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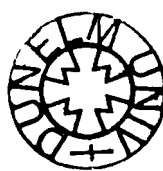
ASPECTS OF SOCIABILITY IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND 1600-1750

Rebecca Frances King

Department of History

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Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, 2001



- 8 MAY 2002

Abstract

Aspects of Sociability in the North East of England 1600-1750.

By Rebecca King.

**Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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This thesis examines the patterns, organisation and experience of sociability in the north east of England from the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. It focuses particularly on socialising within institutions, at commercialised leisure events, and in the private arena. The history of sociability is located within contemporary historical debate about the growth of towns, gender and politeness.

The first chapter reviews the existing literature of sociability and defines the parameters of the study. The second chapter is a case-study of six trade guilds of Newcastle and Durham, which examines the characteristics and values of guild sociable interactions and demonstrates the resilience of company celebrations. The third chapter focuses on the clubs of the north east, exposing the ways in which these new institutions drew upon the practices of the trade guilds, emulating their rhetoric, organisation and social activities. The significance of clubs and societies in the pre- 1750 period is critically assessed. The fourth chapter examines the public sporting events of the region, charting the development of horse-races and cock-fights in both urban and rural areas from the sixteenth century onwards. The profile of those that funded and attended such events is established, and the appeal of such occasions is also examined. The fifth chapter deals with the same issues in relation to commercial leisure events in the field of the arts, focusing on theatre, music and dance. The sixth chapter examines the patterns of socialising at occasions that contemporaries would have defined as private, charting the seasonality of leisure, and exposing the discourses of long-distance sociability by letter. The final chapter draws together the discussion in the foregoing chapters to demonstrate that there were important continuities in the practices and values of sociability across the period. Sociability was always important, and both women and men enjoyed full social lives throughout the period. Commercialised leisure was already available in both urban and rural settlements by the early seventeenth century, and traditional modes of socialising, such as guild celebrations, remained significant throughout the period.

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Abbreviations and Conventions

DRO	Durham Record Office
DUL	Durham University Library
NRO	Northumberland Record Office
TWA	Tyne and Wear Archives

Dates are given in the 'old style', but the year is taken to begin on 1 January.

Chapter One: Introduction: Sociability and the urban renaissance revisited

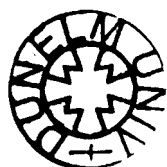
This thesis explores early modern sociability: collective sociable interactions that often had a formalised or ritualised element. The study of sociability involves the exploration of group social behaviour rather than individual friendships, although such emotional attachments were highly important within sociable networks. Sociability is not synonymous with recreation, because while communal recreational activities involved socialising, solitary leisure activities did not. For example, the experiences of individual angling enthusiasts belong to the study of recreation, whereas fishermen who gathered for group expeditions were engaging in both recreation and sociability. Engagement in sociability was not limited to those activities that historians have traditionally designated as either leisure or recreation, such as dancing, and play-going, which were mainly pursued for pleasure.¹ Socialising was an important part of everyday life, and early modern men and women also interacted socially in many other contexts that have been defined as 'associational', such as at church, and within trade guilds. The study of sociability involves analysing the patterns of socialising and examining the ways in which sociable interactions were organised and experienced.²

Various anthropologists, including Geertz, have shown that sociability is culturally contingent and varies considerably between different times and places even within living memory.³ Exponents of the 'new history' articulate the need to integrate an awareness of cultural relativism into historical writing, and Burke emphasises the utility

¹ A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), pp. 214-215, 275; NRO, 855/A7, from Henry Ellison, 20 April 1733; P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 117-127, 150-162.

² J. Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in J. Barry and C. W. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 84-85.

³ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London, 1975), pp. 412-453; J. Brøgger, *Nazaré: Women And Men In A Prebureaucratic Portuguese Fishing Village* (London, 1992), passim.



of Bourdieu's theories in this context. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* suggests that social groups select behaviours from their cultural repertoire in response to particular situations.⁴ Sociable interaction, as all forms of human behaviour, is socially constructed, and therefore varies from culture to culture and from period to period. Socialising has a history that can be explored and related to the rest of historical writing, and research has shown that at least some patterns of sociable behaviour altered significantly during the early modern period. For example, in the fifteenth century gentry households were expected to dispense open hospitality to all comers. However, from the later sixteenth century the poor were more likely to receive institutional relief than to be fed at great houses.⁵

It is important to write a history of early modern sociability in order to illuminate an activity that contemporaries invested with considerable emotional and ideological significance, and which was also of practical importance. Association among the urban bourgeoisie, for example, was promoted by a value system that advocated hard work, respectability and conviviality. As Barry shows, middling sort inhabitants of towns needed to act collectively in order to secure stability in the face of the deleterious effects of a high turn-over of residents. Sociability, along with other forms of combination, provided a means of developing and sustaining a collective civic identity and of maintaining the financial security of individual households. Building sociable networks was also vital to the honour and fortunes of the gentry, allowing families to maintain their status among their peers and to create alliances of mutual benefit. When Sir Ralph Verney lay on his death bed in the late seventeenth century, for

⁴ R. Porter, 'History of the Body' in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 206-232; P. Burke, 'Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future' in Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives*, pp. 1-23.

⁵ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 23-36, 391-393.

example, his final acts revealed the priority he placed upon sustaining his social network. Sir Ralph distributed gifts of venison among his friends and kin, to satisfy expectations of reciprocity and charity, and in order to spread goodwill amongst those who would be in a position to assist his family in the future. As we will see, socialising was highly important to all social groups, and establishing the patterns of sociable interactions also allows us to examine the operation of the organising principles of society, such as gender, social status, and religious and political alignments.⁶

There are various ways in which sociability in early modern England could be explored, but in this study socialising is considered primarily in relation to the two themes with which it has been most closely associated in the recent historiography: changing gender roles, and the development of towns.⁷ Sociability obviously occurred in rural areas as well as in urban locations, though socialising in rural settlements has tended to be neglected in recent work on leisure and recreation, which concentrates on charting the emergence of towns as recreational centres. This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between sociability and the growth of the urban sector, but also attempts to incorporate an awareness of the importance of socialising in villages, where the majority of England's population lived. Sociable interactions in rural areas are discussed wherever possible, and particularly close attention is given to the development of rural horse-racing, and to patterns of private socialising in the country.⁸

⁶ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 84-112; S. E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 23-33; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 9, 195-196.

⁷ See for example, Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, passim; H. Barker and E. Chalus, 'Introduction' in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London, 1997), pp. 1-28.

⁸ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), passim. See below, pp. 139-140, 266-270.

Sociability is prominent in the historiography of towns, where changing patterns of socialising are associated with the theory that an 'urban renaissance' occurred from the later seventeenth century. Borsay and Clark, amongst others, emphasise the lack of recreational facilities in pre-Restoration towns, contrasting the highly developed pleasure-seeking culture of the Georgian town with an earlier period when urban communities 'principally served as a site for trade and guild-based manufactures'.⁹ Borsay argues that the period before the mid-seventeenth century was one of general urban desolation; economically, architecturally and culturally, many towns were in a state of decay.¹⁰ He asserts that the depressed economic climate of the post-Reformation years weighed heavily on many towns. Population growth and the decline in real wages left urban communities heavily burdened by the increasing numbers of inhabitants requiring relief. At the same time towns were affected by recurrent epidemics and were also under threat from fire.¹¹

The Borsay-Clark model of urban history contends that towns emerged phoenix-like from metaphorical as well as literal ashes in the later seventeenth century. Although the fortunes of individual towns might wax and wane, economic prosperity ushered in a period of urban growth, so that approximately 21 per cent of people lived in urban settlements by 1750. The commercial expansion and industrial growth that characterised the post-Restoration period benefited urban centres.¹² The elite and middling groups

⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, passim; P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), passim; P. Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), passim; P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1660-1800* (London, 1984), passim; R. Porter, 'Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society' in R. Porter and M. M. Roberts (eds.), *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996), p. 21.

¹⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 11-16.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 12-16.

¹² Ibid., pp. 16-28; P. Clark and R. A. Houston, 'Culture and leisure 1700-1840' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History Of Britain II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 575-613; Porter, 'Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society', pp. 19-35; E. A. Wrigley, 'Urban Growth and Agricultural Change:

enjoyed surplus income, which created a demand for luxury consumer goods, services and leisure. The provision of these facilities in urban centres, combined with the relatively low cost of urban living, drew the gentry into the town, both as visitors and as permanent urban residents. Among the middling ranks, Borsay attributes most consumption to the professions, although he allows for some spending by an elite of innkeepers, luxury retailers and skilled craftsman.¹³ Urban centres became arenas of sociability, hosting a growing number of public performances of music and a revived provincial theatre.¹⁴ Inhabitants and visitors could display their gentility at assemblies, which were increasingly held in purpose-built rooms. Walks and gardens were constructed in many urban centres, which also permitted maximum opportunities for personal display.¹⁵ There was a growing appetite for sporting activities, which Borsay suggests were often held in or just outside towns, including horse-racing, bowling and cock-fighting.¹⁶

In the same period, individual house-owners engaged in fashionable improvements to their houses, which created a newly uniform streetscape. Civic authorities further enhanced the magnificence of their communities by building or rebuilding public buildings such as town halls, churches and hospitals.¹⁷ Borsay attributes much of this cultural consumption to the desire to establish and confirm social status. The definition and use of the title 'gentleman' was becoming increasingly fluid in the post-Restoration period, and various historians suggest that members of the

England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), 688.

¹³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 28-37; 200-211, 224.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 117-149; J. H. Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure' in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England* (first edition 1982, reprinted London, 1983), pp. 275-280.

¹⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 150-172.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 173-196.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 41-113.

middling ranks were able to participate in a new and less formal code of 'polite' manners. Borsay argues that individuals pursued status through conspicuous consumption, by improving their houses, dressing their persons, and consuming polite leisure.¹⁸ He employs a model of cultural diffusion as well as social emulation: his urban renaissance is disseminated from London to the provinces. Newspapers and other products of the metropolitan press allowed news of new fashionable leisure facilities such as commercial pleasure gardens to reach provincial towns, where they were then copied.¹⁹

This dominant approach to urban history and the development of elite leisure in towns has some serious weaknesses, many of which have been exposed by Barry in a series of key papers that challenge the current meta-narrative.²⁰ Firstly, although the urban history of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century has been relatively neglected, the developing historiography provides significant evidence to suggest an over-estimation of the extent of decline in Tudor and early Stuart urban communities. Borsay himself acknowledges that urban decay was not universal; some communities, such as Exeter and Colchester, flourished throughout the period, and some towns, such as Norwich and York, had clearly recovered by the later sixteenth century.²¹ Recent research has thrown doubt on the severity of the decline in living standards in towns in

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 225-256; P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, 2001), passim; L. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: Moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994), passim.

¹⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 286-287.

²⁰ J. Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-80: urbane or civic?' in J. H. Pittock and A. Wear (eds.), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (London, 1991), pp. 198-234; J. Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775' in J. Black and J. Gregory (eds.), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 49-81; Barry 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 84-112.

²¹ For a more optimistic view of the fortunes of late medieval towns see A. R. Bridbury, 'English Provincial Towns in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 34, 1 (1981), 1-24; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay in Late Medieval England' in P. Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (eds.), *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 159-185; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 11-13.

the sixteenth century. Rappaport's work on London, long regarded as the city with the most extreme poverty and social instability, undermines the urban crisis theory on several counts.²² By making his calculations using retail prices instead of wholesale prices he estimates a maximum decline in real wages over the Tudor period of 29 per cent, around half the decrease originally estimated by Phelps Brown and Hopkins. Rappaport also argues that using a fixed basket of consumables to create the index overlooks individuals' opportunities to alter consumption in favour of cheaper items. By factoring in such down-shifting to cheaper commodities, he estimates that the drop in real wages could have been as little as 17 per cent. He also argues that the daily wage rates used to calculate changes in real wages ignore the possibility that individuals could choose to work more hours to increase their income, and also aim to increase their household income. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of the total price increase occurred during two short-lived crises, whereas the underlying rate of inflation was much lower, with prices increasing by an average of 0.5 per cent annually. These modifications to the orthodox view suggest that many families may have experienced only a small decline in their standard of living during this period, rather than the dramatic drop that was previously envisaged.²³

Contemporaries certainly seem to have believed that urban centres offered the potential for personal advancement, because they continued to migrate into towns in large numbers in the pre-Restoration period. When the population of London and that of other towns over 5,000 are added together, we see that the ratio of urban to national population grew from 5.25 per cent in 1520 to 13.5 per cent in 1670. Wrigley points out

²² I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 9-14; S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth century London* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 4.

²³ Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, pp. 160-161.

that the significance of this growth should not be over-estimated, since the figures reflect the fact that various towns drifted over the 5,000 mark between these two dates. However, it remains clear that the urban sector more than doubled in size between the early sixteenth century and the third quarter of the seventeenth century. High urban mortality levels mean that this increase must have been sustained by in-migration, and it has recently been estimated that for most of the seventeenth century urban communities 'drained off' approximately 40 per cent of population increase in rural areas.²⁴ Much of this migration was channelled through the guild system, and admissions to some of the London companies tripled between the early sixteenth and mid-seventeenth century. Provincial towns could not boast quite such dramatic growth, but saw a steady increase in apprenticeship admissions throughout the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. Admissions to the freedom in Bristol increased by just over 50 per cent between 1539 and 1540 and 1629 and 1630, then held steady to the end of the seventeenth century.²⁵

There are several significant indications that despite the difficult economic climate, civic culture was flourishing in pre-Restoration towns. The numbers of urban governments willing to invest in building town halls grew significantly from the 1530s onwards, as more towns gained autonomous government. Between the first decade of the sixteenth century and the civil war, over 202 town halls are known to have been built, converted, or substantially altered. A further 150 town hall buildings cannot be dated with any certainty, but seem likely to have been built in the same period. While

²⁴ Wrigley, 'Urban Growth and Agricultural Change', 683-688; K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 164-165; P. Griffiths, J. Landers, M. Pelling and R. Tyson, 'Population and disease, estrangement and belonging 1540-1700' in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain II*, p. 198.

²⁵ C. W. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort, 1550-1800' in Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, p. 55.

fewer civic buildings were initially constructed in the north, the south-west and the west midlands, by the late sixteenth century building was more evenly distributed throughout the country.²⁶ Some towns were driven to build in order to replace old and unsuitable facilities, and other communities constructed a town hall in order to express pride in their own town in response to civic building in another local urban centre. However, large numbers of these halls were built in order to provide appropriate civic buildings for the community following a charter of incorporation, or after the town received other privileges, including grants of fairs and market charters.²⁷ Town governments were willing to invest in these buildings, not only because they wished to create a practical centre of administration, but also because the town hall was a symbolic expression of civic pride and authority.²⁸

A further weakness of the current consensus that towns underwent a social and economic renaissance in the later seventeenth century is a general tendency to over-emphasise change at the expense of continuity. While the earlier period was undoubtedly a time when the urban sector was under pressure, we have already seen that there is much to suggest that urban communities were not in a state of crisis. Indeed, London was relatively stable during the Tudor period compared with many continental cities, despite the population increase that the capital experienced during that time.²⁹ Furthermore, there is a need for greater caution when dealing with apparently new developments, which may be more the product of new sources than of a dramatic change in urban culture. The wider range of sources available for the study of the eighteenth century, including reams of newsprint, may be exposing recreational

²⁶ R. Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community c.1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 3, 11, 17-18, 20-21, 75.

²⁷ Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, pp. 73-74, 89-91.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.

²⁹ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 257-260; Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, pp. 387, 53.

activities that were actually present in the earlier period, but tended to go undocumented.³⁰ As we shall see, the leisure facilities of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century towns appear to have been rather under-estimated in the current historiography.³¹

Furthermore, chroniclers of the allegedly new post-Restoration leisure culture have also made little attempt to research the consumption of commercialised leisure further down the social scale. In Borsay's model, urban traders and innkeepers are primarily credited with the essentially passive role of meeting demand for polite consumption. There has been a tendency to polarise urban society into an elite group, which took part in this demand for urban leisure, and an amorphous group of less affluent townspeople that did not.³² Clark's recent work on clubs and societies in early modern Britain shows a desire to cling to the hypothesis of an elite-driven urban renaissance, in the face of his own findings. He suggests that the majority of societies had 'a wider tranche of upper-class support, from professional men and some merchants as well as landowners'. However, he recognises that some clubs recruited mainly from the ranks of the middling sort of people, including craftsmen and retailers, but also involved professional men, while other clubs had a largely artisanal membership.³³

As Brooks shows, there is evidence that while many professionals were part of the local elite, many were also considered to be part of the middling groups in urban society. Large numbers of those who trained to enter the professions were drawn from social groups below the landed gentry, and most medical and legal professionals were

³⁰ Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775', pp. 49-50.

³¹ See below, pp. 131-135, 164-166, 188-193, 220-222, 241-242, 266-267, 269.

³² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 212-215, 218-219, 289; Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-80: urbane or civic?', p. 208; Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 87-88.

³³ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 211-215.

trained in a similar way to men in other occupations, either by apprenticeship or a comparable system. Furthermore, although some high-ranking legal officials achieved vast wealth and entered the ranks of the aristocracy, many successful attorneys in large towns ranked below the wealthier merchants in terms of both their financial means and their political influence.³⁴ Clark's elision of the professions with the elite sits uneasily with recent research that emphasises the alliances between the upper and lower bourgeoisie, and exposes the middling sort of people as a group with values of their own.³⁵ It is important to examine the sociable experiences of the middling sort of people, who were highly active in urban sociability, in institutions including parish churches and trade guilds.³⁶

In order to explore the patterns of sociability of individuals from the middling groups and meaner sorts, we must first attempt to establish what time was available for recreation for these social groups.³⁷ The average working day seems to have been long in the early modern period, though it is difficult to assess this with any certainty as labourers were not paid by the hour. However, the Statute of Artificers and the rules of individual town governments stipulated a working day of at least ten hours and sometimes more than twelve hours, beginning at either 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. Surviving accounts for building labour show that the basic working week ran from Monday to Saturday, and that working on Sundays was unusual. It has recently been suggested that only a small number of holidays were lost after the Reformation, and that northern building labourers were usually allowed time off for Whit, Easter and

³⁴ C. W. Brooks, 'Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries' in Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, pp. 113-140.

³⁵ Brooks, 'Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort', pp. 113-140; Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 94-95; Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, passim; M. R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London, 1996), pp. 193-215 and passim.

³⁶ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 84-112; Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-80: urbane or civic?', pp. 198-234.

³⁷ J. Barry, 'Leisure and Sociability', unpublished chapter draft, pp. 1-2.

Christmas, and for some other holidays.³⁸ This seems to have been a period when artisans and labourers often put in long hours on the days that they worked, but were able to enjoy sociable activities on holidays and Sundays, as well as in the evenings.³⁹

Individuals from the middling sort also sometimes engaged in sociable recreation on weekdays that were not part of the traditional ritual calendar. Master craftsmen who operated with the help of an apprentice or family members had more freedom to choose to spend days away from work than wage labourers, though too much time off would inevitably endanger their livelihood. The Lancaster merchant William Stout noted in 1705, for example, that his friend's son 'was not very diligent in his busines, but went much a-hunting and fishing'.⁴⁰ Professionals also seem to have been able to spend some time socialising on weekdays. While articled clerks seem to have been expected to work long hours, for example, lawyers are known to have spent time travelling to see clients and waiting for them in coffee-houses or alehouses, which might allow opportunities for sociability.⁴¹ Furthermore, while fairs, horse-races and cock-fights were often timed to coincide with the days of the ritual calendar, they were not always held on recognised national holidays. Despite this, those attending such events included 'Apprentices, Servants, and the lowest Sort of Tradesmen', suggesting that these occasions often operated as local holidays, when some masters took time off themselves and allowed their workers to do the same. Communal celebrations for rites of passage, including weddings and funerals, were also held throughout the year. Such

³⁸ D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 122-132.

³⁹ Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 122-132.

⁴⁰ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 15; J. D. Marshall (ed.), *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., 14, 1967), p. 152.

⁴¹ C. W. Brooks, *Lawyers, Litigation and English Society Since 1450* (London, 1998), pp. 160-161, 93-94; C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers And Vipers of the Commonwealth: The 'Lower Branch' of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 187-188.

events may account for some of the days that northern building workers took off from work on days other than traditional national holidays.⁴²

The current historiography not only tends to neglect the sociable interactions of the middling ranks and meaner sort of urban residents, but also overlooks the values of townspeople. The orthodoxy relies on the pursuit of emulation to explain the increased spending on new forms of polite sociability. Clark's recent work on clubs shows less interest in how contemporaries experienced membership of such societies than in charting their rise. Rather than examining the values and attitudes of members, he offers an analysis of the effectiveness of clubs based on the rather unrealistic measure of their national impact. Not surprisingly, he finds that societies were relatively ineffective in fields such as scientific invention or moral improvement, and he falls back ultimately on 'the hope of relaxation and happiness' as the explanation for membership of such organisations.⁴³ As we have already seen, human sociable interactions form part of complex value systems, and cannot be explained simply by the invocation of a supposedly constant desire for pleasure.⁴⁴ The tendency to view London as a model for emulation by provincial towns can also be exposed as an over-simplification. English provincial towns were the centres for local politics and distribution of goods, and their economic strength has been established as an important factor in the long-term industrialising process of the eighteenth century. Provincial towns such as Hull and

⁴² Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 15-33, 49, 51; Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 132. See below, pp. 137-138, 165, 168.

⁴³ Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-80: urbane or civic?', pp. 208-209; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 430-469, 491 and passim.

⁴⁴ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', p. 98. See above, pp. 1-3.

Colchester had a strong and independent civic self-consciousness, which was expressed in the town histories written by residents.⁴⁵

Despite the relatively small size of towns in early modern England, contemporaries recognised the existence of a distinctively urban culture. Moralists and religious commentators criticised dissolute living in towns, while some urban dwellers relished the greater vitality of the town. The dissenter William Hutton wrote of his first visit to Birmingham in 1741 'I was surprised at the Place but more at the People. They were a Species I had never seen. They possessed a Vivacity I had never beheld. I had been among Dreamers, but now I saw Men awake.'⁴⁶ Towns had a more complex occupational structure, different institutions and a larger population, which structured urban life and urban sociability. The very largest towns, such as Newcastle, and even county centres such as Durham were perhaps most likely to have a distinctively urban atmosphere, though very small towns could be perceived by contemporaries as distinctively urban.⁴⁷ However, although it has been suggested that there was a gulf between urban and rural culture, towns and the countryside that surrounded them were highly inter-dependent, and urban centres provided goods and services to their hinterlands. Rural and urban communities had a significant level of shared experience, and the same occupations could be found in both types of settlement. Town and country dwellers also shared the same ritual calendar and the socialising that went with it.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Barry, 'Provincial town culture 1640-80: urbane or civic?', pp. 198-234; R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 236-275.

⁴⁶ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 261; P. Corfield, *The impact of English towns 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (London, 1976), pp. 4-16.

⁴⁸ C. B. Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England: Cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces 1660-1780* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 1-13 and passim; R. Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 228-230.

While sociability has been very significant in the historiography of towns it has also been important to the study of gender roles. The gendered nature of sociable interactions is at the heart of the powerful narrative of gender history articulated by Davidoff and Hall in their 1987 book, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. They suggest that the process of class formation in the later eighteenth to early nineteenth century was defined by a transition in gender relations. The middle class increasingly valued the confinement of women to the domestic sphere, and women ceased to socialise together with men to any significant degree. The chronology of this transition is not very clearly delineated in this book, and its 'separate spheres' thesis has been criticised for failing to trace the suggested changes through the long eighteenth century. Furthermore, upon very little evidence, the thesis assumes a golden age of heterosociability in the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ There has been little work on female sociability in the earlier period, despite Hindle and Capp's work on women's gossip and Wilson's research into the management of childbirth as an exclusively female ritual.⁵⁰

The foundations of Davidoff and Hall's arguments about class formation have increasingly come under attack as historians have uncovered a thriving seventeenth and eighteenth-century middling sort, and a longer-term industrialising process.⁵¹ Various historians have emphasised that we must not impose modern definitions of private and public onto the past, and that we should be aware of the tensions and possibilities for

⁴⁹ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), passim.

⁵⁰ S. Hindle, 'The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley', *Continuity and Change*, 9, 3 (1995), 391-421; B. Capp, 'Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 117-145.

⁵¹ Barker and Chalus, 'Introduction', pp. 13-15, 22-23.

flexibility in the definitions of contemporaries.⁵² This seems particularly important with regard to later eighteenth-century women's charity work, which was perceived by contemporaries as a natural extension of the female domestic role. In practice, such a role gave women (limited) opportunities for agency in pursuing lives that we might choose to describe as public. The same might be said about those eighteenth-century women who played a role in the political sociability that accompanied the election campaigns of their fathers, husbands or brothers.⁵³ Vickery also argues that the terms of the current debate are unhelpful; the 'spheres' that Davidoff and Hall describe cannot fail to be confused with the emergence of the public sphere posited by Habermas.⁵⁴

The most recent work on gender may well have debunked some of the myths surrounding the idea of the creation of 'separate spheres' in the later eighteenth century. However, as I will show, gender historians have fallen back onto another insufficiently substantiated historical master-narrative, this time about politeness, publicity and sociability. Barker and Chalus, for example, suggest that the public role of both men and women expanded in the eighteenth century due to the new culture of polite society delineated by Borsay and Langford. They argue that these increasing opportunities for women's activities outside the domestic sphere led to increasing anxiety about women's 'public' roles among later eighteenth-century moralists. Barker and Chalus suggest that women had new opportunities to attend societies, assemblies and libraries, while clubs and coffee-houses were male-only preserves.⁵⁵ A recent study by Vickery draws

⁵² H. Barker and E. Chalus, 'Introduction', pp. 18-24.

⁵³ E. Chalus, 'That epidemical Madness': women and electoral politics in the late eighteenth century' in Barker and Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 151-178.

⁵⁴ A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), 383-414.

⁵⁵ L. Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere' in J. Still and M. Worton (eds.), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 100-115; H. Barker and E. Chalus, 'Introduction', pp. 22-25. Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, passim; P. Langford, *A Polite and*

attention to the sheer wealth of public opportunities available to genteel women in the Georgian period, including the leisure facilities provided in towns, increasing opportunities for female charitable work and growing female correspondence.⁵⁶

While these first attempts to analyse the social lives of eighteenth-century women are extremely welcome, there is little effort to compare later patterns of socialising with women's sociability in the earlier period. This results in insufficient attention to continuity. We already know that in the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century both men and women attended life-cycle celebrations, including christenings, gossipings after churchings, weddings and funerals.⁵⁷ There was female participation in most of the festivals of the calendar year, including May Day, and women also attended fairs.⁵⁸ Although it has been suggested that the alehouse was a male-dominated space, seventeenth-century ballads frequently referred to women drinking together at inns. Women certainly attended alehouses with their menfolk or with groups of women, and they usually attended community or family festivities that were held in inns.⁵⁹ In the absence of more detailed research on women's socialising in the sixteenth and seventeenth century it is too early for Vickery to assert that Stuart women were restricted to 'the occasional social thrill at the assizes, a horse-race or a fair'.⁶⁰ It is also important to differentiate carefully between women from different social groups. Even if we accept the flowering of the so-called 'urban renaissance', the wives of guild members are unlikely to have participated in it in precisely the same way

Commercial People: England 1727-1783 (first edition 1989, reprinted Oxford 1992), pp. 59-121. See below, pp. 89-92 for the ways in which some women were able to participate in club sociability.

⁵⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 287-288.

⁵⁷ D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (first edition 1997, reprinted Oxford, 1999), pp. 164-172, 201-203, 350-376, 435-455.

⁵⁸ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 53-56; R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The emergence of separate spheres?* (London, 1998), pp. 275-276.

⁵⁹ P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London, 1983), pp. 225, 236, 311-312; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, pp. 274-275.

⁶⁰ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 288.

as the women of the gentry. Recreational patterns were certainly structured by gender, but as we have already seen, they are equally likely to have been affected by social status.⁶¹

As the preceding discussion has shown, the current historiography provides a limited and fragmented picture of sociable interactions in early modern England. This thesis is an attempt to provide an integrated account of some aspects of sociability, exploring how different social groups and both genders socialised in both town and country in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. This will illuminate the history of sociable interaction in the past and will also provide an opportunity to test one of the key arguments of the urban renaissance model, the theory that the post-Restoration period saw a decisive change in modes of socialising. This will be achieved by looking at both traditional forms of sociability and those that have been seen as constituting a reinvigoration of urban culture, across the period that has been credited with the transition. The research presented here takes the form of a regional study, because this permits particularly close attention to the dynamics of change, and the relation of older modes of socialising to those that tend to be thought of as new.⁶²

This thesis focuses on the north east region, which has generally been defined as the two counties of Northumberland and Durham. These counties, bounded by the Tees and Tweed, form a distinct geographical unit, and in ecclesiastical terms were

⁶¹ Scott emphasises the need to avoid thinking of women as one homogenous group sharing identical experiences. See J. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *American Historical Review*, 91, 5 (1986), pp. 1053-1075. See above, pp. 10-13.

⁶² See above, pp. 1-17.

administered together as the diocese of Durham.⁶³ The most densely populated parts of the region were Tyneside, Wearside and the lowland areas to the south and east, while the western moors and fells were far more sparsely settled.⁶⁴ Newcastle and Durham were the urban centres of the north east, and the trade in coal made Newcastle one of the largest and most important provincial towns in England. When Sir William Brereton visited the town in 1635 he was highly impressed, describing it as 'beyond all compare the fairest and richest towne in England'. At the start of the seventeenth century the town already housed around 10,000 people and by 1700 Newcastle was the fourth largest town in England, with a population of approximately 14,000, which grew to a staggering 30,000 by the 1730s.⁶⁵ Newcastle and the Tyneside region were among the first areas in Britain to become industrialised. By the 1720s the coal trade earned Newcastle an estimated £250,000 a year, and other industries, including shipping, glass-making and salt-making were also stimulated by the coal trade.⁶⁶ Eighteenth-century Newcastle also profited from providing goods and services to its improving agricultural hinterland.⁶⁷

Durham was only fifteen miles away from Newcastle, and the two towns were interdependent within the regional economy. Durham had been important in medieval times as the jurisdictional and administrative centre of the Bishop of Durham's palatinate, despite the fact that in terms of size, Durham was a relatively small market town. The population in the sixteenth century has been estimated at between 3,000 and

⁶³ L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London, 1988), p. 51; R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 63-65.

⁶⁴ L. Gooch, *The Desperate Faction? The Jacobites of North East-England 1688-1745* (Hull, 1995), p. xiv.

⁶⁵ Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 8; J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *North Country Diaries II* (Surtees Society, 124, 1914), p. 15; J. Ellis, 'A dynamic society - social relations in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 1660-1760' in Clark (ed.), *Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, p. 192.

⁶⁶ Ellis, 'A dynamic society', pp. 192-193.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

4,000 inhabitants, rising to approximately 4,500 by the mid-eighteenth century. The town acted as the social centre of the county, housing numerous lawyers who served the Palatinate Chancery and church courts, as well as many clergymen.⁶⁸ Durham was already experiencing an influx of gentry residents by 1639, when John Aston remarked on the number of gentry families who had moved into the city, calling it 'the London (as it were) of these north parts, which extend as farre as Barwick'.⁶⁹

The north east displays some distinctive regional features, such as the slow pace of urbanisation. The northern counties of England were less densely urbanised than the south of the country in the mid-sixteenth century, and market towns were particularly sparse in Northumberland. Very few towns in the two counties possessed more than 2,000 residents, and in the county of Northumberland there were 250 square miles to every market. The borders had a reputation for lawlessness, particularly in the earlier part of the period.⁷⁰ However, while later historians have tended to characterise the north as a backward region, it is clear that the two counties were participating in the mainstream of developments that were affecting other areas of the country, and that conclusions that are drawn from a study of the area are potentially more widely applicable.⁷¹ Family structures in the north east seem to have conformed broadly to the patterns found across England, and my previous research into sexual assault found few differences between attitudes to rape in the north and south-east of England. Recent research into building and re-building suggests that the development of housing in early

⁶⁸ A. G. Green, 'House and Households in County Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, c1570-1730', University of Durham, Ph.D thesis (2001), pp. 35, 38-39; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 9-10; M. Knight, 'Litigants and litigation in the seventeenth century palatinate of Durham', University of Cambridge, Ph.D thesis (1990), pp. 90-91.

⁶⁹ J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), p. 7.

⁷⁰ J. K. Walton 'North' in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain II*, p. 121; E. Hughes, *North Country Life In The Eighteenth Century: The North-East, 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), pp. xiv-xv.

⁷¹ S. J. Watts and S. J. Watts, *From Border to Middle Shire: Northumberland 1586-1625* (Leicester, 1975), p. 13; M. James, *Family, Lineage and Civil Society* (Oxford, 1974), passim; Knight, 'Litigants and litigation', pp. 18-66.

modern County Durham, northern Yorkshire and southern Northumberland was comparable to patterns in the southern counties of England. Furthermore, expenditure on consumer goods in urban locations in the region also seems to have been in line with national trends.⁷²

Some potential lines of enquiry have been excluded from this thesis on the grounds of space. The sociability of the church calendar, and associated life-cycle events have been well covered elsewhere, and no attempt is made to deal with them extensively here.⁷³ Political sociability is also excluded from this thesis, both because such an investigation would necessitate considerable exploration of town government records, and because the historiography already includes a detailed case-study of political association in eighteenth-century Newcastle.⁷⁴ Source material relating to attempts by the authorities to regulate recreational activity has not been consulted, because it relates largely to the earlier period, and focuses on the preoccupations of the magistracy.⁷⁵

The historian of sociability faces an evidential bias towards formal and institutional sociability, and this thesis uses letters and diaries in an effort to counteract this potential imbalance. It is important to recognise that many of the new forms of sociability have tended to leave records of their activities only because they were

⁷² D. Levine and K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), passim; R. F. King, 'Rape in England 1600-1800: Trials, Narratives and the Question of Consent', University of Durham, M.A. thesis (1998), passim; Green, 'House and Households in County Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, c1570-1730', pp. 30, 46; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*, pp. 51-52.

⁷³ See for example, Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, passim; D. Cressy, *Bonfires And Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989), passim; R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History Of The Ritual Year In Britain* (Oxford, 1996), passim; R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford, 1994), passim.

⁷⁴ K. Wilson, *The sense of the people: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (first edition 1995, reprinted Cambridge, 1998), pp. 287-375 and passim.

⁷⁵ Barry, 'Leisure and Sociability', unpublished chapter draft, p. 3.

sufficiently organised and commercialised to advertise. Many associations met quietly in local alehouses and coffee houses, without leaving any records of their existence. Similarly, activities such as impromptu group drinking often went unrecorded, and are therefore often lost to the historian. Inevitably, there is better survival of evidence from the end of our period than from the earlier period, and the surviving evidence is also biased towards the social activities of the better-off. Although we are able to discern much about the activities of the middling sort, glimpses of the sociability of the labouring poor are rare. It is also often easier to assess the sociable experiences of men than of women, though material relating to women's sociability was consulted wherever possible.⁷⁶

This work draws on a wide range of sources, including the records of various Durham and Newcastle guilds, and some of the records of the town governments of the two cities. The surviving records of the clubs and societies of the region are also used, along with the printed material produced by clubs. Letters and diaries written by residents of the north east are consulted, as are over a thousand advertisements for recreational activities that were placed in the local newspapers, together with editorial reports of such activities, and a national periodical, the *Racing Calendar*. The second chapter explores socialising within trade companies, and assesses the characteristics and values of guild sociability, and how these changed over time. The third chapter traces the development of clubs and societies in the towns of the north east of England, discusses the profile of those who participated in these organisations and examines how members interacted. The fourth chapter considers sports, analysing the location of horse-races and cock-fights, who attended such events, who funded them and how they

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4. See below, pp. 255-318 for a discussion of private sociability based largely on letters and diaries.

were experienced. The fifth chapter deals with the same questions in relation to the development of the arts in the region, focusing on theatre, music and dance. The sixth chapter turns to the subject of private sociability, and examines the patterns of sociable interactions that contemporaries considered private, and the way in which letter-writing functioned as a form of virtual socialising. The concluding chapter draws on all the material presented in the thesis to offer a critical re-assessment of the extent to which the later seventeenth century marked a turning-point in patterns of sociability.

Chapter Two: The institutional sociability of the Durham and Newcastle trade guilds

I

Trade companies were highly significant institutions within early modern towns, and guild celebrations were important social occasions for many urban residents. Several historians, including Barry and Brooks, demonstrate the economic and cultural importance of trade companies in towns. Their research shows how the middling sort of people relied on trade guilds to mediate the differences that sometimes arose in the urban community, and to soften the destabilising effects of immigration. Urban households also depended on the charitable services of the companies in times of trouble. Apprenticeship, the system of training administered by the guilds, educated succeeding generations of young men in important civic values, and association within the guild bound householders into this same value system.¹ Some trade companies in declining centres may have experienced difficulties in recruitment and trade regulation by the later seventeenth century. In many towns, however, including London, Newcastle and Oxford, the guilds are known to have played an important economic and social role until the mid-eighteenth century.²

¹ J. P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, 1997), pp. 3, 6, 72, 146; I. W. Archer, *The History of The Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, 1991), p. 128; J. Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in J. Barry and C. W. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 84-112; C. W. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort, 1550-1800' in Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, pp. 52-83.

² R. M. Berger, *The Most Necessary Luxuries: The Mercers Company of Coventry, 1550-1680* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 4, 42, 56-57, 79-81 and passim; M. J. Walker, 'The Extent of the Guild Control of Trades in England c1660-1820: A Study Based on a Sample of Provincial Towns and London Companies', University of Cambridge, Ph.D thesis (1985), pp. 13, 17, 20, 22-23 and passim.

However, these insights have rarely been integrated into the later writing on urban history, which has continued in an older historiographical tradition that caricatures the guilds as monopolistic and anti-competitive institutions.³ No monograph addresses the ongoing economic significance of provincial trade companies in the period after the Glorious Revolution, and historians persist in back projecting the collapse of the guild system. Recent work continues to assert that trade companies were in severe decline after 1700, and fails to acknowledge the continued importance of sociability in trade guilds in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁴ None of those writing on polite leisure makes any consistent attempt to address socialising at guild celebrations, which remains a relatively neglected subject. Furthermore, although the recent historiography of death has revealed much about early modern funeral customs, the role of guilds at urban funerals attracts little attention. This is particularly surprising given the importance of trade companies within early modern urban communities, and the significance of guild association for the middling sort, a group whose sociability is otherwise difficult to explore.⁵

This chapter explores sociability within the early modern trade guild through a detailed case study of six individual companies. Three Newcastle guilds and three Durham companies were chosen, and their accounts, orders and minutes were analysed. In the next section of this chapter the profile of the selected companies will be established, and the limitations of the source material discussed. The functions of trade

³ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 13, 17, 20, 22-23.

⁴ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 35, 83, 185.

⁵ For works that fail to address guild festivities see P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), passim; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), passim; D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (first edition 1997, reprinted Oxford, 1999), passim; R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), passim. For an exploration of middling sort association that recognises the importance of guilds see Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 84-112.

guilds in early modern towns are then briefly summarised, and the ethos of company sociability is explored. Participation in guild celebrations is then discussed in terms of both gender and social class, before the characteristics of guild association are established. The chapter ends with a critical assessment of the degree of change over time, describing both the changes and continuities in guild celebrations between the early seventeenth century and mid-eighteenth century.

II

The companies studied here were chosen in order to provide a broad picture of guild sociability, both in major trades and in those of lower status. The Newcastle Hostmen and Durham Mercers were the most eminent of the companies examined in this chapter, and men from these guilds exercised considerable power in the governments of their towns.⁶ The Newcastle Hostmen were first mentioned in the records of the Newcastle Merchants from the fourteenth century, and were incorporated in 1600.⁷ The company was not a trade guild as such, but a fraternity of coal-owners, which had its beginnings in the Newcastle practice of 'hosting' merchants from outside the town who wished to buy goods in Newcastle. In the sixteenth century the Newcastle Hostmen obtained the lucrative monopoly on the sale of coal, which was confirmed in 1600 by royal charter, and members proceeded to buy coal-mines to exploit their monopoly.⁸ Membership of the company was theoretically open to any freeman of Newcastle who could afford the entry fees, but in practice the Hostmen attempted to

⁶ R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 3-4, 34, 39-40, 44, 47; R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols., London, 1816-40), vol. 4, pp. 14-15.

⁷ F. W. Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne* (Surtees Society, 105, 1901), pp. xxviii-xxix, 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xxviii-xxxiii.

restrict admission to the sons and apprentices of their own members.⁹ The twelve highest status guilds, and to a lesser extent the fifteen 'bye-trades', had theoretical voting rights in the mayoral election, but in practice the system was one of co-option. In reality, civic offices in Newcastle were controlled by a narrow elite of wealthy merchants who were also often members of the Company of Hostmen.¹⁰

The Durham Mercers Company, whose records begin in 1590, was a combination of five earlier companies that claimed dates of incorporation between 1345 and 1467.¹¹ Durham, like Newcastle, was relatively unusual among northern towns in that members of some of the guilds were able to vote to elect the mayor. In the north of England only a select group of town guilds had this political power, including those in Carlisle, Durham, Newcastle and York.¹² In Durham, as in Newcastle, the franchise was limited. Under Bishop Matthew's charter, granted to the city of Durham in 1602, four of the Durham guilds were ineligible to vote, and the twelve major trades contributed one alderman and two common councillors each. These thirty-six individuals elected the town's mayor. However, the members of the common council were not elected by all the members of the twelve major trades, but were co-opted by the mayor and aldermen, who also chose new aldermen.¹³ Furthermore, the mayoral office appears to have been dominated by members of the Durham Mercers Company. In the 1680s and 1690s, for example, the vast majority of those occupying the office seem to have been mercers,

⁹ Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, p. 45; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen*, p. xli.

¹⁰ J. Ellis, 'A dynamic society - social relations in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 1660-1760' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London, 1984), pp. 202, 205-206, 223 n. 33; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 34, 39-40, 44, 47.

¹¹ C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 9, 2 (1941), 234.

¹² D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 29.

¹³ Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, pp. 14-15; C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 9, 3 (1943), 347-348.

and their names are listed either among those who attended mercers' meetings or in the admissions lists of the company.¹⁴

The remaining four guilds examined in this case-study were classified as lesser trades, and had considerably less political and economic power than the elite companies of the two towns. The Newcastle Company of Shipwrights seems to have been incorporated before 1604, and the Company of Barber-Surgeons, Wax and Tallow Chandlers was incorporated in 1442.¹⁵ These Newcastle trade guilds were both bye-trades, and were permitted only limited participation in elections of town officers. After 1604 the fifteen bye-trades were allowed to nominate fifteen candidates for potential election to the common council. However, the twelve major guilds were able to exclude these bye-trade candidates entirely, by only selecting nominees from within their own guilds. In Durham the four lesser trades were excluded from any participation in elections for the town government, and two of these guilds have been selected for study.¹⁶ The Durham Company of Barber Surgeons and Waxmakers received their charter on 20th February 1468. The Ropers and Stringers united with the Barber Surgeons and Waxmakers at the end of the sixteenth century, and the surgeons proceeded to leave the guild in the last two decades of the seventeenth century, after which the guild was known as the Barbers, Stringers and Ropers.¹⁷ The Durham

¹⁴ Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, pp. 14-15; A. Hamilton-Thompson, "On a Minute-book and Papers formerly belonging to the Mercers' Company; and 'Ordinary' of the Goldsmiths' Company; both of Durham city", *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd ser., 19 (1922), 210-253; DUL, Bramwell Bequest, Mercers bundle.

¹⁵ D. J. Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights of Newcastle Upon Tyne 1622-1967*, Vol. I (Surtees Society, 181, 1970), pp. 2-3; D. Embleton, 'The Incorporated Company of Barber-Surgeons and Wax and Tallow Chandlers of Newcastle upon Tyne', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, new ser., 15 (1892), 230.

¹⁶ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 347-348; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 42-43, 43 n. 2.

¹⁷ DUL, DCG, Barbers/13; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 158-159.

Company of Curriers and Tallow Chandlers was in existence by the late sixteenth century, and their charter was granted in approximately 1570.¹⁸

These guilds were chosen not only in order to include both elite and less powerful companies, but were also selected on the basis of document survival. Care was taken to ensure the inclusion of guild records from the early part of the period as well as material from the first half of the eighteenth century. The Durham Curriers and Tallow Chandlers, for example, were chosen because, despite the limited scope of the guild's records, they span almost the whole period under consideration. The Curriers records are extant from 1589 to 1686, and then run from 1697 to beyond the mid- eighteenth century.¹⁹ Material from the first half of the seventeenth century survives in the records of all of the six trade companies that were investigated for this chapter.²⁰

The guild records provide ample evidence for a detailed reconstruction of guild sociability, but there are some obvious limits to what can be gleaned from the sources. Details of the recreational life of the companies often only appear in the company's minutes or order books when the organisation of an event changed, or when members were fined for their lateness or non-attendance at a social occasion. Guild accounts show that celebrations often occurred without being mentioned in the minutes.²¹ There are also limits on what the accounts can tell us. Gifts of food or drink have usually left no trace, because items that did not cost money did not appear in the accounts. Dinners were often supposed to be paid for by contributions from guild members, and so might

¹⁸ Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds - continued*, 267.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 273; DUL, DCG, Curriers/1; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2; DUL, DCG, Curriers/3.

²⁰ TWA, GU/HO/1/1; TWA, GU/BS/2/1; TWA, GU/BS/5/1; TWA, GU/SH/4/1; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I*, 158-175, 234-262; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds - continued*, 273; DUL, DCG, Curriers/1; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2; DUL, DCG, Curriers/3.

²¹ TWA, GU/CF/10; TWA, GU/BS/1/1, fol. 119; TWA, GU/BS/1/2, p. 257; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 47B.

not appear in the accounts as an item of company expenditure. Informal sociability that took place between guild members but did not involve guild spending is also lost to us, because it would not be recorded in the company's records.²² Money spent on sociability may also be submerged in the composite entries often used to denote expenditure on several items without listing each one separately. The Newcastle Shipwrights, for example, ended their account for 1678 with the unhelpful entry 'more disbursed' 6s 7d.²³ Inevitably, therefore, the description of guild sociability provided here is an understatement of the extent of institutional recreational activity.

There are also difficulties in using the dates given in the accounts to pinpoint when money was spent on food, drink or music. Firstly, the dates given are sometimes the dates on which payments were made, rather than the days on which the food, drink, or music was provided or consumed. The accounts contain various instances where money was listed as having been spent on food or drink at a meeting, but where the date given for the payment does not match the meeting date recorded in the guild minute-book. Secondly, these guild accounts were usually divided under various date headings, or by marginal date references. The expenses given at the end of a long list under a particular date heading were often spent between that date and the next date heading, rather than on the day itself. This study does not attempt to ascribe dates to those account items under date headings where there is obvious ambiguity.²⁴

Although the guilds selected for this case study were chosen to ensure coverage of the pre-1650 period, the minutes and account series survive in greater numbers from

²² Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I, 235-237.

²³ Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, p. 91.

²⁴ See DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 56B, account to 1718. The account includes payments for main meeting day expenses that were paid on 13 November 1716, but the minutes give the date of 12 November for the meeting. See DUL, DCG, Mercers/1, fol. 37; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 30.

the mid-seventeenth century. Most of the companies' records contain some gaps in the civil war years, such as the accounts of the Durham Mercers guild, which break off between 1633 and 1655. Even where guild records do survive for these years, they are often incomplete, and lacking in detail. The surviving guild records of Newcastle and Durham are both more complete and more detailed for the period after 1650. Inevitably, then, we gain a clearer picture of the recreational practices of the trade companies from the second half of the seventeenth century. However, the surviving records do provide a wealth of detail, which allows the values and patterns of guild sociability to be assessed. The following section examines the important role that trade companies played in the early modern urban community, and establishes how guild association was conceptualised.²⁵

III

Guilds regulated many of the trades practised in incorporated towns, and also facilitated association, which encouraged good relations between those working in the same trade. Guild economic regulation was highly flexible, and was responsive to the prevailing economic conditions. When members of a particular guild were inundated with demand, guild officials allowed, or even licensed, non-guild members to soak up the excess demand. In this way the Newcastle Barber Surgeons exacted 'Castle Garth' tolls from non-guild members living in that liberty of the town in exchange for allowing them to work, and the Durham Tanners bought bark from non-guild members. There was some decline in provincial guild control of trades from the late seventeenth century, but this was initially experienced only among a few trades, including among merchants

²⁵ DUL, DCG, Mercers/1; DUL, DCG, Mercers/9; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/1; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1; DUL, DCG, Barbers/2; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3; DUL, DCG, Barbers/13; DUL, DCG, Barbers/14.

and drapers. In the majority of trades regulation was only relaxed from the 1720s, and other crafts such as shipbuilding and surgery were subject to strong guild regulation until the later eighteenth century. The erosion of the companies' regulatory functions was gradual, and enforcement only declined seriously from the mid-eighteenth century.²⁶

Throughout the period, provincial trade guilds protected the livelihood of their members by controlling the admission of apprentices, prices, wages and working practices. These restrictions were designed for the mutual benefit of members, to prevent them being under-cut either by those outside the guild or by one-another. The trade companies of both Newcastle and Durham prosecuted outsiders, known as 'foreigners', who worked at a trade within the city, but were not members of the relevant guild.²⁷ Until the third decade of the eighteenth century all the Newcastle companies also actively protected the 'foreign bought and foreign sold' custom, which dictated that all commodities bought in the port must be purchased from a freeman of the town. During the same period the city also fought to maintain its prized monopoly as the only port on the Tyne where goods could be legitimately loaded or unloaded.²⁸ Within individual towns, guilds protected their privileges from encroachments by other guilds, and demarcation disputes sometimes arose over which guild was entitled to carry out a

²⁶ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 69, 94, 126, 164-165, 60, 391; F. W. Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, Vol. I (Surtees Society, 93, 1895), pp. xxxix-xlvii.

²⁷ C. W. Brooks, 'Guilds and the middling sort of people in England, 1550-1700', unpublished chapter draft, pp. 2-3; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 52; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 25-26; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 242-244.

²⁸ R. Howell (ed.), *Monopoly on the Tyne, 1650-58, Papers relating to Ralph Gardener* (Newcastle, 1978), pp. 1-19; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 4-6; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. xxxix-xlvii.

particular kind of work. The guilds also safeguarded consumers against sharp practice, by policing standards of workmanship.²⁹

Trade companies were not only economic institutions, but also played an important social role in early modern towns, where the pressures of constant immigration increased the potential for conflict. This conflict was not only expressed in slanderous words exchanged between middling sort women in public places, but also in disputes that arose between guild members.³⁰ These disagreements appeared in the books of the trade companies because the guilds acted to resolve disputes, fining members for defaming their fellows with 'undecent or reveiling words'.³¹ The records of the Newcastle Barber Surgeons Company provide the most detailed picture of these disagreements, often citing the form of offensive words used. When craftsmen argued, insults about workmanship were often exchanged, as when one man was fined in 1706 for telling a fellow member 'before the mayor he did not understand his businesse'.³² Other disputes arose over allegations of dishonesty, to which artisans were highly sensitive. One Newcastle Barber Surgeon reported another on the 6th of December 1664 'for abusing him in the spittle in calling him dissembling knave & he would prove it'.³³ Heated arguments could also be sparked by differences of opinion on company decisions and procedures, as when one member suspected another of voting for 'there electionman' on the grounds of religion.³⁴ The highly colourful language used by guild members included the insults 'ignoramus', 'fool', 'coxcomb', 'busie fellow', 'rogue', 'a

²⁹ Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 34, 18, 29; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 52.

³⁰ Ellis, 'A dynamic society', pp. 190-227; I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), passim; Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', p. 77; L. Gowing, 'Language, Power and the Law: women's slander litigation in early modern London' in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 26-47; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 78-81.

³¹ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 10, 54; TWA, GU/SH/4/1, 30 May 1622.

³² TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 159.

³³ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 255.

³⁴ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 221, 19, 113.

p'fect barettor', 'scatter brains' and 'Scoundrell, Theif & Highwayman'. These disputes occurred occasionally throughout the period, and guilds not only addressed such conflict directly by mediating between the warring parties, but also by acting to strengthen group loyalties.³⁵

Company celebrations provided regular opportunities for men competing within the same trade to develop and strengthen a sense of group identity that minimised conflict both within the guild and within the wider urban community.³⁶ Town governments valued the stabilising role played by trade companies, and the Newcastle common council had such faith in the harmonising influence of guild celebrations that they made contributions towards the cost of wine at guild social occasions during the seventeenth century.³⁷ Ritualised social interactions between guild members were expressions of the ideals of guild fraternity and civic pride, which were also articulated in company ordinances. The charters and orders of the Durham and Newcastle trade companies, like those of the London guilds, emphasised the importance of brotherly unity. In 1649, for example, the Newcastle Shipwrights passed an order explaining that their rules existed so that 'brotherly love and amity may be continued amongst the said society and every one of them'. This ideology of fraternal unity was enacted in charitable giving to members and their families who were suffering financial hardship, attendance at the marriages and funerals of guild members, and ritualised feasting at

³⁵ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 138, 167, 254, 3 October 1670, 12 May 1676, 17 June 1680; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 334; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 78-81; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 236.

³⁶ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', p. 89.

³⁷ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 61-62; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 14.

guild dinners. The following section will establish which members of the urban community were exposed to civic values at these guild social events.³⁸

IV

Institutional sociability is the focus of this chapter, and this is defined here as guild social occasions to which all members were invited. Other types of socialising have therefore been excluded, including the money spent by guilds on food or drink for those who were not guild members. Guild officials expended company money on food or drink as part of the salary of workmen, and shared drinks with men who conducted business with the guild, including lawyers and Stamp Officers. Liquid refreshment was very much part of the conduct of business transactions in this period, and guilds also spent money on drink when they organised business meetings in inns. In the early eighteenth century, for example, the Durham Barbers met 'att the Cockpitt house' to discuss a lawsuit, and spent two shillings there in the process. Although these interactions may well have had some social element, they were primarily business meetings, and as such have been excluded from the foregoing discussion of participation in guild sociability.³⁹

Throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, large numbers of men and women attended guild social occasions. Between the mid-sixteenth century and the early eighteenth century the trade companies of the two towns experienced a phase of growth. It has been suggested that apprenticeship enrolments in Newcastle kept pace

³⁸ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 76-77; D. M. Palliser, 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York' in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 109-111; Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 95-104; TWA, GU/SH/4/1, 16 May 1649.

³⁹ DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 217r.

with the increase in population in the city during this period, and it seems likely that enrolments to the Durham guilds increased in the same way. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the recruitment of apprentices in Newcastle probably reached an all-time high.⁴⁰ It is more difficult to analyse admission patterns in Durham, because no freemen's admissions lists survive from before 1725, and there are significant gaps in the admissions records of the individual guilds. However, a collation of published and manuscript lists of admissions to the Durham Mercers is suggestive, and seems to indicate that the same trends may have been experienced in Durham as in Newcastle.⁴¹

In 1600 there were sixteen guilds in the city of Durham, and thirty-six guilds in Newcastle, all of which were still active by the mid-eighteenth century.⁴² Not only did all the guilds survive as operational institutions, but membership levels also remained viable until at least the early eighteenth century. In Newcastle, admissions to some guilds may have declined after 1700, but there was no crisis in admissions. In the Newcastle Joiners guild there were almost as many enrolments between 1725 and 1749 as there had been between 1650 and 1674.⁴³ The Newcastle Shipwrights, experiencing increased prosperity as the shipping trade expanded, saw their admissions peak as late as 1733.⁴⁴ The three Durham guilds studied here also enjoyed healthy entry totals in the first half of the eighteenth century. In the Durham Mercers guild, for example, admissions probably peaked between in the period 1675 to 1699, with a very slight

⁴⁰ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 55-63.

⁴¹ DUL, Bramwell Bequest, Mercers Bundle; Hamilton-Thompson, "On a Minute-book and Papers formerly belonging to the Mercers' Company", 210-253.

⁴² Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 347 and passim; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I, passim; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 123.

⁴³ Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 54.

⁴⁴ Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 3-4.

down-turn in the fifty years thereafter. Between 1650 and 1700, 125 admissions were recorded, and between 1700 and 1750, 124 members were admitted.⁴⁵

The trade guild was an important arena of association for the urban middling sort. Most of the members of a guild initially came under its jurisdiction as apprentices, indentured for a minimum of seven years to a member of the guild.⁴⁶ When they had successfully completed the terms of their apprenticeship, these men were themselves eligible to become guild members. Some apprentices failed to complete their apprenticeships, but in northern towns the drop-out rate appears to have constituted only a small minority of all apprentices indentured. In York, for example, it has been estimated that there were only twenty cases of non-completion among the 286 apprentice bricklayers who were enrolled between 1654 and 1752.⁴⁷ The majority of men who completed their apprenticeships then went on to work for wages as hired journeymen. Many, but by no means all, of these journeymen eventually raised the funds to be admitted as members of the guild, and establish themselves as master craftsmen.⁴⁸ There were several ways of gaining membership of the guild, including the customary right of the eldest son, or in some guilds all the sons, of a freemen to be admitted without serving an apprenticeship.⁴⁹

The gentry also participated in guild sociability, and those claiming the status of gentleman entered the most prestigious guilds in increasing numbers from the late sixteenth century onwards. These individuals were able to join guilds either as apprentices, or as honorary members. In Newcastle, the proportion of gentlemen's sons

⁴⁵ DUL, Bramwell Bequest, Mercers Bundle, Curriers Bundle, Barbers Bundle.

⁴⁶ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', p. 84; Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 55.

⁴⁷ Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 64-72.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 91; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 323-325.

among apprenticeship enrolments increased from the late sixteenth century onwards. The growing desirability of apprenticeships drove up the premiums, resulting in a decline in the proportion of yeomen apprentices, particularly in elite companies such as the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers. At the same time there was also a sharp decline in the enrolment of apprentices whose fathers were husbandmen. The increase in the admission of gentlemen's sons must have markedly altered the atmosphere of the most important trade guilds of Newcastle and Durham, including the Newcastle Hostmen and Merchant Adventurers, and the Durham Mercers. The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, for example, were attracting almost 30 per cent of their recruits from among the sons of those styling themselves gentlemen by the early 1600s.⁵⁰

In the lesser trades, however, there was much greater continuity in the social origins of recruits, because these trades were too low in status to attract a high proportion of gentlemen members. Gentlemen seeking to place their sons seem to have shown very little interest in the Newcastle Joiners Company, for example, which was classified as a 'bye-trade'. In the company records the status or trade of the father was listed for 293 of the apprentices enrolled between 1647 and 1750. Over two thirds of these fathers were described as yeomen, whereas only fourteen were listed as gentlemen, and a further two fathers were styled as a hostman and a merchant.⁵¹ The lesser trade guilds studied here, the Newcastle Barber Surgeons and Shipwrights, and the Durham Barbers and Curriers, probably also admitted a relatively small number of gentleman's sons.⁵²

⁵⁰ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 54-62.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 54-62; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 54-55; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, p. 43 n. 2; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 325-330.

⁵² Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 60-61; Ellis, *A dynamic society*, p. 208.

In the course of the seventeenth century some gentlemen also began to enter trade companies as honorary members.⁵³ Admission to guilds was in demand among those who did not intend to practise the relevant trade because membership of certain guilds conveyed political power and influence within the civic administration, and membership of any Newcastle or Durham trade company conferred the right to vote in parliamentary elections.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the proportion of honorary admissions in Newcastle and Durham in this period has not yet been calculated, and such an undertaking would be beyond the scope of this project. In the earlier seventeenth century the proportion of honorary freemen would probably have been greater in Newcastle than in Durham, because the City of Durham was not enfranchised until 1678. Until this franchise was granted there was less political influence to be gained by having the freedom of Durham than by being an honorary freeman of a Newcastle guild, and presumably there was therefore less demand for membership.⁵⁵

In Durham various formal limits were also placed on the granting of honorary membership, which do not seem to have existed in Newcastle. In 1709 the Durham Curriers guild outlawed the entry of 'Gentlemen or any pretending or Esteemed to be such' unless they had served an apprenticeship or were the sons of freemen. In 1728 the Durham common council banned all the city's guilds from creating honorary admissions, in response to concerns about tradesmen gaining their freedom without being properly apprenticed.⁵⁶ There were some evasions of this regulation, but the three Durham guilds studied here do not seem to have admitted any honorary members

⁵³ M. C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1991), p. 38; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 325-330.

⁵⁴ Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 29; K. Wilson, *The sense of the people: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (first edition 1995, reprinted Cambridge, 1998), pp. 297-299; A. J. Heesom, *Durham City and its M.P.s 1678-1992* (Durham, 1992), p. 19.

⁵⁵ A. J. Heesom, 'The Enfranchisement of Durham', *Durham University Journal*, 80, 2 (1988), 265-285.

⁵⁶ DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 22; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 324, 349-350, 352-353.

between 1728 and 1750.⁵⁷ In Newcastle and in Durham the major trade companies must have been most attractive to potential honorary freemen, because these guilds wielded the most political and economic influence. Membership of the Durham Barbers would have been relatively unappealing, for example, because not only was this trade low in the social hierarchy, but its members had no representation on the common council.⁵⁸

Guild sociability was also characterised by a surprisingly high degree of female participation, despite the near-exclusion of women from the formal business of the guild. Young women were rarely formally apprenticed to craftsmen in sixteenth-century towns, and formal apprenticeship of girls declined across the early modern period. By the eighteenth century apprenticeship of girls has been estimated at a meagre average of 5 per cent of total indentures.⁵⁹ It was rarer still for women to complete their apprenticeship and receive full free status within a guild, and in Tudor York women only accounted for 1 per cent of all admissions to the freedom.⁶⁰ Of the three Durham guilds studied here, only the Mercers guild recorded any admissions of female guild members. The guild admitted two women in the course of the seventeenth century, which accounted for less than 1 per cent of their total admissions in the period from 1600 to 1749. There is no evidence to suggest that the admission of women would have been any higher in the Newcastle guilds.⁶¹ Widows of guild members were permitted to

⁵⁷ In 1761, however, Durham was rocked by the 'mushroom freemen' scandal, when the Corporation unilaterally repealed the bye-law of 1728 and created more than 200 freemen in one day, in an attempt to ensure the election of their favoured parliamentary candidate. See W. Page (ed.), *A History of County Durham: Victoria History of the County of Durham* (3 vols., London, 1908-1928), vol. 3, pp. 44-45; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 351-353; Heesom, *Durham City and its M.P.s*, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁸ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 60-61; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 347-348; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 42-43, 43 n. 2.

⁵⁹ I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Woman apprentices in the trades and crafts of early modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change*, 6, 2 (1991), 237; B. Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰ Palliser, 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York', p. 100.

⁶¹ Hamilton-Thompson, 'On a Minute-book and Papers formerly belonging to the Mercers' Company', 210-253; DUL, Bramwell Bequest, Mercers bundle, Curriers Bundle, Barbers Bundle.

carry on their husband's business after his death, and those who chose to do so were granted membership of the company. A significant minority of widows probably exercised this right, particularly in trades of a workshop based nature. In Chester, for example, approximately 18 per cent of the joiners continued their late husbands' trades. However, widowed guild members were not accorded parity with male members of the guild and could not hold office in their companies.⁶²

Despite this lack of formal participation in guild life, women were integral to both the economic and social life of early modern trade companies. Many women worked hard to ensure the success of the businesses of their husbands, brothers, fathers and neighbours, and their labour was crucial to urban economies. Guild orders recognised their role by referring frequently to both 'brothers' and 'sisters', and including guild members' wives in prohibitive orders relating to working practices. The Durham Barbers guild, for example, forbade any barber or 'his wife' from tempting a potential customer away from another barber's shop or market stall.⁶³ Women were also employed by the guild itself, both to perform cleaning tasks in the meeting house and in other capacities.⁶⁴ The Durham Mercers guild also paid women, some of whom were probably the wives of guild members, to purchase goods from illicit traders. In the accounting year ending in 1665, for example, 'walkers wife of Gilligate' was paid the sum of one shilling 'to buy goods of Mrs Sharpp'. These commodities were later used as evidence when offending traders were prosecuted for infringing the guild monopoly. The guild probably needed to employ women for this task because shopping was generally a female duty, and traders operating illegally were probably more likely to be

⁶² Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 84-91.

⁶³ A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (first edition 1919, reprinted London, 1982), pp. 172-173; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 161; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 269.

⁶⁴ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen*, p. 252.

suspicious of a man shopping, particularly if they recognised him as a local mercer.⁶⁵ Female relatives of guild members, along with other men and women, were also recipients of guild charity.⁶⁶

The wives and widows of guild members frequently attended guild social occasions, and many guild ordinances stipulated that wives should join their husbands at guild dinners. Gowing suggests that urban men and women tended to engage in separate leisure pursuits in the pre-Civil War period, but women were certainly enjoying company social occasions alongside men. The Durham Smiths were particularly flexible, allowing members either to bring their wives or 'one in her place, whether he be married or no'.⁶⁷ The widows of deceased members could continue to participate in the celebrations of their husbands' trade companies, and guild accounts show that trade companies sometimes paid for widows to attend guild dinners as a form of charity. In 1616, for example, the Durham Barbers guild spent two shillings on the three 'wedowes dinners'.⁶⁸ The Durham Mercers records show that women were attending guild dinners and sermons by 1595, and continued to do so until at least 1717. At the celebrations on their main meeting day in November 1717, the company spent £1 1s on 'Wine & Cold Tankards for our Wives'. The merchants and their wives shared a lavish celebration, including a procession, music and a grand dinner. It seems likely that women continued to participate in the sociability of most of the guilds throughout the period, because

⁶⁵ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 5, 12; Hamilton-Thompson, "On a Minute-book and Papers formerly belonging to the Mercers' Company", p. 235; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 168.

⁶⁶ Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 129-130.

⁶⁷ Clark, *Working Life of Women*, pp. 171-172; F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 336-337; L. Gowing "The freedom of the streets": women and social space, 1560-1640' in P. Griffiths and M. S. R. Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London* (Manchester, 2000), p. 141; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 251; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 283, 290.

⁶⁸ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 160; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1, fols. 6r, 99r.

despite the occasional revisions of company ordinances, no guild struck out the provision that wives should attend dinners.⁶⁹

Women not only attended guild dinners, but were also expected to be present at other guild occasions, including funerals. The Durham Mercers charter of 1561, for example, stipulated that when a guild member died a sermon should be preached at St. Nicholas, where 'all brethren and sisters must be present'.⁷⁰ Not only were wives and widows of members present at the funerals of members of trade companies, but the funerals of the wives of guild members were also regarded as guild occasions. A Newcastle common council order on funeral regulation, passed in the 1670s, assumed that members of all the Newcastle guilds attended the funerals both of members of the company and of their spouses.⁷¹ The town's Shipwrights Company not only expected their members to attend the funerals of guild wives and widows, but also made frequent financial contributions towards their burials, as well as to the funerals of guildsmen.⁷² Several companies also welcomed the new wife of a guild brother by attending their wedding. The Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild required members to attend one-another's weddings, and in 1746 a newly-married member was fined for not making the customary present of gloves to the stewards, clerk and beadle.⁷³ It seems likely that wives also attended the celebrations that were held when new members joined the guild, as they did elsewhere in the north. Trade companies valued the participation of women

⁶⁹ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, copy of 1632 ordinances; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/1, fol. 5; DUL, DCG, Mercers/1, 1 October 1716; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 56B.

⁷⁰ Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I, 236.

⁷¹ TWA, GU/CF/10.

⁷² TWA, GU/SH/1/1, 'To Wm Fletcher for summoning ye Company to widdow Kirkley's ffunerall', 1719; TWA GU/SH/1/1, 'Widdow Stanleys buriall', 1698; TWA GU/SH/1/2, 'to Ralph Crow's Wife's Burial' [3 August], 1755.

⁷³ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, p. 67; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, 26th May 1746.

in guild festivities, and provided the wives and widows of guild members with important opportunities for association.⁷⁴

Guild social gatherings often included the households of individual artisans, and companies frequently used familial rhetoric to describe relationships within the company. Guild minutes and orders often described their constituency of craftsmen and their wives as 'brethren and sisters', for example.⁷⁵ If the guild was conceptualised as a family, a common trope in the discourse of early modern institutions, then families were also conceptualised as part of the guild community. Not only did wives and widows play a central role in company celebrations throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, but the children of guild members were also involved. Several trade guilds required the sons and daughters of members to attend company funerals. In 1561 the Durham Mercers demanded that members present themselves at funerals 'with their households', and the Newcastle Merchants also expected children to be present.⁷⁶ In the Newcastle trade companies at least, offspring were so clearly identified as part of the guild community that their funerals were also company occasions. The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers went even further in 1554, calling on members' children to attend guild weddings, and expecting guild households to attend the weddings of members' offspring.⁷⁷ It is unclear at what age children were considered old enough to become involved in guild sociability, but it was clearly not only young children who were accepted as part of the extended guild family. Adult sons and daughters of guild

⁷⁴ Woodward, *Men at work*, p. 73.

