Remaking the Victorian County Town 1860-1910

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Abstract
This is a study of the 'remaking' of the English county town between 1860 and 1910. During this period, under the pressure wrought by a shifting urban hierarchy, declining status and an eroded market position, the municipal elites in late Victorian county towns transformed their boroughs into specialised urban centres. The study uses a combination of printed sources including census returns, directories and local newspapers together with local manuscript sources, including municipal records, to analyse the process of urban specialisation in two English county towns in different regions, Bedford and Lincoln. The thesis argues that county towns were more dynamic than is generally perceived. In support of this argument the evolving central place function of the county town is examined together with the administrative and market role. Two chapters focus on significant occupational sectors, manufacturing and the professions, to demonstrate the economic dynamism of Victorian Bedford and Lincoln. The core of the thesis is a comparative study of the development of the two municipal boroughs considering the influence of geographical location, networks and the existing urban resource base in developing economic and environmental specialisation. Finally the managers of urban change, the municipal elite are examined to assess how their composition, occupations and lifestyles impacted on their strategies of urban management.
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Chapter One

Introduction

'Towns are made and remade for distinct purposes, in response to public and private needs that find expression in particular buildings or spatial organization.'

This is a study of the 'remaking' of the English county town between 1850 and 1910. During this period county towns attempted to adapt and adjust to the 'age of great cities' and to functioning as part of a national, urbanised, industrialised economy. Under the pressure wrought by a changing urban hierarchy and an eroded market position, the middle class elites in Victorian county towns remade their towns, transforming them from diverse agrarian towns with strong central place functions into specialised urban centres. This process involved economic and environmental modifications and the manipulation of the physical and social structures of the town in order to achieve a particular civic vision of urban specialisation. This thesis will examine the pressures facing county towns during this period and the conscious response of the urban elites in two towns, Bedford and Lincoln, in their pursuit of urban success.

Britain in the nineteenth century was one of the most urbanised societies in the world. By 1850, following a century of sustained urbanisation, the mainland British were a predominantly urban nation living in towns and cities which were growing continuously in both size and complexity. As the scale of Victorian urban development increased, many old established provincial centres found themselves relegated in the urban hierarchy as a result of slow or late growth. Against the competitive challenge posed by the new metropolitan and industrial cities older regional centres faced relative, and sometimes actual, decline. As mobility increased and people were attracted to the increasing opportunities available in the large cities

the gulf in scale between the middle-ranking towns and the largest cities at the apex of the urban hierarchy increased. This gulf was also widening in terms of economic competitiveness. As the structures of transport, communications and information networks extended it was no longer viable for an established medium-sized regional centre to thrive simply through participation in the surrounding regional economy. The county town is a prime example of a smaller urban centre experiencing a decline in status and hegemony combined with the economic challenges posed by the growth of a national and imperial economy.

As yet we know little of the processes of urbanisation and adaptation that occurred in these towns. There are very few integrated studies of late Victorian county towns, the Victoria County Histories tend to focus on details and individual characteristics, and there are no studies which consider the county towns as an urban genre. Research in nineteenth century urban history has focused on the cities, suburbs and towns of the metropolitan areas and the industrial heartlands of Britain; the emphasis has been on those places which experienced dramatic population and spatial growth. In the last four decades historians have sought to understand the complex and evolving nature of the great Victorian cities, yet we still know relatively little of the middle ranking towns, particularly those which had been the established urban centres of the pre-industrial economy and a landed society. While there exists a wealth of local studies on county towns, these lack a national framework and conceptual models of the forms of change occurring in these smaller urban centres in the modern age. County towns form a ‘missing link’ in our understanding of the industrialised urban hierarchy.

County towns and other smaller-scale Victorian towns are not only of interest when set in the wider context of urban change; they are also valid studies of urban life in their own right. Using the urban sanitary district as a measurement of urban settlement, Waller has estimated that in 1901 Britain contained 361 towns of between 10,000-50,000 inhabitants and these towns accommodated 23.2% of Britain's urban

population. With the exception of the more industrialised East Midland towns most county towns, including those which are the subject of this thesis, fell within this category. After a century of city expansion nearly a quarter of urban Britons in 1900 experienced day-to-day life at the level of the provincial, middle-ranking, middle-sized town. These towns also remained the dominant urban experience for a large proportion of the remaining rural population. This is particularly true of county towns with their strong hinterland relationships. These settlements comprise an important and neglected part of the history of British urbanisation.

If historians have overlooked the Victorian county town, there has been extensive research undertaken on the county town in the eighteenth century. Existing literature on the county town can be divided into two identifiable types. The first group of studies is concerned with provincial towns during the 'long eighteenth century'; their rising influence as centres of trade, commerce and most especially as centres of cultural influence and dissemination. These include Sweet's *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture*, Corfield's *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* and Clark and Slack's *English Towns in Transition 1500-1800*. All of these studies consider the role of the county town amongst other small and provincial towns during this period, while Borsay's research takes as its central concern the cultural and social revival of county towns during the post-reformation 'urban renaissance'. Everitt considers county towns in his study on regional development in Britain and does regard them as a specific urban genre, even into the nineteenth century. However his analysis is rooted in the relationship between the county town and the countryside in a predominantly agrarian, aristocratic age. The second group of publications comprises individual studies of particular towns such as

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7 Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 6.
8 J. Langton, 'Town growth and urbanisation in the Midlands from the 1660s to 1841' in J. Stobart and P. Lane (eds), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700-1840: Trades, Towns and Regions* (Leicester, 2000), 7-48.
Hill's *Victorian Lincoln* and Newton's *Victorian Exeter*.12 These studies tend to stress the individuality of place, although Armstrong's study of York focuses on social structure.13 Most were produced two decades ago14 although there has been a recent resurgence of interest in individual towns as evinced by Clark and Murfin's study of Maidstone and Lord's *Derby Past*.15

To what extent can we consider the county town to be a recognisable urban genre in the modern industrial age? Writing about cathedral towns (many of which were also county towns) during this period Waller questioned whether they can still be considered a particular urban type: '...it is debatable whether by late Victorian times the cathedral city was sociologically a distinctive type'.16 Waller's doubt is due to the high level of manufacturing that had enveloped cathedral cities such as Worcester, Peterborough, Lincoln and Rochester by the beginning of the twentieth century and a similar argument can be raised about county towns in the late Victorian period. At first glance the county towns of the nineteenth century can appear to be a disparate collection of urban settlements with little in common. How could quiet, declining Hertford, and the serene cathedral town of Salisbury belong to the same urban genre as burgeoning industrial cities such as Leicester or Derby, for example? The key to understanding the essence of county towns lies in their administrative role and status, rather than in comparisons of Victorian urban scale, and in their adaptation to a changing industrialised and urban world.

What county towns primarily had in common throughout many centuries was their official status as places of provincial administration. Weber defined the three functions of a town as fort, market and participation in a system of domination.17 This third function formed the defining characteristics of the county town and provided the central rationale for their existence. The administrative role with the

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16 Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 216.
attached exercise of hegemony over a defined hinterland provided the central purpose of county towns over the centuries. This study will show how this role remained a central and defining characteristic in the industrial age but was no longer adequate to support either the economy or the status of county towns as urban centres from the mid nineteenth century. The absolute need to adapt and expand their role in the Victorian age provided county towns with another important common characteristic.

The study of the county town in the late nineteenth century is, by necessity, different in nature to studies of larger cities or industrial centres. Research in nineteenth century urban history has usually focussed on the genesis of cities, as in the case of industrial or railway centres such as Middlesbrough or Crewe,18 or the explosive growth experienced by industrial towns such as Leeds and Birmingham.19 From the earliest urban studies of Weber in the late nineteenth century, issues of urban growth, scale and density have been the major focuses of research interest. As early as 1938, Wirth argued that 'We do ... have excellent formulations of theories on such special problems as the growth of the city viewed as a historical trend and as a recurrent process...'.20 The agenda for the research and understanding of the process of urbanisation in the context of the emergence of large industrial cities was set early on.

Further academic interest in large-scale urban settlements was produced by the perceived potential for instability in the high density, rapidly expanding urban environments of the early nineteenth century. The unregulated and apparently chaotic nature of the large towns and cities combined with what Wirth described as 'the superficiality, the anonymity and the transitory character of urban social relations'21 focused the interest of modern urban historians on class relations and questions of control. Modern urban history has became increasingly concerned with

21 Wirth, 'Urbanism'. 
understanding the public and private, formal and informal, visible and invisible structures of control and regulation in the Victorian city.²²

Research on the urban development of the county town in this period is a study of adaptation, adjustment, renewal and, in some cases, a bid for survival. It is an examination of how centres which were already 'real' towns before the onset of industrialisation, places, which although small, were confident of their status and importance, coped with increased urban competition. Prior to the onset of large-scale urban growth in Britain towns such as Chester and Norwich had enjoyed an almost unchallenged regional influence and an important economic and cultural role.²³ The rise of new regional centres such as Manchester and Birmingham and the increasing dominance of the metropolis, combined with the rapid expansion of new communications networks meant that county towns were subject to an ever shifting and usually descending position in the nineteenth century national urban framework.²⁴

County towns experienced eroded status and business from the 1840s onwards, as they were exposed to greater urban competition. New problems such as marginality and inferiority undermined their former regional status. Although many county towns continued to grow and expand in real terms, they failed to keep pace with urban development nationally. In this respect an understanding of the Victorian county town offers the possibility of another picture of nineteenth century urbanisation with which to balance our detailed knowledge of the large-scale industrial city. Developing an understanding of their adjustment will add to our comprehension of the broader processes of urbanisation occurring between 1860 and 1910. Do these towns, rooted in an older, pre-industrial economy, provide an alternative or a complementary view of the type of urban development that occurred in, Birmingham or Leeds for example? To what extent did they experience the same elements of industrialisation or urbanisation that we are accustomed to finding in the

²³ Clark and Slack, Towns in Transition, 46.
Victorian city? A study of smaller provincial towns enriches our understanding of
the full extent and nature of Victorian urbanisation.

On the whole county towns along with market and small towns declined in markets,
economy and influence across the nineteenth century. The lack of dynamism
apparent in these old provincial settlements contrasted strongly and unfavourably
with the phenomenal rise of the industrial towns. Provincial towns that lay outside of
the major areas of industrial change came to be regarded by the Victorians as places
where nothing happened for almost a century. This view has remained largely
unchallenged by modern urban historians some of whom suggest stagnation had set
in by 1800: 'The life and economy of many smaller market towns continued through
the nineteenth century at much the same pace as in the eighteenth'. In many ways
the idea that these provincial towns remained largely untouched by the influences of
population growth, industrialisation and economic change in the nineteenth century
was part of a myth of an unchanging, timeless, England popularised by the
Victorians. However agrarian, market and county towns were exposed to the same
economic, social and legislative pressures as the greater, more obviously dynamic
urban centres.

The competitive pressures brought by industrial change and urban growth were made
acute in county towns by the compounding problem of declining status. In the
context of nineteenth century Britain urban success meant growth and, for the first
time in Britain scale equalled status. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a
town's small size could belie its importance both regionally and nationally; even
small towns could possess important market charters and legal privileges, for
example. By the nineteenth century scale produced urban advantages which smaller
towns could not match. One example is the level of communication connections in a
large city. A study by Simon and Nardinelli related the availability of information to
the economic success of the city. In short, the greater ease of mobility, connection

25 J. Brown, The English Market Town: A Social and Economic History 1750-1914 (Wiltshire,
1986), 20.
28 M.J. Wiener, English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980 (Cambridge,
and communication in a city produced a more efficient exchange of information. The availability of up-to-date, reliable information in the city lowered business risk and encouraged investment which, in turn, produced greater economic and physical growth. The advantages of scale bred more advantages and resulted in further growth. The most competitive urban centres in the industrial age were also the largest.

In the Victorian period the gulf in size between the great cities at the top of the urban hierarchy and those towns in the next two tiers on the urban pyramid expanded continually. This created greater pressures on towns which were not experiencing rapid expansion, including county towns, to compete for status with larger centres. The upheaval of the traditional urban hierarchy throughout the nineteenth century demanded a response from traditional centres, even if, for some, this amounted to the effective control and management of relative decline. The concept of the Victorian county town as an economically moribund centre, which could ignore or defy change, is untenable. County towns in the late nineteenth century tried to find strategies to cope; they needed to develop mechanisms of response, to adapt, to develop new economic roles and to renew and redefine their civic images and reputations. Exposure to wider urban competition necessitated specialisation on the part of county towns.

The need to specialise was the central force in the remaking of the Victorian county town. Specialisation offered a competitive edge over the surrounding market towns and shored up the urban status of the county town within the regional and national contexts. Under competitive pressure late Victorian county towns evolved from diverse marketing centres into specialised urban areas. Some county towns became primarily manufacturing centres such as Leicester, Nottingham and Gloucester, or service centres like Reading, with varying degrees of success. Others developed a portfolio of specialist characteristics such as Shrewsbury with its industrial and

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31 Morris, 'Urbanisation', 164.
educational sectors functioning together with an expansive service sector. The possibilities for developing a specialised income sector in any county town were limited by, and dependent upon, the existing urban resource base. This study examines how the economies and environments of two towns were remade, and reconstructed, between 1860 and 1910 around a particular local strength to produce highly individualised results.

The core of the thesis is a comparative study of two English county towns, Bedford and Lincoln, examining how these towns reacted to the challenges of industrialisation and urbanisation between 1860 and 1910. Comparative analysis has proved to be a valuable method for the study of urban areas and for establishing the different urban genres or typologies. In this case comparative study will begin to provide an understanding of how county towns formed an urban genre during this period and will reveal the processes of transformation operating within them. The case study towns were chosen both for their similarities - both were ancient centres with strong administrative roles - and for their geographical differences. While Bedford was placed in a strong web of communications, well connected to London and to other county centres, Lincoln was isolated in a peripheral agrarian region.

Using towns in different regions allows an element of geographical analysis in which a town's success or failure to adapt can be assessed in relation to location, communications and inter-urban networks? Historians have argued for an increased polarisation in Britain during this period, pitting a landed, Anglican, commercial and London-based culture in the south of England against a radical, dynamic, manufacturing and non-conformist northern model of society. Choosing towns located in different regions also offers the possibility of exploring this dichotomy; how far were these two cultural and economic models influential in the moulding of town identities?

The choice of the towns also enabled examination of the concept of the county town as an urban genre. The numbers of county towns and the definition of the 'county

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town' changed across the period under discussion. In the eighteenth century most county towns were still the ancient shire centres which accommodated the institutions of county government and social provision. These were not, however, the only county centres operating within many counties; for example, in Lincolnshire, Stamford functioned as a social and leisure centre for the county gentry and Bury St Edmunds challenged Ipswich to become an alternative focus of commerce and leisure in Suffolk. The people and business that urban status attracted caused many towns to emulate the shire centres and create comparable institutions or amenities however the ancient shire centres remained significant. In the majority of counties the ancient shire centres possessed an unrivalled concentration of administrative functions and services such as quarter sessions, county gaols and county hospitals in the eighteenth century and as such formed a recognisable urban genre.

By the mid-nineteenth century the definition of the 'county town' was confused by their declining status and by 1871 the census listed '65 old county towns and assize towns' in England and Wales bracketing county towns together with other ancient centres with an administrative function.34 The Local Government Act of 1888 redefined many county towns as 'county boroughs'. The county borough was initially designed to signal the status of larger urban centres as self-governing areas independent of their counties. The act created 61 county boroughs, which were expanded to 64 by the time of the 1891 census. The trend for towns and cities to be 'upgraded' to county borough status continued and by 1921 the number had expanded to 82. The county boroughs created in 1888 and 1889 were described by Waller as 'a queer lot' for they had little in common; as well as the largest cities, much smaller towns were also included such as cathedral cities and ancient shire county towns.35 This situation added to the increasingly confused definition of the county town between 1860 and 1910. As well as changes in the formally defined county boroughs there were new county centres created by the granting of administrative powers to towns which had not previously enjoyed them.

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35 Waller, Town, City and Nation, 247.
Between 1860 and 1910 we see a picture of an ever expanding and arguably ever more meaningless urban genre of 'county town'/ 'county borough'/ 'administrative centre', indeed by the early twentieth century there were few towns or cities of any significant size that could not possibly fit into one of these categories. The focus of this study, however is the development of ancient shire centres, the county towns of the eighteenth century. ‘County town’ in the context of this thesis refers to these centres.

Was the character of the ancient county town strong enough to withstand the geographical and regional forces at work in late nineteenth century Britain? As London’s sphere of influence expanded did it consume the surrounding county towns around, turning them into commuter communities and obliterating the characteristics which made southern county towns like Hertford and Reading, for example, part of the same urban genre as the more isolated Hereford and Shrewsbury?

What were the elements that forged the county town as part of an urban typology? Everitt defines five major common characteristics of county towns in the eighteenth century. Firstly, he argues that they were not heavily industrialised, nor were they identified with staple industries. Secondly, Everitt argues that county towns were commercial centres and functioned as ‘inland entrepots, as exchanges or meeting places of traders, factors, drovers, middlemen, wholesalers and wayfaring merchants of all kinds’, leading to highly developed shopping facilities. Thirdly, Everitt identifies the county towns as professional and entrepreneurial centres, related to their fourth defining characteristic, a strong leisure role as gentry and residential centres. Finally, Everitt sees county towns as centres of ‘craftsmanship’ and artisan trades. Everitt suggests that these functions remain central to county town function throughout the nineteenth century but gives little indication as to how these roles evolved.

This thesis analyses the changing functions of the county town between 1860 and 1910, identifying those activity sectors in Bedford and Lincoln which were central to

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36 For a discussion of urban typologies see Waller, *Town City and Nation*, 10.
the recasting of the urban roles of the county town. This study has three parts: the analysis of the evolving function and economy of the county town from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; a consideration of two cases of urban specialisation; and finally, an analysis of the urban elite who managed town specialisation and their relationship to the ‘remaking’ process.

The first section of the thesis considers the urban role of the county town and the pressures it faced under the impact of railway development and the changing urban hierarchy of the nineteenth century. Geographical issues such as central place and the influence of the hinterland are also considered in relation to urban development. Chapters three and four focus on the economy of the county town examining change through the occupational structures of the case study towns. Two of Everitt’s five county town functions are examined: the supposed absence of industry, particularly manufacturing and the strong presence of professionals in county towns. Chapter three challenges the assertion that county towns were not manufacturing centres, demonstrating the rise of large-scale factory based manufacturing after the mid-century. Contrary to the image of ‘workshop production’ in the county town this chapter argues that large-scale heavy industries using modern technologies did develop in county towns. Studies in nineteenth century industrialisation and urbanisation have tended to focus on the industrial cities in the ‘industrial revolution’ period prior to 1850, however, many provincial urban communities experienced modernising industrial processes and rapid urban growth up to fifty years later. This was the case in many county towns where late industrialisation created specific urban problems in the community, at the same time these industries provided important sources of employment and had a social and cultural impact on town life with the potential to transform individual town economies and identities.

Chapter four focuses on one particular occupational group in the county town; that of the professionals and public servants. Professionals constituted an important and characteristic component of the county town economy and function and this chapter shows how, with state support, the people employed in these occupations

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strengthened their numbers, influence and status between 1860 and 1910. The increasing importance of institutions in the 'remaking' process and the possibility of reshaping individual county towns around newly reformed and reconstructed institutions are discussed.

While this study argues that county towns did continue to constitute an urban genre in the late Victorian period this does not mean that all county towns were the same. While facing many of the same problems and pressures and sharing a common process, that of specialisation, county towns transformed themselves in different ways. To use the words of Briggs, writing about Victorian cities '...they responded differently to the urban problems which they shared in common.' Briggs has described the importance of developing an understanding of individual places to the understanding of the processes of urban history; for this reason the third section considers the 'remaking' of the two county towns in detail. This section of the thesis examines how the economies and environments of Bedford and Lincoln were reconstructed around particular local strengths. This process produced highly individualised results but retained the traditional administrative and marketing economic bases of the towns. In Bedford local priorities were mobilised around a central institution in order to produce a respectable educational and residential centre while in Lincoln technical knowledge and available industrial labour resulted in a small scale manufacturing town. In both Bedford and Lincoln the development of a specialised and economically tailored environment was constrained, and to some extent dictated, by the internal physical constraints of an established urban infrastructure. The effects of external pressures produced by new legislative obligations and the evolving and shifting world and imperial markets on the process of developing new urban specialisms are demonstrated.

Between 1860 and 1910 the process of 'remaking' the county town was the business of the local elite. Through the municipal authority the county town urban elite developed and implemented strategies and policies which drove and directed urban specialisation. Studies on elite composition and activity in large Victorian cities have shown that comparison is a valuable tool for developing an understanding of the

39 Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 18-19.
relationship between the occupational and economic profiles of urban areas and the
structures and behaviours of their elites.41 Chapters seven and eight examine the
members of the corporations of Bedford and Lincoln in order to understand how and
why they remade their towns in specific ways. The composition of the county town
elites are examined firstly in order to establish how far there was a 'county town elite'- a municipal elite with a common pattern across the urban genre, and secondly,
to reveal the relationship between their own occupations and lifestyles and their
urban ambitions. The organisation and composition of those with power demonstrate
how tightly the municipal elites in both towns were tied to the specialist activities
which they supported.

Most studies of urban elites to date have been concerned with the issue of
'hegemony' that is to say the question of how far the urban elite were able to
dominate the working class and what the exact nature of the relationship between the
elite and the wider citizenry was.42 That is not the issue here. Although the question
of class relations in older urban areas merits research, this study is concerned with
the hegemony of the urban elite only so far as it extended - or failed to extend -
across the urban environment. The level of control exercised by the elite through the
physical space and the municipal development of the urban area is examined. This
thesis seeks to establish how the elites prioritised economic activities, investment,
environmental change and even local legislation which matched or linked into their
own value systems and economic interests. The remaking of the county town under
the influence of the urban elite produced diverse results. In Bedford, for example,
the process led to increasing integration into a London-based and imperial economy
and culture, while in Lincoln resistance to central government and outside values was
considered essential to local survival. Between 1860 and 1910 the elite remade the
county towns in their own image and interests; in the physical space of the ancient
market and administrative centre they were constructing a middle class world.

41 R. H. Trainor, Black Country Elites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialised Area 1830-
1890 (Oxford, 1993); D. Smith, Conflict and Compromise: Class formation in English Society 1830-
1914, a comparative study of Birmingham and Sheffield (London, 1982); E.P. Hennock, Fit and
The study uses a combination of printed and local manuscript sources in order to examine the process of specialisation in Bedford and Lincoln. Parliamentary reports, printed census reports and directories have been used to produce population and occupational profiles for each town and in order to make comparisons with other county towns. Most county towns supported at least one newspaper during this period as well as one or two other shorter-lived ones and also produced a range of other publications such as directories giving a great deal of local information. A wide range of unpublished local manuscript sources supplements these printed sources. As well as council records and minutes county towns contained a plethora of clubs, societies and organisations and the records of these have been used where possible to supplement the ‘official’ viewpoint. In addition ‘private’ sources including memoirs and diaries have been utilised to understand the personal experience of life in the Victorian county town.

There are a number of problems inherent in researching towns further down the urban hierarchy in the nineteenth century, despite the Victorian obsession with the collection of information and statistics. Firstly, the state did not always consider towns of this size to be of any importance so did not consistently include county towns in various reports and investigations on urban issues or when collating census information. For example, the printed census returns for 1891 did not give separate occupational information for county towns but included them in figures for the entire county. Secondly smaller towns had less money, less bureaucracy and sometimes the elite operated with greater informality, in short they did not always write everything down! As one local historian lamented in the 1920s: ‘...to tell a story of Bedford is to write the biography of one who has lived a recluse, kept no diary and left but a few stray memoranda and faded letters behind him.’ Council records can often be described as minimal at best, although sometimes newspaper reports can fill the ‘gaps’ in council minutes. Finally, a third problem arises directly from the lack of academic and other interest in these towns in the mid and late Victorian periods. While county towns are generally proud of their medieval or early modern history, nineteenth century records are sometimes uncatalogued or held in inaccessible places. Bedford Town Corporation records for example, remain only partially

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classified and are held in a locked and seldom-visited room in the council office block.

On a more optimistic note the recent availability of the *1881 Census of England and Wales* on CD Rom from the Data Archive at the University of Essex provides a great volume of material about the county towns, enough to provide the basis of an analysis of the demographic, economic and social structures of the county town in 1881. Unfortunately access to this material was available only at a very late stage of this research project and was by no means simple to utilise. The census returns are available in county units so it was necessary to reconstruct individual municipal boroughs from parish units. However, as much of this material has been incorporated as possible in order to add to the depth and detail of the argument.

This study will shed some light on the urban genre of the county town and demonstrate the dynamism and adaptability of traditional centres in the late Victorian period. Asa Briggs pointed out that: ‘...failure to adapt or inability to adapt successfully to the Victorian “age of improvement” was not necessarily a once-and-for-all failure’ for older urban communities.’44 Above all this is a study of two such established, traditional centres and the urban elites who were trying to ensure, with some success, that their towns were not left behind in the race for urban survival.

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Chapter Two

The Function and Topography of the Victorian County Town

By the mid-nineteenth century Britain had experienced a sustained period of urban growth and development. Towns and cities were increasingly complex and organised in their structures with clear zones developing for specialist activities. These activities were themselves becoming more rigidly defined, regulated and time-related. Work and home were separated into different spheres, places and times.\(^1\) The structures of society and social relations in the industrial city were also more complex and organised than they had been in earlier periods with new forms of social interaction and organisation apparent in features such as reformed corporations, evangelical missions and chartism.\(^2\) At a macro level the linkages between the new urban centres reshaped the economic and communication networks of the nation.\(^3\) The drama inherent in these changes, in industrial urbanisation and in the technologies that made them possible, captured the attention of the Victorians. Contemporary artists such as Turner and Dore and writers including Engels, Dickens and Gaskell were fascinated and disturbed by the speed and novelty of urban development in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Against this dynamic picture of intense development, older more ‘traditional’ urban centres such as county towns and market towns suffered relative, and in some cases, actual decline. The contemporary perception of these places was of superannuated and quietly decaying communities whose day was past. It was a perception that lasted from the mid-nineteenth century, when Trollope immortalized the county and cathedral town in his *Barchester Chronicles* series of novels, until recently.\(^4\)

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\(^4\) The best known of these are A. Trollope’s *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* (reprint, Oxford, 1990) for more recent comment on county towns see A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community* (London,
Traditional communities were continually contrasted with the more obviously dynamic industrial towns and cities. Writing in 1940 about the 1850s, Bryant declared that 'the England of Winchester and Canterbury and Chester was a thing of the past. The England of smoking Rotherham and Hull and colonial Crewe had arrived.' For over a century the older urban centres had been continually contrasted with the evolving industrial centres to their detriment.

The industrial age brought the threat of declining status, economic erosion and geographical isolation to previously secure urban centres, particularly to the county towns. This chapter will discuss these issues in relation to the case study towns of Bedford and Lincoln for the period 1860 to 1910. The growth and development of the county towns will be contrasted to the pattern of urban development experienced by the Victorian manufacturing cities. The changes experienced by Bedford and Lincoln will also be considered in relation to the geographical concepts of central place and core and periphery.

The County Town: A ‘different type’ of urban development?
The priorities and patterns of urban economic development in county towns in the second half of the nineteenth century reveal an alternative account of Victorian urbanisation to that of the ‘industrial town’ or city. The county town was distinguished from other urban centres by its administrative function; its status as an urban place derived directly from this role. Even today the term ‘county town’ signals a certain level of urban status; it suggests an established, even sizeable, borough; a market place supplemented with a level of administrative power; a social centre. In the past ‘county town’ rather than ‘country’ or ‘small town’- both of which may have been accurate - meant, above all, a town with its own hinterland, holding dominion over its shire. In this sense county towns fit well with Weber’s concept of a city with its fort, market and hinterland. In both function and character county towns were distinctly urban places although they did not have the impact of scale observed in industrial centres of the same period.
Urban development in the Victorian county town was different to that which occurred in the new urban centres and even looked different. Contemporaries and, later, historians found their attention focussed on the rapid growth of the Victorian industrial city, emphasizing the raw novelty of the new streets and neighbourhoods on 'the still-disjointed limbs of the great city...every sign of hurried and unfinished work...'. County towns belonged to another age and a system that was perceived as divorced from the new regime of urban development. Writing in 1845, Engels described how:

Sixty, eighty years ago, England was a country like every other, with small towns, few and simple industries, and a thin but proportionally large agricultural population. Today it is a country like no other, with a capital of two and a half million inhabitants with vast manufacturing cities; with an industry that supplies the world....

