Madame Malibran, Madame Pasta and John Braham. 'Oratorios', in *Liverpool Pamphlets 1805-1861*, S.J.L., G.35.11.

events which could be enjoyed by 'the industrious as well as the fashionable population of the town'.<sup>35</sup>

The recent death of William Huskisson failed to deter the organisers from holding a Festival in 1830, which proved successful, despite the fact that the popularity of similar festivals in other towns was showing a downward trend.<sup>36</sup>

The desire for public display was clearly still important in Liverpool, with the town's *haut ton* again turning out in force. Arrivals at the opening-night ball were watched by an eager 'crowd which was attracted by the sight', with the interior of the Wellington Rooms said to present a 'brilliant and lovely appearance. Wherever the eye turned, it encountered a wilderness of beauty and fashion'.<sup>37</sup> The first concert was held at the Amphitheatre which had a seating capacity of just under 4000. Its general use was for circus and equestrian performances, and it was not regarded as a favourite resort of the wealthy - 'this public amusement, whatever gratification it may afford to the lower class of the community, can never prove a source of rational amusement to the enlightened'.<sup>38</sup> Its size, however, governed its choice and it underwent considerable refurbishment (including crimson cloth covered seats and red

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<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* Among the spectators at the balloon ascent were 200 children from the nearby workhouse. The report of the Festival stresses the neat and tidy appearance of the children, suggesting that the reason for their attendance might not have stemmed entirely from altruistic motives, but may well also have been a form of publicity exercise.

<sup>36</sup>That of Norwich and Nottingham did not realise within some thousands of pounds the sum obtained in 1827 and even at Worcester, the proceeds exhibit a diminution'. *Particulars of the Liverpool Musical Festival and Fancy Dress Ball, October 4th to the 8th inclusive.* (Liverpool, 1830,).

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>Troughton, p.235.

carpeting) before it was considered suitable for its new audiences, an expense, one assumes, that its owners were confident of recouping. The Festival reports appear to confirm their optimism:-

We did not think that an assemblage of so much fashion and beauty could have been seen out of the London Opera House ....The company..was extremely select and respectable - even in the gallery, we espied.. several families of note. We observed the seats a few months ago only countenanced by unwashed artificers, 'prentice sweeps, *et hoc genus nigrum*, now monopolised by the aristocrats of song; for it is admitted by judges, that to enjoy the perfection of music, you must hold a remote and elevated situation.

The pit of the hall was particularly crowded with ladies, 'dressed in all the tasteful finery of inventive fashion', and although it is their attention to *haut couture* which is always the central theme in Festival Reports, it seems possible that for some at least, the concerts provided them with a rare opportunity to publicly display their own cultural inclinations.<sup>39</sup> Given the lack of detailed lists of concert-goers, it is only possible to make generalisations about their social composition - i.e. wealthy, middle-class, fashionable - but the presence on occasion at the fancy dress balls of members of the Unitarian congregation (the Yates family, Henry Roscoe), does suggest that these occasions were successful in attracting a wide section of Liverpool's divided middle classes and

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<sup>39</sup>*Particulars...Liverpool Musical Festival, 1830.* The eldest daughter of the Unitarian merchant J.B. Yates records in her journal her attendance at the concerts of the 1833 Festival, where she heard the famous singer Madame Malibran. Margaret E.Arbutnot, *My Grandmother (Elizabeth Thompson)*, (Printed for private circulation, 1946), p.10. According to one contemporary observer, Liverpool's higher classes followed the current trend of over-concentration on music (which he saw as mere amusement) in the education of females, allowing only a superficial knowledge of more academic subjects. Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its commerce, statistics and institutions, with a history of the cotton trade*, (Liverpool, 1825), p.364.

of crossing religious and political boundaries.

Festivals were held again in 1833 and 1836, and local newspaper reports indicate that the 1836 Festival was as successful as its predecessors. Discussing the use of St.Peter's Church for the oratorios, a notice in the *Liverpool Mail* regretted the building's limited accommodation (1400) seats and reported that -'all the hotels and hundreds of private houses are full of visitors , and we believe that at no former period did Liverpool contain so many persons'.<sup>40</sup> However, it was to be the last until a lone revival in 1874, although the Liverpool Festival Choral Society, established under the patronage of the Festival Committee,<sup>41</sup> still continued to give concerts which were well received, a review of one reporting - 'The exertions of all concerned were received with immense applause from all parts of the spacious place of assembly, which was crowded beyond the expectations of the most sanguine'.<sup>42</sup> There is no definite evidence to explain the demise of the Festivals. However, the founding of the Philharmonic Society and the economic exigencies of the 1840s may both have been factors that served to convince the organisers to call a halt . By the late 1830s, too, Liverpool's merchants may have felt more secure in their status, with the need for such ostentatious cultural display no longer a primary consideration.

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted in Taylor, p.3.

<sup>41</sup> This was distinct from the Liverpool Choral Society, for whom St Anne's Church was the usual locale for performances. The Liverpool Festival Choral Society survived until 1860. For a list of musical societies in the town during this period, see appendix 7, p.266.

<sup>42</sup>Taylor,p.3.



Important as the role of the Musical Festivals was in helping to construct the town's musical and cultural identity, they were held relatively infrequently (triennially at most), and the regular choral and miscellaneous concerts, performances of oratorios in local churches, and visits from foreign opera companies were also major factors. In 1811, Italian operas were given for the first time at the Theatre Royal for three nights and as a result of their success, the opera company gave another performance at the end of the month.<sup>43</sup> The Liverpool élite were especially willing to turn out in force, when internationally recognised figures of the musical world visited the town, with the considerable expense incurred, only serving to make attendance at such occasions even more prestigious. Paganini twice visited Liverpool during his musical tours - in 1832, he played four times at the Theatre Royal and in 1834, he appeared twice at the Royal Amphitheatre:-

His fame had preceded him and though the price of admission was greater than at any other place outside London, his concerts were attended by all the beauty and fashion, not only of the town, but of the neighbourhood. Williamson Square was nightly crowded with equipages; and all who went to see him were enraptured.<sup>44</sup>

A visit by Franz Liszt in 1840 enjoyed similar popularity - 'Liszt was tremendously rec'd...the house was so full, many left directly Liszt had played his last piece'.<sup>45</sup> Amongst other well known artists was Jenny Lind who sang at the Theatre Royal in 1847 on the first of a number of visits to the town.

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<sup>43</sup>Broadbent, p.127.

<sup>44</sup>*Memoir of Signor Paganini, with Critical Remarks on the Performances (anon)*, (Liverpool 1832), quoted in Taylor p.7.

<sup>45</sup>*Victorian Swansdown: The Autobiography and Diaries of John Orlando Parry*, (London, 1870), quoted *ibid*, p.8

On 10th January, 1840, Liverpool emulated London with the formation of the town's longest surviving concert-giving organisation - the Philharmonic Society.<sup>46</sup> The older Festival Choral Society was apparently still flourishing, with a 100-strong chorus and sizeable orchestra, but 'possibly enlightened musical opinion in the town either found the singing or the playing - or even both - inadequate'.<sup>47</sup>

The new society developed from a group of musicians, who met in St Martin's Church under the direction of William Sudlow, an organist and a member of the firm of Sudlow Bros., sharebrokers. Concerts were initially held on the premises of a dancing academy, 'Mr Lassell's Saloon', in Great Richmond Street, but proved so successful that in 1843, the Society moved to the hall of the newly built Collegiate Institution in Shaw Street. The original basis of four quarterly concerts was quickly extended, with the formality of Grand Full Dress affairs, for which 'Metropolitan talent' was engaged, alternating with what were termed 'Undress' concerts, where local talent was mainly responsible for the performances. Here again, concerts were socially exclusive occasions. The privilege of entry into concerts was jealously guarded, with subscribers attempting to introduce unqualified residents or giving their tickets to strangers, being reminded that they were liable to be expelled for a breach of the Society's

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<sup>46</sup>The Philharmonic Society, London, had been founded in 1813, with the intention of imposing professional standards and autonomy and appealing to a middle-class audience. Initially restricting its audience to subscribers, in 1841, it took the important step of selling tickets to the general public. C.Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth century; A Social History*, (Oxford, 1985), p.59. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society can claim to be the fifth oldest surviving concert-giving organisation in Europe. Taylor, p.10.

<sup>47</sup>Taylor, p.10. The two societies appear to have maintained a reasonably amicable relationship, with a number of performing members in common, until the demise of the older society in 1860. *Ibid*, p.10.

rules.<sup>48</sup>

The Collegiate Hall did not provide an ideal venue for musical concerts. There was friction with the Collegiate authorities on several occasions, the acoustics of the hall were not of a good standard and demands for the seats to be cushioned suggest that in terms of comfort it fell well below the standards expected from its middle class musical patrons. Within four years of the Society's foundation, the possibility of a purpose built concert hall came under discussion, with the architect John Cunningham being asked to draw up a design 'in the horseshoe shape' for a concert-room capable of holding 1,500 persons. In fact, the final plan took a different form, being a long, high rectangular building with a flat coved roof. It had an audience capacity of 2,100 plus 250 in the orchestra. The seating was to be arranged as sixty five boxes, each seating six, and which could be purchased in perpetuity on payment of a lump sum, ranging from 80 to 110 guineas, nine hundred stalls, partly proprietary, gallery seats and a small area of standing room. All the boxes were sold by the 15th November, 1844. However, the sale of the less prestigious stalls was slower and to increase capital, members were encouraged to take up further shares by way of investment; they were to receive 5% interest so long as the seats remained unappropriated. The possession of a member's share

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<sup>48</sup>Admission to the reserved gallery and the body of the hall for the four full dress concerts, was £3 18s. 6d, for three tickets; £2 12s 6d. for two tickets and £1 11 6d. for one; to the upper gallery, the cost was £2, £1-10, and £1, respectively. These could be used by ladies, non-resident gentlemen and members of the subscriber's family resident in his house - rule 12 stating 'No gentleman resident within seven miles of Liverpool not being a subscriber, or a member in the family of the subscriber, shall be admitted to any concert given by this committee'. 'Rules of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, established 19th January, 1840', in *Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concerts*, L.R.O., H780 61 SUB.

carried with it the obligation to subscribe to the concerts, although the shares could be transferred on payment of a registration fee or a fine for surrender to the Society. The economic stresses of the 1840s appear to have had their effect, the annual report recording that 'Too many members of the Philharmonic Society have hitherto abstained from taking that pecuniary interest in the project which the Committee expected'. By July 1846, the Building Committee resolved that sufficient money had still not been raised to allow the building work to begin. However, they were overruled by the general committee, who remarking on the 'rapid increase in the population of Liverpool', determined that they would go ahead as planned. They also decided to convert the entire floor of the hall into proprietary stalls and as soon as 250 stalls had been sold building work was to begin.<sup>49</sup> The committee again adhered to national musical taste in asking Mendelssohn to superintend the opening concert.<sup>50</sup> He agreed and planned to compose a new cantata for the occasion, based on Milton's *Comus*, an event which was unfortunately forestalled by his death in 1847.<sup>51</sup>

In April 1849, the proprietors met to decide on the details of the opening ceremonies and to appoint the stewards. In contrast to the Liverpool Musical Festivals, the stewards included only one representative of the landed aristocracy - the Earl of Sefton, with the names of long established members of the merchant elite, Rathbone, Yates, Gladstone, Earle, listed alongside the

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<sup>49</sup>A.K.Holland, 'Historical Essay', in *The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society 125th Anniversary Programme, Friday, 25th March 1965*, (Liverpool, 1965), p.18.

<sup>50</sup>Devotion to Mendelssohn was peculiarly characteristic of the Victorians. E.J.Dent, p.254.

<sup>51</sup>*Liverpool Pamphlets, Oratorios*,(36).

names of newer members of the town's middle classes, such as the builders, Samuel and James Holme, suggesting that music was more successful than other forms of associational culture in facilitating the inter-mixing of merchants and tradesmen and encouraging a spirit of co-operation between them.<sup>52</sup> On August 27 1849, the hall opened with a four-day festival<sup>53</sup> culminating in a Grand Fancy Dress Ball, establishing from the outset the reputation of the Philharmonic Hall as a bastion of middle class social and cultural values in the town.<sup>54</sup>

The Philharmonic Society segregated its audience rigidly, allowing public access solely to the gallery, much of it standing. The overriding tone of exclusiveness is revealed by a rule, frequently reiterated in programmes, which remained in force until 1909:-

No gentleman above twenty-one years of age residing or carrying on business in Liverpool or within ten miles thereof, and not being an Officer of the Army or Navy, or Minister of Religion, is admissible to the Boxes or Stalls at the Philharmonic Society's concerts unless he be a Proprietor, or member of the family residing at the house of a Proprietor, or has his name upon the list of Gentlemen having the *Entrée* exhibited in the Corridors.<sup>55</sup>

Full dress was insisted on in the stalls and boxes. This rule was dispensed with in the galleries although it was 'respectfully requested' that cloaks and shawls

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<sup>52</sup>*Ibid*, (49).

<sup>53</sup>At the opening festival 75 Of the 96 instrumentalists were Londoners, mostly from Covent Garden and Her Majesty's Theatre. Some were induced to settle. At the opening concerts works of Handel, Mendelssohn and Rossini were performed. Ehrlich, p.63.

<sup>54</sup>Concert life in Liverpool was apparently more constrained by class rigidities than that of Manchester, a circumstance ascribed by Ehrlich to the influence of Charles Hallé in Manchester. *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid*, p.63.

should not be hung over the front of the gallery and that gentlemen remove their hats during the concerts. These differing dress codes could only have served to further emphasise the social zoning within the hall.<sup>56</sup>

Complaints about persistent talking in the boxes during the music confirm that the concerts were regarded as social as much as cultural occasions:-

The institution discharges for Liverpool society the same function as Her Majesty's Theatre does for the *haut ton* of the metropolis. It is here that friends meet and the newest fashions are displayed. It is here that the small talk, persiflage and gossip of what is called 'good society', pervade the air and circulate their agreeable flavour.<sup>57</sup>

The hall was acclaimed a great success, admired both for the excellence of its acoustics and the elegance of its interior. Richter was later to describe it the finest concert-room in Europe. However, it had left the Philharmonic Society with heavy debts, including a mortgage of £10,000 on the land and buildings and in 1852 the committee under the chairmanship of Hardman Earle, made an appeal for financial support:-

A single bad season whether arising from commercial distress or from any of those causes which periodically affect the prosperity of all communities would plunge the Society deeper into debt, till Liverpool may have the mortification to witness the sad spectacle of one of her institutions, established for the cultivation of an elegant and refined science and combining among its members a great portion of the wealth, intelligence and respectability of the town, languishing...and then expiring.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Holland, p.19.

<sup>57</sup>J.A.Picton, 2, p.252.