⁷⁵ P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 66-67; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 161; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 269.

⁷⁶ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 236; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68.

⁷⁷ TWA, GU/CF/10; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68.

members were accorded the respect of the attendance of the company at their funerals and sometimes at their marriages.⁷⁸ The household-based nature of guild sociability meant that it involved individuals at all stages of the life-cycle, from childhood through to old age.⁷⁹

Not only was the nuclear family involved in guild celebrations, but the inclusion of other household members, such as apprentices and servants, was also perceived to be important. Evidence from other locations in England shows that apprentices were integrated into the sociability of the early modern town, sharing in celebrations that included the whole urban community, such as the rituals of Shrovetide and May-Day, and the socialising that accompanied fairs.⁸⁰ Master craftsmen sometimes socialised together with their apprentices, taking them along with them to the alehouse.⁸¹ However, apprentices also developed friendships with fellow apprentices, servants and other local youths, engaging in certain sorts of social activity that were dominated by the young, such as dancing. Throughout this period, youth was perceived as a 'dangerous age', and the behaviour of apprentices was a recurrent concern within guilds in both Newcastle and Durham.⁸²

Concern seems to have been particularly acute in Newcastle, where apprentices were able to take full advantage of the recreational activities of a provincial capital.⁸³ From at least 1554 the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers railed against their apprentices'

⁷⁸ Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I', 236; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68; TWA GU/CF/10; K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty And Piety In An English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (London, 1979), pp. 47-48.

⁷⁹ Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 53-92.

⁸⁰ I. K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (Yale, 1994), p. 192.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 179; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I', 220, 238, 236; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 57-59; Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, pp. 34-40.

⁸³ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 20-27.

inappropriate conduct, including their extravagant clothing and lack of respect for older guild members. The company also objected to the excessive socialising of apprentices, who were indulging in dancing, card-playing and mumming. The guild order complained that 'theis their dooings are more cumlye and decent for rageng ruffians than seemlye for honest apprentices'. Trade companies regulated apprentice behaviour with a range of punishments, including fines. In Newcastle wayward apprentices could also be subdued by incarceration in the dedicated apprentices' prison. Fears about apprentice behaviour appear to have been at their strongest when there was heightened concern throughout society about the enforcement of morality, as in the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. In Newcastle, however, concern about the behaviour of apprentices continued into the early eighteenth century, suggesting that the unruly conduct of apprentices was an ongoing problem.⁸⁴

The trade companies of both towns were concerned to control the behaviour of apprentices, and attendance at company occasions was regarded as an important way of instilling appropriate values. Participation in guild festivities ensured that apprentices were enculturated into the value system of the guild, learning appropriate values of restraint in eating and drinking, obedience to elders and betters, and 'honest loove unto there equalls'.⁸⁵ In some guilds, including the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers and Durham Mercers, apprentices were required to attend the funerals of guild members and their wives by the mid-sixteenth century. The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers also expected apprentices to attend guild weddings from 1554. Conversely, various guilds also expected members to attend the funerals of those apprentices who were unlucky

⁸⁴ Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I*, 220, 238, 236; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 20-27, 242, 248; Woodward, *Men at Work*, p. 57; Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, pp. 34-40; M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 151-167.

⁸⁵ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68, 20-27, 155.

enough to die before they had served their time. In the 1630s, for example, the Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild spent five shillings on food or drink at the house of one of their members, Henry Wills, when 'Ralph dunnge Apprentice was buried'. At least one guild, the Durham Mercers, also allowed apprentices to attend guild feasts, for which master craftsmen were charged one shilling per apprentice from 1632. In November 1670 apprentices were specifically excluded from the planned feast and sermon, but it is unclear whether apprentices continued to attend on other occasions thereafter.⁸⁶

The involvement of journeymen in guild celebrations was probably less common than the attendance of apprentices, but they may sometimes have been included for similar reasons. Numerous households in the two towns employed journeymen, many of whom were casual labourers, travelling regularly in search of work.⁸⁷ Journeymen were included in guild sociability so that this workforce absorbed the civic values of the guild, ensuring both household and community harmony.⁸⁸ Several guilds required the presence of members' 'servants' at guild social occasions, which not only included the company's apprentices, but also the journeymen employed by guild members.⁸⁹ From the mid-sixteenth century the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers and Durham Mercers insisted that 'servants' should attend guild funerals, and the Merchant Adventurers also required the attendance of journeymen at guild weddings. The guild also noted in 1554 that members of the company 'shall and haythe ben attendant at every fre brother's maryeg and beryall, as well of theyr chyldren as servants, as of ther own selves'. Not only were journeymen required to be in attendance

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 67-68; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I*, 236-237; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 63; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 11 November 1670.

⁸⁷ Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 64-72.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 58, 65.

at guild festivities, but there was also a long-standing corresponding obligation for the company to share the funeral feasts and wedding celebrations of journeymen.⁹⁰ It is difficult to know if the practice of the involvement of members' children and servants continued to the mid-eighteenth century, because guilds did not keep lists of those who attended social occasions, and there are only isolated references to their attendance in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. However, almost all the guilds kept rules relating to their inclusion to the end of the period, suggesting that the whole household continued to participate in company events.⁹¹

V

Having established the profile of participation in guild sociability, it is now necessary to examine the characteristics of association in trade companies. Guild sociable interactions were structured by values, and also acted as an expression of those tenets. The sociability of early modern trade companies was a formalised mode of socialising that expressed the importance that the guilds attached to order. Celebration was confined to its proper time and place, and carousing was forbidden during guild meetings. In 1642, for example, George Durham was fined sixpence by the Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild for saying 'by god he would drink tobaca being at our meeting'. Members were not only penalised for drinking while meetings were in progress, but also for arriving drunk at meetings. Aside from drunkenness, other forms of rowdiness were also prohibited at meetings, including betting, excessive noise, and disorderly behaviour. Members could even be fined for disrespectful conduct, such as failing to

⁹⁰ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Guilds, Part I*, 236.

⁹¹ DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, account for 1700; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 63.

remove their hats while oaths were being sworn.⁹² Relations between guild members were also regulated, and 'unmannerly and unbrotherly words' were punished by fines, or excused in return for an apology from the offender.⁹³

Company sociability was ritualised and ordered, and celebrations were governed by written rules set out in the guilds' books. Companies restricted the right to attend their dinners, and also collected the money for guild feasts according to their written regulations. Guild social occasions had a prescribed format, which reinforced the guild hierarchy. Both in their meetings, and at church, trade companies appear to have been seated according to seniority within the guild, and it appears that the seating order at company dinners was similarly hierarchical. The Durham Barbers, for example, required each member to sit together with his wife, in order of the husband's seniority in the company.⁹⁴ At guild processions, which often accompanied celebrations, members also seem to have assembled in hierarchical order.⁹⁵ During social occasions guild members and their households were expected to behave appropriately, in a modest and restrained manner. The orders of the Durham Smiths referred explicitly to the way in which those invited to its dinners were required to conduct themselves, asking men and their wives to 'sit at the dinner orderly and quietly'.⁹⁶ Members were subject to regulation at guild social occasions, and extreme drunkenness or horseplay could be penalised. In 1605, for example, the Newcastle Housecarpenters fined a member for spilling drink at the company dinner, and from 1657 members of the Durham Masons

⁹² TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 264, 186, 18; Embleton, 'The Incorporated Company of Barber-Surgeons and Wax and Tallow Chandlers', 235, 241, 243.

⁹³ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 221, 19, 113, 305.

⁹⁴ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 27 June 1678; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Guilds. Part I', 161.

⁹⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 10/11/1739.

⁹⁶ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 290.

guild were fined 3s 4d each for 'unruly' behaviour at feasts.⁹⁷ Verbal excess at social occasions could also be punished by financial penalties, as in May 1738, when a barber surgeon was fined 'by the vote of the company for abusing Mr. Hanby att Mrs Fishers funeral'.⁹⁸

Companies wanted their social occasions not only to be orderly, but also to encourage bonds of friendship between all members. This emphasis on unity meant that it was considered essential for every member to attend guild celebrations. Company meals and the funerals of members and their households were compulsory for guildsmen, who were fined if they failed to attend without providing a reasonable excuse. All members also had to assemble together at the required time, or be fined for lateness.⁹⁹ The attendance of household members could be strongly encouraged, and the presence of apprentices was sometimes enforced by levying fines. However, wives and children could not be penalised for non-attendance, as they were not subject to the financial jurisdiction of the guild.¹⁰⁰ In many guilds the emphasis on unity was reinforced by requiring all members to contribute financially to the dinner at an equal rate. Exacting fines from members who failed to dine with their fellows ensured that there was no financial incentive to opt out of the guild feast, even in the leanest times. The Durham Curriers, for example, passed an order in 1744 compelling all members to contribute twelve pence towards the communal account supper. Guild members who

⁹⁷ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 113; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 282-283.

⁹⁸ DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 30; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 120; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 257.

⁹⁹ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 237; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 30; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 120; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 257.

¹⁰⁰ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, copy of 1632 ordinances; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 236.

were absent from the feast were required to pay exactly the same sum in the form of a fine.¹⁰¹

The practice of holding celebrations in the homes of members also reinforced the emphasis on communal unity. Members often took turns to host the company in their own houses, and each celebration strengthened the links between the host household and all the others.¹⁰² There was also a corporate culture of shared milestones, where many of the most emotionally significant occasions in the lives of members, including marriages and deaths, were marked by the whole guild. In the early part of the period, entry into a trade company was frequently marked by a two-fold rite of passage. The official admission of a new freeman occurred at a meeting, and his initiation was often also celebrated at 'free-making' festivities, shared by all his guild brothers.¹⁰³ In some guilds money was contributed from guild funds to celebrate the admission of new guild members, as in the accounting year to 1632, when the Newcastle Barber Surgeons spent 6s 8d on wine to celebrate the admission of Henry Grevson.¹⁰⁴

The splendid spectacle of company festivities both demonstrated and reinforced the sense of civic pride felt by participants. Guild members and their families valued their involvement in company feasting, and were proud to belong to the guild community. It was this sense of belonging that led companies to prioritise spending on guild celebrations, and to invest in creating an enjoyable and magnificent occasion. Most trade companies had a collection of plate tableware, which was sometimes

¹⁰¹ DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 53; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 30.

¹⁰² TWA, GU/SH/1/2, account for 1755; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 215r; DUL, Bramwell Bequest, Barbers Bundle.

¹⁰³ TWA, GU/CF/10; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, p. 67-68; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 73-74; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds*, Part I, 236-237, 154.

¹⁰⁴ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 14, 63; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1, fol. 64r.

engraved with the company's arms or with suitable mottoes. When George Wheler donated a loving cup to the Durham Joiners guild in 1721, for example, he had it engraved with the words 'Poculum Charitatis, Peace and Good Neighbourhood'.¹⁰⁵ Companies devoted considerable effort to maintaining their plate, mending it, and having the dents beaten out of it. New pieces were purchased periodically, and older pieces sold off.¹⁰⁶ This plate was used at company dinners, and guilds maintained their collections in order to be able to create an impressive display at the dining table. Some guilds took other measures to create a splendid appearance at feasts, including employing maids to wait on members and providing fresh linen for the tables. Special food and drink were often consumed at guild meals, including the venison given annually to the Durham Mercers guild in the 1740s.¹⁰⁷ The expenditure on funeral equipment, which was also carefully maintained, and the Durham guilds' maintenance of their banners, further demonstrate the emotional and financial investment that members were prepared to make to property used in communal celebrations. In the absence of diary evidence, this provides the best indication that the majority of members enjoyed guild social occasions.¹⁰⁸

Guild celebrations were rituals of inclusion, but they were also designed to project corporate values to those outside the company. The trade guild processions that accompanied feast days in Durham, and guild burials in both towns, ensured that the importance of the trade companies was demonstrated publicly to the whole urban

¹⁰⁵ Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds - continued*, 395-396; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 53.

¹⁰⁶ DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fols. 7, 53; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 61; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, account for 1733.

¹⁰⁷ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 23, 30, 33, 45; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 1741.

¹⁰⁸ DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, accounts for 1721-1722, 1740-1741, 1741-1742; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 9A.

community.¹⁰⁹ At both weddings and funerals members socialised together with the kin, neighbours and other friends who had been invited, displaying guild solidarity and order to outsiders.¹¹⁰ Trade companies sometimes invited guests to their dinners, including officials in the civic administration or local notables, dispensing hospitality to individuals whose good will might prove useful to the company in the future. In 1717, for example, the Durham Mercers invited the Mayor of Stockton to their main meeting day feast.¹¹¹ Other individuals who were exposed to guild sociability included those who were invited in order to reward them for services to the company. When trade guilds paid for a sermon to mark their feast day, the parson was often invited to the dinner, along with the clerk who drew up the accounts and any musicians that had been employed. In 1718, for example, the Durham Barbers paid for both 'the Parson & Clark' to share the guild feast.¹¹²

In the first half of the seventeenth century, trade companies seem to have engaged in frequent and extensive communal celebrations. The records of the Newcastle Barber Surgeons provide the most detailed picture of company sociability during this period, and show that the company not only marked milestones in the lives of their members, and significant days in the calendar of the guild, but also celebrated important days in the ritual year. The Barber Surgeons frequently celebrated Michaelmas, which was a popular day for feasting, and also an important date in the Newcastle civic calendar, when town officials were elected. In 1619 the company dined and drank wine,

¹⁰⁹ DUL, DCG, Barbers/2, fol. 76; TWA GU/HO/1/2, pp. 451-452; TWA, GU/SH/4/1, 29 September 1686; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19; C. Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* (Beckenham, 1984), pp. 119-121.

¹¹⁰ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/10/1728; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 367-373, 435-449.

¹¹¹ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 1 October 1716; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 18; DUL, DCG, Barbers/ 3, fol. 214r.

¹¹² DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 191r; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 21, 41.

and in 1625 the guild ate bacon, shared wine and enjoyed the music of the town waits.¹¹³ The guild also customarily assembled on Midsummer's day, spending £2 12s 'of midsomer even for our Suppers' in the accounting year to 1628.¹¹⁴ Midsummer was also marked by festivities organised by the Corporation, which in the later sixteenth century probably included the parading of Newcastle's 'Hogmagog' giant through the town. The Corporation also celebrated midsummer with music and feasting, and a dancing display by the Shipwrights company.¹¹⁵ Other days in the ritual calendar were also occasionally marked, including New Year's Eve, which the Newcastle Barber Surgeons celebrated in 1633.¹¹⁶

Guilds were also central to the funerals of the members of trade companies and their households, which involved socialising both before and after the burial.¹¹⁷ In some areas of the north, the practice of holding wakes seems to have continued on into the seventeenth century, but across the country the funeral process usually began with eating and drinking. Assembling to share food and alcohol provided an opportunity for fellow guild members and their households to pay their respects to the deceased, comfort one-another, and to reaffirm their bonds.¹¹⁸ The mourners, including the whole trade company and their families, met before the burial in the house of the deceased, to eat and drink in the presence of the corpse. The funeral fare was often served on the trade company's plate, which craftsmen could usually borrow for such events. These pre-funeral social gatherings were often prolonged, and the 'gathering together at the

¹¹³ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 23, 9r.

¹¹⁴ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 45, 86-87.

¹¹⁵ J. J. Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne* (Toronto, Manchester, 1982), pp. xv, 67.

¹¹⁶ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 73-74.

¹¹⁷ R. Houlbrooke, 'Death, Church, and Family in England Between the Late Fifteenth and the Early Eighteenth Centuries' in R. Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London, 1989), p. 33; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 435-455; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, pp. 255-294.

¹¹⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 427, 444-445.

funeral house and serving the people there' often lasted more than three hours in Durham in the 1690s. In Newcastle funerals were reported to last longer still, and in 1676 some complained that they could continue for up to four or even five hours.¹¹⁹ Not only were such funeral meals drawn-out occasions, but early modern funerals were also often large, and in the seventeenth century it was not unusual for up to one hundred mourners to attend. Despite Puritan criticism of elaborate funerals from the late sixteenth century, there appears to have been little decline in the money spent on them.¹²⁰

After a long period of communal eating and drinking, the bearers, usually chosen from among the members of the trade company, carried the body to the church. The Newcastle Shipwrights noted that 'it was anciently accustomed when any brother or sister of the company died that his or her Corpse were carried to the church or other place appointed by free brethren of the company'. The dead man or woman was borne aloft on the company funeral pall or cloth, which was usually decorated with the arms of the company.¹²¹ From 1655 the 'ffreemen & Sistere' of the Durham Mercers guild, for example, were carried to their graves on a sable coloured burial cloth 'together with Scutchcons contayninge the Armes of the said society'. The corpse was accompanied to the church by the funeral procession, which included members of the guilds and their households. The close family of the deceased appeared dressed in mourning clothes, which could usually be borrowed from the guild.¹²² Funerals often ended with a

¹¹⁹ Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, pp. 105-111, 154, 114, 116, 120, 151; TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, undated transcript of Durham Common Council order on funerals, bound after 23 September 1696, and before 2 October 1691.

¹²⁰ Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, pp. 151-152, 52-53; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 403-417.

¹²¹ Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, pp. 105-111, 154, 114, 116, 120, 151; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19, 32; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 59A.

¹²² TWA, GU/HO/1/2, pp. 451-452; TWA, GU/SH/4/1, 29 September 1686; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, p. 95; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 435-438.

'drinking' or a funeral dinner, which provided mourners with another opportunity for collective remembrance and sociability.¹²³ Trade companies sometimes also gathered to celebrate weddings, and these too involved long celebrations. There was often eating and drinking before the couple left for the church, accompanied by a procession. After the marriage was solemnised the festivities began in earnest, and usually included drinking, feasting and dancing. Wedding meals, like funeral dinners, could be served on plate borrowed from the trade guild.¹²⁴

The important days in the calendar of each individual guild were also often marked by communal celebration. Trade companies usually assembled for a minimum of one main meeting and four quarterly meetings each year, and further assemblies were arranged if urgent business arose between meetings. Company meetings were often celebrated by the sharing of food and drink, and some guilds spent company funds on festivities to mark the admission of new members.¹²⁵ In other guilds all new members, or sometimes only those master craftsmen who had migrated from another town, were required to provide a breakfast or dinner for all the company members as part of their conditions of admission.¹²⁶ The most elaborate festivities of the year celebrated the annual main meeting day, the most important day in the guild calendar. The Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild usually celebrated their main meeting with a company feast, which often involved long and grand celebrations. In 1628, for example, the 'headmeeting daye' celebrations on Trinity Monday began with a dinner, where the

¹²³ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 22 November 1655; Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, pp. 155-157.

¹²⁴ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, 26 May 1746; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 350-376.

¹²⁵ Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 237; DUL, DCG, Curriers/1, 18 February 1670; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 45.

¹²⁶ DUL, DCG, Curriers/1, 5 July 1678; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1, 8th consent in 'a note of all the consents of the whole company as followeth 1617', fols. 19v-21v.

tables were laid with clean linen, and the food and wine were served by a maid. The barber surgeons and their wives drank beer after the dinner, smoked tobacco and danced or listened to the music of the Newcastle waits. On the 'next daye at Brickfast' the company gathered to drink beer, and the same night drank wine together at the house of George Horsley, a fellow barber surgeon.¹²⁷

In the early seventeenth century many occasions of guild celebration often punctuated the year, providing regular opportunities for members of the company to socialise. In 1622, for example, the Newcastle Barber Surgeons Company celebrated Michaelmas Monday with a dinner and drinking, and also held a communal breakfast on the day of their main meeting. In the same year the barber surgeons also gathered several other times to eat and drink together, including one undated occasion when they enjoyed fourteen shillings' worth of wine, tobacco and music. One of these undated social occasions was probably the customary celebration at Midsummer.¹²⁸ In the same year, the Barber Surgeons probably also assembled several times to celebrate the admission of new freemen, for various company funerals, and possibly also for the weddings of members, their children, or their journeymen.¹²⁹

VI

Even before 1600, town governments seem to have become increasingly unwilling to spend money on celebrating days in the calendar of the ritual year. Summer vigil feasts, for example, had been held in many urban communities in the early

¹²⁷ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 45; 'The Incorporated Company of Barber-Surgeons and Wax and Tallow Chandlers', 237.

¹²⁸ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 30.

¹²⁹ TWA, GU/BS/2/1; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. I, pp. 67-68.

sixteenth century, but spending on such events declined as the century wore on. It has been suggested that this reduction in corporation expenditure was largely due to the pressure that such events placed on funds. Another factor was the new emphasis on selective charity, which diminished the commitment to general urban entertainment as a form of alms to the poor.¹³⁰ These changes in the patterns of corporation spending had an inevitable effect on the calendar of guild sociability, which also seems to have shifted its focus away from some of the days of the ritual year. The Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild, for example, seems to have ceased to celebrate Midsummer after the mid-seventeenth century, though the festival had been an important time of civic celebration in Newcastle in the later sixteenth century.¹³¹

There is also some evidence of Puritan disapproval of guild dining, and in some towns, including Dorchester and Exeter, godly magistrates appear to have attempted to regulate the celebrations of urban trade companies.¹³² However, there are few signs of any significant decline in guild dining in either Newcastle or Durham in the first half of the seventeenth century. In Newcastle, where the Interregnum town government was highly committed to moral reform, there is little evidence that guild feasting was suppressed. Indeed, the Corporation continued to make payments of wine money to the city's trade companies during these years. The accounts of the Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild show that the company received the customary payment of 4s 6d towards guild celebrations from the 1640s to 1660.¹³³ The records of the Newcastle Hostmen include the best account series for the Interregnum period, and their accounts

¹³⁰ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 122-140, 343-351; R. Hutton, *The Rise And Fall Of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 38-40.

¹³¹ Anderson, *Records of Early English Drama*, pp. xv, 67.

¹³² Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 48-49.

¹³³ Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 233-234; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fols. 175, 196, 207, 226, 230, 233, 238, 244. The payment was 4s 6d in all these years except 1652, when only 2s 8d was given.

suggest that guild celebrations proved fairly resilient during this time. Between 1646 and 1659 the Hostmen spent over £3 16s on sociability on various meeting days, including fourteen shillings' worth of wine drunk in celebration of the main meeting day in 1653.¹³⁴

There was some criticism of guild dining before the Restoration, and some days of company celebration were lost as town governments ceased to fund festivities on the days of the ritual year. However, the later seventeenth century witnessed a more significant period of transition, in which some individuals became less committed to socialising with their guilds at funerals and dinners, while others remained protective of their customary celebrations. In the course of the seventeenth century there was a general weakening of the older tradition of communal mourning, which resulted in changes to funeral practices. The level of donations to the poor at funerals declined, and invitations to funeral dinners were increasingly restricted to the intimate associates of the deceased.¹³⁵ At the same time the families of deceased guild members, and members of the company themselves, seem to have become less committed to choosing bearers from among the ranks of the trade company. In 1672, for example, the Newcastle Shipwrights complained that whereas guild members and their wives had once been carried to their burials by fellow shipwrights, 'now of late the contrary is used and practised to the great wrong and prejudice of the said company and contrary to the useage and custome.'¹³⁶

¹³⁴ TWA, GU/HO/1/1, pp. 383-384.

¹³⁵ K. Wrightson and D. Levine, 'Death in Whickham' in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds.), *Famine, disease and the social order in early modern society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 156-165; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, p. 443.

¹³⁶ Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19.

Some guild members were also increasingly unwilling to be compelled to spend several hours at the funerals of every member of the company and their household. The Durham common council reported that the customary long funerals were inconvenient for 'persons of businesse' because they were 'thereby neglecting their owne necessary occasion and business'.¹³⁷ From the 1670s the corporations of Durham and Newcastle acted to regulate what many perceived as the time wasted in funeral attendance. In 1687 the Corporation of Durham announced that the pre-burial eating and drinking should last no more than two hours 'after the time invited'. After the allotted two hours of communal commemoration, mourners were instructed to proceed to the church with the corpse.¹³⁸ In January 1676 the Newcastle common council had taken similar action, complaining that 'very much time hath been needlessly spent upon funeralls' to their 'no Little hindrance & neglect of their more needful Imployment'. This Newcastle order, and a similar order passed by the Durham Corporation in January 1697, established a system of regulation to enforce the limit on time spent at funerals. The time allowed for each social gathering was marked by the bells of the parish church where the body was to be buried. The bells were rung first to summon the mourners to the funeral, again when one hour of the funeral had elapsed, and for a third time when only fifteen minutes of the permitted time remained. A messenger was then sent to 'the place where the friends & neighbours are Assembled' to warn them that the time limit had elapsed and that the bearers should 'without any further delay take them [the corpse] & bear them away'.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19.

¹³⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, p. 453.

¹³⁹ TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697.

Many members of trade companies seem to have wished to continue the tradition of leisurely eating and drinking at funerals, and the Newcastle and Durham common councils clearly anticipated opposition to the provisions of the funeral orders. In both towns care was taken to limit evasion of the new rules, either by individual guild members or officers of the companies. In Newcastle householders were warned not to attempt to gain extra time by inviting their guests to arrive 'betwixt 2 hours'. If this stratagem was attempted, then the allotted time was calculated from the earlier of the two hours. The household where the funeral was held was fined for any infringement of the rules, and guild members who stayed at a funeral longer than two hours were fined twenty-one shillings each. Strong measures were also included to prevent trade guild officials from ignoring the new regulations. If any guild's stewards failed to comply with the notice, then the fine was to be doubled to forty-two shillings, and the eldest sons or apprentices of that company were to be debarred from gaining the freedom of the town.¹⁴⁰

From the later seventeenth century, however, the guilds were slowly forced to alter their practice, allowing members to attend funerals for a shorter period of time, and recognising the new trend for bearers to be chosen from among the close friends and relations of the deceased. Despite their obvious regret, the Newcastle Shipwrights Company was forced to recognise that the members of the guild were no longer unanimously committed to the obligation to attend the entire funeral of members. In 1672 the guild not only amended their rules to allow friends and relations from outside the company to carry the corpse, but if non-guild bearers were chosen, allowed their members to leave the funeral after the register had been called, rather than

¹⁴⁰ TWA, Gu/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697.

accompanying the corpse to the grave.¹⁴¹ In 1734 the Newcastle Barber Surgeons also changed their rules to permit members to leave fifteen minutes after the register had been taken. These resolutions obliged members to appear at company funerals to pay their respects, but allowed them to leave early in the social proceedings of the funeral, which were also curtailed by the new corporation regulations.¹⁴²

The free-making celebration, another long-standing guild ritual, was also in decline from the later seventeenth century. The provision of a meal had been an expected part of the rite of admission in many of the Durham companies, and the Newcastle guilds also held free-making celebrations. In many of the Durham guilds newly admitted members had a long-standing right to choose to pay a sum of money into the company coffers rather than provide the meal. In the Barbers Company, for example, an order of 1646 dictated that migrant master craftsmen from other towns were either to provide a free breakfast or to pay ten shillings into the company funds.¹⁴³

Initially, this seems to have functioned in the same way as the fines for non-attendance at guild dinners, to ensure that there was no financial incentive to fail to provide the 'treat'.¹⁴⁴ From the early eighteenth century, however, members began to be expected to pay the fine as part of their admission fees, rather than organising a feast. In the Durham Barbers guild, for example, the free-making celebration was still being provided by newly admitted freemen into the 1690s. However, in 1717, the guild

¹⁴¹ TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19. Many provincial clubs also recorded attendance at funerals and fined those who were absent. See Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 382. See below, pp. 104, 110-111.

¹⁴² TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 384; TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697.

¹⁴³ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 26 March 1678; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1 DUL, 8th consent in 'a note of all the consents of the whole company as followeth 1617', fols. 19v-21v.

¹⁴⁴ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 26 March 1678; DUL, DCG, Barbers/1 DUL, 8th consent in 'a note of all the consents of the whole company as followeth 1617', fols. 19v-21v.

decided that all future entrants should pay the financial penalty rather than provide food and drink, and that this money should 'goe forward for the use of the Trade & not be expended'.¹⁴⁵ Companies also appear to have become increasingly reluctant to spend money from guild funds to celebrate the admission of new members. In the Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild, for example, company money was regularly spent on such celebrations in the first half of the seventeenth century, but never after the Restoration.¹⁴⁶ From the later seventeenth century many guild members became increasingly unwilling to invest their time in attending free-making celebrations, just as they had become less committed to attending funerals. Those trade companies that had previously required members to provide meals increasingly preferred to maximise their income by collecting the penalty fees, and other guilds chose not to spend their money on such festivities.¹⁴⁷

Both the inclusivity and extent of guild sociability had been eroded by the mid-eighteenth century. The early seventeenth-century social calendar of the Newcastle Barber Surgeons involved frequent celebrations attended by all the members of the guild. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, the company calendar tended to be dominated by one large-scale annual celebration, while spending on other occasions had declined. The accounts of the Durham Mercers guild survive from 1664, for example, and expenditure on social occasions other than the day of the annual main meeting peaked in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, declining slowly from the second decade of the eighteenth century. Between 1725 and 1731 the guild spent £2 1s on food and drink for members aside from expenditure on the head meeting day, but such expenditure seems to have fallen sharply after 1732. In the nineteen years between

¹⁴⁵ DUL, DCG, Barbers/2, fol. 61; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 20.

¹⁴⁶ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 129.

¹⁴⁷ DUL, DCG, Barbers/2, fol. 61; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 20.

1732 and 1750, a mere two shillings was spent on food or drink on days other than the main meeting day. Although guild officials became less willing to spend money from the company stock on regular celebrations involving the whole company, they continued to spend money at meetings of guild officials, or small groups of members.¹⁴⁸ The growing tendency to recruit from the urban community itself, rather than the surrounding rural area, and the narrowing in the social origins of apprentices must also have affected the atmosphere of trade guilds, making eighteenth-century companies less open and more club-like than their sixteenth-century counterparts. The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers guild, for example, drew 41 per cent of its apprentices from Newcastle by the mid-1680s, and a little over a third of the company's intake were sons of members of the guild.¹⁴⁹

From the later seventeenth century there were also attempts within some trade companies to severely limit expenditure on the main guild celebration. In 1690, for example, the warden of the Newcastle Hostmen banned 'festivalls and treats' 'in wch the company expended vast sums of money'.¹⁵⁰ In 1702 the Newcastle Barber Surgeons decided that they would limit the expense of audit dinners to fifteen shillings per annum, and three years later the company decided that only forty shillings would be expended on each head-meeting day. In 1716 the Barber Surgeons took the more drastic step of announcing that no money whatsoever should be spent on an auditing feast. In both these guilds, however, the majority of members were sufficiently committed to the customary annual guild celebrations to ensure that these attempts to economise failed to curtail spending. The Newcastle Hostmen, for example, flouted their ban on guild

¹⁴⁸ DUL., DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 56B.

¹⁴⁹ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 56-59, 63-65. See above, pp. 37-38.

¹⁵⁰ Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen*, pp. liii, 145.

feasting only a year after it was agreed. From 1691 to the 1720s the company continued to celebrate two annual occasions, the main meeting, and the auditing of the accounts.¹⁵¹ The Newcastle Barber Surgeons guild only obeyed their order against guild celebrations for three years, and in 1728 the guild's audit feast cost the princely sum of £2 2s.¹⁵²

The annual feast of the Durham Mercers guild was also threatened by shifting spending priorities among some members, who were happier to spend money on other things, including maintaining funeral equipment and prizes for horse-races. In thirty of the years between 1666 and 1750 the company passed a resolution not to hold either a communal sermon or feast on the guild meeting day.¹⁵³ In some years this decision was probably taken because the company was in financial difficulties, and needed to save money. In 1666, for example, the guild recorded a deficit of 20s 5d at the end of their accounting year, and chose not to incur further debt by spending money on a feast.¹⁵⁴ However, it seems that the irregularity of celebration in the Durham Mercers Company in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century was not primarily due to financial difficulties. An examination of the company's accounts shows that in many of the years in which the guild cancelled the annual celebrations it could certainly have afforded to hold them. In at least half of these years the account was in credit at the end of the accounting year, so that the company could have afforded to provide a communal sermon and feast.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 122, 128, 143-144, 205; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen*, pp. liii, 145; TWA, GU/HO/1/2, pp. 401, 414, 451-452, 461-462, 709-710.

¹⁵² TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 205, 225, 317.

¹⁵³ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 16 October 1666; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 69, 71. See above, p. 52. See below, pp. 70-72, 145-146.

¹⁵⁴ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 13.

¹⁵⁵ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 7 October 1703; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 25, 71, 69.

The periodic decisions not to hold a feast seem to have been the result of changing spending priorities among some, though by no means all, of the members. However, spending on the annual guild festivities was a controversial issue, and though some mercers were committed to saving money, other members continued to clamour for the company feast. In several years guild members voted to hold a feast, and a later meeting of the company then reversed that decision. At their quarterly meeting in October 1684, for example, the Durham Mercers Company agreed to gather for a meal and sermon, but the celebrations were cancelled at another meeting held twenty days later.¹⁵⁶ Even if those who wished to reduce spending on company celebrations succeeded in passing an order banning the festivities for that year, the resolution might be evaded. The accounts show that in at least five of the years when such a restraining order was passed a feast or a sermon was subsequently held. In the account for the year to January 1680, for example, various members were fined for absence at the company dinner, although the guild had previously voted not to assemble for either a dinner or a sermon in that year. A similar resolution was passed in 1682 and again in 1684, but the account to November 1682 included payments on the day of the 'feast' for a sermon, alcohol and musicians, and payments for a guild dinner also appeared in the account to 1684.¹⁵⁷

Although some guild members were urging restraint, they only succeeded in moderating expenditure on company festivities, because many members wished to continue to enjoy frequent association within their guilds. Despite occasional attempts to reduce spending on entertainment, company celebrations remained an important mode of urban sociability until at least the mid-eighteenth century. Although the

¹⁵⁶ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 3 October 1684, 23 October 1684, copy of 1632 ordinances; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 24.

¹⁵⁷ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 47B, 30, 31.

frequency of gatherings tended to decline from the later seventeenth century in both Newcastle and Durham, most of the trade companies continued to celebrate on occasions other than the annual dinner until at least the 1740s. Guild meetings were sometimes accompanied by eating or drinking, especially when fines were paid or when capital lent out to a guild member was repaid. The Durham Mercers, for example, paid the town waits to play for them after their quarterly guild meeting in October 1712. The Newcastle Shipwrights were still enjoying celebrations on days other than their main annual celebration until at least the 1750s.¹⁵⁸ Although celebrations on the days of the ritual year had declined, some festivities continued to be held on these days. The Newcastle Shipwrights Company continued to hold occasional Easter celebrations, spending 8s 9d on food and drink on Easter Tuesday in 1678, for example.¹⁵⁹ In Durham, the guilds continued to mark the beating of the boundaries, a celebration that involved riding or walking the boundaries of the parish, and communal eating and drinking. These festivities were descended from the Pre-Reformation Rogation Day processions, and took place across England until the mid-eighteenth century, when the custom began to decline. In Durham the city's trade companies sometimes joined the 'bounder day' processions until at least 1730.¹⁶⁰

Not only did celebrations on some days of the ritual year continue, but guild sociability was reinvigorated in the late seventeenth century by involvement in the new political calendar of public celebration. The trade companies of Durham participated in the city's regular civic processions from the last decade of the seventeenth century to

¹⁵⁸ DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fols. 218r, 232r; TWA, GU/SH/1/1, account for 1755; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 51A.

¹⁵⁹ TWA, GU/SH/1/1, account for 1678.

¹⁶⁰ R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History Of The Ritual Year In Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 277-287.

beyond the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁶¹ The guilds marched on various occasions, including the arrival of the Bishop in the city and the anniversary of the accession of the current monarch. Jacob Bee, a member of the Durham guild of Skinners and Glovers, witnessed the procession that welcomed Bishop Crewe and his wife into the city in August 1700. Bee recorded in his diary that the couple were 'mett with a very great company, both gents, tradesmen and others, besides every street in his way to the castle, the streets and windows were see [sic] clad with people 'twas almost innumerall: all the trades' banners was displayed: the mayor and aldermen was there'.¹⁶² The city's guilds also held processions for Restoration Day, celebrated on the 29th of May, and for Gunpowder Treason Day on November the 5th. The Durham trade companies sometimes marked these days with other eating and drinking before or after their procession.¹⁶³ In 1716, for example, the Mercers guild not only celebrated Gunpowder Treason day with a procession, but also drank a dozen bottles of claret, and danced or listened to the music of the town musicians.¹⁶⁴

It seems likely that many individual guild members attached political significance to guild celebrations on political anniversaries, which reinforced the importance of company sociability. The festivities on such days were innately politicised, because certain days of celebration were closely associated with particular political loyalties. Restoration Day, for example, was the anniversary of the day that Charles II entered London in 1660, and was widely abandoned after 1688 because of its connection with the exiled Stuarts. In Durham, however, the day continued to be

¹⁶¹ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, fol. 34; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, account for 1706; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 5; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 286, 333-334; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 248.

¹⁶² J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), p. 60; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 52A.

¹⁶³ DUL, DCG, Barbers/2, fol. 76; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 333.

¹⁶⁴ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 55.

celebrated by bell ringing and guild processions. The parish of St. Nicholas, Durham, was one of a small minority of parishes in England to ring their bells on Restoration Day in the 1690s, and the Durham guilds are known to have held a procession on the 29th of May in 1713.¹⁶⁵ After the Hanoverian accession Restoration Day became a focus for the expression of Jacobite sympathies, and was also celebrated by the politically impotent Tories.¹⁶⁶ In Durham the anniversary seems to have been marked by annual guild processions from 1713 to 1749. The political leanings of Nathaniel Crewe, bishop of Durham from the 1670s to the 1720s, probably account for the initial focus on Restoration Day in Durham. Crewe himself was a suspected Jacobite, who was briefly forced into hiding in 1688, and a contemporary noted that the city was dominated by 'Rory Toryism', for 'none but men of that kidney are in favour with our worthy good bishop.' However, the Durham trade companies continued to hold celebrations on Restoration Day in the years after Crewe's death in 1722, when the see of Durham was held by two Whig-leaning bishops in succession. Processions on Restoration Day continued until at least the mid-eighteenth century, probably because they were popular.¹⁶⁷

Although the Durham trade companies did have an unusual attachment to a day that was strongly associated with Tory sympathies, many of the days celebrated by the town's guilds did not have the Tory associations of Restoration Day. The companies celebrated the anniversary of Gunpowder Treason, which was widely observed in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, and the Durham guilds also marked the anniversaries of the accessions of both George I and George II. The variety of days

¹⁶⁵ Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 288-289; Hutton, *Merry England*, pp. 289-290, 257-258.

¹⁶⁶ Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 290-291; D. Cressy, *Bonfires And Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989), pp. 64-66; F. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London, 1997), pp. 65-95.

¹⁶⁷ Heesom, *Durham City and its M.P.s*, pp. 19-21; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 79.

celebrated by the Durham trade companies defies any attempt to infer the ideological convictions of the majority of their members. However, the celebration of days that had both Whig and Tory associations meant that guild sociability gained an added significance for members of all political affiliations.¹⁶⁸ Newcastle was relatively unusual during this period in that the town's trade guilds do not appear to have taken part in the civic processions that marked political and religious landmarks after the Restoration. None of the three Newcastle companies studied here seems to have mounted independent processions in the later seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, although at least one of the town's other guilds is known to have organised its own processions. However, decline in company sociability on days of the ritual year was partly compensated for by the guild gatherings that occurred in the course of political treating. On election day in 1747, for example, the victorious candidates, provided a 'handsome Treat' for the freemen 'class'd into their respective Companies'.¹⁶⁹

Not only was guild sociability revitalised after the Restoration by the new political celebrations, but trade companies also showed their flexibility by engaging in fashionable commercial leisure pursuits. From at least the later seventeenth century the trade guilds of Newcastle and Durham were financing horse-racing in the two towns, consistently contributing towards prize money. The Durham Mercers, for example, donated money to prizes for races from 1687 to 1739.¹⁷⁰ Attending horse-races was popular among both men and women of all ranks, so giving to the horse-races was

¹⁶⁸ Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 396-397; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fols. 34, 40; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 59A.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *The sense of the people*, pp. 294-297, 302-303; *Newcastle Journal*, 04/07/1747; E. E. Mackenzie, *A Descriptive And Historical Account Of The Town And County Of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Including The Borough Of Gateshead* (Newcastle, 1827), p. 88; C. P. Graves and D. Heslop, *The Archaeology of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London, forthcoming), passim.

¹⁷⁰ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 57; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 206; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 346. See below, pp. 145-146.

guaranteed to please both the households of the trading and non-trading members of the company.¹⁷¹ The sums donated were often quite substantial, such as the one or two guineas donated in most years by the Durham Butchers from 1734 to 1769.¹⁷² At least one guild, the Durham Mercers, also participated in newly fashionable clubability. From 1708 until 1718 the company socialised together at 'club nights', which could involve substantial outlay. In 1709 the sum of £2 10s 11d was spent on one such evening, probably on food and drink.¹⁷³ Trade companies were also occasionally choosing to socialise in the coffee houses of the two towns, as the Newcastle Barber Surgeons did in 1704 and 1705, spending small sums of money on food or drink.¹⁷⁴ From the later seventeenth century trade companies were also more likely to celebrate in inns than in private houses, because alehouses had come to be perceived as the obvious location for much institutional sociability.¹⁷⁵

The calendar of guild celebrations on days other than the annual main meeting day survived until the mid-eighteenth century, albeit in a diminished form. Throughout the period, these occasional guild festivities were supplemented by regular company funerals. There was some reduction both in the prominence of guild members in the funerary rituals, and in the length of time that members were expected to stay.¹⁷⁶ However, many tradesmen continued to view the funerals of members and their households as company occasions. Most of the guilds did not alter their rules regarding participation in funerals, and companies continued to enforce attendance, by fining

¹⁷¹ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973) pp. 50-51. See below, p. 157.

¹⁷² Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 346.

¹⁷³ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 47B, 48B, 56B. See below, p. 124.

¹⁷⁴ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, pp. 136, 143.

¹⁷⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 39-40; DUL, DCG, Mercers/1, 6 October 1735, 30 September 1745. See below, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 18-19; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 384.

those who were late, or who did not appear.¹⁷⁷ The guilds also continued to contribute money towards the funerals of guild members as a form of charitable giving.¹⁷⁸ Companies remained committed to investing in funeral equipment, maintaining and were still hiring out burial cloths and cloaks in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁷⁹ In the Newcastle Shipwrights Company, for example, demand for funeral equipment remained high, and the guild continued to lend out their funeral cloaks and handsome velvet pall until 1758, if not beyond.¹⁸⁰ Evidently, guild members were proud to belong to their trade company, and wanted to be able to conduct the funerals of their relatives using a pall that bore the arms of their guild, even though many of them could have chosen to borrow funeral equipment from their parish church instead. The parish of St Oswald's in Durham, for example, owned a coffin by the early seventeenth century.¹⁸¹

Not only did guilds continue to socialise at the funerals of members, but they also continued to gather for at least one annual celebration throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Communal eating and drinking remained an important part of the self-image of the trade company as a fraternity of brothers, sisters and their households. The Durham Mercers Company, for example, held their main meeting day dinner of 'four dishes of Meat' in an inn in the town from 1735. In 1742 the guild decided that they would continue to hold an annual dinner in one of the Durham alehouses, sharing food costing up to £2 2s.¹⁸² Not only did annual company social occasions survive beyond the mid-century, but these festivities could be impressive events, which included feasting, music, a sermon, and particularly in the Durham guilds,

¹⁷⁷ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 373.

¹⁷⁸ TWA, GU/BS/2/1, account for 1681; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 165.

¹⁷⁹ TWA, GU/HO/ 1/2, account for 1741.

¹⁸⁰ Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, p. 32; TWA, GU/SH/1/2, account for 1758.

¹⁸¹ Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, p. 116; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, And Death*, pp. 432-435.

¹⁸² DUL, DCG, Mercers/1, 6 October 1735, 30 September 1745.

a procession.¹⁸³ The sums spent on these celebrations were sometimes surprisingly large, as in 1737, when the Newcastle Barber Surgeons spent ten guineas on the dinner to celebrate their main meeting.¹⁸⁴

Early modern trade guilds were highly flexible institutions, not only in their methods of trade regulation, but also in their modes of fraternal celebration.¹⁸⁵ Guild culture proved resilient, because the companies were prepared to modify their institutional practices in response to changing attitudes to communal celebrations. Companies had traditionally demanded that their members invest large amounts of time in guild association, despite the many other modes of recreation that individuals were able to enjoy.¹⁸⁶ From the later seventeenth century onwards, however, many members were unwilling to devote so much of their time and money to socialising within their trade company. While some members remained committed to gathering at frequent company funerals and at many occasions of socialising throughout the year, others seem to have begun to expect a more pluralistic sociable life. These individuals probably wished to be able to enjoy guild celebrations alongside many other kinds of recreation, including horse racing and the emerging provincial clubs, without damaging their livelihoods.¹⁸⁷

Trade guilds responded by altering their rules, allowing members to stay at funerals for a shorter time, but ensuring that all members of the guild would continue to

¹⁸³ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 76; DUL, DCG, Mercers/1, 26 June 1710, 1 October 1722; Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account Of The Town And County of Newcastle*, p. 88.

¹⁸⁴ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 401.

¹⁸⁵ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 69, 94.

¹⁸⁶ R. Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing* (London, 1972), pp. 20, 23-24; K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (first edition 1983, reprinted London, 1984), pp. 144-145; G. R. Scott, *The History of Cockfighting* (London, 1957), pp. 93-95, 99, 102. See below, pp. 131-135, 164-166, 188-193, 220-222, 241-242.

¹⁸⁷ Longrigg, *History of Horse Racing*, pp. 46-47; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, passim. See below, pp. 136-137, 165-166, 77-78.

attend company funerals.¹⁸⁸ Companies also reduced the occasions of incidental celebration, concentrating on one large social occasion per year, which acted as a focus for the celebration of guild unity. After the Restoration trade companies took part in the new political calendar of celebration, and absorbed into their activities many of the newly fashionable forms of sociability, such as frequenting coffee-houses.¹⁸⁹ Company sociability endured because guild members and their households enjoyed the celebrations, and because the festivities continued to symbolise a set of civic values that had survived the test of time. Association in trade companies not only survived until at least the mid-eighteenth century, but also provided an important template for a new and highly significant institution of sociability, the club. The evolution and characteristics of clubability will form the subject of the next chapter.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 383; TWA, GU/CF/10; DUL, DCG, Butchers/2, 1 January 1697.

¹⁸⁹ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 81, 73.

¹⁹⁰ TWA, GU/HO/1/2, account for 1741; Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 76-77; Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 95-104; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 20-25. See below, pp. 75-128.

Chapter Three: Clubs and societies: a new sociability?

I

From the later sixteenth century a new institution of association began to develop alongside the older corporate bodies such as the church and trade guild.¹ By 1750 the club was fairly well established as an arena of sociability, and numerous societies had been established in London and in the provinces. At least thirty-five different societies had been founded in the north east by the mid-eighteenth century, ranging from a highly successful clerical charity to relatively informal clubs that seem to have been primarily devoted to drinking and conviviality.² The development of early modern clubs and societies had been relatively neglected by historians, until the recent publication of Clark's ground-breaking monograph. While Clark deserves to be congratulated for producing the first comprehensive survey of clubs in this period, we shall see that he tends to over-estimate both the significance of societies in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the degree to which clubs differed from earlier institutions. The regional focus of this thesis and the fore-going exploration of the trade guilds allow a greater recognition of the continuities in club association.³ This chapter begins by outlining the chronology of the formation of clubs in the north east, and explores how the vitality of association in trade guilds influenced the development of this new sociable institution. The profile of participation in club sociability will be

¹ J. Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in J. Barry and C. W. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 98-99. See above, pp. 24-74.

² *Newcastle Courant*, 20/08/1711; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/08/1725; P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 60-93; P. Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: British Clubs and Societies and Societies in the Eighteenth Century City* (Leicester, 1988), passim; R. J. Allen, *The British Clubs and Societies of Augustan London* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), passim.

³ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 23-25, 60-93. See above, pp. 24-74.

established, and the ideology and characteristics of association in societies addressed. Finally, the distinctiveness of voluntary association in clubs will be evaluated. This analysis of clubability is based on personal papers, the surviving records of organisations in the region, newspaper advertisements of club activities, and printed material produced by societies.

The available sources inevitably underestimate both the number and range of clubs meeting in the region during the period. Only a small minority of societies have left their own records, because many clubs met on an informal basis, or were active for only a few years. The records of some of the clubs and societies in the north east have survived, though usually only those of the most formalised and longest surviving societies. These societies, including freemasons lodges, are not necessarily representative of the typical club, which tended to be smaller and less institutionalised. The newspapers are a useful source for a wider variety of organisations, but do not document those clubs that did not use print to advertise, or those whose activities were on too small a scale to be included in the local news section of the newspapers. The existence of an eighteenth-century bowling club in Darlington, for example, is only known because the inn where the society met was advertised to let. In 1740 the club was listed among the assets of the Black Swan as a 'Company of Gentlemen... [that] ...raises a Sum of Money by Subscription'. Other clubs are only documented in scattered references in personal papers, or from their later eighteenth-century publications that mention the society's date of foundation and place of meeting. The surviving sources probably also distort the chronology of club formation in the north east, because the

newspapers provide coverage of club activities that is unparalleled for the seventeenth century and first few years of the eighteenth century.⁴

The first clubs seem to have appeared in London from the later sixteenth century, though the number of documented associations is small. Many different kinds of societies are known to have been meeting in the capital in the pre Civil War period, including literary clubs, horticultural societies and bell ringing societies. The Antiquaries Society met in London from 1586, and county feasts were also held in the metropolis from the third decade of the seventeenth century. By the early 1620s societies were sufficiently numerous and high profile to attract condemnation from the Privy Council. In November 1623 the Council criticised assemblies in taverns and elsewhere by gentlemen with 'certain new forms of admittance and reception into these societies with professions and protestations to observe and keep certain articles'. Clubs were also formed in provincial towns before the Civil War, including bell ringing societies at Lincoln and Bristol, and a horticultural society in Norwich.⁵

In the north east, only two clubs are known to have existed before 1700. One of these was an 'onest clubbe', probably dedicated to convivial drinking, which met in Durham from the early years of the Restoration.⁶ The keelmen's benefit society was active in Newcastle by the last decade of the seventeenth century, raising money towards a hospital to house sick and poor members. This 'very Capacious. Beautiful, and Useful Hospital' was built in 1701, and could accommodate 160 people. However,

⁴ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 9-10; W. H. Rylands, 'The Alnwick Lodge Minutes', *Ars quatuor coronatorum: Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*, 14 (1901), 4-26; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/01/1740; E. Hughes, *North Country Life In The Eighteenth Century: The North-East, 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), p. 388; *Articles Of The Women's Friendly Society, Kept At Mr. George Rennoldson's, Sign of the Highlandman, Sandgate* (Newcastle, 1794), passim.

⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 44-52.

⁶ Hughes, *North Country Life*, p. 388.

the keelmen had a much longer history of joint action, and it is therefore difficult to assign a conclusive starting date to the society. The keelmen had initially regulated their own work and sociability through their trade guild, which was listed as a by-trade of the town of Newcastle by Star Chamber in 1516. At some point in the sixteenth century the company ceased to exist as an independent body, though the keelmen continued to band together to organise strikes and petitions in the mid-seventeenth century and later.⁷

It is possible that more clubs were meeting in the north east during this period, though no records of any such organisations have survived. The formation of these new organisations across England was made possible by the provision of meeting space for societies in urban alehouses. The number of victualling houses increased rapidly in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and provided space where many kinds of entertainment could be provided on a commercial basis. In 1577 thirty English counties reported the existence of approximately 17,500 inns, taverns and alehouses, but by the 1690s the number of inns had increased by more than 80 per cent, while the total number of alehouses had almost quadrupled. From 1600 inns were becoming an important location for sociability, including cock-fights, plays, and guild dinners. Urban alehouses provided clubs not only with meeting space, but also with alcohol and food.⁸

A variety of institutions probably helped to create an appetite for more formalised modes of association. Secular academies appeared on the continent during

⁷ F. W. Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne* (Surtees Society, 105, 1901), pp. li-liv, 90; J. Ellis, 'A dynamic society - social relations in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne 1660-1760' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London, 1984), pp. 209-214; TWA, 394/1; TWA, 604/655; R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 292-293; *Articles Of The Keelmen's hospital Society* (Newcastle, 1829), p. 19.

⁸ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 39-40; P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London 1983), pp. 6-13, 42-44, 151-160, 232-235; A. Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760' in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 113-120. See above, pp. 71, 72. See below, pp. 166, 168, 204.

the Renaissance period, and the new aristocratic societies meeting in London from the 1620s borrowed some of their organisational apparatus. However, in general, British clubs tended not to model themselves on either the Italian patron-led academies, or the state academies of France. Until the later eighteenth century Britain was more prominent as an exporter of clubability, including freemasonry, than as an importer of continental models. England itself had an older tradition of voluntary association outside the trade guilds, in religious confraternities. These bodies were privately organised, membership was voluntary, and sociability was an important part of their appeal. However, it seems likely that these organisations had relatively little direct impact on the formation of clubs and societies, because they were no longer active by the later sixteenth century. Confraternities were suppressed by legislation in 1547, and had been in decline since the 1530s.⁹

Although continental institutions and religious confraternities may have had some influence on the creation of clubs, enthusiasm for institutional sociability was probably most strongly fuelled by the vitality of association in trade companies. The individuals and groups that established clubs were able to draw on the successful and highly visible exemplar of guild sociability. Residents of incorporated towns regularly witnessed company members assembling at funerals, weddings and processions. Large numbers of middling sort men and their wives experienced guild sociability from the inside, attending company feasts, sermons and funerals. Non-members of the guild also occasionally attended guild dinners, either as guests, or as employees of the company.¹⁰

As the seventeenth century wore on increasing numbers of the gentry experienced the

⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 13-25.

¹⁰ D. J. Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights of Newcastle Upon Tyne 1622-1967*, Vol. 1 (Surtees Society, 181, 1970), p. 95; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/10/1728; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 6 October 1682; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 191r; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 21, 41. See above, pp. 24-74.

culture of the guilds as members. Many gentlemen's sons served apprenticeships in higher status trade companies, and the gentry also gained membership by right of patrimony, or as honorary members. Guild organisation was a national model, which was culturally available even to those in towns that did not have their own guilds, and to those living in rural areas.¹¹ Not only was guild sociability prominent, but contemporaries recognised it as a successful and important form of association. Trade companies held regular social events, which were valued by members and their households, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and until at least the mid-eighteenth century.¹²

The institutional practices of trade companies were ideally suited to the urban context in which they had developed, and clubs were predominately urban institutions, which made use of many of the traditions of the companies.¹³ Early provincial clubs and societies sometimes modelled their rules on guild ordinances, and many societies copied the organisational procedures of the trade guilds, including the titles of officers, election arrangements, and requiring members to swear oaths of secrecy about the organisation's affairs. The officials of clubs in the north east, for example, used various titles, including 'steward', 'warden' and 'assistant', which were all in use by trade companies in the region.¹⁴ Not only did clubs draw on the organisational structure of the guilds, but they also performed many of the same functions as guilds, including providing for

¹¹ C. W. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort, 1550-1800' in Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, pp. 56-62. See above, pp. 37-40.

¹² M. J. Walker, 'The Extent of the Guild Control of Trades in England c1660-1820; A Study Based on a Sample of Provincial Towns and London Companies', University of Cambridge, Ph.D thesis (1985), pp. 61-62; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 14. See above, pp. 24-74.

¹³ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 98-99.

¹⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/06/1745; *Newcastle Journal* 28/04/1744; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735; D. J. Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights of Newcastle Upon Tyne 1622-1967*, Vol. II (Surtees Society, 184, 1971), p. 298; F. W. Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, Vol. I (Surtees Society, 93, 1895), pp. 284-285; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 23-24, 223.

burial, and supporting penurious members. Like trade companies, many clubs and societies reinforced fraternal bonds among members by marking the life-cycle events of members, and by socialising at communal feasts and processions. The rhetoric used to justify the importance of clubs in the early modern town was also borrowed from the traditional discourse of the trade guilds.¹⁵

It has recently been suggested that the voluntary basis of club membership distinguished socialising within societies from guild association, and that sociability in clubs was a distinctly new form of leisure. Clark argues that whereas trade guilds were semi-official and connected with town government and economic regulation, clubs were operating outside official control, and individuals could choose whether or not to join.¹⁶ It is certainly true that in urban communities membership of a guild was more or less essential in order to practise many trades successfully, whereas individuals were not bound to join any club. However, from the seventeenth century onwards, a significant minority of those who joined guilds entered as honorary members, with no intention of practising the company's trade. These men joined in order to gain the political advantages that membership conferred, but also to enjoy the good fellowship of guild social occasions.¹⁷ Furthermore, many of those who joined provincial clubs were motivated by an expectation of both economic benefit and conviviality, in the same way that guild members joined companies in order to practise their trade, but also to enjoy guild sociability.¹⁸ The association of both guilds and clubs was governed by a similar

¹⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 23-24, 178, 228, 265-270; TWA, 1160/1; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, pp. 129-131. See above, pp. 24-74.

¹⁶ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 21-22, 24.

¹⁷ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', p. 54; M. C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1991), p. 38. See above, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 84, 153, 328-329; Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 54, 78; D. M. Palliser, 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York' in P. Clark and P. Slack

ethic of communal conformity, and although membership of societies was indeed voluntary, clubability was often ritualised and ordered, with a plethora of rules controlling behaviour.¹⁹

The direct guild antecedents of one of the most successful eighteenth-century societies further demonstrate the importance of the trade guilds in shaping club association. Freemasonry had achieved remarkable success across Britain by 1740, when there were over one hundred lodges in the capital, and approximately fifty-three in the rest of England and Wales. This 'speculative' freemasonry, a club that included members who were not working as masons, seems to have developed in Scotland from the trade bodies of working freemasons.²⁰ From the last decade of the sixteenth century the master of the king's works, William Schaw, undertook a reformation of Scottish freemasonry, instructing masons in the mysteries of their craft, including secret codes and building traditions, and developing a new kind of masonic lodge.²¹ In the course of the seventeenth century the number of honorary admissions to masons' guilds rose. The involvement of these honorary members, together with the Neoplatonic and Hermetic philosophy of the Scottish masons' lodges, produced a slow and fitful transition from 'operative' lodges of working building craftsmen to speculative masonic lodges.²² This process of transformation is exemplified by the experience of the Dundee masons. In the 1690s the masons' lodge in Dundee was a trade organisation for building craftsmen that also admitted honorary members. In the course of the early eighteenth century the

(eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 109-111; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 13, 17, 20, 22-23. See above, pp. 31-35.

¹⁹ DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 30; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 120; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 257; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, p. 30; TWA, GU/BS/2/1, fol. 120; TWA, GU/BS/2/2, p. 257; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 250-251; *Articles of Pot's Box* (Newcastle, 1787), pp. 17-21. See above, pp. 48-50.

²⁰ M. C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, 1981), pp. 117-120; D. Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge, 1988), passim; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 309-311, 325.

²¹ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 35-36; Stevenson, *Origins of Freemasonry*, pp. 26-51.

²² Stevenson, *Origins of Freemasonry*, p. 6; Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 38.

language of the lodge's minutes changed, and more honorary members were admitted. By 1734 the officers of the Dundee lodge were using the same terminology of speculative freemasonry used by publications such as Anderson's *Constitution of the Freemasons*.²³

This Scottish brand of speculative freemasonry seems to have aroused interest in England, where lodges of masons may have been meeting from the 1640s. Lodges of speculative masons are known to have been active in London by the last two decades of the seventeenth century, and in 1717 the Grand Lodge was formed. The masonic movement then became a federal organisation, where individual lodges could become affiliated to the Grand Lodge.²⁴ The north of England, perhaps because of its proximity to Scotland, was an early centre of freemasonry with more affiliated lodges than any other region by 1740. Freemasonry was well established in the north east by the mid-eighteenth century, with at least eight active lodges, including both unattached and affiliated lodges.²⁵ The connection between English freemasonry and 'operative' masonic guilds is not well understood, and the subject has attracted surprisingly little attention. Many English lodges, such as the military lodges formed by soldiers, began as speculative freemasonry organisations, and had no connection with trade guilds.²⁶ It is clear, however, that some English lodges did evolve directly out of craft guilds, including the masons guild of Alnwick, in Northumberland.²⁷ The minutes of 'the company and Fellowship of Free Masons at Alnwick' reveal how the trade company

²³ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 38-39, 43-44.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 115; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 309-11.

²⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 311, 313-318; W. Waples, 'The State of Masonry in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1725-1814 Part I', *Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076* (no date, no number), 12-26, deposited in NRO 897, 25, 1, 12; W. Logan, *History of Freemasonry in the City of Durham, in connection with the Marquis of Granby Lodge, No. 124, of the Ancient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons* (London, 1886), pp. i-iii; Rylands, 'The Alnwick Lodge Minutes', 4-26.

²⁶ Stevenson, *Origins of Freemasonry*, p. 6; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 310-311, 345.

²⁷ Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, p. 52.

slowly transformed itself into a lodge of speculative masons. At the start of the eighteenth century the company was a trade guild for working masons, and the rules of 1701 contain references to the building trade. However, on 27th December 1748 six men were invited as 'Brors to the assistance of the said Lodge' to 'erect' a new lodge, which appears to have been a speculative lodge of freemasons. Scottish masons may have attended this inauguration, and the lodge records show that at least one member of a speculative Scottish lodge later visited the Alnwick branch.²⁸

II

In the period after the Glorious Revolution the number of clubs increased, and societies spread across the country, becoming more organised, and attracting members from a wider social spectrum. Individuals were increasingly able to afford the costs of society membership, as an increase in surplus income allowed many people to spend more money on leisure.²⁹ The formation of clubs and societies was further stimulated by the increase in the number of inns until the late seventeenth century, when harsher licensing provisions led the numbers to level off. Many inn-keepers made improvements to their premises, and the numbers of provincial coffee houses increased, providing both more plentiful and better accommodation for clubs. The expanding local press provided fledgling clubs with the means of attracting members, through advertising and local news reports. There were no attempts by the post-Restoration state to regulate societies, which meant that clubs were allowed to grow unhampered.

²⁸ Rylands, 'The Alnwick Lodge Minutes', 4-26.

²⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 60-61; P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 135-137, 175-176; P. Clark and R. A. Houston, 'Culture and leisure 1700-1840' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History Of Britain II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 587-588; N. McKendrick, 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England' in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of A Consumer Society* (first edition 1982, reprinted London, 1983), pp. 9-33; J. H. Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure' in McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *The Birth of A Consumer Society*, pp. 265-285. See above, pp. 4-5.

Another factor in the increasing attraction of society membership during this period was the non-interventionist character of both national and local government, which led individuals to pursue their aims through volunteerism. The success of trade company sociability continued to act as a model for club establishment, but later societies were also able to draw on the earlier clubs as models.³⁰

Numerous societies were formed in the north east from the first decade of the eighteenth century, including a wide range of different types of club. The organisations meeting in the region after 1700 included a charitable society, clubs based on sporting activities such as bowling, freemasons lodges, an alumni association, benefit societies, a book club, horticultural societies and drinking clubs.³¹ More societies seem to have been founded in the area from the third decade of the eighteenth century, and twenty-two of the thirty-five societies known to have been founded between 1660 and the mid-eighteenth century were first recorded after 1731. Many organisations probably advertised in other ways before deciding to place advertisements in the newspapers. Some societies had probably been meeting for several years before they first advertised in the local newspaper, or achieved sufficient recognition for their activities to be included in the local news reports. However, it does seem that clubs and societies were only active in the region to any significant extent after 1700, and that clubability was more strongly established from the 1730s onwards.³²

³⁰ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 39-41, 141-193, 245.

³¹ NRO, 2647/4; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/01/1740; Rylands, 'The Alnwick Lodge Minutes', 4-26; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1729; *Articles Of The Women's Friendly Society*, *passim*; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46; *Newcastle Journal*, 11/08/1750; Hughes, *North Country Life*, p. 388.

³² J. Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775' in J. Black and J. Gregory (eds.), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 49-81.

Not all clubs that were established in the region in the first half of the eighteenth century survived until 1750. Many societies that were established in this period were relatively shortlived, and Clark estimates that the average life-span of a club was probably around three to four years. Numerous clubs that were established in the north east during this period probably only met for a short time, though the surviving evidence biases the sample towards those that were relatively successful. Several clubs that have left records seem to have had a brief life-span, including the St. Nicholas Book Club, which was established in Newcastle in March 1743, but is not known to have survived beyond 1746.³³ The Durham Mercers Club seems to have survived for only ten years after its inception in 1708.³⁴ Societies often suffered from the vagaries of fashion, or were threatened by competition from other clubs or other forms of recreation. The Newcastle Sons of the Clergy society had become highly fashionable by the early 1730s, when its annual sermon, which included choral music, was well attended by the great and the good of the region.³⁵ From the mid 1730s, however, the annual sermon became less fashionable as a social occasion, and by the mid-eighteenth century attendance had declined significantly. The Sons of the Clergy's annual service probably suffered from competition from the Newcastle subscription concerts, which began in 1735. The society's sermon had initially offered residents of the north east a valuable opportunity to enjoy a concert, but the event became less attractive when it was possible to attend regular concert series.³⁶

III

³³ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 9, 60-61; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46.

³⁴ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 47B, 56B.

³⁵ NRO, 2647/4, fols. 28, 31, 34, 42, 54, 60, 81; M. M. Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender: Homosociality and the Club' in R. Porter and M. M. Roberts (eds.), *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996), p. 52.

³⁶ NRO, 2647/4, fols. 198-199; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1736; A. Milner, 'Charles Avison', *The Musical Times*, 95 (1954), 16-18, 73-75. See below, pp. 223-224.

Having explored the factors that influenced the emergence of clubs, and outlined the chronology of club formation, it is now important to establish the profile of those who joined societies. The number of members admitted varied greatly between societies, and ranged from under ten to over one hundred. The less formal societies were likely to have fewer members, such as the club that Sir James Clavering joined in 1709. The club was founded by six members, who were all so close that Anne Clavering told Sir James he would not be able to 'raise any combustion for who knows one, I judge, knows the whole six'.³⁷ More institutionalised societies, such as the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy, usually had a larger membership. In 1731, for example, the society's annual dinner and sermon was attended by an impressive seventy-three individuals. Membership was often deliberately limited to maintain an intimate convivial atmosphere, and an upper limit of twenty members was frequently chosen by more formal clubs. Financial considerations governed admissions to benefit societies, which needed to limit numbers in order to protect the health of their funds.³⁸

The majority of societies in the north east seem to have been open only to male members. Various institutions, including the St. Nicholas Book Club in Newcastle and the Newcastle branch of the Sons of the Clergy charitable society, have left lists of members which show that no women were admitted. Other types of club, including masonic lodges and benefit societies, are known to have generally excluded women, so it can be assumed that the lodges and benefit societies of the north east followed the

³⁷ H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sir James Clavering* (Surtees Society, 178, 1967), pp. 45-46.

³⁸ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 196-197; NRO, 2647/4, fols. 81-82.

same practice.³⁹ A further society, the Christ's College alumni society, must have been closed to women, since members presumably had to be alumni of the college.⁴⁰ Roberts argues that men excluded women from clubs in order to be able to engage in behaviour that violated traditional gender boundaries, exploring the 'female in themselves' in a way that was not possible in their other social interactions. However, while clubs in London and the provinces offered opportunities for individuals with all kinds of interests to share their enthusiasms, societies engaging in homoerotic rituals and cross-dressing were always in the minority. None of the clubs that were meeting in the north east in this period seem to have engaged in such activities, and there were other rather more conventional reasons for men to bar women from joining societies.⁴¹

The members of the majority of societies chose to exclude women in order to create a masculine social space where men could drink heavily and converse freely. From the later seventeenth century, books of manners increasingly valued female conversation, emphasising the importance of women's presence at polite social occasions. Despite the shift in gender theory towards an emphasis on the civilising influence of women, older and potentially misogynistic attitudes appear to have prevented the inclusion of women in either clubs or guilds. Women continued to be perceived as too vain and foolish to contribute to the unstructured debates that formed an important part of the activities of many clubs. One masonic publication even justified the exclusion of women with a reference to the female role in the Fall. In this retelling of the story Eve was warned that, 'since you have done this thing, Madam, said he,/For your sake no women free-masons shall be'. In benefit clubs, the male members' desire to

³⁹ Newcastle City Library. Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, first page; NRO, 2647/4 fols. 20-22, 57-61; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 130-131, 201.

⁴⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1729.