In this context county towns found themselves characterised and constrained by their historical roles, although they maintained many of their pre-industrial functions and indeed expanded some, after 1850. The 1871 Census described how: ‘The 65 old county towns and the assize towns, with their markets, fairs, shops, county meetings and assizes, form a second class [of cities] with a population of 2,685,000.’

The townscape of the county town also offered a contrast to that of the industrial centre. Established status, functions, street patterns, buildings and systems meant that county towns were very obviously different to large industrial centres. In county towns the new streets grew more slowly, ancient urban cores were more visible. County towns lacked the density, heterogeneity and regularity apparent in the repetitive streets of the built environment of the industrial centres. In the county town internal urban development occurred within the congested framework of an established urban centre.

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Another factor affecting county towns was the extra pressure created by the necessity to maintain control of the hinterland. In the face of external pressure from new communication networks and shifting urban hierarchies the traditional geographical dominance of the county town was undermined. These factors meant that growth, adaptation or even simply the avoidance of outright decline in the county town was complex and slow. The historical focus on 'vast manufacturing cities' and explosive urban development has drawn attention from the struggle of these older urban centres to adjust to, and manage urban change during this period. In many ways county town development lacked the familiar characteristics of Victorian urban growth.

Nineteenth century British industrial towns and cities developed with a recognisable set of urban characteristics; these included locational similarities, and common experiences of growth resulting in an increase in both scale and physical size. Most industrial towns were located on or near the coalfield regions of the Midlands and north of England, South Wales and the central Scottish belt. Although some were initially isolated they were usually located in regional clusters. Industrial towns and cities were networked tightly together in urban systems, first by canal development and subsequently by railway growth. The growth of Victorian industrial towns also followed an identifiable pattern, opening with rapid, often sudden, population growth, which generally occurred within one or two pivotal decades before the mid-century. Rapid immigration, usually in the decades 1821 to 1841, combined with piecemeal administrative regulation, produced environmental consequences, which required a century of reform to ameliorate the worst effects.

Demographic change went hand-in-hand with the application of coal-fired steam technology to mechanized industrial processes creating new forms of employment often in large-scale operations. These new occupational structures meant that employment and the economy in industrial towns were often dominated by the fortunes of a single industry or activity. These activities were highly specific and sometimes constituted only a single, specialized, part of a manufacturing process such as the silk-weaving industry in Macclesfield. Research has also shown that the specific nature of the industrial activity, cotton, metalworking or mining for example,
created further modifications within the industrial urban genre impacting on physical space, urban social geography and infrastructure and political structures. Dickens’ description of the industrial town pinpointed the close relationship between work and the form of urbanisation it engendered; the ‘attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained.’ In Dickens’ words the industrial town was ‘severely workful’ in character. The nature of a particular industry, its rhythms, composition, gendered roles and household relation, its scale or day-to-day working set-up, had an impact on the physical structure of the city, on the social structure and on the form of local government.

In terms of spatial structure, nineteenth century industrial towns and cities were characterised by the development of separate physical zones of activity and, increasingly, building types. As cities grew, distinct and recognisable districts housed retail or industrial activities, large mills, warehouses or single class residential buildings were to be found in more clearly defined (and labelled) areas. This segregation led to the separation of classes and an increasing distance between individual’s public working and private home, lives. Specialisation also increased and expanded into many areas of urban life. Commercial and social activities within these towns developed increasing levels of complexity and regulation as the century progressed.

Although the urban development of the county town shared many of these features such as population growth, new technology-driven activities and an increase in social complexity, for example, they took different, distinctive forms in the county town. County town growth was less obvious, less dramatic and development advanced on a more limited ‘front’, for example in a particular industry, rather than the encompassing technological, industrial and commercial developments occurring simultaneously in the Victorian city. In addition, development often occurred at different rates and periods in the county town in comparison with the Victorian city. County town population growth and urban development typically ‘took off’ later in

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the century than in the Victorian city. With the exception of some centres such as Derby or York,¹⁸ most county towns did not experience significant expansion until the 1870s. In common with other types of urban growth county town expansion was often compressed into a short space of time; one or two decades usually stand out as 'turning points' in urban growth. In the county towns these pivotal decades occurred after 1850.

Daily life in the county town was different too. While industrial towns were often dominated by a single industry which produced a dominant rhythm of urban activity, for example the shift rhythms of the cotton mill or coal mine, county towns housed many activities and functions and contained many overlapping time-related activities and rhythms. Time in the county town was less predictable and apparently more chaotic. On top of the predictable daily rhythms of work there were overlaid seasonal, annual and rural rhythms such as the yearly hiring fairs, monthly markets and quarter sessions. This multiplicity of urban rhythms gave the urban activity and the traffic in the streets a less regulated and less monotonous character than in an industrial centre.

In common with the Victorian industrial town or city, nineteenth-century county town development was moulded by external factors such as location and communications. County town development was also strongly influenced, even contained, by the internal urban functions which had traditionally pertained to county centres. Traditional structures and retarded growth limited the internal markets and potential profit margins in the county town while location and competition hampered their exploitation of external markets. These structures meant that the economic progress of the county town between 1860 and 1911 consisted of traditional central place functions progressively overlaid by increasingly modern specialist activities. Historic influences such as local government were modernised by layers of administrative responsibilities. The resultant economies were in turn also influenced by the particular urban nature of the Victorian county town and by its location. Above all county towns were differentiated from industrial towns and cities by their historical roles as 'central places'.

¹⁷ Dennis, English Industrial Cities; Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 356-396.
¹⁸ I am indebted to Neil Raven for information on the growth of these towns.
The county town as a ‘central place’

In geographical terms the role of the county town in providing an administrative centre and market for its hinterland was that of ‘central place’. Harold Carter described central place functions as follows:

Every town (in some measure) acts as a focus for the surrounding countryside and it is from this role that the general functions are derived. Since in acting as a focus the town functions as a central place, the term ‘central place functions’ is commonly used and from this, central place theory has developed.

County towns were in a unique position in that their central place role was administrative, political, religious, judicial and social as well as commercial. The county town provided political, administrative, market, professional, production and consumption services to this hinterland. Anthony Trollope encapsulated the diverse nature of these amenities and services when he described country towns as ‘depots from whence are brought seeds and groceries, ribbons and fire shovels; in which markets are held and county balls carried on…’.

The central place functions of the Victorian county town became a mix of ‘traditional’ (sometimes declining) and ‘new’ central place functions in different spheres of activity. In terms of transport the county town provided a central point of contact for ‘traditional’ road and water connections together with the ‘modern’ development of a railway station. In the administrative arena the ‘traditional’ central place functions of the court and army barracks were supplemented with the building of ‘new’ central place facilities such as Poor Law union workhouses and county asylums. Central place shopping services mixed traditional markets and factors with newly developed corn exchanges and department stores. Regular fairs and markets could swell the numbers of people and activities in the central town area to bursting point, changing the entire atmosphere and character of the county town. One resident of Bedford remembered:

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A novel and exciting experience was to see the collection of stalls in the market place on Saturdays and the throng of country people. On that morning carriers’ carts jogged in from the villages, small pair-horse omnibuses for the most part, looking as if they had known many muddy winters and dusty summers. Filled and over-filled with passengers, they were laden on top with sacks and baskets, with more baskets and sometimes hencoops swinging underneath. Farmers came in traps; some people by train. Business went on until, in the late afternoon, the tide of vehicles, even more heavily loaded, turned homewards and the town resumed its normal quiet.22

Some of these central place functions were common to all urban centres. Indeed a degree of central place function forms part of the definition of an urban centre,23 but the county town differed from other towns and cities in two major ways. Firstly, the county town had a formally defined administrative and political role and secondly, it possessed a strong relationship with the surrounding rural region. In the nineteenth century the county town hinterland was frequently formally and legally redefined, for example, through both Poor Law union administration and through the 1888 Local Government Act. However, the various overlapping hinterlands, the mis-shapen concentric rings of consumers around the county town, were not necessarily synonymous with the county borders. While the county administration stretched out to the next county boundary, other authorities and services such as banking and medical professionals created smaller areas of influence.

The concentration of state-devolved and national administrative services in the county town often resulted in the development of facilities whose presence was surprising or disproportionate given the urban scale of the towns. County towns were particularly, perhaps uniquely, rich in institutions given their scale. Institutions and professional services provided another strong ‘central place’ function in the county town. In 1871 Bedford had a population of 16,850; in addition to the legal, state and military institutions, it was also the location for the County Hospital and County Gaol. In 1881, Lincoln housed all of these functions and also possessed a county asylum and a variety of institutions and offices connected to the presence of the Cathedral and the church authorities.24 This centralisation of facilities into the county town actually intensified through the period 1860 to 1910 partly aided by

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central legislation regarding Poor Law unions and the Local Government Board and, most crucially, the Local Government Act of 1888 which established the system of County Councils. In some towns, such as Northampton, where the 1888 act created a separate county borough for the town and a county council for the shire the town accommodated both administrative bodies and their institutions.\textsuperscript{25} These developments resulted in a concentration of institutions in the county town.

Returning to the case study towns, the 1911 Census of Buildings listed 84 separate ‘institutions’ in Bedford and nine ‘government and municipal buildings’; at the same time Lincoln possessed 35 ‘institutions’ and 10 ‘government and municipal buildings’.\textsuperscript{26} These institutions supported and extended the role of the county town as an administrative and professional ‘central place’ which could provide highly specialised professional activities to the surrounding rural areas and market towns. During the same period, however, the increasing actual scale of the county towns and the spread of such facilities nationally through different kinds of urban settlement made these amenities less distinctively ‘county’ towards the end of the century. Although ‘the industrial revolution... created towns that had no regional service function’,\textsuperscript{27} many of these urban centres began to expand their range of services in the late nineteenth century. The county town’s automatic urban ‘right’ to accommodate some functions or facilities was under threat from the mid-nineteenth century as ‘new’ urban centres fought hard to have their regional and national significance recognized.\textsuperscript{28}

The importance of formal government organisation and institutions to the county towns was not just reflected in permanent institutional structures. County towns offered numerous seasonal or annual events which reflected their local or regional dominance over smaller towns and the surrounding countryside. Two of the most significant events in mid-Victorian Lincoln were the annual Hiring Fair and the Stuff Ball. The second of these reflected the earlier function of the county town as a


\textsuperscript{26} PP, Census of England and Wales 1911, Vol. X (London, 1914), 125,128.

\textsuperscript{27} H. Carter, ‘The urban hierarchy and historical geography: A consideration with reference to north Wales’ in Geographical Studies, 3, (1956), 86.

\textsuperscript{28} The ‘Campaign for greater Birmingham’ is an example in point, as well as incorporating new and affluent areas proving fresh sources of finance, the campaign sought to establish the city’s right to a formally defined and controllable hinterland for which it was already providing central services.
gentry leisure centre. The 1851 Census description of the county town emphasised its importance for the 'chief families' of an area, and research suggests that the role of the county town as a gentry centre reached its height during the half century before the Napoleonic Wars. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries both Bedford and Lincoln had held regular events, which attracted the county gentry into town, and justified the erection of dedicated buildings such as assembly and reading rooms reflecting gentry life and interests. In the 1840s John Thomas Brooks, a Bedfordshire landowner, recorded attending several balls in the county town and remarked on the popularity of these occasions, finding them 'crowded and brilliant' attracting landowners from all over the county. According to Everitt county towns '... were the places that focussed not only the life of the county community, but also the life of the countries or pays around them.'

By the mid-nineteenth century this function of the county town was in decline. Gentry interests had withdrawn from the regional town centres and had re-focused both their political activity and capital expenditure on the country house network and the metropolis. This withdrawal was reflected in the decline or closure of commercial businesses and events which had relied on gentry custom, such as the Bedford races or the closure of Lincoln's commercial pleasure gardens in 1863. In some districts 'county' social events, which had traditionally been held in the county centre, relocated to smaller, more exclusive towns, such as Stamford in Lincolnshire. In Bedfordshire by 1891 the county ball was held in Biggleswade but the county town of Bedford retained the hunt ball. On the whole the decline of the county town as an aristocratic and gentry leisure and business centre around the middle of the nineteenth century resulted from the increasing centralisation of power

33 Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 23
37 Wright, *Lincolnshire Towns and Industry*, 243
and culture in Britain at this time; county towns were increasingly ‘peripheral’ to national culture, politics and decision-making.

From the development of the railways, changes in urban scale and shifts in the urban hierarchy challenged the urban role of the county town. Luton and Scunthorpe eclipsed both Bedford and Lincoln, respectively, in urban growth in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although no longer necessarily the largest urban centres in their regions, formal administrative county town status remained important and reinforced the central place functions of these towns in the national context. A local directory summarised the urban functions of Bedford in 1871 in legal, fiscal and civil contexts:

Bedford is the seat of the County Court district, the head of an Excise Collection, and of a Poor-Law Union, the headquarters of the County Militia, and a polling place for the county elections.39

By the beginning of the twentieth century these characteristics still symbolised urban status and merited consideration. In 1907 an Edwardian writer argued, in his description of Lincolnshire, that:

Lincoln must be accorded first place, if only because it is the seat of both the county and ecclesiastical government. In mere population it has less inhabitants by 15,000 than the only other county borough, Great Grimsby, and is in other respects of less consequence than the latter.40

Long after the battle for urban status in terms of physical scale was lost by Lincoln, the original formal state-related central place activities of the pre-industrial county town remained highly significant. The county town was the formal centre through which the state organised judicial, statutory, fiscal and military control over the countryside. ‘Status in this context does not necessarily coincide with size or economic importance, since a traditional administrative centre may... have lost ground to an industrial upstart.’41 While economic functions could be lost to new urban centres during this period, for example Bedford lost the straw-plait market and

38 BLA, Ball Programmes, documents X456/8/1 and X456/8/2.
39 BLA, Bedford Directory 1871 (Bedford, 1871), pages unnumbered.
40 W.T. Pike, Lincolnshire at the Opening of the Twentieth Century (Brighton, 1907), 76-77.
associated trade to Luton, the formal administrative activities and institutions remained in the county town drawing in people and trade from the hinterland.

The county town network and hinterland

The relationship between the county town and its hinterland was crucial to county town growth because, in contrast to 'industrial towns', county town development was inhibited by locational difficulties until the mid-nineteenth century. By 1851, the year when it was first recognized that Britain had become a predominantly urban nation, the majority of county or administrative centres lay outside the metropolitan and industrial heartlands of Victorian Britain. Their early (often medieval) urban development meant that county towns were situated on waterways in agricultural areas and at the heart of agrarian regional systems. Subsequently they were inappropriately located to participate fully in nineteenth century urban industrial growth. Prior to the nineteenth century the traditional transport network of roads and rivers reinforced the economic and social functions of county centres by linking them together into a national network of pre-industrial urban centres through which markets operated and state administration was devolved. These networks were often determined by physical constraints and were geared to a pre-industrial economic rationale. According to Everitt: '...it was the influence of both county and country that shaped their distinctive economy and society.' The pre-industrial rhythms of quarter sessions, fairs and markets provided county towns with both their business and character, but in the Victorian age were part of an increasingly antiquated, inefficient and even irrelevant system. This was reflected in the decline in traditions such as the hiring fair and in the overall numbers of fairs and markets.

The networks of an 'ancient regime' were rendered obsolete by the industrial, urban and technological changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By the 1840s the communicative and economic arteries of Britain had been re-focussed on new geographical areas. This change in the pattern of the communicative network of Britain was soon reflected in the declining positions of county towns in the urban hierarchy. In the Midlands, for example, Langton found that four out of five of the largest towns in the 1660s were county towns; Worcester, Shrewsbury, Lincoln and

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Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 22.
Nottingham. By 1801 only Nottingham and Leicester, two of the most ‘industrialised’ county towns in the country, appeared in the top five.\textsuperscript{44} In 1841, when the full effects of the industrial revolution were becoming apparent, the urban hierarchy in the Midlands had been remade. At the top of the pyramid was Birmingham with 182,922 inhabitants followed by Wolverhampton with a population of 93,245, the next three towns in the hierarchy were county towns: Nottingham, Leicester and Derby. However the gap in urban scale between these town types was significant and continuing to grow. Nottingham was the largest county town with a population of 52,360, while Derby in fifth position had just 32,741 inhabitants. Yet, as Langton has pointed out, the county towns of the Midlands and of the East Midlands, in particular, were unusual in their ability to maintain status.\textsuperscript{45} This was partly due to their integration into a strong urban network; more remote towns like Lincoln fared much worse.

Outside the Midlands network, a strong, defining characteristic of many county towns in the mid-nineteenth century was a certain level of geographical isolation. While industrial towns and cities frequently developed in clusters and self-supporting networks such as those in the Black Country or the ‘Five Towns’ of the Potteries, county towns either belonged to regional networks, or were detached in their own hinterlands. For many county towns including Lincoln, Exeter and Shrewsbury, relative urban isolation was compounded by their dominance over the surrounding hinterlands. Geography also impacted on the relationship between town and county; distance from the county town, physical restraints such as rivers and roads and strong local identities could all weaken the relationship between town and county. Flora Thompson growing up in Victorian rural Oxfordshire thought of Oxford, 19 miles distant, as ‘a gert big town’.\textsuperscript{46} For her community the urban focus was provided by nearer Candleford (Buckingham), accessible by foot or carrier.\textsuperscript{47} The relationship between a county town and its hinterland was vital to the urban survival and development of the county town. The existence, physical size and accessibility of

\textsuperscript{44} J. Langton, ‘Town growth and urbanisation in the Midlands from the 1660s to 1841’ in J. Stobart and P. Lane (eds), \textit{Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700-1840: Trades, Towns and Regions} (Leicester, 2000), 15.  
\textsuperscript{45} Langton, ‘Town growth and urbanisation in the Midlands’, 27.  
\textsuperscript{46} F. Thompson, \textit{Lark Rise to Candleford} (London, 1965), 20.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 335.
networks within the hinterland affected the development of the county town and its function as a ‘central place’ for the county.

Traditionally the county town had performed an established role as the urban centre for a defined, agrarian-based, territory. Its formal preeminence as an administrative and legal centre placed it (in theory) at the apex of the urban system within the shire. This suggests that the county capital had an economic dominance over its hinterland, which inhibited the growth of smaller urban centres.48 These smaller centres formed a web of connections around the county towns while extra-hinterland urban linkages were limited. External linkages were often confined to other county centres; Bedford, for example, had reasonable roads to both Huntingdon and Cambridge, supplementing a network of connections down the local urban hierarchy to smaller towns. Trade links may have been forged with other centres along a waterway; for example, Lincoln’s connections to Boston and Hull along the Witham and Foss Dyke respectively, are illustrations of such relationships. However the rise of a new urban hierarchy in the industrial age and the growth of a national, London oriented railway network bypassed the regional agrarian economic system for which the county town had formerly provided the trade apex.

As well as trade, the county town derived status from its hinterland. Industrialisation and changes in the urban hierarchy in the nineteenth century did not immediately undermine the formal county town functions. The restructuring of the urban hierarchy and of regional economic systems took some decades to root. The 1851 Census described the different levels of urban settlement and the urban system in Britain in relation to families, a hierarchical description which related the urban hierarchy to the social structure of the nation. Settlement size was related to national rhythms, beginning with villages where daily family life was supposed to have occurred. These villages were arranged around market centres, which fulfilled the needs of weekly family routines and: ‘...these centres [are] again separated by wider intervals, around other centres, where the heads of the chief families can readily congregate periodically (County Towns); and ...the large towns [are arranged] around the Capital.’49

Here there is a clear state perception of the role and status of the county town in a (rather modern) model of urban hierarchy. The urban scale of the county town, in comparison to its satellite centres, reinforced status, and the communication networks, which provided series of links to these smaller urban centres, further enhanced this.

The 1851 Census also claimed that:

Each of the central county towns was surrounded on average by eight or nine other towns, extending over an average area of 1,067 square miles, equivalent to a square of 33 miles to the side; and ...they are 35 miles apart.\(^{50}\)

This was obviously an average amongst the welter of statistics generated by the Victorian census enumerators in an attempt to define urban hinterlands and it is not totally accurate in relation to the two case study towns. Bedford was only 20 miles from the smaller ‘county town’ of Huntingdon and just over 18 miles from the fully functioning county town of Northampton. A ring of smaller towns surrounded Bedford: Sandy, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Ampthill, Woburn and Olney which all looked to Bedford for central services. However, this constellation of smaller towns did not automatically enhance the county town’s status; other cultural and political factors were also significant.

Maintaining status was a continual struggle and a prime source of urban competition. Bedford competed for aristocratic patronage locally with Woburn, which, despite being a substantially smaller town than Bedford, was the recipient of the Dukes of Bedford’s civic improvements and attentions, and also with Tavistock, outside the county border, where the 9\(^{th}\) Duke provided the town hall.\(^{51}\) Bedford was more independent due to the predominantly freehold status of its urban land,\(^{52}\) and unimpeded by aristocratic dominance but still vied with Woburn and was anxious to maintain links and identification with the Russells who took their title from the town. Lincoln was more isolated than the average county town: over 40 miles from any

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\(^{50}\) Ibid., 13.


large city (Sheffield was the nearest) and even further from any other county town. Lincoln had a large number of outlying feeder market towns including Market Rasen, Louth, Horncastle, Spilsby, Ruskington, Sleaford, and Gainsborough yet none of them approached the scale or status of an urban competitor.

New communications
The dramatic changes to the urban hierarchy between 1780 and 1850 and the introduction of new communications challenged the traditional patterns of urban linkages and increased urban competition. Railways were both instrumental in this and a powerful indicator of the economic strength and importance of a place. County towns were often bypassed or marginalised by the new economic order associated with steam and the railway age. Beyond the major urban centres developments in communications were often piecemeal, and though most county towns had a railway line by the early 1850s these were frequently branch lines with limited connections to the network. New railways could often connect smaller towns to cities other than the county town with greater ease, or, combined with new industries, could even develop small ‘feeder’ towns into larger urban centres than the county town. There is no doubt that the impact of the railway on urban development was decisive and immediate; around 1880 a Bedford resident noted how:

> The place is now very much more come-at-able than it was in the days of yore before the Midland Railway Company opened their direct line with the North, making Bedford one of their principal stations. It has now the advantage of two stations, the other one running in connection with the London and North-Western Railway Company from Bletchley Junction to Cambridge. There is also a branch line to Northampton so that the railway service is good.\(^5\)

The possession of a railway station could also enhance some ‘central place’ activity in county town, albeit within a more geographically limited sphere of influence. Carriers connected many small communities to the nearest railway station. For example, as late as 1882, White's Lincolnshire Directory listed 131 carrier destinations from Lincoln Inns. Some services ran daily, most twice weekly, but all destinations were small villages or hamlets, beyond the reach or notice of more

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modern communications and reinforced the dependence of these communities on Lincoln.\textsuperscript{54}

As this example showed, the scale and permeability of the county town hinterland was problematic. In theory, the greater the radius of the hinterland, the more isolated the county town would be and the stronger its central place role for the surrounding countryside. In actuality, the increased scale of the area over which the town dominated did not always prove advantageous to urban growth or to economic development. Far from enhancing status and function urban isolation inhibited growth; towns benefited from integration into an urban and communication network.\textsuperscript{55} In addition to a basic central place function, towns which were integrated into an urban network, were able to develop specialist service and manufacturing activities and to extend their spheres of influence.\textsuperscript{56} The relationship between county towns and their hinterlands were also influenced by the presence of other urban developments in the area. For every town like Leicester or Hereford which sat centrally in its plain at the apex of a ‘nested hierarchy of central places’\textsuperscript{57} there were others such as Ipswich and Chichester which possessed only a limited sphere of influence. Other county towns found themselves overshadowed by large urban developments in their own shire, such as Warwick overwhelmed by Birmingham, or Lancaster outstripped by both Liverpool and Preston.\textsuperscript{58}

In the case of Lincoln its hinterland was inaccessible; the county was geographically extensive, afflicted with poor communications, distinct sub-districts and little unity. There were great cultural and economic gulfs, for example between the industrialising Great Grimsby and Humberside areas in the north of the county and the fen farming communities to the south.\textsuperscript{59} Due to these geographical factors and inefficient communications the economic and social dominance of Lincoln over the rural area was limited.\textsuperscript{60} Mills has noted that ‘Lincoln’s influence as a city has never

\textsuperscript{54} White’s History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882 (Sheffield, 1882), 517-518.
\textsuperscript{55} Lepetit, The Pre-Industrial Urban System, 33.
\textsuperscript{57} Hohenberg and Lees, The Making of Urban Europe, 238.
\textsuperscript{58} S. Johnson, unpublished PhD research on the history of nineteenth-century Lancaster, University of Lancaster, 2000.
\textsuperscript{60} R.J. Olney, Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire (Lincoln, 1979), 5.
extended across the whole county'.61  Socially Stamford had established itself as the successful gentry centre of the county in the eighteenth century and maintained this position into the late nineteenth century; assisted by its proximity to a main line and the patronage of its dominant aristocratic neighbour the Marquis of Exeter.62

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Lincoln's isolation became increasingly problematic: instead of reinforcing the urban status of Lincoln as the only large town within the region, isolation began to undermine the town's urban functions. It had never been a major coaching centre being too far off the Great North Road and remote from other major routes. The improvement in roads in the late eighteenth century and the development of the railway in the 1840s initially expanded the coaching trade in Lincoln. Prior to the railway reaching Lincoln, passengers caught new coaching connections to Nottingham or Sheffield or to railway terminals at Leicester or Rotherham. Despite the lack of alternative transport there was never more than a single coach service a day from Lincoln directly to the capital, nor did the city ever establish good communications or links with the new or rapidly developing towns to the north such as Scunthorpe, Cleethorpes or Grimsby.63 Nor were there viable alternative networks, for while Lincoln had possessed good waterways, these had structural problems. The town was linked to the sea by a Roman watercourse, the 'Foss Dyke', which gave access, via the Trent, to the Humber estuary and to the south by the River Witham which fed into the Wash. Both of these routes were inadequate. Foss Dyke had been little touched between the departure of the Roman army and 1740, when it was leased by the town council to Richard Ellison, a local banker who improved and reopened the Dyke under the terms of a 999 year lease. Ellison made substantial profits as traffic increased, but one of Lincoln's main carrying routes for bulk goods remained in private hands hampering expansion. Despite the high tolls, however, the improvement of the Foss Dyke did lower the price of coal in the city.64 The other water route into the city, the River Witham, was also improved in the late eighteenth century, but was unreliable and often un-navigable. Disputes over water levels and locks led to inter-town

63 Olney, *Rural Society*, 4-5.
animosity with Boston further down river. Despite these problems, there was some evidence that improvements in water communications did lead to a temporary commercial revival in Lincoln in the later eighteenth century, but they were inadequate to service Victorian expansion.

The development of railway connections to Lincoln was comparatively late. The opening of the Midland Railway in 1846 and the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway in 1848 made communications easier but the main north-south line bypassed Lincoln. The branch line position of the city did little to ease Lincoln's urban detachment and, as if to emphasise the point, the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln (MSL) line was quickly dubbed the 'mucky, slow and late' by Lincoln citizens. Services did not improve greatly until the arrival of the Great Northern Railway in 1867, which connected Lincoln to Peterborough and thus to London.

While the coming of the railway took two decades to produce a fast and efficient means for Lincoln's citizens to leave (or return to) town they had an immediate and unfortunate impact on the urban environment. The siting of the railways breached internal communications as the competing lines and the positions of the two stations resulted in two level crossings on the High Street creating traffic chaos, particularly on market days. Further division arose from the geographical setting. The internal structure of Lincoln was characterised by isolation and disruption, the town divided into 'uphill' and 'downhill':

The upper or north section, locally designated 'up-hill' or 'above-hill', spreads over slopes and plateau to a height of 210 feet above the river; about a mile long and 1,000 yards wide, and contains the Cathedral, the castle, the lunatic asylum, some of the other public buildings, and many of the best private houses. 'Below-hill' presents an appearance much inferior to that of the upper section, and contains the principal shops and inns, the markets, the least prominent of the public buildings, and most of the abodes of the working population.