<sup>58</sup>*ibid.*

The success of his appeal - the entire mortgage had been paid off by 1858 - and the response of the middle classes underlines how quickly they had made the hall and its music their own - a tradition that was to endure well into the twentieth century.

By the mid-nineteenth century involvement in and attendance at musical functions would appear to have proved a more socially cohesive cultural medium - albeit inside the bounds of the town's middle classes - than the learned societies. The success of the Musical Festivals, the willingness of the merchant elite to pay for prestigious performers and the wide acclaim given to the Philharmonic Hall had all helped to enhance both the town's and their own cultural image. Even James Picton, not normally an admirer of the cultural pretensions of the Liverpool merchants, was convinced that 'the love of music has always prevailed amongst us'.<sup>59</sup> He would have been surprised to learn that when this 'love of music' finally earned Liverpool a worldwide reputation in the second half of the twentieth century, it was the result of the achievements of the working classes.<sup>60</sup>

The theatre, like the musical concerts and festivals offered a potential arena for Liverpool and its merchants to enhance their image and attract visitors to the

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<sup>59</sup>Picton, Vol.2, p.251.

<sup>60</sup>It could, of course, be argued that the working class musical achievement resulted from a prioritization of music in the provision of rational recreation for the working classes of the town. The second half of the century saw, for example, the introduction of working mens one shilling concerts and the Saturday evening concerts run by Father Nugent. Bertram B.Benas, 'Merseyside Orchestras: An introduction to the history of local instrumental music', *T.H.S.L.C.*, 95, (1944), p.103.

town. The readiness of the élite to invest in the building of the Theatre Royal in 1772, clearly showed their recognition of this opportunity - the prologue delivered on the opening night paying due homage to this example of the conjunction of commerce and culture.<sup>61</sup> However, whereas the control exercised by the musical societies allowed a more polite, organised entertainment, rowdiness and social antagonisms were to be much more prevalent in the theatre.

Liverpool showed little ambition to found a local theatrical tradition, but turned its eyes firmly towards the metropolis. It was the invariable custom at the Theatre Royal to have exclusively London performers, with the theatre only being open during the summer months when the two London patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden were closed.<sup>62</sup> Efforts in 1778 to float a non-metropolitan, provincial company were doomed to disastrous failure. The absence of star names promoted no local patriotism in the Liverpool theatre-goers and when the company opened in June of that year, the auditorium walls were covered in graffiti and a riot prevented the performance.<sup>63</sup> The actress, Mrs Sarah Siddons was forced out of the town, but once she had established her reputation on the London stage her reception was markedly different:-

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<sup>61</sup>See Chapter 1. p.25. The earliest playbill for the Theatre Royal, discovered by Broadbent was for June 4th, 1773, and indicates the importance of music in these early performances - *The Beggar's Opera*, was followed by a country dance, a hornpipe and a farce, *The Contrivances*. Broadbent, p.61.

<sup>62</sup>This arrangement was at first a source of considerable financial gain to the management of the Royal, but afterwards proved to be both troublesome and expensive, in that the London theatres became uncertain in their periods of opening and the players sometimes failed to arrive in time for the Liverpool season or had to leave with little notice. *Ibid*, p.57.

<sup>63</sup>Eric Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, (Newton Abbot, 1971), p.27.



So versatile is public opinion, that on her first reappearing here after having received the stamp of approbation from a London audience, they who had been so desirous to banish her the theatre, were now so eager to see her perform, that many injuries, both of body and dress, were sustained, so great was the pressure of the crowd to get into the playhouse.<sup>64</sup>

The plays of Shakespeare and tragedies vied with farces on the same bill, ensuring that any complaints about quality would not be accompanied by complaints about quantity.<sup>65</sup> There does, however, appear to have been a certain amount of local censorship exercised over the productions, emphasising the influence of the merchant community over this branch of the arts. The tragedy of *Oroonoko*,<sup>66</sup> for example, was banned from the local stage as reflecting adversely on the slave trade and commenting obliquely on the conduct of those Liverpool merchants who were engaged in it.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the Bold Street and Philharmonic Halls, admission to the theatre was governed only by cost<sup>68</sup> and disturbances on the part of the audience were, from its early days, a considerable source of anxiety to the managers. The behaviour of parts of the audience appears to have weakened attempts to ensure social zoning within the theatre. By 1799, the *Monthly Magazine* was

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<sup>64</sup>W.Moss, *The Liverpool Guide; including a sketch of the environs: with a map of the town*, (Liverpool, 1796), p.87.

<sup>65</sup>In 1776, a performance of *The Royal Martyr, or the Life and Death of Charles 1st*, was followed by a farce, *The Man of Quality*. In the interval the audience was entertained by Signor Rosignoll's bird imitations. In 1777, *Richard 111* was followed by the comedy, *The Minor*. *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, November 22nd 1777; September 12th 1777.

<sup>66</sup>A play adapted for the stage from the novel by Aphra Behn, published in 1688. The novel is seen as remarkable in being an early protest against the slave trade.

<sup>67</sup>Broadbent, p.72.

<sup>68</sup>Boxes were 3s.6d.; the pit 2s.6d.; the gallery 1s..

reporting:-

More turbulent, indecent and tasteless audiences, than have been met with here, have seldom, I believe, assembled within the precincts of any theatre, amphitheatre, barn, booth, stable...the gallery is composed chiefly of drunken sailors and their doxies, who come to the playhouse, evidently and professedly, for no other purpose than to drink gin and crack nuts...the Pit, too, is often the scene of riot and confusion...In the upper front boxes..the *best* company is generally met with, because it consists of the *middle*-classes, but those seats are not very desirable, from their distance from the stage, and the noise in the house which usually confines the entertainment of that part of the audience to the mere pantomime of the play. In the lower boxes we have sometimes a display of elegance and fashion which is pleasing and interesting, yet the uncontrolled anarchy of the rest of the house, encourages the idle and noisy, even here, to indulge in equally offensive laughter and uproar.<sup>69</sup>

Social antagonisms were also sometimes in evidence. In 1797, for example, at a time when Liverpool's merchants were busy organising themselves to defend the town in case of a French invasion and spent much time practising gunnery skills at the fort, members of the gallery could not resist the opportunity of indulging their wit at the merchants' expense. During a performance of *Jane Shore*, starring Mrs.Siddons, two groups, one on each side of the gallery, kept up a cross-dialogue of ribaldry about 'charging guns with brown sugar and cocoa-nuts' and 'small arms with cinnamon-powder and nutmegs' from the beginning of the play until the end. Mrs Siddons seeing that it was useless to act went through the performance in dumb show.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>A particularly unpleasant habit was that of urinating from the gallery into the pit and boxes. Broadbent, pp.87, 101.

<sup>70</sup>Midwinter, p.27.

Despite having attracted leading theatrical figures<sup>71</sup> by 1799, the *Monthly Mirror* was reporting:-

The theatre is in a shameful condition...the coverings of the seats miserable, old and tattered; and the house is throughout so detestably dirty, neglected and forlorn, that the audiences are necessarily thinner than if they were accommodated in a tolerably decent manner.<sup>72</sup>

Plans to use the Theatre Royal as a venue for a ball during the Music Festival of 1799, were cancelled due to the poor state of the building and the ball was held instead at the Athenaeum. Inside thirty years, the Theatre Royal, financed by Liverpool's merchants as the flagship of the town's theatrical enterprise, appears to have become a byword for riotous behaviour and tawdry production.<sup>73</sup> The growing concern with the town's image at large, increasingly evident from the late 1790s, may well have been responsible for the proprietors' decision to close the theatre in 1802.

However, the importance attached to the presence of a good theatre in the town (as a status symbol even if not for regular attendance), was shown by the decision of the proprietors to remodel and enlarge the Theatre Royal and reopen under new management. The Town Council readily granted permission, unanimously resolving that 'such alteration will be of public convenience and

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<sup>71</sup>Charles Macklin, acclaimed as one of the greatest actors of his day, played a number of times in Liverpool, including his greatest role as Shylock in June, 1775. David Garrick was said to have performed in Liverpool in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*. No date is given but this must have been before Garrick's retirement in 1776. Broadbent,p.65.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid*, p.100.

<sup>73</sup>Midwinter, p.100.

ornament', and within six months the Theatre Royal was reopened. *The Monthly Mirror*, formerly its fiercest critic, now pronounced the theatre 'at once the most elegant, commodious, compact, and chastely proportioned building for the purpose of theatrical exhibition in the United Kingdom'. Prices were raised<sup>74</sup> during the summer months when London performers were available but the theatre was to remain open in the winter months at the old prices.<sup>75</sup> Attempts were made in 1810 to abandon the cheaper priced seats resulting in an outbreak of fighting and vandalism (every window in the theatre was broken and six rioters were arrested), doing little to aid the theatre's quest for respectability.

On June 6th, 1803, the theatre opened with the comedy *Speed the Plough*, the most popular play in Liverpool at that time, followed by a musical entitled *No Song, No Supper*. Again the programmes ranged through Shakespeare to farces, with Edmund Kean<sup>76</sup> playing a full series of Shakespeare at the theatre in 1815. Complaints about the state of the theatre and its productions resurfaced, however, in the columns of the *Liverpool Theatrical Investigator*, the first issue of which appeared in 1821. It criticised the lax social zoning within the hall, declaring that whereas in London 'every part of the house is distinguished by

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<sup>74</sup>Boxes, 4s 6d.; Upper boxes, 4s.; Pit, 3s.; Gallery, 1s 6d..

<sup>75</sup>The audiences were still said to 'have little opinion of any actor who has not played in London'. Quoted in Broadbent, p.114.

<sup>76</sup>Edmund Kean (1789-1833), an English actor, who was acclaimed for his role as Shylock, at Drury Lane in 1814. Villainous parts were said to suit him best, particularly Macbeth, Richard 111 and Iago. Other famous artistes playing at the Theatre Royal, included Ellen Tree, John Kemble and the crown Joe Grimaldi.

a particular class of visitants', in Liverpool 'there is scarcely a part of the house where a tradesman can take his wife and family' without being in close proximity to what were euphemistically designated 'the frail fair'.<sup>77</sup> Despite these criticisms, the theatre continued to attract star names and also to host performances of Italian opera. In 1829, although theatres were in a somewhat demoralised state all over the country, it was claimed that 'no star made any money except at Edinburgh, Liverpool and Dublin'.<sup>78</sup>

For many of Liverpool's élite it seems probable that the rarefied atmosphere of the concert hall or attendance at a musical festival would not be as likely to offend moral and religious scruples as the less socially exclusive and generally rowdy theatre.<sup>79</sup> However, when culture and philanthropy overlapped, the town's élite offered considerable support. Numerous benefits were held at the Theatre Royal, including in the post-war depression of 1816, a play performed by 'gentleman amateurs', for the benefit of the poor at which prices of admission were doubled,<sup>80</sup> and in 1847 an appearance by Charles Dickens in

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<sup>77</sup> The reference being to prostitutes. The Liverpool Theatrical Investigator for the year 1821, (Liverpool, 1821), vol.1, no.3, p.11. Plays were often changed daily, suggesting that they were probably under-rehearsed. In one week, in 1821, *Virginus, Damon and Pythias* (twice), *Wallace, Rob Roy, Fazio* and *Macbeth* were performed, the company being forced to 'whirl at breakneck speed from Shakespeare and Greek tragedy to Highland melodrama'. Midwinter, p.31.

<sup>78</sup>Broadbent, p.145.

<sup>79</sup>The ambivalent attitude of Liverpool's middle classes towards the theatre is exemplified by Thomas Troughton in 1810, who declared - 'Theatrical exhibitions are, doubtless, extremely attractive, and afford a high gratification to curiosity, but their general tendency is certainly immoral. Troughton, p.202. In 1825, in relation to theatrical entertainments, Smithers declared 'a large proportion of the population, from religious or moral principle, decline to give them encouragement'. Smithers, p.374.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid*, p.375.

a production of *Every Man in His Humour*, which raised £480. Following the performance, the Unitarian merchant, Richard Vaughan Yates gave 'a brilliant soirée ...to a large and fashionable assemblage at his residence in the Dingle'.<sup>81</sup> A number of merchants also took a part in organising the Liverpool and Manchester Theatrical Fund for elderly or infirm actors. At its inaugural meeting in 1818, the Mayor (and merchant) Thomas Case was present and by 1819 patrons included the Right Hon. George Canning and Thomas Earle.<sup>82</sup>

Although of the performing arts it appears to have been music rather than the theatre which played the major role in the creation and consolidation of the élite, it was Liverpool which was arguably responsible for what has been described as an 'epoch-making' event in the history of modern-day drama.<sup>83</sup> The years 1842-43 saw the Theatre Royal embroiled in a bitter dispute with the Liver Theatre, the manager of which insisted on offering legitimate presentations which infringed the patent of the Theatre Royal and resulted in a heavy fine. The Liver then applied to parliament to be a second patent theatre in Liverpool, gaining the support of the Corporation (suggesting that it saw the extension of drama as important to the town) and a petition signed by 11,000. The patent was refused but the affair prompted 'The Act for Regulating Theatres' in 1843 (the Liver being the first to be regulated under the new act) with a consequent

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<sup>81</sup>Broadbent, pp.162-3.

<sup>82</sup>The fund was still known to be in existence in 1831. *Ibid*, pp.80-81.

<sup>83</sup>Alladyce Nicoll, 'The Theatre', in G.M.Young (ed.), 2, p268. By this Act, the monopoly in 'legitimate' drama (five act tragedy and comedy without the introduction of music) was revoked and all theatres placed equally under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain.

growth in the number of theatres throughout the country and opening up new paths for those interested in dramatic entertainment.<sup>84</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth-century music and to a lesser extent the theatre can be said to have played a part in helping to forge a coherent class identity amongst the town's wealthier citizens, particularly when they allowed an overlap of culture and philanthropy, but neither succeeded in establishing a distinctly Liverpool tradition.<sup>85</sup> In both spheres this was later to be essentially the creation of the working classes. Ironically, however, it can be argued that Liverpool's most famous contribution to music (in the form of the Merseybeat in the 1960s), can essentially be characterised as cultural borrowing from the music of the descendants of the African slaves transported to the United States by the merchants of Liverpool!

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<sup>84</sup>Broadbent, p.151. Nicoll, p.268.

<sup>85</sup>In the first editions of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Liverpool is not given an article to itself, but is considered under the heading 'Liverpool Musical Festivals', at a date some 16 years after the last one in 1874 (and this the first since 1836), and half a century after the founding of the Philharmonic Society. Manchester, by contrast, has an article to itself, underlining the importance of the influence of Charles Hallé on its musical history. Benas, p.96.