⁴¹ Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender', pp. 48-76.

protect themselves against the threat of cheap female labour also militated against the inclusion of women.⁴²

However, despite the wide-spread exclusion of women from club membership, women were able to participate in clubability. Some organisations were open to women as well as men, and some groups of artisan women succeeded in establishing their own benefit clubs. The only society in the north east in this period to have a mixed membership was the Newcastle and Gateshead horticultural society, the 'Florists and Lovers of Gardening', which seems to have met from at least 1724 until at least 1750.⁴³ Gardening was popular among women, and flower growing was perceived as a particular accomplishment of the female sex. The 'Curious of Both Sexes' were invited to attend the courses of lectures on botany that were run in the north east in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, despite the strong female involvement in gardening, horticultural associations tended to be predominately male organisations.⁴⁴ There were at least four other horticultural societies operating in the north east during this period, none of which appears to have had a significant female membership. The newspaper reports of the activities of these clubs often comment on good attendance by 'Gentlemen', but unlike reports of lectures or assemblies, never mention the presence of women.⁴⁵

In the Newcastle and Gateshead club, however, at least one woman managed to mediate the obstacles to entry, perhaps by virtue of her horticultural achievements. The

⁴² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 203; L. Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere' in J. Still and M. Worton (eds.), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 100-115; Roberts, 'Pleasures Engendered by Gender', p. 66. See below, p. 306. See above, pp. 40-41.

⁴³ *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1744; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/08/1724; *Newcastle Journal*, 11/08/1750.

⁴⁴ K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (first edition 1983, reprinted 1984), pp. 238-239.

⁴⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/08/1724; *Newcastle Gazette*, 27/01/1748; *Newcastle Gazette*, 02/11/1748.

lists of prize winners published in the local newspapers reveal that the intrepid Mrs Hodgshon of Elswick was an active member of the society in the 1740s. She was a keen grower of prize-winning flowers of two varieties, auriculas and tulips. Mrs Hodgshon won prizes in three years in the 1740s, triumphing at the society's auricula show in Gateshead in May 1745. Despite the poor growing season, the members of the Florists and Lovers of Gardening exhibited an 'exceeding fine Show of Flowers', including many unusual plants. Mrs Hodgshon attended the feast at Mr James Thompson's in Gateshead, along with an exceptionally high number of fellow florists, and carried off the 1st, 3rd and 4th prizes.⁴⁶ It is unclear whether Mrs Hodgshon was one of a significant minority of female members of the society, as no membership lists of the society have survived. The female members of the Florists and Lovers of Gardening may have enjoyed club meetings, but the society was probably dominated by the male members, as the majority of mixed societies of this period seem to have been.⁴⁷

Several all-female benefit societies were founded in the north east in this period, providing the wives and daughters of artisans with financial benefits and sociability.⁴⁸ There were at least ten box clubs or benefit societies meeting in the north east in the first half of the eighteenth century, but eight of these benefit societies were probably open only to male members. In order to receive the financial protection that such societies offered, women were forced to found their own societies. Many female benefit clubs were formed by inn-keepers, or by the wives of craftsmen, though some were established by members of the upper classes who had reforming aims.⁴⁹ The Civil

⁴⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1744; *Newcastle Journal*, 27/04/1745; *Newcastle Journal*, 27/04/1745; *Newcastle Journal*, 11/05/1745; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/05/1748.

⁴⁷ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 198-199.

⁴⁸ *Articles of the Civil Female Society* (no place of publication, 1809), passim; *Articles Of The Women's Friendly Society*, passim.

⁴⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/06/1745; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 356-367.

Female Society and the Women's Friendly Society were established in Newcastle in 1735 and 1746 respectively, though it is not known who initiated these clubs. The formation of all-female benefit societies allowed some women to enjoy institutional sociability, but few such clubs were formed, and the average membership of all-female box clubs was lower than that of male societies.⁵⁰

A few women in the north east were able to participate formally in clubs, by becoming members either of a mixed society or by joining an all-female club. However, some women also experienced this form of institutional sociability by attending club social occasions alongside their husbands, very much as the wives of guild members attended guild feasts, though not guild meetings.⁵¹ Only one body in the north east, the Newcastle masonic lodge, is known to have included women in club social events in this way. The Newcastle lodge invited women to the theatre performances that the lodge had sponsored, and sometimes also to masonic dinners. In May 1730 the freemasons and their wives attended a performance of 'the Committee, or the Faithful Irishmen'.⁵² In June of the same year the members of the lodge also seem to have shared a dinner with their wives, and it was claimed that 'Never such an appearance of Ladies and gentlemen were ever seen together at this place'.⁵³ It is possible that other societies in the north east were also holding events that included women, because they were certainly not uncommon in clubs in other areas of the country. In many other British societies women were invited to special balls or feasts, asked to give out prizes, and

⁵⁰ *Articles of the Civil Female Society*, passim; *Articles Of The Women's Friendly Society*, passim; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 356, 364.

⁵¹ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 336-337; C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 9, 2 (1941), 251; C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 9, 3 (1943), 283, 290. See above, pp. 40-44.

⁵² J. H. Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', *Archeologia Aeliana*, new ser., 4 (1860), 237.

⁵³ Waples, 'The State of Masonry in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1725-1814 Part I', 12.

feted as patrons. Clark suggests that such invitations to women were 'tokenistic', and that members' wives were merely invited as decoration. This seems an unnecessarily dismissive interpretation of female involvement, because women probably enjoyed and valued the events to which they were invited. Furthermore, the male members of some provincial societies consistently chose to invite their womenfolk to such events, suggesting that although they preferred to retain a pristine masculine environment in their meetings, they also enjoyed socialising together with their wives. It seems possible that there was a household element to some club sociability, as there was to socialising in trade guilds. The Newcastle keelmen's society obviously regarded wives as part of the club community, for example, because keelmen were obliged to attend the funerals of members' wives.⁵⁴

Not only were both genders sometimes involved in the institutional sociability of early modern clubs, but individuals from a wide range of social backgrounds were also able to participate. The club became an important element in the social lives of gentlemen in the north east, many of whom joined societies. The Newcastle Sons of the Clergy charitable society became fashionable among the local gentry, and the society's celebrations were often attended by the Bishop of Durham, local Members of Parliament and important men of the Corporation.⁵⁵ In 1712, the society's sermon and dinner were attended by nine members listed as clergymen, and fifteen styled as 'gentlemen'. Among those listed as gentlemen were the mayor of Newcastle, the Member of Parliament for Newcastle, William Wrightson, and the Member for County Durham, John Hedworth.⁵⁶ The masonic lodges of the north east were also well supported by the local gentry, who accounted for approximately 9 per cent of the

⁵⁴ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 198, 201-202; TWA, 1160/1, p. 39. See above, pp. 42-48.

⁵⁵ NRO, 2647/4, fols. 28, 31, 34, 42, 54, 60, 81-82.

⁵⁶ NRO, 2647/4, fol. 1.

members of the London masonic lodges studied by Clark. When the Free and Accepted Masons met in Newcastle for St. John's Day in 1733 the *Newcastle Courant* reported that there was 'the greatest Appearance that has been known on that Occasion, the Society consisting of the principal Inhabitants of the Town and County'.⁵⁷

Middling sort members were also prominent in many of the societies meeting in the north east before 1750, including the horticultural societies. Gardening was popular among all social groups in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and by 1677 John Worlidge was able to remark that there was 'scarce a cottage in most parts of the southern parts of England but hath its proportionable garden, so great a delight do most of men take in it'. Craftsmen were even thought to be better at growing prize-winning flowers than gentlemen competitors, because they tended their blooms more assiduously.⁵⁸ The members of the horticultural societies of the north east included a clergyman, a bookseller, printers, an innkeeper, gardeners, nurserymen and seedmen.⁵⁹ The horticultural societies of the north east clearly intended to encourage participation by flower enthusiasts of limited means, and seem to have tried to keep membership costs low. The Bishop Wearmouth Florists, for example, advertised their annual carnation feast and dinner in 1748, promising that 'For the Encouragement of those of Taste in this Way, who may be of low Fortune, we propose the Ordinary to be at a very easy Rate'.⁶⁰ Similarly, when the Newcastle and Gateshead florists held their dinner in 1749 they announced that the 'Expence is fixed at 2s. 6d. only'. This sum was within

⁵⁷ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 320-322; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1739.

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 228-230.

⁵⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 31/03/1750; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/05/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 02/09/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 25/09/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 15/10/1743; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1744; *Newcastle Journal*, 22/04/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/08/1748; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/12/1749.

⁶⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 13/08/1748.

the reach of middling sort members, and was the same amount that the Durham Mercers guild members were required to pay towards their dinner.⁶¹

Many of the middling sort attended clubs and societies both to enjoy the good fellowship and to further their business interests. The horticultural societies, for example, attracted many members who were involved in the gardening or nursery trades, and some clubs specifically invited such individuals to attend. The 1739 advertisement for a Richmond horticultural society invited gardeners, nurserymen and seedsmen, along with gentlemen and florists, for a carnation show and feast at the King's Arms.⁶² In the late 1740s the members of the Bishop Wearmouth and Sunderland Florists included John Hyslop, a Sunderland nurseryman, seedsman and landsurveyor.⁶³ Membership of the horticultural societies allowed those connected with the plant trade to meet potential customers, and to advertise the superiority of their stock by entering their blooms in the flower shows. Edward and John Waldy seem to have run a plant business together in Yarm, and used their membership of various horticultural societies to promote their wares. Edward Waldy won gold rings for carnations at both the Northallerton and Yarm Florists' Feasts in the mid 1730s, and the Waldys capitalised on these victories in their advertising. John Waldy advertised his 'Layers of the best Sorts of Carnations' by using the horticultural prowess of his relative as a testimonial to the quality of his plants. He listed the dates and locations of the florists' feasts where Edward Waldy had won prizes, and named each variety of carnation that he had shown.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 12/08/1749; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, copy of 1632 ordinances.

⁶² *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 84, 165-166.

⁶³ *Newcastle Journal*, 20/08/1748; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/12/1749.

⁶⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/08/1736; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/01/1750.

Individuals from many other trades were keen to be involved in societies that might provide them with work. Innkeepers were particularly prominent in organising clubs, supporting them financially, and providing space for them to meet. George Dixon, a Newcastle innkeeper, was an enthusiastic member of the Newcastle and Gateshead horticultural society.⁶⁵ Dixon seems to have been an extremely keen grower, and won many prizes for his flowers, travelling to flower shows throughout the region.⁶⁶ However, he not only gained a great deal of enjoyment from his membership of the society, but also benefited financially. Many of the events organised by the Newcastle and Gateshead society were held at his inn in Newcastle, the suitably named *Flora*.⁶⁷ Various innkeepers in the region also joined their local masonic lodge, and gained by having their premises chosen as the masons' meeting place. Both the Gateshead and Durham lodges are known to have met at inns that were owned by fellow freemasons.⁶⁸ Newspaper proprietors frequently established societies, and could expect to benefit from increased revenue from advertisements placed by the societies. The members of the Newcastle and Gateshead society of Florists included Isaac Thompson and his partner Peregrine Tyzack, who were among the proprietors of the *Newcastle Journal*.⁶⁹ The partners benefited from this arrangement by gaining all the advertising business of horticultural societies in the region. These clubs had previously advertised their activities in the *Newcastle Courant*, but moved their business to the *Journal* after it was launched in 1739.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 164-165; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1749.

⁶⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 24/08/1745.

⁶⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/04/1749.

⁶⁸ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 246-247; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/01/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/05/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/01/1743; Logan, *History of Freemasonry in the City of Durham*, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 165-166; *Newcastle Journal*, 25/09/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 15/10/1743; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1744.

⁷⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 14/08/1736; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739.

The role of middling sort men in clubs and societies was not confined to membership and the provision of food, drink and accommodation. Many clubs in the north east were initiated by men from the middling sort, including the Newcastle branch of the Sons of the Clergy. This organisation was modelled on the London charitable organisation, the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, which was formally founded in 1674, but had its antecedents in the collections for struggling families of clergymen that were held in the capital during the Interregnum.⁷¹ The success of the London society encouraged the establishment of similar independent organisations in provincial towns, including Norwich, Bristol, Chester and Ipswich by 1705.⁷² The Newcastle society was established in April 1709, at a meeting of eighteen men who each agreed to subscribe annually to a fund for the relief of the poor families of clergymen.⁷³ These eighteen founding subscribers included attorneys, merchants, an upholsterer and a barber surgeon.⁷⁴ Not only were many clubs founded by the middling sort, but many of these men held offices within societies, allowing them to direct the activities of many clubs. The laymen who were appointed as stewards of the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy included six merchants, a hostman, an upholsterer, a barber surgeon and a schoolmaster. Many clergymen from parishes across County Durham and Northumberland also acted as officers of the society.⁷⁵

The lower groups of urban society, including the labouring poor and the marginal, were generally excluded from clubs. The cost of joining a society operated as an effective barrier, because individuals in these social groups could not afford club

⁷¹ N. Cox, *Bridging The Gap: A History of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy over 300 Years 1655-1978* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 1, 3, 4.

⁷² Cox, *Bridging The Gap*, pp. 36-38.

⁷³ J. Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (2 vols., London, 1789), vol. 1, pp. 323-324.

⁷⁴ NRO, 2647/4, fols. 1-2.

⁷⁵ NRO, 2647/4, fol. 7.

membership. Benefit societies in rural areas probably recruited furthest down the social spectrum, enrolling husbandmen and labourers. However, box clubs often explicitly excluded individuals working in the least well paid occupations, presumably because they were perceived as a potential drain on the resources of the clubs.⁷⁶ Although the poorest members of urban society were unable to participate in club membership, the majority of the societies of the north east, as in the rest of Britain, attracted members from a relatively broad social spectrum. Many clubs of the region included both middling sort and many gentlemen members, allowing them to develop friendships and support networks among those who shared their interests. The masonic lodges of the north east, for example, were well supported by the local gentry, but the middling sort provided the solid core of support for the freemasonry movement. In the London lodges studied by Clark, approximately 9 per cent of the members in the 1730s were landowners and gentlemen, 18 per cent were 'professionals' and 19 per cent were active in the major distributive trades. The remaining 53 per cent were tradesmen, mostly occupied in artisan trades.⁷⁷

Although most societies included both middling sort and upper class members, different types of society attracted varying ratios of members from the different social groups. Some societies attracted a predominately middling sort membership, such as benefit societies, which were always dominated by craftsmen. However, the gentry were not entirely absent from these organisations, as some gentlemen acted as the treasurers of box clubs, or became involved in other ways.⁷⁸ Other societies seem to have been dominated by the elite, such as the Tory Recorder's Club of Newcastle, where members

⁷⁶ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 130, 215, 351.

⁷⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1739; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 320-322.

⁷⁸ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 358-359.

met from at least 1747 to discuss politics and to share convivial meals.⁷⁹ Even the more exclusive clubs, however, were usually open to professional men and merchants, and very few organisations restricted membership to the aristocracy and gentry. Social barriers were not dissolved by virtue of participation in the same society, and hierarchical distinctions were often maintained within clubs. However, although societies did not lead to extensive social levelling, clubs did facilitate social mixing, allowing men of different social groups to share fraternal experiences.⁸⁰

Societies were often formed as a result of pre-existing friendship or occupational networks. Smaller clubs, such as the society created by James Clavering and six close associates, might almost exactly replicate an existing friendship network, merely formalising the sociability of an existing group.⁸¹ Other societies provided a mechanism for sociability within an occupational group that had not been covered by a trade company, functioning in a similar way to the trade guilds. Many benefit societies, including the Newcastle Fraternity of Gardeners, Keelmen's fund, and Brotherhood of Maltsters, were trade-based, though other box clubs were not.⁸² Two societies meeting in Newcastle, the St. Nicholas Book Club and the Sons of the Clergy, provided opportunities for clergymen to socialise, developing and strengthening their sense of group identity. Clergymen may have been particularly keen to form occupationally-based clubs to fill the vacuum left by the discontinuation of Convocation in 1717. The St. Nicholas Book Club seems to have been established by a group of friends, almost all of whom were clergymen. When the society was formed in 1743 eleven men signed up

⁷⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 17/06/1749; K. Wilson, *The sense of the people: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (first edition 1995, reprinted Cambridge, 1998), p. 64.

⁸⁰ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 212-216, 224-225.

⁸¹ Dickinson (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sir James Clavering*, pp. 45-46.

⁸² *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1725; *Articles Of The Society Of Maltsters* (Newcastle, 1817), passim; TWA, 1160/1; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 353-355.

as subscribers, including at least nine members of the clergy. The majority of these men would have been well known to one-another, since seven of them held offices in the churches of Newcastle.⁸³ The Sons of the Clergy had initially been formed as a group of clergymen's sons, with a significant lay input. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the society had become dominated by clergymen, who held the majority of offices in the society, and formed the majority of members. Initially, only the sons of clergymen seem to have held office in the society, but by the 1730s clergymen without clerical ancestry were being chosen as officers.⁸⁴

IV

Having established who was socialising in clubs, it is now important to establish the ideological basis of this form of institutional sociability, before discussing its characteristics. Clubs developed few original justifications for their existence, but instead drew on the same rhetoric employed by the trade guilds, and positioned themselves as agents of harmony in the urban community. Various contemporary commentators argued that societies united the differing political and religious groups within towns.⁸⁵ The clubs of the north east emphasised their role in promoting unity among members in both their sermons and newspaper advertisements. The Newcastle masonic lodge, for example, commissioned a sermon in December 1734, which took the theme of 'The Nature and Usefulness of Society'. Although the text of this sermon has not survived, one of the justifications for association was probably the same as that offered by the preacher of the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy in 1711. John Smith told

⁸³ Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, first page, p. 15; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 115.

⁸⁴ NRO, 2647/4/4; DUL, Hudleston Papers, clergy index.

⁸⁵ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', p. 98; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 177-178. See above, pp. 33-35.

the members that an important function of the society would be to engender Love and Friendship among us, that we may know one another'.⁸⁶ The freemasons of the north east seem to have become particularly well known for the orderliness and harmony with which they conducted their meetings. In January 1743, for example, the *Newcastle Courant* reported a meeting of the Gateshead lodge, stating that 'the [E]vening concluded with that Decency and Harmony peculiar [t]o Masons'.⁸⁷

Societies not only saw themselves as encouraging harmonious relations between urban residents, but also believed that association in clubs led to the formation of strong fraternal bonds between members. Many clubs, including the horticultural societies and freemasons, routinely addressed their members in familial language when they advertised club activities in the local newspapers. In 1738, for example, the Society of Archers called on 'Brother Archers' to attend a club dinner in Pearcebridge-End.⁸⁸ The eight printed sermons of the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy show that this society also conceptualised itself as a family. The preachers frequently referred to the members as 'Brethren', and exhorted them to 'continue in brotherly Love amongst ourselves'.⁸⁹ Contemporaries also described the fraternal bonds that existed between different societies, which were perceived as being engaged in the same endeavour. When the Durham benefit society Trotter's Box, won a case about money removed from the society's funds, the *Newcastle Journal* reported that the members were ecstatic, and 'likewise all the rest of the Societies in that City'.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 01/06/1734; NRO, 2647/4; J. Smith, *A Sermon Preached to the Sons of the Clergy. Upon Their First Solemn Meeting* (Newcastle, n. d., 1711?), pp. 20, 42-43.

⁸⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 29/01/1743; *Newcastle Journal*, 03/12/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/01/1743.

⁸⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/05/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/06/1738.

⁸⁹ J. Ellison, *Our obligations to do good, and the manner of doing it* (Newcastle, [1750]), pp. 28-29; T. Sharp, *A Charity Sermon, For the Relief of poor Widows, And children of Clergymen, within The Diocese of Durham* (London, n. d., 1721?).

⁹⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 18/09/1742.

In some respects, the activities of clubs merely mirrored the political divisions within eighteenth-century towns. During the first half of the eighteenth century many clubs acted as rallying points for either Whig or opposition voters, providing an arena for political discussion and electioneering. Individual masonic lodges often aligned themselves with one political grouping, and the Newcastle and Alnwick lodges were known for their oppositionist politics. However, masonry was compatible with various political perspectives, and while some lodges became a focus for Tories and Jacobites, others were known for their Whig sympathies.⁹¹ Other societies also became identified as meeting places for members with a shared political perspective, including the elite Recorder's Club in Newcastle, which had a predominately Tory membership. Jacobites often formed clubs and societies in order to meet and discuss politics, including the Jacobite hunt club that was meeting in Durham in the early 1740s.⁹²

However, many societies sought to recruit members of all political persuasions, as did the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy. The London Sons of the Clergy society was notorious for its high church Tory sympathies, and Henry Sacheverell himself preached at the annual Festival in 1713. Although the metropolitan Sons of the Clergy was a predominately royalist, high church organisation, the society attempted to maintain some balance in its appointment of officers.⁹³ Like its parent organisation, the Newcastle based Sons of the Clergy appears to have received strong support from Tory gentry and M.P.s. The society was patronised by the Jacobite William Shippen, the

⁹¹ Wilson, *The sense of the people*, pp. 70-71; J. Money, 'Freemasonry and the Fabric of Loyalism in Hanoverian England' in E. Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 259-261; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 73-74, 330, 335-336.

⁹² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 180-181, 73-74.

⁹³ Cox, *Bridging The Gap*, pp. 27-28, 79, 30.



Member of Parliament for Saltash, and by the Hon. Dixie Windsor, who was the Tory Member for Cambridge University.⁹⁴ However, the Society also attracted donations from those of other religious or political affiliations, including the Presbyterian and Whig Sir William Middleton, Member for Northumberland between 1722 and 1757.⁹⁵ Although Catholic and Jewish members were specifically excluded from some organisations, many clubs allowed members of different religious denominations to socialise on the same terms. Both the Newcastle and Gateshead horticultural society and the Newcastle masonic lodge admitted nonconformist members, for example.⁹⁶

Early provincial clubs and societies, like the trade guilds, performed a broadly integrative function in urban communities, which were subject to the strain of immigration.⁹⁷ The greatest concentration of societies meeting in the north east was found in the provincial capital, at Newcastle. The location of meetings is known for thirty-three of the societies founded in the north east during the period, of which fourteen clubs held all or some of their meetings in Newcastle. Six societies met in the regional centre of Durham, and the remaining clubs met in other towns in the region, including large towns such as Gateshead, and the market town of Wooler.⁹⁸ In the north east, as in

⁹⁴ R. Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754* (2 vols., London, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 422, 549, 559, 2-3, 29; NRO, 2647/4, fol. 2; Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 1, pp. 464, 428; R. Welford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed* (3 vols., Newcastle, 1895), vol. 1, p. 40.

⁹⁵ Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 2, pp. 257, 125-126, 216, 383, 461; NRO, 2647/4, fol. 42, 98-101; Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 1, p. 609.

⁹⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 17/05/1746; *Newcastle Journal*, 30/04/1748; T. Wake, 'Isaac Thompson's plan of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1746', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 14 (1937), 110-122; J. C. Hodgson, 'Unpublished Letters of Richard Dawes, Master of the Newcastle Grammar School', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd ser., 15 (1918), 77-8; R. Welford, 'Early Newcastle Typography 1639-1800', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd ser., 3 (1907), 27-30; Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. 3, pp. 506-510; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/01/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735.

⁹⁷ Ellis, 'A dynamic society', pp. 190-227; I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), passim. See above, pp. 33-35.

⁹⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/01/1743; T. Sharp, *An Apology for the Annual Collections made towards the Support of Clergymens Widows and*

the rest of Britain, relatively few societies were established in the countryside. A mere three societies are known to have met in rural areas of County Durham and Northumberland, including a horticultural society established in the Northumberland village of Felton by 1750, and a masonic lodge at Swalwell, where the employees of the Crowley works provided a good supply of potential members.⁹⁹

Clubs were an arena where members socialised in an ordered, ritualised manner, according to written or unwritten rules that were designed to promote the ideal of conviviality. Masonic lodges engaged in particularly ritualised association, including elaborate initiation ceremonies involving blindfolding, masonic aprons, and ceremonial swords. Even the more informal clubs often adopted rules, as ritualised sociability was an integral part of sociability in societies. When James Clavering and his close friends formed their club in 1709, Clavering's correspondent assumed that they would dedicate one area for debate, asking whether it would be 'politicks or private affairs'.¹⁰⁰ Sociability in societies was governed by similar rules to those adopted by the guilds, which aimed to control excessive drinking, gambling and swearing. In the 1740s the Newcastle keelmen's benefit society frequently fined members for drunkenness at the society's meetings, including one John Millar, who was fined six shillings in March 1740 for being 'Intoxicate with Liquor'. Excessive indulgence in drink at the funerals of fellow members was also punished by fines, and the society even punished members for drinking on Sundays.¹⁰¹ While members might enjoy betting, they were certainly not permitted to make wagers at company meetings or other social occasions, as William

Orphans (Newcastle, 1746), pp. 13-14; E. Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History* (15 vols., Northumberland County History Committee, 1893-1940), vol. 11, pp. 298-299.

⁹⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 07/04/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735; M. W. Flinn (ed.), *The Law Book Of The Crowley Ironworks* (Surtees Society, 167, 1957), p. xii.

¹⁰⁰ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 250-251, 334; Dickinson (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sir James Clavering*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁰¹ TWA, 1160/1, pp. 15, 44. See above, pp. 48-50.

Shell discovered when he was fined for 'betting and throwing to the ground Jams Portes', in 1742.¹⁰²

Club regulations also sought to prevent members from offending fellow members by swearing, or using indecent language. The 1787 version of the articles of the Newcastle benefit society Pot's Box, which was founded in 1731, included five pages listing various degrees of fineable behaviour. Members who were caught 'beating' or 'basely abusing' fellow members were fined five shillings each. Similar rules governed speech among members of the keelmen's benefit society, who were regularly fined for lying, making oaths and insulting fellow keelmen in 'unbrotherly language', such as 'block head'.¹⁰³ Many societies also forbade political or religious discussion, on the grounds that this might lead to divisions among members. Other aspects of behaviour were also regulated, including inappropriate dress, fighting, and unwillingness to participate fully in the club's activities. The keelmen's society fined one of their members six shillings in 1741 for appearing at the funeral of another keelman's wife 'in disgracefull like habit &c & boasting th[at he had better'.¹⁰⁴ The Pot's Box club also demanded that members dress appropriately for society social occasions, fining members who attended funerals with 'a very rough beard, in a dirty slovenly manner unwashed'. The members of benefit societies were often fined for failing to attend funerals, as the Newcastle keelmen were, though the keelmen also fined members for failing to attend meetings, not casting their votes in meetings, and for lateness.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² TWA, 1160/1, pp. 98, 64.

¹⁰³ *Articles of Pot's Box*, pp. 17-21; TWA, 1160/1, pp. 7, 13, 15, 17.

¹⁰⁴ TWA, 1160/1, pp. 7, 13, 15, 17, 39, 79.

¹⁰⁵ *Articles of Pot's Box*, pp. 17-21; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 250-251, 382-383; TWA, 1160/1, pp. 31, 39-40.

Most clubs had some formal organisational structure, appointing officers to collect membership fees, and organise meetings and social events.¹⁰⁶ Smaller societies usually elected only one or two officers, and the St. Nicholas Book Club in Newcastle seems to have managed with only one officer. A steward was elected at the annual meeting every March, and was responsible for collecting members' subscriptions, and for purchasing the books that the society agreed to buy. He was also responsible for superintending the loan of books to members, levying fines if volumes were not returned on time.¹⁰⁷ Larger societies, which had more complicated finances and more elaborate activities to organise, often elected a hierarchy of officials and held separate committee meetings. The Newcastle Sons of the Clergy engaged in large scale fund-raising, usually collecting more than two hundred pounds per year between 1725 and 1750. The society gained an income by lending capital out at interest, often to the Newcastle Corporation, and also benefited from various bequests.¹⁰⁸

By 1780 the officers of the society were managing the impressive accumulated capital of £1500.¹⁰⁹ Those who acted as stewards of the society also had to oversee the distribution of money to the distressed families of clergymen, reading their correspondence or seeing them in person.¹¹⁰ The financial success of the society must have been the result of good management, and as in most clubs and societies in this period the management structure of the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy seems to have elaborated over time. The society was initially run by only two stewards, an arrangement that dated from the foundation of the organisation in 1709. As the society

¹⁰⁶ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁷ Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/09/1739; Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, vol. 1, pp. 325-326; DUL, DPR, copy will of Elizabeth Rogers, proved 1734; NRO, 2647/4/14; NRO, 2647/4, fol. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, vol. 1, p. 326.

¹¹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 07/09/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/09/1736.

grew larger, and its revenue increased, it became obvious that more officers were needed to run the organisation. From 1725 either four or five stewards were elected annually, and after 1733 an organisational structure of five stewards was established. Not all societies in the region were as large or as structured as this branch of the Sons of the Clergy, but almost all clubs needed to elect officers in order to keep their sociable meetings on a sound financial footing.¹¹¹

The calendar of club sociability followed a similar pattern to that established by the trade guilds. Members of societies associated at regular meetings, which might vary in frequency from nightly to annually, though on average members assembled fortnightly or monthly. These meetings provided regular opportunities for members to meet and get to know one another, and engage in discussion of the shared interests that had encouraged them to join. Clubs also assembled intermittently for funerals, where they engaged in communal commemoration of deceased members, and in other areas of the country some clubs are also known to have celebrated the marriages and christenings of club members and their households.¹¹² The majority of clubs shared a communal dinner at least once a year, often holding their feast on their main annual meeting day, as the guilds did. The Society of Archers, for example, had one main annual celebration, on the day they held their competition, and assembled for a club dinner either before or after the shooting.¹¹³ Some societies held several feasts in one

¹¹¹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 251; Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, vol. 1, p. 324; NRO, 2647/4/4, fol. 7 and unnumbered fols; *Newcastle Journal*, 22/09/1739.

¹¹² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 228, 238, 382; TWA, 1160/1.

¹¹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/05/1736; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/06/1738; *Newcastle Journal*, 29/07/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 30/06/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/05/1737. See above, pp. 56-57.

year, such as the region's masonic lodges, which usually met for two feasts a year, on St. John's day in December, and again in the summer.¹¹⁴

Feasting was an important way in which members were able to develop and strengthen a sense of corporate unity. Club dinners were highlights in the social calendars of their members, and were occasions for the enjoyment of food and good fellowship. This was emphasised by the preacher to the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy in 1711, who ended his sermon by urging his listeners to proceed from the church to the 'House of Banqueting'. He told the members of the society that the feast to come would be 'a seasonable occasion of innocent rejoicing ourselves'.¹¹⁵ The Newcastle keelmen's benefit society valued full attendance at their annual dinner, which was held on what they called their 'head meeting day', using the language of the town's trade guilds. The society charged members sixpence each for dinner, and followed the trade guild practice of fining non-attenders the same amount in order to ensure that even their least well off members would appear.¹¹⁶ Many societies prioritised the annual celebration, investing large sums of money to ensure an enjoyable and spectacular occasion. The Sons of the Clergy sometimes made a charity collection at their dinner, but the conviviality of the annual feast was highly important to members.¹¹⁷ The annual feast was considered so important that the society usually spent considerably more money on the meal than they raised from the ticket sales. In 1748 for example, the Society sold twenty-eight tickets for the dinner, yielding five pounds eight shillings and six pence. The stewards then

¹¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735; Rylands, *The Alnwick Lodge Minutes*, 8.

¹¹⁵ NRO, 2647/4; Smith, *Sermon Preached to the Sons of the Clergy*, pp. 20, 42-43.

¹¹⁶ TWA, 1160/1, p. 67. See above, pp. 56, 50-51.

¹¹⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/09/1739.

chose to order a dinner costing more than double the money received, at thirteen pounds, fifteen shillings and sixpence.¹¹⁸

The camaraderie of club dinners was reinforced by communal toasting, which was often an important feature of society feasts. Masonic processions and dinners in Durham, Newcastle and Swalwell usually culminated in toasting, both to the royal family, and to masonry. In June 1742 the Durham lodge of freemasons met in their new lodge room at an inn in the town, and shared a 'handsome' dinner. The masons made 'loyal healths' at their lodge room, and later made more toasts at the market cross, including a toast to the craft of freemasonry.¹¹⁹ Society toasts allowed members to affirm their bonds, and to extol their society's role within their community and country. When the Durham masonic lodge drank the health of the grand masters for England and Scotland directly after a loyal toast to the King and the Prince of Wales, they were self-consciously proclaiming the importance and status of their society.¹²⁰

The members of clubs often expressed their pride in the activities of their society by making elaborate preparations for the annual feast. The Newcastle and Gateshead florists frequently held their dinners 'in a magnificent Tent' pitched on the bowling green of an inn, 'splendidly decorated with Flowers pendent in Garlands and Festoons'.¹²¹ Societies often provided copious quantities of food and wine for the feast, and also engaged people to wait on members. The Newcastle Sons of the Clergy ate and drank splendidly, usually ordering wine with their meal, and feasting off venison in

¹¹⁸ NRO, 2647/4, fols. 181-182, 62

¹¹⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 269; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/01/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 03/07/1742.

¹²⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1740.

¹²¹ *Newcastle Gazette*, 12/08/1747; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 19/08/1749.

1724.¹²² Members of the society were usually served at the table by the servants of the innkeeper who was providing the food, and from 1728 these servants were joined by a butler.¹²³ In the flower clubs members often provided their own produce for club dinners, as in 1725, when the Elswick society ate fruit provided by 'several Gentlemen' for their dessert. This contribution of food for the feast enabled members to share the fruits of their labours, and express pride in the horticultural achievements of the members of their society.¹²⁴

Many clubs also organised impressive processions on their feast days, which allowed them to display the size, importance and solidarity of their society to the residents of their town. Society members often marched together to the church to hear a sermon, as the Newcastle masons did in December 1733, when they marched from their meeting at an inn 'with their Regalia, and proper Ornaments to the Chapel at the Bridge-End'.¹²⁵ The communal sermon often took an appropriate text, which emphasised the importance of unity among members, praised the attainments of the club, and called for contributions to the society's coffers. In 1712, for example, the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy assembled for a sermon preached by Nicholas Burton, which took as its text 'Love the Brotherhood'. Burton called on members to express love for one-another, 'which is the Bond and Cement the End and Perfection of all Fraternal Society'. He told his congregation that the members of the society were honourable and virtuous, and invited them to show their love for their brotherhood by making a donation.¹²⁶

¹²² NRO 2647/4, fol. 39.

¹²³ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1725; NRO 2647/4, fol. 62.

¹²⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1725; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/08/1725.

¹²⁵ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 267-268; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733.

¹²⁶ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 268; N. Burton, *A Sermon Preach'd before the Sons of the Clergy* (Newcastle, 1712), pp. 1, 7, 16.

Societies not only processed to church, but also marched to other important public locations in towns, including the market cross, which was often the focal point of both masonic processions and those organised by the horticultural societies of the region. In 1739, after the Richmond flower club had enjoyed a dinner and awarded prizes to the best growers, they carried 'their Floral Crowns' to the market cross, 'to celebrate the Feast dedicated to Flora'.¹²⁷ Processions were often accompanied by music, and other modes of public celebration, including the firing of guns and bell ringing. In 1743, for example, the Gateshead masonic lodge treated the town to a 'Grand Procession', which earned them a detailed report in the *Newcastle Courant*. The freemasons of the lodge marched behind a band of musicians, and were heralded by 'a triple Discharge of Guns, and Ringing of Bells'.¹²⁸ Masonic processions were often particularly spectacular, and included the display of the freemasons' regalia and ornaments. In 1735, for example, the Swalwell lodge processed in reverse order of seniority, the Grand Masters coming last. The brethren carried their banners, white wands, white staff and the Great Sword, accompanied by musicians.¹²⁹

Clubs encouraged the development of bonds between members by marking the life cycle events of members and their households, in a continuation of traditional trade guild practices. Some societies in other areas of the country celebrated the marriages of members, and the birth of their children and grandchildren. The most important shared milestones were funerals, which provided opportunities for members to eat and drink together, and strengthen their fraternal links. Societies perceived attendance at club funerals as an important demonstration of solidarity, and many clubs forced members to

¹²⁷ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 265-267; *Newcastle Gazette*, 12/08/1747; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739.

¹²⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/01/1743.

¹²⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 266, 327; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/01/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/01/1743.

attend, and stipulated how they should dress and behave. Benefit societies almost always made attendance at funerals compulsory, and the members of the Newcastle keelmen's society attended the funerals of their fellow keelmen and their wives, sharing ale and tobacco.¹³⁰ Attending funerals was an important part of masonic fraternity, and freemasons often marked funerals with processions, as the masons of Swalwell and Gateshead did in September 1742, when the 'Provincial Grand Master' of County Durham was buried. The *Newcastle Journal* reported that the 'Brethren' of the affiliated lodges of Gateshead and Swalwell had escorted the body of 'Ed Alport' to his burial place in Whickham church-yard. The members created a splendid spectacle, marching in pairs in their masonic regalia of 'white Aprons, white Gloves, and Hatbands', and carrying their 'Sword of State'.¹³¹ Some societies required members to act as pall bearers for the deceased, just as the guilds did. In the keelmen's benefit society members seem to have taken acted as bearers in strict rotation, taking 'turns of the Coffins', and receiving payment from the club for their trouble. The society also owned a pall, which could be borrowed for the funerals of members and their wives.¹³²

Conversation was an important part of all the activities of societies, because the ritualised exchange of learned conversation, jokes and news bound the members of clubs closer together. Convivial talk probably ranged from formal debate to discussions of subjects of masculine interest, including hunting and women. It is difficult to analyse the subjects of conversation at meetings in any depth, since these interactions were often ephemeral and unrecorded. The societies of the north east rarely kept records of the matters they discussed, and the details of clubable conversation were not usually

¹³⁰ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 228, 270, 382, 368; *Articles of Pot's Box*, pp. 17-21; TWA, 1160/1, pp. 15-16; TWA, 1160/4, account to 22 August 1737. See above, pp. 51, 54-56.

¹³¹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 327; *Newcastle Journal*, 18/09/1742.

¹³² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 382; TWA 1160/1, pp. 55, 63; TWA, 1160/4, account from 9 August 1736, account to 22 August 1737. See above, p. 55.

included in newspaper reports of societies' activities. Nevertheless, masonic literature emphasised the importance of conversation as part of lodge activities, and at least some meetings appear to have included in-depth discussion of the principles of freemasonry. When the Darlington lodge met in December 1727, for example, 'the Misteries of the Craft and the Beauty of Masonry were earnestly discus'd' for three or four hours. However, lodges spent only a small proportion of their time discussing or enacting masonic rituals, and the members of the Darlington lodge seem to have spent the rest of their meeting day in 1727 engaging in more general conversation and merriment. According to the *Courant* their three to four hour discussion of masonry was followed by 'Mirth and Joy suitable to the Dignity of that Annual Solemnity'.¹³³

The freemasons were not alone in prioritising good conversation, and the records of the St. Nicholas Book Club in Newcastle allow us an unusual opportunity to partially reconstruct the debates of a society. Book clubs often held convivial dinners and meetings, and the members of the St. Nicholas club seem to have assembled to discuss the latest controversies with their friends.¹³⁴ Unsurprisingly, the predominately clerical membership was most interested in recent theological disputes, and the society bought books that enabled members to engage fully with the flourishing religious controversy that characterised the eighteenth-century English Enlightenment.¹³⁵ The members of the society usually voted to buy groups of books that took the same subject, but were written from different perspectives, suggesting that they were aiming to stimulate debate, rather than seeking to buy only those texts that accorded with the

¹³³ *Newcastle Courant*, 06/01/1728; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 229-230, 332-336.

¹³⁴ Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, pp. 1-2; P. Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London, 1969), p. 58.

¹³⁵ B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 3-14, 215; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46.

views of the majority of members. In 1743, for example, members seem to have discussed the deist controversy, because the society purchased several books both by deists, and anti-deist writers.¹³⁶ The club took the same approach in purchasing books about Cicero, buying both a volume by Middleton, and James Tunstall's 1741 critique of Conyers Middleton's *History of the Life of M. Tullius Cicero*.¹³⁷

Many clubs were formed out of existing friendship groups, and membership of societies also fostered close relationships between individual members. Members of the same club often developed bonds of both business and friendship, and the Newcastle and Gateshead horticultural society was no exception. Isaac Thompson, a prominent member of the society, published a volume of pastoral verse in 1731. Many of his fellow florists supported him by buying his book, and the subscription list names at least ten members of the Newcastle and Gateshead club. These included Jonathan Tyzack, who was elected to act as a steward of the society alongside Thompson in 1743. Another member of the society who subscribed to the volume was Peregrine Tyzack, who seems to have developed both strong emotional and financial links with Thompson.¹³⁸ Peregrine Tyzack and Isaac Thompson were not only members of the same horticultural society, but were both also members of the partnership that printed the *Newcastle Journal* from 1742.¹³⁹ Their partnership was obviously predicated by a long friendship, which Thompson celebrated in verse in his collection of pastoral poems. He dedicated a poem on friendship to Tyzack, submitting the verse to Tyzack's

¹³⁶ Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 167-188; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46.

¹³⁷ I. Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (2 vols., Cambridge, 2000), vol. 2, pp. 29-30; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46.

¹³⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1744; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1744; I. Thompson, *A Collection of Poems* (Newcastle, 1731), passim; Hodgson, 'Unpublished Letters of Richard Dawes, Master of the Newcastle Grammar School', 77-78; Welford, 'Early Newcastle Typography 1639-1800', 27-30; Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. 3, pp. 506-510.

¹³⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 25/09/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 15/10/1743.

judgement, and publicly acknowledging the strength of their bond: 'When Friendship is the Theme that I pursue,/The Theme and Song are both to Tyzack due'. Many similarly intense friendships doubtless developed between members of other societies in the north east.¹⁴⁰

Societies expected members to engage in mutual assistance, and many clubs were co-operative organisations that pooled their funds to the mutual benefit of members. This was particularly true of benefit societies, where the funds provided members with some financial protection, but charity and other kinds of support were also provided by many other types of club.¹⁴¹ The Newcastle and Gateshead Florists, for example, provided members with some protection against the theft of plants, which seems to have been a recurring problem in the region. In May 1743 burglars entered 'several Pleasure Gardens in and about Newcastle' and stole plants. The society attempted to pursue the thieves on behalf of their members, placing an advertisement in 1744 to offer a reward of ten guineas for information leading to conviction.¹⁴² Theft must have persisted, because in 1749 the society advertised that the 'Florists of Newcastle and Parts adjacent' had created a formal 'Confederacy' to prosecute those who stole or damaged the flowers or fruit of subscribers. The Newcastle and Gateshead Florists promised to pay two guineas for information that led to a conviction.¹⁴³ Book clubs provided another kind of mutual assistance, giving their subscribers access to far more books than individual members could afford to buy. Between March and November 1743, for example, the St Nicholas Book Club invested in thirty-four books

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, *Collection of Poems*, p. 24.

¹⁴¹ *Articles of Pot's Box*, pp. 17-21; TWA, 1160; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 230-232, 363.

¹⁴² *Newcastle Journal*, 07/05/1743; *Newcastle Journal*, 07/01/1744.

¹⁴³ *Newcastle Journal*, 06/05/1749.

and pamphlets, the January to July monthly editions of a literary periodical, and paid for the binding of two volumes and some magazines.¹⁴⁴

Not only did societies offer formal assistance to members, but those who joined societies also provided one another with fraternal support in terms of advice and patronage. Members of the horticultural societies of the north east seem to have expected fellow gardeners to offer one-another advice and help. In 1743 Isaac Thompson placed an advertisement in his own newspaper, complaining about several thefts of valuable auriculas from his garden. Thompson sought to show that he had lived up to the ideal of co-operation between members of the same society. He explained that 'since my being a Florist, I have never been backward in lending Assistance to others, being glad of all Opportunities to encourage and promote that which I have found to be both an Exercise and Amusement of so delightful and innocent a Nature'.¹⁴⁵ The members of benefit societies also seem to have been expected to offer one another help, and the Newcastle Fraternity of Gardeners promised members that they would benefit from 'consulting their Brethren relating to planting' and other aspects of their trade. This ethic of mutual assistance could provide both social and economic benefits for club members, leading one commentator to observe that freemasonry 'is no small advantage...to a man who would rise in the world, and one of the principal reasons why I would be a mason'.¹⁴⁶

Fraternal assistance was not confined to long-term members of the same society, but was also extended to temporary members and even to members of other clubs. The

¹⁴⁴ Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, p. 60; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 07/01/1744; *Newcastle Journal*, 12/05/1739.

¹⁴⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1725; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 230-232, 328-330.

majority of clubs and societies welcomed visiting members, allowing visitors to participate in their meetings for a small charge. This practice provided those travelling to the capital or to provincial towns with both a support network and recreation. Visiting members accounted for almost a quarter of diners at a Royal Society Club feast in London in 1750, for example.¹⁴⁷ Military men often attended masonic lodges as visiting members in the areas where they were posted. In 1746 the Durham lodge welcomed many visiting masons from the Swiss Regiment, which was then quartered in the city.¹⁴⁸ Members of different clubs were thought to be bonded through their engagement in clubability, and freemasonry expressed this ideal through organised visiting between lodges of masons. Freemasons' lodges encouraged individual members to attend lodges in other areas of the country, and also welcomed official visiting by whole lodges. This visiting was not confined to those lodges that were affiliated to the grand lodge in London, but also included visits between independent and affiliated masonic lodges. In June 1742, for example, the unattached masonic lodge in Durham was visited by three freemasons from the affiliated lodge in Gateshead. The Durham lodge welcomed more visiting masons from the Gateshead lodge later that year, including their Master, wardens and treasurer. The Alnwick masonic lodge also welcomed visiting freemasons in the 1740s, providing both lodge members and the newcomers with the opportunity to widen their social networks.¹⁴⁹

Many clubs and societies were committed to fraternal philanthropy, continuing the trade guild tradition of charitable giving to outsiders.¹⁵⁰ The Newcastle Sons of the

¹⁴⁷ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 330-332, 209-211.

¹⁴⁸ Logan, *History of Freemasonry in the City of Durham*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 330-332; Logan, *History of Freemasonry in the City of Durham*, pp. 5-6; Rylands, 'The Alnwick Lodge Minutes', 8-9.

¹⁵⁰ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 278-279, 272; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers*, Vol. 1, p. 262.

Clergy was primarily a philanthropic society, which raised money to support the families of clergymen that were suffering financial distress.¹⁵¹ The rhetoric of the society emphasised the public contribution that the association was making by virtue of its charitable giving. In 1746, for example, Thomas Sharp told the club at its annual sermon that its surviving founder members 'have the Pleasure to see from what very small and unprotected Beginnings it hath grown, under their Hands, to an unexpected Degree of publick Utility'. He emphasised the wide geographical area that had been touched by the benevolence of the society, which had 'spread its Branches from Tees to Tweed, and shed its Fruits in every Quarter of the interjacent Country'.¹⁵² Many clubs included philanthropy among their activities, even if it was not their main aim. The Newcastle masonic lodge often made donations to charity on their main meeting day, and in December 1733 they gave money not only to their own 'indigent Brethren', but also made liberal donations to 'the Rest of their charities', including a substantial sum of money to 'the poor House-keepers' of Newcastle. Such charitable activities allowed societies to gain credit and public recognition, and expressed their ideals of self-help and public improvement.¹⁵³

Societies not only emphasised their role in encouraging fraternity and harmony in urban communities, but also in the accumulation of knowledge and expertise. Trade companies devoted themselves to ensuring that craftsmen were appropriately skilled, and some of the benefit societies claimed the same objective. Some trade-based benefit societies aimed to prevent the unskilled from practising their trade, and to enhance the skills of their members. The Newcastle Fraternity of Gardeners, for example, declared

¹⁵¹ Cox, *Bridging The Gap*, pp. 9, 16-17; Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, vol. 1, pp. 323-324.

¹⁵² Sharp, *An Apology for the Annual Collections*, p. 14.

¹⁵³ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 272, 278-279.

that their society would be 'of Advantage to Gentlemen often imposed on by Men pretending to keep their Gardens which know little of it'.¹⁵⁴ Many other types of society emphasised their aims of public and self-improvement, and such ideals were articulated particularly strongly by freemasons. Masonic literature of the period was often characterised by a utopian discourse, and many provincial lodges commissioned lecture series on subjects such as astronomy.¹⁵⁵

The horticultural societies of the north not only included members who were individually devoted to improving their knowledge of horticulture, but also sometimes organised formal lectures on flower growing. The Newcastle Florists appointed an orator to give lectures, and in May 1749 a lecture was given at the tulip show. The speaker discussed different varieties of tulips, their aesthetic qualities, and how they could be differentiated.¹⁵⁶ These lectures probably improved horticultural knowledge among enthusiasts in the north east, but a circle of individuals involved with the society also furthered the study of botany on a national level. The first systematic account in English of the native plants of Britain, John Wilson's 1744 *Synopsis of British plants, in Mr Ray's method*, might never have been produced without the existence of a community of horticultural enthusiasts in the north east.¹⁵⁷

While he conducted his research Wilson made his living by giving series of botanical lectures, but also depended upon the patronage of Isaac Thompson, a committed member of the Newcastle Florists.¹⁵⁸ Wilson's botany lectures in Newcastle

¹⁵⁴ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 178, 252; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1725. See above, p. 33.

¹⁵⁵ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 52-72; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 336.

¹⁵⁶ *Newcastle Gazette*, 17/05/1749.

¹⁵⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 29/07/1749; B. Henrey, *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature before 1800* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 88-89.

¹⁵⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 14/05/1743; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 61 (1791), 806.

were presumably attended by many members of the horticultural society, and a member of the society also often provided the venue. Many of Wilson's courses were held either at George Dixon's inn, or in Dixon's garden.¹⁵⁹ During this period the botanist also benefited from the support of Isaac Thompson, described by the *Gentleman's Magazine* as Wilson's 'steadiest patron, and warmest encourager'. Thompson employed Wilson to assist him with land surveying, which allowed Wilson to accompany Thompson on his business journeys, studying the flowers in each place. Thompson not only provided the botanist with direct financial assistance, but also helped him to produce his book, and promote it to the widest possible audience. Wilson's botany courses and book were advertised in the columns of Thompson's newspaper, the *Newcastle Journal*, and Thompson also printed Wilson's *Synopsis of British Plants*.¹⁶⁰

Isaac Thompson was not only closely associated with the ground-breaking work of John Wilson, but also with the botanical writing of a somewhat less important author, Robert Harrison. Thompson and Harrison had a long history of intellectual collaboration, lecturing together in Newcastle on popular science, and working together on a book on 'natural and experimental philosophy'. In 1763 Thompson printed Harrison's translation of the gardening book, *The Dutch Florist*. Both Harrison and Wilson were probably members of the Newcastle Florists, though their names do not appear in the newspapers as either prize-winners or office-holders. As no membership lists of the society survive, the question cannot be conclusively settled. However, it seems highly unlikely that they would not have joined a society devoted to exploring

¹⁵⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 22/05/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 29/07/1749.

¹⁶⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 14/05/1743; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 61 (1791), 806.

their area of research, and at the very least they both had close connections with members of the club.¹⁶¹

While many clubs prioritised the accumulation of knowledge, another important characteristic of club association was competition. Societies perceived themselves as being engaged in the same endeavour, but they were also competing against one-another in a very real sense. Although individual trade companies strove to equal the processions and dinners of other guilds, it was not generally possible for men to belong to more than one trade company in a town. By contrast, an individual could join as many clubs as time and finances would permit, and societies were competing to attract members.¹⁶² The clubs of the north east included many members who belonged to several societies at the same time. The Recorder of Newcastle, Edward Collingwood, served as the Master of the Newcastle masons in 1734 and later also joined the St. Nicholas book club.¹⁶³ The membership of the St. Nicholas Book Club overlapped to a significant extent with the membership of the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy, because of the large clerical contingent in both societies. Of the ten identifiable original subscribers to the book club, seven acted as either a steward or preacher for the Sons of the Clergy. By June 1744 Thomas Maddison had also joined the book club. He was the curate of All Saints, Newcastle as well as the preacher and morning lecturer of St. Ann's, Newcastle and had also acted as a steward for the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy in 1736.¹⁶⁴ Joining more than one society allowed members to maximise their opportunities for recreation, and to broaden their horizons by pursuing a variety of

¹⁶¹ Henrey, *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature*, p. 395; L. Stephen, *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary Of National Biography* (63 vols., London, 1885-1900), vol. 35, p. 39.

¹⁶² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 26-27, 218-219. See above, pp. 51-53.

¹⁶³ *Newcastle Courant*, 04/01/1735; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club. Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, first page.

¹⁶⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; NRO, 2647/4, unnumbered fols; Newcastle City Library, Records of St. Nicholas book club, Newcastle: accounts, lists of members etc., 1742-46, first page; DUL, Hudleston Papers, clergy index.

interests. Combining membership of the Newcastle and Gateshead horticultural club with membership of the Newcastle masonic lodge, for example, as Langdale Sunderland did, not only greatly increased an individual's social contacts, but enabled him to pursue both an interest in masonic lore and a passion for horticulture.¹⁶⁵

Societies competed against one-another because members wished to express pride in their organisations, increasing and promoting their achievements. Some of the horticultural societies of the north east seem to have engaged in vigorous rivalry, and the competition between the Yarm and Sunderland societies spilled onto the pages of the *Newcastle Journal* in 1749. In May of that year the Yarm horticultural association held their first auricula show, which they described in glowing terms in a report placed in the *Journal*. The report proclaimed that the flowers were so superb that, 'you must take notice that Yarm hath this Season set herself above all her Neighbours for a fine Blow'. This self-promotion was directed particularly at the Sunderland Florists, whom the Yarm club described as jealous onlookers. The report ended by calling for the Yarm society's transactions to be preserved for the 'Information of the present' and for immortality, either on a brass plaque, or in the *Newcastle Journal*. This hyperbole concluded with the noble hope that when readers 'behold the Splendour of our florid Transactions shine eminently conspicuous in the eternal Rolls of Fame' they would be moved to found their own horticultural societies in emulation of Yarm.¹⁶⁶

This public criticism of the Sunderland club must have been all the more stinging coming in the wake of a painful defeat that had occurred a few weeks earlier. A Mr. Butterwick of Yarm had carried off the first prize at the Sunderland Florists' annual

¹⁶⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 06/05/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735; Waples, *The State of Masonry in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1725-1814 Part 1*, 13.

¹⁶⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 13/05/1749.

auricula show, and it seems that the Yarm society was determined to gloat over this victory.¹⁶⁷ The members of the Sunderland society evidently felt that only a public riposte would rescue the society's reputation. They took the opportunity in their report of their tulip show, held only five days after the offending report of events at Yarm was published. After the conventional account of proceedings at their meeting, the injured Sunderland florists made their reply in rhyming verse. This poetical masterpiece acknowledged Yarm's victory at the auricula show, but castigated the Yarm Florists for being 'so proud to brag and boast/ And all her Neighbours seems to roast'. The poet promised that when the Sunderland society was more established they would beat 'silly Yarm'. The verse ended on a note of triumph for the Sunderland florists. The Yarm association might be content to engrave their successes on a brass plaque, but the Sunderland society was able to offer a prize of two gold rings for the best tulips.¹⁶⁸

Competition was not confined to relations between clubs, but was also an important element of sociability within societies. Part of the masculine culture of club activity was competition, which was central to the activities of many clubs. Just as men had long competed to demonstrate their prowess in hunting and cock-fighting, many clubs included opportunities for men to vie with one-another to win both honour and prizes.¹⁶⁹ The Society of Archers, active in the region in the 1730s and 1740s, organised an annual long-bow archery competition in which members competed against each other. Those who shot best gained prestige from fellow members of the society, which was expressed in the award of militaristic titles and leading roles within the society. The best archer at the annual competition won the 'commission' of Captain, and headed the group for the following year. The second best archer won the 2d prize called The

¹⁶⁷ *Newcastle Gazette*, 03/05/1749.

¹⁶⁸ *Newcastle Gazette*, 24/05/1749.

¹⁶⁹ See below, pp. 276, 173-175.

Lieutenant', the holder of which seems to have acted as the second in command of the society.¹⁷⁰ Other 'ranks', including 'Gentlemen', 'Subalterns', 'Long-bowmen' and 'Grecians' seem to have been awarded 'according to merit' in archery.¹⁷¹ The first prize winner not only gained authority and prestige within the 'Loyal Company of Archers', but was also awarded a valuable prize. The best archer was initially given a silver arrow, and from 1750 the winner received the up-graded prize of a golden arrow.¹⁷²

Many clubs in the north east, including horticultural and sporting societies, provided opportunities for men to enjoy the thrill of competition, and to accrue honour among their peers.¹⁷³ However, members who were successful within their club could also gain credit and approbation outside the society. Some competitive events were open to the public, and the annual contest of the Society of Archers sometimes attracted a large audience. The *Newcastle Courant* reported that the 1737 event, held on the 16th of June was watched by 'a prodigious deal of Spectators'.¹⁷⁴ Many clubs reported the names of prize-winners to the local newspaper, ensuring that the prowess of the winners was broadcast beyond the club and spectators, to his neighbours and acquaintances. The results of club elections were also often reported in newspapers, publicly demonstrating the status which society officers had achieved within their club, and increasing their credit in the wider community. In July 1735, for example, the *Newcastle Courant* reported the names of various officers that had been elected by the masons of the Swalwell lodge, including the treasurer, secretary, wardens and master.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 25/06/1737.

¹⁷¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 30/06/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 14/07/1739.

¹⁷² *Newcastle Courant*, 22/07/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/06/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/07/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/06/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 14/07/1750.

¹⁷³ *Newcastle Gazette*, 03/05/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/06/1739; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 229.

¹⁷⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 25/06/1737.

¹⁷⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735.

V

In conclusion, club sociability was a formalised and ordered form of socialising that was characterised by common action and fraternal affection, as well as good-natured competition. Members shared in convivial conversation at regular meetings, and also bonded at one or more large-scale annual celebrations, and at the funerals of members.¹⁷⁶ Membership of a club allowed urban residents to develop important social networks, that offered them both enjoyment, and practical and emotional sustenance. Those middling sort men who were already guild members were attracted to clubs and societies because joining such groups enabled them to expand the scope of their social networks beyond their neighbourhood, parish or occupation. Many guild members would have seen little difference between membership of their guild, and membership of their club, particularly as both organisations explained their roles in the same language. Large numbers of guild members were also active in clubs, including the middling sort members that probably comprised over half of the membership of freemasons' lodges in Newcastle and Durham. Men such as Matthew Ridley, the Member of Parliament for Northumberland from 1747 to 1774, also participated in both institutions. Ridley was not only a Newcastle hostman and merchant adventurer, but also an active freemason.¹⁷⁷ The Durham Mercers' clubbable activity shows how easily guild members could incorporate the so-called new sociability into their lives. From 1708 until 1718 all the members of the guild appear to have assembled for regular evenings of eating and drinking as a 'club'. Many urban dwellers happily sustained

¹⁷⁶ *Articles of Pot's Box*, pp. 17-21; *Newcastle Journal*, 07/05/1743; *Newcastle Journal*, 07/01/1744; Thompson, *Collection of Poems*, p. 24; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/05/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/01/1728; TWA, 1160/1.

¹⁷⁷ Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 2, p. 383; Waples, *The State of Masonry in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1725-1814 Part I*, 14. See above, pp. 33-35, 99-100.

simultaneous membership of their guild and a club, without necessarily perceiving any radical differences between the modes of socialising in the two institutions.¹⁷⁸

The success of trade guilds as institutions for association encouraged emulation, allowing groups of individuals that did not have access to guilds to gain some of the benefits offered by membership of trade companies. Individuals in communities where there were no guilds were able to enjoy communal celebrations and conviviality in clubs and societies. For example, in Felton, a rural community in Northumberland where inhabitants could not join trade companies, a horticultural club was established by 1750.¹⁷⁹ Workers in trades that were not subject to guild organisation were able to combine in benefit societies and other clubs that offered some of the advantages that other occupational groups had gained from membership of guilds. In Newcastle, for example, gardeners, maltsers and keelmen had combined into benefit societies by 1750, allowing these individuals and their households to benefit from common action.¹⁸⁰ Both the middling sort and gentry members valued the support networks that they were able to form in clubs and societies. Membership of clubs was attractive to the middling sort for the same reason that they valued their membership of guilds, because voluntary association enabled them to create support networks that helped them to protect their livelihoods. Although the gentry did not rely on joint action for survival, sociable interactions with their peers were an important way of maintaining social credit.¹⁸¹

There were some significant differences between trade guilds and societies, including the ethos of competition that existed both between and within clubs. Although

¹⁷⁸ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 47B, 48B, 56B. See above, p. 71.

¹⁷⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 07/04/1750.

¹⁸⁰ Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism?', pp. 95-104.

¹⁸¹ A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 9. See above, pp. 2-3, 24.

guilds sought to maintain their status in comparison with other guilds in the town, they rarely engaged in the open competition that sometimes characterised relations between clubs. Clubs also often sanctioned controlled competition between their members, either to grow the best flowers or become the best archer, whereas companies preferred to emphasise the maintenance of group identity at all times.¹⁸² Societies were able to draw on a long-established tradition of competition in various other forms of recreation, including cock-fighting, where opposing teams played for the honour of their community and themselves.¹⁸³ Clubs were also more interested than trade guilds in public improvement through promoting the accumulation of knowledge. Companies maintained standards by ensuring the transmission of skills through the apprenticeship system and fining craftsmen who produced shoddy work.¹⁸⁴ However, many clubs actively worked to improve understanding of various fields, which in the north east included a significant contribution to the literature of horticulture in English.¹⁸⁵

Despite these differences, the similarities between the ideals and activities of clubs and trade companies were numerous, and potentially more significant. Societies were not only similar to the guilds in much of their rhetoric, but also in many of their activities. The patterns of sociability in companies and clubs were remarkably similar, and both institutions celebrated with occasional feasts, sermons and processions, while members also associated at meetings. Communal involvement in the life-cycle events of members also united those who joined both clubs and guilds, as did the emphasis on

¹⁸² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 26-27, 218-219; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/05/1749; *Newcastle Gazette*, 03/05/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/06/1739; Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 76-77. See above, pp. 34-35, 50-51.

¹⁸³ G. R. Scott, *The History of Cockfighting* (London, 1957), pp. 66-67; R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 83-85. See below, pp. 173-175.

¹⁸⁴ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 52; Rowe (ed.), *Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. II, pp. 319-320; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', 242-244.

¹⁸⁵ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pp. 52-72; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 178, 252, 336; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1725; Henrey, *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature*, pp. 88-89. See above, pp. 117-120.

mutual assistance.¹⁸⁶ In terms of membership, both trade companies and societies were supported by a solid core of middling sort members, whilst many of the gentry also participated. Gentry participation would have been more marked in elite clubs than in lower status trade guilds, but many societies, including benefit clubs, were also dominated by the middling sort.¹⁸⁷ Like the guilds, clubs were overwhelmingly masculine in their membership, though women were able to participate in both society and guild social events. Guild association probably provided one of the most important exemplars for early clubs, and the legacy of the trade companies is highly visible in mid- eighteenth-century associations.¹⁸⁸

In the later seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century clubs and guilds operated alongside one another as institutions of association, and trade companies do not seem to have been over-taken by clubs. Whereas Clark suggests that 'clubs and societies matured as a national social institution' after the Glorious Revolution, membership of clubs in the north east region seems to have been negligible before 1700, and only thirteen societies are known to have been formed before 1731. Association in clubs was certainly gathering pace in the 1730s and 40s, when a further twenty-two societies were formed, but sociability in clubs was not particularly well-established in the north east in the first half of the eighteenth century. While many individuals had joined clubs, and gained a great deal of pleasure from association in these societies, only a minority of the residents of the north east were members, and other modes of socialising were far more significant and wide spread. Whereas only

¹⁸⁶ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 23-24, 178, 223, 267-270. See above, pp. 24-74.

¹⁸⁷ Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, Social Mobility and the Middling Sort', pp. 54-62; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 211-215.

¹⁸⁸ I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Woman apprentices in the trades and crafts of early modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change*, 6, 2 (1991), 237; B. Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 89-90; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 24, 198-204.

thirty-five societies are known to have operated in the north east before 1750, there were fifty-two individual trade guilds operating in Newcastle and Durham alone, for example.¹⁸⁹

However, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when trade companies were suffering significant decline, a proliferation of clubs and societies filled the vacuum left by the demise of the guilds.¹⁹⁰ Many clubs had been formed across Britain in the seventeenth century, and the numbers had continued to grow after 1700, but the number of new institutions mounted rapidly in the reign of George III. Growth accelerated more rapidly from the 1770s onwards, and Clark estimates that over 1,000 clubs were founded in England in the 1790s alone.¹⁹¹ Although the formation of clubs may have been partly stimulated by the success of guild association, it was not until the trade companies were in decline that societies came to conclusively eclipse the trade guilds as a locus for institutional sociability. In the early eighteenth century clubs may well have been developing, but were certainly not 'mature' institutions in the way that trade companies were. Other long-standing arenas of social interaction were potentially also more significant than socialising in clubs and societies. As we shall see in the next chapter, there was strong participation in sporting activities in the north east throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

¹⁸⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, p. 60; Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds, Part I', passim; C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', 347 and passim; Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', p. 123. See above, pp. 24-74.

¹⁹⁰ Walker, 'Extent of the Guild Control of Trades', pp. 13, 17, 20, 22-23. See above, pp. 31-32.

¹⁹¹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 127-128, 131-133.

Chapter Four: Commercial leisure and sport: horse-racing, cock-fighting and other sporting activities

I

This chapter explores sporting activities in the north east, and concentrates on two of the most important sports, horse-racing and cock-fighting, in order to examine the development of commercial sport in the course of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. Despite its prominence in the recreational calendar of early modern England, horse-racing has received surprisingly little attention from historians. The only full-length historical monograph on the sport concentrates on the development of the large courses after 1840.¹ Borsay's work also deals briefly with racing as an epiphenomenon of his urban renaissance. Although he displays a welcome recognition of the importance of horse-racing in the eighteenth century, he concentrates on racing as part of the leisure of the elite. As we shall see, he underestimates the extent to which the sport was already established before the Restoration, and his choice of sources leads him to neglect the substantial number of rural race courses.² Cockfighting has received even less academic attention, despite being a highly popular pastime throughout the early modern period. It seems likely that historians have tended to ignore the sport because of squeamishness about its perceived brutality. Borsay devotes only three pages to cock-fighting, perhaps because a sport that 'appears little short of barbarous', did not quite fit his vision of the glittering eighteenth-century town. Scott's privately printed

¹ W. Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London, 1976).

² P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 180-196.

volume of 1957 is the only full-length study of cock-fighting that offers any account of its history, and this has little to say about the sport in the early modern period.³

The lack of research into these sports is all the more surprising given the richness of the potential source material. Not only were important race-meetings noted in the annual *Racing Calendar* from 1727, but races were also advertised in the local newspapers from the early eighteenth century. References to horse-racing also appear in personal papers and guild records. Cock-fighting is also well documented in the newspapers of the north east, and is sometimes mentioned in personal papers. The first part of the chapter explores the development of horse-racing in the region, and the distribution of courses, before examining how horse-racing was funded. Participation in horse-racing is then discussed, along with involvement in the other sports that were organised alongside races. The appeal of horse-racing is explored, and the experience of attending meetings outlined. The chapter then turns to cock-fighting, discussing the sport's development in the north east, attendance at cock-fights, and how fights were organised. The characteristics of sociability at cock-fights are discussed, before the increased regulation of both cock-fighting and horse-racing from the mid eighteenth century is explored.⁴

II

³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 176-178; K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (first edition 1983, reprinted London, 1984), pp. 144-145, 183; G. R. Scott, *The History of Cockfighting* (London, 1957), passim.

⁴ J. Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run, and of all plates and prizes run for in England* (London, 1734-1749), passim. These volumes are usually collectively referred to as the *Racing Calendar*, and I have followed this convention in the text of this thesis. *The North Country Journal or Impartial Intelligencer*, 1734-1738; *Newcastle Gazette*, 1744-1750; *Newcastle Journal*, 1739-1750; *Newcastle Courant* 1711-1750; DRO, D/Sa; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; NRO, ZAL; NRO, ZBL; NRO, ZSW; J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), p. 202; C. E. Whiting, 'The Durham Trade Gilds - continued', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 9, 3 (1943), p. 346; D. J. Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights of Newcastle Upon Tyne 1622-1967*, Vol. I (Surtees Society, 181, 1970), p. 119; DUL, DCG, Barbers/2, fol. 232r.