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65 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 97.
68 A. Williamson, Guide through Lincoln (Lincoln, 1890), 17.
69 S. Bennett, A History of Lincolnshire (Chichester, 1999), 95-97.
The divide was physical and social; at the top of the town was the Cathedral with its close and the castle where county balls and social functions were held, below at the base of the steep hill along the polluted waterway and railway, lay the newly industrialised and working class areas. Writing in 1933, J.B. Priestley noted a Victorian characteristic of Lincoln that was still very much in evidence:

The manufacturing of Lincoln lies at the bottom of the hill, by the side of the railway. It appears that there is great local snobbery about this hill. To be anybody in Lincoln you must live 'uphill'... maids wanting a job point out that they have 'uphill' experience and so demand 'uphill' mistresses. In short a successful social life in Lincoln is essentially uphill work.\(^7\)

With a both external isolation and internal fragmentation and disruption Lincoln's prospects for growth were not promising. The late development of Lincoln and the inadequacy of the existing rail links in the county in the late nineteenth century was revealed by the arrival of the Great Eastern and Lancashire, Derbyshire and East coast operations as late as 1882 and 1897.\(^7\) Conversely the arrival of the railways enabled Lincoln to develop closer local relationships through the urban hierarchy embracing the smaller market towns. Lincoln gained both population and some urban functions at their expense, particularly in the case of towns experiencing relative decline such as Gainsborough.\(^7\)

Lincoln did not belong fully to a regional urban system either before or after the development of the railway links. The town remained too isolated from the larger Midland or Yorkshire centres, although by 1850 there was evidence of increasing passenger traffic between Lincoln and Sheffield. Some of Lincoln's most prominent inhabitants had migrated from Sheffield bringing skills from the steel industry into Lincoln's engineering works.\(^7\) The overall geographical isolation of Lincoln was revealed by the nature of the population; the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants were Lincolnshire natives. The 1861 Census recorded that 75% of the male population and 78% of the female population of Lincoln had been born in the county, of the rest a substantial proportion came from the bordering counties of

\(^7\) Bennett, *A History of Lincolnshire*, 94.
\(^7\) Olney, *Rural Society*, 169.
Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. Most immigrants had come from agricultural areas although Lincoln also received immigrants from the surrounding market towns.\textsuperscript{75}

In contrast to Lincoln, Bedford was always well connected in transport terms. Prior to railway development, Bedford was already an important and established coaching halt on a number of routes:

Of these the more significant were the \textit{Eagle}, Birmingham and Cambridge coach, \textit{The Wonder}, Oxford and Cambridge coach, \textit{The Peveril of the Peak}, Manchester to London and the \textit{Leeds Mail}. The traveller had a considerable choice of local coaches to London: the \textit{Bedford Times}, which ran through Hitchin from the Swan Inn; the \textit{Civility}, which ran through Luton to London from the Red Lion in the High Street; the \textit{Pilot} which took the same route from the Fountain; and the \textit{Umpire}... Many of these left Bedford in the early morning, returning to Bedford the next day, but the \textit{Bedford Times} left the Swan at 8.30a.m. and returned from London at 8.30 p.m. the same day.\textsuperscript{76}

The number of local coaches leaving Bedford for London on a daily basis in the 1830s and 1840s was a testament to its strength of function as a central place,\textsuperscript{77} or primary node on the transport network for its hinterland. Although many of the passengers were seeking connections, or using Bedford as a convenient overnight stop, many others were local people. A network of carriers connected all the local coaches to the surrounding towns and villages and established coaching inns with their varied services revolved around this traffic.\textsuperscript{78} Internally, Bedford was also more unified than Lincoln. It possessed a tightly knit structure at mid-century, despite the presence of the River Ouse. Due to the existence of bridge tolls until 1835 the town had developed along a single bank, growth had centred along the High Street running at right angles from the river and producing a unified high density urban centre.\textsuperscript{79} Residential, retail, manufacturing and commercial activities were mixed together in this central area in the mid-nineteenth century without any clearly delineated zones.

\textsuperscript{76} S. Houfe, \textit{Bedfordshire} (London, 1995), 214.
\textsuperscript{77} L. J. King, \textit{Central Place Theory} (London, 1984), 91.
Both Bedford and Lincoln suffered from a lack of integration into a wider urban system. One illustration of this was the lack of step-migration into county towns from other large towns or cities. This is shown by the small proportion of Irish immigrants in the borough of Lincoln for example; only 1.5% of men and less than 1% of women living in Lincoln in 1861 had been born in Ireland, an unusually small proportion for an English urban area at this time.\textsuperscript{80} Minority communities that could be found in larger industrial centres were under-represented in these towns and, although some Irish-born inhabitants could be found in both counties, their presence was largely temporary and focused on the rural areas. They worked as railway navvies or in brickyards in Bedfordshire and as harvest labourers (particularly on potatoes) in Lincolnshire.\textsuperscript{81} The ethnic diversity identifiable in the Victorian City was not represented in these county towns. Persons born in England or Wales overwhelmingly populated both Bedford and Lincoln; the national average for such inhabitants was 95% of the population in 1881, but in Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire the figures were 98.6% and 98.7% respectively.\textsuperscript{82} This lack of ethnic diversity did not necessarily make for a more homogeneous society in the county town, some population groups were still identified as social outsiders, but they were identified by characteristics other than race. Some of the immigrant community in the county towns may well have been using them as initial stopping points leading to step-migration, but the ability of a county town to attract immigrants from within the county borders whether on a temporary or permanent basis was a testament to its strength as a 'central place'.

The county town in the ‘core and periphery’

County towns participated in invisible networks as well as the visible ones of the physical communications or trade structure. They were important participants in the system of domination described by Weber. In terms of political and administrative status the next upward connection on the urban hierarchy pyramid from the county town was London. Legislation was issued from, and local representation was sent to,}\textsuperscript{78} BLA, \textit{History, Topography and Directory of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire} (London, 1862), 55.\textsuperscript{79} M. F. Hopkinson, ‘Economy and society in an English county town’, \textit{Birkbeck College Occasional Papers} (London, 1986), 17, 19.\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Census of England and Wales, 1861}, 256, 595.\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Census, 1861, Vol. II}, 107.
London. In terms of governance and administration the county town acted as an integral part of the nation state. The success of the pre-Victorian county town was due to this fixed if somewhat arcane position in the urban scale; status and power derived from a direct link to the capital. This direct relationship with the capital provided political power which was supported by recognized social and economic dominance over the county town hinterland.

The consideration of the position of a county town within a national context raises the question of the importance of central/peripheral positions to urban economic and social development. How far does the concept of core and periphery explain the differences between two county towns in this period? Is the oppositional nature of the definitions helpful, or rather a hindrance, in trying to understand an urban area which may actually encompass a range of diversities within its boundary? Core and periphery classifications locate individual communities in relation to a dominant region, that is, the core, or in a fringe or alternative economic position or culture in relation to the dominant area; as peripheral to that culture. As Raimondo Strasoldo explains: '...the centre-periphery metaphor...entails two assumptions: (1) that the centre is the locus of decision-making, i.e. of power, (2) that they both belong to an encompassing system of which they are differentiated but interdependent parts.' In this sense the idea of 'centre and periphery' is more complex than simply geographical location and ease of access although both of these factors play vital parts. Economic, social and cultural trends and influences are also integral parts of the core/centre-periphery relationship. In the case of the nineteenth-century English county town the important relationship was that between the individual provincial community and London.

County town administrative and judicial functions made the capital the focus of most formal communication. London was firmly established as the very heart of the nation state, economy and government in Victorian Britain; no other urban area even approached the metropolis in either scale or importance. The centring of the railway network on the capital, eventually all railways led to London, and the unprecedented

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82 Census, 1881 Vol II, 182-3, 404-5.
growth of its suburbs reinforced its position across the late Victorian period. The position of any town or city was measured in relation to the capital in many types of publication: trade directory, town history or guide book. A central cultural assumption was that any visitor would be starting from London and would possess a metropolitan perspective; even directories produced for local consumption commonly began by establishing this distance.

The dominance of London meant that all other places were essentially provincial. Despite this there has been little research on the nature of the centre-peripheral relationship between London and provincial England in the nineteenth century. Much research focuses on either the 'north-south' divide or the supposedly provincial nature of new industrial centres. County towns were peripheral to London and were consequently 'provincial' almost by definition. The degree of remoteness from the capital produced important urban differences in the nature of the provincial function of county towns. Although the centre-periphery model is not purely geographical it is influenced by communication factors. As both technologies changed and state power became increasingly centralised, the peripheral regions of Britain became a moving frontier in the nineteenth century. Those areas that had been peripheral, or at least distinct from the centre, were gradually drawn into the metropolitan orbit. The single most important agent of change here was the railway, the availability of travel and the rapidly diminishing journey time resulted in the shrinkage of north-south distances and differences.

In terms of the case study towns the distance from the centre proved critical to their development. Bedford was only 40 miles from London but Lincoln was almost three times as far. This geographical reality was reflected in the relatively small amount of traffic between Lincoln and London. The road connections were poor and arduous; for this reason coastal routes to the capital had always been important to

87 Robbins, Nineteenth-century Britain, 26.
Lincolnshire.\textsuperscript{88} Agricultural produce was transported in bulk by water but overland routes were more difficult; there were only enough travellers to sustain one direct coach a day from Lincoln to London prior to railway development.\textsuperscript{89} As time and money became inseparable in the industrial age it was not only the distance from London that mattered; directness was also of vital importance. As Table 1 illustrates, there was a type of centrifugal force at work in late nineteenth century England; the gap between London and Bedford in terms of ease and speed was constantly narrowing and at a faster rate than that between London and Lincoln. The further from the centre the slower the impact and the efficiency of technology.

Table 1

Fastest travel times from London to Bedford and Lincoln

(Train times are for fastest possible services)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bedford</th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Coach: best time 4.5 hours</td>
<td>Coach: Best time 14 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>c. 3 hours not direct</td>
<td>c. 6 hours not direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Train: 1 hour 10 minutes</td>
<td>Train: 3 hours 24 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Train: 1 hour</td>
<td>Train: 3 hours 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Train: 57 minutes</td>
<td>Train: 3 hours 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Railway development initially illustrated, and subsequently magnified, this gulf in accessibility. The first railway development in Bedford began in 1846 with a line from Bletchley, this was a branch line of the London to Birmingham and attracted much local investment. The Cambridge railway followed in 1862 and, eventually, a direct line from London to Leicester passed through the town. In time the railway also replaced the road traffic to Cambridge and Oxford. These urban relationships were all significant, although no single factor influenced Victorian Bedford more than its proximity to the capital.

\textsuperscript{88} Rogers, \textit{History of Lincolnshire}.
As the metropolis spread outwards Bedford’s hinterland, always small due to the pull of Northampton, Cambridge, Huntingdon and towns on the Great North Road, diminished. Across the second half of the nineteenth century the proximity of Bedford to London increased almost annually; the advantages of this to the provincial town were enormous. Bedford can be regarded as coming increasingly under metropolitan influence by the early twentieth century. The proximity of Bedford to London had made it attractive to middle class residents of independent means even before the railway age. Bedford had been identified as a suitable place of residence by certain professional classes in the early nineteenth century; Piggot’s Directory of 1839 listed 180 families of private means residing in the borough. Some had returned from overseas colonies, others were mainly from the Home Counties. The popularity of Bedford and its environs with returning or retiring colonials was apparent in the 1881 census; for every 100,000 persons enumerated Bedfordshire had 466 born in the colonies or in India while the national average was 363 per 100,000. One the whole these were people involved in the Indian Civil Service, the 1881 census showed that 438 individuals in the town had been born in India, most of these were children and born around Bombay. There were also families who were attracted to Bedford from other colonial backgrounds; 46 individuals were born in the West Indies or Caribbean and 33 in South Africa. One family came from ‘Loyalty Island, South Seas’. Examination of individual families in the 1881 census and the ages and birthplaces of children suggest strongly that families relocated to Bedford when the eldest male child required schooling and that younger children were subsequently born in the borough.

The development of Bedford as a specialist educational and residential centre owed much to its location. The town gained three major benefits from its links with the capital. First, there was the income that flowed directly into the town’s Harpur Trust from the City of London. William Harpur founded the Harpur Trust in 1552, he was a native of Bedford who had migrated to London as an apprentice and subsequently rose to the position of Lord Mayor. As a mark of his success Harpur formed a trust

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89 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 102.
91 Census of England and Wales 1881, CD Rom, The Data Archive, (University of Essex, 2001). This source produces a slightly lower figure of India born residents than the printed summary tables of enumerator’s returns for Bedford borough see below Graph 2.
92 Census of England and Wales 1881, CD Rom.
to provide education and alms to the inhabitants of Bedford. The Harpur Trust was funded by an endowment which produced income from land in Holborn. The rental income generated in the city was distributed through the Bedford economy by the trust via alms, poor relief and schooling. By 1868 the gross annual income of the Harpur Trust had risen to £13,121, of which just over half was spent on education and the rest was distributed to Bedford residents in various forms.\textsuperscript{93}

Second, Bedford’s geographical proximity and increased ease of access to London together with the free schooling that the Harpur Trust provided encouraged the flow of professional and service families into the town. Finally there was the link which London provided Bedford into the imperial market. Cain and Hopkins have emphasized the importance of the City of London as ‘...the point at which the international economy intersected with the service capitalism of the south-east’.\textsuperscript{94}

The geographical, fiscal and personal links between Bedford and the City offered the local elite a high level of access to the imperial economy; an advantage which they recognised and were keen to maintain and exploit. The relationship between the locality and the metropolis was often recognized and articulated in an explicit and public manner. When the enthusiastic Mayor of Bedford, Joshua Hawkins invited the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London to the Harpur Grammar School speech day in 1889 he wished to show that Bedford was: ‘...sending back to London a hundredfold more than London sent to Bedford, in well-educated young men and women who would help to make the future greatness of the Empire....He hoped that London might send down its youth to be educated at Bedford.’\textsuperscript{95}

From the 1860s onward, the unprecedented growth of the imperial economy combined with an enlarged bureaucracy and colonial expansion required a new class of educated, highly literate and socially cohesive administrators.\textsuperscript{96} During the same period the decline in patronage, decreased mortality and rising expenses meant that

\textsuperscript{93} J. Godber, \textit{The Harpur Trust 1552-1973}, (Bedford, 1973), 49.
the gentry and middle classes were more concerned about the availability of career prospects for their families.\textsuperscript{97} Bedford institutions developed the competitive examination orientated education tailored to achieving new government posts. The rise of competitive examinations for places in the civil services, Sandhurst and Woolwich was important in expanding middle class demand for the type of education available at the Bedford Harpur schools which prepared pupils for examination.\textsuperscript{98} Through this specialist educational provision and the residents it attracted Bedford was increasingly participating in the imperial and service aspects that characterized the core culture and London centred economy.

Geographically Bedford was ideally located for this class of education consumer; between 1860 and 1874, 75\% of those entering the Indian Civil Service via examination came from professional families from the south-east of England.\textsuperscript{99} This suggests that there was a regional demand for a specific type of education provision at an early stage, from a fairly affluent sector of the population already well located to benefit from Bedford's specialist education provision. Bedford was also well positioned for connections to Oxford and Cambridge, the coach service between the town and Cambridge survived until 1849,\textsuperscript{100} and Bedford used this geographical convenience to enhance its educational reputation. Personal and transport links with these university towns were important to Bedford's credibility as an educational centre and both the schools trust and the corporation liked to describe the location of Bedford as halfway between the two.\textsuperscript{101}

The shrinking physical and mental distance between London and Bedford in this period and the expansion of links into commercial life is illustrated by the consideration of Bedford as a relocation area for London-based companies. In 1894 W.H. Allen's engineering works removed in its entirety from their London site (which was purchased by a railway company for the expansion of Waterloo Station) to Bedford. The firm purchased a site next to the Midland Railway from the Whitbread estate and developed the Queen's Engineering Works and the Queen's Park residential area. W H Allen relocated one hundred London based employees to

\textsuperscript{97} Gourvish, 'The rise of the professions', 22.
\textsuperscript{98} Bell, 'Aspects of Anglo-Indian Bedford', 185.
\textsuperscript{99} Cain and Hopkins, \textit{British Imperialism, Innovation and Expansion}, 331.
\textsuperscript{100} A. Grey, \textit{The Town of Cambridge} (Cambridge, 1925), 185.
Bedford. Bedford was drawn gradually into the south-east core or central culture of Britain from the 1860s onwards. This movement was facilitated by railway technology but the results were economic, cultural and class-based as well as technological.

In contrast to Bedford there is little evidence of any firm economic relationship between Lincoln and London. 'Uphill' Lincoln maintained local-central government relations, although these were often characterised by parochialism and hostility to the centre. Culturally, sectors of the Lincoln community were closer to the 'core' culture represented by London than to the local provincial manufacturing character of Lincoln. Among these people we might include professionals and the cathedral clergy and their families, they belonged to a wider but select community centred on London. Their fortunes and lifestyles could depend on decisions made at the centre rather than locally. However, these contacts had little impact on the overall urban development of late Victorian Lincoln.

Lincoln inhabitants were far more likely to be employed by local companies or to belong to local clubs or associations rather than branches of national ones, while only one local firm had a branch in London. In terms of leisure and consumption, Lincoln only showed evidence of being drawn into the dominant culture emanating from the metropolis as late as the 1890s whilst remaining firmly outside the south-east service based economy. In many ways Lincoln can be regarded as an isolated peripheral ironworking centre, whose isolation, combined with a large agricultural hinterland, maintained and supported Lincoln's role as a central place in its own right. In this way Lincoln is a smaller scale example of the large, varied urban regional centres found in France, with the addition of an industrial specialism.

So far only the relationship between the capital and the county towns has been considered as representing a nineteenth century urban centre-periphery system. This is the most obvious and powerful relationship in terms of government decision-

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104 Lepetit, The Pre-Industrial Urban System, 125.
making and state power. However, there are other aspects to the core-peripheral relationship. Keith Robbins has noted that during this period: 'Peripheral counties were entering into new relationships with the rest of the country. New regional balances emerged as new major regional cities constantly sought to extend their influence.' The strongest examples of this process were the industrialised cities of the north of England; in terms of economic decision-making these provided alternative centres and models of activity to London. These cities also developed their own peripheral relationships with smaller urban centres, which deferred to them in economic or cultural matters. Sheffield seems to have provided this role for Lincoln, particularly for 'down hill' manufacturing Lincoln which looked to Sheffield for innovations such as new industrial techniques and trade union organization.

In spatial terms, Sheffield had well-developed links to industrial urban networks and in turn offered Lincoln secondary access to that urban economy. For this reason early railway promoters in Lincoln had agitated as fiercely for a Lincoln-Sheffield-Manchester line as for a north-south connection with London. Culturally too, the manufacturing towns on the coalfields appeared to offer closer models for the later development of Lincoln than the example of southern white-collar suburbia. Industry in late Victorian Lincoln increased in scale and complexity and required substantial amounts of power and labour. No small amount of business risk was invested. However Lincoln inhabitants did not look to London for examples of how this could be achieved; Sheffield provided a much stronger and closer vision of urban success. It can be argued that late Victorian Lincoln straddled two peripheries simultaneously; while it was 'peripheral' in the national sense, particularly when compared to the example of Bedford, and enjoyed few advantages from its administrative relationship with the state centre, Lincoln was also on the periphery of the northern industrial economy. A little too distant and inconveniently placed to become a manufacturing centre on the scale of Sheffield or Rotherham, Lincoln developed many of the aspects and much of the culture of the northern manufacturing centres tempered by its fragmented nature, limited resources and

105 Robbins, Nineteenth Century Britain, 11.
106 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 65.
107 Newman, One Hundred Years, 3.
traditional roles. Hampered by these problems Lincoln was never to develop on the same physical scale as the industrial centre of the north of England or the Midlands.

Demographic change in the county town

As with other aspects of urban growth demographic expansion and changes in the physical scale of the county town followed a different pattern to that of other types of urban areas. In industrial towns and metropolitan areas dramatic growth occurred during the ‘classic’ phase of industrialisation, with the most important decade being 1811-1821, much earlier than in the county town. During the first half of the nineteenth century county town growth was sluggish; between the 1801 census and 1851 the rate of population growth in the 99 county towns was just 122%. In most of these towns growth occurred up to half a century later and a distinct ‘county town’ pattern to this can be discerned. Although the population of these towns grew continually, in both actual and relative terms, across the nineteenth century, county town growth was retarded, in both scale and timing, by comparison with the development of the larger urban centres.

In the county towns, the most significant period of population and spatial expansion occurred after 1870. P.J. Waller has identified three types of urban area, which experienced a period of ‘exceptional’ growth after 1861; firstly residential suburbs and satellite towns, secondly ‘...the nodal points of the changing industrial economy...’ such as Middlesbrough (iron), and Swindon (railways) and finally seaside and pleasure resorts such as Bournemouth. Waller includes several county towns in his list of expanding urban areas during the late Victorian period including Leicester, Northampton, Derby, Lincoln, Reading and Nottingham. However he does not regard them as a separate identifiable urban genre experiencing population growth in the period 1861-1911. This may be because Waller was concerned with ‘exceptional growth’, which he defined as an inter-censal growth of 25% or more. If we shift the focus from that of ‘exceptional growth’ to towns which experienced their most significant population increase between 1861 and 1911 county towns emerge as an urban genre experiencing consistently ‘late’ demographic increase.

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110 Waller, Town, City and Nation, 2-4.
In the cases of Bedford and Lincoln both towns experienced population ‘take off’ in the second half of the nineteenth century. Graph 1 shows the growth of population in Bedford and Lincoln municipal boroughs over the period. The population of each town was rising steadily from 1861 in similar trajectories, although both experienced decades of ‘take-off’. The population of Bedford grew from 13,413 in 1861 to 39,183 in 1911, an increase of 292%, while Lincoln’s population increased from 20,999 to 57,285 (273%) in the same period. The most significant inter-censal population increase occurred in Lincoln in the 1870s. This was due to both the ‘push’ factor of the agricultural depression from the beginning of the 1870s and the ‘pull’ of enhanced employment opportunities or services.

Graph 1
Population Growth in Bedford and Lincoln, 1851-1911

Sources: PP, Census of England and Wales, 1851-1911.

The demographic structures of the two towns also demonstrate their different relationships to the national communications network. Lincoln’s isolation was apparent in the regional nature of its immigrants (see above) and in the lower rate of growth that it experienced. The more cosmopolitan nature of Bedford’s population reveals the town’s access to London and closeness to the core culture also meant that Bedford was linked to the wider colonial communication network. The ‘residential’ nature of Bedford resulted in a high level of middle-class and colonial-born

111 Ibid., 3.
inhabitants, these incomers were known locally as 'squatters'. This was quite unusual for a county town; these were the types of urban immigrants that one would expect to find in a spa town, such as Cheltenham, in this period.

Graph 2

The graph reveals the intense connection between Bedford and the expansion of the British Empire. By 1881 census returns demonstrated clearly the ability of the town to attract inhabitants from colonies across the world. There is also some evidence of a connection with mainland Europe. There was a very strong service connection in Bedford and this could account for the excess of women; the 1861 Census showed more wives than husbands residing in the town, indeed married women comprised the single largest group identifiable by civil condition. There were also high levels of

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113 Waller, Town, City and Nation, 134.
114 The printed summary tables of enumerator’s returns for Bedford borough produces a higher figure of residents born in India than listed in the Census of England and Wales 1881, CD Rom, The Data Archive, (University of Essex, 2001) it is possible that another colonial region is also included as ‘India’ here. See footnote 91.
widows and retired or unoccupied residents. The widows living in Bedford were, on the whole, younger than those in Lincoln suggesting that they were not all locals but included immigrants who found Bedford an inexpensive place of residence. These residents would prove to be important to the economy of the county town, independent women, widows and spinsters, particularly of the middle class were often free from geographical ties and had the freedom to choose where to live and to spend.

While the comparable rates of growth in Bedford and Lincoln suggest that county towns had a common experience of demographic increase, similarities in demographic structure also suggests a ‘county town’ factor. Unoccupied or retired residents formed an important demographic sector in county towns, despite the decline in the ‘gentry centre’ function of county towns they remained popular places to reside or retire. In Bedford this trend was reinforced by the school reforms and the 1881 Census showed the variety of independent individuals who choose to live there and the multiplicity of ways in which they were described. As well as the ‘retired’ or ‘independent’ there were residents whose occupation was listed as ‘ladies’, ‘landed’, ‘rent’, ‘maintained by friends/relatives’ and the more ambiguous ‘no occupation’, ‘formerly.’ or ‘late of…’. While it is difficult to distinguish how many people were those ‘footloose’ capitalists able to live in a location of their choice from those who were in less fortunate circumstances (only 36 individuals were classed as ‘unemployed’), it is possible to compare the descriptions and gain some impression of the sources of income for some of these residents.

The graph shows a distinct reluctance to describe the source of income with very few returns being specific although there is still some distinction between land and interest. Four residents were specific in describing their income as derived from railway ‘stock’ or ‘shares’.

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In both towns the majority of the labouring population continued to be drawn from the surrounding agricultural region. This was particularly true of young unmarried men and women in the county town. In general immigrants to Lincoln emerged from the immediate hinterland of the town or from within the region, a feature which was apparent in the majority of county towns. Lincoln was particularly attractive to young men from the region; in 1861 young unmarried men, aged 15 to 25 were the largest single identifiable group of inhabitants reflecting the rural nature of the area. The employment opportunities which attracted these different groups will be explored in the next chapter. In Lincoln population growth continued upward into the early decades of the twentieth century while in Bedford the population began to level off before the Great War suggesting a stagnation in the economy.

Conclusion

By the end of the nineteenth century towns were said to be becoming 'increasingly alike'. The process of urban homogenisation was accelerated by the introduction of statutes and regulations, by trends in retailing and by the integration of the service sector, for example multiple chain stores and branch banking. Electric lighting, street furniture and trams, were combing to make many urban streetscapes, particularly High Streets, assume a degree of similarity regardless of the scale of the urban centre. By the end of the century, transport was not the only technological development drawing peripheral towns into the core culture. As Newton has noted of late Victorian Exeter; 'Bookings for London theatres and hotels could easily be arranged by letter or telegram' and were advertised and printed locally. This proximity was reinforced by the introduction of the telephone. The accessibility of London gradually undermined some roles of the county town as it assumed '...the functions which previously had been performed by the great provincial capitals'.

At the same time, domestic tourism began to celebrate the historical diversity of Britain's peripheral areas. In the 1890s a visitor to Lincoln found that on descending from the cathedral he walked:

...suddenly out of the picturesque past into the very prosaic present as represented by Lincoln's High Street. There we found tram-cars running and jingling along; eager crowds on the pavement; plate-glass-fronted shops, quite "up-to-date"; and a large railway station asserted its nineteenth century ugliness...

By 1900, a local inhabitant described how: 'Lincoln has grown remarkably of late, and has developed into a busy go-ahead city, with all conveniences, but it still retains much of its old-world character in the old part of the city.' The modern 'ugliness' and 'conveniences' regretted by the (railway-delivered) tourists of the picturesque brought urban life out beyond the major metropoli. For those living in the rural hinterland the county town often offered the first experience of urban regulation,

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120 R. Dennis, English Industrial Towns of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography (Cambridge, 1984), 245.
121 Newton, Victorian Exeter, 178.
122 Ibid., 147.
123 Robbins, Nineteenth-Century Britain, 25.
124 J. J. Hissey, Over Fen and Wold (London, 1898), 375.
modern social innovations, new technologies and crowds. Flora Thompson recalled the first impressions of ‘Candleford (Buckingham)’ when arriving from the surrounding countryside:

First, way-side cottages embowered in flower gardens, then cottages in pairs with iron railings enclosing neat little front plots and tiled paths leading up to the doors. Then the gasometer (for they actually had gas in Candleford!) and the railway station, which made the town accessible to all but such cross-country districts as theirs. Then came pavements and lamp-posts and people, more people than they had ever seen together in their lives before.126

By the eve of the Great War, the dominance of London, the completion of the railway network, the expansion of leisure travel and the increasingly ‘national’ nature of the economy and lifestyles began to draw in even the most isolated regional centres. Towns such as Exeter and Lincoln had become part of a national commercial culture, which ameliorated both their isolation and local distinctiveness.127 Considering Bedford and Lincoln in relation to issues of core and periphery suggests that county town development between 1860 and 1910 was strongly influenced by location. The position of a community in an urban and communication network and its relationship to the ever-evolving core economy were factors that were influential in determining urban growth and development. Bedford and Lincoln do not provide examples of core and periphery towns but rather examples of degree. Bedford was closer to the centre (London) and much more in accord with the dominant core economy and culture. Lincoln was not placed in opposition to this centre or core, but initially somewhat isolated from it, and found it more attractive or natural to look to an alternative urban model in the manufacturing regions. This initial isolation was gradually overcome by the improvements in communications, by the spread of technology and by the standardization of services and culture across late Victorian Britain. These developments impacted on all aspects of daily life, from where one bought bacon- from the Co-op or a grocery chain store- to how one spent one’s leisure time, perhaps playing or watching the ‘national game’ or reading a national magazine or newspaper. Industrialisation was
not absent, nor were other new technologies such as the railway or gas supply. County towns lacked the suburban sprawl and the obvious residential segregation that contemporaries found so fascinating and repellent in the city, but by the end of the century they had developed many of its other characteristics. County towns possessed paved, lit streets, town halls, libraries, mechanics' institutes, insurance offices and banks, while the nation-wide spread of post offices, railway hotels and high street retailers all represented the modern urban status of the small town.