## Conclusion

*The town of Liverpool, rich in the fruits of its commercial enterprise, has not neglected to furnish its citizens with that useful mental training which endures when worldly comforts fail, or when the luxuries of life fail to give enjoyment. Not only its treasures of knowledge but the buildings also in which they are enshrined, afford objects of wonder and admiration.<sup>1</sup>*

Although Liverpool's growing ambition and competitiveness with the metropolis in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was to some extent reflective of the national scene,<sup>2</sup> its phenomenal economic rise ensured it a hegemonic place in this movement. From the 1790s there appears to have been clear acknowledgement by the town's merchant élite of a need for Liverpool to transform its image if it was to sustain a bid for recognition as the nation's second metropolis. A number of contemporary observations<sup>3</sup> would suggest that, whether wholly deserved or not, by mid-century Liverpool's cultural reputation had undergone a considerable redefinition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Baines, *Lancashire and Cheshire; Past and Present: a history and a description of the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Cheshire forming the north-western division of England from the earliest ages to the present time*, 2vols. (Liverpool, 1868), 2, p.35.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Read, *The English Provinces; a study in influence, c.1760-1960*, (London, 1964); P.J.Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*, (O.U.P., 1982).

<sup>3</sup>See for example the analysis of J.W.Hudson quoted in Chapter 1, p.39.

<sup>4</sup>By 1820 although the *Monthly Magazine* questioned the veracity of Liverpool's improving intellectual profile, it nevertheless confirmed its general recognition by outsiders - 'In the opinion of strangers, Liverpool has acquired a character for literary pre-eminence which, on a more strict enquiry, would probably be found to rest on no very solid pretensions'. *Monthly Magazine*, December 1st 1820, 'Liverpool- its Institutions, and Society', *Holt and Gregson Papers*, 942/HOL/5)



Motivation for a cultural redefinition, it has been suggested came not only from its economic rise, but also from the changing national ideology in relation to the slave trade which was becoming apparent from the late 1780s. Liverpool now found itself becoming increasingly isolated, facing a threat not only to its economic base but also to its cultural identity. The depth of commitment shown by the merchant élite to redefining the image both of themselves and the town is clearly evidenced by their willingness to allow William Roscoe to direct the course of Liverpool's intellectual life.

Roscoe was a Radical, a Dissenter and a committed abolitionist in a town whose leading merchants were firmly attached to High Toryism, the principles of the Established Church and the slave trade, thus placing him securely on the town's social margins. Yet the élite accepted that Roscoe, with his national and international reputation as historian and litterateur was the most logical choice as their cultural icon and offered enthusiastic support when the first of Liverpool long-lasting cultural institutions, the Liverpool Athenæum was established in 1797. This support was mirrored in the attitude of the Town Council which was prepared to offer considerable assistance to projects it deemed likely to bring lustre to the name of Liverpool. Its response to projects which it considered did not meet this criteria, for example the Mechanics' Institution, was to be decidedly less amenable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Critics saw little difference after the local governments changes in 1835. Edwin Chadwick castigated Liverpool in the 1840s for spending over £100,000 on St George's Hall, while the poor of the town lived in conditions of acute distress. This sum he claimed would have cleansed half of Liverpool's street in perpetuity. Quoted in P.J.Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A political and social history of Liverpool 1868-1939*.

Roscoe's belief that commerce and the arts were natural partners further ensured his place at the apex of Liverpool's cultural life. His historical writings allowed Liverpool and its merchants to celebrate their commercial associations rather than turn their backs on them, as has been suggested occurred in some industrial towns.<sup>6</sup> By allowing the merchants to identify with the princes of Renaissance Florence, Roscoe had ensured not only his position as cultural leader but also a permanent place in the pantheon of Liverpool's greats. For Roscoe, however, diffusion of the arts among his fellow-citizens was essentially a moral quest and he was seemingly blind to the fact that many of his fellow-citizens did not share his view.

The institutions and societies that Roscoe did so much to create have been shown to have played an important part in helping to ameliorate divisions amongst the upper ranks of Liverpool society by forging a sense of common identity and purpose amongst them. In so doing, however, they also helped sharpen divisions between the wealthier members of the town and their less fortunate fellow-citizens. Liverpool's élite appear to have recognised that cultural forms and practices were a key factor in determining and reinforcing their social status in the town.

The late 1840s have been represented as a turning point in Liverpool's cultural life. The older societies seemed unable to adapt to the rising number of

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<sup>6</sup>Robert Morris, *Class, Sect and Party; The making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850*, (Manchester, 1990), p.229.

aspirants to middle class status, and the challenge from the growing demand for more specialised organisations. The age of the generalised approach to the arts advocated by the Roscoe circle and adopted by the merchant élite had now drawn to its close. The failure of the efforts in the early 1850s to forge a union of Learned societies and to make the Royal Institution the central focus of municipal provision were to be its death knell.

However, by mid-century, it can be argued, Liverpool's merchant elite saw itself as legitimated and secure. The need to invest in communal cultural provision to reinforce their status was no longer regarded as a priority. In the second half of the century, while some withdrew from involvement in Liverpool's cultural life, others now recognised it as a means reinforcing individual rather than communal identity.<sup>7</sup>

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that in seeking to regenerate the city and change its image in the 1990s, the modern city fathers have endeavoured to utilise Liverpool's rich architectural legacy, have instigated art festivals and have attempted to win city of learning and city of architecture status. In this sense we are witnessing a return to the cultural values and the value placed on culture by the founding merchant élite.

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<sup>7</sup>B.G.Orchard criticised what he considered gifts inspired by desire for personal aggrandizement rather than by concern for the intellectual life of the town He informed his readers that when Sir William Brown gave the Brown Library, the prospect of a baronetcy rather than any native generosity had been the inspiration for his gift. Sir Andrew Barclay Brewer, the brewer and distiller who provided Liverpool with the Walker Art Gallery was given a similar treatment. Orchard intimated that he too had recognised a valuable route to social and political advancement. B.G.Orchard, *Liverpool's Legion of Honour*, (Birkenhead, 1893), pp. 213; 689.

Appendix 1.

**The Athenaeum, Liverpool; Presidents 1798-1850**

1798	George Case
1801	James Currie, M.D.
1802	Thomas Earle
1803	William Roscoe
1804	John Rutter, M.D.
1805	John Bostock, M.D.
1806	George Case
1807	William Lawson
1808	Rev.Theophilus Houlbrooke
1811	The Ven.Archdeacon Brooks
1812	Rev.Theophilus Houlbrooke
1814	The Ven.Archdeacon Brooks
1816	John Rutter, M.D.
1817	The Ven.Archdeacon Brooks
1820	Fletcher Raincock
1821	The Ven.Archdeacon Brooks
1822	George Rowe
1823	Thomas S.Traill, M.D.
1825	John Baines
1826	Henry Lawrence
1827	William Wallace Currie
1828	Rev.Augustus Campbell
1830	Henry Lawrence
1831	Charles Turner (resigned); James Crosbie
1833	Henry Ashton
1834	Francis Heywood
1835	Rev.John Monk

## The Athenaeum - Presidents (*continued*)

1836	Major Joseph Brooks
1837	Henry Lawrence
1838	Jacob Fletcher
1839	Sir John Salusbury
1840	Ven. Archdeacon Brooks
1841	Robert L. Carr
1842	John H. Turner
1843	Ed. Guy Deane
1844	Peter Wright
1845	John Fletcher
1846	R.W. Holme
1847	Samuel Holme
1848	Colin Campbell
1849	Ven. Archdeacon Brooks
1850	Richard Harrison (died during year of office)
1850	John Cropper

## The Liverpool Royal Institution; Chairmen and Presidents, 1814-1850

	<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Deputy Chairman</u>
1814-21	William Roscoe	John Gladstone

### Presidents

1822	William Roscoe
1823-25	Benjamin A. Heywood
1826-28	Dr. Thomas S. Traill
1829-30	John Langton
1831	Charles Turner, M.A.
1832-34	Rev. J. Brooks
1835-37	Joseph N. Walker
1838	Henry Ashton
1839	James Aspinall
1840	Wm. Reynolds, M.D.
1841	Sir J.S.P. Salusbury
1842	Joseph B. Yates
1843	George Freckleton. M.D.
1844	Rev. A. Campbell. M.A.
1845	Samuel Turner, F.R.S.
1846	George Green
1847-48	Rev. T. Raffles, D.D., LL.D.
1849-51	Theodore W. Rathbone

## The Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society - Presidents, 1812-1849

1812	Rev. Theophilus Houlbrooke
1817	William Roscoe
1831	Dr. Thomas S. Traill
1833	Joseph Brooks Yates
1839	Rev. James Martineau
1840	Re. Thomas Tattershall
1843	Joseph Brooks Yates
1846	Rev. James Booth
1849	Joseph Dickinson M.D.

## The Liverpool Philomathic Society - Presidents 1825-50

1825	Robert McAdam
1826	William Hurry
1827	John Eason
1828	David Lamb
1829	W.A.Brown
1830	R.B.Dowling
1831	Joseph Lacon
1832	R.A.Payne
1833	John Eden
1834	G.T.Duncan M.D.
1835/6	W.J.Tomlinson
1837	Edward Heath
1838	Swinton Boulton
1839	John Sorley
1840	J.Dickinson M.D.
1841	F.T.Grayling
1842	T.Eden M.R.C.S.
1843	F.H.Rankin
1844	John Aikin
1845	C.E.Rawlins
1846	Charles Tinling
1847	Fred.Pennington
1848	J.A.Picton
1849	A.Baruchson
1850	Richard Fry



### **The Liverpool Polytechnic Society; Presidents, 1838-1849**

1838	Henry Booth
1839	Henry Booth
1840	John Grantham
1841	John Grantham
1842	John Grantham
1843	John Grantham
1844	Edward Woods
1845	Edward Woods
1846	Henry Dawson
1847	William Bennet
1848	William Milner
1849	William Milner

The Liverpool Mechanics' Institution; Presidents, 1825-50

1825/26	The Rt.Hon. Wm.Huskisson M.P.
1827	Dr.Thomas Stewart Traill
1828/9	John Gladstone
1830	Alderman Thomas Case
1831/32	Samuel Hope
1833	Richard Vaughan Yates
1834/5	Lawrence Heyworth
1836/7	Wm.Wallace Currie
1838	James Mulleneux
1839	Joshua Walmsley
1840	John Leyland
1841	James Muspratt
1842	George Holt
1843	William Fawcett
1844	Thomas Blackburn
1845	Henry Booth
1846	William Brown
1847	Walter F.McGregor
1848	James Ryley
1849	George Holt
1850	Thomas Blackburn

DETAILED  
**Plan of the Liverpool Institution,**  
AS DETERMINED UPON BY THE COMMITTEE.

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THE  
OBJECT OF THE INSTITUTION,  
AS PREVIOUSLY DEFINED BY A GENERAL MEETING OF PROPRIETORS,  
IS THE PROMOTION OF  
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS.

**This is Proposed to be Accomplished,—**

- I.—*By Academical Schools.*
- II.—*By Public Lectures.*
- III.—*By the Encouragement of Societies who may unite for similar Objects.*
- IV.—*By Collections of Books, Specimens of Art, Natural History, &c.*
- V.—*By providing a Laboratory and Philosophical Apparatus.*
- VI.—*By Association of the Proprietors.*

I. SCHOOLS.

They will consist of Three Departments:—1. LITERARY; comprehending the Ancient and Modern Languages, with a particular attention to English Grammar and Composition.—2. SCIENTIFIC; including Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Mechanics, Navigation, and the other Branches of the Mathematics.—3. A SCHOOL OF DESIGN, for Instruction in Drawing, as subservient to Professions, Mechanical Employments, or the Study of the fine Arts.

The Masters will be appointed by the Committee of the Institution.

The Schools are intended to supply the higher advantages of Education, as preparatory either to entering at a University or engaging in Business, to such Pupils as have already made some proficiency at an elementary School: the Pupils therefore will not be admitted under the age of Twelve Years, nor without a previous Examina-

tion as to their Attainments. The proficiency to be required, as the condition of admission into each School, will be defined and made public; and no Pupil shall be examined as to any other qualification.

The Number of Pupils shall be limited; and the Proprietors, individually, shall have a Priority of Nomination for each Share, subject to future Regulations. Other Pupils to be admitted by Priority of Application, provided they appear duly qualified when examined.

The Pupils will be required to pay a reasonable Sum for Instruction, except in cases which may hereafter be defined.

At Midsummer and at Christmas, in each year, the Pupils shall be examined in the Lecture Room of the Institution, in the presence of the Committee and of any others of the Proprietors who may choose to attend, as to the Progress they have made during the preceding Half-year; and cases of extraordinary Merit shall be rewarded by Prizes.

The general discipline of each School shall be conducted by means of a System of Rewards and Punishments, under the superintendence and at the discretion of the Master; with the exception of Corporal Punishments, which are in no case to be inflicted; and of Expulsion, which shall not take place without the decision of the Committee.

## II. LECTURES.

The Committee will make Arrangements for the Delivery of Lectures on the following Subjects, and on such others as may from time to time be approved:—1. PHILOLOGY, or the Structure of Ancient and Modern Languages, chiefly with a view to the attainment of correctness and elegance in our own.—2. HISTORY, Ancient and Modern.—3. MORAL PHILOSOPHY and POLITICAL ECONOMY, the latter including COMMERCE.—4. CHEMISTRY, including its Application to the Arts.—5. NATURAL HISTORY, including GEOLOGY and MINERALOGY.—6. NATURAL PHILOSOPHY; the Astronomical Part to be explained with an Orrery, the Mechanical Branches to be illustrated by Models of the most approved Machinery.—7. BOTANY, HORTICULTURE, and AGRICULTURE.—8. ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, SURGERY, and MEDICINE.

The Lectures shall be open to the Public on such Terms as may be approved by the Committee.

## III. LITERARY SOCIETIES AND ACADEMIES OF ART.

The Institution proposes to provide suitable Accommodations for the LITERARY and PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY of Liverpool, and for such other Societies as may appear to the Committee calculated to promote the Objects of the Institution: also to provide an Exhibition Room for Pictures, and other Works of Art; and Rooms for the Practice of Drawing from Models or Figures, to be used by an Academy or Society of Painters, on such Terms as may be agreed on between the Institution and the Academy.

## IV. COLLECTIONS OF BOOKS, SPECIMENS OF NATURAL HISTORY, &c.

The Institution will gladly receive Donations of Books, or of Specimens in Natural History, Models of Inventions, &c., which will be carefully preserved, and the Names of the Donors inserted in the Records of the Institution.

V. BY PROVIDING A LABORATORY AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPARATUS.

A Laboratory shall be erected for Chemical Experiments, and a Philosophical Apparatus provided, to be used by the Lecturers, or others, as may be regulated by the Committee.