The population of England had developed a taste for horse-racing by the first half of the eighteenth century, and the country was well provided with race courses, defined here as anywhere that a race was run. The *Racing Calendar*, the national racing periodical, recorded 138 courses in operation in 1739, and the true number of courses may well have been far higher. The *Calendar* reported only twenty-one courses in operation in Northumberland and County Durham before 1750.⁵ However, an analysis of the advertisements for racing in the local newspapers demonstrates that the *Calendar* ignored large numbers of smaller courses, usually held in rural locations. In the 1730s races were held at forty-four different race courses in Northumberland and County Durham. If Northumberland and County Durham are typical, then the *Racing Calendar* figures must be doubled to provide an accurate picture of the number of eighteenth century race courses. England probably had over 250 race courses by 1739. Small wonder that by 1736 Drake felt that it was 'surprising to think to what a height this spirit of horse-racing is now arrived in this kingdom, when there is scarce a village so mean that has not a bit of plate raised once a year for this purpose'. This zenith represented the culmination of the second of two waves of expansion in organised horse-racing.⁶

The first period of growth in English horse-racing began in the sixteenth century, though the practice of racing horses for pleasure was much older. Horse-races were first recorded in England during the Roman occupation, and races are also known

⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 184, 355-367. Borsay gives twenty-three courses, but one of these is a duplication (Stannerton is an alternative spelling of Stamfordham), and Blencarn is listed in Northumberland, but should appear among courses in Cumberland. I have corrected these errors in presenting his figures here. Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run*, passim.

⁶ Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run*, passim; F. Drake, *Eboracum: Or, the history and Antiquities of the City of York*, (York, 1736), p. 241.

to have been held during the medieval period.⁷ The origins of modern horse-racing can be traced to the reign of Henry VIII, when the growing demand for horses for military purposes, internal trade and agricultural work encouraged a growing interest in their breeding and training. Numerous books on horsemanship were published during the sixteenth century, and the young men of gentry families went abroad to learn equestrian skills in Italy and France. This new enthusiasm for horsemanship led to the rise of horse-racing as an organised leisure pursuit. From 1580 the growing fashion for horse-racing overtook the earlier cult of *manège*, the horse training system that had been highly fashionable from the mid-sixteenth century.⁸ At least fourteen race courses were established in the course of the sixteenth century, including seven courses in Yorkshire. By the later sixteenth century horse-racing was sufficiently fashionable for Elizabeth I to attend the Croydon races on two occasions in the 1570s and 80s.⁹

More courses were established in the first half of the seventeenth century, including the course at Newmarket which received consistent patronage from James I.¹⁰ By 1649 a national network of over forty race courses had been established, including the pre-eminent courses of Newmarket and Black Hambleton.¹¹ These estimates of the number of early courses probably understate the development of racing in this period. The increase in horse ownership among ordinary people during the seventeenth century provided the means for rural races between locals. In Yetminster, in Dorset, only one fifth of the householders had horses in the 1590s, but by the 1660s three fifths of

⁷ R. Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing* (London, 1972), pp. 20, 23-24.

⁸ J. Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England: For Service, for Pleasure, for Power* (Reading, 1978), pp. 5-6, 16-17, 21-22.

⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 355-367; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 30.

¹⁰ Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England*, p. 6.

¹¹ Borsay traces forty-two courses first recorded before the Restoration. Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 355-367.

householders owned them.¹² The paucity of sources may obscure the seventeenth-century origins of smaller race courses in the north east that were first recorded in eighteenth century newspapers. The race course at the village of Rainton, which is first referred to in 1612, is an example of the kind of race-meeting that may often have gone unrecorded. The only evidence that this meeting existed in the early seventeenth century is a chance reference in the diary of Thomas Chaytor, a County Durham racing aficionado.¹³

By the early seventeenth century horse-racing was a popular pastime, and those living in the north east could see racing at a variety of courses, though they might have to travel some distance to do so. Thomas Chaytor, registrar to the Bishop of Durham, lived two miles south of Durham in the early seventeenth century. He was an enthusiastic race spectator and competitor, and used his diary to record the names and owners of the horses that won at local race-meetings, and the condition of the ground. He also recorded the bets that were placed on horses at the meetings, and charted the progress of his own race horse. He had high hopes of his 'sanded Nagg', which did well on the course at Rainton in 1612, despite being 'yonge untrayned & not kept for the cupp runninge onlie for a triall'. Chaytor went to horse-races at six different locations between 1612 and 1617. He attended the races at Durham in 1614 and 1617, and also at Rainton in 1612, 1613 and 1614. These races were probably held in the village of Rainton in County Durham, though there was also a village of the same name in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Chaytor also attended various race-meetings in the North

¹² Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England*, p. 6.

¹³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 182; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867.

Riding, at Langbaugh, at Hambleton and at Gatherley Moor, where racing had been established from the early sixteenth century.¹⁴

In County Durham and Northumberland, at least four courses were well established by the mid-seventeenth century, at Durham, Newcastle, Alnwick and Berwick. The earliest recorded race course in the two counties was at Durham. The Durham races were already in operation by 1613, when the collection for a new prize was recorded in the ecclesiastical records. The race was held on the Tuesday before Palm Sunday, on Woodham Moor, where horses were weighed for races at the 'now usual weighing place'. In April 1617 James I attended a horse- race in Durham, where the horses of William Salvin and Master Maddocks competed for a gold purse. The races at Durham seem to have continued until the Civil War, because there are references to the races in the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁵ By 1621 races were regularly held at Newcastle on Killingworth Moor, and continued to run in the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁶ By 1654 the Newcastle Races were sufficiently well known to feature prominently on a Hollar map of the Tyne. The course on Killingworth Moor is marked out by a line of posts, and horses are depicted running a race. The winning post and flag are clearly visible, and are surrounded by a crowd, while two rows of spectators line the course.¹⁷ The Alnwick races were already in full swing on Hobberlaw Edge by 1654, when the 'accustomed Horse race' was first referred to in the minutes of the town's court leet.¹⁸ The earliest recorded reference to racing in Berwick occurs in 1639, when a horse-race

¹⁴ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 355-367

¹⁵ J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History* (4 vols., London, n. d.), vol. 2, pp. 83-84; R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols., London, 1816-40), vol. 4, p. 88.

¹⁶ R. Welford, *History Of Newcastle And Gateshead*, Vol. III (London, 1887), p. 309.

¹⁷ J. H. Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', *Archeologia Aeliana*, new ser., 4 (1860), 229; C. J. Spence, 'Notes on the Plates and Maps of the Tyne in Gardiner's England's Grievance Discovered of 1655', *Archeologia Aeliana*, new ser., 13 (1889), 294-296.

¹⁸ G. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick* (Alnwick, 1866), pp. 429-430.

was prohibited by the Mayor of Berwick, due to fears that the event might be used to mask enemy activity.¹⁹

The fundamental characteristics of modern racing seem to have been established by the 1630s. Race winners received cups and non-returnable prizes, raised by subscriptions and endowment. Horse-races were run on measured four-mile courses in heats, with weighing before and after the race. Money was spent on maintaining courses, and the last length of the course was often roped off.²⁰ However, the advent of civil war interrupted the expansion of horse-racing, and during the 1650s sport was partially suppressed by the authorities.²¹ Despite official disapproval, horse-races continued sporadically, and in 1655 the government noted 'how great a concourse of People do usually frequent such Meetings'. Meetings are known to have been held at various locations in the 1650s, including Winchester and Salisbury.²² However, racing in the north east, as in other regions of the country, seems to have been much curtailed in this period. In 1654 the Hon. Captain Charles Howard was sent orders to suppress the races that were being planned at Berwick, and the Newcastle common council banned racing from 1658.²³ In Alnwick in 1657 Daniel Collingwood and a group of gentlemen were overheard complaining that they had been banned from holding horse-races. Collingwood was reported by an informer for his impassioned statement that 'there was none now in power, but the Rascality, who envied that gentlemen should enjoy their recreations'.²⁴

¹⁹ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 33.

²⁰ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 49.

²¹ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 44; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 182.

²² Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 45.

²³ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 33; S. Middlebrook, *Newcastle Upon Tyne: Its Growth and Achievement* (Newcastle, 1950), p. 85.

²⁴ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, pp. 21-22; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 229.

After the Restoration organised racing resumed throughout England, and continued to expand. Charles II was an enthusiastic race goer, continuing the tradition of royal patronage at Newmarket, and riding in races himself.²⁵ Racing was stimulated by an increase in surplus income that allowed people to spend more money on luxuries. There was a greater demand for race-meetings and also for the social events that accompanied them. From the early eighteenth century, the growth of advertising and local news in provincial newspapers provided race-meetings with the oxygen of publicity.²⁶ During the course of the period portraits of race horses became increasingly fashionable, such as Seymour's popular portraits of race winners, published from 1740 to 1756.²⁷ The appearance in 1727 of John Cheney's specialist annual racing periodical, the *Racing Calendar*, was another testament to the widespread popularity of racing.²⁸ Racing is known to have been organised on over sixty courses before 1699, and the first edition of the *Racing Calendar* in 1727 was able to list 112 English race courses.²⁹ A tentative estimate of over 250 race courses operating in the country by 1739 has already been suggested. This second phase of the expansion of horse-racing was ended by sweeping legislation in 1740. The impact of this legislation, which transformed the character of horse-racing, will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter.³⁰

The precise chronology of the increase in race courses in the north east is difficult to chart, because of the nature of the sources. The pre-1700 period is poorly

²⁵ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, pp. 46-47.

²⁶ N. McKendrick, 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England' in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of A Consumer Society* (first edition 1982, reprinted London, 1983), pp. 9-33; J. H. Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure' in McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *The Birth of A Consumer Society*, pp. 265-285.

²⁷ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 70; J. Rice, *History of The British Turf: From the Earliest Times To The Present Day* (2 vols., London, 1879), vol. 2, p. 31.

²⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 217.

²⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 355-367; T. A. Cook, *A History of the English Turf* (3 vols., London, 1901), vol. 1, p. 199; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 91.

³⁰ D. Pickering (ed.), *The Statutes at Large* (24 vols., London, 1762-1769), vol. 17, pp. 392-396; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 10 (1740), 257.

documented, and the *Racing Calendar* did not begin publication until the end of the third decade of the eighteenth century. We know of only twelve locations of racing in County Durham and Northumberland from 1600-1709. Between 1710 and 1739, fifty-three further courses can be identified, most of which are only known to us from advertisements in the local newspapers. Ten courses were first recorded between 1710 and 1719, a further nineteen between 1719 and 1729, and twenty-four between 1730 and 1739. The local newspapers are excellent sources for the development of racing, but the first appearance of a course in a newspaper cannot be equated with the inauguration of that course. As Barry shows, the local newspaper was only one of many methods of advertising that were used in the eighteenth century. The first appearance of a course in the newspapers must often reflect a decision to switch to advertising in print.³¹ The appearance of the first viable Newcastle newspaper in 1711 probably makes a number of pre-existing courses visible for the first time. It is unlikely that the number of race courses in the region more than quadrupled in three decades, and many of these courses probably date back to at least the later seventeenth century. Racing may have begun on some of these courses in the first half of the seventeenth century.³²

By the fourth decade of the eighteenth century horse-racing was very popular in the north east of England. Races were often arranged to coincide with holidays such as Easter and Whit, and were also held on days that were not recognised national holidays, though these days seem to have operated as local holidays.³³ The summer was the dominant horse-racing season, and most races were held between April and September.

³¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 182, 217; J. Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775' in J. Black and J. Gregory (eds.), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 49-81. See above, pp. 9-10.

³² F. Manders, 'History of the Newspaper Press in Northeast England' in P. Isaac (ed.), *Newspapers in the Northeast: The 'Fourth Estate' at work in Northumberland & Durham* (Richmond, 1999), p. 1.

³³ See above, pp. 12-13.

though some races were occasionally run during the winter.³⁴ At the same time that the number of race courses was increasing, many race-meetings invested in improving their courses, and increasing the value of prizes. A better race course and better prizes enhanced the prestige of the course, which in turn attracted more visitors. In the 1720s and 30s both Alnwick and Berwick races were moved onto new courses, and Stockton race course was enlarged in 1745.³⁵ There appears to have been a general increase in the total value of prize money awarded, at least at the larger race-meetings. It is difficult to establish whether or not the prize money awarded at the smaller rural courses increased, because many of these courses were advertised in too few years for comparisons across time to be valid. At several of the smaller courses which were advertised over a number of years there is little sign of any increase. At the village of Lanchester in County Durham, for example, the prize value ranged from prizes worth over £4 10s in 1731 to two guineas in 1737.³⁶ However, Newcastle prizes were only worth more than £130 in one year before 1727, but were worth more than that amount in every year thereafter, reaching a high of £203 in 1734.³⁷ The increase in the number of prizes and races extended the length of race-meetings, increasing the revenue from spectators. Morpeth races only offered two days of racing in 1716, but by 1739 the town was able to hold a five day meeting.³⁸

III

³⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 25/03/1721; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1721; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/03/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/07/1721; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/01/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 27/01/1728.

³⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 182-183; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/06/1726; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/03/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1746.

³⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/03/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/04/1737.

³⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/04/1734.

³⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 30/07/1716; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/03/1739.

The fore-going section of this chapter has established a tentative chronology of the development of horse-racing in the north-east, and the type of settlement where racing was most commonly held must now be established. Historians have struggled to define urban settlements in early modern England, a period when contemporaries often referred to very small settlements as market towns. Rather than adopting arbitrary measures of population size, it seems important to be sensitive to contemporary conceptions of the town. Gregory King's list of English towns, compiled in 1696, included market towns with a population of as few as 600 people. Towns are probably best defined not by population alone, but as communities that exhibited several of the following characteristics; high population density, acted as a market, service or industrial centre, had an 'overtly stratified social pyramid', developed local government and some influence on their rural hinterland.³⁹ The smallest market towns might only display two or three of these distinguishing features, whereas larger centres tended to fulfil all the criteria of the definition. Individual settlements often prove difficult to place, because differentiating between large villages and small towns is not always easy, and the historiography of the north east is not particularly strong on the urban geography of the area in this period.⁴⁰

Seventeenth and early eighteenth-century horse-races were held in both urban and rural locations. The majority of race-meetings advertised in the local newspapers in the north east were based at courses outside urban settlements, including those based in areas that were industrialising by the mid eighteenth century. As Wrightson and Levine suggest, industrialising areas such as Whickham are anomalous, and defy easy categorisation within the usual urban/rural dichotomy. Such settlements have been

³⁹ See P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 4-7.

⁴⁰ Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, pp. 4-10; J. K. Walton, 'North' in P. Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History Of Britain II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 121, n. 5.

included with the non-urban courses here, as they had not developed pronounced urban characteristics by the mid-eighteenth century.⁴¹ Borsay's sole reliance on the *Racing Calendar* causes him to misinterpret the nature of eighteenth century horse-racing. He argues that by the 1730s between 74 per cent and 80 per cent of all courses were held at market towns. While he recognises that the *Racing Calendar* omitted some courses, he seriously over-estimates its comprehensiveness.⁴² The *Racing Calendar* ignored large numbers of smaller courses, usually those held in rural locations, such as the village of Shildon, which only made a return of 101 at the census of 1801. The newspapers show that although Borsay asserts that racing was a pre-dominantly urban sport, the reverse is true. Approximately 53 per cent of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century races in the north east were held in rural locations. By the 1730s most of these thirty-three race-meetings lasted for one or two days, though a few rural meetings, including the Millfield races, lasted for three days.⁴³

The remaining twenty-nine race courses in Northumberland and County Durham were in towns. This is a fairly generous estimate, because it includes towns that were dwindling during the period, and small market towns. Among the four declining towns where racing was held was Bamburgh, which had borough privileges in the medieval period, but then sustained severe damage from the Scots. By the sixteenth century the town was no longer exercising its rights as a borough, and Bamburgh only recorded 295 inhabitants at the 1801 census.⁴⁴ Many of the remaining towns where races were held

⁴¹ D. Levine and K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 82-230.

⁴² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 185.

⁴³ W. Fordyce, *The History And Antiquities Of The County Palatinate Of Durham* (2 vols., London, 1857), vol. 1, p. 101; *Newcastle Courant*, 27/05/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/03/1739; Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run*, passim.

⁴⁴ E. Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History* (15 vols., Northumberland County History Committee, 1893-1940), vol. 1, pp. 113, 132, 148; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*,

could be described as market towns, but displayed limited urban characteristics. Rothbury, for example, was described by Bishop Pocock in 1760 as a 'poor town of two streets which are not paved', with thatched houses, a market, fairs, several shops and trades.⁴⁵ Racing also took place in the larger commercial towns in the north east, which had a wider influence than the market towns, including Gateshead, which had an approximate mid-seventeenth-century population of 2,792 and South Shields, with around 1,670 inhabitants by the same period.⁴⁶ Races were held in the provincial capital, Newcastle, an important trading and social centre, and an administrative capital, and also in the regional centres of administration, trading and services in the two counties, including Durham and Alnwick. The larger town race-meetings lasted four or five days by the 1730s, and the pre-eminent race-meetings at Newcastle and Durham both held five days of racing. The majority of town meetings lasted three days or more, though races held at several market towns lasted for only two days.⁴⁷

IV

Having discussed the distribution of early race courses, it is important to explore how courses were financed, and who entered the races. This provides some measure of the degree to which different constituencies felt themselves to be 'stake-holders' in a course. Little is known about the financial provisions of courses in the earliest years of racing, though the limited sources available reveal that courses were instituted by royal

vol. 2, p. 474; Fordyce, *The History And Antiquities Of The County Palatinate Of Durham*, vol. 2, pp. 246, 249; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 1, p. 256.

⁴⁵ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 15, p. 341.

⁴⁶ For the population figures see D. A. Kirby, 'Population Density and Land Values in County Durham during the mid-seventeenth century', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 57 (1972), 83-98; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/04/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/03/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/04/1739; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 8-9; L. Gooch, *The Desperate Faction? The Jacobites of North-East England 1688-1745* (Hull, 1995), p. xv.

patronage, local farmers and breeders, gentlemen and town authorities. Longrigg suggests that the majority of early courses may have been initiated by towns, on land owned by corporations.⁴⁸ The early history of the Chester races is unusually well documented, and shows how actively many town authorities supported racecourses. In 1609 the Corporation donated three silver cups to the Chester races, which were run on St. George's day. In 1623 the mayor sold the old cups to provide the finances to create new cups, and in 1629 the city guilds donated money to a new prize which was to be kept by the winner. The sheriffs of Chester donated a race prize worth £13 6s 8d, using the fund that had previously paid for their annual Easter breakfast of calves' head and bacon.⁴⁹

Among the earliest known race courses of Northumberland and County Durham, there are examples of both towns and local gentlemen funding the races. From at least 1613 a collection of fifty pounds among the gentlemen and knights of the county funded the Durham races. This capital was used for an annual purchase of a gold or silver plate cup or bowl worth seven pounds as a race prize.⁵⁰ In the early 1620s a group of gentlemen seem to have taken it in turns to organise subscriptions for the Newcastle races. In 1621 it was Sir John Fenwicke's year 'to bring in the plate', and Sir Edward Radclyffe of Dilston was among the subscribers.⁵¹ The common council of Newcastle was supporting the horse-races by 1632, when it granted two silver pots as race prizes for the race on Killingworth Moor after Whit Sunday.⁵² The Alnwick local authorities

⁴⁸ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁰ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, pp. 83-84; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, p. 88.

⁵¹ C. Hunter Blair, 'Newcastle Races', *Proceedings Of The Society Of Antiquaries Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, 3rd ser., 7, 20 (1916), 245.

⁵² Welford, *History Of Newcastle And Gateshead*, Vol. III, p. 309.

also contributed to horse-racing, and are known to have paid for their race course to be moved slightly in 1654, and for the posts to be adjusted accordingly.⁵³

The financial arrangements of many race courses are difficult to tease out, because race-meetings developed in a haphazard way, often attracting prize money of different amounts and from different sources from year to year. Few documents relating to the early years of organised racing in the north east appear to have survived. An analysis of the donors of the prizes listed in the local newspapers permits some analysis of how race-tracks were funded by the early eighteenth century. The most conspicuous donors are innkeepers, partly because many advertisements for race courses included the arrangements for retailing alcohol on the course. Innkeepers were vital to the growth of horse-racing and both financed and initiated prizes. Hostelry owners contributed towards an innkeepers' plate, or paid a subscription to the prizes in return for retailing on the course at thirty-four of the forty courses for which there is some evidence for who contributed to the prizes.⁵⁴ Money collected from innkeepers supported races in most of the towns in the region, including Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland, but also financed the sport in many rural locations. Some racing events seem to have been founded or entirely promoted by innkeepers. In 1726 the Winlaton races were organised by several of the Winlaton innkeepers, who announced that none but the group of 'Founders to the said Plates' would be permitted to sell 'Liquor' on the course.⁵⁵ Innkeepers seem to have organised the races in some years at a total of eight locations, a fifth of the courses for which we have some information.⁵⁶

⁵³ Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, pp. 429-430.

⁵⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 11/03/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/04/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/06/1724.

⁵⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/08/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/07/1726; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 218.

⁵⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/01/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/03/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/09/1731.

The races provided revenue for hostelryes in the form of demand for stabling for horses, lodgings, and food and drink. In return for their contributions to prizes, most race-meetings gave subscribing inns a monopoly on the lucrative drink sales on the course.⁵⁷ Innkeepers who subscribed to the prizes were also usually given the monopoly on stabling horses. The advertisement for the Winlaton races of 1729, for example, stipulated that horses could only qualify to run in the races if they were stabled 'at some Subscriber's, being a Publick House, in Winlaton'.⁵⁸ The practice of forcing owners to keep their horses in the town for up to a fortnight from the date of entry ensured extra income for the innkeepers where the horses were to be stabled. This rule probably also increased the demand for food and lodgings for the owners of the race horses in this period immediately before the races. Local inns were often also chosen as the venue where horses were to be entered for the races. This occasion itself probably generated income for innkeepers, who served drinks to the owners as they waited to enter their horses.⁵⁹

Town authorities had many incentives to support the development of race courses. Many local officials were probably as eager as other urban residents to enjoy the entertainment of the races, and there were also powerful financial incentives. Race-meetings provided revenue for towns both from the competitors in the races, and from the many spectators. Towns could expect to benefit from the increased demand for food and drink, accommodation, stabling, smith work, saddlery and entertainment. It was common practice for race organisers to set a date of entry from several days to a fortnight before the race, and insist that to qualify for the races horses had to be kept in

⁵⁷ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 09/06/1733.

⁵⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1729.

⁵⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723.

the town or village from the date of entry until the races began.⁶⁰ This maximised the potential income from those who brought their horses to compete. One keen race goer, John Swinburne, spent £9 4s 5d at Sunderland in September 1731, when he entered his mare for the races. His account book shows that between 1730 and 1735 he spent similar sums running his horses at Newcastle, Morpeth and Hexham races.⁶¹ Where races were held in incorporated towns, the town authorities often donated money towards prizes, and also provided organisational support. From the early years of the Newcastle races, the Corporation contributed financially. From at least 1716 the town regularly donated a gold cup to the races, which varied in value from forty pounds to sixty guineas.⁶² In some years the Corporation also assisted by providing administrative facilities, allowing owners to enter their horses at the town clerk's office.⁶³ In Berwick during the 1730s, the mayor of the town acted as adjudicator of any disputes that might arise during the races.⁶⁴

In at least eight towns in the region, including Newcastle, Durham and Alnwick, the races received financial support from the freemen or traders of the town. In towns with trade companies, the guilds donated money to a named Freemen's Plate.⁶⁵ In both Newcastle and Durham the guild records reveal that the trade companies regularly supported the races by donating money for prizes. The Durham Mercers made several payments towards race prizes, including an order in March 1693 to donate three guineas

⁶⁰ See *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/08/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/07/1739; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 218-219.

⁶¹ NRO, ZSW, part 2, 454.

⁶² Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 229-231; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1727; *Newcastle Courant* 06/05/1721.

⁶³ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/04/1723.

⁶⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/07/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/03/1735.

⁶⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 04/06/1726. See above, pp. 70-71.

to the race fund.⁶⁶ In Hexham different groups of tradesmen gave separate smaller prizes. The 1731 race prizes included a £10 plate given by the merchants of the town, and a £5 plate given by the butchers. In 1732 the town's masons gave a £15 prize, and the shopkeepers of the town donated a £10 plate.⁶⁷ The Sunderland butchers were obviously determined to secure the pleasure of participation in the races, and the chance to win their money back, because the race prizes that they donated in the 1720s were only open to entry by the town's butchers.⁶⁸ Tradesmen sometimes received direct reward for their subscription, as at Sunderland in 1735, when horses faced disqualification unless they were 'plated by the Subscribing Blacksmiths'.⁶⁹ The potential revenue generated by the races must have encouraged tradesmen to subscribe, but subscribing guilds included the Newcastle Shipwrights, whose members could not expect to benefit directly from the races. Many guilds must have been motivated to donate by their sense of civic responsibility, and members' desire to attend the races, as much as by financial gain.⁷⁰

Several settlements that did not have either a town corporation or guild structure to organise contributions also funded races. Non-incorporated towns were administered by various manorial and parish officers, and these officers probably gathered prize money from local people. The 'Township of Chester', for example, gave a £15 prize to the Chester-le-Street races in 1733, and the race-meeting in the market town of Rothbury in 1739 also awarded prizes raised from the 'Town'.⁷¹ Race prizes were also funded in this way by rural settlements, presumably from money collected by a local

⁶⁶ DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/4, 24 March 1693; Whiting, *The Durham Trade Gilds - continued*, 346; Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, p. 119. See above, pp. 70-71.

⁶⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/04/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/08/1732.

⁶⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/10/1724.

⁶⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 24/01/1736.

⁷⁰ Rowe (ed.), *The Records Of The Company Of Shipwrights*, Vol. I, p. 119. See above, pp. 34-35, 70-71.

⁷¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 14/04/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/04/1739; P. Glennie and I. Whyte, 'Towns in an agrarian economy 1540-1700' in Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain II*, pp. 169-173.

office-holder. Prizes donated by the township were awarded at the rural race-meetings of Pelton and Bywell.⁷² At Hamsterley the local people of the area seem to have contributed to the upkeep of the course itself, because an advertisement promised that 'the Race will be made exceedingly good, by the Town's People'⁷³. It is unclear precisely who gave the money, but most of it was probably collected among the local tradesmen and innkeepers who stood to gain from the races. However, it cannot be assumed that those who were intent on exploiting the races for commercial purposes were the only donors. At the Bywell races in 1734 a guinea and a half 'Fool Plough Plate' was donated by the young men of the village, and the workmen of the village of Winlaton were also regular contributors to the races.⁷⁴

At least twelve race-meetings in the two counties were supported by subscription from the local gentry. Most of the events supported by gentlemen's subscriptions were the high-profile town race-meetings that were reported to the *Racing Calendar*. However, gentry money also supported several rural meetings at Heighington and Millfield, that were obviously fixtures of the gentry sporting calendar. They were reported in the *Racing Calendar*, and both offered larger prizes than most rural courses. Gentlemen's subscriptions also funded several rural events that offered small prizes and were beneath the notice of the *Racing Calendar*. Among these were the novelty races at the village of Longbenton, which included a race of assess ridden by chimney sweeps, alongside more conventional horse-races.⁷⁵ The prize provided by the gentleman's subscription was usually the most valuable prize at the race-meeting. At Durham races

⁷² K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), p. 161; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/07/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/01/1734.

⁷³ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1729.

⁷⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/01/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/07/1734.

⁷⁵ Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run*, passim; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/08/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/08/1738.

in 1727, four prizes were advertised, a plate worth £18 and a plate worth £12, for which no donors were listed. An innkeepers plate of £10 was offered, and also a gentlemen's subscription plate of £24.⁷⁶ The exception to this pattern was Newcastle, where the powerful Corporation had access to considerable funds and sometimes offered the most valuable prize. In 1739, for example, the Corporation spent sixty-five guineas on prizes for the horse-races, and the gentlemen raised only twenty guineas.⁷⁷

No subscription lists survive for race-meetings held in County Durham or Northumberland. However, surviving lists for Warwick races suggest that for county meetings, approximately 30 per cent of the subscribers had the title of knight or above, and around 15 per cent were aristocrats. Subscribers to the gentlemen's prizes at the less prestigious large market town courses were less socially elevated. A race list for Stratford-upon-Avon from 1754 listed only 20 per cent of the subscribers as knight or above.⁷⁸ Some of the smaller courses that raised a gentleman's subscription probably attracted contributions from a small circle of the local gentlemen. The gentlemen's subscription to the 1738 races at the village of Felton, for example, only raised enough to buy a £5 prize.⁷⁹ Most race subscriptions seem to have been paid by men, though local ladies contributed to a 'Ladies Plate' at Newcastle, Durham and Heighington.⁸⁰ Because subscription lists do not survive, it is impossible to calculate accurately how many race courses individuals subscribed to, and how far away from the race courses subscribers lived. Most race-meetings probably drew subscriptions from their immediate area, though the most prestigious county meetings drew financial support

⁷⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 12/08/1727.

⁷⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/04/1739.

⁷⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 189-190.

⁷⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/05/1738.

⁸⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/09/1730; Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1734), p. 40.

from a wide area. Newcastle races, for example, attracted subscriptions from gentlemen living in both Northumberland and County Durham.⁸¹

Subscribing to race prizes was a symbol of status within local society, and provided the opportunity to support an occasion that was a mainstay of the social calendar of the gentry.⁸² The gentry families in the north east often discussed horse-racing in their correspondence, comparing horses and jockeys, and relating the latest prize-winners at race-meetings both within and outside the region. In June 1709, for example, Sir Edward Blackett wrote to his daughter Maria asking her to send him a list of the winners at the Newcastle races. In the next decade he wrote to his grand-daughter to announce the success of one her uncle's horses at the York races, explaining how the jockey's poor riding had robbed him of a further prize.⁸³ Subscription also conferred the advantage of cheaper entry to the races. Racing enthusiast John Swinburne, the third baronet, subscribed to the races at Morpeth, Hexham and Alnwick between 1730 and 1735. In these years he entered his own horses for the races at Hexham and Morpeth, winning the Hexham plate in 1733. Subscribers to the Hexham races received a reduction in entry money, and although the percentage by which the entry money was reduced was not advertised, such reductions could be considerable. The gentleman's plate at Alnwick cost three guineas for non-subscribers to enter, and only one guinea for subscribers. Given that Swinburne never subscribed more than £1 1s to each race, this represented a substantial saving. If gentlemen enjoyed racing, then it clearly made financial sense to subscribe to races they entered regularly.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 189-190; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/04/1739.

⁸² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 189-190; NRO, ZSW, part 2, 454.

⁸³ DRO, D/Sa/C/38.1; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 August 1731; NRO, ZBL, 191, 20 June 1709 to Maria Blackett, and undated letter addressed 'To My Dr Jewel', before letter dated 17 August 1714.

⁸⁴ NRO, ZSW, part 2, 454; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/04/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/05/1722.

The local elite also supported race courses by donating prizes as individuals. Ten race courses in the area were supported by prizes that came from individual donors, the majority of whom were local M.P.s. Only the most prestigious courses in the area, such as Newcastle, Durham and Berwick were supported by these gifts. Some members of parliament seem to have spent money on race prizes as part of their electioneering efforts. Henry Vane stood for County Durham unsuccessfully in 1722 and 1727. He donated prizes to the Barnard Castle races from 1731 to 1733, probably as part of his campaign to stand for the County Durham seat, an aim that was not achieved until 1747, when he represented the county for six years.⁸⁵ However, most donations by members of parliament were made after the individual had been elected, as a way of maintaining prestige and support in the area. After George Bowes was elected as a Member for County Durham in 1727, he gave prizes to both Barnard Castle and Durham races.⁸⁶

Some of these donors may have been motivated by a passion for racing, as well as shrewd political motives. Sir William Middleton gave prizes to the races at Millfield and Morpeth, in his capacity as the Member of Parliament for Northumberland. He was also distinguished as an early member of the Jockey Club, and the owner of an important stud where race horses were bred from imported Arabian stock.⁸⁷ Local dignitaries and office-holders also made individual donations to the races. The High Sheriff of Northumberland donated race prizes to various race-meetings in the first four decades of the eighteenth century, including Alnwick, Hexham and Newcastle.⁸⁸ The Winlaton races, located in the settlement where Sir Ambrose Crowley's iron-works were

⁸⁵ R. Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754* (2 vols., London, 1970), vol. 2, p. 491; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731.

⁸⁶ Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 1, p. 479; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/06/1740.

⁸⁷ Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, vol. 2, p. 257; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/09/1723.

⁸⁸ Hinde, *Public Amusements in Newcastle*, 231.

established, were strongly supported by the paternalistic donations of the Crowley family. At the 1735 Winlaton races, for example, a £17 plate was given by Ambrose Crowley, and a £20 plate by Theodosia Crowley.⁸⁹

Entering horses in races in Northumberland and County Durham was by no means the sole preserve of the aristocracy, even at the most prestigious courses in the region. The *Racing Calendar* listed the twenty-five male owners that entered the Durham races in 1733. There were two dukes among the owners, and the remaining twenty-three included one captain, and twenty-two men styled simply as 'Mr'. However, the status of those who entered their horses for the races differed according to the prestige of the race fixture, and fewer high status owners seem to have entered the races held in small market towns and at rural locations. The *Calendar* did not list any titled owners among those running their horses at races held in the market town of Chester le Street in 1733.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the cost of entering for the most valuable prizes at the more prestigious racing events restricted participation to the relatively well heeled. The very best eighteenth-century race horses commanded large sums, such as Eclipse, who sold for 1,750 guineas in 1765. The would-be entrant to prestigious races needed the financial means to acquire, train and care for a good race horse.⁹¹

The personal accounts of John Swinburne show that he invested heavily in his stable, paying stud fees, saddlers and smiths, and employing a jockey to ride his horses. On 30th April 1732 he recorded that he had spent £12 13s on 'Drugs from London for

⁸⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735; M. W. Flinn (ed.), *The Law Book Of The Crowley Ironworks* (Surtees Society, 167, 1957), pp. xi-xii.

⁹⁰ Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1734), pp. 38-40, 37-38. The proportion of titled owners entering Barnard Castle races in 1733 was very similar to the figures for Durham. See Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, pp. 83-84; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 2, pp. 25, 138.

⁹¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 218.

the Horses'.⁹² The entry fees for the more important courses often ran to a few guineas. At the Newcastle races the cost of entering the race for the biggest prize was three guineas in 1734, and at Sunderland in 1738 the entry fee for the main race was also three guineas.⁹³ The requirement of most courses that horses should be stabled in the town for some time before the race itself was also a considerable addition to the cost of the enterprise.⁹⁴ Most owners were male, but there were also some female racing enthusiasts, such as the women of the Routh family, of Snape Hall in Bedale, North Yorkshire. Betty, Dolly and Judith Routh entered races in Yorkshire, but also ran their horses at races in other parts of the country, including County Durham. Dolly Routh's chestnut mare Trumpery won the thirty guinea race at the Durham races in July 1739, and Dolly was the only female owner listed among the winners.⁹⁵

Although the gentry seem to have dominated the races for the most valuable prizes, the men of the middling sort were probably also active in racing. At four of the more important race-meetings in the two counties a race was reserved for horses of less illustrious townspeople. Their race was often awarded the least valuable prize, as at the Durham races in 1732, when the prizes worth £20 and £12 were supplemented by an £8 prize open only to anyone who was 'deemed a Trading Man'.⁹⁶ The race organisers set a lower entry fee for this race, which must also have enabled more artisans to participate. The Newcastle races often included a prize for horses belonging to freemen of the town. The entry fee for this race was substantially lower than for the other races at only 2s 6d

⁹² NRO, ZSW, part 2, 454.

⁹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/04/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/09/1738.

⁹⁴ See Swinburne's costs at Sunderland and other races in NRO, ZSW, part 2, 454.

⁹⁵ Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 1, pp. 206-207; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 75. Although Dolly Routh's horse was initially judged to have won the race a dispute later arose about the legitimacy of her victory, and the thirty guinea prize was ultimately awarded to Mr Lambton. See *Newcastle Courant*, 14/07/1739.

⁹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/04/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1729; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/04/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1727.

in 1734, presumably to encourage a wide field of entrants. Traders and professional men entering the races held in their own town could keep their horses in their own stables, eliminating the stabling costs that other entrants were forced to pay.⁹⁷

The people who entered horses for the smaller prizes offered at rural race courses and some market towns were probably local farmers and the middling sort. These owners enjoyed the excitement of competition, and could afford the stabling and entry costs at these fixtures. The entry fees charged at rural and small town courses were often fairly low. At Cornsey Races in 1735, owners only had to pay 7s 6d to enter their horses, for example. The rules of entrance at these courses were often carefully framed to ensure fair competition. It was common practice for race articles to ban better race horses that were out of the league of the animals that competed at the event. The Bywell races offered a prize of £5, but were only open to horses that had never won a prize above £5 in value. This restricted entry to the less expensive horses that ran at the courses with smaller prizes, and prevented unscrupulous owners of more valuable horses from paying the low entry money and carrying off all the prizes.⁹⁸ Named individual horses were sometimes specifically excluded from the smaller competitions, usually because they were considered too likely to win. This occurred at Woolsington in 1713, when 'the Grey Stone Horse that won Gateshead plate' was banned from entering for the race.⁹⁹

The sports that were often run alongside horse-racing also provided an opportunity for participation by ordinary people as well as the gentry. The hound trails at races were probably limited to those who were sufficiently well off to keep their own

⁹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/04/1734.

⁹⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/04/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/02/1735.

⁹⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/10/1713.

pack of hounds. Hound trails are known to have been organised at both Newcastle and Shildon races, and the rules were directed to gentlemen and their servants.¹⁰⁰ However, the other sports at race courses seem to have been open to more ordinary race goers. There were foot races in at least some years at eight race courses, including at the more prestigious events at Newcastle, Sunderland and South Shields, and at five rural courses including Hamsterley in County Durham.¹⁰¹ There were both men and women's races, and no entry fees seem to have been charged. The winners of the women's races were usually offered clothing, as at Whickham races in 1731. A women's foot race was held on the 4th September, the second day of the races, and the winner was rewarded with a smock.¹⁰² Prizes for the men's races included a saddle, clothes, and money prizes of up to 14s.¹⁰³ More unusual competitions were also occasionally open to race goers, including a grinning competition for the elderly, rowing races, and a dancing competition. An eating competition was held at Longbenton races in 1738, when entrants were challenged to consume six bowls of hasty pudding and butter as fast as possible. The winner of this test of endurance was given a reward of 2s 6d, and the rest of the entrants received smaller prizes in order of merit. Such competitions and sports provided opportunities for members of the race crowd to win public acclaim, and perhaps financial reward.¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1723.

¹⁰¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 14/12/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/10/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/01/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/09/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/09/1736; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/08/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723.

¹⁰² *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731.

¹⁰³ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/05/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/09/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/08/1738.

¹⁰⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/08/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/05/1725; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/08/1738.

The following section analyses the characteristics of sociable interactions at race courses, which were arenas of sociability where individuals of all social levels and of both genders enjoyed a shared experience. This is not to say that those of different social levels did not experience the races in rather different ways. The local gentry often attended the race course in their carriages, which were crucial signifiers of status. When the ladies of the Bishop of Durham's household attended the Bishop Auckland races together in 1662, they went 'in my Lord's coche', as befitted their social standing. Elizabeth Baker was careful to procure a carriage to take her young charge Peggy to the York races in 1731, but was extremely angry that one of Peggy's relations, a Mr Lampton, was not 'so Cevil to Ask her to Take her To The feald in Thir Coach'.¹⁰⁵ On at least three race courses in the north east, better-off race goers could pay to watch the races from the scaffold, which afforded them a better view of the course among a less socially mixed group.¹⁰⁶ Many spectators watched the races by galloping alongside the horses as they ran the race, but this was not an option open to the very poorest spectators, who had to walk to the races. Race goers often went to the races along with their own friends or family, as the Rev. Dr. Carlyle did when he attended the Chester-le-Street races with two friends in 1758, and race goers often seem to have socialised with their friends and neighbours once they reached the course.¹⁰⁷ After the races the gentry engaged in the full round of race-week sociability, including balls, plays and concerts, while ordinary people might discuss the day's racing over drinks in the local alehouse.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 35; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 21 August 1731.

¹⁰⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/05/44; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/07/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/04/1748.

¹⁰⁷ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 50-51; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 191-194.

The races and the programme of events associated with them were also experienced in different ways by men and women. The cock-fighting that was held in the mornings before the races was socially heterogeneous, but exclusively masculine. While the men were at the cock-fights women may have spent their time enjoying the other diversions that were often laid on to coincide with horse-races in towns, including science lectures, curiosities, and concerts. Though some men presumably preferred to attend these other events rather than watching the cock-fights, women may well have been in the majority among those attending. A course of 'Curious, Diverting, Useful and Surprising' popular science lectures were delivered during the mornings of the Newcastle race week in 1724, and were advertised explicitly as a 'Diversion of the Ladies during the Time of the Horse Races'.¹⁰⁹ During the Durham races in 1747, women could visit the female rhinoceros and other unusual animals that were shown at Elvet Bridge, and morning concerts were laid on in the Newcastle race-week during the later 1730s and 1740s.¹¹⁰ Women probably also used this time to engage in other sociable pursuits with their female friends, including shopping, visiting and conversation. On the race-track itself, most women were spectators rather than participators, as male owners dominated those who competed for the race prizes. Although almost all of the social events that were held in the evenings at town meetings involved both sexes, at one race-meeting men and women attended separate dinners. Between 1744 and 1747 a 'particular Ordinary...for Ladies' was held in Stockton at the time of the races.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1724; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/06/1747. See below, p. 226.

¹¹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/07/1747; P. M. Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', *Music and Letters*, 55 (1974), 17. See below, p. 226.

¹¹¹ Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 1, pp. 206-207; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 75; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), pp. 250-252; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/07/1744; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/08/1747. See below, pp. 280-284, 296.

However, although gender and social status affected the experience of attending the races, the race course was an important shared cultural experience. Horse-racing was highly popular among both men and women from all social levels throughout the period. Participation in the races was not certainly not limited to the gentry, and we have already seen that a wide variety of horses entered races, and many farmers raced their horses. Many farmers and artisans seem to have taken time off from their work in order to attend the races, and no entrance fees were charged at any course in the region before 1750, so that even the very poorest families could enjoy a day at the races.¹¹² Races seem to have drawn large crowds, which included many ordinary people as well as the better-off. Different social groups may have enjoyed these pastimes in subtly different ways, but they were participating in a shared culture. The races provided excitement, the opportunity to compete for honour and status, and an occasion for sexual and personal display.¹¹³

Most spectators probably went to the race course because they found the races exciting, and enjoyed the heady crowd atmosphere. The race between Smiling Molly and Harmless for the £25 plate at Sunderland in 1729 was so thrilling that it was described in the *Racing Calendar* for that year. The mare that held the lead was being closely pursued by Smiling Molly, when Smiling Molly almost fell. The other mare galloped on towards the finishing post, and the crowd shouted and waved their hats. But at the final moment the horse swerved, running on the outside of the finishing post. As the rider turned his horse round, Smiling Molly ran past to steal the race.¹¹⁴ Drama and noise seems to have been an expected element of a trip to the races, and the highly-charged atmosphere of the horse-races at Chester le Street was described in 1758 by a

¹¹² Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing*, pp. 17-19.

¹¹³ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 50-51.

¹¹⁴ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, pp. 246-247.

visiting clergymen, the Rev. Dr. Carlyle. Some of the crowd watched the races by galloping furiously alongside, shouting encouragement to the runners, 'all of them with a keenness, eagerness, violence of motion and loudness of vociferation'. The spice of danger may have added to the pleasure; Carlyle was astonished that no-one in the crowd was injured.¹¹⁵

The betting on the outcome of each race intensified the excitement of the meetings. Gambling on horse-races and other games allowed race goers of all social ranks the opportunity to chase the prestige of a successful wager. Betting permitted women to enhance their prestige, and also provided an unusual opportunity for them to engage in open competition with men.¹¹⁶ Betting was often heavy, as at the 1680 Wakefield races, where race goers laid bets as high as £100.¹¹⁷ The largest bets were probably laid at the most prestigious courses, such as Newmarket, where Sir Robert Carr lost five or six thousand pounds in 1682.¹¹⁸ Sums of up to several thousand pounds were sometimes wagered on matches run between gentlemen, particularly on the Newmarket course.¹¹⁹ At the Newcastle races in 1753 George Bowes was observed thinking 'his money will never have an end, for he is making matches with the lords of the horse coursers, and as we hear, hath made two matches, one of £40 and the other for £100'.¹²⁰ Ordinary race goers could stake much smaller sums on race-courses, as a defamation cause from the north east shows. Richard Wilson sued John Wall for defaming him at Durham races in July 1735. John Wall alleged that he had placed a bet with Wilson, but that when he tried to collect his winnings of two shillings, Wilson

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

¹¹⁶ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 248-250.

¹¹⁷ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, pp. 44, 56; Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 259.

¹¹⁸ Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 1, p. 107.

¹¹⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 216.

¹²⁰ Cited in J. Gill, *Racecourses of Great Britain* (London, 1975), p. 144.

denied that he had given him the stake money. The bet on the Durham race course was made in one of the booths on the course, but gambling also seem to have been underway within towns during the races. In 1750 the organisers of Stockton races banned 'any Gaming Table, or unlawful Games, in the Street or Market Place'.¹²¹

The consumption of alcohol, often to excess, appears to have been an essential and enduring element of the appeal of the racecourse. Alcohol was not only sold by the local alehouses, but also from the tents and huts that were set up along the course itself.¹²² Thomas Smales attended the Newcastle races in 1731, and seems to have been determined to enjoy the event to the full. He attended the races from June 12th, when he recorded in his diary that he was very drunk. He spent the next day at the races 'Drinking Day and Night'. On June 14th his horse won a prize, and he celebrated predictably, by drinking both during the day and at night. He then returned home 'very drunk', spending the next day 'At home very ill', and the following day was also forced to stay at home because he was 'Extream ill'. Convivial drinking was probably part of race course sociability for spectators and race horse owners of all social levels.¹²³

The race course was also an arena where male honour was accrued and tested. Horse-races provided an opportunity for men of the gentry and middling sort to compete against each other for honour. Physical prowess and courage was a key part of manliness, and good horsemanship was expected of early modern men.¹²⁴ Even where owners employed jockeys to ride their horses, the horses represented their owner, and in all races the success or failure of a horse was translated into prestige or embarrassment

¹²¹ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/3/1736/28; *Newcastle Journal*, 04/08/1750.

¹²² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 190-191. See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 30/07/1726.

¹²³ Cited in Gill, *Racecourses*, p. 143.

¹²⁴ E. A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 30-31, 36.

for the owner. The suspected Jacobite Sir William Blackett was publicly ridiculed when his horse lost badly at an unspecified race-track in 1715. He was publicly derided at the course by fellow race goers, including 'a bold country fellow' who 'stept up to him & told him in the publick field th[a]t till he lost his Honr his hors never Lost'. Blackett's lack of success on the track was then mocked on stage during a comedy, and even laughed over by boys in the street.¹²⁵ Failure might bring shame to the loser, but the owner of a winning horse gained the trophy of a purse or a plate that he could display in his house to show off his achievement. He might also gain further prestige, along with financial reward, by having wagered on the success of his horse.¹²⁶

The importance of sexual prowess to male honour resulted in a plethora of sexual names for horses. Many horses were given names without sexual connotations, such as Skipjack or Commoner. However, the runners at Doncaster, Hambleton and York in the first half of the eighteenth century included 'Sweetest when naked', 'Patch Buttock's', 'Sweetlips' and 'Jack-come-tickle-me'. One of Charles II's own race horses was famously called Stiff Dick.¹²⁷ The prestige accrued by those who won horse-races meant that race-meetings could sometimes become politicised. At the 1682 Chester races the Whig Duke of Monmouth ran a foot race himself, and also rode his own horse to victory for the plate. In celebration, local Whigs reportedly broke the windows of all known Tories living in Chester. Lord Wharton, an enthusiastic Whig in Anne's reign,

¹²⁵ NRO, ZAL, 39/1/1, A. R. to Margaret Allgood, 1715.

¹²⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 23/02/1712; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/04/1740; Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 259.

¹²⁷ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p. 10; Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 1, pp. 202, 207-208; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 49.

travelled all over the country to enter his great race horses Careless and Gelding in races where a Tory owner was the hot favourite.¹²⁸

Many aspects of the racing event depended on trust, for both the race horse owners and the spectators. The system of qualification requirements for different events relied on honesty about the horse's type, age and previous winnings. When Newcastle races offered a hunter plate, the organisers wished to ensure that unscrupulous owners would not enter race horses, who would win the race by virtue of their speed. In 1723 they announced that entry was on the condition that 'each Gentleman declaring upon his honour, that each Horse, &c. was kept for no other Purpose than Hunting'. In 1726 the rules had to be tightened up, and it was announced that if the horse was 'doubted at Enterance, Witnesses are to be produced'.¹²⁹ This was obviously a vexed issue, because by 1732 the race articles stated that owners might be required to swear an oath that the horse was a hunter, and from 1739 all owners were made to swear an affidavit to that effect.¹³⁰

The announcement of the race winners often provoked acrimony, because it relied on the word of the judges appointed. A group of 'tryers' was chosen to judge the races, and at some events each of the owners running in the main race appointed judges.¹³¹ Close finishes were particularly prone to cause disputes, which often resulted in the prizes being split. This happened at the 60 guineas race at Durham in 1733, when the judges could not agree on which horse had passed the post first. Three judges wanted to award the prize to Mr Bartlet's horse Cripple, but three were adamant that Mr

¹²⁸ Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 1, pp. 83, 173-174; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 51.

¹²⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 14/03/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/04/1726.

¹³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 08/04/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/04/1739.

¹³¹ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 3, p. 25.

Ingleby's Peggy-grieves-me had won. Cheney reported the dispute in the *Racing Calendar*, commenting that the race was 'most strenuously disputed...more generally controverted than any other Point of its Nature I have known or heard of'. After much wrangling and many extra heats, the prize had to be divided among the owners of three horses.¹³² Disputes over winners were also caused by differences in interpretation of advertisements and race articles, as Cheney commented in his *Racing Calendar* of 1731.¹³³

Controversy was also generated by the suspicion of foul play by owner or rider, which appears to have been a persistent problem in eighteenth century racing.¹³⁴ Articles for the Newcastle town plate observed that 'severall times heretofore severall ill practices have been used in running for & winning the s'd plate'. Horses were to be disqualified if the owner fed the horse between heats, or if owners distracted or stopped other horses on the course. Riders were forbidden to 'lay hold or strike any of his fellow Riders', or remove the weights that had been allotted to them. Disputes over foul play in the races at Durham in 1738 and 1739 caused winning horses to be disqualified.¹³⁵ Betting on the race course also relied on honour, particularly after the anti-gambling act of 1710. This statute allowed any punter who lost more than £10 in a wager to reclaim his money. The act seems to have little used, because contemporary mores required that debts should be honoured. However, betting could also cause disputes, because methods for laying bets were not universally agreed.¹³⁶

¹³² Cheney, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1734), pp. 38-39.

¹³³ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 89.

¹³⁴ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 258.

¹³⁵ Newcastle race articles, probably dating from either 1714 or 1715, reprinted in Hunter Blair, 'Newcastle Races', 245-247; Cheney, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1738), p. 37; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/07/1739.

¹³⁶ Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing*, p. 200; Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 89.

The races were an opportunity for personal display and courtship among rich and poor alike. Festival times, when horse-races were often held, involved the relaxing of customary restraints on moral behaviour. Fairs and festivals were associated with illicit sexual encounters until well into the eighteenth century.¹³⁷ The races were also part of the cycle of events that made up the eighteenth century marriage market. Parents were more likely to allow their children to take part in the process of choosing their spouses, and the gentry were now looking for alliances with wealthy middling sort families.¹³⁸ Many matches were made at race-meetings, and young ladies and gentlemen attended the track with flirtation and marriage in mind.¹³⁹ Contemporary letters show that the races occasioned competition among the ladies in dress and jewellery.¹⁴⁰ Henry Vane exercised considerable presence of mind in his selection of a partner for the Stockton races in 1745. He called on the 'pretty Miss Rouths' during their stay in London, shortly before they were due to be inoculated, 'tho He took care not to ingage Either of them for a partner at Stockton Races least they shld be too much altered'. The celebrated 'Northern Beautys', clearly had their appeal for Vane, but attending the races with a pock-marked partner did not.¹⁴¹

The programme of social events associated with some race-meetings also attracted many of those who attended the horse-races. The larger towns with race courses tended to have an extensive programme of social events organised for race goers. As we have already seen, cock-fighting and other diversions including curiosities, music and scientific experiments were available in the mornings. The

¹³⁷ G. R. Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives* (London, 1979), pp. 74-75; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 29, 76-79.

¹³⁸ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp. 50-51; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 14.

¹³⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 245.

¹⁴⁰ NRO, ZAL, 39/1/1, A. R. to Margaret Allgood, 1715.

¹⁴¹ DRO, D/Lo/F/744, 6, 20.

crowds then flocked to the race-track to watch the racing in the afternoons. After the day's racing was over various social events were often available in the evening, including dinners, masquerades, plays and assemblies.¹⁴² Public dinners, usually known in the north east as 'ordinaries', were often held in inns in towns, and are known to have been held in six towns in the region. These feasts could attract large numbers of people, and at the Lichfield races in 1733, for example, 150 individuals dined together at an ordinary in one inn in town.¹⁴³ However, several rural courses also had some social facilities, including an assembly held at the village of Heighington on both nights of the races in September 1731. Public ordinaries also accompanied the racing at least once at two rural courses.¹⁴⁴ The music, dancing and theatre that accompanied horse-races are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.¹⁴⁵

VI

Having explored the enduring appeal of the races, the following section examines cock-fighting and analyses the sport's development, the locations where it was held, how it was organised and who participated in the sport. Cock-fighting was a popular pastime in England from at least the twelfth century, though cock-fights are known to have been held in ancient Rome. Fighting cocks was a royal recreation in England by the time of Henry VIII, who had a cockpit built at the palace of Whitehall. The sport's widespread popularity by Elizabethan times made it the object of sustained Puritan criticism, and royal support from the Stuart monarchs increased the sport's

¹⁴² *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1724; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/06/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/07/1747; Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 17; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/04/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1724; See above, p. 156. See below, pp. 198, 223, 242-244.

¹⁴³ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/03/1726; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/03/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/08/1747; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 190.

¹⁴⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/07/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/08/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/01/1740.

¹⁴⁵ See below, pp. 188-254.

popularity among the elite. James I was a particular aficionado of the pit, appointing a royal cockmaster, and watching fights at least once a week. Cock-fights were held throughout the country in the early modern period, at fairs, and also to coincide with holidays, particularly Shrovetide, Easter, Whitsuntide, Christmas and the New Year. Annual cock-fights were customarily held in many schools, including the grammar school at Hexham in Northumberland, where the pupils held a fight for a silver bell each Shrovetide.¹⁴⁶ Fights were often held in towns during the assize week, and at the same time as horse-races, which were also often held at festivals.¹⁴⁷

It is difficult to assess the chronological development of cock-fighting in the north east, because of the paucity of sources that exist from before 1700, and because most cock-fighting was probably arranged on an ad hoc basis between friends, and so went unrecorded. The newspaper advertisements are a valuable source for the cock-fights that were held alongside horse-races and for matches between gentlemen. However, the advertisements cover only a minority of fights held per year, and must be used with caution. They are biased towards commercialised fights held in purpose-built pits and shed little light on plebeian cock-fights.¹⁴⁸ As with the horse-races, we must be aware that the first appearance of cock-fights in the newspapers does not reflect the first cock-fighting in a particular location.¹⁴⁹ An average of around sixteen fights were advertised annually in the years between 1741 and 1747, but only ten fights were advertised in total between 1709 and 1718. It is extremely unlikely that cock-fighting underwent the enormous expansion that the increase in advertising would suggest.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 144; Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, pp. 93-95, 99, 102; Bateson, et al. (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 3, p. 217.

¹⁴⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 23/02/1712; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/04/1712; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/05/1729; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/11/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/11/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/08/1712. See above, p. 137.

¹⁴⁸ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁹ Barry, 'The press and the politics of culture in Bristol 1660-1775', pp. 49-81. See above, pp. 9-10, 133.

However, it seems probable that while cock-fighting was popular from the medieval period, particularly at festivals, large-scale organised cock-fighting expanded in conjunction with horse-racing. As the numbers of locations where horse-racing was held increased from the sixteenth century onwards, more large cock-fights were arranged to accompany these races.¹⁵⁰

While cock-fighting that was organised privately between individuals was probably also held in rural areas in the north east, most of the commercialised fights that were advertised in the newspapers took place in towns. The urban locations where cock-fights were held included Newcastle, Durham and Alnwick, though several fights were also advertised in rural areas, including a cock-fight in George Ornby's new pit in Lanchester in 1743. Ornby, almost certainly an innkeeper, offered several prizes for cock-fights, including a purse of three guineas which cost only 7s 6d to enter.¹⁵¹ The larger settlements were better provided with inns offering fights than rural areas were, and the provincial capital, Newcastle, had the greatest number of inns advertising cock-fights. Five different hostleries advertised cock-fights in the city during the 1730s. A few towns in the two counties had up to two inns advertising cock-fights, including Hexham. However, in the majority of settlements only one inn advertised fights during the decade.¹⁵² Only four of the rural courses that made up the largest sector of racing advertised cock-fights, though fights may have been held alongside more of the smaller race-meetings where organisers may have chosen not to spend the money to advertise them in the newspapers.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 16/04/1726. See above, pp. 131-137.

¹⁵¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/03/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/10/1744; *Newcastle Courant*, 27/11/1742; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/04/1743.

¹⁵² *Newcastle Courant*, 04/03/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/04/1731; P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London 1983), pp. 52-54, 69-72.

¹⁵³ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/09/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/09/1732. See above, p. 140.

Organised cock-fighting was financed in a variety of different ways, including with money raised by pairs of individual gentlemen, or by groups of the gentry. Many cock-fights were fought between individuals, who wagered agreed sums on both the individual battle and the whole contest. At Easter in 1728, Michael Midford, esq. of Newcastle and Captain Smith of Darlington fought a main at a pit at an inn in Darlington. The contest lasted three days, and thirty-one pairs of cocks were fought against each other, the owner of the winning cock in each pair taking the stake money of two guineas. The practice of fighting an odd number of pairs of cocks ensured that there could not be a draw, and the overall winner of the Darlington main received the forty guineas stake. A total of 102 guineas had been wagered, which was beyond the means of all but the gentry.¹⁵⁴ Some of the gentlemen of the north east were very keen cockers, and their names feature many times in newspaper advertisements for matches of cocks. These enthusiasts included Sir Edward Blackett of Newby, who travelled the northern region to challenge other gentlemen to cock-fights, and fought at various locations in the 1720s and 30s, including Carlisle, Hexham, Newcastle and Durham.¹⁵⁵

Cock-fights were also fought between groups of gentlemen, usually of the same town or county, who clubbed together to raise the stake money. In December 1730, for example, a group of gentlemen from Yorkshire and Durham took on cock-fighting enthusiasts from Newcastle and Northumberland. They fought forty-five pairs of cocks at the Bull and Crown alehouse in the Flesh Market at Newcastle, for the same stakes as the match at Darlington in 1728.¹⁵⁶ Some of these fights were financed by raising

¹⁵⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 30/03/1728.

¹⁵⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/03/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/08/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/03/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/03/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/03/1728.

¹⁵⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 05/12/1730.

subscriptions from those who wished to enter their game cocks, and such subscription fights were advertised at various locations, including Newcastle and Darlington.¹⁵⁷ A list of subscribers to a Darlington cock-fight, published in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1744, suggests that such subscriptions tended to be raised from the gentry, as one would expect from the level of stake money required to participate. Of the six subscribers, two were titled, one was an 'honourable', and the other three men were styled esquire.¹⁵⁸

However, there was also considerable middling sort involvement in the funding and organisation of cock-fighting, as there was with horse-racing. Some corporations contributed to the sport by building and maintaining public cockpits, including the Alnwick Corporation, which owned a cockpit in the town between 1695 and 1704. There are several references to leases granted to individuals, presumably innkeepers, to manage the cockpit on behalf of the Corporation.¹⁵⁹ While some town governments did support cock-fighting, most of the cock-fights that were advertised in the local newspapers took place at inns, or at cock pits owned by innkeepers. Many innkeepers invested in converting part of their building for cock-fighting because of the increased revenue guaranteed by hosting cock-fights. Of the nineteen settlements in the north east where cock-fights were advertised in the 1730s, the venue where the fight would be held is known for eleven locations, and all of these fights were held in inns. Regular small-scale fights were probably held at inns throughout the year, but cock-fights held on public holidays and during the races could expect to attract a far larger crowd.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 07/03/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/12/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/11/1744.

¹⁵⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 24/11/1744.

¹⁵⁹ Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, p. 434. See above, pp. 142-147.

¹⁶⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1728; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 177.

Some prizes were provided directly by innkeepers, who recouped their costs by selling food and drink, providing accommodation, and by charging entry fees to the individuals who wished to compete. Most of the smaller prizes that were advertised were probably provided by innkeepers, such as the £5 plate offered by Mrs Hill for a 'Welsh Main' of sixteen cocks, held at her inn in Newcastle on New Year's day in 1731. Each owner had to pay a fee of five shillings for every cock entered.¹⁶¹ The 'Welsh Main' was the form of cock-fight commonly arranged when innkeepers gave the prize themselves, because it was particularly suitable for fights where individuals entered separately, perhaps bringing only one cock each. In a Welsh Main the cocks were fought in pairs, the surviving birds fighting again. The winner was the owner of the bird that won the contest between the last two surviving birds. Some of the cock-fights that were held in inns lasted for several days, maximising the income that the innkeeper could hope to gain from the spectators and competitors.¹⁶²

Both the gentry and the middling sort of people were involved in organising commercial cock-fights, and those who participated in and watched cock-fighting were drawn from an even broader social range. The sport was fashionable among the gentry, who sometimes discussed cock-fighting in their letters, but was also enjoyed by men of all social levels. When Pepys went to see a cock-fight in the capital in 1663 he was watching together with apprentices, middling sort artisans including butchers and bakers, and 'parliament men'.¹⁶³ Ordinary people both held cock-fights themselves, and enjoyed watching the sport.¹⁶⁴ Cock-fighting appears to have attracted an almost

¹⁶¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/01/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/12/1730.

¹⁶² Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, p. 193; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1728.

¹⁶³ NRO, ZBL, 195, Aletheia Blackett to John Blackett Esq. at Warwick, 12 [July], no year; NRO, ZAL, 39/7, K. Roberts to Mrs Widdrington at Newcastle, undated; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 144-145; Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, p. 69.

¹⁶⁴ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 49.

entirely male audience, though at least one northern woman was passionate about the pit. The wife of John Croft, a successful horse breeder in Yorkshire, was reported in the 1750s to be 'an admirer of the diversion of cock-fighting and would bet her money freely'. However, John Croft's wife seems to have been an extremely unusual woman, and the singularity of her devotion to fighting cocks probably explains why the diarist Thomas Gyll remarked upon it when noting the death of her husband in his journal.¹⁶⁵ The newspaper advertisements for cock-fights always refer to the participation of 'gentlemen', and the personal letters and diaries consulted for this thesis did not reveal any other occasions when women attended cock-fights.¹⁶⁶

Enthusiasts such as Thomas Dixon, who lived in Yorkshire in the 1740s, devoted much energy to attempting to breed the perfect game cock.¹⁶⁷ The resulting birds were then fed special diets, and given training to improve their fighting skills. Various books instructed readers in the art of training and fighting cocks, including George Wilson's *The Commendation of Cockes, and Cock-fighting*.¹⁶⁸ Pairs of cocks of equal weight were matched to fight one another, and before the fight the game cocks were clipped and fitted with artificial spurs.¹⁶⁹ Fights were governed by rules, which dictated the behaviour of competitors and spectators. The 1743 *Racing Calendar* included a set of rules for cock-fights, for example, which explained how the winner was to be decided.¹⁷⁰ The cockpit was an amphitheatre consisting of a central platform, ringed with tiered seating for spectators.¹⁷¹ The lower tiers of seats seem often to have

¹⁶⁵ Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries*, p. 202; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 145. See above, p. 156.

¹⁶⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/04/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1724.

¹⁶⁷ Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ M. Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and pastimes of the English gentleman 1580-1630* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 130, 133-134; Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, pp. 41-47; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁰ Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1743), pp. 70-75.

¹⁷¹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 49.

been reserved for higher status spectators, as was the case with the cock-fights that accompanied Durham races in 1742. The rules for cock-fights reproduced in the 1743 *Racing Calendar* allowed the master of the pit to remove any spectators from the lower ring who were not of 'better Rank and Quality'.¹⁷²

Different kinds of cock-fight attracted competitors from different social backgrounds, and several types of fight appear to have been largely restricted to gentry participants. At the larger race courses most of the cock-fights seem to have been reserved for gentleman competitors who could afford the large sums that were wagered on the fights. A sample of all the advertisements for cock-fights that were printed in the *Newcastle Courant* before 1730 revealed only a few instances where cock-fights held alongside the races were open to wider participation. At Newcastle races in 1727, cockfights were held on every morning of the races, between the gentlemen of Durham and Northumberland. The sums wagered were four guineas per battle and eighty for the overall victors.¹⁷³ Some less exclusive cock-fights were held in conjunction with the more prestigious races, and there may have been more which were not advertised. Some Newcastle races certainly did offer the opportunity for less well off cock-fighting enthusiasts to try their luck. A subscription horse-race held on the Town Moor in Newcastle in 1718 was accompanied by cock-fighting at Robert Hill's cockpit. The prize was a pair of silver spurs worth two guineas, and no entry fee was stipulated.¹⁷⁴

Some of the smaller race-meetings, where middling sort men were more likely to be entering their horses, are known to have offered the opportunity to enter cock-

¹⁷² *Newcastle Courant*, 15/05/1742; Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1743), p. 73.

¹⁷³ *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1727.

¹⁷⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/11/1718.

fights. In the 1730s cock-fights were advertised at sixteen of the sixty-five courses that we know to have been holding races before 1739. The majority of these were held at the larger town race-meetings, such as Sunderland, and at some market town courses including Wolsingham.¹⁷⁵ However, several of the smaller race-meetings offered the opportunity for men below the level of the gentry to compete in cock-fighting. Entering the cock-fights at such race-meetings was another way in which middling sort men could actively participate in the sport at the races. The races at Kenton in 1725 were run for a relatively small prize, and the entrance fee was only six shillings. No entry fee was quoted for the cock-fighting that accompanied the racing, though it was probably similarly low, and the prize was a pair of silver buckles. It seems likely that both the races and the cock-fights at Kenton were entered by middling sort men.¹⁷⁶

The fights organised by innkeepers were also open to individuals from a wider social spectrum than the individual matches or group fights. Not only were the costs of entry often fairly low, but would-be competitors could enter with only one bird, whereas the contests between individuals or groups of men might require entrants to possess numerous high quality game cocks. Some of the fights organised by innkeepers were known as 'subscription fights', presumably because entrants subscribed jointly to the cost of the prizes, though the subscription money required to participate appears to have been fairly affordable.¹⁷⁷ In March 1715 cock-fights were held over two days at Robert Hills's cockpit for a pair of silver spurs worth two guineas. The subscription money which entrants were required to pay was fairly low, at only three shillings. While these prices might have excluded the poorest sorts from competing, they certainly allowed for the involvement of men from the middling ranks. And if less well-off men could not

¹⁷⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 07/07/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/02/1739. See above, p. 153.

¹⁷⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 30/09/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1729. See above, p. 153.

¹⁷⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/12/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/12/1743.

afford to fight their cocks at commercialised fights, they could certainly participate as spectators, sharing the experience of the pit. The following section will explore the characteristics of sociable interactions at cock-fights, and will establish the reasons for the sport's popularity.¹⁷⁸

VII

Some of the pleasures of cock-fighting were similar to the attractions of the turf. The ordinaries that accompanied some cock-fights provided a welcome opportunity for masculine conviviality.¹⁷⁹ Cock-fights occasioned heavy betting, and the atmosphere was often exciting, as at the cock-fight that Pepys attended in 1663, where the socially mixed gathering all joined together in swearing and betting.¹⁸⁰ The crowd enjoyed the thrill of the fights themselves, and their wagering deepened their involvement. A German travelling through England in the 1760s described the attraction of watching the birds battle to the death, remarking that 'it is amazing to see how they peck at each other, and especially how they hack with their spurs. Their combs bleed terribly, and they often slit each other's crop and abdomen with the spurs. There is nothing more diverting than when one seems quite exhausted and there are great shouts of triumph and monstrous wagers; and then the cock that appeared to be quite done for suddenly recovers and masters the other.'¹⁸¹

The cocks represented masculine virtues of courage and strength, and were described in sexual language, because the 'cock' was both a fighting bird and a

¹⁷⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/02/1715.