In the industrial economy of mid and late nineteenth century Britain county towns were locationally disadvantaged. Usually far from sources of energy they were more isolated than industrial towns or new 'shock' cities. Victorian county towns lacked good access to modern urban networks and did not benefit from improvements in communications as quickly as cities or industrial centres. The scale and permeability of the county town hinterland also influenced communications and town status. These factors, together with employment opportunities, caused a lag between the main periods of urban growth in Britain and the expansion of the county towns. Internally county towns were destabilised during the nineteenth century by the erosion or loss of traditional central place functions. All of these factors influenced the ability of individual communities to 'catch up' on urban change. Bedford and Lincoln had different experiences of urban development; the primary variable in the course of change and development in the two towns was that of location. Late Victorian Bedford and Lincoln were strongly influenced by internal and external geography. In Bedford's case proximately to the metropolis and in Lincoln's high levels of physical and urban isolation moulded the urban outcomes for the beginning of the twentieth century.
Chapter Three
County Town Manufacturing 1860-1911

County towns have long been perceived as non-industrial urban areas. In the
nineteenth century these towns were regarded as distinguished from other urban
settlements by two main characteristics: a weight of tradition and a lack of industrial
activity. The Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840) listed the hierarchy
of urban settlements starting with ‘The Metropolis’ then moving down through
‘Manufacturing Towns’, ‘Populous Seaport Towns’ and ‘Great Watering Places’
before considering ‘County and other considerable Inland towns not associated with
any particular form of manufacturing’. This clearly indicates both the contemporary
hierarchical ranking of the county town and the perception that the economic activity
of the county town did not possess a strong manufacturing base.

This chapter and the following one will focus on the economy of the county town
examining change through occupational structures. Two of Everitt’s five county
town functions are examined: the supposed absence of industry and the presence of
professionals. This chapter considers the strength and changing characteristics of the
manufacturing sector in the mid and late Victorian county town and shows how it
was an important, and responsive source of income. Manufacturing provided these
towns with an important income generator which was both diverse and adaptable.
The chapter will also show how some county towns developed large-scale,
specialized industries which became integral to their urban fortunes and identities.
These industries changed the world of work in the county town with the introduction
of factory based production. The impact of the scale of large works and the
continuance and variety of workshop and domestic manufacture will also be
examined.

1 A. Everitt, Landscape and Community (London, 1985), 23; A. Armstrong, Stability and Change in
2 PP, Report of The Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840). This quotation also suggests that
some county towns had already become ‘manufacturing towns’ and were primarily associated with
this activity. It is clear that by 1840 there was a perception of a residual category of county towns
which were important but economically undeveloped.
Despite their image, all county towns possessed a range of small manufacturing activities by the nineteenth century. Since county town industries possessed central place functions they had strongly developed agricultural processing interests. Manufacturing activities involved refining, producing luxury goods and products for the service sector. These two groups can be broadly defined as extractive processing and skilled artisan handicraft forms of manufacturing. Malting, brewing, glue boiling and tanning were typical processes deriving from the agricultural hinterland, while skilled handicraft production concentrated on the service sector products and the luxury end of the market. From the restoration onwards, county towns provided a location for clock makers, dressmakers, furniture makers and other skilled artisans producing goods for the gentry market. Some of these products found a wider market outside the immediate clientele and region. In Worcester, for example, the glove-making industry had evolved from the town’s role as a gentry centre. The leather for the finished product was supplied initially from the local agricultural hinterland and the town produced gloves for a regional middle class as well more practical work wear for agricultural tasks. The production of stockings in Leicester followed a similar pattern with the town becoming closely identified with the specialist production of a quality item.

The development of industrial manufacturing in county towns such as Worcester dated from the end of the eighteenth century, when 'The craft-economy of these county towns or regional markets...found a new role for itself in adapting its skills to the needs of an increasing population, a changing countryside, and an expanding leisured class.' This adaptation required a concentration of activities and a change in the scale of manufacturing and trading activities in the county town. It also required a progression from a craft based to a large-scale and factory based production economy and from focusing on regionally orientated to national and international markets. In common with the changes in the agricultural economy in the county town hinterland, urban production was shifting to a capital-intensive process from a labour-intensive one. This process continued and intensified from the early nineteenth century onward in county towns, although development was uneven

4 Everitt, Landscape and Community, 53.
and heavily influenced by social structures and physical location. It was also dependent upon the expansion of capital sourcing structures within the county town network such as growth of county banking, credit and insurance. The development of 'modern' industry in the county town occurred from the mid-nineteenth century point onwards rather than in the 'classic' period of industrialisation.

In towns such as Leicester, Nottingham and Northampton modern industry was achieved by introducing mechanisation to an area which had previously been hand, and often home-based, sometimes leading to national pre-eminence in a particular product. This move to factory production led to physical changes in the urban environment. Consequently some county towns became more 'industrial' in character than others and their sources of income and employment were inextricably bound up with the fortunes of a single manufacturing industry. Thus Nottingham became synonymous with lace-making and hosiery, Derby with silk and china and Northampton with shoe-making. None of these towns relinquished any of the administrative or market functions which had provided their main urban characteristics in previous periods. These towns became known primarily as manufacturing centres but were always more economically and socially diverse than the classic industrial or mill towns of this period. The diversity of function noted by Alan Everitt in his study of Hanoverian county towns remained a prime feature of the English county town throughout the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth.

The influence of location

The successful development of factory-based, large-scale manufacturing industries in the county town depended upon location and the related availability of raw materials. Towns gained comparative manufacturing advantage if they had good communication links allowing them access to raw materials at a relatively low cost. Location was a crucial variable in the development of a successful manufacturing

6 Everitt, Country, County and Town, 28.
7 J. Smith, 'Economic and social change in East Midlands county towns, 1750-1820' unpublished PhD research, Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, 2000.
9 Everitt, Landscape and Community, 37.
industry and often reflected an earlier, sometimes medieval role. According to R.J. Morris, in the Victorian period: 'The characteristic English manufacturing town was based upon a merchanting and finishing centre, located in a coalfield area'. Other towns had little to build on except a fortuitous location, the development of the specialised metal trades in Wolverhampton is a good example; the industry resulted from the town's proximity to metal ores and its location immediately above a coal seam. County towns located in the east and south-east of England were disadvantaged by the lack of available coal or iron deposits and were initially isolated from the primary generator of nineteenth century industrialisation, coal fuelled steam technology. Due to their location and proximity to raw materials midland county towns were quicker to adapt towards manufacturing specialisms.

The issue of raw materials demonstrates the importance of physical location but the position of a town in an urban network was also vital. Urban integration could also provide a cost advantage in developing a successful manufacturing industry. Towns gained advantages from their interaction with other manufacturing centres in an urban network; this enabled each to specialise in a particular form or part of the manufacturing process, as in the Potteries or the web of hosiery towns in the East Midlands. Conversely, in county towns which experienced a high degree of geographical isolation, industrialisation was either inhibited or occurred relatively late. This was the case in the western counties in particular; where in the county centres of Shrewsbury, Hereford, Gloucester and Exeter the results of both isolation and remoteness from coal and other raw materials become apparent. Neither Hereford nor Exeter, for example, possessed a significant modern staple manufacturing industry in the nineteenth century. Both towns housed a number of small-scale agricultural processing industrial activities including brewing, tanning, cider milling and paper milling. Shrewsbury, closer to the 'cradle of the industrial revolution', was more industrially developed but again was not identified with any

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13 J. Ellis, ‘‘The stocking country”: Industrial and urban growth in Nottingham 1680-1840’ in J. Stobart and P. Lane, Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700-1840 (Leicester, 2000), 93-116.
14 R. Newton, Victorian Exeter 1837-1914 (Leicester, 1968), 179.
particular industry.\textsuperscript{15} Gloucester became a railway centre, mainly due to a simple change of gauge between two different company tracks.\textsuperscript{16} Worcester demonstrated the benefits of better integration, gaining strongly from its proximity to Birmingham and from canal and rail links to the Black Country. In addition to the glove industry the town developed successful large-scale engineering and china manufacturers.\textsuperscript{17}

The location of a county town was vital to its ability to maintain position against the rising industrial centres in the urban hierarchy. Many found themselves unable to compete and failed to develop large-scale industries. In contrast to this pattern East Midland county towns were highly developed and East Anglian county towns possessed sizeable industries by the late nineteenth century despite experiencing delayed industrialisation. By the \textit{1880s} modern industries, particularly engineering industries could be found, in the county and some larger market towns, in a broad arc from the Humber to London.\textsuperscript{18} Cambridge, which was a special (educational) case, and declining county towns such as Huntingdon lacked large-scale industry and proved exceptions. In Lincoln, Ipswich, Chelmsford and Bedford the manufacture of agricultural machinery and engines introduced new industrial techniques, steam power, new work discipline and conditions, large-scale production and extensive industrial buildings to the county town.\textsuperscript{19} In impact, if not in scale, these industrial developments were extremely significant within their urban setting and within the wider region.

\textbf{The development of new industries in Bedford and Lincoln}

Despite the stereotypical view the importance of manufacturing to the economies of the case study towns was well established by the mid-nineteenth century. The 1851 Census found that manufacturing industry formed a vital part of urban employment and income in both Lincoln and Bedford.\textsuperscript{20} As tables 2 and 3 show, the

\textsuperscript{15} B. Trinder 'Shrewsbury' in P. Clark (ed.) \textit{Industry and Urbanisation in Eighteenth Century England} (Leicester, 1994).
\textsuperscript{16} P.J. Waller, \textit{Town, City and Nation}, 219.
\textsuperscript{17} Bridges and Mundy, \textit{Worcester}, intro xxx.
\textsuperscript{18} Waller, \textit{Town, City and Nation}, 4.
\textsuperscript{19} E.I. Abell, \textit{The Story of Lincoln: An Introduction to the History of the City} (Wakefield, 1971); P. Bishop, \textit{The History Of Ipswich: 1500 years of Triumph and Disaster} (London, 1995); J. Godber, \textit{The Story of Bedford: An Outline History} (Luton, 1978).
\textsuperscript{20} Census of England and Wales 1851, 1871, 1891, 1911. The Census returns have been analysed using W.A. Armstrong 'The use of information of occupation', in E.A. Wrigley, ed., \textit{Nineteenth-century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data} (Cambridge, 1972). This system of analysis bears no relation to any form of occupation linked class definition and
manufacturing sector was already the largest sectoral employer of men and women in both Bedford and Lincoln in the mid-nineteenth century.

Table 2
Occupations by sector and gender in Bedford 1851-1911
(% of employed population only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1851 Male</th>
<th>1851 Female</th>
<th>1871 Male</th>
<th>1871 Female</th>
<th>1891 Male</th>
<th>1891 Female</th>
<th>1911 Male</th>
<th>1911 Female</th>
</tr>
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<td>17.5</td>
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<td>15.4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>44.6</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>--</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Services &amp; Professionals</td>
<td>12.2</td>
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<td>8.8</td>
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<td>8.0</td>
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<td>10.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
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<td>43.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Occupations by sector and gender in Lincoln 1851-1911
(% of the employed population only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1851 Male</th>
<th>1851 Female</th>
<th>1871 Male</th>
<th>1871 Female</th>
<th>1891 Male</th>
<th>1891 Female</th>
<th>1911 Male</th>
<th>1911 Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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<td>16.6</td>
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<td>12.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
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<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dealing</td>
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<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
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<td>14.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Services</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Public Service &amp; Professionals</td>
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<td>7.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


offers little insight into the structure of social classes within the census area however for the purpose of this study Armstrong provides a valuable tool for building up a picture of the importance of different industrial sectors to the county town economy. In order to obtain realistic occupational profiles for Bedford and Lincoln the agricultural industrial sector has been omitted from the total as has Armstrong’s mining category, being inappropriate for the geographical areas studied here. For a critique of Armstrong’s approach see Dennis, English Industrial Cities, 118-119 and N.D. Raven, ‘Manufacturing and trades: the urban economies of the north Essex cloth towns c. 1770-1851’ unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Leicester 1998.
In 1851, over 39% of occupied men and 43% of working women in Lincoln and over 44% of working men and women in Bedford were occupied in manufacturing activities of all types. Between a third and a half of all urban incomes and probably over a half of all breadwinners and households were dependent upon manufacturing. Across the second half of the century this sector consolidated its importance as a source of employment and income in both Bedford and Lincoln as the graph of male employment shows. The economic differences between the two towns are highlighted, notably the lower but steadier nature of manufacturing employment in Bedford until the 1890s and the more volatile and vulnerable nature of Lincoln manufacturing with the 1880s depression clearly apparent in the occupational returns. The graph also shows the decline in the importance of manufacturing as a sector within Bedford as the twentieth century began.

**Graph 4**

**Employment in Manufacturing, Bedford and Lincoln 1851-1911**

(\% of employed males)

Manufacturing was an important source of urban income in both county towns even when experiencing slump or relative decline. However the graph gives little indication of the changing nature of manufacturing employment and activities in Bedford and Lincoln between 1851 and 1911. These differences stem directly from the composition of the manufacturing sector in the towns. The graph also conceals
the diversity of manufacturing occupations and occupational change in Bedford and Lincoln across the period.

In common with many other county towns the type of manufacturing activity taking place in Bedford and Lincoln at the mid-century was small-scale and very diverse in character. Manufacturing occupations listed in the 1851 census returns included those of watchmaker, coachmaker, whipmaker, gunsmith, maltster, tailor, upholsterer, basketmaker, bonnetmaker and gilder. These are the types of occupation defined by Armstrong as 'handicrafts' as opposed to 'modern manufacturing'. The largest identifiable group working in manufacturing in Lincoln at the mid-century were the 403 women and girls employed as milliners, followed by 223 men and youths occupied as shoemakers (although it is highly likely that many of these were actually cobblers). The second largest male employment group in Lincoln manufacturing comprised the 184 tailors. In Bedford the major manufacturing activity for males was again shoemaking employing 304, (although again the same caveat applies), followed by 151 tailors and 72 blacksmiths. Women and girls produced hats or lace for sales to 'middlemen' or merchants.

Few of these people enumerated in 1851 worked in large premises and many did not even go out to workshops but worked at home, as in the case of women milliners and lace makers who often worked in their own kitchens. In the thirty years following the 1851 census, both Bedford and Lincoln saw a move towards fully industrialised larger scale manufacturing where labour was formalised and work took place within regular shift and work patterns at the 'works'. Both towns also experienced the development of a single major industry and typical products with which the towns were identified.

In both Bedford and Lincoln the major new manufacturing industry evolved from a facility which could be found in almost any market town: the foundry. A small foundry was an essential central facility in an agrarian district and they were widespread in the early nineteenth century. Even very small towns in East Anglia

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and Shropshire possessed them, but in county towns they were larger, more numerous and more productive. There was also a significant concentration of skilled workers in county towns. Everitt found that there were clusters of metal workers in county towns as early as the Georgian period and, even though none of his case study towns was 'particularly notable as a metal-working centre', they contained at least 350 master metal-craftsmen. From the early eighteenth century provincial town foundries had produced individual items mainly to order and 'while the majority...began by making agricultural implements or castings for millwrights, by the end of the nineteenth century they were manufacturing...traction engines, milling machinery, bridges, equipment for gold and diamond mines, cast iron piano frames, electrical apparatus, deck winches for ships, parts for malt kilns, lawnmowers, street furniture...'. To this can be added kitchen ranges and a growing number of other domestic consumer products.

Versatility was a hallmark of this provincial production and few small town foundries specialised in a single product or range. However, those which did evolve into large-scale units of production initially started with a focus on a single product or specialised in one product from a broad base. Specialization and the strong identification of a firm with a particular product proved to be essential to the successful expansion of county town iron foundries. This was the case with Howards in Bedford where the development of the major agricultural ironworks was stimulated by the presence of innovative large landowners (including the Dukes of Bedford, the Russells) and the use of modern 'high' farming methods in the surrounding farming region. John Howard began with an ironmonger business describing himself as an 'Ironmonger, iron and brass founder, locksmith, bellhanger and brazier, iron, zinc and tinplate worker, brick, tile and lime burner, garden pot manufacturer'. In essence, he ran a traditional county town foundry and metal workshop. By 1851 Howard and his son James specialised in iron ploughs, displayed at the Great Exhibition, and the firm became synonymous with plough production for high farming and pioneered the steam-powered plough. Howards

were successful plough makers but did not produce a satisfactory engine for these until 1876 when they developed their most successful agricultural engine the 'Farmer’s Friend'. From this point onwards engine production expanded and work became increasingly skilled and specialized.

Howards' Britannia Ironworks became an important employer but never came to dominate Bedford spatially as it was sited on the periphery of the town, out of both sight and mind. In Lincoln, the situation was very different. The development of several agricultural engineering plants, still known as ‘foundries’, producing similar products occupied an extensive area of the central urban space and fundamentally re-orientated the structure and social tone of the cathedral city between 1860 and 1910. In Lincoln the combination of available ironstone, existing foundry workshops and engineering skills, low agricultural wages and strong regional demand enabled the development of a successful industry rather than a single works. Manufacturing in Lincoln also benefited from the town’s peripheral position in the network of East Midland towns.

Industrialisation had a relatively late impact on the East Midlands region as a whole. The three major engines of the industrial revolution, the mechanisation of the textile industry, the new technologies affecting coal and iron and the introduction of steam power had made no great impact by the mid-nineteenth century. Although rather peripheral to other East Midland counties, Lincolnshire followed the same pattern due to the distance from the coalfields and the difficulties in mechanizing existing industries. In many ways Lincolnshire in the early Victorian period was still an agrarian and early industrial society; the largest occupational groups in the area were farmers followed by trades and crafts people. This situation was not disrupted initially by the industrialisation of the East Midland towns to the west of the county. The major effects of the initial industrialisation process were to intensify the demand for food and wool and as a result the production of these two commodities became increasingly large-scale. Surplus agricultural production was absorbed by the fast...

32 A. Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 21
growing towns of the East Riding, along with Derby and Nottingham. There was a secondary effect; intensive farm production increased the demand for agricultural implements and machines. This demand, combined with water transport improvements which enabled coal to be carried more efficiently, provided the impetus to small-scale industry. However, Beckett and Heath argue that these developments did not constitute an industrial breakthrough. They found that in the East Midlands:

Regional specialisation had accompanied the canal system, as, for example with the sale of coal into Lincolnshire in exchange for agricultural goods, but the canals failed to open up a wider and more diverse market. The result was that the real breakthrough into modern industry with significant technological innovation, a fully-fledged factory system, and greater capitalisation, was a product of the years from about 1840 onwards rather than of the classic revolution period.

The isolation which retarded industrial development was not ameliorated until the arrival of the railway, which enabled the development of large-scale heavy engineering industry in Lincoln. Railway transport overcame locational disadvantage to a limited extent and brought pig iron and cheaper coal from Yorkshire and later from Nottinghamshire and Scunthorpe. Iron foundries flourished and by the 1860s there were five major engineering firms established in the town; Gwynnes founded in 1849, Clayton and Shuttleworth (1842), Robey and Co. (1854), Fosters (1856) and Rustons (1840). As the dates of the establishment show the engineering tradition in Lincoln pre-dated the arrival of the first railway in 1846. Portable engines were already in production by 1845, but the railway proved to be the catalyst in the change to large-scale production of iron engineering products. In the 1851 census only 82 men and youths in Lincoln were returned as ‘engine and machine makers’ and 62 as ‘engaged in iron manufacture’ although there were 97 ‘blacksmiths’ in the town. Better communications leading to increased demand were to expand these numbers dramatically in the following decades. The early presence

34 Wright, Lincolnshire Towns and Industry, 59
35 Beckett and Heath, ‘When was the industrial revolution in the East Midlands?’
36 LA Book Collection, author unknown, Forgotten Lincoln, (Lincoln, 1898).
37 Wright, Lincolnshire Towns and Industry
of skilled labour was important in the expansion of the iron industry in Lincoln as was the surplus of male labour available in the surrounding hinterland.\textsuperscript{39}

Alongside railway expansion major developments occurred within the iron industry in the 1850s which directly affected Lincoln. Iron foundries in Lincoln mainly cast pig iron as regionally available ore was unsuited to steel making and Lincoln was isolated from the main areas of modern iron production, for example, those in the north-east or the Black Country. This dependence on pig iron production meant that Lincoln foundries were restricted in the processes and therefore limited in the range of products that they could offer. Initially, Lincoln foundries produced machines purely for the agricultural market. An 1872 directory listed fourteen agricultural implement manufacturers producing a wide variety of products from fixed and movable engines to seed drills and threshers and explained: '...It is now one of the chief seats for making the heavier kinds of agricultural machinery, comprising threshing machines, portable and fixed steam engines, road steamers, corn mills...sawing and pumping machinery, & c.'.\textsuperscript{40} Production expanded and later diversified into steam engines, boilers and electrical lighting equipment as well as the original ploughs. Lincoln foundries looked for new products that suited their skills and processes and new markets for them.

From the broader perspective, the history of the iron industry suggests that this diversification and active development of markets was essential for the growth of the Lincoln iron industry. In 1870, Britain dominated the world iron and steel market\textsuperscript{41} and was the world's leading supplier of engineering products.\textsuperscript{42} The initial boom in iron production between 1869-73 due to export demand was followed by a serious slowing in growth during the last quarter of the nineteenth and through to the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{43} This mainly affected the pig iron industry, as demand for steel proved more resilient. The impact was spread nationally, one manufacturer complained to the Royal Commission on Depression in Trade and

\textsuperscript{40} W. White, \textit{Whites History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882}, 498.
\textsuperscript{42} S. Pollard, \textit{Britain's Prime and Britain's Decline: The British Economy 1870-1914} (London, 1989), 22.
\textsuperscript{43} F. Crouzet, \textit{The Victorian Economy} (London, 1982), 240; Payne, 'Iron and steel manufactures', 75.
Industry of a ‘...depression in prices and depression of volume of trade’ and blamed this on the closure of foreign markets and the availability of foreign ores. However in Lincoln the damage was greater potentially due to the dependence of Lincoln foundries upon pig iron working. The range of products that the Lincoln foundries had been built upon was also vulnerable. On the whole Lincoln foundries had specialized in agricultural engineering products and found themselves driven out of some markets by both tariff barriers and American and German competition. This slump was compounded regionally by the onset of the agricultural depression after 1873 and a decline in demand for agricultural products in Britain. Research suggests that the agricultural depression did not affect Lincolnshire immediately, and it has been suggested that Lincolnshire was less affected by depression than many other rural counties but the home market for Lincoln firms extended well beyond the eastern counties by this time. The tightening in the agricultural economy certainly encouraged local agricultural implement makers of all sizes to advertise the diversity of their product ranges. The adaptability of the Lincoln manufacturers demonstrated the need for dynamism and flexibility in the county town economy as local businesses faced exposure to wider competition.

In Lincoln the growth and scale of the iron foundries from the late 1840s meant that there was considerable structural vulnerability in the local economy. By the 1870s Lincoln was already overly reliant upon a single industry based upon iron working, an industry that was restricted by process and therefore limited in its ability to adjust to changing circumstances. This was a period where agricultural demand was depressed and overseas competition fierce, yet the 1870s were the decade of largest population growth in Lincoln and the iron foundries continued to expand against a background of an ever-tightening and more competitive market. How did the Lincoln firms attain such growth and scale in such circumstances? There were a number of factors in Lincoln’s success. The foundries responded by diversifying, as we have seen, but also by specializing in successful products, for example,

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46Saul, ‘The engineering industry’, 211.
concentrating on portable steam engines for agriculture - an area in which Britain was pre-eminent.\footnote{Saul, 'The engineering industry', 207.} Another area in which Lincoln firms excelled was identifying a demand for innovative and bespoke machines. Richard Hornsby's works began producing an innovative oil-driven engine in the early 1890s which could be used to provide electricity and pump mines and canal locks among other uses. By 1904 the firm had sold over 10,000 of these engines.\footnote{Ibid., 217.}

Product adaptation enabled Lincoln firms to prosper and expand between 1850 and 1914. Crisis in the Lincoln iron foundries was more likely to mean short-time working or lay-offs rather than company failure although there were endemic problems in the industry. Market problems were compounded by the fact that all the largest employers produced similar products and the cyclical depressions in the iron industry were felt across the whole town. The wages of the workers, particularly the higher disposable incomes of the skilled workers such as the town's boilermakers, had become essential to the urban economy in little over two decades. In 1875, for example, during a depression in iron exports, local businesses began to fail and economic depression deepened. Some manufacturers were forced to introduce short-time working by 1879, further destabilizing the town economy.\footnote{Hill, \textit{Victorian Lincoln}, 203.} The dependence of Lincoln's urban income on a single industry was a direct reflection of the scale of the iron foundries and of the proportion of local men they employed.

The scale of industry

One of the major elements in the modernisation of the county town industrial and economic structure between 1850 and 1910 was the revolution in the scale of production. Although manufacturing was not a new activity for county towns what was new in this period was the concentration of activity, level of mechanisation and, more visibly, the scale and physical presence of the manufactories. New manufacturing plants transformed the appearance and the environment of county towns almost beyond recognition. William Hale White (Mark Rutherford) described late Victorian Bedford (which he renamed 'Cowfold'), as:

\footnote{Ibid.}
...a small country town in one of the Midland shires. It is now semi-manufacturing, at the junction of three or four lines of railway, with hardly a trace of what it was fifty years ago.51

This transformation occurred in many county towns and was largely due to the position and size of the new manufacturing plants. Large-scale plants were built from the 1850s onwards, generally close to, or in, the town centres. The innovative scale of new manufacturing in county towns meant that a single plant or industry could suddenly dominate the landscape of the county town. In Ipswich, for example, the firm of Ransomes, the oldest and largest of the agricultural machine companies, already employed 1,000 men by 1843. In Lincoln, five major iron engineering works: Clayton and Shuttleworth’s Stamp End Works, Robey and Co.’s Perseverance Iron Works, the Sheaf Iron Works belonging to Ruston and Co., Foster’s Wellington Foundry and Gwynnes, moulded the urban landscape of the lower town with the extensive scale of their plants.52

In Bedford the Howard’s Britannia Works stood alone and unchallenged in terms of scale until the arrival of the Queen’s Engineering Works in 1894. Although located on the edge of town and, therefore, not dominating the central space the Bedford ironworks was known for its scale which attracted many visitors to the county and tourists including General Garibaldi.53 As early as 1862, the Britannia Works, as the major industrial employer, was ‘...occupying an area of fifteen acres and giving employment to about 500 men’.54 At this time Bedford had a population of 13,413. The Foundry Department of these works consisted ‘...of an immense rectangular building more than 250 feet long, with a roof of three spans, covering about an acre.’55 The scale of the foundries was comparable to that of major factories in the industrial centres at the same time, for example Clayton and Shuttleworth’s works in Lincoln covered eleven acres and employed 1,300. Robey and Co., also based in Lincoln, built the Perseverance Iron Works which an 1882 directory described as covering ‘...an area of about seven acres of land [having] a frontage of 200 yards towards the Canwick Road and gives employment to about 700 hands’.56 By the

52 White’s History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882, 498.
54 History, Topography and Directory of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire (London, 1862), 53
55 Bedford Central Library Local Collection, Anon, A Visit to Bedford (1883), 11.
56 White’s Directory of Lincolnshire 1882, 498.
early twentieth century Robey’s Perseverance Works had grown to 1,600 employees\textsuperscript{57} and was an important motor driving the county town economy.

The engineering foundries of Bedford and Lincoln were not only large-scale by county town standards, they were also significant when set against the national average.\textsuperscript{58} In 1871, the national average workforce of machine building firms was 85 employees; the dominant Lincoln and Bedford firms matched or exceeded this number. During this period the largest engineering firm in Britain was Platt Brothers of Oldham who employed 7,000 men in 1875.\textsuperscript{59} When it is considered that Platts made machinery for the mammoth cotton industry and ‘supplied almost one half of the cotton spindles installed in Britain and probably about one third of those installed in the rest of the world’\textsuperscript{60} we can see that the county town engineering works were both significant in scale and expanding in an manner unprecedented outside of the classic ‘industrial’ areas. The proportion of the county town population dependent upon individual foundries also demonstrated the impact of ‘the works’ on the county town economy and environment.