VI. BY ASSOCIATION OF THE PROPRIETORS.

It is proposed that a Public Room shall be open for the accommodation of the Proprietors, where they may assemble for the Communication of Literary and Philosophical Intelligence, at stated Hours to be hereafter fixed. This Room is intended to be supplied with the Periodical Works of the United Kingdom on Literary and Scientific Subjects, with the Literary Journals of Foreign Countries, and with such other Works of an occasional nature as the Committee may from time to time judge to be conducive to the objects of the Institution; but no Newspapers or Journals, unconnected with such objects, shall be admitted into the Public Room.

The Proprietors shall each be furnished with a Silver Ticket, the production of which shall obtain Free Admission to the Lectures, and to the Public Meetings and Exhibitions of the Literary Societies and Academies.

18th August, 1814.

Appendix 3.

**THE ROYAL INSTITUTION SCHOOL, LIVERPOOL:-** Selected list of scholars taken from the school roll, 1819-1829.

Source:- A. T. Brown, *Some account of The Royal Institution School, with a roll of masters and boys, 1819-1892, A.D.* (Liverpool, 1927); *Gore's Liverpool Directories*; *D.N.B.*

Entry	Name	Father	Classes	Afterwards
2/1819	Cyrus Morrall	Cyrus Morrall merchant (eldest son)	Classics	Brasenose Coll. Oxford. Incumbent St. Michael's, Liverpool 1833-56; Vicar North Leigh, Oxon, 1856- 61.
	Thos. Steuart Gladstone	Rbt. Gladstone merchant	Classics	Broker; J.P. Hon. Col. Liverpool Rifles Volunteer Brigade.
	Richard Appleton	William Appleton	Classics	?Trinity Coll. Cantab. Chaplain of Kirkdale Gaol, Liverpool.
	Hugh Matthie	?Hugh Matthie merchant	Classics	Pembroke Coll. Oxford. Rector of Worthenbury, Flint.
	Colin Campbell	Colin Campbell ? Broker	Classics	Trinity Coll. Cantab. Vicar of St. Thomas', Lancaster.
	John Laird <i>Anglican</i>	William Laird Shipbuilder	Classics	Shipbuilder. First M.P. for Birkenhead, 1861-74.
	Thos. B. Horsfall <i>Anglican</i>	Charles Horsfall Merchant	Classics	African merchant. Mayor of Liverpool 1847-8; M.P. for Liverpool 1853-68; J.P. Lancs 1849; President Liverpool Chamber of Commerce 1850. Founder with his brothers of Christ Church, Everton.
	W. Brownsword Chorley <i>Quaker</i>	John Chorley (d.1816) Lock manufacturer Nephew of Dr. Rutter	Classics	Author of <i>Lyre and Sword</i> , and <i>Handy Book of Social Intercourse</i> , 1862.
	John Rutter Chorley	As above	Classics	Sec. Grand Junction Railway; <i>Athenaeum</i> reviewer of foreign literature 1846-54; collector of Spanish plays; friend of Carlyle. See also D.N.B.

<b>Entry</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Afterwards</b>
	Henry Fothergill Chorley <i>Quaker</i>	as above	Classics	<i>Athenaeum</i> reviewer & Director of Musical Dept.; edited <i>Memorials of Mrs Hemans &amp; Miss Mitford's Letters</i> (2nd.series); Dramatist, novelist, friend of Mendelssohn. See <i>D.N.B.</i>
	George Orred	George Orred Attorney	Classics	Merton Coll. Oxford; Lord of the Manor of Tranmere.
2/1820	Joshua Lace	Joshua Lace First Pres. Liverpool Law Society.	Classics	Attorney
	Robert Horsfall <i>Anglican</i>	Charles Horsfall merchant	Classics	Stockbroker; J.P.Lancs; Founder of St.Margaret's Church, Princes Road and the attached orphanage. Joint founder Christ Church, Everton.
2/1820	John Ashton Case	Thos. Case merchant; Mayor 1817	Classics	Merchant
7/1820	John Tayleur <i>Unitarian</i>	Charles Tayleur merchant	Classics	
	Henry R.Sandbach <i>Anglican</i>	Samuel Sandbach West India merchant Mayor 1831	Classics	Glasgow University; merchant; J.P. Caernarvon; High Sheriff Caernarvon 1854.
2/1821	William Willink	Daniel Willink merchant; Dutch Consul, Liverpool	Classics	Sec. to Public Loans Dept. London; 1855 Vice Consul to the Netherlands.
7/1822	Thos.Halton (second son)	Rev.John Halton of Chester	Classics	Brasenose Coll. Oxford; Curate St.Peter's, Liverpool.
	John Orred	George Orred Attorney	Classics	Attorney
	Charles H.Horsfall	Charles Horsfall merchant	Classics	Merchant
	Robert Aspinall	Thos.Aspinall merchant, Kingston, Jamaica	Classics	Trinity College, Cantab. Capt. 2nd.Royal Lancs. Militia. J.P. Lancs, 1855.

<b>Entry</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Afterwards</b>
7/1823	John A. Tinne <i>Anglican</i>	Philip F. Tinne Govt. Sec. British Guiana; later Liverpool merchant	Classics	Merchant; Chairman Bank of Liverpool etc.; Pres. Liverpool Royal Institution 1854.
	Wm. Thos. Tinne	as above	Classics	Captain, 8th Hussars, 42nd. & 86th Foot.
2/1824	Richard B. Turner	Charles Turner merchant; Pres. Liverpool Royal Institution 1831	Classics	Bank of England Manager, Leeds; Barrister at Law.
7/1824	Wm. Gladstone	Rbt. Gladstone merchant	Classics	London merchant; One of H.M.'s Lieuts. for the City of London. Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.
	Studley Martin <i>Unitarian</i>	Thos. Martin	Classics	Sec. of Cotton Brokers Assoc. 1841-82; Joint Sec. Liverpool Cotton Assoc. 1882-87.
2/1825	Robt. Gladstone	Robt. Gladstone merchant	Classics	Manchester merchant
7/1825	Wm. Drinkwater	John Drinkwater merchant	Classics	St. John's Coll. Cantab.; Barrister at Law' first Deemster Isle of Man, 1877.
	Wm. R. Sandbach	Samuel Sandbach merchant	Classics: maths prize	merchant; J.P.
1/1826	Edgar Corrie	William Corrie broker	Classics	
	Thos. H. Lloyd 3rd. son	Llewellyn Lloyd broker	Classics History English	Brasenose Coll. Oxford; Fellow of All Souls; Rector of Hamerton, Hunts.
	George Hancox <i>Unitarian</i>	Joseph Hancox merchant	Classics Maths	
	Wellington Tobin	Thos. Tobin shipowner & merchant	Classics	Military service; died aged 25 yrs.
	Ed. Henry Roscoe	Edward Roscoe merchant and second son of William Roscoe	Classics	Attorney; of Newton House, Chester



Entry	Name	Father	Classics	Afterwards
7/1827	Adam S.Gladstone	Rbt.Gladstone merchant	Classics, Maths, History, English.	Liverpool merchant. Lt.Colonel Liverpool Volunteer Rifle Brigade.
	Murray Gladstone	as above	as above	Manchester merchant.
9/1827	John Morecroft	Thos. Morecroft	as above	Attorney
	Peter W.Brancker	P.W.Brancker merchant	as above & French	Jesus Coll. Oxford; Rector of Scruton, Yorks.
8/1828	James Dirom	Lieut.Col.Dirom	History, English	Rear-Admiral Royal Navy.
2/1829	Augustus Turner <i>Anglican</i>	Charles Turner, merchant; Pres. Liverpool Royal Institution, 1831.	Classics, History, Maths, English	Military service, Bengal Army, General, 1849.
	Montgomery Gladstone	Rbt.Gladstone merchant	Classics, maths	Manchester merchant.
	Henry Hamer	Henry Hamer gentleman	Classics	Queens Coll. Oxford; Rector of Pointington, Somerset.
	James (Joseph) Sylvester <i>Jewish</i>	Abraham Sylvester gentleman	Classics, Maths	St.John's Coll. Cantab.; mathematician; Author of <i>Nugae Mathematicae</i> , 1866; <i>Laws of Verse</i> , 1870; <i>Theory of Reciprocants</i> , 1885; Professor of Mathematics, Oxford; Pres. London Mathematical Society; See also <i>D.N.B.</i>

A.T.Brown found the register to be incomplete and often inexact. Many entries had no other details than a surname. These have been omitted from the above list. With many of the records destroyed in the bombing of 1941, precise analysis is difficult, however, the above table shows that throughout this period the school drew its pupils almost entirely from the sons of Liverpool's middle classes, in particular the commercial community. Despite the hopes of the founders, it does not appear to have attracted many pupils from a distance (apart from those whose fathers' interests were in the West Indies) - 4 pupils are listed from Kirkby, Bootle, Chester and Stockport. Out of the sons of 26 merchants/brokers, 14 followed their fathers into the business world; 5 entered the Church; 4, the armed forces; 3, the legal profession. Two pupils went on to enter parliament - Thomas H.Horsfall and William Laird.

#### Appendix 4.

#### Societies meeting in the Royal Institution by 1888.

##### Liverpool Amateur Photographic Association

Founded 1863; President - B.J.Sayce;  
Object:-The advancement of the art of photography  
Members - 144  
Subscription - 10s 6d. per annum; entrance fee - 10s 6d.

##### Liverpool Academy of Arts

Founded 1810; President- John Finnie;  
Object:- The promotion of the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, by the holding of exhibitions, and from time to time carrying on such undertakings as may seem desirable in the interests of art.  
Members - 28; associates - 12; hon.members - 5; retired members - 9.

##### Liverpool Architectural Society

Founded 1848; President - Edmund Kirkby;  
Object:- For the advancement of architecture and establishing respectability and uniformity of practice in the profession  
Members - 116  
Subscription - £1 1s per annum; Associates and students pay 10s 6d.

##### Liverpool Astronomical Society

Founded 1882; President - W.F.Denning, Esq. ;  
Object:- The study and Development of the Science of Astronomy.  
Members - 500  
Subscription - 5s. per annum; Entrance fee - 2s. 6d.

##### Liverpool Chemists Association

Founded 1849; President A.H.Samuels;  
Object:- The development of the Science and practice of chemistry especially Pharmacy  
Members - 113  
Subscription - members, 10s. per annum; associates - 5s. per annum.

##### Liverpool Engineering Society

Founded 1875: President - Chas.Hy.Darbshire;  
Object:- The promotion of the study of the theory and practice of Engineering  
Members - 136  
Subscription - For ordinary members residing within ten miles of Liverpool Exchange £1

1s. per annum; and half that sum for such members residing beyond that limit and students.

#### Liverpool Geological Society

Founded 1859; President - H.C.Beasley.

Object:- The Science of Geology

Members - 53

Subscription - £1 1s. per annum for resident members; 10s 5d for non-resident members.

#### Ladies Work Society

Founded - no date recorded but pre 1880; President - Mrs.Edward Banner

Object:- To assist gentlewomen in reduced circumstances to earn a livelihood.

#### Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society

Founded 1812; President - James Birchall;

Object - The study of Literature, Philosophy, Natural History, and the Fine Arts.

Members - 274

Subscription - £1 1s. per annum; Entrance fee - 10s.6d.

#### Ladies Educational Association

Founded 1866: President - Mrs.P.Reynolds Rathbone;

Object:- The better education of women

Subscription - £1 1s. for a course of ten lectures for private students; 10s 6d. for teachers and pupils from schools.

#### Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

Founded 1848; President - The Lord Bishop of Chester.

Object:- The study of the History of the Antiquities of Lancashire and Cheshire

Members - 220

Subscription - £1 1s. per annum for Resident Members; Non-Resident members - 10s 6d.

#### Liverpool Microscopical Society

Founded 1868; President - A.Norman Tate;

Object:- The encouragement of Microscopical Research.

Members - 162

Subscription - 10s 6d.; Entrance fee - 10s 6d.

### Naturalists Field Club

Founded 1862; President - Rev.H.H.Higgins;

Object:- The study of Natural History.

Members - 420

Subscription - 5s. per annum.

### Liverpool Philomathic Society

Founded 1825; President - William Oulton;

Object:- The increase of knowledge among its members

Members - 380

Subscription - £1 1s. for the first session and 10s 6d for each succeeding session.

### Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

This society held four preliminary examinations and a competitive examination for the Bell Scholarship during the year, in the Royal Institution.

### Liverpool Polytechnic Society

Founded 1838; President - J.C.White;

Object:- The development of the science of machine construction

Members - 188

Subscription - 11s. for Members, and 5s. for associates.

### Liverpool Science Students Association

Founded 1884; President - W.Narramore;

Object:- The study and development of natural and physical science.

Subscription - 5s. per annum

Entrance fee - 2s 6d.

### Liverpool Welsh National Society

Founded 1885; President - The Right Hon. Lord Mostyn;

Object:- The study and cultivation of the Welsh language and the protection of Welsh National interests and institutions.

Members - 206

Subscription - 10s 6d. per annum for gentlemen; 5s. per annum for ladies; one payment of £10 10s. for life members; Entrance fee - 10s 6d., no entrance fee for lady or country members.

Source:- *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Proprietors of the Liverpool Royal Institution held on February 10th, 1888.* (Liverpool, 1888).

Dates of foundation vary in later reports. Where these can be verified they have been amended accordingly in the above list.

Appendix 5.

**Comparison of Membership of Selected Literary and Philosophical Societies-1847**

**Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society**

President - Rev.J.Booth

Ordinary members	132
Corresponding members	63

**Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society**

President - Edward Holmes M.D.

Ordinary members	63
Honorary members	30
Corresponding members	20

**Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society**

President - Rev.William Sinclair

Ordinary members	104
Proprietors	55
Subscribers	56
Honorary members	33

**Bristol Philosophical and Literary Society**

Director - Rev.William Conybeare

Ordinary members	232
Honorary members	92
Associates	10

Source:-Rev.Abraham Hume, *The Learned Societies and Printing Clubs of the United Kingdom*, (London, 1847).

**Appendix 6 :**

**List prepared by the Council of the Liverpool Polytechnic Society, 'as calculated to suggest', desirable and suitable Subjects for future Communications.**

Abstract Report of Commissioners on Health of Towns, taking the subject separately, viz:- Drainage, Ventilation, the best modes of building houses for the poor, with the author's remarks and suggestions.

Aerial navigation.

Agricultural Implements.

Albert Docks, Description of the New.

Alloys of Metals (new) and their properties.

American Timber Bridges applicable to English Railways.

Application of Iron to Architectural purposes.

Artesian Wells.

Architecture, Most recent improvements in, with respect to Ventilation, Light, and Sound for public and private buildings.

Astronomical Instruments and Apparatus, Improvements in.

Atmospheric Railways and Exhaustors.

Atmospheric Railways, Various systems of; and comparison with those in common use.

Bell-Founding.

Boiler-Making, Improvements in.

Boring Operations.

Breakwaters, Portable or Fixed.

Broad and Narrow Gauge.

Buffers and Brakes.

Building Materials used in Liverpool, description, quality, prices of.