¹⁷⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/01/1743. See above, pp. 155-164.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 145; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁸¹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 49-50.

contemporary word for the penis. The birds represented their owners in battle, and allowed them to win money, credit, and to enhance their reputation for virility.¹⁸² Contemporaries compared the cockpit to the arena of the classical gladiators, 'the very model of an amphitheatre of the ancients'.¹⁸³ Several of the advertisements placed in the newspapers of the region emphasised the honourable and martial aspects of the sport. An advertisement for a Shrovetide cock-fight at a Newcastle inn addressed itself to 'All Gentlemen or others, who are Lovers of the Noble and Heroick Recreation of Cock-Fighting'.¹⁸⁴ The correlation of the cock-fight with honour and prestige was so strong that at Hexham Grammar School the winner of the annual Shrovetide cock-fight was named the 'captain or victor of the said school'.¹⁸⁵ Men attached great importance to their fighting cocks, and Cuthbert Carr was doubtless furious when the two 'Choies' game cocks which he had intended to breed from were mistakenly served up to customers in a Durham inn, where the landlady 'pull'd of thirr necks, and fell to boiling or roast'. The veteran cock-fighter Sir Edward Blackett was sympathetic to the disappointment of a fellow cock-fighting enthusiast and called down a 'plague on her', but at least one of the women of Carr's acquaintance thought it 'a good jest'.¹⁸⁶

Many of the cock-fights advertised in the local newspapers were competitions between teams of gentlemen from different towns or counties. Such matches occurred all over England as well as in the north east, and in these contests local pride was at stake as well as the honour of individuals.¹⁸⁷ Such matches reinforced local solidarity and group loyalty, not only among the teams of gentlemen that entered, but also among

¹⁸² Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 183; E. Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (London, 1955), pp. 88, 209.

¹⁸³ Cited in Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 177.

¹⁸⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 23/02/1712.

¹⁸⁵ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 3, p. 217.

¹⁸⁶ NRO, ZBL, 195, Aletheia Blackett to John Blackett Esq. at Warwick, 12 [July], no year; NRO, ZAL, 39/7, K. Roberts to Mrs Widdrington at Newcastle, undated.

¹⁸⁷ Scott, *The History of Cockfighting*, pp. 66-67.

the spectators from the communities that they represented. Conversely, the matches allowed the ritualistic expression of rivalries between different towns and counties. In 1712, the *Spectator* noted wryly that cock-fighting and football encouraged the maintenance of community pride and aggression towards outsiders, allowing settlements to 'reassume their national Hatred to each other. My Tenant in the Country is verily perswaded, that the Parish of the Enemy hath not one honest Man in it.'¹⁸⁸

Like the race course, the cockpit was an arena where honour was tested, gained and lost. Many aspects of cock-fighting depended on honour, including the conduct of the fights themselves. Disputes about fights often arose from disagreements over which cock had won a match. A cock-fight at Bishop Auckland races in the mid 1740s between teams of gentlemen from Northallerton and Bishop Auckland was finally settled by a lawsuit. The Northallerton team had lost, but then refused to accept the result, claiming that the Auckland team had broken the rules.¹⁸⁹ Another likely cause of disagreement was the heavy gambling that took place in the pit, and bad debtors were dealt with by exposure to public humiliation. The rules for cock-fighting printed in the *Racing Calendar* of 1743 stipulated that non-payment of gambling debts should be punished by the offender being hoisted in a basket to the roof of the pit.¹⁹⁰ Unlikely as it may seem, this punishment was carried out in at least some parts of the country, because such a basketing was recorded in the 1760s.¹⁹¹

The cock-fights occasioned 'deep play', and more prize money was often at stake in the cock-fights of race week than on the race course itself. At Bishop Auckland races

¹⁸⁸ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 83-85.

¹⁸⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 04/04/1747. See above, pp. 159-162.

¹⁹⁰ Cheny, *An Historical List of all horse-matches run* (London, 1743), p. 73.

¹⁹¹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 50.

in May 1725 cock-fights were held between the gentlemen of Northumberland and of County Durham. Each morning before the races they fought their cocks for high stakes: ten guineas per fight, and 100 guineas for the overall winners. The total value of the prizes available at the horse-races themselves in that year was only forty-nine guineas.¹⁹² The money collected for the cock-fighting prizes often seems to have been raised to match the level of the prize money available on the course itself. The Newcastle races in June 1723 offered prizes with a total value of just over £100. The cock-fights held during the racing between the gentlemen of the bishopric of Durham, and those of the county of Northumberland were fought for four guineas per battle and eighty guineas for the overall winner. Thirty-one pairs of cocks were pitted against each other, so a total of 124 guineas were paid out to the winners of the individual cock-fights, and a further eighty guineas was awarded to the winning team. The total pay-out, at over 200 guineas, far exceeded the prize money available to be won on the race-track. However, it must be remembered that large wagers were also made on the outcome of the horse-races, so the total amount of money staked on the race-track cannot be calculated.¹⁹³

VIII

Having explored the character of sociability at cock-fights and horse-races in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, it is now important to trace the history of attempts to regulate these popular sports, and how such regulation gathered pace from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. It seems that both ordinary people and the better off continued to share many of the same recreational activities in the pre 1740 period.

¹⁹² *Newcastle Courant*, 20/03/1725.

¹⁹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723. See above, pp. 158-159.

Not only did racing and cock-fighting attract a socially mixed crowd, but both the gentry and the rest of the populace enjoyed watching bull and bear baitings. The contemporary literary stereotype of the uncultured country squire arose precisely because many gentlemen continued to be involved in local sport and community traditions.¹⁹⁴ However, sports and other traditional recreations had faced periodic criticism since at least the medieval period.¹⁹⁵ There were two particularly intense periods of criticism, beginning with the Puritan attack on recreational culture from the Tudor period to the mid-seventeenth century. Although the holding of church ales had declined by the late seventeenth century and some saints' days were lost after the Reformation, many recreational practices proved remarkably resilient. The majority of contemporaries never accepted the Puritan criticisms of popular recreations, and many customs survived. The most important holidays of the medieval calendar continued to be celebrated in the eighteenth century at Christmas, Shrovetide, Easter, May Day and Whit.¹⁹⁶ In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century there was a renewal of moral concern, resulting in the formation of societies for the reformation of manners. This movement was influential in London, but seems to have had a fairly limited impact in the provinces, particularly in rural areas.¹⁹⁷

However, from the mid-eighteenth century, the attack on popular recreational culture intensified. Football matches, boxing matches, parish feasts and fairs were increasingly condemned as disorderly and immoral, and magistrates made attempts to suppress them. Blood sports were increasingly seen as cruel and outmoded, and cock throwing and bull baiting were successively attacked. In the course of the eighteenth

¹⁹⁴ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 67-71. See above, pp. 157, 169.

¹⁹⁵ P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), p. 217.

¹⁹⁶ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 5-14.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

century cock-fighting was increasingly criticised as a cruel sport, and the traditional grammar school fights began to die out.¹⁹⁸ Borsay suggests that cock-fighting was beginning to lose its fashionable support by the mid-eighteenth century. However, the sport continued to accompany the most prestigious racing events in Northumberland and County Durham, and the popularity of cock-fighting seems to have remained strong to the mid-eighteenth century, in the north east at least.¹⁹⁹ The sport lost favour among the elite of the region in the course of the later eighteenth century, but the frequency of newspaper advertisements for cock-fights in the 1740s suggests that we should not back-project the decline of the sport into the earlier eighteenth century.²⁰⁰

The regulation of horse-racing also increased from the mid eighteenth century, when the expansion of the sport was brought to an abrupt halt by legislation to 'restrain and prevent the excessive Increase of Horse Races'. The preamble to this 1740 act explained that action was necessary because the increase in smaller race-meetings had impoverished the 'meaner sort' as well as wasting their time. The act stipulated that no race or match could be run for a prize worth less than fifty pounds.²⁰¹ The 1740 legislation was guaranteed to have a dramatic effect on English racing, because in 1739 nearly 90 per cent of race prizes advertised in the *Racing Calendar* did not reach the stipulated value of fifty pounds.²⁰² By the late 1740s the total prize money won annually at English race-meetings stood at two thirds of pre-1740 levels. Two thirds of courses operating in the 1730s had ceased to hold races altogether. More research is required into what happened to racing in rural locations and at smaller market towns in the later

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 118-157; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 160.

¹⁹⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 178; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/04/1748. See above, pp. 164-176.

²⁰⁰ E. Hughes, *North Country Life In The Eighteenth Century: The North-East, 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), p. 382. See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 05/11/1748.

²⁰¹ *The Journals of the House of Commons* (London, n. d.), vol. 23, pp. 449, 452-453, 460, 462, 469-470, 474-475, 481, 488-489, 490; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 183-184, 303-305; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 10 (1740), 257; Pickering (ed.), *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 17, pp. 392-396.

²⁰² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 184.

eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and in the absence of research into horse-racing in this period it is impossible to ascertain the lasting national impact of the 1740 legislation. There was some degree of recovery after 1750, but only 65 per cent of the courses advertised in the *Racing Calendar* in 1739 were holding races by 1770. The majority of the smaller courses that had never made it into the pages of the *Racing Calendar* did not have the resources to raise the necessary funds to resume racing.²⁰³

An analysis of prize money awarded by different courses during the 1730s confirms that smaller meetings in the north east could not hope to meet the demands of the 1740 statute. Newspaper advertisements provide full details of prize values in some years of the 1730s for a total of forty-five race courses. Only four of these race-meetings had a total prize value of over fifty pounds in every recorded year of running in that decade. This suggests that approximately 90 per cent of race courses were awarding prizes below those demanded by the act. Eleven courses sometimes raised enough to qualify, awarding sums during the 1730s that were both under and over the fifty pound mark.²⁰⁴ The majority of race-meetings, 68 per cent of these courses, were never able to raise such large amounts of money at any point during the 1730s. Nineteen of these courses never made it over ten pounds, and a total of twenty-six courses never awarded prize money of more than twenty-five pounds. Rural horse-races were bound to be hit hardest by the legislation; the majority of the nineteen horse-races that were offering prizes of less than ten pounds in the 1730s were in rural locations.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Ibid., pp. 184-185.

²⁰⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/04/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/07/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/08/1734.

²⁰⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/01/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/09/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/02/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/02/1736.

After 1740 race-meetings survived by raising the money to meet the requirements of the legislation, or by attempting to evade the terms of the act. In 1747 the organisers of Chester le Street races came up with the creative solution of offering two plates of fifty pounds and one of 'a considerable Value'. The winner of one of the fifty-pound prizes was obliged to return twenty-five pounds to the race organisers to fund the provision of prizes for the following year.²⁰⁶ A letter printed by the *Racing Calendar* of 1751 suggests that this stratagem of evading the act by paying out only part of the advertised prize money may have been widespread. Dr. Bracken wrote to complain that although he had won the £50 plate at Yarm with his horse Nancy 'the founders would pay but 20gs., by making use of pretended evasions, which has been practised at sundry places this year'.²⁰⁷

Borsay uses the stated prize values in the *Racing Calendar* to argue that evasion of the 1740 act was minimal. However, Dr. Bracken's letter suggests we should not assume that the advertised prize values can be used as a guide to the sums paid out to winners.²⁰⁸ The newspaper advertisements probably do not reveal the true extent of post 1740 racing in Northumberland and County Durham, because where races were run without the required prize money organisers probably decided that it was safer not to advertise them. This impression is reinforced by complaints from the Northumberland Grand Jury in 1744 about popular attendance at 'illegal race meetings' in the county. Nationally, grand juries are known to have made various presentments of illegal race-meetings that were offering prizes below the values set by the act.²⁰⁹ However, even if we assume that some races were held illegally in the two counties after 1740, the impact

²⁰⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 09/05/1747.

²⁰⁷ Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, vol. 2, p. 276.

²⁰⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 184.

²⁰⁹ Gill, *Racecourses*, p. 107; Rice, *History of The British Turf*, vol. 1, p. 16; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 233.

of the legislation must have ended racing at the majority of the smaller rural race courses.

Between 1741 and 1749 racing was advertised in a total of only nine locations in Northumberland and County Durham. Of the fifty race courses in the two counties either advertised in the local newspapers or appearing in the *Racing Calendar* in the 1730s, only 18 per cent were running by 1749. This suggests that the north east lost approximately 82 per cent of the race-meetings which were operating in the two counties before the act was passed. Using the *Racing Calendar* Borsay calculates that the number of race-courses nationally dropped by approximately two thirds between 1739 and 1749.²¹⁰ Including the smaller courses by surveying local newspaper advertisements would probably show that the loss of courses across the country was nearer to the 82 per cent loss that was suffered in the north east. Surprisingly, the legislation initially affected racing at several of the courses in the region that had been able to reach the required level of prize money in at least some years in the 1730s. At seven of these locations, including Barnard Castle, Berwick and Sedgefield, racing does not seem to have resumed during the 1740s. Over the next two decades many of these places probably raised enough money to resume racing within the terms of the 1740 legislation. Racing resumed at Alnwick and Staindrop in 1750, for example.²¹¹

Only the larger race-meetings survived the 1740 legislation. Newcastle, Durham, Morpeth and Stockton races continued annually throughout the 1740s, apart from 1749, when racing was banned in both counties because of an outbreak of cattle

²¹⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 184-185.

²¹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/08/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/06/1737; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/12/1733; Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, pp. 430-431; *Newcastle Journal*, 13/10/1750.

disease.²¹² At two other centres, Hexham and Bishop Auckland, races initially ceased before resuming in 1743 and 1745 respectively. Racing also re-emerged in the later years of the 1740s at Chester le Street and Sunderland.²¹³ In most of these towns where racing survived the number of races had to be reduced, in order to provide the stipulated legal minimum of £50 for the winner of each race. The 1738 Newcastle Races featured five races over five days, and the largest prize awarded was 40 guineas. By contrast, in 1740 there were only three days of racing, with one race per day, though this increased to four days after 1744.²¹⁴

The groups that had financed the sport before the act continued to fund racing in the 1740s. Innkeepers donated money to prizes at the majority of the courses, and gentlemen's subscription plates were listed at various meetings, including Newcastle and Morpeth. The Corporations of Morpeth and Newcastle supported the racing, as did the freemen of Newcastle. Individuals continued to donate prizes for the racing, including the £50 plate donated by John Hedworth and George Bowes to Durham races in 1740.²¹⁵ Most race courses raised the entry fees in order to gather the increased revenue that they needed to pay for prizes. In Hexham, entry fees had been charged on a sliding scale in 1739, with lower fees for the less valuable prizes. The prices to enter the three races were a guinea, one and a half guineas, and two guineas. In 1744, after the races had resumed, subscribers were charged four guineas to enter each race, and non-subscribers five guineas.²¹⁶ There is some evidence that courses also attempted to boost

²¹² *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/05/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/08/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/07/1748; *Newcastle Gazette*, 19/07/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/03/1749.

²¹³ *Newcastle Journal*, 04/06/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/01/1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/04/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/09/1748.

²¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 08/04/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/03/1744; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 231.

²¹⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 16/04/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/07/1742; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/06/1740. See above, pp. 141-151.

²¹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/03/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/06/1744.

takings by raising entrance money from better-off spectators. After 1744 Newcastle charged spectators a shilling per day to watch the races from a 'safe' scaffold. The same sum was charged to watch from the scaffold at the Chester le Street races from 1748.²¹⁷

The 1740 statute reduced participation in the larger race-meetings, because the traders and artisans of the towns no longer raced their horses or participated in sports alongside the races. The requirement for each race prize to be over £50 ended the practice of providing smaller freemen's prizes with low entry fees, and there are no references to such races after the legislation came into force.²¹⁸ At the same time that race organisers ceased to provide races for ordinary townspeople to ride in, they also stopped organising the sports that they had competed in. After 1740 no race-meeting in County Durham or Northumberland advertised foot races or other competitions alongside the races, and ordinary people still attended the races, but were now restricted to the role of spectator.²¹⁹ Despite the financial crisis, there were no attempts to introduce fees for attendance, which would have been difficult, because courses were not enclosed. Apart from concerns about practicality, organisers were probably also deterred by a fear of losing large numbers of spectators, in a period when attracting a crowd was a high priority. Innkeepers and communities would only support the races if they continued to generate revenue in the shape of consumer demand for alcohol and other products and services.²²⁰

²¹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/05/44; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/04/1748.

²¹⁸ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 24/03/1744. See above, pp. 152-154.

²¹⁹ Such sporting events did continue to be held alongside horse races in other counties in the north. For the sports held with the races at Croft in Yorkshire in 1749, for example, see *Newcastle Courant*, 16/09/1749.

²²⁰ See above, pp. 143-147.

We might expect that the 1740 horse-racing legislation and the concomitant steep drop in the number of meetings in the region would have an adverse impact on cock-fighting. Many cock-fights were held at the races, and the legislation stopped racing in several towns as well as in most rural locations. However, slightly more cock-fights were advertised per year in the *Newcastle Courant* in the 1740s than in the previous decade. Between 1730 and 1739 an average of around eleven cock-fights per year were advertised in the *Newcastle Courant*. By the years 1741 and 1747 this had increased to an annual average of approximately sixteen events. The slight increase in advertisements during the 1740s may suggest that there was a greater demand for organised cock-fighting because of the sudden demise of horse-racing in many settlements.²²¹

Some communities sought to compensate for their loss of racing by continuing to hold the annual cock-fighting or foot races that had once accompanied the races. This allowed locals to continue to watch and participate in annual festivities that were important to them, at a time when they had lost most of their opportunities to compete in local horse-races. The cock-fights and foot races also provided some opportunity for communities and innkeepers to recoup some of the revenue once brought in by the races. Horse-races were not held at Winlaton during the 1740s, but in 1746 foot races and cock-fights were held at the customary race time. A cock-fight was held in the morning of August 14th at Joseph Errington's pit, and three foot races were run in the afternoon, on the ground where the horse-races had once been held. Two men's races

²²¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/10/1724; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/09/1748. See above, p. 165.

were held for prizes of three guineas and one guinea, and women raced against one-another for a smock worth eight shillings.²²²

IX

In conclusion, this chapter has proposed a chronology of the development of commercial sport that differs significantly from the model suggested by Borsay. While he acknowledges the difficulties created by the lack of sources for the earlier period, he hypothesises that most race courses were in urban locations, and suggests that this shows that racing grew in pace with urban development. As we have already seen, there is much evidence to suggest that Borsay's chronology of urban development over-emphasises the degree of change after the Restoration.²²³ The development of a network of over forty race courses before the Restoration, most of which were located in towns, presupposes a dynamic urban scene in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Furthermore, reports of large crowds at the races in the mid-seventeenth century suggest that travelling into towns to watch sports was popular well before the Restoration.²²⁴ Borsay's chronology of urban regeneration is rather questionable in its own terms and, as this chapter shows, many race-meetings were held in rural locations and are therefore unlikely to have developed as a result of an 'urban renaissance'. Although the most prestigious race courses were located in towns, the growth of organised sport in the eighteenth century was both a rural and urban phenomenon. Many villages had alehouses where cock-fights could be arranged, and whose innkeepers wished to increase their incomes by organising horse-races. Rural areas were important markets.

²²² *Newcastle Courant*, 26/07/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/07/1739. See above, pp. 143-147, 153-154, 165.

²²³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 173-196 and passim. See above, pp. 6-10.

²²⁴ Longrigg, *The History of Horse Racing*, p. 45. See above, pp. 131-137.

which neither travelling chapmen nor innkeepers and tradesmen were foolish enough to overlook.²²⁵

Horse-races and cock-fights were important arenas of association throughout the early modern period, and the provision of commercialised horse-racing increased from the sixteenth century onwards. Horse-racing had a long history, but organised racing was stimulated initially by Tudor horse breeding programmes, and then again after the Restoration by the growth in expenditure on leisure and the exposure offered in provincial newspapers. Cock-fighting was also a long-established sport, and commercialised cock-fighting probably increased in tandem with the growth of horse-racing. Horse-racing and cock-fighting both had enduring popularity because they were activities that people valued. Spectators enjoyed the excitement of watching horses races, or seeing two cocks fight to the death, often heightened by financial speculation on the outcome. The opportunities for flirtation, and convivial eating and drinking added to the pleasure of the track. Individuals staked their prestige by competing in races or cock-fights, which provided the opportunity for both excitement and financial gain.²²⁶ Ordinary people had substantial opportunities for involvement in horse-racing and cock-fighting, and neither sport was dominated by gentry funding, despite Borsay's characterisation of horse-racing as 'high-status leisure'.²²⁷

From the mid eighteenth century, however, popular leisure began to come under increasing attack, and the inclusive character of both horse-racing and cock-fighting was threatened. Regulation of sports increased greatly after 1750, and throwing cocks had

²²⁵ Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 52-54, 69-72; M. Spufford, *The Great Reclothing Of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1984), pp. 1-22.

²²⁶ See above, pp. 129-187.

²²⁷ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 196.

been outlawed as a cruel sport by the end of the eighteenth century. while bull-baiting was probably also in decline. In the later eighteenth century there were growing attempts to prohibit football games, and boxing matches, and pleasure fairs also came under increasing criticism for encouraging disorder and immorality.²²⁸ Opportunities for ordinary people to enter horse-races were curtailed by the legislation of 1740, though they could continue to attend larger events as spectators. The ability to watch and participate in cock-fighting also started to diminish from the later eighteenth century, as cock-fighting provoked increasing criticism, and the recreational world of ordinary people began to diverge more markedly from the leisure patterns of the elite.²²⁹

²²⁸ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 118-157. See above, pp. 176-185.

²²⁹ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 122, 135, 165; Thomas, *Man And The Natural World*, pp. 159-160, 185-186; Hughes, *North Country Life*, p. 382.

Chapter Five: Commercial leisure and the arts: drama, music and dance

I

The previous chapter of this thesis established the nature of sociability at commercial sporting events during this period, and this chapter complements the last by exploring three other important kinds of public sociability, all of which fall broadly within the arts. The development, organisation, audience and appeal of theatre, music and dance are explored, and the locations of these activities in the region are charted. This chapter is primarily concerned with public leisure activities, and gatherings which are essentially private, such as the balls held in noble households, are not discussed. Activities such as civic ceremony and some popular festivals that include elements of music, theatre or dance have also been excluded from this chapter. The history of provincial drama, music and dance remains under-researched, despite a variety of potential sources on which researchers could draw. The main sources for the analysis presented in this chapter are the local newspapers, private letters and papers, and the guild records, as well as the records of the Newcastle Corporation.¹

While much attention has been devoted to the development of the metropolitan playhouses from the late sixteenth century, provincial theatre has attracted only limited historical attention, and has tended to be stereotyped as second rate and backward. Historians, including Plumb and Borsay, over-emphasise the unique character of

¹ *The North Country Journal or Impartial Intelligencer*, 1734-1738; *Newcastle Gazette*, 1744-1750; *Newcastle Journal*, 1739-1750; *Newcastle Courant* 1711-1750; NRO, ZAL; NRO, IDE, 2DE; NRO, ZCK; NRO, 855; NRO, 650; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), passim; F. W. Dendy, *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, Vol. I (Surtees Society, 93, 1895), passim; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2; J. J. Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne* (Toronto, Manchester, 1982), passim. See above, pp. 129-187.

eighteenth-century drama, caricaturing earlier theatre as entertainment in squalid inns and barns to 'astound the yokels with melodrama or acrobats'.² However, recent work by Suzanne Westfall and Paul White amply demonstrates the importance of the Tudor provincial theatre, and other research has revealed a flourishing culture of provincial drama in the post-Restoration period.³ Unfortunately, no coherent historical account exists of the provincial theatre across the early modern period, and the history of theatre in the north east has not attracted systematic research.⁴

In the Tudor period professional drama in the north east, as in the rest of England, was provided by troupes from noble households. Many noblemen patronised troupes of players, in order to display their political, economic and literary importance.⁵ Noble patrons provided companies with a name, residence, and the necessary costumes and props for performing. Such patronage also protected actors from punishment under the various vagrancy statutes, and made them more acceptable in the towns and households where they wanted to perform.⁶ The majority of these companies of actors spent most of their time on tour, returning to perform for their patron only occasionally.⁷ It is difficult to trace the routes of sixteenth-century companies, because not all towns have extant municipal records, and even where records survive dramatic activity is likely to be under-recorded. Such records only list plays performed by troupes that received payment from the town coffers. We know that some companies

² P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 118-121; J. H. Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure' in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (first edition 1982, reprinted London, 1983), pp. 265-285, 277.

³ S. R. Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford, 1990), passim; P. W. White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1993); S. Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765* (Cambridge, 1939), passim.

⁴ The north east lacks a study to match Hare's case-study on the south west. See A. Hare, *The Georgian Theatre in Wessex* (London, 1958), passim.

⁵ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p. 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 135-136.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

performed in villages as well as in towns and in noble households, but most of these performances probably went unrecorded.⁸

The records of the Newcastle Corporation provide a good measure of the level of dramatic provision in the area during the period. They show that there was extensive dramatic activity in Newcastle in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Newcastle played host to annual Corpus Christi plays until the later sixteenth century, but was also visited by many professional companies of actors.⁹ In the 1590s, for example, at least twelve professional touring companies performed in Newcastle, including the Earl of Worcester's Players and Lord Darcy's players. In all but two years of the decade at least one dramatic performance was recorded, and in some years several companies visited the town.¹⁰ Touring actors needed to obtain permission from the town authorities in order to perform in a particular town, and the first performance was usually held before the officers of the municipality in the guildhall.¹¹

In Newcastle, these performances were usually acted in the merchant's court, or sometimes in the mayor's house.¹² Using the Kent records, Westfall shows that actors supplemented the money they received from the town authorities by charging an admission fee for performance to the general public. Troupes performed in a variety of locations, including public buildings, inns, private houses or churches.¹³ The audience for professional theatre in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century may well have been fairly heterogeneous, because there are indications that the mayor's command

⁸ Ibid., p. 141; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 134.

⁹ Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, pp. xi-xv, xvii.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 73, 86.

¹¹ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p. 145; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 23.

¹² Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. xvii.

¹³ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 145, 149; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, pp. 130-131.

performance was often free to the audience. In *Mount Tabor*, published in 1639, Willis described 'the mayor's play, where every one that will comes in without money, the mayor giving the players a reward as he thinks fit'.¹⁴

It has been suggested that provincial drama declined from the later sixteenth century, because fewer payments to theatre companies appear in town records. It is certainly clear that although the early Protestants used religious drama as a preaching tool, the mystery play cycles had disappeared almost everywhere by 1600. Town authorities also seem to have become more resistant to secular drama performed by professional companies, and were increasingly unwilling to pay for performances or to allow them to be held in public buildings.¹⁵ It is difficult to discern whether this declining official enthusiasm for plays resulted from financial concerns, in a period when corporation finances were often eroded by inflation, or from religious motives. However, fewer payments to theatre companies by town authorities do not necessarily indicate that theatre was in decline in the provinces, and it seems clear that drama continued to be performed in provincial areas in this period. Companies could make their living by performing for wealthy households and charging audiences for performances in inns and other places, despite a drop in payments from town coffers. In Shrewsbury, for example, the Whitsun plays were staged for the last time in 1569, but the loss of this cycle was compensated for by regular visits from travelling professional companies, including a play performed by the Earl of Essex's troupe in the town's high

¹⁴ For citation of *Mount Tabor*, see M. H. Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', *Archeologia Aelianna*, 3rd ser., 2 (1914), 49.

¹⁵ G. Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1600* (London, 1959-81), vol. 2, part 1, pp. 141-148; P. Collinson, 'The Shearmen's Tree and the Preacher: the Strange Death of Merry England in Shrewsbury and Beyond' in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (London, 1998), pp. 216-217; White, *Theatre and Reformation*, passim.

street in 1584.¹⁶ The north east appears to have continued to sustain a culture of provincial drama in the early seventeenth century, and entries for payments to professional companies were recorded in the Newcastle Corporation books in all the first three decades of the seventeenth century. However, the fragmentary nature of the Newcastle Corporation accounts of the first half of the century rules out any systematic analysis of the number of visiting players who received official approval.¹⁷

The household books of the Naworth estate in Brampton, Northumberland provide a rough indication of the prevalence of drama in the area in this period. As Dodds argues, it is unlikely that troupes coming as far north as Brampton would have failed to appear in Newcastle en route. Players visited Brampton in six of the eight years between 1618 and 1625, and again in 1629 and 1633.¹⁸ Seventeenth-century dramatic culture in Newcastle was sufficiently fertile to produce a local dramatist who adapted an earlier drama, *Edmund Ironside*, for local production. The resulting play, *The Love-sick King*, included vigorous praise of Newcastle, as well as a new subplot involving eminent citizen Roger Thornton. Thornton was a Dick Whittington style figure, reputed to have worked as a peddler before becoming a successful merchant and serving several terms as mayor of Newcastle from 1400 onwards. The play was printed in 1655, though it seems to have been written earlier in the century, and may have been performed before James I when he visited Newcastle in 1617.¹⁹

¹⁶ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 340-344; P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), p. 40; Collinson, 'The Shearmen's Tree and the Preacher', pp. 218-219. See above, p. 4.

¹⁷ Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, pp. 133-156; Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 50.

¹⁸ Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 50-52.

¹⁹ M. H. Dodds, 'Northern Minstrels and Folk Drama', *Archeologia Aelianna*, 4th ser., 1 (1925), 145-146; Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 50-51; M. H. Dodds, 'Edmund Ironside' and 'The Love-Sick King', *The Modern Language Review*, 19 (1924), 158-168.

Theatre survived in the capital during the interregnum, despite official disapproval and intervention, albeit in a diminished state.²⁰ There are indications that provincial drama also proved surprisingly resilient in the face of cyclical repression. In the 1650s, Newcastle magistrate Ambrose Barnes made strenuous attempts to suppress plays, which were obviously still being performed in the town.²¹ In December 1656 seven local actors performed a comedy in Newcastle, but were reported to the magistrates, who had them whipped in the marketplace.²²

There is only limited evidence relating to drama in Newcastle from the Restoration to the first decade of the eighteenth century.²³ Theatre companies certainly returned to Newcastle after 1660, because a letter-writer from the town complained of the reappearance of 'May-poles and Playes, and Juglers'. Plays were obviously being performed regularly in the town by 1697, when the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers were forced to prevent their thrill-seeking apprentices from loitering at Newcastle's 'play houses'.²⁴ It seems likely that Newcastle was receiving regular visits from companies throughout the later seventeenth century in much the same way as Norwich, another (albeit larger) provincial capital. Drama flourished in Norwich between 1669 and 1709, with four companies visiting in the first five years of the 1660s alone.²⁵ Players were certainly visiting Newcastle with regularity by the second decade of the eighteenth century, because the rules for letting the Moot Hall for theatrical performances are set out in a Northumberland Quarter Sessions order of 1711. Furthermore, Pierson's

²⁰ L. Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (New York, 1962), pp. 1-167.

²¹ Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 53; W. H. D. Longstaffe (ed.), *The Memoirs of Ambrose Barnes* (Surtees Society, 50, 1867), p. 100.

²² J. H. Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', *Archeologia Aeliana*, new ser., 4 (1860), 234-5.

²³ Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 53.

²⁴ R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), p. 234, n. 1; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, Vol. I, p. 25.

²⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 8; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 35.

Company is known to have visited Newcastle and performed in the Moot Hall in 1716.²⁶ As with horse-racing, the appearance of theatrical advertisements in the newspapers reflects the spread of printed modes, rather than mirroring the chronological development of theatre in the north east. It seems likely that performances in the provinces increased in the early eighteenth century, so that there was a nation-wide network of companies by the mid-century, and most large towns could boast a theatre season. Even the relatively small towns were likely to receive an annual visit from a touring company.²⁷ The number of provincial touring companies that based themselves in a particular urban centre also increased.²⁸

Companies usually advertised their arrival in a new place by beating a drum to attract a crowd, and then distributed playbills with details of their forthcoming performance. Many companies visiting the north east must have relied solely on this method of advertisement rather than paying to advertise in the newspapers.²⁹ Even where companies advertised in the newspaper in some years, they did not necessarily do so in others. An advertisement in the *Newcastle Journal* in 1739, which is probably for Mr Bardin's Company, refers to previous visits by the company in the winters of 1738 and 1737. No advertisement seems to have appeared for these seasons in either 1737 or 1738, though the 1738 season was reported in the local news section of the *Newcastle Courant*.³⁰ The first extant newspaper advertisement for a play in Newcastle only appeared in 1721, five years after the first known performance in the town in the

²⁶ Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 53; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 235.

²⁷ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 118-119. See above, pp. 133, 137.

²⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 120.

²⁹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 21. For the use of handbills by a theatre company in the north east, see *Newcastle Courant*, 30/01/1742.

³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/11/1738; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739.

eighteenth century.³¹ A theatrical performance was reported or advertised somewhere in the north east in only half the years between 1721 and 1730, but in nine out of the ten years between 1741 and 1750. It seems unlikely that the provision of drama doubled within thirty years, though there was probably some increase in dramatic activity in the early eighteenth century.³²

The provincial theatre faced a potential threat to its existence in 1737, when the government introduced punitive legislation to regulate performance. This legislation was primarily a response to the growing tide of political satire in the theatre, though perhaps also an attempt to reduce popular theatre-going. The Licensing Act not only established a draconian system of censorship, but also denied all provincial companies the right to act.³³ Despite the theoretical severity of the act, it seems to have had remarkably little effect on provincial drama. This was primarily due to the widespread popularity of theatre attendance: local magistrates were responsible for enforcement of the act, and most of them did not want to interfere with a recreational activity which was important to them and to their friends and families. As Aston observed in arguing against similar legislation earlier in the 1730s, 'it would be a great Loss to the Country Gentry to be depriv'd of seeing Plays elsewhere than at the two Patent Playhouses'.³⁴

There were some prosecutions under the act, but it seems to have had a rather limited effect on the provincial theatre. Managers reacted to the Licensing Act by

³¹ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 235; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721.

³² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 118-119.

³³ D. Pickering (ed.), *The Statutes at Large* (24 vols., London, 1762-69), vol. 17, pp. 140-143; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 119, 303-304; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 5-9; P. Hartnoll, 'The Theatre and the Licensing Act of 1737' in A. Natan (ed.), *Silver Renaissance: Essays in Eighteenth Century History* (London, 1961), pp. 165-186; J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 128-53; T. W. Craik (ed.), *The Revels History of English Drama, Vol. 5: 1660-1750* (London, 1976), pp. 26-32.

³⁴ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 119; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 6-8.

practising subterfuges, in an attempt to exempt their performances from the act. It became common practice in the north east, as in the rest of the country, for dramatic performances to be advertised as concerts, with a play performed free between the two halves. Advertisements also announced that the actors appeared 'for their own diversion', rather than financial gain.³⁵ However, the extent to which the legislation altered the practice of performance in the provinces remains uncertain. Theatre productions had included dances and songs throughout the period. When the York Company performed in Newcastle in 1721, for example, a comedy was accompanied by 'several new Entertainments of singing and dancing'.³⁶ Furthermore, music, performers, and instruments of the 'concert' are very rarely listed in advertisements for drama after 1737, though they do appear in some advertisements for genuine concerts. This suggests that the 1737 Act did not cause theatrical performances to become dominated by music.³⁷ The legislation also seems to have had little measurable impact on the frequency of performance in the north east. Although some companies may have been deterred from performing, theatrical companies continued to perform in the north east in every year from 1737 to 1745.³⁸

The frequency of theatre performances in the north east must reflect a strong demand for drama in the region, as elsewhere in the provinces.³⁹ In 1735 Aston commented on the popularity of drama not only among the gentry, but also among all those attending markets, fairs, races and cock-fights.⁴⁰ It is difficult to assess the

³⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 119; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 7-9, 138.

³⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721.

³⁷ For an advertisement for a concert which describes performer, music and instruments, see *Newcastle Courant*, 08/08/1741. For an advertisement for a theatre performance described as a 'concert' which does not describe music, instruments or performers see *Newcastle Journal*, 17/07/1742.

³⁸ See for example, *Newcastle Journal*, 09/06/1744; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 119.

³⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 119.

⁴⁰ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 6.

popularity of individual performances, but the local newspapers often reported large and appreciative audiences for productions in the north east.⁴¹ A prologue spoken at a performance in Newcastle in November 1738 reflected the common contemporary view that theatre could educate society. 'We are a little Common-Wealth, design'd/ At once, t'amuse, to please, t'improve the Mind'.⁴² The writer included a sly dig at the minority of supporters of the 1737 legislation who wrongly 'think Performance of a Play - a Crime'. The prologue also emphasised that the theatre of the north east was thought to be very popular with women, and calls on the ladies to protect the actors from criticism.⁴³

II

The first part of this chapter has established the chronology of secular dramatic performance in the north east. The following section deals with the organisation of theatre in the region in this period, covering its seasonality, locations of performance and repertoire. The types of company that toured the region are discussed, and how performances were funded is outlined. Provincial theatre had both a summer and a winter season, though plays were not necessarily performed in both seasons in the same year. The winter season ran from October until mid-March, and coincided with the provision of concerts and assemblies. The provincial theatre also provided entertainment for towns during the summer season, from spring to autumn, when towns attracted large crowds for races and to assize weeks. It has previously been suggested, relying on data from York, Norwich and Salisbury, that there was more drama in the

⁴¹ See for example, *Newcastle Journal*, 29/12/1739.

⁴² *Newcastle Courant*, 02/12/1738; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 259-260.

⁴³ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/12/1738.

provinces during the winter months than in the summer.⁴⁴ However, an analysis of the seasonality of Newcastle drama reveals a rather different pattern. We can establish the dates of performances in Newcastle for twenty-three of the years between 1716 and 1750. There were summer performances in twenty of these years, and winter performances in eleven of these years. In eight years Newcastle hosted performances in both the winter and the summer. Summer performances in the north east were usually timed to coincide with the races, and often also the assize week.⁴⁵ There was often drama in both seasons in Newcastle, but more drama was provided in the summer season. The Newcastle data suggests that winter was not necessarily the most important theatrical season in all towns.

Until the fourth decade of the eighteenth century the venues for drama in the north east differed little from those used in the sixteenth century. Plays were performed on stages that were temporarily erected in public buildings or in inns. Between 1716 and the mid 1740s, most performances in Newcastle seem to have taken place in the Moot Hall, the court building of the county of Northumberland.⁴⁶ Other performances in the town took place in inns, including the 'Great Room' at the Old George inn, which was also used as the meeting room of the Scots Society, and in the Turk's Head tavern.⁴⁷ In the late 1720s and early 1730s productions also took place in a booth that stood in a timber-yard.⁴⁸ The locations of performance in settlements in the north east other than Newcastle are less well documented, though research has shown that plays were usually performed in inns, public buildings and even in agricultural buildings throughout the

⁴⁴ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 139-144.

⁴⁵ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 237.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/06/1747.

⁴⁸ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 15/06/1728.

provinces in this period.⁴⁹ The first permanent provincial theatres were built in the early eighteenth century, but most purpose-built provincial playhouses were constructed after the mid 1740s. In 1748 a theatre was built on the walls of the St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Newcastle, which was entered through the yard of the Turk's Head, where all the recorded performances of the late 1740s were held. In 1733, a play was performed in Sunderland's 'New Theatre', and a decade later, a play took place in Durham at the 'Old Play House', though it is unclear whether these venues were purpose built or existing buildings that had been adapted for use as theatres.⁵⁰

The repertoire of the provincial theatre reflected the sophisticated demands of its audience. The plays performed in the north east, as in the rest of the provinces, fitted the broad trends observable in metropolitan theatre. The most popular plays were comedies, such as George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, performed at Newcastle's Moot Hall in 1743. Of the one hundred identifiable plays performed in the north east between 1716 and 1750, only approximately one fifth were tragedies. Where tragedies were performed they were often versions of Shakespeare plays, or pathetic tragedies by dramatists including Rowe, Otway and Banks. From the 1720s, opera and pantomime swept the provincial stage, as they did the metropolitan theatre, with opera appearing in the north east from 1721 and pantomime from 1735.⁵¹

Far from providing second-rate plays, theatre in the provinces was part of the mainstream of drama in the period. Audiences in the north east appear to have expected

⁴⁹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 21; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 146-147.

⁵⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 148; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 164; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/09/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/06/1743.

⁵¹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 10; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/05/1743; A. Nicoll, *A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 59-61, 322; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/07/1721; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/10/1743.

to see new plays and entertainments with some regularity. In the 1740s a 'new' performance was advertised in most years, either of an entirely new work, or of a new scene, dances or songs inserted into an old piece.⁵² Play-goers were sometimes able to see the latest plays only a matter of months after they had appeared in London. For Newcastle race week in June 1747, for example, the York Company performed Dr Hoadley's comedy *The Suspicious Husband*. The play had received its first performance only four months earlier, at the Covent Garden Theatre in London.⁵³

It should not be surprising that the drama of the provinces and metropolis were so similar, because many of the companies touring the provinces came from the capital. Sybil Rosenfeld identifies three broad categories of provincial touring company operating during the period. There were genuinely itinerant groups, which were small companies of actors scraping a living by performing in smaller centres. These companies might also sometimes travel to perform in larger towns. Other, better-established, companies were based at a large town, and travelled on an established circuit of locations to perform. Temporary metropolitan companies were also formed to tour the provinces, usually when London theatre companies closed for the summer.⁵⁴

At least eleven different companies visited the north east between 1716 and 1750. Of these eleven identifiable companies, only four can be easily categorised. Two seem to have been provincial touring companies based in large towns. One troupe was initially based in Newcastle in 1739-40 as the Newcastle Company of Comedians, then based themselves in Edinburgh, continuing to tour the north east until at least 1745 as

⁵² See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 01/07/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 05/06/1742.

⁵³ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 165; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/06/1747; *Newcastle Journal* 06/06/1747; Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 337.

⁵⁴ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 5.

the Edinburgh Company of Comedians.⁵⁵ The touring circuit of the famous York Company of Comedians also included Newcastle from at least the 1720s until beyond 1750.⁵⁶ Two companies came to Newcastle directly from the metropolis. G Hallam brought a company to the north east from the New Wells Theatre in Clerkenwell in the winters of 1740 to 1742.⁵⁷ This Hallam must have been part of the powerful Hallam theatrical dynasty, which included the William Hallam who managed the New Wells Theatre in the 1740s.⁵⁸ Another company touring the north east in the early 1740s, Robinson's, was billed as being from the Old Saddler's Wells in London.⁵⁹

A further five companies evade easy categorisation, because little is known about the composition of the company, or their geographical circuit. Nothing at all is known about a company led by a Mr. Hewitt, which performed in Newcastle in winter 1739.⁶⁰ Another of these elusive companies can be identified as the Lincolnshire-based provincial touring company, Herbert's Company of Comedians, which performed in the north east in 1728.⁶¹ Three companies were not necessarily from London, but were managed by actors with substantial experience on the metropolitan stage. One such company seems to have been led by Peter Bardin, a well-known London actor. Bardin had been acting with Giffard's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields, until the end of the 1736-37 season, when the Licensing Act caused the company to be disbanded. At this point Bardin appeared in the north east, where he seems to have led a company between 1737 and 1740, before travelling to act in Dublin from 1740. The newspaper advertisements do not list the names of his actors, who could have been recruited either

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 106-107; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/06/1723.

⁵⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 06/02/1742.

⁵⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 26/12/1741; Craik (ed.), *The Revels History of English Drama*, Vol. 5, pp. 130, 138.

⁵⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 28/05/1743.

⁶⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/09/1739.

⁶¹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 3; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1728.

from among London players or from provincial companies.⁶² Another performer who was a veteran of the London stage, Madame Violante, also toured the north east with her company in 1735. Violante is known to have performed in Dublin, Edinburgh, Bristol, and possibly also in Paris, though where she recruited her company is not clear.⁶³ Mr Orfeur led another company on tour in the north east, from at least 1732 to 1733. Orfeur had probably been acting in London theatres and fairs in the 1720s, moved to the York Company for a brief period from 1726, and then managed his own troupe.⁶⁴

The newspapers also list several further performances, where no company name was given, and actors were not listed. Performances by unidentifiable companies took place in Newcastle, Sunderland and Durham between 1730 and 1734. These could be further tours by the companies already identified, or by other established provincial or metropolitan companies. These advertisements might also relate to occasional performances by itinerant companies.⁶⁵ Such companies were least likely to be able to afford to advertise in the newspaper, and many of them must have existed in the north east without having left a trace in the records. We only know of one such performer, George Harker, because he decided to give up working as a puppeteer and advertised his show for sale in 1749. Harker claimed that he had earned fifty pounds annually by travelling with his puppet show. Potential buyers were asked to apply to an inn in

⁶² P. Highfill, K. Burnim and E. Langhans (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800* (16 vols., Carbondale, 1973-1993), vol. 1, pp. 286-288.

⁶³ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1735; Highfill, Burnim and Langhans (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London*, vol. 15, pp. 180-183.

⁶⁴ Highfill, Burnim and Langhans (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London*, vol. 11, pp. 117-118; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1733; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 237; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 218.

⁶⁵ See for example *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1733; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 5.

Barnard Castle, so we may assume that Harker was based somewhere in the vicinity of that town, and had probably come to the north east with his show.⁶⁶

There was a two-way traffic of performers, both from the provinces to the London stage, and vice versa. London performers were appearing in the provinces throughout the period, including Charles Hulett of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, who acted in Newcastle in the summer of 1728. Hulett played the part of Macheath in the York Company's production of the *Beggar's Opera*, which was performed in the booth in Mr Usher's deal yard.⁶⁷ The provincial companies also trained many actors who later made the transition to the London stage. Mrs Elizabeth Copen acted with the Bath company in the 1720s, and had moved to the York Company by 1736.⁶⁸ She can then be found performing in Newcastle in 1742, with a company that was probably based in Edinburgh. However, in 1745 Copen made the first of many performances on the London stage, appearing in *The Recruiting Officer* in Drury Lane. She had a long and successful career in London, and also went on to further performances in Dublin and the provinces.⁶⁹

The theatrical performances advertised in the local newspapers took place overwhelmingly in Newcastle. Plays are known to have been performed in Newcastle in four of the years between 1716 and 1726, and in nineteen years between 1727 and 1750. The best provision of drama outside the provincial capital seems to have been in the regional centre of Durham, where plays were performed in a mere five years between

⁶⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 06/05/1749.

⁶⁷ Highfill, Burnim and Langhans (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London*, vol. 8, pp. 29-30; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/06/1728.

⁶⁸ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 9, 121, 173.

⁶⁹ *Newcastle Journal* 05/06/1742; Highfill, Burnim and Langhans (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London*, vol. 3, pp. 483-484.

1716 and 1750. Plays were also recorded in three years in Sunderland, two years in Hexham and in one year in Shields and Darlington. The newspapers contain no advertisements or reports of plays in villages, despite the fact that other contemporary accounts show that theatre companies did perform in rural areas.⁷⁰

The notable London actor Charles Macklin spent the early part of his career as a member of a touring company in the west country. In the second decade of the eighteenth century his group of actors toured villages, often performing in barns. The records of another small touring company, performing in Wales and southern England in 1741, show that they also played in rural places.⁷¹ Many smaller itinerant companies travelling in the north east must have relied on their drum, bills, and word of mouth to attract audiences for their performances in villages and towns, rather than expending large sums on newspaper advertisements. It seems likely that over-reliance on the comprehensiveness of the newspaper advertisements would significantly underestimate the prevalence of performances in towns in the north east other than Newcastle, and in small market towns and villages.⁷²

Theatre companies often used inns, because alehouses could provide food, lodging, stabling, and frequently had large rooms that could accommodate plays. The innkeeper also stood to gain from the arrangement, by profiting from revenue from the rooms he let and the food and drink that patrons and actors consumed.⁷³ Theatrical performances, like the races, provided income for towns by attracting people into the town to spend money. At York, the perceived revenue to be gained from an established

⁷⁰ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 22.

⁷¹ Hare, *Georgian Theatre in Wessex*, pp. 30-36.

⁷² Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 21.

⁷³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 144, 218.

winter theatrical season led the city council to grant a theatre monopoly to the York Company in 1733. The Newcastle authorities do not seem to have encouraged theatre companies by taking similar actions, and this may be part of the reason why the town had not attracted a long-term resident theatre company by 1750. No other town in the north east seems to have financed drama between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century, or to have hosted a resident theatre company.⁷⁴

Companies were usually managed by actor-managers, who controlled the company finances, organised the itineraries, and recruited the actors. The manager purchased the scenery, costumes, props, and was customarily paid by taking his acting share and four extra shares out of the takings from each performance.⁷⁵ It seems improbable that these cultural entrepreneurs came from particularly elevated backgrounds, though we know little about the social origins of those who ran the Newcastle companies.⁷⁶ Theatre productions were financed primarily from the revenue generated by ticket sales, but also by money received from private performances for the local gentry. In December 1741 in Newcastle, Robinson's Company offered private performances to gentlemen and ladies at one hour's notice. Those who chose to commission a performance from the company were to be treated to a private puppet show of a play from the human theatre.⁷⁷ Although most touring companies were not travelling under the protection of noblemen after the mid-seventeenth century, they still received a form of semi-patronage from the local gentry. Actors were paid with equal shares of the profits of normal productions, and they were also each allowed separate 'benefit' nights, when a particular actor received all or some of the revenue from that

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 218-219; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 163. See above, pp. 144-145.

⁷⁵ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 11-18, 28-29.

⁷⁶ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741.

performance.⁷⁸ In order to ensure a full house, and maximum profit, the actor who was to profit from the benefit personally knocked on doors in the town, delivering the company playbills.⁷⁹

This practice was current in eighteenth-century Norwich, York and Hull, and also in Newcastle, where several advertisements for actors' benefit performances in the 1740s apologise for failing to call in person on 'benefactors' or 'friends'.⁸⁰ Tate Wilkinson, an actor with the York company, described how an actor 'must go cap in hand, and with the humblest demeanour, paint his distress, and solicit their support: or he must attend their nocturnal revels, wait upon their smiles, and feed them with his jests. He must spout, sing, and be every way subservient to their wishes, and, after thus debasing human dignity, it is well if he finds himself enriched with a few guineas'. Actors also made these personal visits in the hope of getting their benefit performances patronised by a member of the gentry. The patron paid the actor directly, and then chose the play he wanted from the company's repertoire, and sold tickets on to friends.⁸¹ This evidence of a semi-patronal relationship between actors and the local gentry of the north east suggests that Plumb was overstating the case in his description of a wholly commercialised eighteenth-century theatre. Further proof that the provincial theatre was not fully commercialised after the Restoration is provided by the partial survival of the system of noble patronage. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century there were still some surviving provincial companies that were supported by noble patrons,

⁷⁸ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 28-31.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 05/07/1740; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/01/1742.

⁸¹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 17, 31.

such as the Duke of Norfolk's Servants, the Duke of Grafton's Men, and the Duke of Monmouth's Players.⁸²

III

The following section analyses the experience of play-going, and establishes the audience and appeal of drama in the north east. The audience for metropolitan drama included men as well as women, and was also socially mixed. The nobility, gentry and the middling sort were the most frequent play-goers, but servants, apprentices and journey-men also attended.⁸³ It seems likely that the profile of theatre audiences in the north east was not dissimilar. Companies addressed themselves to both men and women when they advertised productions in the area, and both sexes were present in the audience.⁸⁴ The local newspapers reported the popularity of plays with the nobility and gentry of the north east, and recorded ticket prices for theatre performances suggest that ordinary people would have been able to attend the theatre on an occasional basis.⁸⁵ A comprehensive analysis of ticket prices is impossible, because companies performing in the region did not always include ticket prices in their newspaper advertisements. Furthermore, the sums advertised may not always reflect the standard ticket prices charged, because many of the advertisements stipulating ticket prices relate to special occasions when prices were often higher than usual. These include benefit nights, when the proceeds of the performance went to a named actor in the company, race week or other special events, or first or last nights. Prices were usually lower when actors

⁸² Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure', pp. 265-285; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 45, 49, 37-38.

⁸³ E. Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1600-1700* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 6; H. W. Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick* (New York, 1954), pp. 23, 32.

⁸⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 30/01/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/01/1742.

⁸⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1735.

appeared in smaller towns, and puppet shows tended to charge lower ticket prices than the human theatre.⁸⁶ It is also possible that smaller itinerant bands, which probably toured the north east but did not advertise in the newspapers, charged less per performance.⁸⁷

Provincial theatre in the north east operated a system of gradated seating and ticket prices by the early eighteenth century. The distribution network for theatre tickets included inns, coffee houses, booksellers and sales by actors themselves at their lodgings.⁸⁸ There were up to four zones of seating provided, ranging upwards in price from the upper gallery to the first gallery, the pit and the box. Sometimes all the seats seem to have been the same price, as at the Yarrows' benefit night with the York Company in July 1748.⁸⁹ On other occasions there were no boxes available, or only one gallery. Provincial theatre was often organised by subscription in the eighteenth century, and there were occasional subscription seasons in Newcastle from 1733. After 1749 the York Company held a regular summer subscription season in Newcastle. Subscribing to a season of performances in either the pit or the box required a substantial investment, and was only open to those of some means.⁹⁰

In 1749 a subscription of £1 7s was charged for a box ticket for the series of eighteen plays performed by the York Company. The pit subscription ticket for the same series was eighteen shillings.⁹¹ Men and women of the middling sort who wanted

⁸⁶ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 67-68, 163-164, 30-32; G. Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* (first edition 1955, reprinted London, 1990), pp. 28-29, 68-70.

⁸⁷ In London the minor theatres always charged lower entry prices than the patent houses, see Pedicord, *Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 19/12/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/07/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/07/1749.

⁸⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 09/07/1748.

⁹⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 220; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 163-164; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 18/11/1738.

⁹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/05/1749.

to attend performances, but could not afford a subscription ticket, could pay per performance attended for tickets in either the pit or the gallery. In 1750 tickets for a single night cost two shillings for the pit, and one shilling for the gallery.⁹² In the 1730s the York Company made more money in York from tickets sold for individual performances than from the advance sales of subscription tickets. This suggests that we should not underestimate the scale of ticket sales to those who were unwilling or unable to afford subscription tickets.⁹³

The cheapest entry price advertised during the period was three pence for the upper gallery, but at other performances the cheapest tickets were sixpence or a shilling. It seems likely that the system of lowering ticket prices for late-comers was applied in the north east, as it was elsewhere in the provinces, and in London. These reduced tickets may have allowed more apprentices and journeymen to attend the theatre.⁹⁴ In a period where households were more likely to have surplus income, many seem to have chosen to spend it on attending theatre performances. Theatre tickets were often available in the north east for the price of one or two bottles of beer at the alehouse.⁹⁵ Servants were also sometimes allowed a free seat in the gallery if they had attended to reserve seating for their masters and mistresses. When Hallam's Company performed in the Moot Hall in Newcastle in January and February 1742, gentlemen and ladies were promised free seats for their servants.⁹⁶

⁹² Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 164.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-127.

⁹⁴ Pedicord, *Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*, p. 37; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 69.

⁹⁵ Pedicord gives a price of three pence for a bottle of beer. See Pedicord, *Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*, pp. 24, 26. See above, p. 136.

⁹⁶ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 69; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/01/1742; *Newcastle Journal*, 06/02/1742.

In the north east, performances usually began at either six or seven o'clock in the evening, except during the race week. During the races the performances seem to have begun soon after the horse-races of the day had finished, in order to allow time for the assemblies that took place after the play was over.⁹⁷ These early performance times might seem to make theatre attendance difficult for some ordinary people, who often had working days that extended to 7 p.m. and beyond.⁹⁸ However, even those who were unable to exercise the choice to stop work early occasionally in order to see performances could see the plays that coincided with customary holidays, such as Christmas, Easter and Whit. Brand described how on Shrove Tuesday in Newcastle 'the great bell of St. Nicholas' Church is tolled at Twelve o'clock on this day; Shops are immediately shut up, Offices closed, and all kind of business ceases; a Sort of little Carnival ensuing for the remaining Part of the Day'.⁹⁹

The culture of play-going in the early modern period was one of active participation in the performance. Members of the local gentry could choose plays, by sending requests to theatre companies. In May 1749, for example, the York Company acceded to a request to perform Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* and Fielding's farce *The Mock Doctor* in Newcastle.¹⁰⁰ When societies commissioned plays, this may even have allowed middling sort and artisan members the chance to choose performance repertoire. In the 1730s and 1740s several plays were also performed in Newcastle at the request of the city's freemasons, which probably had a significant middling sort and

⁹⁷ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 68-69; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/06/1723.

⁹⁸ D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 122-128; Pedicord, *Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*, pp. 36-37. See above, p. 11.

⁹⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/11/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1728; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 05/06/1742; J. Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (Newcastle 1777), p. 333.

¹⁰⁰ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 70; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/05/1749

artisan membership.¹⁰¹ Gentry members of the audience often paid to sit on the stage itself, or to watch from behind the scenes, though the larger spectacles mounted later in the period meant that space for such seating was not available at all performances.¹⁰² Local gentlemen could also choose to appear on the stage themselves, if they fancied trying their hands at acting. Acting with a touring company offered the amateur actor an opportunity to impress his friends and neighbours, provided that his acting passed muster.¹⁰³ Amateur involvement is known to have occurred several times in the north east during the period, in Newcastle and Sunderland. In June 1721, for example, a 'Gentleman of this Town, for his Diversion, who never yet appear'd upon any Stage' appeared with the York Company in the Newcastle Moot Hall. He played the role of Essex in Banks's *The Unhappy Favourite*, a play that was said to be particularly popular with women. Perhaps the unknown man hoped to impress a particular female member of the audience.¹⁰⁴

During the performance audiences not only watched the spectacle but also shaped the proceedings, by responding to the action on stage. The memoirs of an actor in the York Company, which regularly appeared in Newcastle during the period, described experiences of heckling during provincial performances. On occasion members of the audience even threw objects at the actors, or got up onto the stage.¹⁰⁵ In one provincial performance a humorous grocer responded to an actress delivering the line 'Oh when shall I have rest?' by calling out 'Not till you have paid me my one pound, one and tenpence, Ma'am'. Heckling provided the members of the audience with the

¹⁰¹ See for example, *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1739. For the membership profile of freemasons see Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 320-322. See above, p. 97.

¹⁰² *Newcastle Journal*, 12/11/1743; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 69.

¹⁰³ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 23/06/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/11/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721; Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 24, 55-57.

¹⁰⁵ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 33; Hare, *Georgian Theatre in Wessex*, pp. 23-25.

opportunity to exercise wit, or attempted wit, and to compete for the admiration of their peers.¹⁰⁶

Political heckling was common in theatres and many of the plays that were performed in the north east had a political dimension that would have been well known to their audiences.¹⁰⁷ Plays performed in the north east from the 1720s to 1750s represented both sides of the political divide, including plays with anti-Walpole content, and also whiggish drama. The controversial *Beggar's Opera* was performed three times in Newcastle in 1728, the year that it first appeared in London, and on three further occasions in the late 1730s and early 1740s.¹⁰⁸ Contemporaries read this play as a political satire against Walpole, comparing him to the characters of the robber and the fence.¹⁰⁹ Other plays that satirised Walpole also appeared on the Newcastle stage, including Fielding's *Mock Doctor*, performed twice in 1741.¹¹⁰ At the same time, plays that promulgated Whig principles were also being performed in the city, including Rowe's *Tamerlane* and Richard Steele's *Conscious Lovers*. Rowe's play was performed in Newcastle at least twice, in 1749 and 1750, and Steele's drama was performed three times between 1723 and 1744.¹¹¹

Audiences in the north east attended performances not only to see the play, but also to enjoy sociability, conversation and flirtation, often while the play was in progress. Wilkinson of the York Company complained of the inattention of the men

¹⁰⁶ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁷ Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁰⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 04/05/1728; *Newcastle Journal*, 10/09/1743.

¹⁰⁹ Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131 n., p. 132 n; *Newcastle Journal*, 19/12/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 26/12/1741.

¹¹¹ Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, pp. 31, 83; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/06/1723; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/04/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 27/10/1744. For productions of Rowe's *Tamerlane* see *Newcastle Courant*, 08/07/1749 and *Newcastle Journal*, 23/06/1750. A further production of either the Marlowe or Rowe's play was noted in 1744, see *Newcastle Journal*, 05/05/1744.

and women in both the cheap and expensive seats of the provincial audiences he played for. He protested that his spectators were often more interested in 'the flirt of a fan' than in the performance itself.¹¹² Many play-goers seem to have turned up at performances drunk, and enjoyed the plays while talking to their friends.¹¹³ Etheredge's play *The Amorous Old Woman* and its 1674 prologue satirised contemporary playhouse manners, suggesting that young men attended the theatre to look at the women, and talk to friends, 'with a bum revers'd to whisper Miss'. Spectators also seem to have been concerned to dress up for the occasion, taking care to appear in their best clothes. Attending theatrical performances was a vital opportunity for personal display.¹¹⁴

The newspaper advertisements and reports of drama provide much evidence of what audiences demanded, both of the venue for performance, and of the entertainment itself. Novelty was understandably popular, and if any new dance, song or play was included, then this was mentioned prominently. Even if the pieces to be performed had first appeared a decade or more ago, but were new to the place of performance, then this was emphasised in advertisements. When a performance of George Farquhar's comedy *The Twin Rivals* was advertised in Newcastle in June 1721, the play was already nineteen years old. But the notice of the play was accompanied with the promise that it was 'never play'd in this town', which was clearly felt to be an important selling point.¹¹⁵

Audiences were not only interested in seeing plays that had recently been premiered, or plays which they had not seen before, but also in new clothes and scenery.

¹¹² Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 9; Hare, *Georgian Theatre in Wessex*, pp. 24-25.

¹¹³ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 33; Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ A. Nicoll, *A History of Restoration Drama, 1660-1700* (first edition 1923, reprinted Cambridge, 1928), pp. 15, 17.

¹¹⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721; Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 321.

The newspaper advertisements usually announced whether any or all of the characters in the play were wearing new costume. New costumes that would improve the spectacle were a considerable attraction to eighteenth-century provincial audiences, who were used to seeing the same costumes recycled for many different roles.¹¹⁶ Any new or impressive scenery or props were also listed, because this equipment was also rarely replenished in touring companies.¹¹⁷ In 1748 the York Company proudly brought to Newcastle an 'entire new Set of Scenes' that were 'not inferior to any in Great Britain'. The larger provincial companies were able to advertise impressive spectacles of some scale.¹¹⁸ Orfeur's Company brought a production of Davenant and Dryden's version of *The Tempest* to Newcastle in 1732. They promised audiences 'the sea-scene, all the music, songs, flyings, sinkings, dresses, and other decorations proper to the play, and an artificial shower of fire, as performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London'.¹¹⁹

Audiences were not only interested in seeing fresh plays, but also wanted to see popular and good drama. Company managers often emphasised that the plays performed in their season would be well-known pieces. Herbert's Company whetted the appetite of potential audiences by describing their 1728 production of *The Beggar's Opera* as a 'celebrated Dramatick Entertainment'. Other advertisements emphasised the superiority of the plays to be performed by describing them as the best available.¹²⁰ Play-goers were also interested in the size of the company and the skill of its actors. Smaller provincial companies were notoriously short of actors, which threatened the

¹¹⁶ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 01/07/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 23/06/1750; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 23-24.

¹¹⁷ See for example, *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1744; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 23.

¹¹⁸ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 25; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/05/1748.

¹¹⁹ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 237.

¹²⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 06/06/1747.

quality of performances by forcing actors to learn many parts in the same play.¹²¹ Advertisements in the north east often emphasised the completeness of the company, as in the advertisement for Orfeur's Company in May 1733, which promised 'a very full...Company'.¹²² Managers also promised accomplished actors, describing their companies as 'good' or 'best'.¹²³

Company managers sought to encourage attendance by stressing the previous success of the company or the specific production. Descriptions of successful appearances in other locations and before illustrious patrons were obviously thought to appeal to audiences. Descriptions of satisfied audiences in other places were often part of the advertisements and were also mentioned in the news sections of the newspapers. An advertisement placed in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1741 for a puppet play by Mr Robinson's Company from London, listed appearances at the Tennis Court in the Haymarket, and a fortnight of performing before the Prince of Wales and the nobility at 'Clifden-House...with great Applause'.¹²⁴ Companies also traded on their reputation within the north east, and previous performances in the area were listed prominently in advertisements. When Orseur's Company advertised their 1733 summer season in Newcastle, they reminded readers of their popular performances in the town during the previous summer.¹²⁵ Once the season was under way, many play-goers probably attended because of recommendations from friends, but newspaper reports of successful performances must also have encouraged people to attend. A performance in November

¹²¹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 24-25.

¹²² *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1733.

¹²³ *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/05/1733.

¹²⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741.

¹²⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1733.

1738, for example, was praised by the next issue of the *Newcastle Courant*, which described the 'very crowded audience' and 'universal applause'.¹²⁶

The degree of comfort in the auditorium must also have been important to audiences, because this subject often features in advertisements or newspaper reports. Play-goers in the north east clearly expected the venue for performance to be clean and warm, and generally comfortable, and various companies advertised that their venue was 'commodious'.¹²⁷ Audiences also expected to be able to reach the auditorium without inconvenience. When Herbert's Company appeared in Newcastle in 1728, they promised to make the 'way very clean for the easier passing of Gentlemen and Ladies to the said Hall'.¹²⁸ Bad weather disinclined audiences to attend the theatre, and this caused financial difficulties for Bardin during his 1741 summer season in Newcastle. He responded by placing a pathetic advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* begging residents of Newcastle to take pity on his predicament and attend his benefit performance.¹²⁹ Although theatre audiences were expected to be lively, the elite audience did not appreciate disorder in the theatre. Consequently, several advertisements and reports emphasised that the performance was conducted with decorum.¹³⁰

The strong demand for theatre during the period meant that the number of actors and companies increased. There were so many actors performing in the provinces by the 1730s that it was suggested there was not 'Wood enough in England to hang them all'.¹³¹

¹²⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/12/1738.

¹²⁷ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 28/11/1741.

¹²⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/12/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/06/1728.

¹²⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 05/07/1740.

¹³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/12/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/11/1741.

¹³¹ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 6-7.

This increase in companies meant that more than one company could be performing in a town at the same time. Theatre companies sometimes had to compete with each other for custom, and were prepared to use the local newspapers to further their cause.¹³² In 1728 the York Company and Herbert's Company both performed *The Beggar's Opera* in Newcastle on the same night in June. There had possibly also been some poaching behind the scenes, because the Herbert's Company performance featured an actor who had previously been a member of the York Company.¹³³ When Hallam's Company and Robinson's Company both appeared in Newcastle in the winter season of 1741, Robinson used his advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* to criticise the opposition. He listed his own record of performances in the metropolis and in front of the royal family and nobility, and announced that his company could out-perform the 'paultry Stuff...lately attempted to entertain' by Hallam's.¹³⁴

It is difficult to reconstruct the length of time that different companies spent in a location and the number of performances they gave. Even those companies that made use of newspaper advertising might only promote the first and last nights, benefit performances and special occasions. In November 1738 Bardin advertised the first night of a series of subscription performances by his company in Newcastle, but there were no further advertisements for later performances, so it is impossible to know how long his company stayed in the town. It seems to have been rare for every performance to be advertised or reported separately in the newspapers.¹³⁵ Sometimes companies are only known to have given one performance, though they may well have given others that

¹³² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 221.

¹³³ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/06/1728.

¹³⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 19/12/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 26/12/1741.

¹³⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/11/1738.

were not advertised.¹³⁶ Other companies advertised that they would perform during the horse-races at a particular town, though they may also have presented plays before and after the race week itself.¹³⁷

In towns in the north east other than Newcastle, the longest season appears to have been a few weeks. In 1735, for example, Madame Violante's Company performed in Durham for two weeks, acting for the crowds that gathered for the race week and the following assize week.¹³⁸ Newcastle performance seasons were longer and, where precise performance dates were given, seem to have lasted from one to three months. Madame Violante's Company appeared in Newcastle for a relatively short season in 1735, holding their first performance on 2nd June, and their last night in the town on 30th June.¹³⁹ The York Company performed for three month long seasons in Newcastle from 1748 to 1750, arriving in mid or late May and leaving in mid-August.¹⁴⁰ Performances are recorded on all nights of the week except Sunday.¹⁴¹ When a company was holding a series of performances in a town, plays were usually presented several nights a week. In their 1732 winter season in Newcastle, for example, Orfeur's company performed on Mondays and Thursdays.¹⁴² Plays were often performed nightly during the races, as part of the intense programme of leisure events that accompanied the horse-racing.¹⁴³

The large number of actors appearing in the region indicates the vitality of provincial theatre during this period. At least ninety-five different actors performed in

¹³⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/06/1741.

¹³⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1734.

¹³⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1735. See also *Newcastle Journal*, 21/07/1739.

¹³⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735; *Newcastle Courant*, 28/06/1735.

¹⁴⁰ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 163.

¹⁴¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 06/05/1721.

¹⁴² Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 235.

¹⁴³ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/04/1724. See above, pp. 163-164.

the north east between 1716 and 1750, and this figure is necessarily an under-estimation. Many advertisements did not list the names of all the actors appearing in a particular production, and some newspaper reports and advertisements for plays do not list any of the members of the company.¹⁴⁴ Surnames that appeared several times have only been counted once here, although they might have represented various different actors.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the various companies that probably visited the area without advertising in the newspapers have left no record of their company membership.