While industrial cities such as Birmingham or Manchester had many large-scale modern buildings, the impact of manufacturing plant scale in the county town was made more dramatic by the limited size of the surrounding urban areas and the strong ‘workshop tradition’ of county towns.\textsuperscript{61} In instances where there was a single large-scale plant in a town these businesses were often two or three times the size of their next largest neighbour. In 1881 Dudley Cary Elwes remarked in his Bedford guide:

\begin{quote}
This town, with the exception of Messrs. J. and F. Howard’s Ironworks for the manufacture of steam ploughs and agricultural implements, has no very large employers of labour in it. These works [were]...opened on the 4\textsuperscript{th} February 1859, since which they have gained a world-wide renown. About 600 hands are employed in a general way.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57} Victoria County Histories, A History of Lincolnshire (London 1906), 395.
\textsuperscript{58} Crouzet, The Victorian Economy, 61.
\textsuperscript{59} Saul, ‘The engineering industry’, 186-7.
\textsuperscript{60} Pollard, Britain’s Prime, 20.
\textsuperscript{61} Everitt, Landscape and Community, 31.
\textsuperscript{62} D. G. Cary Elwes, Bedford and its Neighbourhood: Notes on Objects of Interest (Bedford, 1881), 68.
The building itself was described as ‘...one of the most interesting objects of the neighbourhood. The style of architecture is Italian, and the entire structure is, perhaps, one of the most handsome and complete in the kingdom.’

In addition to the visual impact of the works buildings, continued expansion could consume significant areas of urban space, changing the familiar geography of the town. In Shrewsbury, for example, Thomas Corbett’s Perseverance Ironworks expanded and ‘...during the 1870s and 80s gradually destroyed the tightly-packed courts of houses in Castle Foregate, which were amongst the most squalid dwellings in the town in the middle of the century’. The growing diversity of products, and the increasing vertical integration of processes on site in the iron industry in particular, resulted in a multiplication of buildings, including offices, support workshops and even stables. The central areas of county towns, often a rambling arrangement of yards, lanes, workshops, courtyards and passages were consumed and constrained by the rational and exclusive walled spaces of the ‘works’. These new works sectioned off large areas of town space reorganizing the inhabitant’s landscape and daily routes across the urban space. In the case of Robey and Co in Lincoln ‘the area covered by workshops [was] over 10 acres’ by the Edwardian period. Due to this growth, the tight confines of the central districts of county towns often necessitated the relocation of the production process in the later decades of the century. In York, Rowntrees employed only around 100 workers producing confectionery in 1880 but by 1904 had expanded to 2,945 employees on a new site a mile and a half outside the city centre.

The scale of the Rowntree operation in York provides an example of a company in another sector, food processing, successfully implementing economies of scale in the county towns at this time. Modern industrial buildings changed the urban space and also introduced new materials and building designs into the county town, including iron framed buildings and workshops influenced by railway design. These plants

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63 Kellys Bedfordshire Directory 1885 (London, 1885), 75.
66 Victoria County History, Lincolnshire, 395.
introduced previously unknown levels of technology to the county town and often pioneered the use of steam, mechanisation, electricity or gas. In Ipswich, Ransome's foundry had used gas lighting at their premises as early as 1818 and later relocated to a quayside near the gasworks.\textsuperscript{68} As the scale of manufacturing employment grew in the county town new streets were developed to house workers. These areas often possessed a unique social tone, more in keeping with a heavily industrialised area than the previously mixed county town environment. One middle class resident of Bedford claimed:

The death-knell of 'old' Bedford began to toll when, about 1892, Mr. W.H. Allen brought his engineering works down from London. Huge buildings and workshops made their appearance and an alien population took possession of the district known as Queen's Park.\textsuperscript{69}

The older streets in Lincoln and Bedford contained buildings of mixed functions, ages, and styles, frontages were irregular and diverse. By contrast the new streets were monotonous in their regularity. One member of the 'alien population' remembered the drabness of the area: '...with its mean little corner shops, its brick walls decorated with enamel or paper advertisements...'.\textsuperscript{70} Queen's Park was virtually a company suburb, the grid-like roads were almost exclusively occupied by Allen's employees at the Queen's Engineering Works and many occupants rented accommodation from more skilled or affluent co-workers.\textsuperscript{71}

Queen's Park was developed on open land on the very periphery of the town, in contrast Lincoln's industrial residential quarter was close to the 'down-hill' central area. The newly developed area of St Swithin's was located opposite the drained marshy land that housed the railway and the new foundries. Also known as Stamp End, the streets were separated from the foundry area by the River Witham and the works were accessed by footbridges. This development was the result of in-filling and the tight boundaries resulted in high density brick terraces climbing up hill. The

\textsuperscript{68} Bishop, History of Ipswich, 121-122.
\textsuperscript{69} C.D. Linnell, 'Late Victorian Bedford', Bedfordshire Magazine, Vol. 7 (Luton, 1961), 83.
\textsuperscript{70} L.H. Poole, Bedford Before I Forget, or: Unwittingly in receipt of Sir William's Charity (Bedford, 1987), 17.
\textsuperscript{71} Poole, Bedford Before I Forget, 18.
combination of redbrick housing interspersed with elementary schools and Wesleyan chapels very clearly signalled a new type of class-segregated industrial urban environment and, possibly, a new type of urban proletariat for the county town.\textsuperscript{72}

The new suburban developments provided physical evidence of the demand the ironworks created for labour on a scale unprecedented in the county town. The five major foundries in Lincoln employed around a thousand men in the early 1860s, by 1885, this number had risen to 5,000. The Ipswich agricultural machinery makers Ransomes employed in one in seven of local working men by 1851.\textsuperscript{73}

**Life at work**

Within the foundry or factory space the experience of work in the county town was also changing. R.J. Morris has described the ‘Works’ as ‘an enclosed semi-private space’.\textsuperscript{74} It was distinct from its surroundings with the high brick boundary walls and fixed working hours separating workers from the street and from town life. In urban industrial centres the rhythm of factory routine and mill shifts could dominate urban life and provide a single daily ‘beat’ but in the county town ancient and seasonal rhythms of work survived alongside that of the factory. The employees in the works were divorced from the rhythm of this urban life - from busy assize and market days, ‘St Monday’ or sluggish periods caused by bad weather or agricultural depression in the town’s hinterland - in a way that their predecessors in the courtyard and city centre workshops had never experienced. Work time and town time were becoming detached from each other. The enclosed environment of the foundry was impermeable to the outsider or the casual labourer; employment was a matter of getting across the boundary. Even in the early twentieth century in Lincoln this could be an informal but tense process:

\begin{quote}
If you wanted a job you hung about on the bridge early in the morning.... You would sidle up to the foreman and talk to him as he walked from the bridge to the works' entrance. According to his mood or need he would tell you to go to hell or ask what your trade qualifications were. If he wanted hands, and you suited him, he might take you on straight away.'\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} I am grateful to Dr Dennis Mills for showing me around the remaining part of this development and sharing his knowledge of Victorian Lincoln.

\textsuperscript{73} Bishop, *History of Ipswich*, 121-122.

\textsuperscript{74} Morris, "The industrial town", 191.

\textsuperscript{75} Quoted in B. Newman, *One Hundred Years of Good Company: The Story of Ruston and Hornsby* (Northumberland Press, 1957), 40.
Large firms with enclosed premises spawned their own rules and regulations, life and culture; they were within, yet apart from, the town and offered an alternative local identity within the county town. This sometimes took over civic identity. Sport was one such example, and in Ipswich, the local football team was known as 'the tractor boys' long after the decline of the agricultural machinery foundry from which they had originated. In Lincoln the foundries had their own cricket and football teams. In addition, the works held other sporadic leisure events such as works outings, picnics and celebrations.

Most of the labour for these extensive plants came from the county town hinterland. The development of the large-scale foundries went hand-in-hand with major population growth in the towns. This was particularly marked in Lincoln where the 1871 census suggested: 'The increase in the population of the city of Lincoln is mainly attributable to the extension of the iron manufactures'. Immigration was also fuelled by the agricultural depression in the surrounding countryside although the significance of the push and pull factors in Lincoln's growth is a matter of debate. Hill attributes the temporary decline in population growth in the town in the 1880s entirely to an industrial depression, suggesting that 'pull' factors were more important in Lincoln's growth than 'push' ones. This is probable as the agricultural depression was not as pronounced in Lincolnshire as elsewhere and had a later impact on this region than in others.

In Lincoln wages in the iron foundries were based on agricultural wages with foundry wages being slightly higher. This strong relationship between the two industries reflected the close proximity between the county town and its hinterland. While skilled workers such as fitters and pattern makers earned between 26 and 30 shillings a week in 1886, the labour aristocrats, moulders, boilermakers and blacksmiths earned up to 34 shillings. The unskilled or semi-skilled labourers earned only between 18 and 19 shillings a week. These were good wages compared to Lincolnshire agricultural wages in the previous year of 13/6 in summer falling to 12

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77 LA., Lincolnshire Chronicle, 23rd September 1889.
78 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 290.
shillings in December. Agricultural wages also experienced downward pressure in
the Lincolnshire countryside and had fallen continuously from a summer high of 18
shillings a week in 1872 at the onset of the agricultural depression. Lincoln’s iron
foundry labourers were better off than their rural contemporaries in the 1880s, but
not substantially better off than their farm labourer fathers were a decade or two
earlier. Nor were foundry wages always reliable, although more constant than rural
wages. Foundry workers were often subjected to short-time working, particularly in
trade depressions or during the winter when transport problems could impact on
production. This suggests that there were significant ‘push’ factors in rural
Lincolnshire encouraging people into the towns. The majority of Lincoln’s
immigrants came from within the county, with others from the neighbouring counties
of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. There is evidence that young men who came into
Lincoln for the agricultural hiring fair did not always return to the land: ‘some of the
farm lads came to Ruston’s instead’. These immigrants were overwhelmingly
working class and many rural skills were usefully employed in Lincoln’s
manufacturing industries which were heavy and labour intensive. The relationship
between foundry and agricultural wages apparent in Lincoln reveals the close
connection between the development of manufacturing in the late Victorian county
town and its hinterland. The county town manufacturing sector developed within the
framework of the regional agricultural economy and was dependent upon the
hinterland for labour supply.

In Bedford the growing availability of skilled labour combined with proximity to
London attracted other engineering firms to the town. By the turn of the century
Howards’ Britannia Works had been joined by Grafton and Co.’s Vulcan Works
(1886) and Allen’s Queen’s Engineering Works. In 1905, Adams’ Manufacturing
Company brought automobile engineering to Bedford. In addition there was the
Bedford Engineering Company and E. Page and Company who manufactured brick,
pipe and tile machinery along with the obligatory agricultural implements.

80 Victoria County History, Lincolnshire, 354.
81 Ibid., 353.
82 Quoted in Newman, One Hundred Years, 40.
The diversity of manufacturing in the county town

Historians have emphasized the continuance of this workshop tradition of manufacturing in Britain throughout the second half of the nineteenth century both outside, and more recently within, the larger industrial and metropolitan urban areas.\textsuperscript{83} This was true of the county town despite the rise of large-scale modern industry. In Bedford 91 ‘Master’ tradesmen were listed in the 1881 census along with 31 ‘Journeymen’ in different trades. Many of these were involved in manufacturing, particularly in producing luxury consumer products such as the 35 cabinetmakers, 19 watchmakers and 3 clockmakers.\textsuperscript{84}

Despite the dominance of the iron engineering industry in Lincoln, other manufacturing activities also expanded during this period. By the 1880s, White’s Directory noted that, in addition to the iron foundries: ‘...much business is done at Lincoln in corn, coal &c.; and there is a chemical manure manufactory, &c., and many large malthouses, corn mills, breweries and tanneries.’\textsuperscript{85} Manufacturing employers of this type included Doughty and Son (seed, crushers, merchants and oil cake manufacturers), William Singleton (rope and cover maker), Cannon and Co. (leather dressers and glue manufacturers) and Jekyll, Glaisier and Pratt (Chemical manufacturers). These are the type of processing and agriculture-related industries we might expect to find in any town which acted as a central place for a rural hinterland.

The changing character of the manufacturing sector also illustrates the increasingly gendered nature of work in the county town. Employment in large-scale plants and the factory system was almost exclusively male in both towns. The more ‘traditional’ handicraft and home-based manufacturing became ‘ghettoised’ as women’s work, low paid and only suitable as a secondary source of household income. This trend was clearly visible in late Victorian Bedford. In Bedford, the proportion of working women occupied in manufacturing declined dramatically across the period. In the mid-Victorian era Bedford women involved in


\textsuperscript{84} Census of England and Wales 1881, CD Rom, The Data Archive, (University of Essex, 2001).

\textsuperscript{85} White’s Directory of Lincolnshire 1882 (London, 1882), 498.
manufacturing worked as milliners or in traditional handicraft piecework-based production, making either straw-plait or lace.

Graph 5

**Women in manufacturing, Bedford and Lincoln 1851-1911**

(\% of employed females)

Lace-making was an outwork industry paid by piece rates which was well established in Bedford by the eighteenth century when Arthur Young recorded: ‘The town of Bedford is noted for nothing but its lace manufactory…’  

86 Many Victorian visitors mentioned lace-making in connection with Bedford including Queen Victoria who ‘Bought some very pretty Bedfordshire lace’ on a visit in 1841.  

87 From the mid-nineteenth century, lace-making declined in Bedford itself, and by 1862 a local directory listed only three lace dealers/manufacturers. Although the 1871 Census recorded 249 women employed in lace in the town, girls in the surrounding rural villages manufactured the majority of lace.  

88 The industry declined further as Nottingham mechanised its lace industry from 1840 onwards and the variety of lace made in Bedfordshire narrowed, and piece-rates fell. Another traditional female

manufacturing occupation was the production of straw-plait for hat making.\textsuperscript{89} The chief employments of women and girls in this county are lace-making and straw plaiting.\textsuperscript{90} Straw-plait production had many aspects in common with lace-making. Again this was a form of out-work for which women were paid by the length through middlemen. Straw-plait also declined in Bedford from the mid-century with the growth of Luton and the centralisation of hat production in that town. The straw-plait trade declined in Bedford to the point where the specialist straw plait market moved entirely to Luton. By 1911, only 15 women were recorded in the census as straw plaiters in Bedford while 6,972 were similarly employed in Luton.\textsuperscript{91}

The local decline of these two, essentially cottage handicraft industries accounts for the dramatic fall in women’s employment in the manufacturing sector in Bedford after 1891. Few new industrial opportunities replaced them although the development and growth of alternative employment in other sectors offset this, most significantly expansion in the dealing and professional and public services. A recovery was beginning by the eve of the Great War; a Bedford directory of 1910 listed twenty-eight manufacturers. Ten of these were involved in producing agricultural implements or in engineering, of the rest, five were brewers and two were boat builders. These activities would have offered limited work for women who were beginning to find employment manufacturing new engineering products such as electrical apparatus. Lighter manufacturers such as the two umbrella makers, a bicycle works and a firm producing artificial teeth provided the possibility of some further female employment. These types of consumer-orientated manufacturing activity possibly resulted from Bedford’s relatively short distance from the demands of the metropolitan market\textsuperscript{92} as well as from local middle class demand. They hint at the lighter type of industries, which developed in the town later in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{flushleft}
90 PP, \textit{Agriculture} (IUP Vol. 10), 501.
92 N.D. Raven, ‘Manufacturing and trades: the urban economies of the north Essex cloth towns c. 1770-1851’ unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Leicester 1998 discusses the early development of consumer manufacturing in towns with good communications to London markets. P. Clark and L. Murfin (eds), \textit{The History of Maidstone: The History of a Modern County Town} (Maidstone, 1996) considers a later example of this development.
\end{flushleft}
Central place processing and manufacturing continued in county towns alongside newer industries. Many of these ‘traditional’ activities continued to expand and to find markets outside the immediate hinterland. Brewing was a good example of a traditional agricultural manufacturing process in these towns. In the late nineteenth-century brewing companies became more formal, larger-scale and began to be actively involved in controlling the retail of their product. The Charles Wells Brewery in Bedford purchased 35 licensed houses in 1876 and in 1910 the brewery became a limited liability company. Dawbar and Co. in Lincoln were also expanding and owned 50 tied houses when the company was taken over in 1905. In Lincoln and Bedford the change of scale came in the train of engineering development; other industries evolved similar economies of scale and large premises. The Charles Wells Brewery in Home Lane, Bedford, for example, was rebuilt in 1877 when the old premises proved too small for expanding production. This site used modern industrial building design and was further extended during the 1880s and 1890s.\footnote{L. Richmond and A. Turton (eds), \textit{The Brewing Industry: A Guide to Historical Records} (Manchester 1990), 358.} The rebuilding and expansion of the county town breweries suggests that older, smaller manufacturing industries had learned the lessons of scale and technology from the newer industries and were arguably more constrained physically than some new manufacturing forms. The new brewery plants in the county towns ‘contained the latest machinery often fitted by one of the leading brewing engineering firms...’\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 13.}

In Lincoln manufacturing continued to offer significant employment opportunities to both women and men well into the twentieth century. Here women were employed in a diverse range of modern manufacturing occupations including making implements and electrical apparatus, food processing and working in chemicals. Again some of these activities were the precursors of Lincoln’s twentieth century industries. Despite the growth of new opportunities ‘traditional’ skilled manufacturing activities such as dressmaking and millinery remained significant sources of female income throughout the period 1860 - 1910.

\textbf{Markets}

Just as county town crafts and industries had found new regional markets from the late eighteenth century, new manufacturers sought fresh worldwide markets after
1850. With the exception of admiralty or government contracts there were no formal systems in the late Victorian period for finding new markets for products. Individual companies had to promote their own products at home and abroad both within and outside of the Empire. County town firms demonstrated dynamism in both the development of products and in seeking markets. Saul argues that the agricultural machine foundries of the east of England, including Ransomes of Ipswich and both Clayton and Shuttleworth and Rustons of Lincoln, ‘...dominated world trade in their particular types of agricultural machinery right up to 1914.’ They achieved this by ‘a combination of well equipped works, vigorous selling methods with representation in all the major centres, extensive agencies elsewhere, sophisticated credit arrangements and willingness to adapt machinery to local conditions.’

Despite the fact that the initial impetus for industrial development had come from the surrounding agricultural industry, Lincoln manufacturers were not parochial in their approach to marketing. Markets for the agricultural machines were pushed outwards from the Lincolnshire wolds so successfully that Lincoln agricultural engineering products were in demand in all intensively farmed areas including the grain basket of Europe. Between 80 and 90% of Ruston’s engineering products were produced for the export market. Lincoln firms had branches in Hull, Liverpool and London, and all the major foundries had agents and sales offices throughout Europe. Robey and Co. established offices in Paris, Berlin, Breslau, Prague and Pest, Clayton and Shuttleworth in Prague, Krakow, Pest, Bucharest, Vienna and Odessa, Ruston and Proctor in Milan and in Pest where Foster also had a branch. There was a deliberate targeting of the grain producing areas and later, by the turn of the century, Lincoln firms were trying to sell products in South America. Lincoln companies did not have functioning imperial links, nor did they seem to seek actively to market their products within the British Empire but instead set up their own extra-imperial international networks, often based on personal contacts.

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97 Newman, One Hundred Years, 30.
99 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 112-3.
In Bedford, Howard’s continued to make ploughs, engines and implements to individual orders as well as patenting their most popular products which were widespread throughout England and Scotland. The Britannia Works displayed models which had been adapted for agriculture in the Cape, Southern Russia, South America, Spain and Turkey.\(^\text{100}\) Howard’s relied heavily upon the patronage of the Duke of Bedford who used their equipment on his estates and on demonstrating their products at agricultural shows, exhibitions and steam ploughing contests.\(^\text{101}\) The Empire also provided a source of potential markets. The Queen’s Engineering Works began exporting from Bedford in 1894. They produced pumps and electrical machinery, supplying the admiralty, other naval markets and colonial regions, particularly Egypt.\(^\text{102}\) While larger manufacturers connected county town production to the wider world markets smaller-scale manufacturers often continued to produce for a mainly local or regional market. In Bedford at the end of the nineteenth century there still existed a small foundry in the town centre which produced items as small as pots and pans for sale locally. As a result of manufacturing development, after 1850 county towns developed new markets beyond their traditional hinterlands and national boundaries. Some towns such as Bedford were able to tap into the extensive imperial market but others including Lincoln showed dynamism and confidence in sourcing new demand in extra-imperial territory. By 1910, manufactured products were spread throughout the world carrying the names and reputations of English county towns with them.

Before the 1850s the ancient shire centres, the county towns of the eighteenth century had provided a varied central role to a mainly agricultural hinterland, offering general economic and leisure functions. As these towns lost regional prestige and status they became more vulnerable to the influences of national markets and imperial and world trade, whether in goods or in the movements of individuals. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards even the ‘quieter’ traditional county towns identified by the Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840) sought wider markets for their goods and services. Specialist manufacturing developed after the ‘classic period’ of industrialisation demonstrated the adaptability of the county town to adjust from its traditional roles to new national and economic

\(^\text{100}\) Anon, A Visit to Bedford.
\(^\text{101}\) H. Bonnett, Saga of the Steam Plough (Newton Abbot, 1972), 48.
\(^\text{102}\) Lane, The Story of Queen’s Engineering Works, 19.
imperatives. The manufacturing sector enabled the county town to reposition itself adapting from the role of regional supplier to a producer which could supply a specialised demand sometimes throughout the world.

**The county town economy**

Between 1860 and 1910 the county town economy became more complex. The mid-century administrative, professional and marketing centre had contained some handicraft and workshop manufacturing for at least a hundred years. From the 1850s onwards this mixture was gradually superseded by large scale and factory based manufacturing. Employment in the different manufacturing sectors became highly gendered. The new manufacturing in the county town was narrowly defined; plants were highly integrated and produced tightly targeted products. Alongside this 'modern' industry county towns accommodated a continuance of workshop-based informal production, generally for local consumers, and below this in scale, a remnant of home-based, handicraft piecework manufacturing, which was increasingly 'sweated' in nature and usually confined to female workers. Overall the manufacturing sector was a significant and important employer in late Victorian county towns for inhabitants of both genders— even in those towns which were not apparently 'industrial' in character.

In the mid-nineteenth century, county towns had possessed certain 'invisible' infrastructural advantages, which enabled them to adapt and meet the manufacturing challenge over the following sixty years. A high level of industrial and commercial services was a necessary component of a successful town or city in the modern industrial economy. The industrial service sector comprised the finance-related occupations including bankers, accountants, insurance agents and bill discounters, which enabled commerce to function.103 These services extended credit and capital locally and integrated the local economy into a larger national one. The traditional urban central service role of the county town had developed and supported a wide range of commercial services and many of the customers for these continued to be drawn from the surrounding agricultural hinterlands. The relative isolation of county towns from major urban networks provided a trading advantage in this sector.

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103 Armstrong, 'The use of information of occupation'.
County towns had established sophisticated networks and institutions for raising and managing capital in the eighteenth century. In county towns key traders, particularly merchants including grain merchants and drapers, provided cash nexus in the urban environment which developed into a more complex financial services sector.\textsuperscript{104}

The level and sophistication of industrial services in a particular urban area indicated the diversity of commercial activity. The growth of the industrial services sector between 1851 and 1910 reveals the development of an increasing pattern of economic complexity, regularity and formality in fiscal matters in Bedford and Lincoln at this time, whether in personal or commercial business.

**Graph 6**

Graph 6 illustrates the proportion of the population solely or mainly occupied in the industrial services sector according to the census returns. Directories show that during this period individuals whose main occupation belonged to another sector (for example merchants) often undertook some financial services, particularly insurance provision. This could indicate that there was a higher level, or a more diverse range, of industrial services available than is easily apparent from the census returns. In Lincoln, for example, many of the corn merchants also acted as agents for national

\textsuperscript{104} J. Smith, ‘Economic and Social Change in East Midlands County Towns, 1750-1820’, unpublished
insurance companies although their main occupation would have been returned under the dealing sector. The development of industrial services as single income sources in Lincoln were possibly inhibited, or compensated for, by a tradition of sourcing capital and credit through family and business networks from the late eighteenth century onwards particularly through local attorneys. Further retardation of this specialisation in Lincoln could have been caused by the fact that the products of the foundries were generally exported by individual companies directly to their own branches and agents in Europe or further afield. The paucity of industrial services is illustrated by the directory listings; five Lincoln accountants appear in White’s 1872 directory and only four are listed in the 1882 edition, along with just three banks. In contrast the Bedford industrial services sector grew from a banking base dominated by a few families into a small but modern financial services sector; those listed as insurance agents in Bedford directories were more likely to have this as their primary or sole occupation than in Lincoln for example.

It seems possible that during this period the development of the industrial services sector in these county towns was influenced more strongly by the changes in class structure than by changes in industrial activity. The increasing dominance of a middle-class with private incomes in Bedford (see chapter two) meant that there was a pronounced demand for lawyers, bankers and insurance agents to administer and protect these incomes, and growth and specialisation took place accordingly. This suggests that the industrial services in the county town expanded in response to the needs of the middle class for personal capital and financial management as opposed to industrial requirements. Despite this, the presence of sophisticated financial services must have eased the process of developing large-scale plant in the county town, making the access to ready cash for wages and clearing bills and to cheques for sale and export easier. This is particularly significant in comparison to the difficulties experienced in some newer industrial areas where such professional services were often supplied from outside. In Oldham and Rochdale, for example, there were "...slender mercantile and professional sectors. It was Manchester where the lawyers, accountants, bankers, brokers, dealers, commercial clerks, salesmen and

PhD research, University of Leicester, 2001.

travellers mostly concentrated',\textsuperscript{107} while the industries of the Rhondda were supplied with banking services from as far away as Banbury.\textsuperscript{108}

By the end of the nineteenth century the new large-scale modern manufacturing industries of Bedford and Lincoln were well established but structurally exposed, due to the dependence which had developed alongside the growth of specialisation. Manufacturing industries in the county towns around London such as Bedford, Reading and Maidstone were not as economically vulnerable as those in isolated centres like Lincoln.\textsuperscript{109} As the twentieth century progressed, county towns within the London orbit were quicker to adjust to lighter production and gained from better access to the consumer market. This was a result of manufacturing diversity, which arose from location; the demand for consumer goods in the metropolis and its satellite residential centres supported the expansion of consumer-orientated and high technology production. In early Edwardian Bedford manufacturing activity remained divided between 'traditional' and skilled crafts such as brewing, boat building and clock making and factory based industries such as agricultural engineering, electrical engineering and car and bicycle manufacturing. These activities provided an economic evolution between the mid-Victorian market town of Bedford and the modern, metropolitan satellite that it would become by 1920. However the manufacturing sector did not dictate the overall economic, social or physical character of Bedford which was always more 'respectable' and leisured rather than 'industrial'.

To a certain extent, such developments resulted in a county town economy which was a reflection, and a functioning part, of the urban industrial national economy that had developed by the early twentieth century. Table 3 shows some of the major occupational sectors in county towns and 'industrial' towns in 1911. The ancient county towns (in italics) are compared with the 'new' county centre and textile town of Preston and the manufacturing centre of Stockport on the northern industrial belt and with the metalworking town of Wolverhampton in the Black Country.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{106} W. White, \textit{White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1872} (Sheffield, 1872); \textit{White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882} (Sheffield, 1882).
\bibitem{107} Waller, \textit{Town, City and Nation}, 90.
\bibitem{108} Trinder, \textit{Victorian Banbury} (Banbury, 1982), 26.
\bibitem{109} P. Clark and L. Murfin (eds), \textit{The History of Maidstone: The History of a Modern County Town} (Maidstone, 1996).
\end{thebibliography}
Differences of scale in the male population are immediately apparent, with only Northampton, among the county towns, reaching a male population of anywhere near industrial size. This reflects the growth produced by shoe manufacturing in Northampton, a process that had become highly intensive and factory based by this time. 110 Perhaps more surprising is the similar nature of the employment structure in 'county' and 'industrial' economies in the early twentieth century. Apart from the appearance of obvious economic specialisms such as the high levels of men employed in engineering in Bedford and Lincoln and textile manufacture in Preston, other areas of employment remained consistent. Approximately the same proportion of the population was required in the building industry in all towns and, outside specialist engineering centres, general engineering was a growing part of all urban male employment by 1911. County towns still offered more employment opportunities for unskilled male labourers than other towns but it is reasonable to suppose that some of this work was seasonal and would possibly be lower paid than the equivalent work in more developed industrial towns.