Carving machinery.

Chemical character of Building Materials.

Chemical Manufactures, Improvements in.

Chemistry, the modern application of to Agriculture.

Chronometers and Pendulums, Improvements in.

Chimneys.

Cleansing Streets, Best method of. Comparison of the work done by Scavengers and by Whitworth's Machine. Relative cost and superiority of the two systems.

Construction, Engraving and Architectural.

Colours, Improvements in Manufacturing.

Coals, Qualities of.

Coffee, East and West India.

Cocoa and Rice.

Cotton, The various sources and qualities of.

Dry Rot, Prevention of; various modes.

Daguerreotype.

Decorative Art, Novelties in.

Distillation, Improvements in.

Draining Implements.

Drainage of Land in Agriculture.

Electric Telegraph, Working of the.

Excavating Apparatus.

Expansive Steam, progress in, use of, and results.

Explosions of Steam etc., and their causes.

Failures of Bridges etc.

Fire-proof Construction.

Fire-places for warming apartments and preventing

smoke, most recent improvements in.

Fire, System in use for preventing, in Liverpool; Machinery for, etc.

Fossils.

Fountains.

Fresco, Painting and Limes.

Fuel, Artificial.

Fuel, Economy of, as a source of power in the Steam Engine in its various applications.

Furnaces for Consuming Smoke, and result in actual cases.

Gases.

Gas Meters.

Gas, Economy of; source of heat etc.

Gas Burners.

Geology, Local and General.

Glass and Porcelain.

Glass, Improvements in making.

Guage, Broad and Narrow, Relative value of.

Harbours, Improvements in.

Hempen and Wire Ropes, Relative advantages of; comparative cost, durability, safety, best means of protecting them from wear and decay.

Heat, method of procuring small, intense and uniform.

Heat, Improvements in Instruments for measuring minute quantities of.

Histories of Manufactures.

Hydraulic Machines, Improvements in.

India Rubber, New Application of.

Inventions, Processes, or Practices of Foreign Countries.

Iron, modes of giving an Incorrodible surface to.

Iron and other Metals, Manufacture.

Iron Steamers, Latest improvements in.

Iron Steamers, Construction of; instance the Birkenhead Frigate.

Iron Rope, Construction of; and description of the kinds hitherto used, with details of construction and cost.

Kilns, Improvements in.

Lenses, Improvements in, or use of, in lieu of Reflectors in Light-houses.

Lime and Plaster, Preparation of, for Fresco; and tools for laying it.

Locomotion.

Masonry.

Materials, Description of the nature of, used in this or any other town.

Machinery, New descriptions of.

Mechanical Combinations, Peculiar.

Metals, Manufacture of.

Mining.

Ores, Modes of Dressing and Improvements in.

Patents, Foreign.

Pile Driving, Account of expenses of; with a description of Naysmith's Steam Pile Driver, and results of its use.

Pottery and China Manufactures.

Railway Travelling, Improvements effected in, as respects speed, comfort, and safety.

Railway Telegraphs and Signals.

Repairs of Engineering and other large works.

Roads, Public Streets, and Footpaths, Materials used in Liverpool and neighbourhood for the foundation of; relative advantages of each kind;

relative cost, and cost of maintenance.

Screw Propellers, Description of most improved and latest results.

Scaffolding, History and Description of.

Sewerage of Liverpool or any other town, Description of.

Shingle Traps and Motion of Shingle on Beaches.

Ships, Forms of, for various purposes, and their qualities.

Slips on Railways, Accounts of, and causes.

Steel, Manufacture of, and Tempering.

Steam Engine, Prospective Improvements in; or in any other means of producing power, and in its more ready application to occasional purposes.

Statistics of Manufactures and Improvements.

Sugar, Manufacture of.

Taps and Dies.

Source: -*Transactions of the Liverpool Polytechnic Society 1844-1847*, (Liverpool, 1847), pp.5-6.



## Appendix 7.

### Liverpool Musical Societies (1790-1850)

#### Apollo Catch and Glee Club (1796)

The earliest records of the club date from 1802. The maximum number of members was originally 18 but this was later increased. Subscriptions were 10s 6d. and 1 guineas for performing and non-performing members respectively. The club survived until 1896.

#### Liverpool Musical Society c.1820

Choral. Headquarters in Russell Street. Leader Michael Haybrick. Its demise was c.1835.

#### Cecilian Society c.1820

Orchestral, leader John Jackson.

#### The Festival Choral Society (1836)

Came into being under the auspices of the Musical Festival and Survived until 1860.

#### Liverpool Philharmonic Society (1840)

See chapter 6.

#### Societa Armonica (1847)

Began in 1847 with Charles B. Herrman as conductor. Its playing or 'practical members met in a room at 11 Lime Street and their first concerts were given in the Royal Assembly Rooms in Great George Street. In 1853 the society moved to the hall of the Mechanics' Institution in Mount Street. Its strict dress code suggest its was aimed at the middle classes. In the 1890s it was described as a 'staid and very earnest group of socialites, shipping magnates and professional men and women'. In 1909 it was disbanded by its conductor Vasco Velloso Akeroyd in 1909, who formed the Akeroyd Orchestral Society.

Sources:- W.I.Argent, *The Philharmonic Jubilee; half a century of music in Liverpool*, reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury*, (Liverpool, 1889). *Records of the Apollo Catch and Glee Club*, 14 vols. L.R.O., 780 APO. Thomas Kelly, *Adult Education in Liverpool; A narrative of two hundred years* (Liverpool, 1960). Stainton B.de Taylor, *Two centuries of Music in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1976).

## Appendix 8.

### Some Liverpool Theatres and places of Dramatic Entertainment 1772-1850

#### The Theatre Royal (1772)

See chapter 6.

#### The Olympic Circus, (1805)<sup>1</sup>

The Christian Street circus was first opened in 1789. It opened in 1805 as the Olympic Circus with mainly equestrian performances. It remained until 1825, when the foundation of the building was rendered insecure by a rupture of the common sewer in the immediate neighbourhood. According to Troughton, in 1810, it was not noted 'as a place of genteel resort'. Rechristened the Queen's in 1831; the Victoria in 1843; the new Theatre Royal Adelphi in 1846.

#### The Royal Amphitheatre, (1826)

Opened in Great Charlotte Street as a result of the problems with the Olympic. Built by subscription. Still mainly equestrian based and capable of accommodating 3000-4000 spectators. Early in 1840 the establishment was known as Ducrow's Royal Amphitheatre of Arts. Towards the end of that year it was simply called the Royal Amphitheatre. Performances were given by there by Paganini and Jenny Lind. In 1880 the theatre was put up for auction and bought by Sir David Radcliffe for £20,000, The interior was gutted and the house rebuilt and renamed the Royal Court, which was burnt down in 1933 and rebuilt.

#### Liver Theatre (1829).

Circa 1820, a new building was opened in Church Street, 'The Dominion of Fancy', which was used for balls, parties, exhibitions etc. Converted into a theatre by John Scott and named the Pantheon Theatre, holding from 800-1000 people. Open from November to Easter. It was not confined to drama, Madame Tussaud exhibiting her waxworks there. In 1829-30, it was refurbished and renamed the Liver, becoming very popular and invoking opposition from the Theatre Royal. It survived until 1850.

#### Sans Pareil Theatre. (1826)

Originally opened in 1825 in Great Charlotte Street as the New Rotunda and converted into a theatre in 1826. Its patrons were drawn from the poorest classes. Redesigned in 1831, temporary accommodation used in the interim in Cook Street. New theatre opened in 1832, boxes 1s 6d.; pit 1s.; gallery 6d.. Closed in 1843.

### The Hop (1830)

Sometimes called the 'Penny Hop' situated at 140 Dale Street, almost facing Fontenoy Street. Opened as a Theatre of Arts with mechanical working models. Other entertainments consisted 'negro minstrelsy, legerdemain, marionette performances'. However in the mid-1840s a move was made to legitimate drama. It survived until 1860 'affording enjoyment to thousands at a cheap rate'.

### The Zoological Gardens Theatre, (c.1832)

Situated in West Derby Road in the Zoological gardens. Main performances were vaudeville and farces. Closed with the gardens in 1865.

### The Prince of Wales Theatre (1842)

Situated in Vauxhall Road. No details appear to have survived.

### The 'Penny' Hop (1840s)

Situated in Hood Street. The interior was simply a large room fitted with a stage and seats on an inclined plane. Plays were given twice or sometimes three times nightly. The patrons were of the lowest order and many were without shoes or stockings.

### The Royal Colosseum and Queen's Theatres

Opened in 1850 in what was formerly the Unitarian Paradise Street Chapel. When first opened the audience had to pass through the graveyard to enter. It changed hands and its name on a number of occasions. It closed down in 1904, was reconstructed and reopened as the Queen's Theatre, seating 2000 persons at popular prices.

## Some Liverpool Concert Halls 1786-1850

### The Music Hall, Bold Street (1786)

See chapter 6. It was demolished c.1836. In 1853, Hime's Music Hall was erected on the site, with seating for nearly 1000 persons and housing the Liverpool Festival Choral Society and other musical bodies. However, it was unable to withstand the competition of the Philharmonic Hall.

### The Portico Rooms (c.1840).

Situated in Newington, possibly on part of the site subsequently covered by the outer end of Central station. It was used for panoramic exhibitions, concerts and lectures and musical entertainments. In 1841 a series of concerts given by an orchestra of 24 players included the first performance in Liverpool of Beethoven's 7th Symphony. Price of admission 1s..In 1849, its name was changed to Stiles' bowling saloon and later the Liver Bowling Hall.

### Royal Assembly Rooms (1842)

Situated in Great George Street, this was first known as the Templar's Hall. In 1842 it was acquired and enlarged by Edmund Elliston, son of the licensee of London's Drury lane Theatre and reopened as the Royal Assembly Rooms, attracting notable artistes such as John Braham in 1844. In the same year Samuel Lover, the Irish novelist gave a series of readings. The Societa Armonica gave concerts here during its early years.

### The Nelson Assembly Rooms/Concert Hall

Situated in Lord Nelson Street. In 1840, John Finch, a local iron merchant and disciple of Robert Owen financed the erection of a 'Hall of Science' for socialists. Its main hall on the first floor could seat 2700 people and there was a range of subsidiary halls and lecture rooms at street level, suitable 'improving' activities for working people. Concerts and dramatic entertainments were a regular feature. In the first years of the twentieth-century it was sold to a tobacco firm.

### Clarence Hall

In 1840 concerts were organised in the Clarence Hall in Bond street, off Vauxhall Road. A preliminary advertisement described them as 'providing the working classes vocal enjoyment, away from the polluting atmosphere of the tap-room. Moral sentiments will be appealed to, and in proportion as the virtues of the mind are developed, the angry passions of human nature will be diminished'.

Sources:- *Manuscript Collections towards a History of Liverpool* by John G. Underhill 1828-1834. Thomas Troughton, *The History of Liverpool from the Earliest Authenticated Period down to the Present Time*, (Liverpool, c.1810). R.J.Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool Stage from the earliest period to the present time*, (Liverpool, 1908). S.de.Taylor, *Two Centuries of Music in Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1976).

## Appendix 9.

### Notes on some other Liverpool Institutions

#### The Collegiate Institution

The Collegiate Institution was originally established as a Church of England rival to the Mechanics' Institute, and had in itself, in its early years, some features of the Mechanics' Institute. It was founded in 1840 'for the General Instruction of all Classes, combining Scientific and Commercial, with sound Religious Knowledge'. The building in Shaw Street was opened in 1843, at which William Gladstone gave an address. At this time and for some years. the Institution ran a programme of lectures similar to that of the Mechanics' Institute, and it also had a library that amounted to 6,000 volumes. Admission to the lectures ranged from 6d. to 1s-6d. The Institution established three distinct day schools at different rates of charge, with separate apartments and divisions of the lecture hall so as to accommodate the three great classes of society without infringing on their prejudices and dignity. Lectures were delivered on two evenings a week. In addition there were evening classes similar to those run by the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution. Subscription for entry to these classes was one guinea and the evening classes met on four evenings a week from 7-9pm.

#### The Mechanics'and Apprentices Library

Established in July, 1823, mainly through the efforts of Egerton Smith, editor of the *Liverpool Mercury*. According to a circular issued in 1823, it was 'prompted by the example of New York, where an Apprentices Library had been established in 1820 - one of the few examples of American influence in English education. Its committee was chosen from the middle class donors and chief supporters of the Library. At a public meeting held in the town hall in January, 1824, to mark its inauguration, the librarian exhibited a banner sent by the apprentices of New York, which according to a contemporary description was adorned with a lion and an eagle, with a label bearing the name 'Roscoe', hanging from the eagles beak. By 1831 the number of books had risen to 3500, with 1000 readers. In 1829 it had premises in Pool Lane, (now South Castle Street) and by 1832 had moved to School Lane. It developed close links with the Brougham Institute.

#### Brougham Institute

Established in Lawton Street in 1836, provided a working class newsroom, with lectures, concerts, a discussion class etc. The annual subscription was 7s. Non-subscribers could use the facilities at a charge of 1d. for each admission. Average daily attendance at the newsroom was 100.

### The Northern Mechanics' Institute

This was founded in 1839 and for three years met at the North Corporation School in Bevington Bush. When permission to use the school was withdrawn, the Institution lapsed, but it was revived about 1840, in the Concert Hall in Lord Nelson Street, where it was last recorded in 1850. It had a small reference library and a newsroom, and arranged weekly lectures and Saturday evening concerts. It was said to have had in 1840, and again in 1850, some 500 members, but in fact there was no regular membership subscription. Those who used the Institution paid as they went: 1d for the newsroom, 1d-3d for the lectures, 3d-1s. for the concerts. This method, which was unusual in mechanics' institutes, but was very successful in attracting the poorer workers, was probably copied from the Brougham Institute and the Mechanics' and Apprentices Library. Prizes were offered by the committee for the best essays by working men 'On the Influence of cheap rational Amusement on the Working Classes'. The entry numbered 68 and the prizes were awarded by the Earl of Sefton in April, 1849.

### The Woolton Mechanics' Institute

The Woolton Mechanics' Institute began 'at a meeting held in Rev. Dr. Shepherd's schoolroom, December 10th, 1846', and lasted until 1928 when its funds were transferred to Liverpool University. Although it was founded at the Unitarian Chapel, it was non-denominational. However the Gateacre Chapel always took a keen interest in its well-being, and one of William Shepherd's last acts was the compilation of an address enlisting the support 'of the rich merchants living in the district for the proposed Mechanics' Institute'. A building was erected in 1848, the estimated cost was £500, of which £200 was promised by the Woolton mechanics and labourers. It was formally opened on January 5th, 1849, with the expressed aim being 'a cultural influence in the district at large, to encourage mutual improvement by offering a home to like-minded groups and to provide instruction, elementary and advanced, for boys and girls, men and women'. In its first year, lectures were given on Education, Physiology, Astronomy, History of Welsh Music and Phrenology. Admission charges ranged from 6d. for front seats to 3d. for back seats. A reading room and circulating library with around 600 books, a number of which were donated by the Roscoe Club, were provided. The Institution appears to have faltered between 1855-1862, when lectures were revived and continued until 1882. In 1888, the Unitarian Holbrook Gaskell financed a course of ten scientific lectures on *Botany and the Principles of Gardening*. In 1928 the Institute was finally wound up.