Because newspaper advertisements did not always list all actors in a particular company, it is difficult to estimate the average size of companies visiting the north east.¹⁴⁶ Companies touring the provinces in this period could be very small, with as few as five actors.¹⁴⁷ These small companies probably were active in the north east during the period, but the newspapers tell us little about their activities. The companies advertising visits to Newcastle and the larger centres of the north east were often quite sizeable. Advertisements for the York Company's summer season in Newcastle in 1750 named sixteen actors. In the mid 1730s the York Company is known to have consisted of sixteen actors and actresses, so it seems likely that the whole company travelled to Newcastle to perform.¹⁴⁸ When Robinson's Company from London appeared at Sunderland in 1741 at least fourteen actors appeared, and Hallam's Company brought at least twelve actors to the north east in the same year.¹⁴⁹ Some smaller companies clearly

¹⁴⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1739.

¹⁴⁵ For references to one or more Hallams see for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 22/11/1740 and *Newcastle Journal*, 05/07/1740.

¹⁴⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/06/1721; *Newcastle Journal*, 21/04/1739.

¹⁴⁷ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1750; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 123-126.

¹⁴⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 28/11/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 12/12/1741.

were visiting the area, such as Herbert's Company, which only listed eight actors in its advertisements in 1728.¹⁵⁰

IV

There was a vibrant culture of musical performance in the north east long before the Restoration, just as there was a strong theatrical tradition. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the north east seems to have been well served by musicians. Professional musicians travelled the country on the same basis as professional companies of actors, patronised by noblemen and noblewomen who wished to demonstrate their discernment and power.¹⁵¹ Minstrels provided music to the noble households in which they were employed, taught music and repaired instruments.¹⁵² While some musicians were expected to remain in the household all year round, patrons also allowed their minstrels to travel. These musicians benefited from the name and protection of their patron, returning occasionally at agreed intervals to perform in the household.¹⁵³ Town waits were also touring the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Municipal authorities employed their own bands of musicians, to keep the watch, welcome illustrious visitors and play for festivals. Town waits also performed at civic ceremonies, guild dinners, wedding dinners and at alehouses. In several cities, including Norwich, the waits were also required to give regular concerts.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1728; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 63.

¹⁵¹ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p. 122. See above, pp. 188-193.

¹⁵² Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 84-85.

¹⁵³ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 88-89, 140, 135-136.

¹⁵⁴ W. L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society: from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953), pp. 74-100; Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, pp. 164-168; J. Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (2 vols., London, 1789), vol. 2, pp. 353-354.

Newcastle's municipal records reveal that the regional capital received frequent visits from professional musicians. In the decade from 1590 to 1599, Newcastle's municipal records record four visits from travelling minstrels. These included the musicians of the Lord of Cumberland, 'Lorde Willabies musecions' and the Boston waits.¹⁵⁵ Many towns allowed their waits to travel, and waits from towns in five counties are known to have visited Newcastle in the pre-civil war period.¹⁵⁶ Several towns in the north east employed their own waits, including Newcastle, Durham, Hexham, Darlington, Gateshead and Alnwick.¹⁵⁷ It is likely that the waits from the larger towns of the north east not only entertained their own citizens, but also toured the region. The Darlington town waits played in Newcastle in March 1630, for example.¹⁵⁸ The travelling musicians played for the municipal authorities and 'provincial crowds' in the towns they visited, and also performed in gentry households.¹⁵⁹ The audience for this professional music seems to have been diverse. According to Woodfill, musicians were paid by 'a very large part of the population, of the lower as well as upper classes'.¹⁶⁰

It has been suggested that provincial music-making declined after the late sixteenth century, before reviving at the Restoration. However, as with the provincial theatre, fewer payments from municipal funds do not necessarily mean that fewer musicians were performing.¹⁶¹ It is clear that professional musicians continued to perform in the north east during this period. There are some references in the Newcastle

¹⁵⁵ Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, pp. xvii, 125, 129-131.

¹⁵⁶ Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 103-108; Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. 215.

¹⁵⁷ Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 293-295; Dodds, 'Northern Minstrels and Folk Drama', 123.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁹ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 81, 88, 91.

¹⁶⁰ Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁶¹ See above, pp. 191-192.

common council records, and the early seventeenth-century household books from the Naworth estate list frequent visits from minstrels.¹⁶² Research by Scholes demonstrates that music was not entirely suppressed during the Civil War period, though little is known about music-making in the north east during this time.¹⁶³ Indeed, the musical life of the north east is poorly documented between the Civil War and early eighteenth century. However, we may assume that there was a flourishing music scene in Restoration Newcastle as there was in Norwich, where travelling professional musicians were playing in inns and for private households, while town waits continued to perform their traditional role. The inns where music was played must have been fairly numerous in Newcastle by the late seventeenth century, because the Merchant Adventurers felt it necessary to ban their apprentices from attending any 'musicke houses' in 1697.¹⁶⁴

A form of concert had been offered by the London and Norwich waits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and musicians are known to have performed in public alehouses from at least the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁵ This commercial ale-house music was promoted by innkeepers, because good music encouraged people to come and spend money on food and drink in the inn while they listened. The innkeeper may have paid the musicians, but the players also received tips from customers. In the metropolis there were also occasional concerts connected with theatrical productions, such as the performance that occurred in Blackfriars in 1602.¹⁶⁶ These early concert forms were followed by a series of public concerts in Oxford during the 1650s, and by

¹⁶² Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', 51-52; Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. 30.

¹⁶³ F. D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London, 1964), pp. 79-81; P. A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England: A Contribution to the Cultural History of Two Nations* (first edition 1934, reprinted Oxford, 1969), passim.

¹⁶⁴ T. Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk* (Norwich, 1979), p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 74-100; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ J. Harley, *Music in Purcell's London: The social background* (London, 1968), pp. 135-144.

the 1670s Oxford was holding large public concerts.¹⁶⁷ In the metropolis public concerts seem to have been revived at the Restoration, and in the 1670s the first purpose-built commercial concert room was erected.¹⁶⁸ Concert series became a popular form of entertainment in the metropolis and provinces alike, and by the 1730s at least eight or nine towns had hosted some form of public concert series.¹⁶⁹

Little is known about commercial music making in the north east in the eighteenth century before the appearance of the *Newcastle Courant*. The first advertisement for a musical performance in the north east appeared in 1712, though it seems likely that concerts had been given in the region before this date.¹⁷⁰ In the early eighteenth century several concerts were advertised in the north east, though many more may have taken place without being advertised in the newspapers. Concerts were held in Newcastle in the summers of 1712 and 1725, and musical performances were given in both Durham and Newcastle in 1733 and 1734. Many of the concerts were timed to coincide with the Durham or Newcastle race week, though some took place during the winter season. Not all the performers were named in the advertisements, but at least five different musicians or groups of musicians performed in the region during this period.¹⁷¹ Music could also be enjoyed at the annual sermon organised by the Newcastle Sons of the Clergy Society. From 1717 to the mid 1730s this service included choral music sung by the Durham Cathedral choir.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ P. Holman, 'The British Isles: Private and Public Music' in J. A. Sadie (ed.), *Companion to Baroque Music* (London, 1990), p. 266; M. Tilmouth, 'The beginnings of provincial concert life in England' in C. Hogwood and R. Lockett (eds.), *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in memory of Charles Cudworth* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 9.

¹⁶⁸ Harley, *Music in Purcell's London*, pp. 145-149.

¹⁶⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 121-123.

¹⁷⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/05/1712.

¹⁷¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 21/05/1712; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/05/1725; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/11/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/12/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 11/05/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/06/1734; *North Country Journal*, 31/05/1735.

¹⁷² NRO, 2647/4; *Newcastle Courant*, 15/09/1722. See above, p. 86.

The success of these ventures encouraged the young organist Charles Avison, supported by a committee of Newcastle men, to establish a series of subscription concerts in Newcastle in 1735. A letter to the *Courant* attributed the success of the first season 'to the Industry of one who (with the Encouragement of some Gentlemen) had all the Trouble of it, without any other Advantage than purely to entertain the Town'. In July 1738, Avison took over sole responsibility for the organisation of the Newcastle series, which ran for nearly eighty years.¹⁷³ Charles Avison was a remarkable individual, and the musical life of the north east was greatly enriched by the involvement of a noted composer and musical critic. He was born in Newcastle in 1709, and was the son of one of the Newcastle waits, Richard Avison, who is thought to have begun his son's musical education.¹⁷⁴

Charles Avison later studied in London with the composer Geminiani, and is known to have given at least one benefit concert in the capital in the early 1730s. In 1735 Avison returned to Newcastle, and remained in his native city for the rest of his life. He was first appointed organist of St. John's church in 1735, and then moved to the post of organist at St. Nicholas in 1736. He was not only a successful organiser of subscription concerts, but also a famous composer, who produced concertos, chamber music and sacred works. In 1752 he published his most important literary work, *An Essay on Musical Expression*. This book, written in collaboration with unnamed others, was arguably the first musical criticism produced in England.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1736; A. Milner, 'Charles Avison', *The Musical Times*, 95 (1954), 74. For the Avison family tree and an assessment of Avison's musical importance see J. Avison, 'Charles Avison 1709-1770: A Certain Person of Importance', University of Cardiff, B.Sc dissertation (1999), passim.

¹⁷⁴ S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (20 vols., London, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 748-751.

¹⁷⁵ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 1, pp. 748-751.

Charles Avison was highly regarded nationally as well as within the region, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* contains an allusion to his music.¹⁷⁶ Avison turned down many lucrative offers in order to remain in Newcastle. He is known to have been offered various opportunities at York Minster, Dublin and Edinburgh, and a position as organist at the Charterhouse, London. A letter to the *Newcastle Journal* in March 1759, which was probably written by Avison's friend John Garth, reminded readers that Avison had been faithful to the town. Rather than accepting demanding jobs elsewhere, he had chosen to remain in Newcastle and dedicate himself to composition.¹⁷⁷ He seems to have found Newcastle a congenial centre of fellow music enthusiasts and he is known to have been a member of a Newcastle literary society, and to have founded a society dedicated to the work of the composer Marcello in the 1750s.¹⁷⁸ Avison was dedicated to the ideal of co-operation in the service of music, advising professional musicians to 'cultivate a sincere and friendly Commerce with each other, and cherish that benevolent Temper, which their daily Employ...ought naturally to inspire.'¹⁷⁹

Avison's subscription series was part of the Newcastle winter season, and usually began in either September or October, running through to the spring. This seems to have been the dominant season of the year for musical performance in the provinces.¹⁸⁰ Either twelve or fourteen concerts were given fortnightly in each series, usually on Thursday evenings. Occasionally, shorter series of weekly concerts were also

¹⁷⁶ Cited in Avison, *Charles Avison 1709-1770: A Certain Person of Importance*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁷ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 1, pp. 748-751; Milner, 'Charles Avison', 75.

¹⁷⁸ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 1, p. 749.

¹⁷⁹ P. M. Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', *Music and Letters*, 55 (1974), 21.

¹⁸⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/09/1735; S. Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 85 (1959), 24-25.

held, such as the series of six weekly concerts held from 6th March 1746.¹⁸¹ Concerts were also held in the summer season, during the race and assize weeks in the town.¹⁸² These concerts often began at 11 a.m. in order to be over before the horse-racing began and so as not to clash with the evening entertainment, which usually involved a play followed by the assembly. Such morning concerts were run at the same time as the cock-fighting that was also held in the morning of the race week. As was suggested in the previous chapter, this may have meant that these concerts were predominately frequented by women, who do not seem to have attended cock-fights.¹⁸³

It is difficult to ascertain the musical repertoire of most of Avison's concerts, because full details of the programme were not usually advertised in the newspapers. However, the works that are identified show that Avison's series brought contemporary music to the north east, and that his musicians often performed new works. Handel's *Saul* was performed at the Newcastle series in 1739, only a year after the work was written.¹⁸⁴ Newcastle was also regaled with Avison's own work, including his 'grand concertos done from Scarlatti's Lessons', performed in 1744.¹⁸⁵ Avison was unusual among his contemporaries in greatly admiring French music, such as the works of Geminiani, Marcello and Rameau, and their music was performed in his Newcastle series alongside that of Handel.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 18; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/03/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/09/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/08/1736; *Newcastle Courant*, 27/04/1745.

¹⁸² Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 17.

¹⁸³ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 18; *Newcastle Courant*, 04/08/1750; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/07/1749. See above, pp. 156, 169-170.

¹⁸⁴ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 73; Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 17-18.

¹⁸⁵ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 73-74; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/05/1744.

¹⁸⁶ C. Cudworth, 'Avison of Newcastle, 1709-1770', *The Musical Times*, 3 (1970), 480.

Avison's subscription concerts, like other provincial concert series, seem to have been frequented by the men and women of the elite and middling sort.¹⁸⁷ Music was popular with both men and women, and both sexes frequented dancing and music masters in the region.¹⁸⁸ The newspaper reports of the subscription concerts declared the presence of both sexes, and both men and women wrote about concerts in their letters and diaries. Elizabeth Blackett was impressed with the Newcastle subscription series concert that she attended at some point before 1777, writing to her friend that 'there was a great deal of company...I thought the performance very well'.¹⁸⁹ The audience probably included many of those who were in the list of subscribers to the composer's published works. These subscribers included peers and baronets, members of local gentry families such as the Blacketts and the Riddleys, as well as senior churchmen and merchants.¹⁹⁰ The ticket charges for Avison's concerts suggest that they were not within the means of the poorer sorts, because the price for a single concert was two shillings and sixpence. Provincial concert-going seems to have been more socially exclusive than theatre, where cheap tickets at sixpence or a shilling were often available.¹⁹¹

The cheapest recorded concert tickets sold in the north east during the period were for a concert in Durham in 1743, where seats in the pit were one shilling. On several other occasions tickets were sold at two shillings, but the usual price for single concerts during the period was two shillings and sixpence.¹⁹² Seating in concerts was

¹⁸⁷ Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 20; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 53.

¹⁸⁸ NRO, 2DE, 52/4; NRO, ZCK, 18; Harley, *Music in Purcell's London*, pp. 24, 34-35, 38; Milner, 'Charles Avison', 17; Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 14; NRO, ZAL, 43/1, Elizabeth Blackett to Mrs Widdrington, 5 February, no year.

¹⁸⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 01/12/1739; Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries*, p. 194; NRO, ZAL, 43/1, Elizabeth Blackett to Mrs Widdrington, 1 September, no year.

¹⁹⁰ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 17.

¹⁹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/05/1735; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 7. See above, p. 209.

¹⁹² *Newcastle Journal*, 17/12/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/09/1750.

not usually zoned, except at one concert in the Newcastle Moot Hall in 1743, where tickets were sold for the pit and the gallery.¹⁹³ Ordinary people in the north east could still afford to attend itinerant musical performances, but not the subscription concert series. Men and women of the middling sort were able to go and hear several concerts in a season, though the half guinea subscription that was usually charged for a whole concert series would often be beyond their means.¹⁹⁴ Tickets were sold at inns, coffee houses, the assembly rooms and at Avison's lodgings, and admitted one gentleman or two ladies.¹⁹⁵ Other provincial concert organisers also charged women lower ticket prices in this period, and the practice may have been designed to encourage more women to attend.¹⁹⁶

The Newcastle subscription concerts not only provided recreation and sociability for audiences, but were also part of the social lives of the amateur musicians who played for them. Members of the elite and middling sort often performed in subscription concerts in the first half of the eighteenth century, and Avison's orchestra included both professional and amateur musicians.¹⁹⁷ Both Lady Milbank and Mrs Ord are thought to have performed for audiences in Avison's subscription concerts.¹⁹⁸ Letters to the *Newcastle Courant* in the 1730s reveal that the subscription money from the Newcastle series was used to purchase a stock of scores and instruments, which seem to have been kept by Avison. The repertoire was chosen to suit an orchestra composed of both amateurs and professionals, and Corelli-style concerti grossi were often played. The professional musicians played the more complicated concertino parts of these pieces.

¹⁹³ *Newcastle Journal*, 17/12/1743.

¹⁹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 24/09/1748.

¹⁹⁵ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 18; Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 17.

¹⁹⁶ Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 26.

¹⁹⁷ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 17; Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 30.

¹⁹⁸ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 17.

and the amateur players performed the less demanding ripieno parts.¹⁹⁹ For the amateur musicians, Avison's orchestra was a quasi-society, which both men and women could join. They enjoyed the opportunity to play, meet fellow music enthusiasts, and demonstrate their talents to their friends and neighbours. Playing in the orchestra probably allowed amateur musicians free admission to the concert series, as was the arrangement in other provincial towns. This would have allowed some amateur musicians of the middling sort to attend more concerts than they could otherwise have afforded.²⁰⁰

Avison was a cultural entrepreneur, collecting the subscription money, and organising necessary expenditure on instruments, scores, fees for hiring professional musicians, candles, room hire and advertisements for the series.²⁰¹ He claimed publicly that the subscription concert series was not run for profit, but 'his sole Desire is to keep up the Consort, and the Success of it (whether attributed to his Diligence or not) all the Satisfaction he requires'.²⁰² The author of the *Newcastle Journal* letter suggested that the subscription concert series was primarily important to Avison as an arena where his compositions could be performed. Otherwise he was happy to dedicate himself to composition: 'Let him have his pen and ink, his candle, his ruled paper and his harpsichord, and he looks no further, at most no further than the performance of his music'.²⁰³ Avison was clearly not motivated solely by profit, or he would not have refused so many offers of lucrative posts. However, his sizeable assets at the time of his death suggest that he was content in Newcastle because he was making a handsome

¹⁹⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/04/1736; Avison, 'Charles Avison 1709-1770: A Certain Person of Importance', p. 14; Holman 'The British Isles: Private and Public Music', p. 267.

²⁰⁰ Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 18.

²⁰¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/04/1736.

²⁰² *Newcastle Courant*, 24/04/1736.

²⁰³ Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 22.

living there from the concert series, his teaching, his post as an organist and from publishing his compositions. Avison's father had been part of the Newcastle middling sort, drawing a wait's salary of a mere four pounds per annum. By contrast, Charles Avison was able to leave his three surviving children a deed of gift of £1000 in old South Sea annuities, and a further £1000 in his will, along with three double harpsichords, other instruments, music, books and household goods.²⁰⁴

The Newcastle subscription concert series did not always run smoothly. Although performing in the concerts provided professional musicians an income and an opportunity to demonstrate their talents to potential patrons, there were also inherent tensions. Performers who were used to competing with one another had to play amicably in the same orchestra. In a letter to the *Newcastle Courant* on 17 April 1736 a disgruntled violinist demanded that 'to prevent any Disgust being taken by Competitors, that all the Performers should be upon a level, and the entire Management and keeping of the Musick...be left to two indifferent Persons'. He claimed that he had been disadvantaged by not being allowed sufficient time to practise, and had therefore left the orchestra.²⁰⁵ This dispute between Avison and the organising committee on the one hand and two violinists on the other was pursued in weekly letters and advertisements in the *Newcastle Courant* from 10th April until 29th May 1736. The orchestra seems to have separated into two factions, with some musicians following the example of the errant violinists, and refusing to play for the series.²⁰⁶

The controversy does not seem to have damaged the popularity of the concerts, and probably enhanced their profitability by providing the new subscription series with

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 6, 23.

²⁰⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/04/1736.

²⁰⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 24/04/1736.

free publicity. The readers of the *Newcastle Courant* must have followed this fascinating series of exchanges avidly, decoding the allusions and descriptions. Readers would have been aware that when the violinists referred ironically to the 'modest young man', they were criticising the new young organist of St. John's, Charles Avison. They would probably also have known the identity of the two musicians that the concert organisers satirised as the 'nimble-finger'd Swiss...and his light-heel'd Associate'.²⁰⁷ The end of the dispute, which culminated in a musical wager, probably generated most excitement. The concert organisers challenged the 'Swiss' violinist to compete with the twelve year old boy who had taken his place as first violin of the subscription concert orchestra. After much haggling between the two sides, the date of the musical contest was agreed, and was advertised to the public in the *Newcastle Courant*.²⁰⁸

Those who attended the contest at Mrs Hill's inn in Newcastle on the evening 20th May 1736 were disappointed of music, but probably entertained by the spectacle that seems to have taken place. The 'Swiss' violinist left, on the grounds that the rules had been changed, though his antagonists implied that he refused to play because he knew he could not win. The satirical epitaph written by the organisers of the subscription concert described how an audience had gathered to watch the 'Swiss' fiddler play, 'the Hour of his Death approaching'. The violinist was said to have ranted and raved for approximately half an hour, speaking 'in broken Sentences'. The climax of the encounter was 'the Moment his feeble Eyes met his dreadful Antagonist his Agonies seiz'd him...he spit, star'd, stunk, and dy'd'.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/04/1736; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/04/1736.

²⁰⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/04/1736.

²⁰⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/05/1736.

The subscription concert series in Newcastle was followed by the establishment of a series at Durham, organised jointly by Avison and John Garth.²¹⁰ Garth was a friend of Avison's, collaborating with him not only on the concert series, but also on an edition of Marcello's *Psalms*.²¹¹ The subscription concert series in Durham was first advertised in the local newspapers in September 1740, though it may have been running before that date.²¹² The series appears to have been popular and successful, because the subscription concerts continued into the 1750s, and attracted the patronage of the bishop.²¹³ Concerts were usually held on Tuesday evenings, though the newspaper advertisements do not give any indication of the frequency or the number of concerts in the series.²¹⁴ However, the subscription tickets prices appear to have been the same as the Newcastle prices, at half a guinea for the series.²¹⁵ Given that the ticket prices were the same, and that Avison was involved in organising the series, we can probably assume that the Durham subscription concerts also consisted of either twelve or fourteen fortnightly concerts.²¹⁶ As in Newcastle, the winter season was the most important period in the musical calendar of the town, and a morning concert was usually arranged during the town race week.²¹⁷

The on-going importance of town musicians in the provision of public urban music underlines the significance of continuity in music-making. The town waits continued to perform throughout the first half of the eighteenth century in many

²¹⁰ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 1, p. 749.

²¹¹ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 75.

²¹² *Newcastle Courant*, 20/09/1740.

²¹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/11/1749; Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries*, p. 194.

²¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/01/1741.

²¹⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 23/09/1749. See above, p. 228.

²¹⁶ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 18. See above, p. 225.

²¹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/09/1740; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/09/1749; *Newcastle Journal*, 16/01/1742. *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1746. See above, p. 225.

provincial centres, and the waits of the north east seem to have been no exception.²¹⁸ Until 1793 the Newcastle waits were paid to play in the processions that marked national celebrations such as coronations and royal birthdays. They also played a fanfare to welcome the assize judges and performed at civic ceremonies. The Durham waits also survived into the first half of the eighteenth century, and were still providing regular music for trade guild feasts in the 1740s.²¹⁹ In York the waits seem to have played in the subscription concerts and provided the music for balls and assemblies. The Norwich town musicians played a similar role in the first half of the eighteenth century. It seems likely that the organisers of the subscription concerts of the north east would have employed the services of various town musicians of the region, though there is no conclusive evidence of this.²²⁰

The north east continued to be visited by other professional musicians during this period.²²¹ At least eleven performers or groups of musicians are known to have visited the north east between 1735 and 1750.²²² The two centres for music in the region were Newcastle and Durham, which both had subscription concert series, and were also visited by touring professional musicians. The only other musical performances advertised in the north east were two concerts at Stockton and one concert in Sunderland.²²³ In the eighteenth century concerts are known to have taken place in small towns and even in villages, though no such performances are documented in the north east. As with theatre in such locations, it may be that such performances occurred but

²¹⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 125-126.

²¹⁹ Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 6-7; Brand, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, vol. 2, pp. 353-354; DUL, DCG, Mercers photocopies/3, 82; DUL, DCG, Barbers/3, fol. 185r; DUL, DCG, Curriers/2, account for 1749.

²²⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 125-126; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 4.

²²¹ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 74.

²²² See for example, *Newcastle Journal*, 30/05/1747.

²²³ *Newcastle Courant*, 01/08/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/10/1748.

were not advertised, particularly since itinerant musicians were more likely to appear in these locations. Like companies of actors, many musicians probably relied on publicity from hand bills and word of mouth.²²⁴

The venues used for musical performance in this period were similar to those that were used for leisure activities in the sixteenth century.²²⁵ Musical performances in the north east in the eighteenth century were usually held in public buildings. The Newcastle subscription concert series began in the Assembly Room in the Groat Market, and also used the Grammar School in the West Gate when the assembly rooms were engaged for other events.²²⁶ The Durham subscription series was held in the Assembly Room in the Bailey.²²⁷ The other performers visiting the region also used public buildings, including the Moot Hall, Cordwainers' Hall and a dancing school in Newcastle.²²⁸

Concerts outside subscription series were organised entirely on a benefit system, which was similar to the theatre benefit system. Musicians took it in turns to hold a benefit night. The musician or group of musicians organising the concert paid the costs of advertising in the local newspaper or in printed handbills and hired the performance venue. If any guest performer was to appear, then his fee also had to be paid, though the local musicians usually performed free at such benefits, and the concert organiser's more talented pupils often also played. The organiser chose a potentially profitable time

²²⁴ Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 22-23. See above, p. 204.

²²⁵ Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. xvii. See above, p. 190.

²²⁶ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 18.

²²⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/09/1740.

²²⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 17/12/1743; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/05/1712; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/11/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1741.

to hold the concert and a programme of music that would attract a large audience.²²⁹ Subscription series usually also included some benefit concerts where the profits of the performance went entirely to the organising musician. Avison and Garth held their benefit concerts when the largest potential audience was assured. In Newcastle Avison's benefit performance was usually the assize week concert, and in Durham Garth collected the profits from the race week performance.²³⁰

Although bands patronised by noblemen no longer provided a large proportion of commercial music, eighteenth-century music was not entirely free of patronage. Touring musicians and the managers of subscription concerts needed to establish semi-patronal relationships with the local gentry in order to be commercially viable. Musicians were expected to call personally on all those who might potentially attend the performance to request the pleasure of their company. This personal attention seems to have been regarded as essential for securing an audience for public concerts, and musicians were careful to apologise in their newspaper adverts when they were unable to make such calls.²³¹ Personal visits were also made in the hope of securing engagements for private concerts, such as the private concert held in Newcastle in spring 1741 by the harpist Parry.²³²

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²²⁹ Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, pp. 9-12. See above, pp. 205-206.

²³⁰ Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, pp. 9-12; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/07/1744; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/07/1746.

²³¹ Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 11; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/07/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/03/1746.

²³² *Newcastle Journal*, 28/03/1741.

Having established how musical performance developed in the north east and how it was organised, the following section examines how audiences experienced concert-going. Attending subscription concerts was a highly participatory recreational activity in this period. Local men and women played in the subscription concert orchestra of Newcastle, and possibly also in Garth's orchestra in Durham.²³³ Members of the local elite could influence the music performed at concerts by requesting certain pieces, just as they could ask for a particular play. In 1733, for example, Nathaniel and Charles Love gave a concert in Newcastle that consisted of music requested by several local men and women. The music was performed on trumpet, French horn, oboe, violin and flute, and included work by Handel.²³⁴ Provincial concert audiences did not listen to the music in silence, because contemporary concert etiquette permitted socialising and conversation during the performance.²³⁵

The audience also shaped the performance by their response to the music, as they did in November 1739 at one of Avison's Newcastle subscription concerts.²³⁶ This concert is unusually well documented, and shows how social events were structured by contemporary values. Held shortly after the outbreak of war with Spain, this concert allowed the audience and performers to express their patriotism. The music had obviously been chosen particularly for its patriotic sentiments, and was described by the *Journal* as being 'suited to the brave Spirit of the Times'. The performance was on a grand scale, including the choir of Durham among a total of almost forty performers. The music was enthusiastically received by a large and emotionally charged audience. The *Newcastle Journal* related how 'universal Vivacity was observ'd to fire the whole

²³³ Milner, 'Charles Avison', 17.

²³⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/11/1733. See above, p. 210.

²³⁵ Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 28.

²³⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 01/12/1739.

Audience.' The audience all stood up together at the start of 'To Arms', joined in the choruses at the end of all the songs, and also responded with vigorous applause.²³⁷ National celebrations for events such as military victories or coronations were often marked by concerts.²³⁸

Many of those who attended concerts in provincial towns and villages would have had some musical ability or interest in music. Music was viewed as a rational and uplifting recreation, and members of the middling and better sorts were likely to have received some form of musical education. There was a widespread passion for music in the eighteenth century, and the desire to attend concerts was probably primarily motivated by the desire to hear the music.²³⁹ However, music was only one of the attractions of attending a concert series. A description of concert-going by Samuel Johnson suggested that many ladies enjoyed the pleasure of wearing and showing off their finery 'in a place where the race of meaner mortals seldom intrudes.' Not only did concerts provide opportunities for personal display, but they were also an important part of the social calendar, and Johnson described how female concert-goers enjoyed 'returning courtesies, or refusing to return them'.²⁴⁰

Audiences in the north east were susceptible to the appeal of the new at concerts, as well as at the theatre. The advertisements show that unusual instruments were thought to be appealing to concert-goers. In July 1734, for example, Signior Catani and Mr. Hebden of York performed a concert including music on 'the vox humana, an

²³⁷ Newcastle Journal, 01/12/1739; Newcastle Courant, 01/12/1739; F. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London, 1997), p. 84.

²³⁸ Tilmouth, 'The beginnings of provincial concert life in England', p. 9; Newcastle Courant, 06/10/1750.

²³⁹ Harley, *Music in Purcell's London*, pp. 24, 34-35, 38; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 121.

²⁴⁰ Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 53.

Instrument never heard in these parts'.²⁴¹ The contemporary music performed at Avison's series shows that audiences expected to hear the best new pieces, and new music was sometimes listed in advertisements.²⁴² Music enthusiasts also prized good performance, and so previous successful appearances in other parts of Britain, including at Bristol and York, were often advertised.²⁴³ Several musicians were able to impress audiences by advertising their experience of playing in Europe, such as Mr Wright who was 'Lately from Italy'. Performances before dignitaries were also listed in the advertisements.²⁴⁴

Performers were also careful to list their previous successes in the north east itself. When the harpist Parry performed in Newcastle in 1741, he emphasised his previous successful performances at Durham and Newcastle.²⁴⁵ Young musicians were particularly popular in the eighteenth century, which Fawcett ascribes to the sentimental style of contemporary music appreciation. Child musicians appeared several times in the north east, and their age was stipulated in advertisements. In May 1725, for example, two concerts were held in the Newcastle Grammar School that featured a 'famous Lute-Master...as also his Daughter, who is about nine Years of Age, sings Italian and English Opera Songs, to the Admiration of all that have heard her.'²⁴⁶

Residents of the north east do not seem to have seen their music as inferior to the Metropolitan ideal. London was rarely invoked as a comparison to the concerts

²⁴¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 11/05/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/10/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/10/1748; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 28. See above, pp. 213-214.

²⁴² Milner, 'Charles Avison', 73; Horsley, 'Charles Avison: The Man And His Milieu', 17-18; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/08/1741.

²⁴³ *Newcastle Courant*, 11/05/1734; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/03/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1746.

²⁴⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/08/1741.

²⁴⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 28/03/1741.

²⁴⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/05/1725; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1741; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 53.

offered in the region. However, when the *Courant* praised the Durham performance of Handel's *Alexander's Feast* in 1749, the performance was described as equal to or better than the St. Cecilia's day performances in London.²⁴⁷ The ability and experience of some of the performers who visited the north east in this period provided an impressive standard of music. Not only was the region blessed with the talented Charles Avison, but the organiser of the Durham subscription concerts, John Garth, was also a composer. Garth's composition technique was influenced by Avison, and he wrote several keyboard sonatas of an unusual type favoured by Avison and several other composers in the north east. The existence of a recognisable regional musical style is a further indication of the strength and significance of musical performance in the north east.²⁴⁸

The region was also visited by professional touring musicians of a high standard, who were renowned among contemporaries. The Mr. Noell who played his 'Cymbalo' in Durham and Sunderland in 1748, for example, was probably the Portuguese composer and musician Georg Noëlli. Noëlli gave performances on the cymbalo in the New Haymarket Theatre in London in the 1750s, and became intimate with Handel. He was not only a performer, but also published several compositions, and contemporaries considered his improvisation to rival that of W. F. Bach.²⁴⁹ Tomaso Pinto, who performed in Newcastle in 1741, was one of the most famous violinists of the day, and played in Corelli's concerts in London.²⁵⁰ Other notable musicians with metropolitan

²⁴⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/11/1749.

²⁴⁸ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 7, p. 170.

²⁴⁹ Sadie, (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 13, p. 262; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/10/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/10/1748.

²⁵⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1741; Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 14, p. 759.

experience appeared in Newcastle during the period, including Dr. Musgrave Heighington and John Parry.²⁵¹

The concerts held in the region appear to have been popular. Newspaper reports often recorded that concerts had attracted a large and satisfied audience, and the survival of the subscription series suggests that they consistently attracted good audiences.²⁵² Audiences for eighteenth-century provincial concerts could vary from under fifty to a few hundred. The Leeds concert series, for example, attracted an average audience of twenty to thirty, though sometimes audiences numbered over one hundred.²⁵³ Music enthusiasts were prepared to travel long distances in order to hear good concerts. When Handel's *Alexander's Feast* was performed in Durham in celebration of St. Cecilia's Day in 1749, the *Newcastle Gazette* reported the attendance of 'most' of the Durham ladies and gentlemen, and 'many' from Northumberland and Yorkshire.²⁵⁴ Organisers obviously expected people to travel from County Durham to hear Newcastle concerts, because tickets for Newcastle concerts were sometimes sold in Durham.²⁵⁵

Performers who were unknown in the area sometimes attracted a far smaller audience than the concert series. When the harpist, Parry, played in Newcastle in October 1741, a letter appeared in the *Newcastle Courant*, purporting to be from a member of the audience. The writer criticised Newcastle for being inhospitable to strangers, and commented on the excellence of Parry's playing and the small size of the audience. When the child musician Tomaso Pinto performed in Newcastle earlier in the

²⁵¹ Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 8, pp. 435-436; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/11/1747; Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 14, p. 245; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/10/1741.

²⁵² Milner, 'Charles Avison', 74; *Newcastle Gazette*, 29/11/1749.

²⁵³ Sadie, 'Concert Life in Eighteenth Century England', 28.

²⁵⁴ *Newcastle Gazette*, 29/11/1749.

²⁵⁵ *North Country Journal*, 31/05/1735.

same year, the Assembly Room was initially booked for his concert. It was then announced that this room was too large for his performance, because the expected audience was smaller than the capacity of the room. The event was moved to the smaller Cordwainer's Hall, where the audience could 'be accommodated in the best Manner for the Company'.²⁵⁶

VI

Another popular social activity in the eighteenth century was dancing, including the assemblies which Defoe described in the 1720s as 'so much, and so fatally now in vogue'.²⁵⁷ Little has been written about the history of dance, though it is clear that dancing was an important element of sociability long before the seventeenth century. The attacks on dancing in Puritan sermons from the sixteenth century onwards show how prominent it was in contemporary sociability, and Scholes argues that dancing weathered this criticism and continued to be popular.²⁵⁸ Dancing remained an important part of festivals such as Christmas, May-day and Whitsun until well into the eighteenth century, and was also still part of the celebration at annual parish feasts and fairs.²⁵⁹ The Renaissance popularised dancing among the gentry, and dancing lessons were taken by young men at the universities and the inns of court. Dancing was an important part of family celebrations in gentry households in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and the ability to dance well was regarded as one of the most important

²⁵⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/10/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 02/05/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 25/04/1741.

²⁵⁷ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 150-151.

²⁵⁸ Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England*, pp. 58-80.

²⁵⁹ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 7-10, 16-17, 27-30, 32.

attributes of a gentleman or lady.²⁶⁰ While noble households kept their own musicians, it seems probable that the many professional musicians who toured the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided music for public dancing at inns and in other locations. Residents of Newcastle were certainly enjoying opportunities to dance by the mid-sixteenth century, when it was reported that apprentices were spending much of their time on 'daunseng'.²⁶¹

There were assemblies at York in the pre civil war period, and assemblies were held at several centres after the Restoration. However, the early eighteenth century appears to have been the hey-day of the public assembly, when they spread across the provinces. By 1770 at least sixty towns had either built an assembly room, or are known to have held assemblies, including provincial capitals, regional centres and small market towns.²⁶² Assemblies were held in at least sixteen locations in the north east from the early eighteenth century to 1750. Most of these took place in larger urban settlements, including the provincial capital, Newcastle, the regional centre in Durham and other large towns.²⁶³ However, race-week assemblies were also held at smaller centres, such as the 'inconsiderable' town of Hartlepool, where visitors could not even be sure of finding lodgings, and at three rural locations, including the village of Heighington.²⁶⁴

The first assembly in the region was held at some point in the first two decades of the eighteenth century in Newcastle. By 1729 a total of seven towns are known to

²⁶⁰ M. Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and pastimes of the English gentleman 1580-1630* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 88-93.

²⁶¹ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 81, 88-89, 91; Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 242-243; Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Merchant Adventurers Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, Vol. I, p. 20. See above, pp. 220-222.

²⁶² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 150-151.

²⁶³ *Newcastle Courant*, 16/04/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/05/1726, *Newcastle Courant*, 24/06/1738.

²⁶⁴ E. Hughes, *North Country Life In The Eighteenth Century: The North-East, 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), p. 401; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/08/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 31/07/1731.

have held assemblies, and by 1740 a further nine locations in the north east had followed suit. This suggests that the provision of assemblies in the region increased during the first half of the eighteenth century, as they did across the country. In most of these locations assemblies only seem to have been held during the most important time in the social calendar, the annual races.²⁶⁵ Only four towns, including Newcastle and Hartlepool, advertised series of assemblies outside the race week. However, several further towns may have held such series without advertising them in the newspapers. It seems unlikely, for example, that Durham would have had a building described as the 'Assembly-house, in Saddler-street', if assemblies were only held there in one week in every year.²⁶⁶ Two other urban centres, Bishop Auckland and Stockton, built new assembly rooms during the period. The degree of investment involved in building and furnishing such rooms suggests that regular series of assemblies were also held in these locations, even if they were not advertised in the newspapers. When the evidence of designated accommodation is taken into account, a probable total of seven towns in the north east held series of assemblies at some time between 1700 and 1750.²⁶⁷

In the north east, as in the rest of the provinces, assemblies and public balls were usually held during the winter season, as at Newcastle, where the assembly series usually began in either October or November, and continued fortnightly until late spring.²⁶⁸ In the provincial capital, Newcastle, occasional assemblies were also held to coincide with special events, such as royal birthdays or national celebration days for

²⁶⁵ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 242; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1729; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/09/1729; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1735; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 150-151, 155.

²⁶⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/08/1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1730; *Newcastle Courant*, 14/05/1726.

²⁶⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 11/02/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/07/1737.

²⁶⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 26/10/1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/11/1736; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/10/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 09/01/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 09/04/1743; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.

military victories.²⁶⁹ Assemblies accompanied the race or assize weeks in sixteen locations in the north east.²⁷⁰ In the resort towns of the region, at Tynemouth and Hartlepool, assemblies were organised to coincide with the summer season, when the visitors were resident in the towns. The Hartlepool assemblies were advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* in June 1730, promising 'Gentlemen, and Ladies, that an Assembly will be kept once every Week at Hartlepool, during the Bathing-time'. Because visitors to resorts dedicated their time almost entirely to recreation, they demanded a more intense leisure cycle, with assemblies every week.²⁷¹

Assemblies were often financed by subscription, and in the north east, the Newcastle and Tynemouth assembly series are known to have been organised on a subscription basis.²⁷² Tickets to assemblies in the Newcastle subscription series, and to the race week and assize week assemblies, were also available on a nightly basis.²⁷³ Ticket prices for assemblies were not always advertised, but where they are given the prices were similar to those charged for concerts. This suggests that like the audience at concerts, the company at assemblies was made up of the middling and upper sorts. The lowest ticket price charged for public dances during the period was two shillings, for balls held by dancing masters and by performers.²⁷⁴ Single nights at the Newcastle subscription series cost two shillings and sixpence, putting occasional nights at assembly series and the balls held by dancing masters and performers within the means of the middling sorts. Only those with considerable means could afford to attend all the

²⁶⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/04/1749; *Newcastle Gazette*, 26/10/1748.

²⁷⁰ See for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 28/07/1733; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 155.

²⁷¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1730; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.

²⁷² *Newcastle Courant*, 26/10/1745; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.

²⁷³ *Newcastle Journal*, 02/08/1740.

²⁷⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/10/1748; *Newcastle Courant*, 19/05/1744; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 154. See above, pp. 227-228.

assemblies in a series, however, because subscription tickets were expensive. The subscription to attend the whole season at the Tynemouth assembly cost one guinea, and the Newcastle assembly cost five shillings per quarter.²⁷⁵ The price of the tickets guaranteed that like concert series, assemblies were more socially exclusive than many other forms of eighteenth-century sociability, such as race-going, the theatre, or cock-fights.²⁷⁶

Assemblies were public events that usually included card playing, tea drinking and dancing. By 1751 the assembly had been defined as 'a stated and general meeting of the polite persons of both sexes, for the sake of conversation, gallantry, news and play.' Assemblies were important events for the operation of the eighteenth-century marriage market, and were notorious for flirtation and match-making. Couples and groups walked around the room or rooms, engaging in the various diversions that were on offer, and enjoying discussions of the latest local gossip.²⁷⁷ Public balls were also held during the period, and more elaborate dances were also sometimes held in the north east. A masquerade, where the dancers were masked for either the entire ball, or the early part of the evening, was held in Newcastle in the race week of 1724.²⁷⁸

Assemblies were popular because they offered a wide range of activities. Card play was extremely popular during the eighteenth century with both men and women, and large sums were gambled on games. This leads Borsay to suggest that such activities constituted 'deep play', where social status and personal honour were at

²⁷⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/10/1745.

²⁷⁶ See above, pp. 227-228, 157, 207-210, 169-170.

²⁷⁷ M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London, 1978), pp. 191-193; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 245.

²⁷⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/04/1724.

stake.²⁷⁹ The raffle, another game of chance, is known to have been part of the entertainment at Newcastle assemblies in 1724 and 1725. The assembly on the 6th August 1724 began at 4 p.m. with a fan raffle of twelve 'fine Fans'. The right to enter the raffle seems to have been included in the ticket price of two shillings and sixpence, which presumably meant that the whole company tried their luck. The raffle was decided by throws of the dice, the best fan going to the person who achieved the highest throw, and the other eleven allocated in order of quality to those who made the next best throws. After all the winners had been decided, the dancing began.²⁸⁰ Assemblies could also provide opportunities for consumption, and at Newcastle, as at York, approved traders appear to have been permitted to sell luxury goods at the assembly rooms.²⁸¹ In June 1746 the goods on sale at the Newcastle assembly room included fashionable hats, ribbons, fans and necklaces.²⁸²

The ticket prices charged at assembly rooms excluded the poorer sorts, and this created a degree of social exclusivity at the assemblies of the north east, allowing a less formal etiquette to be followed. The contemporary ideal was for behaviour at such social events to have 'a certain openness of behaviour', allowing the different ranks to interact more freely than in other environments. How far the assemblies of County Durham and Northumberland conformed to this ideal is uncertain, but it was recognised that some provincial assemblies continued to be organised with a formality that was considered unfashionable in other quarters. In 1711 *The Spectator* observed that a 'polite country squire shall make you as many bows in half an hour, as would serve a courtier

²⁷⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 249-250. See below, p. 277.

²⁸⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 11/07/1724.

²⁸¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 07/06/1746; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 193.

²⁸² *Newcastle Courant*, 07/06/1746.

for a week'.²⁸³ We know little about the conventions governing assemblies in the region, other than that assemblies were evening entertainments, and were never held on Sundays.²⁸⁴ However, it seems that the Newcastle assembly was usually opened with a dance by the highest ranked couple present. On the 29th of September 1747, for example, a 'grand' assembly in the city began with a dance by Lord Lymington and Lady Camilla Bennet.²⁸⁵

The most spectacular assemblies in the north east were those held in the region's provincial capital for special events.²⁸⁶ In 1748, for example, the Newcastle assembly was moved to a Monday so that it would coincide with the King's birthday on 31st October. The reports of the assembly described it as a 'grand' affair, attended by the mayor and his wife, accompanied by numerous 'Ladies and Gentlemen of the best Distinction'.²⁸⁷ On such evenings those who gathered to dance dressed themselves in their best clothes, creating a 'brilliant' assembly.²⁸⁸ How many people attended such events in Newcastle cannot be calculated, but in York an average of 200 to 300 subscribers bought tickets during the race week. At smaller urban centres and at rural locations assemblies were probably smaller than those held at provincial capitals such as Newcastle. While not all assemblies at the north east were on the same scale, they shared the same basic features, and their longevity confirms their popularity.²⁸⁹

Contemporaries regarded assemblies and balls as entertainments that were enjoyed most of all by women. Dances were often described in newspaper

²⁸³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 274-275. See below, pp. 306, 315.

²⁸⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/10/1743.

²⁸⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 03/10/1747.

²⁸⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/04/1749; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 156.

²⁸⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/04/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/11/1748; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 276.

²⁸⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 29/04/1749.

²⁸⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 193, 156.

advertisements as being held 'for the Entertainment of the Ladies', though we know that both men and women attended such public dances.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, at least one group of young men were so concerned about their exclusion from the assemblies, that they sought to establish an alternative series. Newcastle apprentices were barred 'by ancient Custom' from attending public dances in the city, and were therefore unable to attend the assembly series. In an advertisement placed in the *Newcastle Journal* in 1750, apprentices called for their masters to recognise the advantages of dancing as 'highly conducive to Health', and to allow them to establish a private assembly series.²⁹¹

It is not possible to identify who organised most of the assemblies and public dances in the north east during the period. However, in some centres, promoters of events can be identified, and their motives for promoting the events can be discerned. Some assemblies were organised by innkeepers, such as the Berwick upon Tweed assembly. From 1738 the race-week assembly was held in the 'Great Room' of Mrs Mary Selby, the landlady of an inn in Berwick.²⁹² If an innkeeper organised assemblies at his alehouse, then he could not only charge entrance money, but also benefit for the demand generated for food, drink, lodging and stabling.²⁹³ Other tradesmen also ran assemblies, such as Thomas Moore, a vintner in North Shields, who organised the summer assembly series at Tynemouth from 1740.²⁹⁴ Many events were organised by dancing masters, who used them as an opportunity to supplement their earnings, and to generate future income by advertising their services. In the 1740s there were thirteen

²⁹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 15/06/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/11/1748.

²⁹¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 27/01/1750.

²⁹² *Newcastle Courant*, 08/07/1738; *Newcastle Journal*, 18/08/1739.

²⁹³ For the facilities expected at assemblies see *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739.

²⁹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/10/1739.

balls organised by four different dancing masters held in Newcastle, and two balls held by a dancing master in Durham.²⁹⁵

The balls seem to have been open both to the general public, and to the pupils of the relevant dancing master. If his pupils performed well, watching their dancing would encourage the other men and women present to arrange dancing lessons with the dancing master. At the ball held by dancing master Hugh Dempsey in the Newcastle Assembly Room in June 1742, the pupils began the dancing, showing off their skills for the first three hours of the ball. At ten o'clock the rest of the company joined them on the floor.²⁹⁶ These balls were popular with pupils, because they provided an opportunity for students to impress the company with their new-found mastery of fashionable dances. Friends and family of the dancing masters' pupils probably attended in order to see the progress that the pupils had made, encouraged by the low price of these dances. Balls organised by dancing masters were slightly cheaper than assemblies, at only two shillings. The balls also enabled those who were interested in taking lessons with the dancing master to evaluate the quality of his teaching before committing themselves to expenditure on lessons.²⁹⁷

Actors also organised balls during this period in the north east. Dancing was an important element of theatre performances during this period, and many actors were able dancers.²⁹⁸ In summer 1744 a pair of actors who were performing in Newcastle with the Edinburgh Company of Comedians organised two balls.²⁹⁹ These dances were part performance and part ball. On the 29th May 1744 the audience at Mr Froment and

²⁹⁵ *Newcastle Gazette*, 07/10/1747; *Newcastle Courant*, 23/10/1742.

²⁹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 29/05/1742.

²⁹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 22/10/1748.

²⁹⁸ Nicoll, *History of Restoration Drama*, pp. 59-60.

²⁹⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 19/05/1744; *Newcastle Journal*, 26/05/1744

Mrs Dumont's ball were treated to a spectacular display of six new dances, each performed in different costumes. Their dancing was organised between dances for the paying company. Such events provided extra income for the actors, who were notoriously short of money. They must also have been popular with dancing enthusiasts, because the company could both dance and enjoy a performance of the most fashionable new dances for the same price as an ordinary ball ticket.³⁰⁰

Musicians sometimes arranged balls to follow their concerts, in order to encourage maximum attendance. Several such events occurred in the north east during the 1730s and 1740s, including the ball that followed Knerler's concert in the Newcastle Assembly Room in September 1746.³⁰¹ When balls were held immediately after concerts, it seems likely that the musicians stayed to play for the dance. Who provided the music for the other balls and assembly series in the north east is not so clear. In Newcastle and Durham, it is probable that the professional musicians from the subscription concert orchestras were among those who performed for assemblies. It is also likely that in urban centres that employed their own musicians, members of the town waits provided some of the music.³⁰² Those who attended the assemblies expected to be able to dance to good music, and the north east was well populated with professional musicians who could provide it.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 19/05/1744; Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 15-16.

³⁰¹ Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 11; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/08/1746.

³⁰² Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 125-126; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 4. See above, pp. 230, 232-233.

³⁰³ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1730. See above, pp. 230, 232-233.

Many assemblies were held in inns, such as the Hexham race week assembly in 1745, which was held at the Phoenix inn.³⁰⁴ Public buildings were also used, including town halls and a school.³⁰⁵ Existing premises with large rooms where dancing could be held were often altered and used for assemblies. In Tynemouth in 1739, existing premises were rebuilt and improved to create more space for dancing.³⁰⁶ However, the number of rooms built specifically to accommodate assemblies also increased during the period. A new assembly room was built in Newcastle in 1733, for example, forcing the regular assembly to use the Cordwainer's Hall until the new building was ready.³⁰⁷ The assembly rooms were completed by November 1733, and seem to have been located in the Groat Market, and owned by a Mrs Banson.³⁰⁸ Those attending assemblies wanted to dance in rooms that were spacious, comfortable and well furnished, and advertisements often promised that their premises conformed to these expectations.³⁰⁹

VII

In conclusion, the north east was well provided with venues for public sociability in the mid-eighteenth century. Leisure was commodified, and tickets were provided to the public on a commercial basis. However, the hypothesis of the emergence of a newly commercialised leisure market from the early eighteenth century

³⁰⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 17/08/1745; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/07/1738; A. Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760' in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 114-115.

³⁰⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 27/07/1734; *Newcastle Courant*, 24/06/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/05/1733; Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 242.

³⁰⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739.

³⁰⁷ Hinde, 'Public Amusements in Newcastle', 241-242; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 157-159.

³⁰⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 03/02/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 10/11/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/08/1748; *Newcastle Gazette*, 07/10/1747.

³⁰⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 159; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/08/1727.

requires reassessment.³¹⁰ Firstly, professional actors and musicians had long provided theatre and music on a commercial basis. Post-Restoration drama and music did not represent profound discontinuity from the theatre and music of the earlier seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. Although series of assemblies and public concerts were leisure forms that were developed from the mid-seventeenth century, commercial performances had been provided in rural and urban areas since at least the sixteenth century.³¹¹ Public drama and music was held in similar venues from the sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century. Although new methods of collecting revenue were introduced, the principle of charging audience members an entrance fee was established from at least the sixteenth century.³¹²

Furthermore, any attempt to contrast a wholly commercialised eighteenth-century leisure market with the patronage of the earlier period is doomed to failure. The need to create patronal relationships with the wealthier families of the area was present in both periods. The expectation of personal service with tickets, and the practice of bowing to gentry requests for particular music or plays ensured that such relationships continued. Although wide-spread patronage of entire bands of musicians or actors did not survive into the mid-eighteenth century, we have already seen that wealthier men and women continued to sponsor performances in order to demonstrate their status and fine taste.³¹³ It is also important to recognise that much of the patronage practised in the sixteenth century was fairly nominal. Many patronised troupes received little more than

³¹⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 117; Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure', pp. 265-285.

³¹¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 117-127, 150-162; Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society*, pp. 74-100; Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p. 122.

³¹² See for example, Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, p. 21; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 146-147; Anderson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, p. xvii.

³¹³ Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces*, pp. 28-31.

a small financial reward and the right to use the patron's name. As we have already seen, such bands and companies spent little time in their patron's household.³¹⁴

The number of concerts, plays and dances in the region probably increased further from the Restoration onwards, encouraged by the increase in surplus income, and assisted by the publicity provided by the newspapers.³¹⁵ By the mid-eighteenth century those living in the north east were able to enjoy year round leisure provision, with a winter season dominated by concerts and assemblies accompanied by some plays. This was followed by the summer season of theatre, punctuated by some assemblies and concerts. The summer race week and assize weeks were the high point of sociability in the region, when many plays, assemblies and concerts were given. Residents of the area were part of the mainstream of national culture in their engagement with theatre, music and dancing. There is little sign that those in the north east considered their entertainments to be inferior to the same activities elsewhere in the country, or in London. Indeed, they had every reason to be proud of the wide range and high standard of the so-called civilising pursuits available to them. Most of this provision was located in the urban centres of the region, though it is important to remember that some plays and music continued to be performed in provincial villages throughout the period. The newspaper advertisements show that several assemblies were held in rural locations.³¹⁶

The broad social involvement in both the consumption and provision of leisure under-mines Borsay's vision of a gentry-driven urban renaissance.³¹⁷ The concerts and

³¹⁴ Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp. 88-89, 140, 135-136.

³¹⁵ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 129-131.

³¹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 31/07/1731; *Newcastle Courant*, 12/04/1740. See below, p. 261.

³¹⁷ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, 200-204.

dances advertised in the local newspapers were attended by both the middling and upper sorts, and theatre is known to have had a far broader audience. Ordinary people were consumers of dramatic entertainment, and probably also of the musical performances and dancing provided by itinerant touring musicians who did not use the newspapers to advertise. Most of the cultural entrepreneurs of Newcastle appear to have been drawn from the middling sort. Innkeepers, dancing masters, actor-managers and the son of a town wait shaped the culture of sociability in the north east, and derived their income as much from pleasing the middling sort as from satisfying the gentry.³¹⁸

These social occasions thrived in the eighteenth century, just as they had in the sixteenth century, because people enjoyed them. Participation in such activities cannot be ascribed merely to the desire to follow fashion, and it is important to remember that dancing, music and theatre were valued by contemporaries. These arts are all as old as human culture itself, and are activities that provide for the ritual expression of human emotion and experience.³¹⁹ Theatre and concert-going were highly participatory in this period, and at balls and assemblies the paying dancers enacted the dances together. Dances provided young people with the opportunity to meet marriage partners, and we may imagine the emotions that men and women experienced as they danced with partners who attracted or bored them. Men and women attended such events because they enjoyed the experience of the concert, play or dance, accompanied by personal display, sociability and flirtation.³²⁰

³¹⁸ See above, pp. 207-210, 227-228, 244-245, 204-205, 248-249, 224.

³¹⁹ A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama From Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Background, Origins and Developments* (London, 1950), pp. 1-28; C. Sachs, *World History of the Dance* (New York, 1963), passim. See above, pp. 188-194, 220-224, 241-242.

³²⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 245; Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk*, p. 57. See above, pp. 210-213, 236-237, 245.

Chapter Six: Private sociability in County Durham and Northumberland

I

The foregoing chapters of this thesis have already explored the character of institutional and commercialised sociability in the early modern period. The final chapter examines patterns of socialising at occasions that contemporaries defined as private. The gentry and upper middling sort of the north east saw social events such as plays and assemblies, which were open to all comers, as 'public'. The ground where horse-races were held were referred to as 'the publick field', for example, and the Newcastle subscription concerts were timed so as not to interfere with 'other publick Diversions'. Eating at the meals that were sometimes provided to accompany the horse-races was often described in newspaper advertisements as dining 'in Publick'.¹

However, social events in family dwellings that were not open to all comers were not perceived as public, and tended to be defined as 'private' gatherings. Individual family houses were described as 'private houses', and the plays or concerts that were performed to order in gentry homes were known as 'private' performances.² This chapter is concerned with social events that were private in this sense, such as dinners, visits and hunting expeditions. Adopting this contemporary classification of sociable interactions does not imply that these occasions were perceived as purely domestic, because contemporaries viewed the gentry and upper middling sort home not merely as a household space, but also as an important arena. These families used social occasions

¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 27/01/1750; NRO, ZAL, 39/1/1, A. R. to Margaret Allgood 1715; *Newcastle Courant*, 22/07/1749; *Newcastle Courant*, 01/08/1747; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), pp. 227, 290.

² *Newcastle Journal*, 26/04/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741; *Newcastle Journal*, 28/03/1741; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 290.

in their houses to display economic and political power, and to maintain their social credit.³

This chapter uses personal letters and diaries written by and to men and women in County Durham and Northumberland. The principal collections of personal papers in major repositories in the two counties have been studied, although legal, business and ecclesiastical letters have been excluded. Many surviving diaries of residents of the region have also been consulted. The sample is inevitably biased towards the upper echelons of early modern society, and the bulk of the surviving correspondence was produced by members of the gentry. This allows us to establish a detailed picture of private gentry sociability, which is particularly important since the social activities of this group are central to the urban renaissance theory.⁴ The records also permit us to examine many of the social activities of the better-off elements of the middling sort, as a significant amount of the correspondence of professionals and members of the mercantile elite has also survived. Unfortunately, although every effort was made to include material relating to those of lower social status, the north east does not seem to have produced any artisan chronicler to match Nehemiah Wallington's account of life in London. Much less can therefore be discerned about the private sociable interactions either of artisans in the region, or of those below them in the social structure.⁵

While the majority of the personal papers studied for this chapter date from the eighteenth century, some revealing seventeenth-century letters and diaries do survive, and this chapter covers patterns of sociable interaction from the early seventeenth

³ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 9.

⁴ See above, pp. 4-5. For a description of the contents of the major archival collections consulted and more detail on the correspondents, please see the appendix to this thesis. See below, pp. 340-348.

⁵ P. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (London, 1985), passim.

century onwards.⁶ A further potential difficulty is created by the regional scope of this study. Correspondence across wide geographical distances was not uncommon in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and many surviving letters written to those in the north east came from correspondents in other regions of England. Fortuitously, large numbers of letters and copies of letters written by those within the study area survive, and those letters sent from outside the north east often discuss the dynamics of sociability of individuals from Northumberland and County Durham.⁷

The experience of sociability often proves surprisingly elusive, because contemporaries rarely spelled out social conventions that were obvious both to themselves and their correspondents. Furthermore, the area cannot boast an individual diarist or letter-writer who wrote in as much detail as the Lancastrian Elizabeth Shackleton, whose precise descriptions of her social life in both letters and diaries provided the raw material for Vickery's impressive network analysis.⁸ However, although some of the evidence is fragmentary, personal letters and diaries surviving from the north east can be analysed to reveal how sociability was structured and experienced. Thick description is employed here to create a detailed and textured account of patterns of sociability in the north east from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. This chapter will turn first to the cycle of seasonal sociability among the gentry and upper middling sort, and then explore the modes of socialising that shaped the whole year. Correspondence is then examined as a medium for social contact from a distance, constituting virtual sociability. Finally, attitudes to sociability are discussed, and the degree of change in practices and perceptions of sociability across the period is analysed.

⁶ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; NRO, 1DE, 5; NRO, 1DE, 9/14; NRO, ZBL, 193; NRO, ZBL, 194.

⁷ See, for example, NRO, ZAL.

⁸ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 11 and passim.

II

From the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century patterns of sociability varied according to the season. The most important seasonal division was that between the social cycles of summer and the winter. During the winter season the middling and upper sorts were able to engage in a wide variety of social engagements and commercial leisure activities in towns. In these months, many gentry and upper middling families took up residence either in urban centres within the region, or in London.⁹ The last two decades of the sixteenth century marked a turning point in the residence patterns of country gentlemen, who were increasingly attracted to London living. The growth of seasonal London residence can be measured by the swelling tide of criticism that it provoked.¹⁰ By the 1620s, James was concerned that the extent of gentry residence in London was weakening provincial administration. When he ordered the gentry back to their country seats in 1622, approximately 7000 families and 1,400 coaches vacated the capital. This first attempt by the crown to expel the provincial gentry from the metropolis was followed by other expulsions in the 1630s.¹¹

Despite royal resistance to London residence, by the 1630s three quarters of the peerage had bought a house that was either in or near the capital. Hundreds of the provincial gentry had either bought a London residence, or rented rooms for the winter season. The growth of the West End provided suitable town housing for these new residents, stimulating the growth of the London season that had become established

⁹ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 139-141.

¹⁰ J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford, 1986), p. 364; F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 141-148.

¹¹ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 119, 147.

between 1590 and 1620.¹² Gentlemen from the northern counties were travelling to London in increasing numbers from the late sixteenth century, and the early seventeenth-century expulsions included the names of many northern families who had taken up residence in the metropolis.¹³ After 1688, long and frequent parliamentary sittings stimulated the London residence of the nobility and gentry, and the inducements to attend the London season increased with the development of a national marriage market in the eighteenth century.¹⁴

From at least the early seventeenth century, travellers to London from the north east not only made new social contacts, but were also sustained by their networks in the provinces. Visitors often found that friends and family members from the north east were also in London for the season, and socialised with a northern circle. Their family, friends and neighbours who remained in the north east provided them with frequent information about other residents of the region who were setting out for London. In 1600 Robert Delaval from Seaton Delaval spent his summer in the capital. He associated with various family members and friends, including his cousin Peter, of Tynemouth, Northumberland. He also saw Anthony Felton, shortly before Felton returned to the north east to attend the Newcastle Assizes.¹⁵ Towards the end of the period, those travelling to London to attend the social whirl of the season continued to rely on regional networks for sociability in the metropolis. In March 1745, for example, Henry Vane and the Routh sisters were flirting in London, but also expected to meet in the summer at Stockton races in their home region.¹⁶ Those travelling to spend the

¹² L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 387-392.

¹³ J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry: From the Reformation to the Civil War* (London, 1969), pp. 21-23.

¹⁴ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 139-141; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 285-286.

¹⁵ NRO, IDE, 5/14; B. Anderton (ed.), 'Selections from the Delaval papers' in A. M. Oliver (ed.), *A Volume Of Miscellanea* (Newcastle Upon Tyne Records Committee, 9, 1930), pp. 147-149.

¹⁶ DRO, D/L.O/1/744, 10.

season at resorts and other urban centres outside the north east also drew on networks of regional sociability. In the eighteenth century Mrs Widdrington of Hexham considered moving on from London to spend part of the winter season at a spa. She was assured by a friend that it would not matter much if she had no one to go with as 'you will meet w[i]th a good many of y[ou]r Country folks there'.¹⁷ Another correspondent wrote from Bath in May-time to complain that company was very limited as there were 'very few North Country people hear'.¹⁸

London was considered the acme of fashion and culture, and those able to spend the season in London were envied. One County Durham correspondent told a relation visiting London that 'You are entertained in so different a manner & have everything so far Superior to what we have in the North'.¹⁹ Correspondents writing from the north east often assumed a stylised position of faux-ignorance towards friends or kinfolk experiencing the delights of London sociability. In the 1730s Katherine Carr described herself to her brother Ralph in this way, as 'a Poor auQuard Country Girl', and told him that he would have to make allowances for the fact that she had never in her life been further than ten miles south of Dunstan Hill. Ralph's brother Ben Carr wrote from Newcastle to tell Ralph that he had a duty to send regular news back to 'these poor creatures that scarce sees beyond the smook of their own Chimneys'. In this conventional discourse the urban centres of the north east could not compete with London for cachet, and Ben Carr contrasted Newcastle unfavourably with London as 'this dull place'. Attending London for the season was characterised as both pleasurable

¹⁷ NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to Mrs Widdrington in Brooks Street, Holborn, London, Sunday, no year.

¹⁸ NRO, ZAL, 39/7, to 'my Dear Fatty', Bath, 18 May, no year.

¹⁹ NRO, 855, box 4, to 'dear Brother', Dunstan Hill, 25 April, no year.

and civilising, and the majority of the upper gentry and nobility of the north spent at least one season in the metropolis.²⁰

However, residents of the north east also had more ambivalent perceptions of London residence. Families feared that their kinfolk would be unable to readjust to their usual routines in the north east, and letters to London often advised visitors against becoming spoiled by the gaiety of the town. In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, Anne Byne's friends in Newcastle warned her that her daughter Isabella would never be able to 'Relish the pleasures of this Country', having spent a season in London. Anne reported this in a letter to her daughter, and admonished 'Bell' to remember that happiness came from within. Anne told her daughter that she had been lucky enough to enjoy many pleasures in London, which Isabella 'must feed on for many Years to come'.²¹ London and the resorts were also notorious for extravagant spending, and correspondents often wrote back to the north east with reports of the unwise behaviour of friends and neighbours. Lancelot Allgood wrote from London to Hexham in the first half of the eighteenth century to recount the extraordinary behaviour of 'Mrs Smiths daughter'. Allgood reported that she was spending as though she had an income of five hundred pounds a year, and went everywhere by chair.²²

In the same period that the London season developed, the gentry began to move into the large provincial centres. By the early seventeenth century the Yorkshire upper gentry were making frequent visits to York, and taking up winter residence. The same process was noticeable in Durham and Newcastle, where gentry housing increased in

²⁰ NRO, 855, box 4, Katherine Carr to Ralph Carr, 14 November 1737; NRO, 855, box 4, to 'dear Brother', Dunston Hill, 25 April, no year; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 264-265.

²¹ NRO, 855, box 6, to 'Dear Bell', 15 May, no year.

²² NRO, ZAL, 43, Lancelot Allgood, Pandon Square, to Mrs Widdrington at Hexham, undated.

the period before the Civil War.²³ A pattern of winter residence was probably established relatively early, because country pursuits dominated the summer months of gentry families throughout the period. Cliffe suggests that gentlemen taking up residence in York during the winter months were partly motivated by the desire to avoid isolation in far-flung parts of the county when travelling was difficult. Gentry households also moved into towns to reduce their living costs and to enjoy a more extensive social life.²⁴ The gentry residents of these towns were able to enjoy commercialised cock-fighting, musical and dramatic performances from at least the later sixteenth century. In the period after the Restoration the season became more formalised, and the provision of leisure became more regular and more intensive. The commercialised leisure on offer by 1750 in the main centres of the north east included concerts, plays, balls, assemblies, curiosities and lectures.²⁵

The heavy expense that was involved in spending the season in London largely restricted over-wintering in the metropolis to the nobility and upper gentry. The lesser gentry of the north east were more likely to choose to spend the winter season at a local urban centre. They were joined there by some members of the upper gentry and nobility who regarded spending the season in a town in the north east as better value for money than London. Sir Edward Blackett's daughters Alethia and Maria spent time in Durham, Newcastle and York in 1709, and then spent the winter season of 1709 to 1710 in London.²⁶ In August 1710 Sir Edward instructed his two daughters to return to the north because the expense of maintaining them in London was too great. He reminded Maria

²³ Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry*, p. 20; J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), p. 7; A. G. Green, 'House and Households in County Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, c1570-1730', University of Durham, Ph.D thesis (2001), pp. 235-283.

²⁴ Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry*, p. 20.

²⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/11/1733; *Newcastle Courant*, 30/01/1742; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/08/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 13/04/1734; *The North Country Journal*, 11/12/1736. See above, pp. 129-187, 188-254.

²⁶ NRO, ZCK, 4, 1 September 1718; NRO, ZBL, 189, to Maria at Durham, 22 September 1709.

that this expenditure of £55 per year was reducing the money available for his daughters' marriage portions, and that he was also paying to support her brothers.²⁷ By April 1714 Alethia and Maria were resident in York, 'for they have very good acquaintance in this City, & may divert them Selves very well till my return'.²⁸ Those below the lesser gentry, and genteel families in straitened circumstances were not able to afford all the social events associated with the winter season, but might make the occasional trip to town to see a play and dine with friends.²⁹

The urban centres of the north east were perceived as centres of pleasure and fashion in their own right, and not as pale shadows of metropolitan splendour. Residents of County Durham and Northumberland were proud of their urban centres, and contemporary letters contain much praise of the diversions at the two main centres in the region, Durham and Newcastle. Elizabeth Baker was delighted to hear that her grandson George was to stay in Durham during the assize week in 1731, which she believed 'will Divert him very much Being so much Company in Town'.³⁰ Newcastle was described as a place of 'good Entertainment', and expected to be 'very Gay'.³¹ In the eighteenth century, the social occasions in the urban centres of the region were central to the operation of the local marriage market. Shortly before the Durham races in 1732, for example, one correspondent speculated of a female acquaintance that 'perhaps she may get A Spark at Durham'.³² A stay in town in the north east necessitated preparations to ensure suitably fashionable dress and accoutrements. When one of the Blacketts left

²⁷ NRO, ZBL, 189, 12 August 1710; NRO, ZBL, 189, 9 August 1710.