By 1911, county towns had a fully 'modernized' economy, with highly developed specialist manufacturing employment. There is no evidence that the county town economy continued to lag behind those of other urban areas, such as mill towns or metalworking centres. The differences between the economies of the county town and industrial town by 1911 were differences of scale and degree; county towns contained more professionals, more visible and bureaucratic local administration, more white-collar employees. These differences of degree, produced a very different urban environment in the county town.

Across the nineteenth century economic development in the county town followed a different timetable to that of other urban areas. While there can be general agreement about when the major phases of urban and industrial development occurred in the nineteenth century, locational problems, local conditions or specific developments could buck the general trends. As the example of Lincoln shows individual communities experienced change in unique ways; industrialisation, urbanization and modernization were very ragged processes and could produce highly localized effects. The time lag in mechanizing some industries could result in

110 Brown, Northampton 1835-1985, 70.
competitive disadvantage or in a rigidity of specialisation which had a potential for rapid obsolescence nevertheless; manufacturing and factory based production were important components of the county town economy in the late Victorian period.
Table 4
Occupations of males in county towns and industrial centres in 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Preston</th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
<th>Northampton</th>
<th>Wolverhampton</th>
<th>Stockport</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Worcester</th>
<th>Bedford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired/unoccupied</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General/local</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General engineering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood/furniture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile manufacture</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory/general labourers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Males</td>
<td>42,084</td>
<td>23,021</td>
<td>34,472</td>
<td>36,167</td>
<td>40,206</td>
<td>28,819</td>
<td>17,586</td>
<td>13,989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure to nearest single percentage of total male population aged 10 years and over according to the Census 1911,
(Census definitions of employment categories are used here)
Chapter Four

The Impact of the County Town Professional

Research in urban history has demonstrated how occupational structures influenced the economic, social and physical development of particular urban areas. The previous chapter demonstrated the important role of one major employment sector, that of manufacturing, in county town adaptation and growth between 1860 and 1910. This chapter considers the impact of a single occupational and status group who were influential in shaping the individual characters and social tone of county towns. In the late Victorian county town professionals, both male and female, comprised an important ingredient in the unique nature of the urban genre. County towns attracted and supported a higher level of both ‘traditional’ professions such as clergy and army officers and newly professionalised occupations, for example teachers, accountants, sanitary officers and nurses, than other types of urban settlement. The presence of professional inhabitants was disproportionate to the scale of the county town urban settlement and was further compounded by a local influence disproportionate to their actual numbers.

Professionals were becoming increasingly important in nineteenth century society. They ‘came into their own during the reign of Victoria. They grew numerous and distinct enough to be considered a class, or more strictly speaking, a subclass, with an influence on English opinion and culture far out of proportion to its size’. For the purposes of this study the wider definition of the ‘professional’ sector is used which also includes those employed in public service. This definition includes both those who worked in the ‘established’ professions such as the Church, the army or navy, legal and medical fields, and, those in the newly established or recently recognized

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5 Armstrong's definition of 'Professional and public service' employees is used. This classification is broadly based on Booth's definition of this sector, termed simply 'professionals'. See W.A.
professions such as teachers, journalists, and dentists, in addition to those employed
in the public service area including local government officers and sanitary
engineers.⁶

The Urban Professional

As urbanisation progressed so professionals made a significant contribution to urban
life.⁷ Borsay argues that the growing presence of these individuals in towns played
an essential role in the eighteenth century urban renaissance,⁸ while in the nineteenth
century the growth of urban areas requiring greater levels of administration,
combined with the dense concentrations of population created a new level of demand
for professional knowledge and services. The process of urbanisation and the
presence and growth of professions were tightly linked. Professional occupational
groupings became increasingly defined and formalised, while new or subsidiary
occupations became professionalised.⁹

Who were the professionals and how did their role change as urbanisation
proceeded? Gourvish notes that there are ‘many problems inherent in defining the
term “profession” and in measuring the extent of professional development.’¹⁰
Establishing the overall level of professionals in society in the late Victorian period
is further complicated by this ‘moving frontier’ of professionalised occupations. The
period between 1860 and 1900 was a pivotal time for professional groups.¹¹ Reader
calculated professionals (including teachers) as comprising 0.7% of the population in
1841 rising to 1.2% in 1881 and to 1.3% in 1911.¹² While Gourvish has estimated
that the level of professionals in late Victorian Britain ‘...as a percentage of the
occupied population...increased from about 2.5 per cent of the total in 1860 to 4.0

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Armstrong in E.A. Wrigley, ed., Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative
⁶ 'New' occupations were becoming recognized implicitly by society's acceptance of self-regulation,
professional qualifications and restricted practices and explicitly by government in moves such as
licensing and inclusion in the 'Professional' category of census occupations. For a discussion of this
see T.R. Gourvish, 'The rise of the professions' in T.R. Gourvish and A. O'Day (eds), Later Victorian
⁷ Corfield, Power and the Professions, 214.
⁸ P. Borsay, The English Urban Renaissance, Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770
⁹ Gourvish, 'The rise of the professions' 13-36. See also Reader, Professional Men and Perkin, The
Rise of Professional Society.
¹¹ Ibid., 33.
¹² Reader, Professional Men, 211.
Per cent in 1901. Perkin produces a lower figure for the nineteenth century but calculates ‘By 1911, if we add the lesser professionals and technicians to the higher ones, the professions were 4.1 per cent of the occupied population, not much short of the 4.6 per cent who were “employers” in the census of industrial status...’.

Estimates of the levels of professionals in late Victorian society depend upon the occupations that are included. In the period 1860-1911 increasing numbers of traditional and new jobs were professionalised or were making claims towards professional recognition. The late-Victorian period was ‘...the moment of the professional classes’ final acceptance and establishment...’ The social standing, stability and actual numbers of professionals grew across this period, while their education, training, status and organisation became ever more established and more accepted by, and incorporated into, the establishment.

The growth of professional employment opportunities together with their subsidiary and support occupations in urban areas, from the mid-nineteenth century was, in part, a direct result of government policy. The provision of state, legal and professional services expanded dramatically in the late nineteenth century. The state encouraged the growth of the urban professions in this period in three ways; firstly by recognising and legitimating old and new professions. The legal and medical professions reorganised and formalised their structures internally but other professions such as teaching were professionalised, expanded and strengthened as a direct result of public social policies and legislation. Secondly, the state encouraged professional growth by developing a bureaucratic government machine. New urban occupations and professions such as sanitary engineers, local government officers and inspectors developed from public employment. Thirdly, professional growth was encouraged and reinforced by the state focus on the institution as a form of management for a variety of social needs. The increasing scale and scope of prisons, poor law union workhouses, hospitals, schools, training and technical colleges, museums, galleries and even town halls all supported the employment of

15 Reader, Professional Men, 146.
16 Gourvish, ‘The Rise of the Professions’.
19 Waller, Town, City and Nation, 281-88.
professionals. These institutions also created opportunities for professional support and auxiliary staff and expanded their activities and reinforced their own ambitions and claims to professional status. The growth of both professional services and professional occupations was a direct result of government endorsement. These developments occurred in all urban areas but their impact was greater in county towns where a small concentration of limited professional occupations had been well established before the industrial revolution.20

**Professionals in the county town**

The presence of professionals in the county town has been linked to the county towns’ roles as gentry and leisure centres in the eighteenth century.21 County towns continued to grow as professional centres throughout the nineteenth century, even after their roles as gentry centres had declined. Professional services were no longer simply dependent upon gentry custom in the nineteenth century but provided an important part of the county town’s urban function. In 1841, Armstrong found unusually high levels of professionals in York compared to industrial towns and a ratio of doctors to patients which was ‘far above the national average’.22 County towns were recognised as professional service centres and the presence of this occupational group gave county towns another distinct urban characteristic.

Bedford and Lincoln were prime examples of towns where the presence of professional inhabitants made a substantial difference to the local economic and social life. Both towns sustained higher-than-average percentages of professional residents. The proportion of men occupied in the professions or in the public services (here termed ‘professionals’) in Bedford never fell below 7% of the male population from a high of 12.17% in 1851.23 In Lincoln, professional men formed 8.74% of occupied males in 1851 and 6.43% in 1911. Their relative numerical strength meant that professionals occupied a strong position in the county town

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23 These figures are taken from analysis of the occupational information in the census returns of 1851-1911 using W.A. Armstrong’s system as described in ‘The use of information of occupation’, in E.A. Wrigley, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Society*. See also above, chapter three.
environment. They formed a significant portion of male middle class rate-paying household heads and as such had a significant cultural and ideological impact on county town development.

**Graph 7**

**Professional Employment: Bedford and Lincoln 1851-1911**

(as a % of occupied males)

![Graph](image)


In Bedford and Lincoln the proportion of professionals showed a surprising resilience across the period 1860 to 1910. Despite the growth of a large industrial workforce in Lincoln, the proportion of professionals in the employed population declined only gradually across a sixty year period, while in Bedford there was an initial decline in the proportion of professionals followed by a strong recovery at the turn of the century. Overall there was a very real increase in the numbers of men working in professional and public services in both towns.

**Urban professionals and urban typologies**

By the beginning of the twentieth century professionals were widely spread throughout all the different types of urban areas of Britain. Despite this, county towns continued to attract more professionals than other types of urban settlement. County towns remained more solidly middle class and maintained a significantly larger professional sector than more 'modern' industrial centres or larger Victorian

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24 Armstrong’s definition of ‘Professional and public service’ employees is used, see footnote 5.
cities. The 1911 census found higher proportions of professionals in the county towns of Worcester, Reading, Lincoln and Bedford than in dynamic industrial centres such as Preston, Wolverhampton and Stockport. There is some evidence that the newer industrial centres failed to support a professional sector. Hoppen argues that in the mid-Victorian period ‘...an inverse relationship seems to have existed between the extent of industrialisation and the numerical presence of a middle class: York and Hull... had more middle class citizens than Bradford and Wakefield’, 25 although the levels of industry in ‘non-industrial’ towns like York remain debatable. Hoppen argues that this inverse relationship is true for a broader middle class which is basically composed of the first two classes when the Victorian urban population is divided into five hierarchical social classes. These first two classes comprise the wider ‘inclusive’ middle class, while the first class contains only of ‘professional and similar occupations’. Hoppen’s argument is even more persuasive when the professional occupations which comprise (class I) are isolated.

In 1911, just over 1100 men enumerated in Bedford were listed as having occupations in the Census categories I, II or III, employed in general or local government, defence of the country or professional occupations and their subordinate services (similar to Hoppen’s class I) out of a total population of 40,000. Professional males formed 2.9% of the town’s population and 10.6% of the occupied male population in Bedford. In comparison, more industrialised Luton in the same county, with a population of around 50,000 had just 626 male inhabitants in these occupations (1.3% of the population). In Lincolnshire there was a similar concentration of professional men in the county town with 1,211 men occupied in census categories I-III (2.1% of the population and 6.1% of occupied males). Great Grimsby, a much larger urban centre in Lincolnshire with a population of almost 75,000 people was catching up as a professional centre. In Great Grimsby 2,065 men (2.8% of the population) were employed in the professions or public services, although over half of these were actually employed in defence and reflected the town’s role as a port. 26

As urbanisation and professional services were closely related the presence of professionals was higher than average in defined urban areas and higher again in larger or metropolitan urban areas. Richard Rodger’s work on employment in Victorian Scottish cities revealed high proportions of professionals in established cities such as Aberdeen and Edinburgh and lower proportions in industrial cities. Edinburgh provides a most interesting comparison with Bedford and Lincoln in relation to the professional occupational sector. ‘In late Victorian Edinburgh one in seven male workers was in the professional grouping...’ as a result of Edinburgh’s metropolitan role. The city acted as a judicial and administrative centre for a large region, an educational centre, and performed a gentry leisure role. This is the same collection of urban functions that are found in Victorian county towns. The differences are of scale and hegemony rather than of urban type. The level of professional inhabitants is one of the keys to understanding this urban type. In 1881, 12.5% of the employed male population of Edinburgh were professional men and ‘until 1911 some 12-15% of employment in Edinburgh was in the professions...’.

Given the differences in scale and the nature of Victorian Edinburgh it is surprising that there is not a greater disparity in the proportions of professional inhabitants between the county towns and a regional capital.

Table 5

Professional employment in selected towns 1871-1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Edinburgh</th>
<th>Bedford</th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population 1871</td>
<td>196,979</td>
<td>16,850</td>
<td>26,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional females %</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>7.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional males %</td>
<td>12.71</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 1911</td>
<td>293,491</td>
<td>39,183</td>
<td>57,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional females %</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>18.96</td>
<td>15.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional males %</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>10.69</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 Ibid., 84.
29 Ibid., 83.
30 Figures for Edinburgh from Rodger, ‘Employment, wages and poverty in the Scottish cities’, for information on the county towns see Graph 7 above.
Edinburgh was a centre for white collar and financial employment and an ancient seat of learning; it was recognised as a middle class metropolis. The level of professional employment was important to the economy of the city, as was the apparent stability of this sector over a forty-year period. The proportion of professional males in the workforce in Edinburgh was a third higher than in Bedford, and eventually, twice the size of the professional group in fully industrialised Lincoln. Taking into account the size of the area administered by Edinburgh and the importance of its university foundation, the significance of the levels of professionals in county towns becomes clear. The disproportionately high levels of professionals in the county towns were a reflection of urban function rather than of scale of settlement.

The figures for both Bedford and Lincoln represent census returns for defined municipal boroughs only and do not include certain suburbs (Lincoln) or developing surrounding villages (Bedford). On the whole professionals preferred to live within the county town boundary. This would suggest that compared to other urban centres the ancient county towns were preferred locations for professional residence. Further evidence to support this comes from Brian Preston's work on father and son occupation patterns. Preston found levels of professionals higher in county towns than industrial centres although slightly lower than in seaside residential towns. Taking samples from the 1871 census he found that in Hastings, a respectable resort and residential town, 13.3% of employed men and 4.3% of employed women were professionals compared to 7.7% of men and 6.9% of women in Lincoln. This was a substantially higher level of professional occupants than in the industrial centres of Coventry or Bolton where only around 4% of employed men and fewer than 3% of employed women worked in professional occupations. The level of professionals in county towns was comparable to that of seaside towns - another urban genre with a large 'residential sector' and consumer function. However, county towns may have provided a more stable professional environment than other urban types. Preston's research demonstrates the long-term stability of the professional group within the county town; examining father and son groups in Lincoln he found that

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31 M. Gorsky, 'Hospital provision before 1945', research paper read at the Centre for Urban History, Leicester, 1st December 2000.
while 7.7% of occupied males worked in the professional sector in 1871, almost 10% of sons in father-and-son families were occupied in this sector. This suggests that the professions were both a growth area for employment and regarded as a sound occupational choice for sons in established families. Preston also states that: 'occupational succession was not very noticeable' in the professional sector - only 4.3% of sons followed their father into a particular profession. The sons of professionals, unlike those of men employed in manufacturing or building, had wider career choices available to them.34

Why should the ancient county towns, former gentry and agricultural centres, attract and contain a bigger middle class and, more specifically, a higher level of professional people than larger cities or industrial towns as late as 1900? There are a number of factors which account for the high levels of professionals in county towns, perhaps the most obvious of which is the limited growth of these towns. In county towns the middle class and professional elements were not numerically overwhelmed by the influx of urban immigrants which formed the casual and semi-skilled workforces of the industrial centres.35 County towns required a fixed level of professionals to carry out their administrative function, and some professional occupations, such as that of county coroner, were not related to the scale of the urban settlement. These positions could be found in the same numbers in all county towns regardless of size. In addition the county institutions located in these towns also attracted and sustained professionals. Between 1860 and 1910 the county town not only offered employment and income opportunities to professionals in this period but the urban environment provided professional residents with the type of housing and lifestyle that they desired. County towns were both popular and profitable locations for professional men and women.

County town services
The traditional role of county towns had centred on the provision of state, legal and professional services in provincial areas.36 The expansion of state services had led to a concentration of permanently established professionals in provincial, and

34 Preston, 'Occupations of father and son', 33.
35 See chapter one for a definition of these urban centres.
36 See above chapter two.
particularly county, towns. While assizes, epidemics, wars and social seasons brought individuals to the courts, hospitals, poorhouses and barracks on a temporary basis, permanent support staff clustered around these institutions. County towns housed significant numbers of lawyers, doctors and army officers for nearly a century before urban growth took off. Where the county town was also a cathedral city, in Lincoln, Worcester and York, for example, these professionals were supported - and sometimes outnumbered - by members of the Church clergy. County towns had also acted as gentry leisure centres and this clientele, again often temporary, provided a demand and income for professional services.37

From the mid-nineteenth century the national increase in bureaucracy and the growth of education and health services in all urban areas meant that professional institutions and services were no longer unique to county towns and became part of urban function. However, the formal state recognition of professional occupations, combined with the emphasis on the importance of the central institution and the devolution of state power and administration through the county town, resulted in a unique situation. In county towns the relatively high level of government institutions such as prisons, poor law unions and schools compared with other urban areas expanded the existing concentration of professional urban residents. The demands and weight of these professionals also supported the development of professional-led services such as hospitals, colleges and architectural, financial and legal practices. This expanded the level of professional activity consistently. In short professionals created and attracted other professionals; an urban environment with a high level of professionals needed more professionals to service them creating an environment in which professionals formed a mutually reinforcing economic and social grouping.

The concentration of professional occupations in the late Victorian county town can be seen as a result of a type of state-sponsorship of urban development since the presence of this occupational group was directly linked to the urban and national status of the county town. This devolution of state services to urban areas and the privileged status of the county town above other urban settlements can be seen as early as 1808 when the County Asylum Act (48 George III) empowered county

towns to build asylums to provide a central amenity for the surrounding hinterland. Other permissive legislation which allowed privileges specific to the county town followed. This special urban status was further reinforced by the 1888 County Councils Act, which chose to focus on the county town as the locus for implementing government policy regionally. So the composition of the professional sector in the county town was closely linked to the urban function and social structure of a town. The concentration of professionals in the county town due to the levels of administrative and institutional employment in the period 1860 to 1910 provided a nucleus around which further professional growth formed. The professional presence was consolidated by the expansion of state bureaucracy and government services and a secondary demand for professional services and professional employment was then provided by the consumption patterns of professional-headed families.

Many county town professionals were directly or indirectly funded by public money; they were employed by central or local government or by government-funded institutions, or relied on providing services to other professionals thus employed. These services drew funding from the local economy but they also brought money into the boroughs from a variety of distances by attracting people, grants, endowments and government finance. Some smaller towns paid sums to county town institutions for providing specialist services which they were not able to offer to their own inhabitants. Saffron Walden, a small market town in north Essex, subscribed two guineas a year to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge for free treatment of paupers whom the town sent across the county border. Saffron Walden considered the expenditure to be of 'positive benefit to the parish' and this example shows how county town institutions such as Addenbrooke's composed their incomes from sources outside the borough and often from a multiplicity of modest sums, bringing finance into the county town and reinforcing its urban status.

In turn professional residents created a demand in the county town for further professional services and for informed and specialised support staff who sometimes became professionalised themselves. So Bedford and Lincoln supported exactly the

38 Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 246.
same proportion of legal professionals, indicating a presence closely linked to the county town administrative functions rather than the different economic bases of the towns. However other differences in the structure of the professional sectors in the two towns were more closely related to the expansion of urban specialisms.

**Graph 8 Professional and public sector employment in the county town:**
**Bedford and Lincoln, 1871**

![Graph showing professional and public sector employment in Bedford and Lincoln, 1871.](image)

Source: PP, *Census of England and Wales 1871, vol. II.*

One obvious difference between the two towns was the higher level of teachers and army and navy employees in Bedford. These two sectors were closely linked; Bedford had two thirds more teachers and twice as many army or naval officers as Lincoln due to the presence of the free schools and to Bedford’s growth as an educational and residential centre. The attraction of the schools for professional families was already a strong factor in Bedford in 1871, pre-dating the reform of the schools’ trust in 1873. Here the national role of Bedford as a particular type of residential town and specialist in educational provision is immediately apparent. The army and naval employees shown in Graph 8 were not retired but occupied and although Bedford did house a barracks the number of naval personnel suggests that most of those enumerated in Bedford were on leave. This would indicate that there
was a higher level of services households in the town that the census suggests as heads of household away in the army of navy would not appear in the census. Bedford also possessed a slightly more robust medical sector and there was also a marginally higher proportion of clergy than in Lincoln, a surprising result given that Lincoln was the Cathedral town. The explanation for this arises from the diversity of small non-conformist congregations in Bedford.\textsuperscript{40} The proportion of lawyers was the same in both towns reflecting their close relation to the administrative function of the county town and also suggesting that there was a fixed amount of work available for this profession in towns of this scale.

From the 1870s onwards, the public services and professions sector also began to employ significant numbers of working women in both towns. In fact, the proportion of women employed in this sector doubled in Lincoln between 1871 and 1911 and trebled in Bedford over the same period despite using a static definition of 'professional'.\textsuperscript{41} In Bedford, this development was fairly predictable as female education expanded in the wake of male educational provision as a result of state pressure, applied by the Taunton Commission to the Harpur Trust requiring a girl's high school, and through the commercial sector. Bedford was well supplied with mistresses of music, drawing and dancing, ladies' academies and, eventually, a female-staffed college for kindergarten teachers.\textsuperscript{42} The growth of the female professional sector in late Victorian Lincoln was more diverse than in Bedford. Here the largest group of professional women in 1911 was also comprised of teachers, followed by those employed as nurses and midwives and a much smaller group of musicians and music mistresses. This last occupational group was only slightly larger than the newly expanding sector of administrative employees reflecting the beginning of a rise in female office workers. It is worth noting that the status of these women, as well as their numbers, had substantially increased across the period and that female nurses and teachers were regarded as far more 'respectable' in 1911 than they were in 1871. Once again it can be seen that even in a town such as

\textsuperscript{40} P.L. Bell, Belief in Bedfordshire (Bedford, 1986), 100; M. F. Hopkinson, 'Economy and society in an English county town', Birkbeck College Occasional Papers (London, 1986), 53.

\textsuperscript{41} Armstrong's definition of 'Professional and public service' employees is used see W.A. Armstrong in E.A. Wrigley, ed., Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data, (Cambridge, 1972).

\textsuperscript{42} PP, Census 1851, 1871, 1891, 1911; R. Smart, On Others' Shoulders, An Illustrated History of the Polhill and Lansdowne Colleges now De Montford University Bedford (Bedford, 1994), chapters 2-4.
Lincoln with an important heavy engineering base there was a significant and continually increasing demand for professional services.

The 1881 Census demonstrates the impact of professionals as employers. Examination of just one professional occupation, that of solicitor, reveals the number of persons dependent upon a single professional activity. There were fourteen solicitors enumerated within Bedford borough in 1881: thirteen listed simply as 'solicitor' and one as 'solicitor for Essex'. Between them they employed twenty-two specialist staff: seven 'solicitor’s clerks', six 'solicitor’s managing clerks', five 'solicitor’s general clerks' and four 'articled clerks'. There were thirty-eight different Bedford households were dependent upon the activities and fortunes of Bedford solicitors.

There was also a spatial impact on the urban structure through the consumption of these individuals. While some solicitors lived in extended households, which also included their clerk, most solicitors and clerks maintained separate households in respectable areas. There was some clustering of households; most of the solicitors did not live on the same street as each other, being spread around older elite areas, but there is evidence of clerks living in close proximity to solicitors, often along the same road as the case of a clerk named Payne who lived at 13 Peel Street opposite an employer at number 14. Solicitors's clerks also demonstrated residential clustering with four households along Cauldwell Street alone. These arrangements had implications for the demand for housing, goods and services in the town. Professional families also contributed to the growth in female employment. No one in the county town was more likely to hire the services of a nurse or music teacher than the business or family of another professional.

The rise of the institution

From the 1860s onwards both male and female professional employment in the county town was increasingly centred on institutions such as county hospitals and asylums. These 'county' institutions added to the status of the town and drew in funding and population from the hinterland. The presence and expansion of

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43 **Census of England and Wales 1881**, CD Rom, The Data Archive, (University of Essex, 2001). In addition the enumerators listed a barrister and a law student.
institutions aided professional development and assisted the professionalisation of new occupations in the county town. These institutions sometimes acted as centres of professional interaction in both formal and informal frameworks. The county hospital was one such institution and provides an example of the importance of the formal physical presence of such places in the late Victorian county town.

In a recent paper on voluntary hospitals, Martin Gorsky argued that county towns were better provided with hospital beds than many larger towns or industrial districts. This was a direct result of the status attached to the hospital presence. Due to the importance attached to both founding and maintaining a hospital, many county towns had infirmaries established in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some foundations began as a direct result of a particular legacy, as in the case of Samuel Whitbread’s bequest to Bedford, others by public (generally gentry) subscription. Yet as the scale of Bedford advanced during the nineteenth century reliance on private benefactors proved insufficient to cope with the expanding responsibilities charged to the institutions. Following unprecedented urban growth, many were far too cramped and unable to keep pace with demand. Some were also unable to adapt new knowledge and techniques of healthcare; early hospital founders had often concentrated on providing lying-in facilities in buildings which, although imposing, were unhygienic and unsuitable.

From the mid-nineteenth century county towns made a concerted effort to update or replace their long established infirmaries. In some towns second specialist hospitals were founded. The new wave of hospital foundation proceeded in much the same way as the first. In Lincoln the new County Hospital (originally founded in 1769) was built in 1878 by public subscription at a total cost of £32,000 and enlarged in 1891. The new building could accommodate 110 patients and released the old hospital for use as a theological college hostel creating two institutions where there had previously been one. In Bedford the original 1830 building was still in use in 1895 when a committee was appointed to consider conditions in the building. The committee concentrated on issues of population growth, science and respectability. Interest in the ‘scientific’ approach to health manifested itself in concern about the

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44 Gorsky, ‘Hospital provision before 1945’.
45 G. Tyack, ‘The public face’ in P. Waller (ed), The English Urban Landscape, 298-299.
inappropriate nature of the building, which was thought to harbour germs, and an
emphasis on new technology including the provision of telephones.\textsuperscript{47} The committee
decided on ‘...an unpretentious building, simple in design and economically
constructed to accommodate 100 patients, with a fully equipped administrative
block.’\textsuperscript{48}

Bedford Hospital was built and re-built by public subscription. Subscription
campaigns were usually led by individuals with a high profile and a great deal of
local influence, aristocratic patronage was popular. The Duke of Bedford and Samuel
Whitbread II were the figureheads for the Bedford campaign\textsuperscript{49} while in Lincoln the
County Hospital attracted a host of titled patrons: ‘Earl Brownlow is the president;
the Duke of Rutland; the Marquis of Ripon, the Earl of Yarborough and Lord
Monson, are...vice-presidents.’\textsuperscript{50} The high level of aristocratic presence in the
voluntary funded institutions was not typical of either county town where there is
little other evidence of titled influence. Aristocratic patronage may reflect the
general belief that the function of these hospitals was to serve the wider county area,
despite the arguments made for increased urban demand. Hospitals were regarded as
located outside political and economic arenas, but still offered the possibility of
considerable social influence. Subscription lists were published and the amounts
given by individuals were made public knowledge.

Despite aristocratic patronage voluntary hospitals relied upon middle class
contributions for both their foundation and day-to-day running.\textsuperscript{51} In order to
instigate and maintain support for an institution it was necessary to transcend
political or religious differences in the subscriber class. According to White's
\textit{Directory} the cost of running the Lincoln County Hospital was £5,565 in 1880:

\begin{quote}
...and its income was £4295, of which £1401 was from annual
subscriptions, £97 from dividends on stock, £62 from the Cathedral
annual sermon, £651 interest on £15,830 mortgages, £363 from
donations and legacies, £1024 from congregational collections at
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} B. Cashman, \textit{Private Charity and the Public Purse: The Development of Bedford General Hospital:
\textsuperscript{48} Cashman, \textit{Private Charity}, 147.
\textsuperscript{49} B. Cashman, ‘The Bedford Medical Community in the Nineteenth Century’ in \textit{Bedfordshire
Historical Miscellany: Essays in Honour of Patricia Bell}, Volume 72, (Bedford,), 196-7.
\textsuperscript{50} W. White, \textit{White’s Directory of Lincolnshire, 1881} (Sheffield, 1881), 5.
\textsuperscript{51} Gorsky, ‘Hospital provision before 1945’. 
churches and chapels...and £440 from Hospital Saturday collection which was proposed by the working men themselves in 1879.  

The incorporation of the working class into the list of contributors was a growing trend by the 1880s and in Bedford working men paid towards the new hospital by subscription, through their firms. Access to these facilities was strictly limited: 'Persons are not admitted as patients without a recommendation from a subscriber or benefactor, except in urgent cases.'  