## Selected Biography

### **AIKIN JAMES (1792-1878)**

Born Dumfries, son of a solicitor, educated Dumfries High School. Entered office of John Richardson, merchant in Liverpool 1806; became West India merchant about 1810 and later was shipowner and broker. Elected a town councillor (Liberal) in 1835/36 and was treasurer Chamber of Commerce 1856/7. One of founders of Sailors' Home and the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society. Anglican. A founder member of the Liverpool Philomathic Society, Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Liverpool Royal Institution, member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society,

### **ASHTON, NICHOLAS (1742-1833)**

Son of John Ashton of Ashton who settled in Liverpool c. 1746, buying the salt works at Dungeon on the River Mersey, Bailiff 1749. One of principal promoters of the Sankey Navigation. Nicholas Ashton entered the salt business with his father, taking it over on his father's death in 1759. Owned the salt works at Dungeon on the Mersey. Although the salt trade remained his principal interest, he later branched out into other trades. Treasurer of the Infirmary 1769. J.P.. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

### **BAKER, PETER (? -1796)**

Shipbuilder and African Merchant in partnership with Mr John Dawson. Served an apprenticeship as a joiner in the neighbourhood of Garston. Came to Liverpool, worked as a carpenter, eventually becoming a master. Became freeman in 1761, listed as a shipwright. Went into partnership with his brother-in-law John Dawson as shipbuilders. Their ship the *Mentor* successfully attacked a French vessel, which was returning from India with a cargo of gold and diamonds reputedly worth £400,000. Set up as African merchant, but also continued shipbuilding business. Baker withdrew from shipbuilding in 1781 and from slaving in 1788. Bailiff 1785, Mayor, 1795.

### **BANNER, HARMOOD (1783-1865)**

Family came to Liverpool from Frodsham in 1700. Educated at a school kept by Bailie Arkle near the Adelphi Hotel, then the grammar school at Winwick. Aged 15 entered a clerkship at Somerset House. Returned to Liverpool and commenced business on his own account - in partnership with his brother-in-law under the firm of Banner & Billinge, porter dealers, 8 Lower Castle Street. Commenced business as an accountant in 1814. Residence Dingle Head. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

### **BENSON, ROBERT**

In business as a wholesale grocer in Kendal. In 1781 he married Sarah Rathbone, sister of the William Rathbone 1V, who invited him to join his firm,

which then became Rathbone and Benson. Treasurer of American Chamber of Commerce 1808-1817, President in 1821. His son, also Robert Benson, merchant of Duke Street, was a Proprietor of Royal Institution and a founder member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**BINNS, JONATHAN MD. (1747-1818)**

Born in Liverpool. Apprenticed to his uncle, a surgeon and apothecary at Settle, and then took his degree at Edinburgh in 1772. Returned to Liverpool to practise his profession. Moved first to Hanover Street and then built a house in Bold Street. For many years senior physician to the Liverpool Dispensary. Left Liverpool in 1795. Quaker. Member of the early Philosophical and Literary Society of Liverpool, and President in 1783, when the society was wound up.

**BINNS THOMAS (1771-1842)**

Born in Liverpool. Educated at Joseph Tatham's Academy in Leeds. Entered the family business as a leather merchant. Chairman of the Underwriters' Association. Treasurer to the Infirmary. Collector of maps, plates and portraits. Quaker. Founder member of Literary and Philosophical Society.

**BIRCH, SIR JOSEPH (1755-1833)**

Born Whitehaven, son of Ald. Thomas Birch, Virginia merchant, Bailiff 1771, Mayor 1777/8 (d.1782). Served apprenticeship to father; admitted freemen 1777. West India Merchant. Member of Council 1780-83. Candidate for Liverpool 1802. M.P. for Nottingham 1802-3. Originally Anglican became Unitarian on marriage to a daughter of Benjamin Heywood, later returning to Anglicanism. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

**BIRCH, SIR THOMAS (1791-1880)**

Born Liverpool, son of Sir Joseph Birch. Educated Rugby and Jesus College, Cambridge - called to bar at Lincoln's Inn 1817 -private secretary to Lord Melbourne when Chief Secretary for Ireland 1827-30. M.P. for Liverpool 1847-52. Anglican. Liberal. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**BLACKBURN THOMAS (1784-1855)**

Born in Liverpool, practised as a surgeon. Active in politics. Liberal. Father-in-law of Sir Edward Baines of Leeds. Member of Ancient Chapel of Toxteth but seceded 1819 in protest against Unitarianism and became Independent. President of Mechanics' Institution 1844.

**BLUNDELL, HENRY (1724-1810)**

Of Ince. Patron of the arts. President of the Society for Promoting the Arts in Liverpool, 1783. First patron of the Liverpool Academy in 1810. Prior to his death he invested £1600 in the hands of trustees to promote and encourage the arts in Liverpool. Interred in Sefton Church. Roman Catholic.

**BOAT(E)S, WILLIAM (c.1730-1794)**

So named because he was said to have been a waif who was found in a boat and brought up by the person who found him. Placed in Blue Coat School and



later apprenticed to the merchant service. Invested his prize money he received and bought a ship. Became a merchant/trader. Entered the slave trade. One of his ships reputed to have captured a Spanish ship with a large prize and was said to have run around Liverpool shouting 'Born a beggar, die a lord. Bailiff 1763.

#### **BOLTON, JOHN (1756-1837)**

Born at Ulverston on 22nd March 1756. On leaving school, went to Liverpool, apprenticed to a firm of West India Merchants. Made enough money in the West Indies to be able to return to Liverpool in the mid 1780s and set up as a West India merchant. Anglican. Ardent Tory. His house in Duke Street was the headquarters of the Tory party. One of the first proprietors of the Athenaeum and the Botanic garden.

#### **BOLTON THOMAS (1779-1862)**

Born Liverpool. Served apprenticeship with Thomas Thornely M.P. and John Ashton Yates M.P., to William Rathbone. Partner in Bolton, Ogden and Co. merchants from about 1803. President of the American Chamber of Commerce 1820 and 1831. Member of Town Council 1835. Mayor 1840/1. Liberal. Unitarian. Supporter of the Mechanics' Institution.

#### **BOOKER JOSIAS (1793- ?)**

Born near Carnforth. In 1815 was sent to manage the family estates in Georgetown, British Guiana. Also involved in a shipping business which operated between Liverpool and Georgetown. Returned to England in 1826, married and took up residence at Poplar Grove, Allerton. He was a patron and benefactor of Liverpool Collegiate School and in 1840 he was chosen as the first chairman of the Royal Insurance Company. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum.

#### **BOOTH, THOMAS (1749-1832)**

Born Orford, near Warrington, came to Liverpool in 1767 with his brother George, served apprenticeship to a corn merchant. Established themselves as corn merchants under the name Thomas Booth & Co.. By the end of the 1780s it had become one of Liverpool's leading firms of corn merchants. Chairman of Roscoe's election committee 1806-07. Unitarian. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and Botanic Garden.

#### **BOOTH, HENRY (1788-1869)**

Born Liverpool, son of Thomas Booth, educated at Dr Shepherd's Academy. Served apprenticeship to father then established business as corn merchant in partnership with his brother-in-law Joseph Hancox with little success, being mainly interested in engineering. Partnership dissolved in 1812. One of chief promoters of scheme for Liverpool/Manchester Railway. Liberal. Unitarian. Proprietor of the Athenaeum. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. President of the Liverpool Polytechnic Society 1838 and 1839. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1845.

**BOSTOCK, JOHN (1773-1846)**

Stepson of Rev. John Yates. Proprietor of the Athenaeum. One of the three first Vice-Presidents of the Literary and Philosophical Society. Remained in office until 1817 when he moved to London. Unitarian. President of the Athenaeum in 1805.

**BOULT, FRANCIS JNR. (1804-1883)**

Shipbroker. Member of Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. Leading member of Financial Reform Association. Unitarian. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society and Liverpool Polytechnic Society.

**BOULT, SWINTON (1808-1876)**

Born in Liverpool. Entered business as an insurance agent for London insurance companies. In 1836 he founded the Liverpool Fire and Life Insurance Company with the aid of George Holt, a fellow Unitarian and wealthy cotton broker and town councillor who became its chairman. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. President of the Philomathic Society 1838. Proprietor of the Athenaeum.

**BRIGHT, SAMUEL (1799-1870)**

Merchant and shipowner of Gibbs, Bright and Co. Came to Liverpool from Bristol in 1824. Member of Literary and Philosophical and Polytechnic Societies. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**BROCKLEBANK, THOMAS (1774-1845)**

Born in Whitehaven, son of a shipowner and shipbuilder. Came to Liverpool in 1819. Opened office of T. & J. Brocklebank, merchants and shipowners in 1820. One of greatest shipowners in country with large fleet. Prominent in movement for reform of dock administration 1832/3. Member of Dock Committee 1828-32, 1836-9. Councillor for Abercromby Ward 1835-9. Anglican. Liberal. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**BROOKS, ARCHDEACON JONATHAN (1775-1855)**

Member of prominent Liverpool family. Educated Trinity College Cambridge. Became Rector of Liverpool in 1829 and Archdeacon in 1848. High Churchman. One of leading Tories in the town and along with John Gladstone and others founded the *Liverpool Courier* (ed. Thomas Kaye) to serve as the party organ. President of the Athenaeum 1811-12, 1814-16, 1817-20, 1821-2, 1840-41, 1849-50. President of the Royal Institution 1832-34.

**BROWN, SIR WILLIAM (1784-1864)**

Born Ballymena, Co. Antrim, educated at Catterick. Aged 16 emigrated to Baltimore, U.S.A. where his father entered the linen trade. Entered father's counting house and became a partner in the firm - Alexander Brown & Sons, linen merchants. Came to Liverpool 1809 to open branch as W. & J. Brown, later Brown, Shipley & Co., merchant bankers. Director of Bank of Liverpool 1831-60 and first chairman 1831-35. Chairman of Atlantic Telegraph Co. 1856. President

of Chamber of Commerce 1861. President of the American Chamber of Commerce 1825 and 1843. Active in local affairs. Alderman 1835-38, resigned. Elected MP.in 1846 for South Lancashire, and again in 1847, 52 and 57. President of the Anti-Monopoly Association 1845-6. Gave circa £40,000 towards erection of free library in Liverpool. Baronet 1863. Originally Presbyterian but later became Anglican. Proprietor of the Royal Institution. Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1846.

#### **CAMPBELL, REV.AUGUSTUS (1786-1870)**

1829 instituted as Rector of Liverpool. Held position jointly with Rev. Jonathan Brooks, until Brook's death when he took over sole charge. President of the Liverpool Royal Institution 1844. President of the Athenaeum 1828-30.

#### **CASE, GEORGE (1748-1836)**

Son of a Prescott tradesmen, John Case. 1759 entered Manchester Grammar School. Successful Liverpool merchant. Mayor in 1781. In 1797, became Colonel of the 1st. Battalion of Liverpool Volunteers. Member of the Town Council for 57 years and a magistrate for 50 years. Anglican. President of the Athenaeum 1798 and 1806. Proprietor of Liverpool Royal Institution and Botanic Garden,

#### **CASE, THOMAS (1776-1845)**

Son of Thomas Case, merchant of Liverpool. Nephew of George Case. Mayor in 1817-1818. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1830.

#### **CLARKE, WILLIAM Jnr. (c.1753-1805)**

Son of William Clarke, a linen draper who progressed into banking. Close friend of William Roscoe and member of 'The Liverpool Literary Coterie'. On the death of William Clarke Snr. in 1797 the affairs of the bank were found to be very involved and the bank was under threat of closure in 1799. William Roscoe acted as attorney and was persuaded (reluctantly) to become a partner. His brother, John Clarke, in partnership with William Roscoe, Charles Porter and William German acquired and opened out a colliery at Orrell in 1789. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

#### **CLAYTON, SARAH (1712-1779)**

Daughter of Alderman William Clayton (merchant of Liverpool, mayor in 1689, and MP.for Liverpool. Youngest of 5 surviving daughters. The Directory of 1767, gives first notice of her residence in Clayton Square, which she laid out. Did not enter the commercial world until middle-aged. Little information about her activities prior to 1749 although in 1745 her name is on the subscription list for the new infirmary for twenty guineas and there are reports of her placing a memorial to her mother in St Nicholas Church. Although she was involved in developing land on the north side of Church Street in 1752, her principal commercial activities were mining and marketing of coal. She inherited from her father an interest in the Parr Hall Estate at St Helens. Also in partnership with

Thomas Case (nephew) in the coal business "Clayton, Case and Company" in Water Street. Conspicuous in civic and mercantile affairs, unusual for a woman at this time. Notice of bankruptcy of Clayton, Case and Company in 1778.

**CRAGG, JOHN (c.1767-1854)**

Owner of the Mersey Iron Foundry in Tithebarn Street. One of the promoters of the new Exchange. Loved iron, wanted to develop its use. Met the architect Thomas Rickman circa 1812 and spent much time with him discussing designs utilising iron. With Rickman influential in the building of St George's, Everton (1814), St Michael's in the Hamlet, Toxteth (1815) and St Philip's, Hardman Street (1816), incorporating cast iron into construction and decoration. Cragg also built a number of villas close to St Michael's in which as much use as possible was made of cast iron. Proprietor of the Athenaeum, the Botanic Garden and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**CROPPER, JOHN (? -1874)**

Merchant of Cropper, Benson and Co. East India Merchants and shipowners. Treasurer of the American Chamber of Commerce 1818-1837. Town Councillor for South Toxteth Ward 1835-39. Unitarian but later became a Baptist. President of Royal Infirmary 1818 and 1832. President of the Athenaeum 1850-52. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**CURRIE, JAMES (1756-1805)**

Educated Dumfries Grammar School. Went to America in 1771 to train as a merchant but returned in 1777 on outbreak of War of Independence. Studied medicine at Edinburgh University. While at Edinburgh was a member of the Speculative Society and became interested in the theories of Berkeley, Locke, Hume and Reid. M.D. Glasgow in 1780. Settled in Liverpool in October 1780. Elected physician to the Liverpool Dispensary. Member of a literary society with William Roscoe, William Rathbone, Professor Smyth and others. Unitarian. President of the Athenaeum 1801. Proprietor of the Botanic Garden.