²⁸ NRO, ZBL, 190, to Mr. Pemberton, 29 April 1714.

²⁹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 264-265.

³⁰ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 August 1731. See above, pp. 238-239.

³¹ NRO, ZBL, 198, to 'Dear Brother', Vine Street, 22 February 1743.

³² NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 6 May 1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/04/1732; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 265-266. See above, pp. 163, 245.

Wallington in Northumberland for the Durham races in 1734, he diligently applied milk and lemon to his face to tone down his unfashionable country tan.³³

Provincial towns were characterised by strong civic self-consciousness, and those living in the provinces viewed some London entertainments with distrust. There is little evidence that new metropolitan developments in commercialised leisure and private entertaining were adopted wholesale in the provinces.³⁴ Although the fashionable variations on assemblies were exported to the north, for example, they were adapted for the provinces and did not enjoy unalloyed success. One highly fashionable symbol of metropolitan dissipation, the masked ball, seems to have been regarded as unsuitable for the north east. Only one public masquerade was recorded in the region in the course of the eighteenth century, in Newcastle in 1724.³⁵ There also seems to have been a general belief that routs, which were large assemblies, were not well-suited to the north. In the mid-eighteenth century Margaret Widdrington of Northumberland received various letters describing the unsuccessful attempt to introduce routs to York. The rout was highly fashionable in the early eighteenth-century metropolis, and several citizens of York experimented with the new dance that was the 'Tast of the Times'.³⁶

In mid-eighteenth century York the fashionable rout was adapted to local taste, with the provision of a vast array of food, 'contrary to the ruels'. Mrs Wentworth and Mrs Boucher succoured the guests at their routs with prodigious quantities of coffee, tea, chocolate, mulled wine and many varieties of cake. Lavish food and drink were not

³³ NRO, ZAL, 39/7, 10 July 1734.

³⁴ R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 238-241. See above, pp. 238-239.

³⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 18/04/1724; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 242-244.

³⁶ NRO, ZAL, 43, Dorothy Johnson to Mrs Widdrington, 21 April, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, J. S. in York to Mrs Widdrington, 8 April, no year; M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London, 1978), p. 191; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 242.

provided at the routs 'of the polite World', and made the York dances very costly for their hosts. One observer explained that routs had to be adapted to northern mores by saying that 'we yorkshire folks show more Generous hearts, and won't let the Spirits flag, for want of something comfortable to support them'.³⁷ Dorothy Johnson did not enjoy attending Lady Wentworth's large rout in the city, describing routs evocatively as 'Hurle Burlle Hurricains'. She thought that the attendance of 400 ladies and gentlemen had made the event 'excessive disagreeable'.³⁸

Another obstacle was the small number of private houses in York that were suitable to host a large ball of this kind. One unfortunate lady had to dismantle a bed in order to hold her rout, 'for few of our House's are Calculated for such things'. These failed adaptations of the metropolitan rout discouraged others, and 'J. S.' wrote to Hexham from York that 'this I believe put a stop to the fashion of routs'.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, the rout seems to have failed to catch on in either County Durham or Northumberland, where there is no mention of such dances being held, either in the local newspapers or correspondence. The gentry and upper middling sort of the north east were not quiescent consumers of every London fashion, and refused to adopt new forms and fashions in recreation which conflicted with local etiquette. In York, for example, leaving guests hungry seems to have been considered inhospitable, so hostesses were unable to obey 'polite' instructions that little food should be served at routs.⁴⁰

³⁷ NRO, ZAL, 43, Dorothy Johnson to Mrs Widdrington, 21 April, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, J. S. in York to Mrs Widdrington, 8 April, no year.

³⁸ NRO, ZAL, 43, Dorothy Johnson to Mrs Widdrington, 21 April, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, J. S. in York to Mrs Widdrington, 8 April, no year.

³⁹ NRO, ZAL, 43, Dorothy Johnson to Mrs Widdrington, 21 April, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, J. S. in York to Mrs Widdrington, 8 April, no year.

⁴⁰ NRO, ZAL, 43, Dorothy Johnson to Mrs Widdrington, 21 April, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, J. S. in York to Mrs Widdrington, 8 April, no year.

When the summer season approached, most of the gentry left the metropolis and the towns of the north east, and either returned to their country estates, or moved on to the watering places. Holy wells and springs had been frequented in the pre-Reformation period for medicinal and religious purposes. Most of these were located in rural areas, and were visited by people of all ranks, the majority of whom lived locally.⁴¹ Holy wells were suppressed at the Reformation, but the spas then underwent 'an Elizabethan renaissance'. The popularity of bathing in springs and taking waters for medicinal purposes increased in the late sixteenth century, and by the 1640s summer visits to watering places were very popular.⁴² Those with the requisite financial means were also able to travel to spa towns in Europe. In 1623, for example, Francis Delavel wrote to his brother Ralph in Northumberland, just after Francis's return from a spa in Germany.⁴³ Visitors are known to have continued to frequent the English spas during the civil war years, including Scarborough in Yorkshire. Hembry identifies the existence of at least sixteen spas across England by 1660, and notes that she excludes from her calculations the hundreds of medicinal springs throughout England that enjoyed a purely local popularity.⁴⁴ In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the number of spas increased further, and the facilities at spa towns improved.⁴⁵ Visitors included the gentry, the middling sort, and the labouring poor, who also took the waters.⁴⁶

The historiography of watering places, including Hembry's monograph, has tended to concentrate on urban centres. The chronology of the development of the pre-

⁴¹ J. Barrett, 'Spas and Seaside Resorts, 1660-1780' in J. Barrett, P. Corfield, R. O'Day and J. Stevenson, *The Rise of the New Urban Society* (Milton Keynes, 1977), p. 42.

⁴² P. Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815: A Social History* (London, 1990), pp. 2, 21, 74-75, 302; R. Lennard, 'The Watering-Places' in R. Lennard (ed.), *Englishmen at Rest and Play: Some Phases of English Leisure 1558-1714* (Oxford, 1931), p. 18.

⁴³ NRO, 1DE, 5/47, 28 August 1623.

⁴⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 65, 69.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 165, 310.

eminent resorts may be well known, but little has been written on the use of rural springs. Furthermore, the significant summer exodus to rural and urban watering places within the local region has not received the attention it deserves. Northerners travelled south to the famous spa towns of Bath and Tunbridge Wells, or the large spas of the north, but could also choose to spend the summer season in resort towns closer to home, that depended on local clientele.⁴⁷ Many residents of the north east chose to visit the prestigious northern resorts of Scarborough and Harrogate.⁴⁸ Harrogate had been a popular resort since the Elizabethan period, and when the living of nearby Knaresbrough fell vacant in 1642, it was described as requiring a competent cleric because of 'the great resort to it in summer time by reason of the wells'. The spring at Scarborough was probably discovered in 1620, and by 1660 was already sufficiently popular to be attracting hordes of visitors who lived up to a hundred miles away. It continued to attract residents of the north east in the first half of the eighteenth century, and Edward Delavel of Newcastle considered going to the town in 1719 to take the waters that 'are best for us Scurvy people'.⁴⁹

It is highly probable that there were popular locations for bathing and taking the waters in County Durham and Northumberland before the seventeenth century, but the earliest documented use of watering places in the area dates from the post-Restoration period. A spa at Butterby near Durham was in use by 1684, and three other springs in various districts of the city were being exploited in the last three decades of the seventeenth century. A vitrioline spring in Durham was advertised in a pamphlet

⁴⁷ P. Borsay, 'Health and leisure resorts 1700-1840' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 775-804; Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 65, 69; DRO, D/Sa/C/38.2; DRO, D/Sa/C/23; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 31-34, 141-142.

⁴⁸ DRO, D/Sa/C/38.2; D.R.O Salvin D/Sa/C/23; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 19, 52, 74; Lennard, 'The Watering-Places', p. 19; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 28 July 1733; NRO, 650, D/4, to Edward Delaval, Newcastle, 5 February 1719.

published in 1675, and Celia Fiennes sampled the waters of two other springs in the city in 1698. Fiennes likened the taste of the Durham 'Spaw Waters' to 'the Sweete Spaw in Yorkshire, the Tunbridge waters'.⁵⁰ By 1750 at least eight bathing and drinking centres had developed in Northumberland and County Durham, in both urban and rural locations. Two bathing centres developed in the towns of Hartlepool and Tynemouth by the 1730s, stimulated by the new fashion for sea bathing, and probably also by the collapse of the Scarborough cliff face in 1737, which caused short term damage to the spa there.⁵¹ Another 'most famous Spaw' in the Northumberland town of Rothbury was advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1738.⁵²

By the 1740s three further centres are known to have been attracting visitors, including the spa at the town of Hexham. By 1744 the County Durham market town of Wolsingham was also receiving visitors to its 'Chalybeate Spaw'.⁵³ In the village of Dinsdale a spa and cold well were already being exploited by 1746, when they were offered for sale in the local newspaper.⁵⁴ At some time in the eighteenth century spas also developed at the village of Cornhill in Northumberland, and in the rural locations of Axwell near Winlaton, and Shotley Bridge in County Durham.⁵⁵ Another unidentified spring in Northumberland was visited by Anne Byne in the mid-eighteenth

⁵⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 96; C. Morris (ed.), *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685-c1712* (London, 1982), p. 180.

⁵¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 13/06/1730; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739; Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 212; E. W. Gilbert, 'The Growth of Inland and Seaside Resorts in England', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 55 (1939), 22-23.

⁵² *Newcastle Courant*, 10/06/1738.

⁵³ *Newcastle Journal*, 09/05/1747; *Newcastle Journal*, 29/06/1745.

⁵⁴ W. Fordyce, *The History And Antiquities Of The County Palatinate Of Durham* (2 vols., London, 1857), vol. 1, p. 506; *Newcastle Journal*, 10/05/1746.

⁵⁵ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 360; J. Ryan, *History of Shotley Spa and Vicinity of Shotley Bridge* (Sunderland, 1841), p. 80; E. E. Mackenzie, *A Historical And Descriptive View Of The County Of Northumberland, And Of The Town And County Of Newcastle Upon Tyne* (2 vols., Newcastle, 1811), vol. 1, p. 451; Fordyce, *The History And Antiquities Of The County Palatinate Of Durham*, vol. 2, pp. 676-677.

century. Her letters recorded a journey into the west of Northumberland to take the waters, when she was forced to take lodgings three miles away from a rural spring.⁵⁶

As the popularity of individual spas increased, so did the potential for socialising among visitors, and recreation appears to have been a powerful attraction of watering places even in the late sixteenth century. In Buxton, for example, many Lincolnshire and Yorkshire gentlemen arrived to take the waters in 1580, diverting themselves with cock-fighting, dicing, card games, balls and musical performances.⁵⁷ Companies of actors appeared at resort towns in the summer, including appearances by Leicester's company and the Earl of Sussex and Earl of Worcester's players at Bath in the late sixteenth century.⁵⁸ In the eighteenth century, visitors to Hartlepool, Hexham, Rothbury and Tynemouth could attend summer season horse-races, and three of these towns are also known to have held summer cock-fights. Assemblies had been held at three resort towns in the region by the mid-eighteenth century, and private balls were reported at Hartlepool and Rothbury.⁵⁹ Visitors to Durham could partake of various leisure activities, which in the seventeenth century included the annual horse-race, run from at least 1613.⁶⁰ In the eighteenth century summer visitors could attend theatre performances, assemblies, balls, concerts, cock-fights and the annual horse-race.⁶¹ At rural springs, which could not support a season of commercialised leisure, the presence of fellow visitors allowed for more impromptu socialising. When Anne Byne chose to

⁵⁶ NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 21 April, no year.

⁵⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 3, 22; Lennard, 'The Watering-Places', pp. 15-17, 21, 29.

⁵⁸ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 14/09/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/07/1721; *Newcastle Courant*, 08/04/1732; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/12/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 17/08/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/09/1728; *Newcastle Journal*, 20/10/1739; *Newcastle Journal*, 17/10/1741; *Newcastle Courant*, 03/05/1746. See above, p. 244.

⁶⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 358. See above, p. 134.

⁶¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 24/05/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 05/07/1746; *Newcastle Courant*, 29/07/1727; *Newcastle Courant*, 16/06/1733.

drink the waters at an unspecified location in the west Northumberland, she did so secure in the knowledge that Mr Bonner and his family visited every year.⁶²

Across England, many resorts were promoted by local landowners or medical practitioners, who expected to profit from the visitors. In the north, innkeepers were particularly likely to promote resorts, and town governments seem also to have contributed to improving the facilities.⁶³ Towns and individual entrepreneurs promoted the healing qualities of their wells and springs in the hope of attracting visitors who would spend money on food, lodgings and entertainment. The advertisement for Rothbury spa in 1738 promised convenient accommodation for visitors.⁶⁴ Investment to improve facilities for visitors was worthwhile if it ensured future revenue. In 1739 an advertisement was placed in the *Newcastle Courant* announcing that the town of Rothbury had paid to improve the road between their town and Newcastle, for the benefit of those coming to drink the waters.⁶⁵ Leisure facilities were also improved in the hope of attracting more visitors to the resorts. In Hartlepool, for example, the population was reported to have launched a subscription for a long room in 1738, to which 'their genteel Alderman' had contributed.⁶⁶

Although Bath was the most prestigious of the spa towns, resorts in the north east had their own character, and there is no evidence that those who visited them perceived them as less medicinally efficacious or as socially backward. In 1738 the Rothbury spa was rather ambitiously advertised as equal to that of Tunbridge Wells. for

⁶² NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 21 April, no year.

⁶³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 43, 67, 167, 202.

⁶⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/06/1738.

⁶⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/06/1738; *Newcastle Courant*, 07/07/1739.

⁶⁶ E. Hughes, *North Country Life In the Eighteenth Century: The North-East, 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 400-401.

example.⁶⁷ The spas of the north east probably failed to attract a significant proportion of the aristocratic visitors that flocked to Bath, but it seems likely that the presence of the grandest visitors was not always of paramount importance to contemporaries. Rebecca Stainforth wrote to a friend in Hexham in the 1730s to report how much she had relished her summer stay in Scarborough. Her enjoyment had been enhanced because there were 'not much Qual[ity] which in my opinion, are no addition to those Places'.⁶⁸ Those who attended the resorts were not solely preoccupied with emulation, but attended because they expected to achieve health benefits and enjoyed both the public leisure activities on offer, and the opportunity to socialise with friends and family.⁶⁹

The social pace of the urban centres of the north east was far giddier than the sociability of the country, because the concentration of people meant that urban social networks were much larger. Urban sociability was characterised by more frequent invitations to private card parties and private dances, dining and visiting. Visitors to urban centres could also enjoy the commercialised leisure activities on offer. In the pre 1650 period these activities included music, dancing, theatre, horse-races and cock-fights. By the mid-eighteenth century this provision had increased to include regular series of public assemblies and concerts, established theatre seasons and lectures.⁷⁰ While in the countryside, families enjoyed a good degree of sociability with neighbours, but the available social pool was necessarily limited, particularly in the winter when travelling was more difficult. In the 1740s, Margaret Grey spent her time in the country 'dinning about with the few neighbours we have'. She reported that she had already

⁶⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 10/06/1738; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁸ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/27.

⁶⁹ For an argument that stresses emulation see Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 31-34, 231-232.

⁷⁰ *The North Country Journal*, 11/12/1736; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 261. See above, pp. 129-187, 188-254.

dined with five neighbouring families, ' & are to be at Mr barkers tomorrow'.⁷¹ However, Rebecca Stainforth's sister was very disappointed at being forced to spend Christmas in the countryside on health grounds, 'for a Town is certainly preferable to the Country at this time a year'.⁷² Even in the summer, when most gentry and some upper middling sort families spent time in the countryside, some complained that rural social life was too restricted. In the mid-eighteenth century Anne Byne was relieved to be returning to Newcastle for the summer mini-season, because 'the want of Company makes me so melancholy that I am not able to bear it, so I must away to the Town again'.⁷³

Some country areas had more elite families close by, or were fairly close to a town, offering better potential for socialising. One female correspondent described Margaret Allgood's 'Neighbourhood' in the Hexham area as being so 'good', that it was an exception to the general rule that the town was the best place to live in the winter.⁷⁴ The summer sociability enjoyed by Mary Allgood in rural Brandon was a whirl of visits, often taking up both morning and afternoon, and evenings spent dining with local families. One July 22nd she reported that her brother Lancelot had gone to the Morpeth races, while Mary was receiving a visit at Brandon from Mrs Lile and Mrs Kitty Ougle ' & some more Company'. Mary wrote to her sister to relate that 'we are mighty mirry now'. Furthermore, although some correspondents might miss the gaiety of the town, few wished to make prolonged visits to urban centres during the summer months.⁷⁵

⁷¹ DRO, D/St/C2/3/99; NRO, 753, box 1, G, P, (ii), from Margaret Grey, 10 January 1749.

⁷² NRO, ZAL, 43, Rebecca Stainforth to Margaret Allgood at Hexham, 6 December, no year.

⁷³ NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 29 May, no year. For the involvement of upper middling sort families in both the summer and winter seasons see Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 33-36.

⁷⁴ NRO, ZAL, 43, Rebecca Stainforth to Margaret Allgood at Hexham, 6 December, no year.

⁷⁵ NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, 12 July, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, 5 July, no year.

In summer the large towns became dry and dusty, and pleasure seekers left the urban centre where they had spent their winter season, invoking the troublesome heat, and the dwindling company. In late April 1747 George Wanley Bowes wrote from London that 'The Town Will soon grow too warm for the Company', and bemoaned the imminent departure of friends including 'my Friend Lyonell...whose Good Company, I shall be very much disappointed of.' Many men and women felt the lure of the fresh air and leisure pursuits of the countryside.⁷⁶ In the mid-eighteenth century Anne Byne was ready to leave Newcastle by 15th May, and explained her need to return to the countryside to 'get a little Fresh air'.⁷⁷ Another female letter-writer, Rebecca Stainforth, expressed her delight at the good weather that permitted her to enjoy 'all the pleasure the Woods and Fields can afford'. She explained that she enjoyed these country recreations all the more, because she had the company of a good-natured and 'agreeable' friend.⁷⁸

Hunting was one of the most popular countryside pursuits in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and had long antecedents as a gentlemanly sport. Books on hunting were produced from the late fifteenth century, and hunting for pleasure has an even longer history than its literature.⁷⁹ By the mid-eighteenth century hunting remained as popular as ever, despite the lampooning of the country squire in print, most notably in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Although Addison and Steele might mock the unrefined country gentry who thought of little beyond hunting, horse-racing and cock-fighting, the culture of the countryside proved resilient.⁸⁰ Hunting survived because it

⁷⁶ DRO, D/LO/F/744, 22; NRO 650, D/5, 20 May 1725; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 140-141.

⁷⁷ NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 29 May, no year; NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 15 May, no year.

⁷⁸ NRO, ZAI., 39/6/39.

⁷⁹ M. Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and pastimes of the English gentleman 1580-1630* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 27-36; K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (first edition 1983, reprinted London, 1984), pp. 145-147.

⁸⁰ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 262-263.

was an activity that was valued and enjoyed by the majority of gentlemen. The hunt was part of a masculine culture of shared expeditions, characterised by amiable competition to display hunting prowess.⁸¹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the gentlemen of the north east met frequently to hunt a variety of quarry including fowl, foxes, hares and deer.⁸²

A hunting expedition was considered successful if the men had enjoyed an exhilarating test of their skill and stamina, and that of their horses and hounds. In 1743 William Chaloner wrote to his uncle George Bowes, M.P. for County Durham, describing a good day's hunting in which, 'We ran a Fox from Yarm about nine weeks ago, two miles above Croft & at a cast...[two hounds]...took Croft [?] Bridge by way of Leap & lay for dead, the young bitch recovered got up, & stood the Chase to admiration...'⁸³ Good fellowship during the chase was also valued, and for many hunting enthusiasts the pleasure was enhanced by the company of their friends. In the early eighteenth century, for example, Catherine Collingwood told her brother-in-law that her husband was enjoying good hunting, but that 'he only wants y[ou]r good Company to make himself Compleatly happy in that Sport'. Social bonds were both forged and maintained by sharing the experience of the chase.⁸⁴

Hunting was an important element of the social interactions of many gentlemen in the north east, including Ralph Carr of Dunstan Hill, who hunted in the 1730s with

⁸¹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 272-276.

⁸² Anderton, (ed.), 'Selections from the Delaval papers', pp. 166-167; DRO, D/Sa/C/31; DRO, D/ST/C1/3/218; NRO, 855, box 4, from Katherine Carr, 5 March 1738; NRO, ZAL, 39/7, 10 July 1734.

⁸³ DRO, D/ST/C1/3/218.

⁸⁴ DRO, D/Sa/C/43/11; L. Gooch, *The Desperate Faction? The Jacobites of North-East England 1688-1745* (Hull, 1995), pp. 58, 64-65.

'our Very good Naber', known to his friends as 'Hunting Tome'.⁸⁵ For some gentlemen, hunting expeditions seem to have been their main form of socialising, as in the case of Bryan Salvin, who maintained his own pack of hounds, and took them out on joint expeditions with his friend, Mr Shafto. When Salvin contemplated selling his pack of foxhounds in 1714, his parents attempted to dissuade him, arguing that he had 'Nothing but 'em to devirt him selfe w[i]th all'.⁸⁶ Vickery exposes the frequency with which Lancashire gentlemen met up to share communal breakfasts to sustain them on the day of hunting ahead. Undoubtedly, the gentlemen of Northumberland and County Durham also ate and drank together before or after their day's hunting.⁸⁷ Singing hunting songs was another important part of the masculine fellowship of the hunt, and one such song written in the north east in this period has survived.⁸⁸

As in the rest of country, individual gentlemen in the north east kept small packs of hounds for hunting hare, deer and foxes, and hunters to ride in the field.⁸⁹ Men prided themselves on maintaining a good pack of hounds by careful breeding, rearing and training. Male correspondents discussed the best approaches to running their packs, and argued the merits of their own methods. Lending or giving hounds to a friend or relative was a common way for a keen hunter to strengthen ties of affection, while demonstrating the superiority of his own pack. In 1743, for example, the nephew of County Durham M.P. George Bowes gave him several hounds, including 'Countess', boasting that 'you cannot produce a finer creature'. Masculine honour could be enhanced or damaged by the standard of a man's pack of hounds, and Bowes's nephew declared

⁸⁵ NRO, 855, box 4, 5 March 1738.

⁸⁶ DRO, D/Sa/C/29.

⁸⁷ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 31, 207, 209.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 274; DRO, D/St/X/17/3, 1, 2, 3.

⁸⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 09/09/1749; NRO, ZSW, 454, 10 November 1731.

that he would have hanged his hounds before 'you should have any from me th[a]t are in the least faulty'.⁹⁰

Competition was an integral part of the hunting expedition, and was sometimes formalised by wagers or by organised hound trails. In 1616, for example, a hunting competition took place between Sir Bartie Bulmer and Sir George Conyers. The diarist Thomas Chaytor recorded that two or three other men also attended 'for companie', and that 'the wager easie & frendlie'.⁹¹ Organised hound trails, where gentlemen could compete for prizes, were run alongside the horse-races in both Newcastle and Shildon in 1723, and in 1739 a competition was organised between two Northumberland dogs and two Yorkshire dogs. The owners wagered fifty guineas each, and the *Newcastle Courant* reported the ensuing victory of the two dogs from Northumberland.⁹² The honour that men could accrue from success at such events is displayed by a hunting song that survives in the Durham Record Office. The song immortalised the victory of Sir William Bowes's hounds in a hound trail run on Stenton Hill, and contained unabashed praise for his pack. Not only did the author claim that Sir William's pack 'all the North he may Crack', but also that it would be hard to find any hounds in the whole of England to beat his. Unsurprisingly, the song was not written by an unbiased observer, but by John Fallowfield, huntsman and brewer to Sir William.⁹³

Women were rarely included in hunting expeditions, though some women are known to have shot game. A minority of women also took part in fox-hunting on horseback, though this was beginning to be considered inappropriate by the mid-

⁹⁰ DRO, D/ST/C1/3/218.

⁹¹ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 43.

⁹² *Newcastle Courant*, 18/05/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1723; *Newcastle Courant*, 21/04/1739.

⁹³ DRO, D/St/X/17/3. 1, 2, 3.

eighteenth century.⁹⁴ While the men spent their days in sociable hunting, many women shared time at the card-table, engaging in various games including whist and quadrille.⁹⁵ This typical gendered division of country leisure was in operation within the Widdrington household in Northumberland in early autumn 1735. A female friend wrote to Mrs Widdrington that 'as the Gentlemen will have their entertainment in the fields, I imagine yours will be Quadrill for the Country will admitt of nothing better for the Ladies now'.⁹⁶ Although card playing was most particularly associated with the female sex, card parties were not restricted to women, and men also took part in summer card games. Players enjoyed the excitement of competing, and Mary Allgood described gleefully how she and her partner Mr Stoddart were enjoying a winning streak, 'w[hi]ch is bore w[i]th great patiance'. Contemporaries not only played for the sake of the card game itself, but also valued the social interaction at the card party. Mary Allgood seems to have relished her card parties and described her fellow card-players as 'really as sival & friendly as possiable'.⁹⁷ Women also spent their time in walking together, letter-writing, and in housekeeping tasks such as bottling or gathering fruit.⁹⁸

Both the men and women of the gentry returned to the larger urban centres of the north east for the shorter summer season, connected to the race and assize weeks. In July 1734, for example, W. Blackett and his wife both left the country, where W. Blackett had been spending his time hunting deer. They travelled separately to Durham to attend the races, where visitors also had the opportunity to participate in the flurry of

⁹⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 272-274.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

⁹⁶ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/31.

⁹⁷ NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] Allgood to Mrs Widdrington, 8 July, no year; Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 249-250. See above, pp. 245-246.

⁹⁸ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/39; NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, 12 July, no year.

social events that frequently occurred alongside the races and assizes. This summer stay in the town was usually short, though presumably not always as short as W. Blackett's stay in Durham in July 1734, which lasted only one night.⁹⁹ In Newcastle, summer theatre seasons of a month or more were held sporadically from at least 1728, and a regular three month season from 1747. This may have tempted visitors into the city for longer periods of summer residence, though the lure of the country in summer appears to have been strong.¹⁰⁰ Even the pleasure of attending the horse-races could be endangered by what contemporaries perceived as the oppressive quality of towns in hot weather. In June 1736 one woman writer asked a female friend whether she had attended the Newcastle races, because 'I fear the excessive Heat w[oul]d make it disagreeable'.¹⁰¹

III

The previous section established the seasonal pattern of sociability among the gentry and upper middling sort, and we must now examine the characteristics of private social interactions throughout the year. The peripatetic routine of many gentry and some upper-middling sort households meant that families often had two sets of neighbours with whom they socialised, those in the town and those in the country. Writing from Newcastle in the mid-eighteenth century Anne Byne sent news from 'our street'. She listed the four babies recently born to their neighbours, the Reays, Johnsons and Featherstons.¹⁰² While in Newcastle she was also visited by 'our Country Neighbours...

⁹⁹ NRO, ZAL, 39/7, 10 July 1734. See above, pp. 197-198.

¹⁰⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 20/04/1728; *Newcastle Courant*, 06/06/1747.

¹⁰¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/28.

¹⁰² NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, addressed to 'Dear Bell', undated.

Miss Bonner came w[i]th Mrs Henzell'.¹⁰³ Relatives were also prominent in individuals' social networks, and from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century much socialising took place between family members. In early seventeenth century County Durham, kin were central to the sociability of Thomas Chaytor and his family. Between 1612 and 1617 Thomas recorded that he, his wife Jane and their children shared meals with, visited or were visited by many relatives. Measured in this way, relatives were in the majority among their social contacts, and included Jane's parents, Thomas and Jane's siblings and their spouses, nieces, nephews, cousins, and an uncle. Similarly, in late eighteenth-century Lancashire, over a third of the social events or exchanges in which Elizabeth Shackleton participated included kin members. Family members were also prominent in her correspondence networks, as approximately half of all the letters that she wrote or that were sent to her were from relatives. These findings are consistent with other network studies that have also shown the prominence of social interactions with relatives during this period.¹⁰⁴

While bonds of kinship were one constituent of social networks, personal compatibility was another important component in the establishment of friendship groups. Many letters reveal the strong bonds of affection that had developed between individuals in a social circle, often as a result of shared interests. Thomas Chaytor, for example, commended his 'good frend' Thomas Horsley for his skill in physic, law and good knowledge of 'other literature', in which he was 'rarely Learned'. Approximately a hundred years later, in the 1720s, William Davison of Beamish was exchanging detailed and affectionate letters with a friend in Chester, who was a fellow horticulture

¹⁰³ NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to her daughter Isabella, 15 May, no year.

¹⁰⁴ S. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), p. 6; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 23, 334 n. 29; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867.

enthusiast.¹⁰⁵ Not only character and interests, but also political or religious allegiances could cause individuals to gravitate to one-another. Although families with differing political allegiances did socialise together, some social networks appear to have been dominated by individuals with similar political or religious perspectives. The social networks of the Catholic Salvins of Tudhoe, the subject of a case study later in this chapter, were characterised by strong links with families of the same confession.¹⁰⁶ Another social network where individuals tended to share the same political perspective was that of Margaret Widdrington, wife of Henry Widdrington of Cold Park, a Catholic who fought for the Jacobites in 1715. In 1735, Rebecca Stainforth was surprised to hear from Margaret that one of the Misses Currers had been in the 'fine Party when the abby People had their friends'. Rebecca explained that she had assumed that 'nothing that bore the character of a Whig' would have been welcome there.¹⁰⁷

The staples of sociability throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were visiting and communal eating. Maintaining social networks required a high degree of contact, and visiting neighbours, friends and kin was an important form of social exchange, in which reciprocity was paramount. One female letter-writer, Mary Allgood, told her sister humorously one July that her mornings were often spent 'gossaping', and 'I'm too much the fine Lady to spend my afternoons at home alone'. Although Mary would have liked to spend the afternoon of 12th July at home, Mrs Shafto had invited her to visit. Mary decided that she must attend, despite the fact that she had already dined with the Shaftos the previous evening. The following day Mary felt obligated to

¹⁰⁵ DUL, Shafto (Beamish) Papers, 497-498; NRO, ZAL, 39/6/21; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 279-282; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 25-26, 39-40, 58-59; DRO, D/Sa/C/19; See below, pp. 287-290.

¹⁰⁷ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/21; E. Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History* (15 vols., Northumberland County History Committee, 1893-1940), vol. 15, p. 200; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, p. 62.

visit Mrs Errington at Beaufront Sands, since she had already refused so many invitations to Beaufront. She explained that she was wary of declining any more, in case her friend became 'hufft'.¹⁰⁸

Failure to return visits was regarded as a breach of manners, and occasioned great offence. When Sir Francis Blake of Ford travelled south in 1705, he received an angry letter from his daughter, who lived near Newcastle, about his failure to visit her on his way. Blake responded by denying her an apology, writing sternly that his illness had made him unable to travel the extra distance to see her.¹⁰⁹ Contemporaries often took care to write in advance to explain failure to visit, citing ill-health or poor weather. A deliberate failure to return a visit or to issue an invitation could be used to slight a former friend or acquaintance. In the earlier eighteenth century Frances Brandling wrote to Mrs Widdrington in Hexham to complain about the behaviour of her sister, who had decided that 'none of us is to be invited to dinner because we did not stay there w[he]n we were all in our trable'. The initial failure to accept an invitation had so angered Brandling's sister that she responded by withholding the respect and recognition of kinship that social invitations conveyed.¹¹⁰

The letters exchanged between Elizabeth Baker of York and William Pye of Durham convey powerfully a sense of the value system that structured visiting. Elizabeth enjoyed seeing friends, family and acquaintances, and often expressed her gratitude to those who had come to visit her. In 1734 she wrote to Pye, having recently returned to York from a stay in London and Bath. She expressed her 'Great felicity &

¹⁰⁸ NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[lgood] to her sister, 12 July, no year.

¹⁰⁹ NRO, 650, D/2, to 'dear daughter', 13 September 1705.

¹¹⁰ DRO, D/Sa/C/18/8; NRO, ZAL, 43, F[rances] Brandling to Mrs Widdrington, Hexham, 15 January, no year.

Comefort' at having returned home, close to Pye, her grandchildren and cousin. She was also grateful for the many friends from Durham and York who had in 'so kind Abudenc' visited her to welcome her back to the north.¹¹¹ When she received unexpected visits she was delighted, as when Mr Wharton arrived one night in September 1734, bearing a letter and money from Pye.¹¹²

Elizabeth appreciated lengthy visits, and often recorded the time that guests stayed. In January 1733 she was pleased to relate that a visitor had stayed for two hours, and also noted with delight that she had received 'A long viset' in April of that year.¹¹³ The success of the visit was partly measured by the guests' enjoyment, signalled by their reluctance to leave. When Dr. Ashenton visited Elizabeth Baker in November 1732 she reported ecstatically that he 'would not Take acquitenc from me'. Elizabeth also measured the success of visits by the appropriateness of the behaviour of her guests, and how much she enjoyed their company. She was positively ascerbic after a visit from a Mrs Wilkinson in 1732, having been most unimpressed by her vanity and obsession with clothes. Elizabeth advised Pye not to marry her because 'I Think she has Littel in her but feddil fadils & minding fine Clothes To Set her of'. She warned Pye that although Mrs Wilkinson might be rich, she was too old for him, and too headstrong. Elizabeth's poor impression of Mrs Wilkinson was doubtless not improved by Mrs Wilkinson's failure to deliver Elizabeth's messages properly.¹¹⁴

Elizabeth Baker particularly enjoyed visits when her guests brought her gossip and news, as in January 1733, when Major Davison 'Told me Aboundence of news'.

¹¹¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 4 May 1734.

¹¹² NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 September 1734.

¹¹³ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 January 1733; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 April 1733.

¹¹⁴ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 6 May 1732.

including the latest intelligence of colliery agreements and disputes.¹¹⁵ She was delighted when visitors bringing letters or money from Pye were also able to give her news of his health and doings.¹¹⁶ Elizabeth also commented favourably on guests whose behaviour she perceived as friendly and well-mannered, describing Mr Branfort as 'a very pritty young Gentlemen'. Branfort had visited her to bring a letter and money from Pye, and Elizabeth had given him wine. They had toasted Pye's health together, and Elizabeth hoped that Branfort would return to drink tea with her the following afternoon.¹¹⁷ In other cases when she reported successful visits, Elizabeth described guests approvingly as 'very Cevil', and 'very Good Comepany'.¹¹⁸

Contemporaries felt that visits were particularly appropriate at certain times, which included rites of passage, and important holidays. Visiting during times of illness or bereavement was perceived as a social duty, and performed the dual role of providing practical help and emotional sustenance. When Ralph Grey's wife was unwell in August 1745, Grey wrote to invite his sister 'Pad' to come from Preston to visit, because he felt they would benefit from the 'favour of her company'.¹¹⁹ Various letters also show that newly married couples were received by visits from their neighbours. When Ralph Carr married in the 1750s, his friends Lud Grant and Alexander Collingwood wrote to promise visits.¹²⁰ The birth of a new baby occasioned visiting, not only from women who came to support and congratulate the mother, but also from well-wishers of both sexes. When George Bowes' wife gave birth to a son, the proud father reported that

¹¹⁵ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 January 1733.

¹¹⁶ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 23 May 1733.

¹¹⁷ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 23 May 1733.

¹¹⁸ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 30 November 1732; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 April 1733.

¹¹⁹ DRO, D/St/C1/3/221/2; NRO, 753, box 1, G, volume 1743-5, 9 August 1745.

¹²⁰ NRO, 855, box 4, 15 February 1754; NRO, 855, box 4, 21 December 1753.

visitors 'come in so fast' that the kitchen was on their fifth batch of baking.¹²¹ The traditional holidays of Christmas and Easter remained important occasions for sociability until at least 1750, and family members often gathered together at these times. In 1710, for example, Sir Edward Blackett instructed his daughters Alethia and Maria that they should accept any invitation 'to Easter' at their uncle Bridges'.¹²² From at least the early eighteenth century, the birthdays of both adults and children were commonly celebrated with visiting friends. On 15th November 1736 one female correspondent reported that her mother had reached her 71st birthday the previous day, 'which we Celebrated with great Joy'.¹²³

Visitors to households in the north east were often invited to share a meal, and all the meals of the day were potential occasions for socialising. Even breakfast could be a sociable meal, whether for men about to set out on hunting expeditions, or for individuals of both sexes before a journey. In the mid-eighteenth century, Mrs Widdrington of Hexham was invited to 'breakfast comfortably' with a friend before they set out on a journey together.¹²⁴ Invitations to dinner were frequently issued to guests of both sexes, and were a staple of sociable interaction throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The early seventeenth-century diary of Thomas Chaytor records how frequently he and his wife were invited to dinner by friends and relatives. On 21st January 1616, for example, they dined at Chaytor's uncle Lambton's in Durham, 'where the cheare was excedinge great'. On the 31st of the same month they 'dined and Supped with Mr Coop where we hadd great and kindest entertainment'.¹²⁵

¹²¹ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 2; NRO, 650, D/5, 14 June 1701; DRO, D/St/C1/2/74.

¹²² DRO, D/St/C1/2/90/13; NRO, ZAL, 37/9/353; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 18; NRO, ZBL, 189, 6 June 1710.

¹²³ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/18; DRO, D/Sa/C/32, 31 January 1715.

¹²⁴ NRO, ZAL, 43, HLG [?] to Mrs Widdrington, undated; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 207.

¹²⁵ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 42-43.

In the course of the eighteenth century it became increasingly fashionable to dine in the late afternoon, often as late as four o'clock. The other major change to dining practices in the eighteenth century was the new custom whereby the ladies left the dining room after the meal. This left the male diners some time for masculine talk and companionable drinking, which Ralph Grey of Backworth characterised in 1734 as 'the gentlemen's drinking hard & talking downright bawdy.' As well as indulging in alcohol and risqué conversation, men also smoked together in the after-dinner hour. In 1713, Captain Millington was obviously missing his smoking companion William Jones, and was moved to send him a message complaining that he 'has a great miss of you, to take a pipe in a Evening'.¹²⁶ The men and women were usually reassembled at the end of the evening, when tea, coffee and supper might be offered. However, despite these changes, dinner remained the main occasion for sociability of all kinds. When Mr Cotesworth was courting Jane Douglas in the early eighteenth century, for example, he was frequently invited to dine with the Douglas family, and Jane's father often went to dine at Cotesworth's.¹²⁷ Supper was consumed in the late evening, and was also a meal to which guests of both sexes might be specifically invited.¹²⁸

By the eighteenth century hot beverages could be served to visitors throughout the day, and Elizabeth Baker of York often invited guests to take tea with her. The tea-party was most closely associated with women in contemporary discourse, and Elizabeth certainly hosted some all-female gatherings at her tea table, including one

¹²⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 207, 334, n. 32; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book from 15 September 1733 to September 1736, March 1734; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 294; NRO, ZBL, 190, to 'Honest Mr Jones', 16 September 1713.

¹²⁷ NRO, ZBL, 197, from J[ane] D[ouglas], 12 November, no year; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 207.

¹²⁸ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 42; NRO, ZAL, 43, from M[ary] A[llgood], 5 July, no year; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 207.

celebration in February 1734, when she took tea with several ladies 'of my Acquaintanc'. However, tea was also served to male guests, and one Sunday in January 1733, for example, Elizabeth gave tea to two cousins and a 'Mr Alling', who 'Came all To see me...& was so kind To stay & Take Tea with me'.¹²⁹ Both male and female guests were also likely to be offered wine to drink, and glasses were often raised in toasts to absent friends.¹³⁰

Visitors might be entertained with music, which could be accompanied with dancing. In 1756, the gathering at Ralph Carr's house enjoyed 'a most agreeable Concert'. It is unclear whether the three 'Women Singers & an Eunuch' who performed were professional musicians, or came from among the guests and hosts. Many gentlemen and women of the north east received some musical education, and music-making in the home was common in this period. Jeromma Chaytor of County Durham, for example, was sent to Newcastle in 1615 to 'be instructed on the lute', and taught to read, write and sew. Her lute playing was probably destined to enliven the future social occasions in the Chaytor household.¹³¹ Music was not only provided by amateur musicians among the assembled company, but also by paid performers. In the mid-eighteenth century Mary Allgood enjoyed a ball at a house in Northumberland, where the music was provided by musicians from Newcastle. There were approximately fifteen dancers in total, and she noted gleefully that there had been 'as many men again as woman w[hi]ch is not coman'. The 'night was spent very agreeably in Dancing' until 3 a.m., and Mary related with delight how both Mr Matty and Mr Jennison were keen to secure her as their partner for

¹²⁹ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 9 February 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 January 1733; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 207-209.

¹³⁰ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 9 February 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 21 October 1731.

¹³¹ J. Harley, *Music in Purcell's London: The social background* (London, 1968), pp. 24, 34-35, 38; NRO 855, box 4, to 'My Dearest Lass', Dunstan Hill, Monday, no year; W. L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society: from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953), pp. 201-239; DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 38. See above, p. 237.

the night.¹³² Households could also commission private performances of plays for their guests, from touring companies of actors. Some plays were performed in gentry households by amateur gentry actors and actresses, for the amusement of their friends and neighbours.¹³³

IV

Such sociable interactions strengthened bonds within a social network, and this process can best be demonstrated by a case-study of the surviving early eighteenth century correspondence of the Salvin family. The Salvins were members of the Catholic gentry, and had lived at Tudhoe Hall in County Durham from the early seventeenth century. Catholic families had a reputation for being hospitable, and participated in the mainstream of elite sociability, socialising with their Protestant neighbours, and spending their seasons in London, Bath and northern urban centres. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Jesuit John Thornton, chaplain at Haggerston Castle, spent many of his leisure hours hunting and attending horse-races. He developed strong friendships not only with Catholic gentry families, but also with many of the horse-racing and hunting enthusiasts of the region.¹³⁴ However, Catholic families also developed close links with other Catholic gentry, who shared their religious beliefs, political perspectives and experiences of recusancy.¹³⁵ The social network of the Salvins of Tudhoe included George Collingwood, a Jacobite executed for his part in the 1715

¹³² T. Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk* (Norwich, 1979), p. 2; NRO, 650, D/1, 19 September 1681; NRO, ZAL, 43/1, M[ary] A[llgood] to Mrs Widdrington at Hexham, Thursday night, undated. See above, p. 235.

¹³³ P. W. White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 130; *Newcastle Courant*, 26/12/1741; M. H. Dodds, 'The Northern Stage', *Archeologia Aelianna*, 3rd ser., 2 (1914), 50-52; R. Welford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed* (3 vols., Newcastle, 1895), vol. 2, pp. 49-54; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 236. See above, p. 205.

¹³⁴ Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 25-26; Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, p. 174.

¹³⁵ Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 39-40, 58; DRO, D/Sa/C/19.

rebellion, and other Catholic families, such as the Widdringtons, Haggerstons, Claverings of Callaly, Withams and Charltons.¹³⁶

Members of the network strengthened their ties by visits, invitations, and by shared dining and drinking. Visits were keenly sought, and Ralph Salvin of Tudhoe was frequently invited to London by his relation A. Browne, to Eslington by George Collingwood and his wife, who was Ralph Salvin's sister-in-law, and to Durham by relation Bryan Salvin.¹³⁷ Ralph Salvin seems to have been unusually reluctant to leave his own home, and his lawyer David Dixon felt the need to warn him against immuring himself at Tudhoe. Dixon wrote from Durham to advise that 'Melancholy comes fast enough without courting, & a man maybe a good Christian without living in a Cloyster or sell'. Ralph Salvin seems to have accommodated Catholic priests at Tudhoe Hall, and Dixon may have feared that Ralph was spending too much time in prayer.¹³⁸ Ralph also seems to have spent his leisure time lavishing attention on his garden, which left one visitor in 'great raptur's', and he may also have been responsible for the improvements made to Tudhoe Hall in the early eighteenth century.¹³⁹

Ralph may have been unwilling to leave Tudhoe, but he received visits from various friends and relations including William Ettricke, Jack Witham and George Meynell.¹⁴⁰ He maintained good hospitality, and was clearly popular with his friends, who on a visit to Widdrington 'always toasted y[ou]r health'. Ralph enjoyed a good social life, including a close friendship with his lawyer Dixon, who wrote to Ralph in

¹³⁶ DRO, D/Sa; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 93, 17, 18, 23, 59, 127-128, 64.

¹³⁷ DRO, D/Sa/C/24; DRO, D/Sa/C/28; DRO, D/Sa/C/34.

¹³⁸ DRO, D/Sa/C/43/8; A. G. Green, 'Tudhoe Hall and Byers Green Hall, County Durham: Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century Social Change in Houses', *Vernacular Architecture*, 29 (1998), 37.

¹³⁹ Green, 'Tudhoe Hall and Byers Green Hall', 37.

¹⁴⁰ DRO, D/Sa/C/18/10; DRO, D/Sa/C/37; DRO, D/Sa/C/41; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 58-59.

February 1720 to say that he was looking forward impatiently to their next meeting.¹⁴¹ Although Ralph Salvin seems to have been slow to return his visits, his sociable brother-in-law, George Collingwood of Eslington, performed the expected role of an eighteenth-century gentleman to perfection. Collingwood was thirty years old in 1715, and was reported to be 'a very pious gentleman and well-beloved in his country'. His many visits to friends and family included travelling with his wife to dine with Gerard Salvin in November 1710.¹⁴² He also stayed with the Widdringtons in April 1713 and went to Callaly to a celebration for Mr Clavering's birthday in January 1715.¹⁴³ He and his wife were not only eager to invite Ralph Salvin to their home, but also entertained Salvin's daughter when she visited them.¹⁴⁴

Male friends and relatives bonded over frequent hunting expeditions, including an outing at Widdrington in 1713, which George Collingwood thoroughly enjoyed. He announced that 'all Diversions and everything went forwards with so much ease and freedome', that he intended to make a return visit every hunting season. William Widdrington was well known for his hospitality and addiction to rural pursuits, and was reputed to be 'wonderfully esteemed at home by all the gentlemen of the county'.¹⁴⁵ The men also seem to have enjoyed companionable after dinner drinking, such as the occasion in the second decade of the eighteenth century when Lord Widdrington visited Ralph Salvin at Tudhoe. Lord Widdrington told his friends that he 'Drank the best wine...and Stayed att Tuddoe til three a Clock in the morning and was very merry'.¹⁴⁶ Ralph Salvin appears to have had a reputation for plying his guests with excellent wine.

¹⁴¹ DRO, D/Sa/C/28; DRO, D/Sa/C/18.

¹⁴² DRO, D/Sa/C/19; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁴³ DRO, D/Sa/C/32; D.R.O, D/Sa/C/28.

¹⁴⁴ DRO, Salvin D/Sa/C/30; DRO, Salvin D/Sa/C/43/5.

¹⁴⁵ DRO, Salvin D/Sa/C/28; Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁶ DRO, Salvin D/Sa/C/32.

One correspondent claimed that a stay at Tudhoe had made Mr Hays 'so glutted w[i]th the fine wines...that ale will hardly go downe with him now'.¹⁴⁷

These social networks not only provided their members with entertainment and sustained them emotionally, but were also to affect their decisions in 1715. Gooch shows that the ties of loyalty established between fellow Catholics were decisive in determining whether individuals joined the rebellion of that year. Many of those who fought were motivated as much by loyalty to friends and family as by religious or political conviction.¹⁴⁸ George Collingwood of Eslington turned out to fight alongside John Clavering of Callaly, to whose house he had been a visitor only a few months earlier, and his friend Lord Widdrington, with whom he had often gone hunting.¹⁴⁹

V

Having examined how social interactions created close-knit networks it is now important to look at how experiences of sociability varied according to gender. Throughout the period, women socialised in exclusively female company on some occasions, but also attended mixed events. The diary of Thomas Chaytor provides an illuminating account of the extensive social life enjoyed by his wife Jane in early seventeenth-century County Durham. Thomas was registrar of the Consistory Court of Durham, and Jane was his second wife. She was a recusant, and Thomas was frequently threatened with the loss of his office as a result.¹⁵⁰ Some of Jane's sociability involved activities that were exclusively female, particularly attendance at child birth. On 15th

¹⁴⁷ DRO, Salvin D/Sa/C/43/8.

¹⁴⁸ Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹ Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 40, 63-65; DRO, D/Sa/C/28; DRO, D/Sa/C/28.

¹⁵⁰ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 13-15.

January 1613, for example, Jane Chaytor set out to stay with the Bulmers to assist with Lady Bulmer's delivery and support her afterwards. Although Nicholas Bulmer was born on the 18th of January, Jane stayed for another month because of Lady Bulmer's 'weakness after her deliverance'.¹⁵¹ When Jane herself gave birth she was also supported by her network of female friends. Thomas recorded that Dorothy Johnson 'came to her' on June 3rd 1616, and that Jane had expected to give birth on 'most of the daies of this Moneth from 4 to the 22'. Her baby boy was finally born on the 26th of June, and Dorothy was probably at the house with Jane for over three weeks.¹⁵² Jane Chaytor also supported female relatives and friends in time of sickness, staying with her friend Lady Bulmer when she was taken ill, and also with her mother in Newcastle when she was suffering from a 'sore foot w[hi]ch payned her'.¹⁵³

Jane sometimes went alone to social events that were not exclusively female, as she did in March 1615 when both she and her husband were invited to a christening, but Thomas was too unwell to attend.¹⁵⁴ Jane also stayed at her parents' house in Newcastle without her husband.¹⁵⁵ More commonly, Jane Chaytor socialised together with her husband and their children, often welcoming guests to her own house for the day, or for an extended visit. She took control of the household expenses from February 1614, and must have played a significant part in deciding what preparations would be made for guests and what food would be served. She and Thomas hosted various events at Butterby including christening dinners, Christmas celebrations and the wedding dinner of their niece Margery Athie and her new husband John Richardson, when a 'good

¹⁵¹ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols., London, 1816-40), vol. 4, p. 111.

¹⁵² DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 50.

¹⁵³ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 35, 44.

¹⁵⁴ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 32.

¹⁵⁵ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 51.

Companie assembled'.¹⁵⁶ Most guests probably came to see the whole Chaytor family, though in June 1613 Thomas recorded that his father-in-law and mother-in-law had come specifically to 'see my wife'. It seems likely that Jane's parents had come to see her because she was then heavily pregnant with her daughter, Marie.¹⁵⁷

Jane also accompanied her husband on visits to friends and family in various locations, including Newcastle, Durham and Stella, County Durham. In 1616, for example, Thomas, Jane and their two sons and two daughters spent Christmas in Newcastle, staying almost three weeks, presumably with Jane's parents. Thomas recorded that the family had been made 'much welcom, and had great intertainment'.¹⁵⁸ They also enjoyed dinner together at Thomas's uncle's house in Durham, in January 1616.¹⁵⁹ This pattern of female sociability had altered little by the mid-eighteenth century, when Elizabeth Baker of York socialised both with her women friends, but also in mixed company.¹⁶⁰ She received many visits, and also made visits to Bath and Scarborough for the season, enjoying a flourishing sociable life in much the same way as Jane Chaytor had in the early seventeenth century.¹⁶¹

Although gentlemen in County Durham and Northumberland often socialised together with their wives, men were more likely to travel and socialise autonomously than women were, throughout the period. The holding of public offices often involved homosociable dining, and men made visits in the course of travelling on business. On August 22nd 1745, for example, Ralph Grey of Backworth waited on the high sheriff of

¹⁵⁶ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 16, 27, 38, 32.

¹⁵⁷ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 15-16.

¹⁵⁸ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 55.

¹⁵⁹ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 42.

¹⁶⁰ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 9 February 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 January 1733.

¹⁶¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 March 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 28 July 1733.

Northumberland at the Moot Hall in Newcastle, along with the other gentlemen of the county. He later dined at Hills tavern in Newcastle with those 'gentlemen as are come to Town to go along with the sherif. & likewise to spend the evening w[i]th such.'¹⁶² Thomas Chaytor recorded various social occasions when he does not seem to have been accompanied by his wife, including various funerals, weddings and visits that he undertook alone. In June 1616, for example, Thomas enjoyed 'great entertainment' without Jane, at Sir 'Raph Graies' house at Chillingham.¹⁶³

VI

The next section moves from discussing patterns of face to face sociable interaction to considering letter-writing, and shows how correspondence functioned as a form of virtual sociability. The exchange of letters sustained social networks, even where individuals might only meet once a year or even more rarely, and was structured by a range of common discourses. An important and recurrent trope in seventeenth and eighteenth-century letters was that of 'remembering'. If a writer wished to reassure a correspondent of his respect and emotional attachment to him, then he employed the language of memory. Both male and female letter-writers often reported that their correspondent had been remembered in conversation, sometimes by stating that the recipient of the letter had been the subject of long and approbatory conversation. In September 1734 Elizabeth Baker wrote to her relation William Pye, a lawyer in Durham, to thank him for the letter and money he had sent her. Both the money and letter had been delivered to her in York by Mr Wharton, a mutual friend, who was on his way to London. Baker assured Pye that when Wharton had shared a drink with her

¹⁶² NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book from 24 February 1745 to 22 August 1745; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 272.

¹⁶³ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 20, 24, 49.

that evening the conversation had turned to Pye, and that 'your Eares might Burn with Talking of you'.¹⁶⁴ Writers often stressed that their correspondent had been remembered, and hence virtually present, at a social occasion among his or her friends. In this way, an absent friend could also be assured that although he or she had been physically absent, his presence had been heartily missed. When Mr Knight visited Elizabeth Baker in York she was glad to be told that William Pye and his family were well. Baker described Knight's visit in a letter to Pye, reporting that she and Knight were 'wishing for your Comepany With ous'.¹⁶⁵

An important ritual of sociability in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was toasting, drinking to the health of men or women.¹⁶⁶ Letter-writers often promised absent correspondents that they had been toasted at gatherings of their friends and family. In 1710 Sir Edward Blackett told his son John, then in Rotterdam pursuing his career as a merchant, that Sir Edward would soon make a trip to Newcastle to drink John's health with his friends.¹⁶⁷ Health drinking was not confined to the dining table or evening drinking, but could also occur at the female-dominated tea-table. Elizabeth Baker promised William Pye that his health had been drunk at her house, in both tea and wine.¹⁶⁸ Healths could not only be drunk by both men and women, but also by children, as when Lancelot Allgood's 'little Girle' promised to drink to the health of her relations on her birthday, in November 1733.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ NRO, IDE, 5/12; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 September 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 20 December 1734; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 4 May 1734.

¹⁶⁵ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, E[lizabeth] Baker to 'Dear Sir', 17 September, no year.

¹⁶⁶ J. Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne* (2 vols., London, 1882), vol. 1, pp. 26-28.

¹⁶⁷ NRO, ZBL, 189, to 'Dear Jacce', 18 July 1710.

¹⁶⁸ DRO, D/LO/F/745, 63; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, E[lizabeth] Baker to 'Dear Sir', 17 September, no year; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 207-209.

¹⁶⁹ NRO, ZAL, 37/9/356, 12 November 1733.

Healts were important ways of congratulating absent individuals on important milestones, such as marriages and birthdays. In 1753 Newcastle merchant Ralph Carr found himself a wife, and received various congratulatory letters. Lud Grant promised him that he and Sir Harry Innes 'drunk your health and Mrs Carrs in a Bumper'.¹⁷⁰ The writer sometimes indicated that he had invited friends especially in order to remember and honour the absent correspondent on a landmark day. The solicitous Elizabeth Baker wrote that 'she was not unmindfull' of her grandchildren on the occasion of her grandson George's birthday, 'allthoe at A distenc'. She convened 'sume Ladys of my Acquaintenc Tow Drink Their Healths in Tea & wine with me'.¹⁷¹ Letter-writers often reported that their correspondent's health had been drunk frequently.¹⁷² Clearly, contemporaries believed that the more often a friend's health was drunk, the more he was valued and had been missed. This reporting of 'remembering' was also part of the system of political and economic networking. In March 1710 Sir Edward Blackett wrote to John Sharpe, reporting that he had spent the previous day at the house of 'Mr Aislalie', with the mayor and recorder and other friends. The company drank the health of Sharpe and Aislalie 'very heartily in a glass of Tobie', and one of the members of the company had announced that he was interested in buying Sharpe's house. Health drinking and remembering in conversation allowed friends and family to further each other's interests, and to report that they had done so.¹⁷³

Offering to perform errands was another commonplace of seventeenth and eighteenth-century correspondence, and provided opportunities to render service to relations and friends, showing respect and affection. In 1612 Francis Delaval wrote

¹⁷⁰ NRO, 855, box 4, Lud Grant, of Castle Grant to Ralph Carr, 15 February 1754; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 9 February 1734; NRO, ZAL, 37/9/353, 30 November 1730.

¹⁷¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 9 February 1734.

¹⁷² DRO, D/LO/F/745, 26; DRO, D/Sa/C/28; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 12 August 1731.

¹⁷³ NRO, ZBL, 189, to 'Dr Sr', 21 March 1710.

from Caversham to his brother Ralph at Seaton Delaval in Northumberland. Francis assured Ralph that 'if in the place whre I live eather by my ssiarch [sic] or travell may at any tyme pleassure you I Shall be gladd of occation'.¹⁷⁴ Friends who were visiting London or provincial towns were often happy to make purchases for their friends of a wide range of commodities that were not available closer to home.¹⁷⁵ Correspondents might also ask their friends to perform services, such as Edward Cutler of Durham, who in 1759 was asked to find a boarding school in the city for the daughter of his friend Richard Stephenson.¹⁷⁶ Both sexes were involved in the exchange of good will that proxy consumption entailed, though there was also a gendered dimension to shopping. Whereas both women and men bought luxury consumables, men and women's clothes, jewellery, and luxury goods, a male correspondent took responsibility for the typically male preserve of weaponry. This difference in purchases reflected a wider division in men and women's patterns of consumption, as Vickery shows, and the kinds of tasks performed for correspondents were probably also gendered.¹⁷⁷

Another important mechanism for maintaining social networks was the exchange of gifts. Local elite families exchanged gifts as a way of demonstrating status, and strengthening ties of friendship.¹⁷⁸ In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, one woman correspondent in the north east was grateful for a gift of apples and onions from her sister.¹⁷⁹ Residents of the north east frequently sent gifts of their produce, and regional specialities to their friends outside the area. In 1754 Ralph Carr, a Newcastle

¹⁷⁴ NRO, 1DE, 5/30.

¹⁷⁵ NRO, 855, box 5, 19 November 1753; NRO, 855, box 5, 6 November 1753; NRO, 855, box 5, 15 January 1754; NRO, 650, D/1, 19 September 1681; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 168.

¹⁷⁶ DRO, D/St/C2/3/100/17.

¹⁷⁷ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 March 1734; NRO, ZBL, 193, Mary Rogers to Sir William Blackett, Newcastle, 20 June 1676; NRO, ZBL, 193, Mary Rogers to Sir William Blackett, 1 July 1676; NRO, 855, box 4, to Ralph Carr, Amsterdam, 14 November 1737; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 166-168. See above, pp. 41-42.

¹⁷⁸ NRO, 650, D/5, 15 July 1724; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 222.

¹⁷⁹ NRO, ZAL, 43/1, from M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, Saturday night, undated.

merchant, sent 'Shields Capons' to the Reverend Edmund Lodge in Surrey. Lodge responded to this gift with a letter offering Carr 'many thanks', and pronounced the birds to be 'very good'.¹⁸⁰ Correspondents who visited London or the resort towns purchased luxury goods to send as presents to their friends in the north east. When Elizabeth Baker visited Bath in March 1734, she sent a ring and snuff box to a relation in Durham. She explained that they were not of great value, but that the style of the snuff box was unique to Bath.¹⁸¹

Reciprocity was considered very important by contemporaries, and gift-giving was a means of thanking friends and relations for previous gifts and favours. Ralph Carr and Edmund Lodge performed commissions for one another as well as exchanging gifts. In early 1754 Lodge bought various fruit trees on Carr's behalf, and sent them to the north east by sea. He also visited shops in London to place Ralph's order for jewellery and clothes for his wife. Their degree of intimacy and trust was demonstrated by Lodge's willingness to use his own initiative in fulfilling Carr's commissions. Lodge added extra fruit trees to Carr's consignment, including varieties that produced particularly good fruit or fruited early. In return Carr offered gifts of produce, and Lodge asked him to send 'Blanesly Oats' from the north east to Carshalton.¹⁸² Both men and women exchanged gifts as a sign of goodwill, and both sexes sent both household produce and luxury goods.¹⁸³ However, there were some gendered elements in gift

¹⁸⁰ NRO, 855, box 5, 27 February 1754.

¹⁸¹ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum-book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 25 September 1732; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 March 1734.

¹⁸² NRO, 855, box 5, 19 November 1753; NRO, 855, box 5, 15 January 1754; NRO, 855, box 5, 27 February 1754.

¹⁸³ NRO, ZAL, 40/3/14; NRO, ZAL, 40/3/4; NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 13 March 1734; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, 25 September 1732; June 1740 to June 1741; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 192-193.

giving, as men seem to have held the monopoly on making presents of game. This should not be surprising, as men monopolised the hunting that yielded such meat.¹⁸⁴

Another currency of sociable exchange was the trade in valuable information. Correspondence brought news and gossip into the north east, and also kept letter-writers informed of developments within the region. Letters with news from the metropolis were prized by recipients in the north east, because they enjoyed the thrill of being abreast of the latest developments, and could disseminate such privileged information in their region, accruing status in the process. In the mid-eighteenth century Anne Byne wrote from Ponteland to her daughter Isabella in London that 'Our Country affords no news, but we are very full of what we hear from London, Viz: the magnificence of the intended fireworks, & th[a]t hoop=pettycoats are abollished.'¹⁸⁵ Many residents of the north east received copies of political speeches or songs from London newspapers as enclosures in letters sent from the metropolis. In June 1745, for example, the cookery writer Hannah Glasse spiced up her letter to her aunt in Hexham by including a political song culled from the *London Evening Post*.¹⁸⁶

News of marriages made in urban centres outside the region, by men and women from the north, was also a staple of letters exchanged between the north east and the capital in the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Blackett wrote from London to share gossip about various courtships with her friend in Hexham, but regretted that 'I cant name a day for any of the north country people'.¹⁸⁷ Those staying in London and towns

¹⁸⁴ NRO, ZAL, 43/1, from M[ary] A[llgood] to sister, Saturday night, undated; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 167.

¹⁸⁵ NRO, 855, box 6, Anne Byne to Isabella Byne, 29 November, no year.

¹⁸⁶ DRO, D/LO/F/745; NRO, ZAL, 40/3/4; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 15, p. 200.

¹⁸⁷ NRO, ZAL, 43/1, Elizabeth Blackett in London to Mrs Widdrington, Hexham.

elsewhere were also expected to keep their friends informed about their social interactions. Letter-writers reported both on commercialised leisure such as theatre and opera, and also on private social engagements that they had experienced. These letters were appreciated by correspondents, who wished to maintain their knowledge of how fashionable entertainment was conducted.¹⁸⁸ However, both the writers and recipients of such letters were by no means always impressed by these social occasions. When Mrs Widdrington of Hexham visited London in the mid-eighteenth century, she wrote to a friend in the north, to report that she had not enjoyed *The Beggars' Opera* as much as she had expected. Rebecca Stainforth replied smugly that she was not at all surprised 'the Beggars Opera shouldn't answer y[ou]r expectations', as 'any thing so vastly commended can never answer'. Similarly, Ralph Salvin received an account of a puppet show in Tunbridge Wells, of which his correspondent wrote 'I cant say we were much diverted'.¹⁸⁹

Those writing to the north east from outside the region were equally keen for gossip and news from Northumberland and County Durham. Political news was requested by many, including Elizabeth Baker in 1732, who asked that William Pye inform her of the Durham 'parliment dowins'.¹⁹⁰ Residents of the north east who were spending the season away from the region were often keen to keep abreast of the news in their home area. When Ralph Grey spent time in London in the early 1740s, for example, he noted his intention to ask one of his correspondents in the north east to 'send me the old Newcastle newspapers'.¹⁹¹ Correspondents also requested information

¹⁸⁸ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/23; NRO, ZAL, 43, Rebecca Stainforth to Mrs Widdrington in London, 5 April, no year; NRO, ZBL, 193, 22 July 1676.

¹⁸⁹ NRO, ZAL, 43, Rebecca Stainforth to Mrs Widdrington in London, 5 April, no year; DRO, D/Sa/C/23.

¹⁹⁰ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 30 November 1732.

¹⁹¹ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740. June 1740 to June 1741, after note for 11 May 1741, but before Oct 1740 [sic].

about the latest marriages made in the north east, and the births and deaths that occurred in the area.¹⁹² Entertaining accounts of sociability in urban centres of the north east were also eagerly received, such as Mrs Widdrington's description of the 'Batchelders feast' at Hexham, lauded by its recipient as 'so Whimsical, and humourous'.¹⁹³ For those experiencing the season in London, or other towns outside the region, correspondence with families and contacts in the north east was vital for social networking. Those writing from the north east not only provided information on friends and family who would shortly be setting out to the same location, but could also be asked to investigate the origins of potential contacts. In 1745 for example, Margaret Bowes wrote to a correspondent in Durham requesting information on a family from the city who had recently come to live in London.¹⁹⁴

During the Jacobite rebellions of the first half of the eighteenth century, letter-writers in the north east found their correspondents elsewhere in England desperate for reports of the military campaigns. Whereas London correspondents were used to retailing the latest political news to their friends in the north, they now clamoured for news from those same correspondents, and read northern newspapers avidly. In October 1745 Hannah Glasse wrote to her aunt in Hexham, to thank her for her reports of the rebellion. Hannah described her aunt's account as the best that she was receiving from the north, and begged her to continue to send news of the campaign.¹⁹⁵ Both male and female correspondents exchanged political news, and women in the north east were clearly actively engaged in political debate.¹⁹⁶ Despite women's exclusion from formal politics, sociable discussion of political issues was one way in which women were able

¹⁹² NRO, 855, box 6, 26 April, no year; NRO, 855, box 6, 29 May, no year.

¹⁹³ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/37.

¹⁹⁴ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/37; DRO, D/LO/F/745, 43.

¹⁹⁵ NRO, ZAL, 40/3/6.

¹⁹⁶ DRO, D/LO/F/745; NRO, ZAL, 39/1, letters from A. R. to Margaret Allgood, 1715.

to participate in the political sphere. Women in the north east could also become political actors by signalling their party loyalties by the colour of the cockades and dresses that they wore to assemblies, by attending civic ceremonies, and also by hosting social events on behalf of their politically active menfolk.¹⁹⁷

Both men and women exchanged news of changing fashions, and some male correspondents proved surprisingly adept at discussing both male and female fashions. In 1600 Robert Delaval left Seaton Delaval in Northumberland to make a visit to London, and sent news to his daughter Jane that the 'toyes' women had previously worn on their heads were now no longer fashionable. He informed her that women now wore 'calles', and he would bring some for her when he returned to Seaton.¹⁹⁸ He was also able to advise his son Ralph of the changing fashions in jerkins, and offered to buy him some fashionable clothes from London.¹⁹⁹ Correspondents in the north east were not only interested in the London fashions, but also in the fashions displayed at prominent northern towns. Writing from Brandon in Northumberland Mary Allgood asked her sister Margaret to write by the first post to describe the fashions 'how ya dress their heads' at the York races.²⁰⁰

Metropolitan fashions were not adopted wholesale in the north east, and correspondents commented on the different fashions that prevailed in the north. Rebecca Stainforth wrote from York to Mrs Widdrington in Hexham in 1735, describing the new

¹⁹⁷ K. Wilson, *The sense of the people: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (first edition, 1995, reprinted Cambridge, 1998), pp. 49-54; E. Chalus, 'That epidemical Madness': women and electoral politics in the late eighteenth century' in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London, 1997), pp. 151-178; DRO, D/St/CI/3/122.

¹⁹⁸ Anderton (ed.), 'Selections from the Delaval papers', pp. 156-159; NRO, IDE, 5/18; NRO, 855, box 5, 15 January 1754; NRO, 855, box 4, Katherine Carr, Dunstan Hill to Ralph Carr, 25 April, no year.

¹⁹⁹ Anderton (ed.), 'Selections from the Delaval papers', pp. 156-159; NRO, IDE, 5/19.