This necessity of referral often meant that institutions that had originated as services for the poor or 'for the town' and had stated so in the founder's bequest became increasingly the preserve of the middle class, at the very least, the 'gates' were controlled by the urban elite. This process resulted in the 'upward mobility' of urban institutions and placed them at the heart of the urban management programmes of the urban elite. Control of urban institutions such as hospitals comprised an important part of urban power.

Additional professional-led institutions developed from the hard-core professional presence in the county town. These included private hospitals like 'The Lawns' in Lincoln, which was established in 1820, and run on a subscriber only basis and more discreet institutions such as the Springfield House Private Asylum in Bedford. This institution advertised itself as '...within an hour of London, Leicester, Northampton, Nottingham, Cambridge and Luton'. The asylum boasted an 'elevated and healthy situation, extensive grounds, “Employment system”, carriage drives, billiards, tennis, boating etc.' As this advertisement shows, these institutions were designed and marketed to an affluent middle and upper class clientele from a wide area. The same directory carried other three listings for private medical institutions in Bedford at this time. Private medical institutions, in common with educational institutions often attracted entire families into local residence as they followed the family member enrolled in the facility. Along with the employed professionals these consumers added to the dynamism of the local urban economy. The establishment of institutions and the families and expenditure that followed them strengthened the competitiveness of the county town in a 'niche market'. The physical presence of the

52 White's Directory of Lincolnshire 1881.
53 Ibid. 5.
55 Lambert and Sprague, Lincoln, 194.
new and reformed institutions in the county town with their enhanced scale and outbuildings, often set in their own grounds also symbolised the presence and importance of the professional to the urban area.

The presence of a new hospital attracted professionals to the town and had 'spin-off' effects. Reformed institutions carried with them a professionalising effect; they strengthened local professional identities and regional and national networks. In both Bedford and Lincoln the infirmary acted as a central meeting place for medical professionals consolidating their professional status in the town and reinforcing the central position of the county town in the mental map of the local practising professional. County towns provided a focus and meeting place for urban professionals and a point of interaction with their regional colleagues, more rural counterparts or with a national body. These associations also boosted the status of the county town, which although peripheral to the national knowledge centre (generally in London) was perceived as an important local capital for information and news.

Professional societies were often centred on county towns. Some, such as the British Medical Association, founded in Worcester in 1832 as the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, became national organisations. Many more retained significance as county or regional organisations. Bedford Medical Society was fairly typical in this respect. It was founded in 1895 for:

... the promotion of professional intercourse, for the reading of papers, for the exhibition of cases, pathological specimens etc. and for the discussion of all questions affecting the welfare of the profession.

All doctors resident in the county were eligible to join the society but its core members practised in Bedford and the county infirmary provided both the impetus and a location for society activities. The county town provided the critical mass or 'hardcore' of medical membership; in 1881 there were ten individuals listed in the borough as 'doctor', 'surgeon', 'physician' or 'M.D.' who were potentially practising, in addition there were five described as 'retired' or 'not practising' and

57 Corfield, Power and the Professions, 160.
one attached to the Indian Army.\textsuperscript{59} The county institution acted as a focal point for professional knowledge and status and the county hinterland was an almost automatic unit of professional organisation. The network of county towns with their professional societies linked together into a growing national professional identity, reinforced by touring specialists and lecturers. County towns were important locations for the development of professional status and for the consolidation of the importance of professionals in society during this period.\textsuperscript{60}

The concentration of state services and professional individuals in the county town promoted further growth of private specialist institutions and services. County towns were often far richer in professional services than larger urban centres which tried to develop this sector in the late nineteenth century. An example of a diversifying industrial centre in the late Victorian period was Sheffield, the closest large city to Lincoln (40 miles), which had a population of over 91,000 in 1871. Sheffield developed professional associations with an Institute of Accountants founded in 1877 and its own law society founded in 1875. However its professional sector was limited in its composition and underdeveloped. On closer inspection both of Sheffield's professional organisations were obliged to cast their net quite widely for members. The Sheffield Institute of Accountants comprised twenty-five fellows and six associates from 'Sheffield, Rotherham and district' while the Sheffield Law Society had 127 members, most of those 'practising within twenty miles of the town hall'.\textsuperscript{61} Despite the relative growth of the professional community in Sheffield an 1879 directory listed only four stationers and two surgical instrument makers, with no legal stationers or medical suppliers.\textsuperscript{62} The paucity of professional individuals and services relative to urban scale demonstrates both the lower levels of provision available in industrial districts for many decades and the lack of an established urban hinterland. In county towns the professional presence was more secure and was reinforced by the 'central place' function of the county town making it the 'natural' focus for professionals in the surrounding hinterland. Newer industrial centres such

\textsuperscript{59} Census of England and Wales 1881, CD Rom, The Data Archive, (University of Essex, 2001).
\textsuperscript{60} A consideration of the importance of the professional element to the national economy and culture during this period can be found in Perkin, \textit{Rise of Professional Society} and Wiener, \textit{English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit}.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{White's, Directory of Sheffield 1879}, 175.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, 4-5.
as Sheffield struggled to establish this position as a local professional centre as they also attempted to develop commercial and cultural dominion over a hinterland.

**Professional consumption**

Patterns of professional consumption had a direct impact on the broader economy of the county town. Professionals were a group with particular aspirations and tastes, requiring their housing and lifestyles to be of a certain standard and to reflect these tastes. At the upper end of the market Wiener has argued that professions aspired to, and sometimes achieved, a lifestyle modelled on that of the gentry, particularly towards the end of the period.63 This involved making enough money to maintain a gentry style household, sending sons to one of the public schools and also being able to provide for a university education.64 However, it is important to realise that these were the exception rather than the rule and that most late Victorian professionals were ‘comfortable’ rather than rich.

How affluent was the male professional household head? The answer would seem to be as varied as the levels and practices of professionals themselves. According to Reader the professional man could expect a salary of:

> About £1,000 a year, or a little on either side, evidently represented modest prosperity. There were plenty below and a reasonable chance of getting fairly well above though naturally the very high incomes- say, from £5,000 up- were rare. Taking the like with like- the country parson with the country doctor and the small-town lawyer, or slightly higher up the scale, the Church dignitary (below the bishops but above the parish parsons) with the physician in a good way of practice and the rising barrister- it would appear that the rewards were roughly comparable.65

At the lower end of the professional earning bracket Booth found 10% of London board school pupils had professional parents, indicating incomes too small to afford any form of private education.66 The appeal of Bedford as a residential town to the middle classes rested on the free provision of a grammar school education, indicating that many of the professionals who were merely resident there, for example, Indian civil servants, army and naval officers, had small enough incomes (or large enough

63 Wiener, *English Culture*, 16.
64 Reader, *Professional Men*, 197.
65 Ibid., 201.
66 Ibid., 195.
families) for this to be an important consideration. However, the majority of professionals actually practising in the county town probably belonged to the middling type of professional earning between £500 to at most £1,000 per annum. The county town doctors and clerics were more affluent than their rural counterparts, and could sometimes, as in the case of the cathedral clergy, have a wider access to promotion and financial improvement. They also had certain advantages not available to their rural or metropolitan fellow professionals; they enjoyed a cheaper lifestyle and increased social standing. In the county town which was relatively free of aristocratic dominance, such as Bedford or Lincoln, unlike in more rural areas or the metropolis, professionals could qualify for the highest social status and attain social leadership. Institutions reinforced this status. As the institution became widely accepted as a desirable form of social management and knowledge development and as individual institutions grew in local prestige the associated professionals benefited from increased status.

Although many of these county town professionals could not aspire to the type of quasi-aristocratic lifestyle described by Weiner they did have a position to maintain. The importance of social standing to the professional in this period cannot be stressed enough. Everyone in the local middle class was a potential employer, client or business partner. In a small community individuals of similar social status met through formal and informal urban activities from political meetings to the musical society and Sunday worship. The county town professional had opportunities for gaining potential custom and enduring social judgement at every turn. This added to the pressure to maintain a certain level of social standing. In the county town this required a stability of establishment - to be a partner in a successful solicitors, or to be employed as the surgeon to the infirmary, for example - and the maintenance of a respectable domestic establishment. These two characteristics were more important than the amount of actual income, although of course it required a reasonably substantial income to maintain them.

Levels of servant keeping demonstrate how professional expenditure contributed indirectly to the urban economy. Servant keeping, that prime indicator of status and

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respectability, was one immediate result of the growth of the middle class community. In mid-Victorian Bedford over 43% of employed women worked in domestic service. This figure never fell below 35% for the following 60 years; indeed the numbers of women in service increased. In 1851, working women in Bedford were just as likely to be employed in domestic service as in manufacturing, but they were three times more likely to be a servant in 1911.69 By the end of the nineteenth century ‘Bedford is estimated to have had [domestic servants] in 1 household in 4’.70 The rise and dominance of domestic service, particularly for women, partially offset the decline in female employment in manufacturing between 1860 and 1911. The popularity of servants in Bedford households was partly due to the sheer amount of labour required to maintain comfort and respectability in the Victorian home. Bedford’s speculative housing developments were aimed at incoming respectable residents who were labelled by the indigenous town community as the ‘squatters’. The design of these houses:

...assumed there would be maids...and with reason, for no one expected to live without a servant. There were often two, even in small houses, the familiar combination of cook and housemaid.’71

In addition to the question of domestic labour servants were also required as symbols of status, affluence and respectability. One resident of late Victorian Bedford recalled how:

A caller would have been surprised had the door not been opened by a woman in a print dress in the morning, or a woman in a dark dress and white cap and apron during the afternoon.72

An examination of surgeon’s households in the 1881 census showed that the average number of servants employed by these professionals was indeed two: usually both young women with one obviously senior and up to ten years older than the other.73

Not only were there more indoor domestic service opportunities in Bedford than in many towns but a higher proportion of these were in business as opposed to private

69 PP, Census of England and Wales 1851, 1871, 1891, 1911, occupational returns.
71 Mann, ‘The newcomers’ 93.
72 Ibid., 93-4.
establishments. Hotels, lodging houses and, particularly in a town with so many middle class inhabitants and schools, commercial laundries were offering a different type of 'domestic' employment in a growing service industry. This is a pattern which was also apparent in other types of 'residential' urban settlement such as seaside resorts. The proportion of women occupied in domestic service in late Victorian Bedford was not simply a result of the resident squatter community. The rise and dominance of domestic service, particularly for women, partially offset the decline in female employment in manufacturing in both towns as did the growth of female employment in transport and communication-related occupations. The example of Bedford demonstrates the intense relationship between the professional and domestic employment sectors and promotes a powerful contrast to the decline in servant-keeping nationally. In Lincoln a slightly lower but still very significant proportion of women were occupied in domestic service. It is reasonable to conclude that a significant percentage of these jobs were a result of the strong professional presence in county towns.

The table below (table 6) shows the level of servant keeping in different urban areas by 1911. It can be argued that by the Edwardian period urban settlements were becoming more standardised, particularly with regard to government and services. However, professionals and the middle-class communities they belonged to were not evenly distributed through the urban growth hierarchy. The table below shows the level of servant keeping in different urban areas by 1911. Some very clear trends emerge with the towns divided into three groupings. The highest proportions of female domestic servants were in residential or resort towns where a strong concentration of upper and middle-class residents and guests ensured continued demand for staff. Malvern provided the highest figure for Worcestershire as did Stamford for Lincolnshire, showing the ability of these towns to attract aristocratic patronage and a more extensive elite clientele than the county towns in each area. County towns, as a whole, displayed a higher incidence of servant keeping than industrial centres; Bedford, Hereford, Shrewsbury and Exeter employed above-average levels of servants indicating their solid middle-class communities. Bedford's metropolitan and residential nature by 1911 is clearly visible as it

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74 Walton, *The English Seaside Resort*, 75.
75 Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 238.
approaches Cheltenham, both a residential town and a spa, in servant employment levels. The more ‘industrial’ county towns of Worcester and Lincoln employed slightly below average levels of servants, while the fully industrialised county towns of Northampton and Nottingham had proportionally few servants, possibly reflecting a smaller middle class demand, or more probably, the high levels of female employment in the shoe, hosiery and lace-making industries specific to these towns. The table also suggests that county towns which were more isolated (and less industrialised as the previous chapter explained) supported more servant keeping households. The industrial centres of Wolverhampton and Sheffield had developed stable and expanding middle classes by 1911 and were approaching county towns in their levels of domestic service employment. Luton and Grimsby by contrast, towns which had far outstripped their county centres of Bedford and Lincoln in scale, did not have as many servant keeping households as in their county towns. Grimsby, with its merchants and confident county borough status was obviously developing a servant-keeping class but Luton remained overwhelmingly proletarian. By 1911 Grimsby had spawned its own urban bureaucracy and professionals but Luton was still subservient to Bedford in this respect.
Table 6
Incidence of servant keeping in different types of urban settlement
Proportion per 1000 of female indoor domestic servants to ‘total number of separate occupations or families’ according to the 1911 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential/ Resort towns</th>
<th>Malvern</th>
<th>Cheltenham</th>
<th>Stamford</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>399</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County towns</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hereford</td>
<td>244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shrewsbury</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial centres</td>
<td>Wolverhampton</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grimsby</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggregate of urban districts</td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professionals were in possession of regular disposable incomes and their lifestyles required certain levels of sustained consumption. This impacted on the occupational structure of county towns and also on the types of goods and services available. Rodger has shown the importance of salaried employment to urban development in Scottish cities where it was the regularity, not necessarily the level, of the professional income that encouraged expenditure and nurtured small urban businesses. The large families, consumer lifestyles, and, most importantly, the continuity of salaried or pension incomes of this class ensured that even the poorer widows of professionals and service pensioners contributed to a steady local demand.

This is most readily apparent in the retail sector. A healthy professional sector nourished and supported specialist suppliers in the retail trade adding to the diversity and specialisation of provincial retailing.

County town shops were changing rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century; medical equipment suppliers, legal stationers and artists’ materials shops were joining the traditional drapery and hardware shops characteristic of market towns. The 1871 Census listed one law stationer and 52 chemists in Lincoln while Sheffield, a town twice the size, possessed no medical suppliers or law stationers. The returns for Bedford for the same decade show twenty-seven chemists, but no law stationer, although there was one in Cambridge and two in Oxford (Bedford was equidistant from these towns). The development of specialist suppliers also demonstrates how the county towns were developing as professional ‘central places’ attracting professionals from the surrounding regions into town for access to new knowledge, policy information, ‘professional intercourse’ and to buy equipment. Department stores also sprang up to cater for the general requirements of professionals and other more affluent residents. There is no doubt that professional consumption had a deep impact on the tone of the county town high street and Hopkinson argues that, in Bedford, professional expenditure:

maintained the retail services which enabled a large number of small traders to continue in profitable employment. When allied to the 300 or so property owning gentry resident in Bedford the professional and public employees constituted probably the most economically influential group in town.

Professionals also provided a demand for skilled, specialist trades to service their private domestic lifestyles. It is difficult to establish a direct link between professionals and such specific service trades beyond those immediately linked by economic sector, as for example, the solicitor as consumer and the law stationer as supplier. There were however, trades which can be identified as reflecting the expenditure of the broader local middle class. There was a plethora of items that were regarded as the ‘natural’ constituents of the late Victorian comfortable middle-

77 PP, Census 1871, vol. II, Occupational returns; White’s General and Commercial Directory of Sheffield, (Sheffield, 1879), 4-5.
78 Census 1871, vol. II.
class home, particularly the middle-class parlour, and which were beyond the reach of the working class purse. Middle-class houses were crammed with books, journals, prints, clocks, photographs, pianos, sheet music, china, upholstered furniture and decorative innovations such as wallpaper.80

The continual nature of consumption maintained a variety of associated trades. Where the middle class was numerically significant then demand for these types of service trades could provide stable employment. Where a higher proportion of the urban middle or lower middle class was salaried, as in the case of professionals, the long-term nature of professional incomes combined with their regularity and predictability enabled these servicing trades to expand. The 1871 Census lists eight paperhangers in Bedford together with ten booksellers or publishers and four musical instrument makers or dealers, by 1911 there were 138 men employed as printers and lithographers while sixteen were employed in ‘Paper, prints, books and stationery’. In Lincoln there was a similar increase in these activities; in 1871, there were seven photographers, eight booksellers/ publishers, eight musical instrument makers/ dealers and 31 watch or clockmakers enumerated in the borough with two female photographers. By 1911 there were 107 Lincoln men occupied in working with precious metals, jewels, watches and instruments, 162 printers and lithographers and 45 Lincoln women working in paper prints and books.81

It could be argued that these figures simply reflect the growth in the population and the changing ways that the census enumerators listed occupations. However trade directories show a real expansion, in a short space of time, of tradespeople advertising their services to the middle class consumer. Kelly’s Directory of Bedfordshire for 1890, for example, listed two pianoforte warehouses and one piano tuner, six photographers and one printseller in Bedford. By the time the 1906 edition was produced pianoforte warehouses had taken off with five listed, together with six tuners, photographers had also become more popular with eleven advertising but the number of paperhangers remained static as did the single print seller.82 These changes reflect both changing fashion, with photography outstripping the vogue for

81 PP, Census of England and Wales 1871, 1911.
prints by the twentieth century, and also spending patterns. Significantly larger items such as pianos could be bought on hire-purchase arrangements while specialist services such as paperhangers required ready money.

Like Bedford, professional households in Lincoln had much the same effect on patterns of consumption and were reinforced by the Cathedral clergy and associated households of the close who shared many of the same consumer tastes and requirements. The Bishop's household, for example, comprised eleven individuals plus servants and extended households were common in other professional arenas. George Goldsmith 'general practitioner of medicine' of 43 Harpur Street, Bedford was probably an extreme example, since his household comprised himself, his wife Mary, their four children ('scholars' aged nine to 13) his sister-in-law, who was listed as 'wife of a surgeon', her four-year-old daughter born in 'Sutria' and her (presumably new) infant of no given age, born in Bedford. The house also contained Goldsmith's sister, a spinster in her twenties, and his assistant, a medical graduate from Scotland. The age of Goldsmith's new niece and the fact that these five adults and six children were looked after by only three live-in servants, a cook, servant and nurse, suggests that perhaps his sister-in-law's presence was temporary. It is also impossible to assess the disposable income here- could the extended professional family be a more respectable and better-disguised middle-class version of the working-class fiscal standby the lodger? There is little doubt that at the most basic level this one household must have produced a sustained demand for groceries, educational and domestic services.

It was not just individuals and households that formed the consumer sector in the county town. The physical presence of larger institutions such as the Cathedral, schools, hospitals and asylums provided steady, regular employment for tradespeople involved in the functioning and maintenance of the services and the buildings themselves. Supplying institutions provided service industries, retailers and wholesalers with regular trade and (reasonably) reliable payment. Preferred or contract supplier status was seen as an endorsement of a business; trade directories show how these suppliers were proud to advertise their links with institutions.

84 *Census of England and Wales 1881*, CD Rom.
Conclusion

In the late Victorian and Edwardian periods county towns were professional centres. They accommodated and supported a proportionately larger professional sector than either larger Victorian cities or newer industrial centres. Bedford and Lincoln were powerful examples of county towns with significant but different professional sectors. This situation had arisen through the significant proportions of professionals attracted by the combination of central place services, professional employment opportunities and the state endorsement of the county town as the suitable location for regional administration. Professionals themselves were also attracted to county towns rather than to other urban centres. The joint forces of institutions, professionals and their organisations had an economic and structural influence on the development of the county towns, particularly with regard to employment and consumption. Professional values contributed to shaping the physical and social tone of the county town and as professionals became more secure and confident they provided social and cultural leadership. The growth of professional occupations and the professionalising of traditional or new occupations represented one of the most successful and innovative occupational sectors in this period and were important and influential players in the urban development of county towns. Professionals influenced opinion and culture and also had a direct impact on the economy through their consumption patterns and lifestyles. They shaped urban environmental development with their demands for respectable suburban housing and services and enhanced the status of the county towns through the development and upgrading of institutions. Professionals comprised a significant force in defining the unique character of the Victorian county town as an urban genre. The previous chapter showed how county towns could be successful in competing with other urban centres in new technological and industrial processes. This chapter has demonstrated another area in which county towns developed and retained an urban specialism giving them a competitive advantage over other urban centres. The professional sector provided an acknowledged ‘county town’ function, a highly developed central place activity which could become a defining mechanism in the remaking of a county town.

Chapter Five

‘Bedford by the River’:

The creation of a specialised urban environment, 1860-1910

The previous chapters have shown how exposure to wider urban competition necessitated specialisation on the part of county towns. Under pressure, late Victorian county towns evolved from diverse marketing centres into specialised centres. Some county towns became manufacturing or service centres primarily, with varying degrees of success. Other towns developed a portfolio of specialist characteristics. The viability of possible solutions available to any particular town was limited by factors such as location and the existing resource base of the town. This chapter will consider how external influences such as central government and issues of imperial policy were also important in determining the specialist development of one Victorian county town. Between 1860 and 1910 Bedford was ‘remade’ under the influence of a particular group of residents and the values and culture of empire.¹

In many cases urban specialisms reshaped the identity and the physical environment of county towns. Bedford provides a prime example of a county town which repositioned itself within the national and imperial contexts through the expansion of specialist services and accommodation. Late Victorian Bedford sought to market itself as a residential centre. In order to attract the market of respectable residents for which Bedford was aiming, the borough needed to offer environmental and infrastructural advantages over other urban centres. The two major features of Bedford’s civic development after 1860 were a focus on health and the provision of respectable leisure. These two areas of civic development were directly related to Bedford’s specialist education services and its national location.

Bedford’s transition to a specialist service centre was partly due to the expansion of an existing resource - its educational charity - and partly through the external

¹ For a discussion of the impact of imperial culture see E.S. Wellhoffer, Democracy, Capitalism and Empire in Late Victorian Britain 1885-1910 (London, 1996); J. Morris, Pax Britannica: The Climax
influences of central government and Empire. Due to its free schools, Bedford had already established itself as a preferred place of residence for the ‘middling sort’ by the mid-century. This role of specialist residential centre was reinforced by central government through education reform from 1869 onwards.

The Harpur Trust provided Bedford’s educational institutions. Founded in the sixteenth century by a Bedford citizen who became Lord Mayor of London, the charity drew its income from land rents in Holborn, London and used these to finance a grammar school, almshouses and various other benefits to Bedford. By the mid-nineteenth century rising rents in the capital caused the annual income of the trust to grow to a point where it was able to provide four schools; two elementary, a grammar and a commercial or ‘writing’ school education was free to the sons of residents of Bedford. A Bedford Directory of 1862 described the resultant urban growth:

The town has of late years much increased, and is still further increasing. There has been a great many genteel residences erected, which are very soon occupied by those who are attracted by the advantages arising from the free schools.

Initially only those residing within the borough qualified for access to the education provided by the Trust; this contributed to the initial concentration of middle class families in Bedford.

The Taunton Commission under the Endowed Schools Act 1869 examined and reformed Bedford’s Harpur schools as part of a concerted restructuring of the education system at the national level. A range of government commissions examined the different levels of schooling available. The Taunton Commission was focussed on schools which were considered less important (though within the same

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4 Anon, History, Topography and Directory of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, (London, 1862), 52.
hierarchy) than the nine great public schools covered by the earlier Clarendon Commission. The Taunton Commission was concerned primarily and explicitly with middle class education. The commission sought to develop a system of education for the middle class founded on the model of the elite public school as defined by the Clarendon Commission. The main difference between the two commissions, and between the different strata of schools addressed, was to be the end product. While the Clarendon Commission concentrated on elite schools producing statesmen, Taunton schools would produce the class of administrators and bureaucrats needed to administer and manage imperial expansion. While the Taunton Commission imposed formal syllabi and defined value systems on previously independent endowed schools, they did recognise some of the existing middle class requirements. At Bedford’s Harpur Grammar and Commercial Schools and others the classics were retained due to parental demand. As the commission noted of the middle class:

...they value [classics and mathematics] highly for their own sake, and perhaps even more for the value at present assigned to them in English society. They have nothing to look for but education to keep their sons on a high social level.

The middle class reverence, and financial need, for education was well understood and career-orientated examinations were brought to the fore. Existing local social values then, were retained and supported by the school reforms but it was also necessary that schools such as Bedford should develop to support the wider mechanisms of the state and the needs of Empire.

The ‘new scheme’ proposed by the Taunton Commission under the Endowed Schools Act incorporated Bedford’s Harpur schools into the national education system and into the broader south-east economy. In essence the Taunton Commission appropriated the financial power and educational capabilities of the Harpur Trust for the mechanisms of the modern bureaucratic state. The financial position of the Harpur Trust also changed. Prior to the adoption of the new scheme in 1873, the income generated by the Trust’s land in Holborn was distributed, by locals, into the Bedford economy. Before the Taunton reforms the Trust spent £7,046 on education out of a gross income of £13,121 (57%); the remainder (43%),

8 Ibid., 17-18.
was distributed to Bedford residents in the forms of apprenticeship fees, marriage portions and poor relief.\textsuperscript{9} From 1873, a far greater proportion of this income was concentrated on producing a specialist middle class education which would contribute towards the supply of educated bureaucrats. An ever-increasing number of these were required by the expansion of both the administrative state and its overseas Empire. This adjustment limited the proportion of income, which had trickled directly into the local economy in various forms of poor relief and gifts. It also reduced the level of local control over the activities of the Trust schools as the trustees had less discrimination in both expenditure and educational issues. The Taunton Commission decided that 72\% of the total income should be spent exclusively on secondary education, approximately 19\% on elementary education and that the welfare obligation of the Harpur Trust should be reduced to 9\% of the total income.\textsuperscript{10} The remaining welfare portion was to be concentrated on almshouses and so spent in a more controlled and defined manner. After adoption of the Taunton Reform Scheme the Harpur Trust Schools were expanded and girls’ schools were formed. There was a new emphasis on an organised ‘Imperial’ curriculum, which were orientated towards service exams.\textsuperscript{11}

Following the reforms in 1873, the residency qualification which required pupils to reside within the borough in order to obtain free education, was abolished and fees were introduced.\textsuperscript{12} Far from discouraging settlement within the town, the reform of the schools resulted in a ‘great jump’ in incomers attracted to Bedford by the educational facilities, most notably an influx of families of Indian Civil Service officers.\textsuperscript{13} The trustees of the Harpur Trust, of whom the Bedford Town Council formed the greatest part, were well aware of the potential of the schools and their ability to attract new residents. The trustees had made efforts in the 1850s and 1860s to implement reforms in the schools and to attract a dynamic and modern headmaster in order to enhance their reputations.\textsuperscript{14} The interests of the town council and the economic interests of the town generally were strongly integrated with the fortunes of the Harpur Trust, and with the reputation and attractiveness of the Grammar

\textsuperscript{9} Godber, \textit{The Harpur Trust}, 49, 133.
\textsuperscript{11} Godber, \textit{Harpur Trust}, 42-46.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 52.
\textsuperscript{13} E. Moser, ‘The Crescent, Bedford’ in \textit{Bedfordshire Historical Miscellany: Essays in Honour of Patricia Bell}, Vol. 72 (Bedford), 181.
school in particular. However, many opposed the Taunton reforms. They argued that the new scheme was against the founder's wishes and siphoned off money from the local inhabitants. It took the government some time to implement the changes recommended by the Taunton Commission but reform took place in 1873 and a girls' school opened in 1880. The trust's schools and the residents they attracted became the key component of Bedford's economy.

Despite the modernising reforms, Bedford needed to compete with other urban centres to attract respectable residents in search of education for their children. To achieve this, the town needed to offer environmental and infra-structural advantages over other educational centres. Accordingly, the two major features of Bedford's civic development, after 1860, were a focus on health and the provision of respectable leisure. Both the visible and invisible environments of the central area of Bedford, the physical and moral environments, were remoulded in order to provide a healthy, respectable and above all unimpeachably reputable climate for middle class living. This produced stresses and conflicts between the central place role of the county town and the requirements of the residential middle class. Tradition was confronted by modernity.

The first area where conflict arose between the existing county town environment and civic ambitions occurred was that of the water supply. Following the epidemics of water-borne diseases such as cholera, the sanitary debates of the mid-century and the technological advances made in the provision of water and drainage, gravel beds, drains and piped water became the obsessions of middle class Britain in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Directories produced for middle class consumption gave extensive information of the type of clay or gravel beneath places and the nature and sources of the water supply in particular communities. In Bedford water provision became the battleground for the town's national and, ultimately, international reputation.