**CURRIE, WILLIAM WALLACE (1784-1840)**

Born in Liverpool, son of Dr. James Currie. Served apprenticeship to William Rathbone. Admitted as freeman 1806 and became a merchant. Member of Town Council. Moderate Whig. First Mayor of reformed Corporation 1836. Chairman of Finance Committee 1836-38. J.P. for Lancashire 1831 and for Liverpool 1836. Anglican. President of Athenaeum 1827-8. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution, member of Literary and Philosophical Society. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1836/7.

**DAWSON, PUDSEY ( -1816)**

Descended from an ancient family of Bolton-by-Bowland, Yorkshire. Came to Liverpool circa 1776. Merchant. Firm supporter of the School for the Blind. Mayor in 1799. Colonel of regiment of volunteers raised in 1798. Residence in Rodney Street. One of first Proprietors of the Athenaeum.

### **DIROM, LIEUT. GENERAL ALEXANDER**

Resident in Liverpool from 1811-1819, as Commanding Officer of the District. On coming to Liverpool, he was greatly impressed by its attractions and possibilities, remarking that it contained a greater proportion of inhabitants than in any large town with which he was acquainted able to give their child a liberal education. Thus as one of the founders of the Royal Institution, he was particularly eager for the establishment of the Royal Institution Schools. He sent one of his sons to the school who became a Rear Admiral. Another son was established as a Liverpool merchant, living for many years at Vernon Hall, Mount Vernon. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution

### **EARLE, THOMAS (1754-1822)**

(Earle family originally came to Liverpool in 1688 from Warrington). Educated Manchester Grammar School. Admitted freeman 1779 and became a partner in Thomas and William Earle, oil, silk and sugar merchants. Involved in African slave trade. Member of Council from 1782 (one of the few Whigs to serve), bailiff 1782 and 1791, Mayor 1787-8, J.P. Lancashire 1801. Active in establishment of Liverpool Volunteers 1797. Supported William Roscoe in 1806 election. Anglican. President of the Athenaeum 1802, Proprietor of the Botanic Garden and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

### **EARLE WILLIAM (1760-1839)**

Second son of William Earle of West Derby. Entered his fathers business with his brother Thomas (q.v). Lived at Everton. Magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant. For some time Colonel of the Liverpool Fusiliers, raised in 1803. Whig but not always consistent in vote. His one son, Charles (1798-1881) was educated at Eton, entered no profession but devoted most of his time to sporting activities. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

### **EARLE, WILLIAM (1787-1864)**

Eldest son of Thomas Earle of Spekelands. Educated at Charterhouse. Admitted freeman 1812. Partner in T & W. Earle and Co. merchants and Earles and Carter, oil merchants. Elected to the Council 1817. Bailiff 1823-4. Mayor 1836-7 (first of reformed Council). A founder of Bank of Liverpool. Anglican. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution and the Athenaeum.

### **EARLE, SIR HARDMAN (1792-1877)**

Fourth son of Thomas Earle of Spekelands. Educated Charterhouse. Admitted freeman in 1812. Partner in Salisbury, Turner and Earle, general merchants until retirement in 1855 and in Earles and Carter, oil merchants. One of promoters of Liverpool and Manchester Railway. In 1849 purchased part of the Allerton Hall Estate and built Allerton Tower. Anglican. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

### **EWART, WILLIAM (1763-1823)**

Member of old Galloway family of Mullock and Kirkcudbright, son of a Church of Scotland minister. Came to Liverpool and was employed at first in the house

of George Dunbar at 3 Exchange Alley but was soon in business as senior partner in the new firm of Ewart and Rutson (before 1790). One of first proprietors of the Athenaeum. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**EWART, WILLIAM (1798-1869)**

Born in Liverpool, son of William Ewart, merchant (q.v.), brother of Joseph C. Ewart. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Barrister Middle Temple 1827. M.P. for Bletchingley 1828-30, for Liverpool 1830-31, M.P. for Wigan 1839-41, for Dumfries District 1841-68. Close friend of the Gladstone family. Anglican. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

**EWART, JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER (1799-1868)**

Born in Liverpool, son of William Ewart, merchant. Educated at Eton. Served apprenticeship to father and was partner in Ewart, Myers and Co. brokers 1820-1838, retired. Had multiple business interests. President of Reform Association 1852-55. M.P. for Liverpool 1855-65. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Liverpool Royal Institution

**FLETCHER, THOMAS (1767-1850)**

Eldest son of John Fletcher, a hatter, largely in the export trade, in Castle Street. Thomas was apprenticed (aged 16) to James France, a Jamaica merchant. Became a partner. Later went into banking, ultimately becoming bankrupt. In 1824, Fletcher was one of the six commercial members who, were added to the Dock Board for the first time. He retained his seat for six years. In 1803 Fletcher was Vice-Chairman, and in 1806 Chairman of the West India Association. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution and the Athenaeum.

**GLADSTONE, SIR JOHN (1764-1851)**

Born at Leith. Aged 22, John Gladstone entered the service of Corrie and Co., corn merchants in Liverpool. Became a partner in the firm. Partnership broke up and firm became Gladstone & Co. His business, in which he amassed a large fortune, was mainly with the East Indies, but he also developed a West Indian trade. The firm acquired large plantations in Demerara and elsewhere - hence against abolition of slave trade. His admiration for Canning led to him becoming a staunch Tory. First entered parliament in 1818 as member for Lancaster. Elected for Woodstock in 1820 and for Berwick in 1826 but was unseated in 1827. Active in local affairs. Originally Presbyterian but conformed c.1804. Proprietor of the Athenaeum, the Botanic Garden and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**GLADSTONE, ROBERTSON, (1805-1875)**

Born in Liverpool, second son of John Gladstone. Educated at Eton and Glasgow. Served his apprenticeship to his father becoming a partner in Gladstone and Co., East and West India Merchants. In 1836 married the daughter of Hugh Jones, a banker, Unitarian and Whig - scandalizing his brother on religious grounds. Politics originally Conservative and he was one of the founders of the Liverpool Conservative Association. Broke with the party in

1844. Mayor in 1842/3. Anglican, but in his later years, regularly attended Myrtle Street Baptist Chapel. Figure of significance in the town. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**GREGSON, MATTHEW (1749-1824)**

Born in Liverpool, son of Thomas Gregson of Liverpool (previously of Whalley, Lancashire). In 1788 went into business on his own as upholsterer and interior decorator. By 1809 had become wealthy - owned an estate in Wavertree and about a dozen warehouses in the town - retired in 1814. Anglican and senior churchwarden of the town. Conservative in politics, supporter of the slave trade. Collected documentary and pictorial evidence of the history of Lancashire. Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. 1801 elected a member of the Society of Arts; 1803 gained the gold medal of the Society. Played a prominent part in early art initiatives. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution, Botanic Garden and the Athenaeum.

**HAMER, REV. JAMES**

Chaplain of St Michaels (Corporation Church), Pitt Street. Vice president of the Literary and Philosophical Society 1814. Honorary secretary of the Royal Institution 1814-1818. Vice President of the Athenaeum 1811-13.

**HANCOX, JOSEPH**

Came to Liverpool, when his father's Birmingham Iron works failed and set himself up as a corn merchant, with help from other Paradise Street seat holders. Unitarian. Founder member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**HEYWOOD, BENJAMIN ARTHUR (1755-1828)**

Merchant in the African trade in Liverpool until 1788, when commenced in business in Manchester as a banker. President of the Liverpool Royal Institution 1823-5. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

**HODGSON, ADAM**

Merchant and broker. Chairman of Bank of England. Director of Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Author of "Letter from America", 2 vols. publ. 1824. Reformer, Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. A Reformer in politics. Proprietor of the Royal Institution and the Athenaeum. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

**HODGSON, DAVID**

Corn merchant. Brother of above. Mayor of Liverpool in 1845. Tory. Town Councillor for Everton and Kirkdale Ward from 1837-44. Alderman 1844-50. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution and the Athenaeum. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**HOLME, SAMUEL (c.1800-1872)**

Born in Liverpool. Entered his father's building firm. Principal promoter and

subsequent chairman of the Liverpool Conservative Tradesmen's Association. Town Councillor. Staunch Tory and popular orator, who portrayed himself as the working man's friend. On his election as Mayor (1852-3) he announced that he would let Liverpool see what 'a tradesman' could do in that position. Alderman 1853-64. Anglican. One of the seven original founders of the Liverpool Collegiate Schools. President of the Athenaeum 1847-8. Joined Literary and Philosophical Society in 1837, resigned 1841. Founder member of Polytechnic Society. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

#### **HOLT, GEORGE (1790-1861)**

Born in Rochdale. Apprenticed to Samuel Hope, cotton broker of Liverpool in 1807. Originally Baptist but changed to Unitarianism on marriage. In 1821 Hope went into banking and Holt took over the cotton broking business - George Holt & Co. In 1831 with Adam Hodgson and other businessmen formed the first joint stock bank in Liverpool - the Bank of Liverpool. Founded school for girls in Liverpool - Blackburne House. Elected to the Council in 1835, served with only a short break for 21 years. Member of Dock Committee; chairman of Libraries Committee. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1842 and 1849. Two of his sons, Alfred and George were members of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

#### **HOLT, THOMAS (1773-1845)**

Glass manufacturer, merchant and shipowner. No relation to the Holts of Rochdale. Married a daughter of the Unitarian minister Robert Lewin. Residence - Hope Street. In the nineteenth century family was eclipsed by the descendants of the Rochdale Holts. Unitarian. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

#### **HOPE, SAMUEL (1781-1837)**

Cotton broker. Entered banking, Samuel Hope & Co. until it was converted into a joint stock company under the title of the Liverpool Borough Bank in 1836 with Hope as chairman. However both Hope and his partner Edward Burrell died the following year. Bank foundered and was closed in 1857. Baptist. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution.

#### **HORSFALL FAMILY**

Charles Horsfall, merchant in African palm oil trade. Tory. Anglican. Mayor in 1832. Had three sons. Thomas Berry Horsfall (1805-78), Mayor in 1847-8 and M.P. for the borough from 1853-1866; Robert and George Henry. Family erected a number of churches in Liverpool. Charles and his sons were all Proprietors of the Liverpool Royal Institution.

#### **HOULBROOKE, REV. THEOPHILUS ( -1823)**

Took the degree of LL.B at St John's College, Cambridge in 1769. Originally clergyman of the Church of England, but became a Unitarian. For several years the resident tutor in the family of William Rathbone. President of the Athenaeum 1808-11 and 1812-14. First president of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, in office from 1812 to 1816 (succeeded by William Roscoe). Proprietor



of the Royal Institution.

**HUME, REV. ABRAHAM (1814-1884)**

Son of Thomas F. Hume, of Scottish descent. Born at Hillsborough, Co. Down, Ireland. Educated at the Royal Belfast Academy, Glasgow University, and Trinity College, Dublin. On leaving latter, he was for a time a mathematical and English teacher, first at the Belfast Institution and Academy, and then at the Liverpool Institute and Collegiate Institution. In 1843 graduated B.A. at Dublin and received honorary degree of LL.D at Glasgow. In same year ordained, served for four years without stipend at St Augustine's, Liverpool. In 1847 appointed vicar of the new parish of Vauxhall. In 1848 founder member with Joseph Mayer and H.C. Pidgeon of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society and the Polytechnic Society.

**JEVONS, THOMAS (1791-1855)**

Iron merchants. Married to Mary Anne Roscoe, eldest daughter of William Roscoe. Unitarian. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**KOSTER, JOHN THEODORE**

Came to Liverpool from Lisbon where he was 'an English gold-merchant of celebrity'. De Quincey visited him with Mrs Coleridge in 1807-8. Described the Kosters as 'a family, the most accomplished I have ever known. Koster's house was 'the resort of distinguished foreigners'. On the 1814 committee of the Liverpool Royal Institution. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**LASSELL, WILLIAM JNR. (1799-1880)**

Brewer. President 1848-49. Gold medallist of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1849 and its President in 1870. Moved to Malta in 1852. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**LEYLAND, THOMAS (1752-1827)**

Son of Richard Leyland of Knowsley. By 1774 in business in Liverpool with Gerald Dillon - Dillon and Leyland, at the lower end of Water Street. In 1776 reputed to have won a prize of £20,000 in the lottery which ensured future success. Thomas Leyland was elected to the Chamber of Commerce in 1780. Dealt extensively in the slave trade, in partnership with his nephew Richard Bullin and Thomas Molyneux. Co-opted onto the Town Council in 1796, bailiff same year and Mayor in 1798. Somewhat inexplicably in 1802 he entered into partnership with the bank of Clarkes and Roscoe - but Leyland dissolved the partnership suddenly in 1806 and commenced business as a banker on his own account. Elected Mayor again in 1814 and during his year of office published the Corporation accounts for the first time. Mayor for a third time in 1820. One of first proprietors of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

**MARTIN, STUDLEY**

Cotton broker. For many years secretary of the Liverpool Cotton Brokers

Association, founded in 1841. Unitarian. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society.

**MAYER, JOSEPH (1803-1886)**

Born at Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Came to Liverpool in 1821 to be apprenticed to his brother-in-law. 1828 travelled to France, Switzerland and Italy. Before he set off, he gave the Mechanics' School of Arts, a set of casts and four volumes relating to the arts. Travelled abroad on a number of occasions. 1843 set up business on his own as manufacturing goldsmith, jeweller and silversmith (1843-73). At Great Exhibition, exhibited 33 items of plate and jewellery. Founder member of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Member of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, Liverpool Polytechnic Society.

**MOSS, JOHN (1782-1858)**

Born in Liverpool. Son of Thomas Moss (timber and general merchant. Entered family firm. In 1807 he opened a bank in the name of Moss, Dale and Rogers, (the Dale was his brother-in-law, Edward Rogers was son of a Liverpool merchant). Bought an estate at Otterspool c.1811 and built a house there. Here in 1812-13 he started an oil mill in partnership with George Forwood. In 1816 created J.P. for the County of Lancaster. Involved in railway building. In 1831 was Chairman of the Liverpool and Birmingham Railway. John Moss also had some very large sugar plantations in Demerara. Anglican. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution; Proprietor of the Athenaeum. Brother, Henry Moss became a member of the Common Council in 1824. Bank carried on by two of his sons - Thomas, educated Eton and Oxford; Gilbert, 'esteemed for his artistic tastes and charitable bent'.

**MULLENEUX, JAMES (1793-1868)**

Born in Liverpool. Senior partner in Hugh Mulleneux and Sons, rectifiers and distillers of Dale Street. Member of Ewart's committee 1830 and 1832. Secretary of Liverpool Parliamentary Reform Union 1831-32. Member of committee of Reform Association from 1835. Treasurer of Anti Monopoly Association 1841-6. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1838.