²⁰⁰ NRO, ZAL, 40/4, 11 June, no year.

fashion for the 'short Manteel' in velvet. She also explained that short hoods were still fashionable in York, though she had heard that hoods were being worn long in London.²⁰¹ Although correspondents wanted to be kept abreast of the latest fashions in northern towns and in London, residents of the north east were also quick to mock fashionable excesses. James Allgood's pocket book for 1764 contained a satirical poem lampooning ladies' fashions, for example.²⁰² Fashionable dress was adapted for the provinces, and the extremes of any trend tended not to be adopted by the cautious lesser gentry and wives of merchants and lawyers. Correspondents in the north east shared opinions on fashion by letter, but were not passive consumers of metropolitan fashion missives.²⁰³

Correspondence networks also allowed the wide dissemination of important news about members of the social group. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century letter-writers communicated news of the health of friends and family and reported births, marriages and deaths. Letters not only constituted a direct exchange between individuals, but also maintained links within the wider social network. Sir Edward Blackett's letters to his son John in Rotterdam informed John of the progress of his brother Kit's career, and the exploits of his other brother Ned. Sir Edward also kept John apprised of the deaths of friends and family members, and complained to him of the family's distress at the departure of family friends Captain and Mrs Millington for Cheshire. The letters that John received ensured that he was well informed of the

²⁰¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/6/24.

²⁰² NRO, ZAL, 81, James Allgood's pocket book, 1764; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 172-174.

²⁰³ NRO, IDE, 5/18; NRO, ZAL, 81, James Allgood's pocket book, 1764; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 178-183.

important events in the lives of men and women in his social network in the north of England, even those with whom he was not in regular correspondence.²⁰⁴

The seventeenth and eighteenth-century practice of 'sending service' formalised the role of correspondence as a method of sociable exchange between more individuals than the letter-writer and recipient. Sending service operated in two directions. The letter-writer often offered his or her service, love or best wishes to friends or family members beyond the named recipient of the letter. When John Fenwick invited his cousin Ralph Delaval to his house in Northumberland in 1623, he sent his love to his cousin's wife, and to all Ralph's family.²⁰⁵ Letter-writers often asked for their service to be given to 'all our freinds in Generall', thus ensuring that their messages of good will were broadcast throughout their social network.²⁰⁶

Not only could individual letter-writers use their epistles as wider signals of continued esteem, but friends and family could add their voices to a letter. In many letters, the service sent by the letter-writer himself was joined by service from other friends or relations. When Katherine Carr wrote to her brother Ralph in March 1738, she added that their sister Peggy sent service to Ralph himself, and also to Mr Therkild and Mr and Mrs Carn.²⁰⁷ In a period when reading aloud was an important part of recreation, it seems likely that the gossip and news of many letters was destined to be shared with the family and friends of the recipient. Although sensitive financial matters and highly personal content was doubtless not shared, the communication of news and

²⁰⁴ NRO, ZBL, 189; NRO, ZBL, 192.

²⁰⁵ NRO, IDE, 5/49.

²⁰⁶ NRO, IDE, 5/35.

²⁰⁷ NRO, 855, box 4, to 'dear brother', Dunston Hill, 5 March 1738.

good wishes from letters maintained wider links in social networks.²⁰⁸ In 1715, for example, Sir Edward Blackett's daughter Maria received a letter which reported that her uncle Bridges was ill in London. She informed her father, Sir Edward Blackett, who wrote on the same day to his son Kit in London, asking Kit to write back with reports of Bridges' health.²⁰⁹

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as today, letters were used to convey important information, such as financial agreements or instructions to legal representatives. However, many personal letters were phatic, in that little of great note was discussed. These letters were important because they were signifiers in themselves, communicating good will. Letter-writers exchanged ritual greetings and wishes for sound health, using conventional modes of courtesy address, which were gleaned from manuals and expected by contemporaries.²¹⁰ As with gifts, reciprocity was important, and convention dictated that correspondents should apologise if they took a long time to answer, or did not send an equal number of letters. In 1612, for example, Francis Delaval apologised to his brother Ralph, for not writing often enough. Francis explained that he was thankful for the many letters Ralph had sent him, and that his failure to write was not occasioned by 'want of good will and true respective Love and duty'.²¹¹

VII

²⁰⁸ N. Tadmor, 'In the even my wife read to me': women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century', in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor, *The Practice And Representation Of Reading In England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 164-165.

²⁰⁹ NRO, ZBL, 191, to 'Dear Kitty', 21 [June 1715].

²¹⁰ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 60.

²¹¹ NRO, ZBL, 189, to Mr Booth, London, 3 December [1710]; NRO, 1DE, 5/30. See above, p. 297.

Having established the broad patterns of sociability in the region, and discussed the role of correspondence as a form of social contact in itself, the following sections discuss attitudes to sociability. Not everyone was sociable by inclination, and several letters comment on individuals who were perceived to be unusually retiring. Not only was Ralph Salvin of Tudhoe loath to leave his house, but his father, William Salvin, seems to have been similar. William's great-nephew Bryan Salvin recorded in 1712 that William was 'so great a home keeper', that he had visited the Salvin family at Croxdale only once since his marriage, which had taken place in 1710.²¹² Many individuals were occasionally wearied by the social round, as Mary Allgood was at one point in the mid-eighteenth century. Although she enjoyed socialising, describing her friend Mrs Greenwood as 'very good company', she began to feel overwhelmed when visits and dining took up all her time. During her stay in the country one July, Mary was forced to make 'a slight pretence of not being well' in order to spend two days at home by herself. She may have wanted to spend more time on her other occupations of letter-writing, and gathering and bottling fruit.²¹³

By the mid-eighteenth century the increased fashion for rural seclusion led some individuals to make self-conscious declarations of their desire for retirement. In 1733 George Crow decided to move from London to the North, hoping to find 'Quiet, remote from the Bustles, as well as Perfidy of the vulgar World'. He initially considered Durham, and then decided to look for a place of residence between Doncaster and Auckland. However, Crow failed to find solitude in the north, complaining that he 'Sicken'd' of all the places he considered. He could not shrink into obscurity in the close-

²¹² DRO, D/Sa/C/18/10; DRO, D/Sa/C/34; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, pp. 119-120.

²¹³ NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, 5 July, no year; NRO, ZAL, 43, M[ary] A[llgood] to her sister, 12 July, no year.

knit communities of the north, and returned to the 'Rus in Urbe' of London, where he felt that he was 'not markt out for Censure'.²¹⁴ Although some individuals were anti-social by temperament, and many occasionally sought solitude, the majority of men and women took pleasure in sociability, and were distressed by missed opportunities for meeting friends.²¹⁵

The development of a new code of manners governing sociability, the emergence of 'politeness', has been emphasised in much of the recent historiography. The discourse of politeness was elaborated in prescriptive literature from the later seventeenth century onwards, and political writers, including David Hume and Adam Smith integrated a concern with manners into theories about how society might be improved. Klein argues that the code of 'politeness' emphasised the importance of sociability and conversation, within which appropriate behaviour should be ensured, with the aim of pleasing others.²¹⁶ Women were explicitly included in the public sphere of the polite, and their conversation was styled as a civilising influence.²¹⁷ In order to be able to converse readily, polite men and women needed to be well informed on a variety of subjects, and should have a good sense of appropriate demeanour. Gentlemen and women should aim at a dignified and graceful manner, controlled and correct without appearing excessively formal.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 282-284; NRO, ZAL, 39/5, A, 9 December 1733.

²¹⁵ NRO, 324/W3/23, 8 September 1733.

²¹⁶ P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 15-52.; L. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: Moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 3-4. See above, pp. 6, 16-17, 246-247.

²¹⁷ L. Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere', in J. Still and M. Worton (eds.), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 100-115.

²¹⁸ Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness*, pp. 5-8; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 196-202.

The discourses of politeness tinged the language and perceptions of many individuals in the provinces, including the Cornish clergyman John Penrose, born in 1713, and the late eighteenth-century Lancastrian Elizabeth Shackleton.²¹⁹ In the north east, one individual's personal memoranda books and letters show him to have been zealous to the point of neurotic in his pursuit of the polite. Ralph William Grey's family lived at Backworth Hall in Northumberland, and his forebears had been members of the mercantile elite of Newcastle, who had then bought land in Northumberland and moved into the lesser gentry.²²⁰ Ralph was baptised in 1707, and was educated at Oxford University and at the Middle Temple in London, and spent some time in France, as part of the Grand Tour.²²¹ While living at Backworth Ralph spent seasons in the capital, but also at urban centres in the north, including Preston, York and Newcastle. Scattered evidence in his personal papers suggest that he practised as a lawyer, including references to law books that he intended to read, notes on how lawyers learnt in the past, and details of actions he intended to take on the Bishop of Durham's behalf in a boundary dispute. From his early twenties, Ralph Grey traced his development as a polite gentleman in a series of memoranda books, where he noted his plans, ideas and concerns.²²²

²¹⁹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 202; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 175-183.

²²⁰ Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. 2, p. 381; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 40-43; DUL, DPR, will of William Grey, proved 1716.

²²¹ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 40-43; J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members Of The University Of Oxford, 1715-1886* (4 vols., Nendeln, 1968), vol. 2, p. 565; DUL, DPR, will of William Grey, proved 1716; H. A. C. Sturgess (ed.), *Register Of Admissions To The Honourable Society Of The Middle Temple: From the Fifteenth Century to the year 1744* (3 vols., London, 1949), vol. 1, p. 308. NRO, 753, box 1, G, volume 1728-30, to Mr George Huddisford, 27 September 1728; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736.

²²² NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 26 April 1743; NRO 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1744-5-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1743-5, June 25th, 1744; memorandum book 1747-8, p. 23; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book September 1736 to June 1739, June 1737.

Ralph used his memoranda books to record his cultivation of the knowledge that he regarded as suitable for a gentleman. He noted his plans to read in French, and to learn as much Latin as gentility demanded, and also recorded that he should read 'Palladio writings the most compleat to acquire a good taste of Architecture'.²²³ He positioned himself carefully within the contemporary model of polite learning, noting that he was not studying to become 'learned or bookish', but to be a 'polite, easy & agreeable gentleman whose only aim will be to be agreeable in conversation'.²²⁴ His thinking on conversation echoed the emphasis in the prescriptive literature on pleasing rather than competing with others. In June 1733, for example, Ralph noted that the 'Best quality in conversation' was to be both easy and obliging.²²⁵ He reminded himself that he should avoid long, dull stories and should not discuss financial matters or politics. Instead, his intentions were to converse on 'pleasant, chearful and delightful subjects, such as Beauty, Painting, Musick, Poetry, the Writers of the past and present Age'.²²⁶

Ralph dedicated himself to collecting prescriptive literature on manners, and studying and digesting it. In August 1732 he noted that he intended to acquire various miscellanies on 'polite behaviour in conversation' and 'our prudent conduct in general'.²²⁷ He read Addison and Steele's *Tatler*, *Guardian* and *Spectator*, and copied sections from them on conversation and proper behaviour into his memoranda books. Ralph also copied similar material from the writings of French authors including La

²²³ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 24 March 1733, 23 May 1733.

²²⁴ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book September 1736 to June 1739, undated entry.

²²⁵ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 6 June 1733.

²²⁶ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, November 1734.

²²⁷ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 20 August 1732.

Bruyere, noting that France was the best place to learn how to be polite.²²⁸ He believed that he would learn correct behaviour by reading books on etiquette, and by 'keeping the politest & best company'.²²⁹ He made frequent references in his memoranda to those he wished to socialise with in order to complete his education. Ralph wished to cultivate the acquaintance of the polite of both sexes, reflecting the emphasis on heterosociability in contemporary conceptions of elegant sociability. He decided to seek out those who 'have had the best education & seen the most of the world in their different ways of lives & capacities'.²³⁰

Ralph clearly wished to model his own social life around contemporary precepts for polite behaviour. He used his memoranda books to note rules for 'elegant suppers', and to record his intention to socialise at gatherings of around four or five 'polite persons', which should include both men and women.²³¹ He recorded specific questions about how to entertain, including a memorandum to ask his cousin Loman whether it was more genteel to serve small beer to guests in little cups, or in a tankard.²³² Ralph also wanted to check whether it was polite to keep corks in the bottles on the table, and whether tablecloths could be left on the table after dinner.²³³ His notes show that he recorded ways of entertaining that he regarded as easy and civil, and wished to emulate at Backworth. He was impressed by Mr Loman's methods of country entertainment, for

²²⁸ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741; NRO 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, August 1734.

²²⁹ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, 7 January 1734.

²³⁰ NRO, 753, box 1, G, volume of letters and accounts 1745-47, 19 February 1747; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, after letter dated 31 July 1742.

²³¹ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, 7 January 1734.

²³² NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, October 1734.

²³³ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, 10 December 1734.

example, recording that the company dined at one, drank tea until four, then walked in the garden for an hour.²³⁴

Ralph constantly monitored his own behaviour, frequently documenting new questions about correct manners, which he wrote in his memoranda books. This was part of his conscious strategy to ensure that he attained politeness, because he believed that gentlemen should 'w[he]n we have any doubt to mark it down & enquire of the politest of our acquaintance how we ought to behave'. In September 1732 he wondered whether it was 'well bred' to crack nuts with one's teeth in public. He clearly discovered that it was not, because he annotated the entry with the word no, and scored his question through.²³⁵ His questions included queries as to how to introduce different individuals, the etiquette of health-drinking, and how to behave when visiting. In March 1733, for example, Ralph was seized with doubts about how to take his leave of visitors. He recorded a memorandum 'To enquire ab[ou]t The method of setting gentlemen & ladies to the door'.²³⁶ Ralph Grey monitored his behaviour to see whether it 'does not savour of formality', the sworn enemy of the easy, polite manner that he was attempting to cultivate.²³⁷

There was clearly some change in the patterns and ideologies of sociability between the early seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century. The dispensation of open

²³⁴ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book September 1736 to June 1739, August 1737.

²³⁵ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 15 September 1733 to September 1736, 7 January 1734; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 1 September [1732].

²³⁶ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 21-22 April 1732, 31 March 1733.

²³⁷ NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741, 3 November 1732.

hospitality to rich and poor alike in gentry households seems to have declined in the pre-Restoration period. This reduction in traditional hospitality was probably stimulated by economic pressures, and also by the decrease in all-year round rural residence by the gentry. During the first half of the seventeenth century gentry families became increasingly likely to spend the winter in town, and were less often at home to entertain.²³⁸ Ralph Delaval of Seaton Delaval, who died in 1628, kept an open, great, & plentiful house for Entertainment, his owne Family consisting dayly in his House of threescore persons & above'. In 1628 this was an essential part of the account written of Ralph by his son Thomas, who undertook to describe the 'Reputation he Lived in to his death'. By the Restoration such open hospitality to all comers would probably have seemed as outdated as Ralph's refusal to 'rid to any publick assembly, without 5 or 6 men in Liveries & 2 or 3 of his Sons to attend him.'²³⁹

However, although his liveried attendants and medieval-style hospitality might have seemed old-fashioned, many of the other qualities that his son praised in 1628 would not. Ralph's delight in 'the Company of his knisemen & freinds', 'excellent discourse', and dedication to hunting would still have been considered the essential attributes of a gentleman.²⁴⁰ The provision of generous hospitality remained necessary in order for gentry and upper middling sort families to establish public prestige and political influence. In the north east, as in the rest of the country, traditional hospitality continued to be distributed to social inferiors until at least the mid-eighteenth century. In the 1730s, for example, William Pye of Durham was entertaining his relation's tenant

²³⁸ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 149-150, 391-394, 401-402. See above, pp. 2, 258-259.

²³⁹ Heal, *Hospitality*, passim; NRO, 1DE, 9/14, p. 208.

²⁴⁰ NRO, 1DE, 9/14, p. 208. See above, pp. 273-276.

farmers every Christmas.²⁴¹ From the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, sociability with social equals or superiors remained vital, and was a means of creating and sustaining networks of emotional and practical support. Throughout the period the elite home was identified as a public stage, where status and authority were demonstrated by gracious sociability.²⁴²

It has recently been suggested that the eighteenth century marked a decisive break with the past in terms of an increasing attention to good manners, and scrutiny of the behaviour of others and the self. Philip Carter suggests that whereas earlier diaries and letters had been preoccupied with spiritual development, from the eighteenth century there was a new focus on 'polite self-fashioning'. However, whereas it seems clear that this period witnessed a trend towards the secularisation of such autobiographical literature, earlier diarists and letter-writers also considered good manners.²⁴³ Many of those writing letters and diaries in the first half of the seventeenth century commented on the manners and conduct of others. The diarist Sir William Brereton, writing in 1635, enjoyed his meeting with Mr Linsley Wren at Auckland in County Durham, describing Wren as 'a fine gentl[eman] very livelye, and of a free cariage'. Brereton particularly commended those who maintained an appropriate level of entertainment, such as the Bishop of Durham, who 'maintaines great hospitalitie, in an orderly well governed house'.²⁴⁴ Individuals also examined their own behaviour, as Francis Delaval did in November 1612, when he apologised to his brother Ralph for his potentially ill-mannered failure to write sufficiently frequently, and offered to prove his

²⁴¹ NRO, ZAL, 39/3, 21 December 1732; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 195-196.

²⁴² Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 195-196. See above, pp. 255-256.

²⁴³ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 163-164; M. Mascuch, *Origins Of The Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 91-96, 99, 131.

²⁴⁴ J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *North Country Diaries II* (Surtees Society, 124, 1914), pp. 1, 8-9.

fraternal love by dedicating himself to any errands that his brother needed him to perform.²⁴⁵ Uncivil behaviour occasioned comment, as in December 1617, when Thomas Chaytor entertained his nephew Richard Chaytor at his house in Durham. Richard's behaviour failed to please, and Chaytor recorded in his diary that his nephew was 'a little too much given to eating and drinking which I could not forbear without compleynninge'.²⁴⁶

Not only were good manners and sociability consistently important throughout the period, but politeness was a code of manners that was heavily indebted to older ideas about civility.²⁴⁷ As Bryson shows, Renaissance conceptions of civility emphasised that the manners of individuals influenced the state. The mastery of civility became part of a conception of sociability that was interconnected with the humanist political ideals of civil virtue. Humanist writers prescribed an education in civil virtue to ensure that the elite ruled by the 'principles of moral and political order', rather than on the basis of dynastic ambition and faction, and good manners formed part of this education.²⁴⁸ From the sixteenth century writers of prescriptive literature covered an increasingly wide range of social situations. Whereas medieval writers had concentrated on noble courtesy at banquets and meals, from the sixteenth century onwards writers were more concerned with definitions of good manners 'at all times and in all companies'.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ NRO, IDE, 5/30; NRO, IDE/9/14, p. 208.

²⁴⁶ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fol. 67.

²⁴⁷ A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 45-46.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

Like later writers on 'politeness', sixteenth and seventeenth-century conduct books emphasised the importance of controlling the self in order to please others.²⁵⁰ Conversation was considered an art that was essential to sociability, and writers devoted space to advice for appropriate approaches and subjects. Speakers were to aim to be obliging, avoiding boring the company, boasting and disagreeing with others.²⁵¹ This period also saw some expression of a conception of heterosociability that was to become dominant by the mid-eighteenth century. Some writers suggested that the presence of women in social situations could exercise a civilising influence on men, and Castiglione emphasised the significance and eloquence of women at court.²⁵² As in later advice literature, men were expected to demonstrate their superior mental and physical strength, while exercising self-restraint and acting civilly. Carter suggests that the post-Restoration literature of politeness formed a decisive break with the past in advocating a concept of honour 'less associated with warriorship than with lawfulness, religious respect and sociability'. However, as Bryson demonstrates, this transition towards a concept of manhood that prioritised good manners was already well underway by the late sixteenth century. By the reign of Elizabeth, good gentlemanly conduct was increasingly associated with good manners and civil government, rather than swordsmanship.²⁵³ The consumption of leisure was an important part of the contemporary construction of gentility, and recreational activities including horsemanship, dancing and musicianship were prescribed for the gentry.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 71; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 53-87.

²⁵¹ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 155, 164; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 64-66.

²⁵² Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 127-128.

²⁵³ Ibid., pp. 272-275; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 63-66, 72.

²⁵⁴ Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations*, passim.

In some respects the texts of 'politeness' were novel, elaborating a systematic chronology of the development of society from savage to civilised. The theoretical division between the spheres of the state and sociability was also new, as was the definition of how the social and governmental spheres should interact. The later work on civility and politeness also placed greater emphasis on heterosociability and male refinement, reduced the importance of formality and precedence, and moved away from the ideal of the learned courtly oratory so beloved of humanists.²⁵⁵ However, these changes in the prescriptive literature mask important continuities in the discourses of sociability. Strikingly, good manners were perceived as vitally important throughout the period, and an abundance of prescriptive literature advised on appropriate behaviour.²⁵⁶

Furthermore, the conduct literature reveals much about the changing theory of manners, but may provide little guide to actual behaviour. Although the prescriptive literature of the early seventeenth century did not universally emphasise the importance of mixed sex socialising, for example, women such as Jane Chaytor of County Durham were enjoying a full social life alongside their husbands.²⁵⁷ Moreover, the eighteenth-century criticism of excessive formality among country squires suggests that many of those in the provinces continued to cling to older conceptions of more ceremonious civility.²⁵⁸ It is certainly clear that some individuals became obsessed with the new codes of politeness, but this appears to have been a minority experience. Carter attempts to extrapolate from the writings of three individuals to demonstrate the importance that politeness assumed in the lives of the gentry and middling sort. He demonstrates how

²⁵⁵ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 151-192; Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness*, pp. 3-8; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 196-202; Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere', pp. 100-115; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 53-87.

²⁵⁶ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 3-5.

²⁵⁷ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867, fols. 16, 27, 38, 32, 55. See above, pp. 290-292.

²⁵⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 261-263. See above, pp. 246-247.

the writer James Boswell, the future Lord Chief Justice Sir Dudley Ryder, and a provincial clergyman, John Penrose struggled to match their lives to the template of politeness, in a similar way to Ralph Grey.²⁵⁹

However, these three men were hardly representative of the majority of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century letter-writers. The extent to which the majority of individuals were devoting themselves to pursuing the ideals of the *Spectator* can only be measured by looking at a larger sample of correspondents and diarists. In the north east, Grey was unique among letter-writers and diarists in the excessive attention he devoted to the cultivation of politeness, and his fixation may have been due to a rather obsessive and neurotic personality. In this, Grey seems to have had much in common with one of the most significant writers on politeness, the third earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury was also dedicated to self-examination, recording his attempts at self-reform in a series of notebooks, and often struggling with the socialising expected of him. Excessive attempts to display good manners may always have had more to do with social pathology than with normative behaviour.²⁶⁰ Although there were significant changes in the language used to describe good manners, and the emphases on mixed-sex socialising and less formal manners were new, there seems to have been no revolutionary transition from a culture of civility to a culture of politeness.²⁶¹

The fundamental forms and functions of sociability remained remarkably stable from at least the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. The seasonality of

²⁵⁹ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p. 5; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 163-208.

²⁶⁰ Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness*, pp. 70-73; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 163-208.

²⁶¹ Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness*, pp. 3-8; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp. 196-202; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book 1745-1750, 15 February 1745; NRO, 753, box 1, G, memorandum book June 1731 to [?] 1733, June 1739 to June 1740, June 1740 to June 1741.

sociability was established by the early seventeenth century, with set seasons of residence in town and country, where patterns of sociability varied. Throughout the period, the most common modes of social contact with neighbours, friends and relatives were visiting and communal eating. There seems to be little evidence that the eighteenth century was a watershed for the public role of women in any arena other than in the pages of the prescriptive literature. Women have always possessed a public life, despite being contained by patriarchal ideology and practise. Elite women took the public stage as hostesses in their homes and guests at the homes of others in the seventeenth century just as in the eighteenth. We have already seen that there was significant provision of commercial leisure from the late sixteenth century onwards, allowing women to socialise at plays and horse-races. From the seventeenth to at least the mid-eighteenth century social interactions have included occasions that were homosociable, such as exclusively masculine hunting expeditions, and women's tea parties, as well as mixed sex gatherings.²⁶²

Socialising was an essential part of the lives of both early modern men and women, and it was governed by certain expectations that were well understood by contemporaries. The maintenance of social networks required frequent contact, preferably in person, though gifts and letters could also be used to retain links. This contact had to be sustained equally, and letters, visits and invitations to dine always required an answer in kind. Throughout the period, guidance in good manners and hospitality was considered essential to the education of gentlemen and gentlewomen. The north east had its own culture of sociability, and although London was always perceived as the centre of fashionable entertainment, the region was often reluctant to

²⁶² A. Lawrence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (London, 1994), p. 15; S. Amussen, *An ordered society: gender and class in early modern England* (London, 1988), p. 3; A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1995), pp. 1-27.

introduce metropolitan innovations. Residents of the region were capable of criticising the style of entertainment in the metropolis and resort towns outside the region, and also maintained an ambivalent attitude to London seasonal residence.²⁶³

The northern urban centres, particularly Newcastle and Durham, were perceived as the centres of the most intense socialising, though contemporaries also placed a high value on the slower pace of countryside sociability, particularly in the summer. Perhaps the most important, if most obvious, continuity, was that contemporaries always valued their social lives. The elite of the north east not only needed to socialise in order to maintain standing within their communities, and create networks of support, but also wanted to socialise, because they derived pleasure from their social interactions. Most contemporaries enjoyed long visits from friends for good conversation and the exchange of news. The loss of a companionable friend, neighbour or relative was sorely missed, as when one correspondent's neighbour fell seriously ill in 1718. The writer stated that 'I sh[all] have a very great loss of his civilitys & favours to me, as well as the want of his good company'.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ See above, pp. 255-316.

²⁶⁴ DRO, D/Sa/C/42.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: Sociability and the long seventeenth century

This thesis has explored various kinds of socialising from the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, and has uncovered greater evidence of continuity than much of the previous work on the subject would suggest. The historiography has tended to over-emphasise the change in patterns of socialising after the Restoration, which does not seem to have been as dramatic as is generally argued.¹ It is certainly clear that the provision of many kinds of public leisure increased from the later seventeenth century, becoming both more frequent and more regular. As we have seen, the larger urban centres in the north east were provided with regular theatre seasons and series of assemblies and concerts by the mid-eighteenth century, which were not available to residents of the region in the early seventeenth century. Both horse-racing and cock-fighting seem to have undergone a wave of expansion from the later seventeenth century, with racing on more than forty different courses in the north east by the 1730s, and cock-fights often being held alongside the racing.² Many individuals were also socialising in clubs and societies in the north-east, and at least thirty-five different associations were operating by 1750, none of which seem to have existed a century earlier. Some of the forms of commercialised leisure that were popular during this period were innovative, including series of assemblies and public concerts, which are not known to have been held before the mid-seventeenth century. Many of these activities were also funded in a new way, by gathering subscriptions for whole series of performances, as well as charging for individual tickets.³

¹ See above, pp. 4-6, 306-318.

² See above, pp. 193-195, 208, 222-224, 232, 242-243, 136-137.

³ See above, pp. 75, 208, 222-227, 242-245.

However, while the provision of many sorts of public leisure increased steadily after the second half of the seventeenth century, there is much to suggest that the recreational facilities of mid-eighteenth century towns did not constitute a decisive break with the past. Many of the sporting and cultural activities that have been cited to demonstrate the flourishing urban culture of the later period were actually already present in towns in the early seventeenth century.⁴ As we saw in chapter five, professional theatre and music were available in the towns of the north east in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Both towns and rural areas were visited by touring theatre companies, and by the last decade of the sixteenth century the provincial capital of the north east, Newcastle, usually received at least one visit from a theatre company annually. The professional companies that performed in Newcastle probably also performed in other locations in the north east.⁵ The region also received visits from touring musicians, either waits employed by the larger urban centres of the region, or minstrels receiving noble patronage. Musicians were probably performing in public alehouses in the region by the sixteenth century, just as they were in other provincial areas. Customers were not only able to listen to this music, but also to dance to it, and dancing was already so popular in Newcastle in the 1550s that there were complaints about apprentices' excessive indulgence in the pastime.⁶

Sporting activities also seem to have been well established in the north east by the mid-seventeenth century, as the case study of horse-racing and cock-fighting presented in chapter four has shown. A nation-wide network of more than forty race-meetings had been established by 1650, enabling horse-racing enthusiasts in the north east to attend races in at least four and possibly five locations in Northumberland and

⁴ See above, pp. 188-193, 220-222, 241-242.

⁵ See above, pp. 188-193, 220-222.

⁶ See above, pp. 220-222, 241-242.

County Durham. The surviving sources probably significantly underestimate the number of courses operating in the region during this period, and racing enthusiasts could also travel to see racing in other northern counties. Horse-racing was highly popular by the mid-seventeenth century, and was stimulated by the production of numerous books on horsemanship, and by the widening of the base of horse ownership to include more of the population.⁷ Cock-fighting had been a popular pastime since the medieval period, and fights were commonly held at fairs and on holidays, as well as at many grammar schools. While it is impossible to measure the number of cock-fights in the north east in the pre-Restoration period, it seems likely that organised cock-fighting was stimulated by the increase in the number of race-meetings, because fights were often held alongside races.⁸

While the leisure facilities available in towns do seem to have increased in the second half of the seventeenth century, these developments were very much building on older foundations. This becomes particularly clear when we consider the way in which trade guilds, previously assumed to have been fairly insignificant by 1700, continued to be important in the social lives of their members until the mid-eighteenth century, and greatly influenced the formation of clubs and societies. Trade companies in the north east did come under pressure from the later seventeenth century from some of their members, who wanted to reduce the frequency and length of communal celebrations.⁹ However, the guilds of the north east responded to these changes with their trademark flexibility, reducing the time spent at funerals and company social events, while preserving the commitment to attend funerals, and one major annual celebration. At the same time, companies expanded their activities to include the newly fashionable coffee-

⁷ See above, pp. 131-135, 164-166.

⁸ See above, pp. 164-166.

⁹ See above, pp. 25, 59-74.

houses, donated money to the horse-races, and became involved in the new political calendar of celebration. Trade guilds continued to be highly significant in the social lives of their members until the mid-eighteenth-century, and continued to involve a significant number of urban residents.¹⁰

Not only did trade guilds continue to be important in early modern towns, but they also seem to have acted as an important exemplar for the establishment of clubs and societies. While it has been suggested that voluntary association in clubs was dramatically different to traditional socialising in institutions such as trade guilds, research into both the trade guilds and societies of the north east has revealed little evidence of such a dichotomy.¹¹ As we saw in chapter three, clubs and societies seem to have modelled themselves on trade guilds to a significant extent, employing the same discourses in their sermons and newspaper advertisements, and using many of the organisational arrangements of trade companies. While clubs placed more emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge than guilds, and many society activities involved competition, the similarities between the two kinds of institution appear to have been more significant than the dissimilarities. Clubs and guilds in the north east engaged in similar kinds of socialising, including processions, dinners and funerals, and the ethos of these organisations was highly similar. Both the companies and clubs and societies prioritised fraternity, order, unity, harmony and pride in their organisations.¹²

Furthermore, the organisation of organised leisure activities does not seem to have changed dramatically after the Restoration. The venues used for musical and dramatic performances, dancing and cock-fighting in the north east in the first half of

¹⁰ See above, pp. 59-74.

¹¹ See above, pp. 79-84.

¹² See above, pp. 79-84, 125-127.

the eighteenth century were mostly the same as those that had been used in the early seventeenth century. By 1750 several urban centres in the region had either built or converted existing buildings to create dedicated assembly rooms and theatres, where dances, plays and other events could be held. These dedicated buildings only appeared in the north east from the early eighteenth century, but even in this period the majority of leisure events do not seem to have been held in such buildings. Many plays, concerts and dances continued to be held in other public buildings and in inns, and cock-fights were often still held in alehouses.¹³ Methods for funding and organising events also displayed significant continuities. The principle of charging an entry fee to view a performance was not new to the later seventeenth century, but had been a well-established practise of Tudor theatre companies. As we saw in chapter three, the main rules of the sport of horse-racing were established in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the organisation of the sport altered relatively little in the one hundred years that followed, despite its expansion.¹⁴ Many of the methods later used to raise money to fund leisure events, including gentry subscriptions, sponsorship by innkeepers, and donations from town authorities and guilds were already in operation in the first half of the seventeenth century.¹⁵

The recent historiography of recreation has tended to suggest that the growth of commercialised leisure events was a post-Restoration phenomenon. As we saw in the first chapter, it is conventionally argued that such events increased in urban areas in this period due to increased surplus income among the gentry and middling sort of people. Proponents of the 'urban renaissance' model argue that towns recovered from the later seventeenth century, as a result of commercial expansion and the growth of production.

¹³ See above, pp. 198-199, 234, 251.

¹⁴ See above, pp. 252, 190, 222, 135.

¹⁵ See above, pp. 141-151.

They suggest that there was an unprecedented influx of the gentry into towns in this period, and that these gentry residents and visitors, along with middling sort consumers, funded an upsurge of organised leisure activities in urban areas.¹⁶ However, this thesis has shown that many of these developments have a much longer history, casting doubt on the chronology charted by historians such as Borsay and Clark. We have already seen that early seventeenth-century towns may not have been experiencing such severe difficulties as Borsay suggests, and that urban residents were probably not suffering the precipitous decline in standards of living that has generally been envisaged. High levels of migration into urban settlements suggest that many individuals continued to believe that towns offered economic opportunities, and many towns seem to have begun to recover from the later sixteenth century.¹⁷

The seasonal gyration of elite families, generally assumed to be a post-Restoration phenomenon, seems to have been established in the mid-seventeenth century. The numbers of gentry and upper middling sort families who spent the season at urban centres certainly seem to have increased from the later seventeenth century, but many families were already over-wintering in towns before 1650. As we saw in chapter six, many elite families from the north east were spending their winters either in the capital, or in the main urban centres in the region by the early seventeenth century. They then spent their summers in country pursuits such as hunting, or travelled to drink the waters either at rural or urban springs, and were able to attend the horse-races and cock-fights that were held in both urban centres and rural areas.¹⁸ Recent research suggests that gentry families often had surplus income in this period, which they spent on various

¹⁶ See above, pp. 4-6.

¹⁷ See above, pp. 6-9; K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 164-166.

¹⁸ See above, pp. 258-278, 131-135, 137-140, 164-165.

commodities, including land, their houses, and urban residence. Many of these households probably also spent money on attending organised leisure events, doubtless stimulating the increase in such occasions, including the expansion of horse-racing and cock-fighting from the later sixteenth century.¹⁹

Although many poorer families were suffering in this period, households from social groups below the level of the gentry might also have surplus income to spend on socialising at organised leisure events. Wrightson suggests that while smaller tenants were struggling to survive as rents rose, better-off tenants had more surplus income as they benefited from the increase in agricultural prices and decrease in wage costs. The yeomanry, for example, were increasing their expenditure from the later sixteenth century, spending more on their homes, education, and dowries for their children. Many urban residents were benefiting from the business opportunities generated by urban expansion, where there was increasing demand for the work of professionals and for labour of all kinds. Though the majority of the urban population was suffering from the effects of the progressive decline in real wages, many of the mercantile elite made their fortunes, and even small masters were sometimes able to reach 'a modest prosperity'. It has been suggested that there was a general increase in consumption during this period, and that many households were making more purchases. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests they may well have been spending their money on organised leisure events, as well as on other commodities.²⁰

¹⁹ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp. 182-186. See above, pp. 131-135, 164-166.

²⁰ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp. 186-201; J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy And Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 158-180; C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London, 1998), pp. 15-59. See above, pp. 188-193, 220-222, 241-242.

Leisure certainly seems to have become increasingly commercialised from the later seventeenth century, but it may be that rather than characterising that period as a revolutionary 'urban renaissance', we should think of it as witnessing an intensification of an earlier trend.²¹ Indeed, Wrightson suggests that Britain experienced a period of economic expansion from the last decades of the sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century. He argues that this was marked by an increase in agricultural production, and a growth in the diversity of manufactured products. At the same time, markets expanded, and became more integrated, and the degree of increase in commercial transactions can be measured by the enormous increase in litigation that occurred during the period.²² Wrightson suggests that commercial expansion was also driven by an increase in overseas trade, which spread to the Atlantic in the early seventeenth century. It has been estimated that the national income of England and Wales increased by more than 100 per cent in real terms between 1566 and 1641. The development of recreational facilities may well have been stimulated by economic expansion in this period, and probably formed part of the growth of market exchange. We have already seen that the number of victualling houses increased rapidly from the sixteenth century, providing more space where many kinds of entertainment could be provided on a commercial basis.²³

There are signs that some commercialised leisure was also available in rural areas throughout the period, despite the fact that historians of leisure have tended to concentrate on developments in urban areas. The majority of organised leisure events were doubtless concentrated in urban areas, which guaranteed a larger audience. However, the prevalence of horse-racing in rural settlements warns us not to

²¹ See above, pp. 4-6, 136-137, 165-166, 193-194.

²² Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp. 159-176.

²³ Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, pp. 176-181. See above, p. 78.

underestimate the extent to which the commercialisation of leisure was both an urban and a rural phenomenon. Horse-racing was expanding in the towns of the north east from the later sixteenth century, but numerous race-tracks were based in villages, and approximately 53 per cent of race-meetings held in the north east in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century were in rural areas.²⁴ Musicians and theatre companies were probably performing in villages in the north east throughout this period, as they were in other provincial areas. Individuals from all ranks travelled to drink the waters at medicinal springs in rural areas, which brought people together for socialising. By the eighteenth century cock-fights were sometimes advertised in village inns in the region, and several assemblies were held in rural settlements.²⁵ The distribution networks for consumer goods included villages as well as provincial towns by the early seventeenth century, and organised public leisure also seems to have been consumed in rural areas by this period. In rural areas leisure events could be held in agricultural buildings, as well as in village inns, whose innkeepers stood to profit from organising horse-races or cock-fights, and allowing theatre companies or musicians to use the building.²⁶

It seems that participation in organised leisure was fairly broad in both the first half of the seventeenth century and later in the period. Involvement in public leisure differed according to status, and those below the middling sort could not afford to attend many events where an entry fee was charged. The high prices charged for series of assemblies, concerts and plays in the north east in the early eighteenth century must have prevented many of the middling sort from attending regularly, though they could

²⁴ See above, pp. 3, 131-135, 139-141.

²⁵ See above, pp. 233-234, 204, 189-190, 266-270, 166, 242.

²⁶ See above, pp. 198-199, 143-144, 168-169, 204, 222.

certainly afford the occasional outing to such events.²⁷ Furthermore, while individuals from a broad range of social groups might gather in the same place to enjoy the same activities, they did not always experience them in precisely the same way, or mix extensively. In cockpits, for example, tiered seating restricted social mixing, and in the eighteenth century sitting in the most expensive seats at the theatre would have ensured a degree of social exclusivity.²⁸ However, many kinds of sociability in the region involved a broad cross-section of society, and cock-fights and horse-races were equally popular with the labouring poor, middling groups and the gentry throughout the period. Both the gentry and the middling sort were already involved in funding leisure activities in the early seventeenth century, with town authorities, trade companies and groups of gentlemen providing prizes for horse-races, and inns hosting many different recreational activity.²⁹

Previous accounts of commercialised leisure in the post-Restoration period have tended to under-estimate the participation of groups below the elite. The previous chapters of this thesis have shown that both the gentry and the middling sort were providing funding for commercialised leisure activities during this period.³⁰ Groups of gentlemen banded together to raise money to hold horse-races and cock-fights, and subscriptions collected from the gentry also helped to fund concerts, plays and assemblies. However, the middling sort were also funding many kinds of organised leisure in this period, through corporations and trade guilds, and as individual innkeepers or tradesmen.³¹ The middling sort have often been characterised as responding to elite demand, but many recreational activities were actually initiated by

²⁷ See above, pp. 244-245, 227-228, 207-209.

²⁸ See above, pp. 155, 170-171, 208.

²⁹ See above, pp. 207-210, 169, 157, 141-151, 78.

³⁰ See above, pp. 10-11, 141-151, 207-210.

³¹ See above, pp. 147-149, 167-169, 228, 208-210, 244-245.

middling sort men, including clubs, cock-fights, horse-races and the Newcastle subscription concert series. While individuals from the middling sort of people could not always afford to attend all the events of each season, they were often to be seen at horse-races, cock-fights, concerts, dances and plays.³² Middling sort men often fought their cocks at the fights organised by innkeepers, and before 1740 they were also able to ride in small rural horse-races and in the races that were reserved for them at larger meetings. Those below the middling sort were also able to enjoy public leisure, and these meaner sorts were prominent among the crowds watching cock-fights and horse-races, and occasionally managed to afford a cheap seat at the theatre.³³

Continuity also seems to have been strongly evident in the gendered patterns of sociability. Throughout the period some kinds of sociability were restricted to one sex, including cock-fights, which usually seem to have been watched by all-male audiences. Many men also had opportunities to socialise in a male-only environment in a work-related capacity, with fellow officers of the corporation, fellow JPs, or at guild meetings.³⁴ Men enjoyed masculine bonding, heavy drinking and bawdy discussion on hunting trips, and later in the period also at club meetings and in the after-dinner hour.³⁵ Women also valued opportunities to socialise with their own sex, supporting one-another through the birth of children, which was a female-dominated ritual in this period, and also through lying-in after child-bearing. While husbands and male relations might visit a woman during her lying in, this was an event dominated by women, which allowed female relatives and neighbours to bond.³⁶ In the summer season the women of

³² See above, pp. 10, 96, 168-169, 141-147, 224-225, 186, 353-354.

³³ See above, pp. 172, 152-153, 169, 157, 207-210.

³⁴ See above, pp. 169-170, 292-293.

³⁵ See above, pp. 272-277, 87-89, 285.

³⁶ See above, pp. 290-291, 283-284; A. Wilson, 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation' in V. Fildes (ed.), *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England* (London, 1990), pp. 68-97; D. Cressy, *Birth*.

the gentry and upper middling sort played cards, walked and did housework together, while their menfolk went out on hunting expeditions. Both men and women probably enjoyed the opportunity to spend time in the company of their own sex, where they could discuss and be supported in their gender-specific experiences.³⁷

However, women were also actively involved in many different kinds of sociability together with men, throughout the period. Both men and women frequently attended horse-races, and both sexes enjoyed listening to music, dancing, and attending plays.³⁸ The festivities held by trade companies often involved the wives, daughters and female servants of guild members, and women were sometimes able to participate in the social occasions organised by clubs.³⁹ Women also shared in private sociability, welcoming friends and relatives to visit and eat at their homes, and travelling to enjoy hospitality at the homes of others. Much socialising seems to have involved the development of relationships between households, rather than between individuals, and both men and women were expected to participate fully in sociability, which was regarded as an important obligation. Both sexes valued social occasions in many of the same ways, appreciating conversation, well-mannered conduct, and the opportunity to participate in good-natured competition.⁴⁰

It has recently been suggested that women's opportunities to socialise in the public sphere were greatly enhanced in the eighteenth century, but this argument proves difficult to sustain once earlier opportunities for female leisure are examined. The

Marriage, And Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (first edition 1997, reprinted Oxford, 1999), pp. 55-87.

³⁷ See above, pp. 273-277.

³⁸ See above, pp. 157, 227, 247-248, 207.

³⁹ See above, pp. 42-44, 89-92.

⁴⁰ DUL, Add. MSS., 866-867; J. Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in J. Barry and C. W. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 84-112. See above, pp. 291-292, 316-318, 276-277.

provision of commercialised leisure undoubtedly continued to expand after the Restoration, providing more social events for both men and women of all social groups.⁴¹ However, women had many opportunities to socialise in the first half of the seventeenth century. These included commodified leisure and the traditional sociability at guild events, but also so-called 'private' sociability, such as dinners and visits. This type of socialising was termed private because it included only those that were invited, but was highly significant nonetheless, in that it was importance for the standing of families in the community. There seems to have been little meaningful increase in the scale of women's socialising in the eighteenth century. Throughout the period, women were heavily involved in sociability, and socialised both together with men, and also in all-female company.⁴²

Sociability in the north east was not merely a poor imitation of the London social season, as the preceding chapters have shown. The elite residents of the region seem to have had a complex response to the country's capital, displaying both disdain and admiration towards London.⁴³ The capital was certainly believed to have high-quality organised leisure, and a pace of socialising which other towns simply could not match. Those living in the north east were keen to hear news from the capital, and to be told about the latest fashions and the social events of the season. However, residents of the region also had a healthy scepticism about London, fearing the extravagance that could overtake friends and relatives who travelled there to socialise or meet marriage partners.⁴⁴ They were also sometimes concerned that the excitement of London might prejudice the traveller against their home region, and leave them unable to appreciate

⁴¹ See above, pp. 16-17.

⁴² See above, pp. 42-44, 317, 255-256.

⁴³ See above, pp. 260-261.

⁴⁴ See above, pp. 260-261.

the slower pace of socialising in the provinces. Residents of the north east were not avid consumers of every passing metropolitan fashion, either for new modes of socialising or changes in dress. Instead, those living in the north east dressed in order to conform to the fashions that were current in the urban centres of the north east, and only took up new ways of socialising if they were perceived to be appropriate to the region. Some of the new types of dances that were so popular in London in the first half of the eighteenth century were largely rejected by residents of the north east, for example.⁴⁵

Residents of the local area were proud of their urban centres, frequently praising the social events that took place there. The clubs, theatre, dance and music of the north east do not seem to have been perceived as inferior to those of London, and indeed the north east was taking part in the mainstream of developments in drama and music during the early eighteenth century.⁴⁶ The plays that were performed in the region during the period conformed to the same patterns that were observable in the London theatre of the time. The quality of drama seen in the region was probably similar to much of what was performed in London at the time, because companies from the capital came to perform in the north east. The north east, along with other provincial areas, also acted as a training ground for talented actors and actresses that were later to grace the stages of the nation's capital.⁴⁷ The presence of the talented composer Charles Avison ensured that high quality music was both being performed and written in the north east during this period. Far from copying musical composition styles from elsewhere in the country, Avison and several others in the region were writing a distinctive kind of keyboard sonata that seems to have been limited to this small circle of composers in the north east. Innovation in the region was not limited to music and, as we saw in chapter

⁴⁵ See above, pp. 261, 301-302, 264-265.

⁴⁶ See above, pp. 263-264, 238-240, 199-200.

⁴⁷ See above, pp. 199-201, 203.

three, one of the horticultural clubs of the north east seems to have been associated with the publication of a botanical work of national significance.⁴⁸

Patterns of socialising in the north east do not seem to have been diffused in any simple way from the capital to the region, and nor do they seem to have been primarily based on emulation. The gentry and upper middling sort of the north east might be interested in the doings of the nobility, but did not necessarily wish to copy them. In fact, one correspondent from the north east reported that she had enjoyed her stay at the resort town of Scarborough precisely because few of the fashionable set were present.⁴⁹ Those who lived in the north east were also prepared to visit local springs that were based outside large urban centres if they were reported to be medically efficacious. These resorts would not attract the glittering crowd that flocked to Tunbridge Wells, but allowed visitors to socialise with their friends and to keep their expenses to a minimum.⁵⁰ The middling sort of people had their own value system, which prioritised thrift, mutual help, conviviality and fraternity, and these ideals were expressed in guild sociability, which remained important throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Rather than seeking to emulate the socialising of the better-off groups in society, many artisans were proud of their trade companies, and continued to be willing to invest both their time and surplus income in guild socialising.⁵¹

Sociability was an important part of early modern culture, and both the middling sort and gentry needed to build up networks of friendship. The middling groups needed association in order to secure household survival by common action, and the gentry

⁴⁸ See above, pp. 224-225, 239, 118-119.

⁴⁹ See above, p. 271.

⁵⁰ See above, pp. 266-271.

⁵¹ See above, pp. 2, 34-35, 66-74.

relied upon socialising to maintain their social credit. Individuals from all social backgrounds relied upon their social networks in times of difficulty, to give help and provide sympathy.⁵² As we saw in the last chapter, many historians argue that the development of 'politeness' caused a significant transition in both the patterns and conceptualisation of sociability from the later seventeenth century. The literature of politeness certainly delineated a new chronology of the development of civil society, and prescribed less formal manners than before.⁵³ However, most individuals failed to become obsessed by the dictates of politeness, and there were frequent complaints about the over-formal manners of the provincial elite. The codes of politeness were based to a significant extent on earlier ideas about manners, and there were also many important continuities in the value system of socialising, which the current historiography fails to address.⁵⁴ Individuals valued socialising throughout the period, and good manners were always felt to be important, because they made social interactions more pleasant. Throughout the period most elite households put a great deal of effort into building their social networks, maintaining them with frequent reciprocal visits and communal meals. From the seventeenth century their relationships were increasingly also maintained by corresponding, which pledged friendship across great distances. Letter-writers promised to remember one-another, and offered good wishes, many different kinds of information, gifts and mutual assistance.⁵⁵

Sociable activities supplied many different needs for the residents of the north east throughout the period. Many kinds of socialising offered the opportunity for excitement, which could be derived from the dramatic tension experienced in the

⁵² See above, pp. 2-3, 24, 312.

⁵³ See above, pp. 306, 315.

⁵⁴ See above, pp. 307-318.

⁵⁵ See above, pp. 317-318, 280-287, 293-304.

theatre, a close finish at the race-track, or a fight to the death in the cock-pit.⁵⁶ Social occasions in the north east often included the opportunity to compete for honour, whether by gambling, or by direct competition against others. Men were able to vie with one-another for success on the race-track, in the cock-pit and while hunting. By the first half of the eighteenth century they could also enter the competitions that were often organised by clubs. Women had fewer opportunities to engage in public competition, though they were able to stake money on card games and at the race course. Women were also able to compete against one-another in some of the sports that were organised alongside horse-races.⁵⁷ Both genders could also enjoy flirtation and courtship at social events, and individuals from all social classes enjoyed the opportunity for personal display that such occasions offered. Eating and drinking were always prominent at these events, and the pleasure of consuming good food or wine often enhanced the convivial atmosphere.⁵⁸ Conversation also added to the enjoyment, allowing individuals to bond with friends and family. Many kinds of socialising offered the opportunity to accumulate knowledge, either in the course of informal discussion, or at the formal lectures that were sometimes held by clubs in the region by the first half of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹

The period from the last decades of the sixteenth century to the first half of the eighteenth century seems to have been a distinct epoch in the history of sociability, which was followed by a period of significant change. In many ways the mid-eighteenth century marked a greater turning-point in the history of leisure than the mid-seventeenth century, though more research is needed in order to confirm this. No monograph has yet

⁵⁶ See above, pp. 254, 157-158, 173.

⁵⁷ See above, pp. 159-161, 173-175, 276, 122-123, 158, 277, 154.

⁵⁸ See above, pp. 157, 163-164, 212-213, 245.

⁵⁹ See above, pp. 113-120, 212-213, 236, 245, 117-120.

been produced on the history of horse-racing in the later eighteenth century, for example, and much work remains to be done on the sociability of the middling sort in the same period.⁶⁰ From the mid-eighteenth century attacks on popular recreation certainly gathered pace, however, and traditional blood sports were the subject of sustained criticism across the country. Trade guilds declined sharply from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, and had ceased to be important in the social lives of large numbers of townspeople by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶¹ Whereas the importance of clubs before 1750 can be exaggerated, the number of clubs increased dramatically in the later eighteenth century, so that there were over 3,000 different societies operating in the capital by 1800. By the end of the eighteenth century societies had become highly significant institutions of sociability, overtaking the trade companies from which they had learnt so much. In this period the recreational practises and values of the majority of the population and the gentry appear to have begun to differ more significantly. By the mid-nineteenth century there were fewer recreational activities that were shared by all social groups, and activities such as mumming and football were less likely to be supported or watched by the elite.⁶²

Indeed, the work presented in this thesis suggests that there may be problems with the current periodization of social history. In recent years many historians have chosen to study sociability and leisure, as well as numerous other subjects, across the 'long eighteenth century'. This period is variously defined as beginning either at the Restoration or Glorious Revolution, and historians place its end at different points in the early nineteenth century. The current historiographical vogue for studies of the 'long

⁶⁰ See above, pp. 127-128, 186-187, 129, 10-11.

⁶¹ See above, pp. 128, 186-187.

⁶² See above, pp. 186-187; R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations In English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 158-171.

eighteenth century' has produced much important research that has illuminated neglected periods and areas, including ground-breaking studies of gender from the later seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries.⁶³ However, the whole-sale adoption of this chronological framework has serious implications, which have yet to be generally recognised. While 1688, for example, may mark a logical turning-point for a political history concerned with tracing increasing centralization, the changing balance of power between king and parliament, and the struggle against Catholic insurgents, it is far from clear that the later seventeenth century marked a decisive change in cultural and social terms.⁶⁴

In fact, there were many important continuities between the century after 1650, and the previous one hundred year period. As we have seen, recent research suggests that the economic growth of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was part of a narrative of expansion that can be traced back to earlier developments. During this period production grew, the number of market transactions increased, and markets became increasingly integrated.⁶⁵ By 1750 settlements with more than 5,000 residents housed approximately 21 per cent of the population, but the urban expansion of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century had been preceded by a more significant phase of growth in the sixteenth and earlier seventeenth century. The urban sector increased dramatically during this period, growing by more than 100 per cent between 1520 and 1670, by which date approximately 13.5 per cent of the population lived in urban

⁶³ R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The emergence of 'separate spheres'* (London, 1998), passim; P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, 2001), passim; F. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London, 1997), passim.

⁶⁴ O'Gorman, for example, emphasises the importance of the Glorious Revolution as a turning-point in British history. See O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, pp. x-xvi.

⁶⁵ See above, p. 326.

settlements.⁶⁶ Whereas the growth of the professions from the later seventeenth century has often been invoked as a cause of urban regeneration after the Restoration, recent research has shown that the number of lawyers grew dramatically during the sixteenth century. By 1640 the total number of legal professionals had increased to between seven and ten times their estimated number in 1480, and the profession continued to experience moderate growth until approximately 1690. Rather than experiencing an unprecedented expansion in the first half of the eighteenth century, the legal profession first stagnated and then declined during these years.⁶⁷

The period from the later seventeenth to the early eighteenth century was certainly not a turning-point in terms of economic expansion, urban growth, or the rise of the professions, but nor was it marked by a revolution in gender relations. The basic gender framework seems to have remained remarkably stable across the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth century. While there were some changes in theoretical conceptions of gender during this period, the same broad division of labour persisted.⁶⁸ Women continued to take the responsibility for child-care and housework, and women's work retained its low status. The roles that were prescribed for men and women in the mid-eighteenth century were broadly similar to what was expected of them in the earlier period, and women were always able to exercise agency, despite being portrayed as the inferior sex.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See above, pp. 4-5, 7-8.

⁶⁷ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 205-207; C. W. Brooks, *Lawyers, Litigation and English Society Since 1450* (London, 1998), pp. 182-185. See above, p. 5.

⁶⁸ For changes to theoretical conceptions of gender, see T. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London, 1990), passim. See above, pp. 88, 306, 314.

⁶⁹ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, pp. 23, 305-313; J. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 3-6, 140, 177-198; L. Pollock, 'Teach her to live under obedience: the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', *Continuity and Change*, 4, 2 (1989), 231-258. See above, pp. 317, 88-89.

Not only does the first half of the eighteenth century appear to have much in common with the earlier period, but the eighteenth century was bisected by a significant change in the prevailing demographic regime. While population stagnated and then declined a little from the mid-seventeenth century, population levels began a tentative recovery in the 1680s, and then rose more steeply in the second half of the eighteenth century. This demographic evidence suggests that the post 1750 period should not be so unthinkingly conflated with the second half of the seventeenth century, with which it may have less in common than is generally suggested.⁷⁰ The current fashion for studying developments across the 'long eighteenth century' has begun to prove problematic, as it involves the implicit assumption that the mid-seventeenth century marked a general turning-point. This discourages attempts to trace developments across the seventeenth century, and has led to a general tendency to overlook the important continuities from the later sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. The 'long eighteenth century' paradigm appears to have outlived its usefulness and it may well now be time to turn to the study of the 'long seventeenth century', the period on which this thesis has focused.

⁷⁰ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), pp. 207-210.

Appendix: A summary of the contents of the major manuscript collections of personal papers consulted

The following pages summarise the contents of each of the major manuscript collections of personal papers consulted, which are used particularly extensively in Chapter Six. This appendix is provided in order to give the reader a more detailed picture of the profile of the correspondents whose letters survive. All the personal letters, diaries and memoranda books of individuals from County Durham and Northumberland held in these collections were surveyed. However, those letters that were concerned with financial, ecclesiastical or legal matters were not consulted.

Durham Record Office

D/Lo: Londonderry Papers

This collection contains various personal letters, some of which date from the later seventeenth century, though more survive from the first half of the eighteenth century. The holdings include the correspondence of various gentry families in the region, including members of the Bowes family of Streatlam. Among the members of this family whose correspondence survives are George Bowes, Solicitor-general to the Bishop of Durham in 1694 and Recorder of the City of Durham in 1706, and his wife Anne Bowes.¹ The correspondence of another branch of the Bowes family, resident at Thornton in County Durham and at Cowpen in Northumberland, is also represented in this collection. Correspondents from this branch of the family include a Margaret

¹ R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols., London, 1816-40), vol. 4, p. 108.

Bowes, who was probably the Margaret Bowes of Thornton who was baptised in 1678 and died in 1758, and George Wanley Bowes. The letters also include the correspondence of the gentry family of Vane family of Long-Newton.²

D/Sa: Salvin Manuscripts

This archive contains some eighteenth-century personal letters, mostly written by or sent to the Salvins, who were a gentry family based in Tudhoe, Croxdale and Sunderland Bridge in County Durham. The correspondence includes various letters sent by the family of Henry, Lord Montagu, who was Secretary of State to James II at St. Germain. His daughter, Barbara, had married Ralph Salvin of Tudhoe in 1708. The Salvins also corresponded with the Collingwoods, a gentry family of Eslington Hall in Northumberland. The Collingwoods were related to the Salvins by George Collingwood's marriage in 1710 to Ralph Salvin's sister-in-law. Other correspondents included a member of the Riddell family of Gateshead, another gentry household. The archive also includes letters from a wealthy Durham lawyer, David Dixon, who seems not only to have acted for the family in a professional capacity, but also to have been a family friend.³ The correspondence discusses the social lives of much wider range of individuals than those whose correspondence is preserved in the archive, including the

² E. Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History* (15 vols., Northumberland County History Committee, 1893-1940), vol. 9, pp. 328-330; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, pp. 214-215, 383.

³ Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, part 2, pp. 117-120; A. G. Green, 'Tudhoe Hall and Byers Green Hall, County Durham: Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century Social Change in Houses', *Vernacular Architecture*, 29 (1998), 36-37; L. Gooch, *The Desperate Faction? The Jacobites of North East-England 1688-1745* (Hull, 1995), pp. 25, 58-59; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 1, p. 7; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 2, pp. 128-129; DUL, DPR, will of David Dixon, proved 1728. For a case-study of the sociability of the Salvin family see above, pp. 287-290.

gentry families of Widdrington of Colt Park, the Haggerstons, Claverings of Callaly, Witham, and Charlton.⁴

D/St: Strathmore Collection

This collection includes some seventeenth-century correspondence, though more personal letters survive from 1700 onwards. The collection is the archive of the Bowes family of Streatlam, later the earls of Strathmore, and the majority of these letters were exchanged by members of that branch of the Bowes family. This archive therefore includes the correspondence of several of the same individuals that are represented among the Londonderry papers. Various seventeenth-century members of the Bowes family of Streatlam are represented here, including Sir William Bowes, Member of Parliament for County Durham from 1679 to 1685, in 1695, and from 1702 to 1705. The collection also contains several letters sent to Sir William's son George, the Member of Parliament for County Durham from 1727 to 1754, as well as nineteen letters exchanged between George's elder brother, William Blakiston Bowes, and other members of the family.⁵ The material not only includes gentry correspondence, but also a few personal letters exchanged by the Tully family, who seem to have been members of the mercantile elite of the region, and had business links with the Bowses.⁶

Northumberland Record Office

⁴ Gooch, *The Desperate Faction*, pp. 17, 18, 23, 59, 127-128, 64.

⁵ Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, p. 108; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 2, pp. 253-254.

⁶ F. W. Dendy (ed.), *Extracts From The Records Of The Company Of Hostmen Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne* (Surtees Society, 105, 1901), pp. lii, 168, 277, 295; DRO, StC/3/1/8; DUL, DPR, will of Elizabeth Tullie, proved 1780.

NRO 650: Delaval (Hastings) Manuscripts.

1DE, 2DE: Delaval (Seaton Delaval and Ford) Manuscripts.

Some personal papers from this collection have been printed, but most of the letters in this archive exist only in manuscript form, with many dating from the early seventeenth century. Many letters survive from the later seventeenth century, and there are also personal papers dating from the first half of the eighteenth century.⁷ This archive is dominated by letters received or sent by members of the gentry Delaval family of Seaton Delaval in Northumberland. The seventeenth-century letters include the correspondence of Sir Robert Delaval, who was high sheriff of Northumberland in the later sixteenth century, and the letters of his sons Ralph and Francis. The collection also includes the memoranda book of Thomas Delaval of Durham and Hetton-le-Hole, which contains biographical notes about the hospitality of his father, Sir Ralph Delaval, who died in 1628.⁸ The Delavals also corresponded with other gentry families in the region, including the Bowes family of Bradley and Biddic-Waterville, with whom they intermarried in the second decade of the seventeenth century, and the Blakes of Ford castle, who married into the Delaval family in the later seventeenth century.⁹

NRO 753: Grey Manuscripts

This collection contains the correspondence of the Grey family of Backworth, Northumberland who were descended from a Newcastle merchant. The family then

⁷ B. Anderton (ed.), 'Selections from the Delaval papers' in A. M. Oliver (ed.), *A Volume Of Miscellanea* (Newcastle Upon Tyne Records Committee, 9, 1930), pp. 123-169.

⁸ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 136-177; R. Wellford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed* (3 vols., Newcastle, 1895), vol. 2, pp. 37-54; NRO, 1DE, 5/43.

⁹ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 169-172; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 4, p. 110.

bought land in Northumberland and moved into the lesser gentry.¹⁰ Some correspondence dates from the seventeenth century, but more letters and numerous memoranda books survive from the first half of the eighteenth century. The collection is dominated by the personal papers of one individual, Ralph William Grey, who was baptised in 1707, educated at Oxford University and at the Middle Temple, and probably practised as a lawyer. Ralph Grey's personal papers provide a full account of his socialising and attitudes to sociability.¹¹ He corresponded with various members of his own family, including his mother and his siblings, and also exchanged letters with many professionals and members of the mercantile elite. His correspondents included William Ellison, who was mayor of Newcastle in 1710, 1722 and 1734, and the wealthy Dr. Askew, described as 'the most eminent physician in the North of England' when he died in 1773.¹² The collection also contains over twenty letters exchanged between Ralph Grey's sister Ann, the physician Alexander Sandilands, and Alexander's daughter Elizabeth in the 1740s.¹³

NRO 855: Carr-Ellison (Hedgeley) Manuscripts

This collection contains a handful of personal papers from the seventeenth century, but the majority of the personal letters date from after 1700. Many of these letters were written or received by members of the Carr family, gentry who resided at Dunstan Hill in County Durham. Most of the surviving Carr family letters are from the correspondence of Ralph Carr, who was born in 1711, and served his apprenticeship as

¹⁰ Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. 2, p. 381; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 40-43; DUL, DPR, will of William Grey, proved 1716. See above, p. 307.

¹¹ See above, pp. 307-310.

¹² J. Hodgson, *A History of Northumberland* (3 vols., Newcastle, 1820-1858), vol. 3, part 2, p. 347. *Newcastle Courant*, 23/01/1773.

¹³ NRO, 753, P (vi).

a Newcastle merchant adventurer before setting off to undertake the grand tour. After travelling in Europe and visiting St. Petersburg, Ralph returned to Dunstan Hill, and traded as a merchant, dealing in coal, iron and timber amongst many other goods.¹⁴ Ralph's correspondents included his many siblings, and also his brother-in-law, Charles Byne, an army officer, and his nephew and trading partner John Widdrington. The letters of Ralph's wife Isabella, and her mother Anne Byne, who was the wife of a clergyman, also survive.¹⁵ The collection also contains some correspondence of members of the Ellison family of Hebburn in County Durham, who were descended from the mercantile elite of Newcastle, and moved into the gentry in the course of the period. Members of the family whose correspondence is preserved include Robert Ellison, who was baptised in 1665, and Henry Ellison, who acted as high sheriff of Northumberland in 1735.¹⁶

ZAL: Allgood (Nunwick) Manuscripts

This collection includes numerous personal and business letters exchanged between members of the Allgood family and others. The earliest material dates from the late seventeenth century, though more letters survive from the first half of the eighteenth century. Many letters in the collection are undated. The Allgoods of Northumberland were a gentry family, whose members corresponded with various other gentry families in the region, including the Bakers of Crook Hall and Elemore, the Blacketts of Wallington, and also with the Widdringtons of Cold Park, with whom they inter-

¹⁴ R. E. Carr and C. E. Carr, *The History Of The Family of Carr* (3 vols., London, 1893), vol. 1, pp. 12, 45-47 and 'Pedigree of Carr of Dunstan Hill, co. Durham', interleaved between p. 36 and p. 37.

¹⁵ Carr and Carr, *History Of The Family of Carr*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 91-92, 87-88; Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. 2, pp. 145-147.

¹⁶ Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 346-348; E. Hughes, *North Country Life In The Eighteenth Century: The North-East 1700-1750* (Oxford, 1952), p. 9.

married in 1726. One of the most prolific correspondents is Elizabeth Baker. She is most likely to have been the Elizabeth Baker who was the wife of George Baker of Crook Hall and Elemore, and was widowed in 1723. The correspondence contains numerous letters sent or received by family members and others who were professionals, including clergymen and lawyers. These include many letters to William Pye of Durham, registrar to the Dean and Chapter of Durham and auditor to the Bishop, along with the letter books of the Reverend James Allgood. There are also letters from the cookery writer Hannah Glasse, nee Allgood, who was born in 1708 and went on to write several works on domestic economy.¹⁷

ZBL: Blackett (Matfen) Manuscripts

This collection includes some seventeenth-century letters, though there are many more letters dating from the first half of the eighteenth century. Most of the correspondence in this collection was sent or received by the Blacketts, a gentry family of Newby in Yorkshire and West Matfen in Northumberland. Numerous letters in this collection were sent by Sir Edward Blackett of Newby, a cock-fighting enthusiast and member of the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, who died in 1718.¹⁸ Many of the other surviving letters were sent by Sir Edward's son, John, who operated as a merchant in Rotterdam, before returning to the north east. John and his father both copied up their letters into letter-books, and these constitute a good series of early eighteenth century

¹⁷ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 15, p. 200; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 70-71; NRO, ZAL, catalogue; Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. 2, p. 358; J. C. Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Society, 118, 1910), p. 192; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 12, p. 377.

¹⁸ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 12, pp. 377-379. See above, p. 167.

correspondence.¹⁹ Many personal letters were exchanged between members of the family, including members of the cadet branch of the family at Wallington, in Northumberland, though the Blacketts also corresponded with other gentry families in the north. Among these were the Yorkes, the family of Sir Edward's second wife, Mary, and the Mitfords of Seghill, who were also connected to the Blacketts by marriage.²⁰ The collection also holds many letters sent and received by professionals and members of the mercantile elite of the region. There are various letters both from and to members of the Douglas family of Halton and Matfen, for example, who were connected with the Blacketts through the marriage of Anne Douglas to Sir Edward Blackett of Newby in the 1750s. Anne's father, Oley, and her grandfather John, were both Newcastle attorneys.²¹ Sir Edward Blackett enjoyed a warm correspondence with many merchants, including Mrs Gray, from whom he bought fish, wine and funeral goods, and also with numerous clergymen, including Reverend Pemberton of Bedale.²²

ZSW: Swinburne (Capheaton) Manuscripts

This collection contains the letters of the Swinburne family, and includes both seventeenth and eighteenth-century items, though only some personal correspondence survives. The Swinburnes were a Northumberland gentry family, and had their main seat at Capheaton. The surviving letters were sent or received by various members of the family, including Isabella Swinburne, and her husband Sir John of Capheaton, who was the first baronet and died in 1706. Various personal letters were also sent or

¹⁹ NRO, ZBL, 189; NRO, ZBL, 190; NRO, ZBL, 191; NRO, ZBL, 192; NRO, ZBL, 195.

²⁰ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 9, pp. 65-68.

²¹ Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 12, pp. 377-379; Bateson, *et al.* (eds.), *Northumberland County History*, vol. 10, p. 406.

²² NRO, ZBL, 189, to 'Good Mrs Gray', 8 February [1711]; NRO, ZBL, 189, to Reverend Pemberton at Bedale, 22 April 1710.

received by John and Isabella's son, Sir William Swinburne of Capheaton, who died in 1716. Edward Swinburne, brother of the first baronet, also seems to have been among the correspondents. The Swinburnes corresponded with various other families, including the members of the Blount family of Maple Durham in Oxfordshire, gentry who were related to the Swinburnes by marriage.²³

²³ Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 231-234.

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