**PARKER, CHARLES STEWART (1800-1868)**

Partner in Sandbach, Tinne & Co. Born in Glasgow in 1800, eldest son of C.S.Parker (1771-1828). Family with extensive Scottish and West Indian interests. Educated at Universities of Glasgow and Geneva. Married Anne Sandbach, daughter of Samuel Sandbach. Entered firm of Sandbach, Tinne & Co. Brother-in-law to J.A.Tinne. Served from 1837-39 as a Director of the Bank of Liverpool and was Chairman of the New Exchange Building Committee and was a trustee of the Bluecoat School. Also chairman of the Thames and Mersey Insurance Company. Anglican. Proprietor of the Royal Institution.

**PICTON, JAMES ALLANSON (1805-1889)**

Born in Liverpool, son of a builder (not successful). Left school aged 13½ years to work in his father's timber yard. In 1821 his father was placed in the debtor's

prison in Great Howard Street. Family destitute in 1825. In 1826, James Picton became an assistant surveyor in the employ of a local builder and joiner at a wage of 25/- per week. Became a self-taught architect as well as a surveyor and valuer. Member of Town Council. Originated Liverpool public library and museum. After his retirement in 1866, aged 60, he devoted his life to scholarship and public life in Liverpool. Buildings designed by Picton include the Corn Exchange in Brunswick Street, Queen's Buildings in Dale Street, The Temple in Dale Street and Tower Building in Water Street. Knighted 1881. Congregationalist but undenominational in temper. Member of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical and Polytechnic Societies. President of the Philomathic society 1848. Founder member of Architectural and Archaeological Society in 1848. One of first members of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Director of Mechanics' Institution.

#### **RATHBONE, WILLIAM {4th} (1757-1809)**

Born Liverpool - admitted freeman 1779, partner with his father as Rathbone and Son, merchants, until his father's death in 1789, then Rathbone, Benson and Cropper (later Rathbone, Hughes and Duncan). Married Hannah Mary Reynolds, daughter of Richard Reynolds (Quaker, ironmaster and philanthropist) in 1786. Member of Liverpool Committee for the Suppression of the Slave Trade founded 1788. Active participant in agitation to open up the East India Trade. Member of early literary societies. Advocate of extension of the franchise. Took leading role in election of William Roscoe, 1806. Active in agitation for repeal of Orders in Council. Dubbed the 'Hoary Traitor' for his political views (hair prematurely white). Originally a Quaker but disowned by them in 1805 for publishing a book criticising the strictness of Quaker discipline. Bought Greenbank from Lord Sefton in 1787, on birth of eldest son William. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

#### **RATHBONE, WILLIAM {5th} (1787-1868)**

Educated privately and at Hackney College. Apprenticed to his father's office. Admitted freeman 1809. Same year, on father's death, established business as William and Richard Rathbone, becoming Rathbone, Hodgson (Adam) and Co. 1814 and Rathbone Brothers and Co. 1824. Also partner in Rathbone, Martin and Co. insurance brokers and Ross T. Smyth and Co. corn merchants. Took leading part in all educational and cultural initiatives. Interested in the Hibernian Schools. Helped found Sailors Home, baths and wash-houses. President of American Chamber of Commerce 1819, 1827, 1832, and 1845. Promoter of Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Town Councillor, Mayor 1837/8. President of Liverpool Reform Association in 1840s. Quaker then Unitarian. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and Liverpool Royal Institution. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society. Life member of the Mechanics' Institution. Supported the Roscoe Club. Brother Theodore, President of the Royal Institution 1849-51.

#### **RATHBONE, WILLIAM {6th} (1819-1902)**

Born in Liverpool, educated at Gateacre and St Domingo House, Everton. Served apprenticeship to an East India merchant. Studied at Heidelberg University 1838-9. With Baring Brothers in London 1840-41. Visited U.S.A. Partner in

Rathbone Brothers and Co. 1841-84, retired. Partner Ross T.Smyth and Co. corn merchants 1847-88. Chairman of American Chamber of Commerce 1851. Spent much of his fortune in relieving the deserving poor and supporting school teachers and clergy of all denominations. Pioneer of reform in workhouse nursing and founder of District Nursing Service. Member of committee of every charitable and hospital institution in the town. Took leading part in establishment of University College. Declined all state honours. Unitarian. Proprietor of the Athenaeum.

**RATHBONE, RICHARD (1788-1860)**

Merchant. Brother and partner of William Rathbone. One of first members of the Literary and Philosophical Society, Vice President 1842-44.

**RAWLINS, CHARLES EDWARD (1812-1884)**

Merchant of the firm of Rawlins and Son. President of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce in 1869. Unitarian. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society and Polytechnic Societies. President of the Philomathic Society 1845.

**RUSHTON, EDWARD (1756-1814)**

Born in Liverpool, son of a small tradesman. Became a seaman in the African trade, and rose to the position of mate on a slaver before an epidemic of ophthalmia on board ship blinded him and forced him to settle on shore; in the 1780's he conducted a tavern in Liverpool. Fervent abolitionist. In 1787, published verses *West Indian Eclogues*, in which he fiercely attacked the slave trade. Supported the French Revolution. Circa 1789 Rushton bought a half-share in the *Liverpool Weekly Herald*, which he edited, and which served to some extent as a mouthpiece for the Reformers. Opened a book shop in Paradise Street. Member of literary society to which Currie and Roscoe also belonged.

**RUSHTON, EDWARD (1796-1857)**

Son of Edward Rushton (q.v.) the blind poet. Barrister at Law. Appointed Stipendiary Magistrate of Liverpool 1839. Anglican. Member of Literary and Philosophical Society.

**RUTTER JOHN MD.(1762-1838)**

Born in Liverpool, son of Thomas Rutter, painter and tallow chandler. Nephew of William Rathbone iii. Studied medicine at Edinburgh. Physician to the Dispensary. Quaker. President of the Athenaeum, 1804 and 1805. Proprietor of the Botanic Garden.

**SANDARS, JOSEPH (1785-1860)**

Was in business soon after 1800 at 16 Goree Piazzas and in 1820 lived in Pembroke Place. Partner in Sandars and Claxton, corn merchants and underwriter of the firm Brain and Sandars. Originator of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, inviting Stevenson to Liverpool as engineer. Director of London and North Western Railway. Known as Father of the Railway. Partner with George Stevenson and Sir Joshua Walmsley in Snibstone Colliery, Leicester

and from 1837 in Clay Cross Colliery, Derbyshire. Moderate Whig being active in town dues agitation 1833 but he supported Lord Sandon in 1832 and gradually became Conservative. Originally Unitarian but became Anglican. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society

**SANDBACH, SAMUEL (1769-1851)**

Born at Tarporley. Lived at Woodlands, Aigburth. An early partner in McInroy, Sandbach & Co.. Later was the founder of Sandbach, Tinne & Co. Associate of well-known men such as Canning and Gladstone. Mayor of Liverpool 1831-32. Director of Bank of Liverpool. One of his daughters married Charles S.Parker, who later entered into the partnership. Another daughter married J.A.Tinne. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution

**SHEPHERD, REV.WILLIAM (1768-1847)**

Born in Liverpool, son of a shoemaker, belonged to Benn's Garden Chapel. Educated at the Dissenters' Academy, Daventry 1785-1788. Tutor to the sons of the Rev. John Yates 1790-91. In 1791 became minister of Unitarian chapel at Gateacre. Opened a school. Admitted a freeman in 1796. Member of Roscoe circle. Took an active part in radical politics but as an author of election squibs rather than as a public speaker. Deputy chairman of Liverpool Parliamentary Reform Union 1831-2. After passing of Reform Bill took little further part in public affairs. Close friend of Lord Brougham. Declined chair of classics at Manchester College 1798. In 1802 published "Life of Poggio Bracciolini". Author of literary and theological works. In 1834 University of Edinburgh conferred degree of LL.D. on him. Member of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. Proprietor of the Athenaeum, Botanic Garden and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**SMITH, REV.JOSEPH (17 -1815)**

Studied for the ministry at Warrington Academy. Came to Liverpool in 1781 to be co-pastor at Benn's Garden, from Shrewsbury. From his forceful manner of preaching, Smith was known to the town as 'Thumping Jack', and his sermons were notoriously political. Unitarian. One of the three first vice presidents of the Literary and Philosophical Society. One of the active members of the (old) Philosophical and Literary Society of 1780.

**SMYTH, PROF.WILLIAM (1765-1849)**

Born in Liverpool, son of Thomas Smyth. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, elected a fellow of his college, Peterhouse, proceeding to M.A. in 1790. After father's business failed forced to seek employment, becoming tutor to Richard Brinsley Sheridan's elder son, Thomas. Later he obtained a tutorship at Peterhouse, and in 1807 was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, a position he kept until his death. Never married. Member of early literary societies in Liverpool.

**STANIFORTH, THOMAS (1735-1803)**

Merchant. One of principal merchants engaged in the Greenland fishery trade. Also a partner in a wine, rum and brandy firm until 1776. Engaged in the slave trade and was a member of the first committee of the African Association in

1777. Member of Chamber of Commerce from 1774. Appointed to the Town Council in 1781. Mayor 1797. First President of the Liverpool Marine Society, founded in 1789, for the benefit of masters of vessels, their widows and children. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Botanic Garden.

**STANIFORTH, SAMUEL (1769-1851)**

Son of Thomas Staniforth, who succeeded to his father's business. Bailiff in 1804 and Mayor in 1812. Later in life he did not prosper in business and obtained the post of Distributor of Stamps. Samuel's son, Thomas, entered the Church, in 1832 gaining the living of Bolton-in-Bowland. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum, the Botanic Garden and the Royal Institution.

**THORNELY, THOMAS (1781-1862)**

Born in Liverpool and educated at Dr. Shepherd's Academy. Served apprenticeship to William Rathbone. Partner in Martin Hope and Thornely 1802-12, later head of Thomas and J.D. Thornely, American merchants from 1815 to retirement in 1835. President of the American Chamber of Commerce, 1818, 1826, 1838. Candidate for Liverpool in 1831 and 1832. M.P. for Wolverhampton 1835-59. Retired through ill-health. President of the Anti-Monopoly Association 1841-45. Unitarian. Member of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**TINNE, JOHN ABRAHAM (1807-1884)**

Partner in the merchant firm of Sandbach, Tinne and Company, West India merchants. Town Councillor. 1876-77, Chairman of the Bank of Liverpool. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**TOBIN, SIR JOHN (1763-1851)**

Born Isle of man. Entered merchant service. Privateering laid the basis of his fortune. Retired from the sea and set up as a merchant in the African palm oil trade. In 1838 he was one of the first Directors of the Transatlantic Steam Ship Company. Mayor in 1818, Knighthood 1820. Tory. Anglican. Proprietor of the Athenaeum, Liverpool Royal Institution and Botanic Garden.

**TOBIN, THOMAS (1775-1863)**

Apprenticed to a merchant vessel. In 1801 left the sea and commenced business as a merchant, importing palm oil. Tory. Anglican. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**TRAILL, DR. THOMAS STEWART (1781-1862)**

Born in Kirkwall, son of a minister. Graduated in medicine at University of Edinburgh in 1802. Came to Liverpool in 1803. Remained until 1832, when he was appointed Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at the University of Edinburgh. Physician to Liverpool Ophthalmic Infirmary and Royal Infirmary. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1827. First secretary of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society 1812-1831, and Treasurer 1812-1817, President 1832. President of the Athenaeum 1823-25, President of Liverpool Royal Institution 1826-28.

**WATT, RICHARD (?1724-1796)**

Partner in firm of Watt and Walker, West India merchants. Of humble parentage. Came to Liverpool as a boy and secured employment with John Dymoke, a chaise hirer of Fenwick Street. His master took a liking to the boy and sent him to night school to learn to read and write. Watt advanced to a counting house and was then employed as a supercargo to Jamaica where he became an exporter of native produce to Liverpool and acquired a large fortune. On returning home after c.35 years (c.1782), he looked up his benefactor's family and finding his two daughters in poor circumstances settled an annuity of £100 each for life. Purchased Speke Hall and lavished much money and care on its restoration.

**WILCKENS, HENRY (1751-1821)**

Born in Bremen and came to Liverpool circa 1767, becoming involved in the salt trade. Interested in the docks, the Dispensary and the Lyceum Library. Proprietor of the Botanic Garden

**WILLIAMSON, JOSEPH (1769-1840)**

Born in Warrington. Came to Liverpool c.1780, aged eleven and with only a few shillings. Found employment with Thomas Moss Tate, a tobacco merchant of Wolstenholme Square. Married into family in 1802. On death of his employer, succeeded to the business. Acquired a considerable fortune. Proprietor of the Botanic Garden.

**YATES, REV. JOHN (1755-1826)**

Born Bolton Le Moors, son of a schoolmaster. Aged 17 years to Warrington Academy. High regard for Dr Enfield. Ordained in 1777 - appointed to Key Street Unitarian Chapel. Married in 1779, Elizabeth, the widow of Dr. Bostock, daughter of John Ashton of Woolton Hall. Marriage financially advantageous. Moved to newly built Paradise Street Chapel in 1791. Remained at Paradise Street until his retirement in 1823. Preached sermon condemning the slave trade 1788 and was a member of committee for its suppression. Member of early literary societies. Yates was described as 'a speculative parson', and it was rumoured that he obtained the money to establish his son Joseph as a West India merchant at an early age, by a fortunate deal in tobacco. Possibly this occurred in 1776, when no tobacco entered Liverpool between May and the end of December. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and Botanic Garden. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society.

**YATES, JOSEPH BROOKS (1780-1855)**

Born in Liverpool, eldest son of the Rev. John Yates. Educated by the Rev. William Shepherd and at Eton. Entered the house of West India merchant, gradually gained controlling interest. Member of Dock Committee 1836-9. Elected F.S.A. on 18th April 1852 and was also F.R.G.S., a member of the Chetham Society, and an original member of the Philological Society of London 1842. Declined to take part in 1830 by-election. J.P. Lancashire 1836. Art

collector and had an extensive library. Author of various antiquarian works. Unitarian. Member of Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, of which he was president during four triennial periods, and a frequent reader of papers at its meetings. Proprietor of the Athenaeum and the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**YATES, JOHN ASHTON (1781-1863)**

Second son of Rev. John Yates. Merchant and broker. Educated by William Shepherd and then Manchester Academy. Apprenticed to the firm of William Rathbone. M.P. for Carlow. Member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution.

**YATES, RICHARD VAUGHAN (1785-1856)**

Third son of Rev. John Yates. Educated By Rev. William Shepherd. Engaged in the iron trade. Senior Partner in Yates, Cox & Co. Active in the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute. In 1843 bought 90 acres of land from the Earl of Sefton to form the Princes Park Estate which he laid out at a cost of £70,000 and opened to the public. Borough magistrate, member of Town Council. Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society. Proprietor of the Liverpool Royal Institution. President of the Mechanics' Institution 1833.



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