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15 The debate was conducted mainly through the pages of *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent* in the early 1870s.
In January 1862, John Simon of the Medical Department of the Privy Council Office wrote to Bedford town council ‘with regard to the health and sanitary circumstances of Bedford’. This letter followed two years of correspondence and stated that investigations by the Privy Council had found: ‘That an improved system of sewerage, house drainage and water supply is indispensable for the health of the population of Bedford.’ Simon’s letter claimed that the town was a centre of disease: ‘typhoid fever proves to be of annual recurrence in Bedford, and that it, with other diarrhoeal diseases prevails every year...in the Town...’ and argued that this was due to a ‘dangerous quality of water’. The Privy Council investigation had begun in the wake of an epidemic of typhoid fever and this letter followed the failure of the council to adopt the Local Government Act of 1858. This investigation had the potential to do serious damage to the reputation of Bedford as an educational and residential centre. The town corporation rejected the findings of the Privy Council energetically and published their response together with Simon’s letter as a pamphlet entitled A Vindication of the Health of Bedford. This was not the first time that the council had needed to launch such a propaganda offensive; in the 1840s the council had been involved in a controversy between medical men on the issue ‘Is Bedford Healthy?’ Despite this Bedford had not adopted the permissive 1848 Public Health Act and the 1860s Bedford borough council took on the Privy Council arguing that ‘a system of misrepresentation and exaggeration has for a long while been employed upon this subject’. It is clear that Bedford council felt that the reputation of their locality was under attack from central government and from ‘London’ and the control and competition that ‘London’ represented. Resistance to inspection and intrusion was also resistance to central power. In 1862, a Bedford council meeting argued the motion ‘that no notice be taken of the letter ... from the Medical Department of the Privy Council’ and a direct confrontation was avoided by moving the debate to a broader consideration of the Local Government Act.

In their defence, Bedford council claimed that the mortality rate was distorted by the county town function of Bedford. The presence of public institutions in the town, it

17 G. Hurst, A Vindication of the Health of Bedford, (Bedford, 1862), 3.
18 Hurst, A Vindication, 5.
20 Hurst, A Vindication, 9
was argued, pushed up the mortality figures. In other words people had a tendency to die in the 'county' institutions based in Bedford itself. Allowing for this, they claimed, 'the mortality of Bedford... is much below the average of the country'. The high death rates were blamed on the residents attracted from the surrounding districts and other areas and on the poor health of the incomers to the infirmary, union workhouse, gaol and lunatic asylum. In addition, the council argued that:

The unusually extensive charities of the Town are a great attraction...for miserably poor and incompetent persons to come and reside in it... With such people the mortality must always be considerable, not on account of insufficient drainage, but from insufficient and inferior nourishment and the various ills incident to extreme poverty.

They also argued that, among the urban residents:

Nearly half the population consists of young persons under twenty years of age; and with children, sickness and the rate of death is greater than with adults.

It was important for the town council to refute the statistics of the Privy Council by placing the responsibility, however inconsistently, for the indisputable presence of disease on groups of individuals rather than on the urban environment. Bedford council accepted there had been incidences of typhoid diarrhoea in the town, but argued these were due to temporary circumstances, such as hot summers and the low state of the river, rather than the permanent infrastructures such as drainage. They claimed that 'the supply of well-water in Bedford is very ample and superior'. None of the problems, Bedford Corporation argued, were attributable to the physical structure of the town, its water supply or the municipal management of the borough.

Why did the council reject the Privy Council's report so strenuously and publicly? For the same reason that Simon gave for the Privy Council's interest in the town:

Their Lordships...cannot esteem it a matter of merely local concern, that causes of serious diseases are needlessly operating in a town which has

22 Hurst, A Vindication, 10.
large educational endowments, and to which, in consequence, young persons are sent for education from all parts of the country.24

The town councillors of Bedford, who also acted as trustees of the Harpur Trust, fought to maintain the reputation of their borough as a safe and healthy environment. Bedford already possessed a national reputation as an educational centre and this issue demonstrates the importance of establishing and maintaining the character of the town's urban environment in attracting educational consumers. The published reply of the town council denigrated the opinions of 'engineers and other professional men' while upholding the more convenient views of 'Medical gentlemen of the largest experience'25 and casting doubt upon 'the present unsatisfactory state of sanitary science'.26 While they had not been willing to recognise medical opinion in the 1840s, Bedford councillors in the 1860s privileged medical opinion above that of other professions. They promised to adopt the Local Government Act and Bedford Corporation sat as a Board of Health from 1862. Having done so they 'humbly and respectfully trust[ed] that the lords of Her Majesty's Council will give no countenance to representations disparaging and detrimental to the best interests of the ancient and loyal Borough of Bedford'.27 The creation of the Board of Health can be seen as a partly defensive manoeuvre by the town council, designed to maintain local control and to keep central government at arm's length.

The publication of Simon's letter and the council's reply had also acted as a piece of local propaganda in favour of the adoption of the Local Government Act. This extended the council's powers but also involved expense for ratepayers:

In their anxiety to do their utmost to provide the comfort, cleanliness, and sanitary condition of the Town, the Council for the purpose of obtaining enlarged powers, have resolved to adopt the Local Government Act, and are determined to exercise those powers to the best of their knowledge for the advantage of the Town; not recklessly, but prudently.28

24 Hurst, A Vindication., 8.
25 Ibid., 14.
26 Hurst, A Vindication, 15.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Ibid., 16.
Bedford council was careful to point out the permissive nature of the act. The council was in a difficult position: they needed to reassure residents and potential residents as to the positive and progressive sanitary state of the town. Unfortunately, many of those who needed such reassurance were also ratepayers and so did not welcome a rate rise. The reply was written by George Hurst on behalf of the council. Hurst was a Liberal, well-established in local politics, and a founding member of Bedford Literary and Scientific Institution and the Bedford Musical Society. He had a long municipal career and was well-connected. Despite the tone of the 'Vindication', Hurst was not anti-improvement, as his colleague James Coombs remembered:

In 1861...the great work of Drainage and Water Supply for the town was initiated by Mr James Howard, who at a special meeting of the council, proposed a resolution on the subject, which was seconded by Mr Hurst and adopted. The London Times newspaper had just then published some severe strictures on the sanitary condition of Bedford.

While the 'Vindication' claimed 'The drainage of the Town has of late years been extended' it did not mention such a meeting, nor did Alderman Coombs recall the interest of the Privy Council, but, more significantly, the national press coverage of the issue. The council took action to improve the supply of water and drainage on the basis that Bedford's national reputation among the Times reading middle class was under threat. Within the borough itself such a large and expensive project met with a mixed reception. There was a possibility of a ratepayer's revolt, as Coombs noted: 'This beneficent project encountered great opposition from certain economists who claimed to be representatives of the ratepayers of the town.' The council needed to promote the reputation of the town, carry out improvements and maintain low rates; it also needed to defend its local autonomy. The interest of both the Privy Council and the national press in Bedford had created a threat to Bedford's civic reputation, economy and future, a threat that was only narrowly averted. The sanitary issue also revealed central government's interest in urban centres with 'large

30 BLA, Aldermen J. Coombs, Recollections, Personal and Political, as read before the Bedford Liberal Club, April 4 1889 (Bedford, 1889), 18.
31 Ibid., 18.
educational endowments' almost a decade before educational reform began to channel their resources.

The Taunton reforms crystallised and formalised the economic relationship between the schools and the town. The reformed Harpur Schools attracted increasing numbers of middle class residents to the town. Hopkinson argues that 'By 1871 the Harpur Charity was no longer seen as a subsidy for local non-competitiveness but as an asset among others to be exploited to bring in outside capital.'\(^{32}\) The Harpur Schools had been exploited in this way since the 1840s and, following reform in 1873, the local focus on the economic 'spin-offs' from education provision intensified. This was due to the diminution of Trust income distributed directly to local townspeople as charity. The only pecuniary advantage available to those not benefiting directly from educational provision, was through the service sector. The Harpur Trust was no longer a local source of direct urban funding and the indirect fiscal gains from the trust were now largely dependent upon the expenditure of middle class scholars and their families.

The 'funnelling' of Trust funds and activities into providing education for a defined and potentially limited market had a powerful impact on the social and spatial values of Bedford town and its urban growth. The mobile middle class residents attracted by the public school style education on offer after 1873 required suitable accommodation, services and amenities. As Bedford's economy became more dependent upon these relatively affluent residents or 'squatters', municipal and commercial efforts turned towards attracting and retaining this group.

**The influence of the metropolis**

The second major influence on the socio-spatial development of Bedford was its proximity to, and relationship with, the capital, both in terms of central government and the metropolitan city itself. Chapter two discussed the importance of county town location in relation to the capital, however the relationship was not simply about distance and nor was distance a constant factor across the period 1860 to 1910. As London expanded throughout the nineteenth century its circle of influence extended. The metropolitan area was a moving frontier which came to dominate the

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\(^{32}\) Hopkinson, *Economy and Society*, 65.
south-east of England. Located only fifty miles from Westminster, Bedford became incorporated gradually into the greater metropolitan economy. In this period the almost continual improvement of rail transport services and the ever-decreasing journey time to London from satellite towns combined with the expansion of London-led media reinforced the relationship between these towns and the capital. Changes in the ‘core culture’ of Britain had an early impact on Bedford; good communications and ease of access to London meant that the county town was quick to absorb these changes.

In late Victorian Bedford signs of metropolitan influence became increasingly apparent. For example, the national shift to a service based economy which occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the importance of information and knowledge-based services and professions were very evident in Bedford. It was harder for towns within or around London’s orbit to avoid or resist new political developments or the implementation of government policies. The rapid implementation of social policy developments and the reform of local charities and schools reveal this. Towns such as Lincoln and Exeter on the periphery of national culture and more remote from government reach were able to resist centrally-imposed change for a longer period. This was particularly true of the implementation of urban environmental and social improvement.

For many urban areas during this period proximity to the capital became a two-edged sword; London could provide information, business, traffic and good locational advantage to a town, but it could also attract wealth in the form of capital and residents from smaller towns. The ease of access to London from Bedford meant that the myriad attractions of the capital for the affluent middle class could draw both residents and their disposable incomes from Bedford. The niche marketing of Bedford would only prove successful if enhanced town status attracted mobile

33 See above chapter two.
37 See Hill, Victorian Lincoln and Newton, Victorian Exeter.
middle class residents to consider Bedford as a residential alternative to London and if, once installed, the local facilities could hold them.38

Late nineteenth century London attracted the professional and leisured middle classes to its amenities. Fashionable shops, parks and gardens and access to a wide range of cultural activities all defined the respectable consumer-led middle class lifestyle of the late nineteenth century. For those living on private means or the families of military and administrators posted overseas, who were affluent enough to choose where they could live and were free from geographical ties, London acted as a magnet, despite the expense involved. During the late Victorian period London consolidated her position as an imperial capital and the effects of imperial trade, government and human traffic re-shaped the city: ‘As never before London seemed the heart of the world.’39 Access to the capital offered access to the opportunities of empire, a fact of which the Harpur School trustees, Bedford council and Bedford residents were highly conscious.

In the late Victorian and Edwardian periods the expansion of status-conscious London suburbs offered direct competition to smaller towns in the residential market. For those living within commuting distance of London the stores, museums and other attractions were accessible on day trips, attracting the leisured consumer and deflecting them from spending in provincial towns. As early as the 1890s Bedford provided accommodation for daily train commuters to the capital.40 In order to combat this drain, civic leaders and local traders needed to be able to offer modern leisure amenities and fashionable and desirable shopping within the town. Proximity to London acted as an impetus to early environmental improvement to towns in the south-east of England who had ambitions to attract or retain affluent communities.41

The marketing and development of a specialist environment in Bedford turned the proximity of the capital into an economic advantage. Residents could be won from London suburbs and yet Bedford was close enough to ‘town’ for those who wanted

40 Kelly’s Directory of Bedfordshire (London, 1890), 16.
to easy access to the capital. By the 1890s specialist guides promoting Bedford as a place of residence emphasised this locational advantage. The Town of Bedford and its Schools 1896 published ‘to answer the many enquiries usually made by those seeking a place of residence whose attention may have been directed to Bedford...’ described the close link between the town and the capital:

Among the many advantages accruing from the situation of Bedford in relation to the Metropolis is one of great importance to the businessman viz., the early arrival of the newspaper train (at 6.15 a.m.), whereby the reader of the London morning papers is put in possession of the news before breakfast.

The emphasis on the availability of London information and the speed of connections would suggest that London was perceived as a major centre of information and knowledge and proximity to this was part of Bedford’s residential advantage over other towns. This was particularly important in Bedford for two reasons; firstly because many of the residential or ‘squatter’ community were dependent upon the movements of the London stock and trade markets for their incomes and, secondly, because the production of knowledge and access to knowledge was part of Bedford’s urban capital as an educational centre.

This issue of knowledge and the emphasis on the immediacy of information was an important aspect of the urban culture in Bedford. Urban professionals, exam-based education and city-based commercial income from stocks and shares all formed part of the values of ‘respectable Bedford’. The functioning of London as an imperial city also had an impact. Frequent communications and the Harpur Trust Schools, with their public school culture, ensured that the imperial ‘core culture’ of London, the values characterised by Wiener as ‘Englishness’ engulfed late Victorian Bedford. An example of the importance and strength of this cultural connection was demonstrated in the syllabus of the grammar school, which contained both ‘Civil’ and ‘Military’ departments, preparing pupils for:

41 Clark and Murfin, History of Maidstone.
42 BLA, Anon, The Town of Bedford and its Schools 1896 (Bedford, 1896), 3-4.
43 Ibid., 7.
44 Wellhoffer, Democracy, Capitalism and Empire.
45 Wiener, English Culture.
Increasingly, both the residents and activities present in Bedford from the 1870s onwards had a direct imperial connection. In the new suburbs and in the town centre the values of empire (particularly of the white-collar administrative class) shaped the physical environment of Bedford. At home in Bedford’s newly built villas, the atmosphere of empire was intense:

Our houses were large enough to accommodate an Edwardian number of young, and under their gables the Anglo-Indians were trying to make ends meet with dignity. We were of those English families who had served their country in India in one way or another, but chiefly in the army. Our houses were crammed with Benares tables, strings of little carved elephants, placid Buddas and malevolent gods. Our mothers made good curries.  

Evidently, the expense of large families made Bedford a popular residential choice, but cheapness was not the only criteria. One of the strategies that influenced environmental development in late Victorian Bedford, was the attention given to middle class male leisure. The importance of professional men to Bedford’s economy has been discussed above. However there was a particular sector of professional servicemen that the local authority was keen to cultivate, namely those on active service since such active service personnel sought suitable places to educate and house their families in their absence. Long leaves and the possibility of a retirement market reinforced the importance of this element of demand. The 1881 census recorded relatively high levels of active service personnel, compared to national averages, in Bedford from both the army and the navy. Since the census taker could only count active servicemen present in the town on a particular day, it is reasonable to suppose that there were a great many more for whom Bedford formed a permanent family base.

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46 Kelly’s Directory 1890, 20.
The corporation and town developers concentrated on providing amenities for the male household head; sometimes that target was identified very specifically. The male breadwinner was not just any middle class man but one from a specific occupational or colonial background, as featured in this estate agent’s advertisement:

The society in Bedford is just what Anglo-Indians have been accustomed to and, therefore, what they want. In many places in the neighbourhood of London the unfortunate retired officer finds himself with no companionship to his taste during the greater part of the day; the men go off to their business in town, and only return in the evening. This is not the case in Bedford, where birds of this feather have flocked together. Paterfamilias has no difficulty about finding kindred spirits to play golf, bridge, or row, or do whatever he has a mind to.  

The facilities available to these men were consciously modelled on their metropolitan equivalents. The Bedford Town and County Club, located on the Embankment was one such example. It was deliberately designed to mimic London clubs in its facilities and ambience, in an attempt to prevent local men from going up to the capital on a daily basis. The Town and County Club was a commercial venture, as

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49 Quoted in Bell, 'Aspects of Anglo-Indian Bedford', 181.
were some other amenities such as the 'Turkish baths, with all modern improvements, ...in Ashburnham Road.'

The Bedford Town Corporation developed municipal facilities such as the parks, corn exchange which doubled as an assembly room, and the river area as part of a coherent municipal vision. In the 1890s, one of the council aldermen described how local cultural life had changed: 'Various handsome clubhouses have been built, and the social life of the place is full of animation and attractiveness. The arts and sciences are sedulously cultivated...'.51 By 1906, *Mates Illustrated Guide to Bedford* listed the range of activities available to men in and around Bedford including: rowing and sailing, angling, dramatic arts, cricket, golf, hunting 'another popular means of recreation in Bedford due to the proximity of the Oakley Hounds...’ (there were also two packs of harriers in the town), polo, football, tennis and croquet, 'technical teaching', athletics, music and theatre.52 As this list shows many specialist activities and amenities were developed in late Victorian Bedford while some of the more rural activities such as hunting were rooted in the town’s agrarian regional role and the town was still able to exploit this.53

While most activities were male orientated, there was much emphasis on family life and the of young people of both sexes made their presence felt at leisure activities. 'Quite a number [of Bedford girls] used to bicycle or even walk to meets of Major Carpenter’s harriers or Mr Addington’s beagles, run for hours after the hounds, then cycle home again...'.54

Urban commercial service facilities including large banks, insurance offices and large department stores also proliferated in Bedford.55 High Street retailers were under pressure to compete with London in fashions and stock ranges. Bedford traders were keen to emphasise how competitive and up-to-date their stocks were. In the 1890s Atkins and Smith 'Tea, Coffee, Wine and Spirit Merchants, Grocers and Italian Warehousemen, Provision factors, etc.' advertised that their High Street shop,

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51 J. Hamson, *Bedford Town*, 149.
53 Anon, *The Town of Bedford and its Schools 1896*, 44.
‘The Bedford Supply Stores’, could easily compete with attractions of larger metropolitan department stores:

All goods supplied at these stores are guaranteed of the best and purest quality, in addition to being at the same prices as the Army and Navy and other London stores. Thus patrons have no need to go to the Metropolis when they can make their purchases at their own door, at the same cost and equal value.\textsuperscript{56}

If the local shops and goods themselves were not sufficient to prevent the departure of shoppers to the capital, appeals were made to local loyalty. \textit{The Bedford Bee} argued that the use by local residents of London stores, in particular, was ‘unpatriotic’. \textit{The Bee} seems to have been aimed primarily at commercial Bedford and was especially bitter at the disloyalty of ‘local residents, people of ample private means’ and ‘officials’ using London shops. Its readers were no doubt marketing their services to this same group. \textit{The Bee} argued: ‘We hold it to be a plain duty - and nothing less - for those who live by the town to live and procure the necessities of life in the town’ and that ‘...there is a patriotism of common daily life as well as of national...’.\textsuperscript{57} The idea of a local daily patriotism recognised the importance of retaining expenditure within the urban micro-economy but it also shows an attempt to build a common feeling in the community. It is significant that \textit{The Bee} was published at the end of the 1870s, a decade when the town’s population had increased by 16%. Its editorials attempted to create a common civic identity between the natives of the town and the incomers but both the project and the paper were short-lived; in the decade between 1881 and 1891 Bedford’s population grew by another 44% and distinct communities were to emerge.\textsuperscript{58}

No doubt all of these strategies, municipal and commercial, helped in attracting those ‘of ample private means’ to the town and assisted in retaining them, their families and their expenditure on an everyday basis. Bedford shops did carry a broad range of stock, probably more so than in many provincial county towns but this was a period of retailing expansion everywhere.\textsuperscript{59} Sizes of shops, numbers of shops and

\textsuperscript{55} Godber, \textit{History of Beds}, 491.
\textsuperscript{56} BLA, \textit{Bedford c.1890}, book collection number 5312, 169.
\textsuperscript{57} BLA, MK198, \textit{The Bedford Bee}, 14 May 1879.
\textsuperscript{58} PP, \textit{Census of England and Wales, 1881, 1891}.
ranges of stock were increasing in all towns but very few county town stores could have carried the range of curry powders, solar topees, school uniforms and sporting goods that they did in late Victorian Bedford. However there is evidence to show that the Bedford middle class, particularly the new residents, continued to regard London as the place to go for special events or purchases. One resident at the turn of the twentieth century remembered how:

Outstanding features of Bedford life were the organised pleasure parties. If several friends wanted a day in town on the cheap, a notice would appear in the General Library (later in Hockliffe’s, after the discovery that it was illegal to use the Library in this way) announcing date, fare (4s 6d) and train, with space for the signatures of the proposed participants. At the booking office each member was handed his return ticket by the organizers. Coaches were not reserved, and the travellers could return by whatever train they liked, even the ‘midnight’. I went to London with one of these parties in 1902 to see the C.I.V.’s just back from South Africa, march through the city.60

This typical quotation illustrates nicely the patriotic, highly organised and thrifty nature of middle class Bedford residents in this period.

**The production of a specialist environment**

Attracting specialised income required towns to develop infrastructural, spatial and cultural assets as well as appropriate services. The competition between towns to attract residents resulted in the development of bespoke facilities for affluent families. The uptake of these facilities and the demand for the expansion of services and amenities from residents once in situ resulted in a dedicated urban environment.

The very presence of the Harpur Schools influenced both the physical space and social tone of the town. The institutional buildings of the four main schools, their playing fields and the plethora of smaller private ‘feeder’ schools, boarding houses and kindergartens all moulded the urban environment and its spatial and architectural character. Following the Taunton reforms the schools and their buildings expanded steadily between 1873 and 1910 continually consuming urban space. Few students were boarders, most also belonged to middle class families resident in Bedford. The relationship between the town and the schools was intense. This was particularly the

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60 Linnell, ‘Late Victorian Bedford’, 82.
case in the relationship between the locality and the Modern, as opposed to the Grammar, School. Although the Grammar School possessed teams and houses named after areas of the town, the Modern School was more intimately connected with commercial Bedford and attracted the sons of the local tradesmen and residents. Bedford Modern School produced eight Mayors of Bedford during the period 1860 to 1910.

In Bedford the reforms of the Taunton Commission and municipal environmental control produced a townscape which was notable for its emphasis on leisure and respectability. In the early twentieth century, one writer noted how: ‘...in many respects Bedford has almost the appearance and characteristics of a junior university.’ He noted the presence of a large number of young people, bicycles, sports and institutional buildings. The townscape was unusual in that it resembled most closely in environmental characteristics, a spa town or resort, yet it lacked the central attractions and functions of either of these urban genres.

This environment was directly related to the financial circumstances of the sector of the middle class settling in Bedford. Those middle class residents in search of education for their offspring did not choose Bedford if they were affluent enough to afford the fees associated with one of the major public schools. Nor did service families without children reside in Bedford if they could afford Cheltenham. The only hope for continual expansion of the town economy within this market was the continual attraction of families of the same circumstances of income. Above all the national reputation of the town was paramount. Twenty years after the water purity debate a local editorial articulated the problem inherent in this type of urban specialisation. The Bedford Times and Independent newspaper editorial argued that the future of the town lay with the educational services but also stressed the importance of management:

A large future can hardly be anticipated. Our schools are not an unlimited quantity and it is with them that the prosperity of the town mainly lies. The future, therefore, largely depends upon the management of the town in relation to the schools; and next to this to do our best to keep them

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61 Godber, Harpur Trust, 108.
62 Ibid., appendix.
when they are here. Both one and the other depend as much upon the
management of the Borough as upon the management of the Schools.64

The proprietors of the newspaper were Edwin Ransom and Joshua Hawkins.
Hawkins was a leading citizen and popular councillor during this period and the view
presented was his personal political and municipal 'manifesto'.65 He was an incomer
to the town, articulated the priorities of the 'squatter' community and initially joined
the council as a representative of the economists' Ratepayers' Association.66 He was
a prime mover in many of the leisure developments. However Hawkins did not
pursue this vision of urban development alone.

The majority of Bedford's municipal elite had a vested interest in maintaining the
numbers of middle class residents in the town. The limited nature of the respectable
incomes in Bedford and the high proportion of minors in the population limited the
ability of the council to undertake large-scale development; the ratepayers wanted a
healthy, pleasant and well-controlled environment at a low cost. For thirty years
after the water controversy the municipality concentrated on the health, appearance
and reputation of the town rather than on projects relating to the economic
infrastructure such as roads, markets or public transport. Poorer areas were
pressurised to maintain minimum standards and in 1874 the Royal Sanitary
Commission found that in Bedford 'Water supply is by waterworks. When the rental
is under £20 the board have the power to compel water to be laid on, and where it is
laid on there is a constant supply.' And that 'Sewerage and drainage of the district is
considered sufficient.... Sewers and house drains are carefully trapped.'67 On the
whole private domestic accommodation in the town was of reasonable quality and
healthy: 'Houses generally have water-closets or privies capable of being flushed
with water, and drain into the sewers.' The Commission found 'No unhealthy
districts' but noted that there was a smoke problem from the large foundries and
numerous small workshops in the town. There is very little reference to this problem
elsewhere, however, and it may be that it gradually abated as manufacturing became
less significant in Bedford over the following decades or simply that it was not

64 The Bedford Times and Independent, 30th September 1882.
65 M. McKeown, 'Joshua Hawkins and Liberals in local government: Bedford 1880-1892',
66 McKeown, 'Joshua Hawkins'.
considered to be problematic locally. On the whole the council reacted quickly to health threats after their initial strategy of denial had proved ineffective.

Civic action on the outward visible environment focussed on the transformation of the riverside area into a dedicated leisure space and the provision of parks.\(^{68}\) The delivery of more standard urban municipal services such as paving and lighting was concentrated on the central streets and new suburbs. The major area of redevelopment was in the very heart of the town along the river Ouse. The riverside area was transformed from its original function as an area of trade and traffic into the town’s primary leisure facility and the signifier of Bedford’s new urban role. This was achieved through a conscious civic vision and policy; ‘The Corporation ... steadily pursued a policy of buying up property adjoining the river, until only one or two small plots interrupt a clear walk along both sides of the Ouse.’\(^{69}\) These properties, mostly mills and warehouses but also some working class dwellings, were razed to provide land for leisure and the ‘Embankment’ was developed. The Embankment was essentially a riverside promenade or narrow park with open public access. The entire riverside area was landscaped over two decades in the 1880s and 1890s reinforcing and modernising the image of ‘leisured’ Bedford. The corporation also aimed to control activities on the river itself. Traditionally the council had limited powers over the river and passed a local act to extend the municipal rights over the river and its banks in 1905.\(^{70}\) Through the policy of controlling and re-allocating commercial space for leisure the riverside area became the focus of respectable recreation in late Victorian and Edwardian Bedford.


\(^{69}\) J. Hamson, *Bedford Town and Townsmen* (Bedford, 1896), 146.

\(^{70}\) *Mates Illustrated Guide To Bedford* (Bournemouth c. 1906).
Postcard view of Bedford Embankment showing the Bedford Town and County Club on the left, posted in Bedford in January 1907.
Figure 2 Postcard view of the River Ouse at Bedford, posted in September 1906.
The handling of the riverside area highlights a number of important issues in late Victorian Bedford. It demonstrates the power of the municipal government when there was a clear goal and an unopposed project. The increasing availability of the wharf properties is evidence of the late nineteenth century decline in both river traffic and waterside manufacturing in the town, while the resulting leisure facility shows clearly that the Bedford Corporation had a distinct concept of the type of central town environment they wished to produce. The project was important enough to warrant a separate council committee and was supported by various voluntary projects to provide extra features such as rowing clubs and trees. The re-landscaped area featured heavily in local postcards, directories and was central to the Borough’s re-marketing of itself as ‘Bedford by the river’ (see illustrations).

Slum clearance in Bedford was not a result of social improvement or of health concerns but was undertaken in pursuit of leisure. The riverside area of Waterloo, also known as Thameside or Thames Street, was demolished in the early 1880s to provide an extension to the Embankment. Waterloo was one of the central working class areas in Bedford and photographs taken in the 1870s show seventeenth and early eighteenth century cottages with irregular frontages, overcrowded and cluttered together. The laundry in the photographs suggests the occupation of some of the residents, Waterloo housed those employed in the casual service sector of the county town. They were overcrowded and labelled as slum dwellings but ‘re-development’ of the area did not include any new buildings. While municipal powers were used to clear the Waterloo area the redevelopment, or rather re-landscaping, was funded by subscription, including £500 from the Duke of Bedford.

It was unusual for Bedford council to provide urban leisure activities directly. The council was keen to use their authority to facilitate the development of leisure areas and amenities and to re-designate a large proportion of urban land for leisure use but municipal provision did not extend to providing actual facilities within these areas. These were frequently provided by voluntary or associational effort. When the corporation gained the powers and space to develop a ‘people’s park’ for example, the pavilion, gates and lodge were provided by public subscription. There was a clear concept of the limits of municipal obligations; the corporation would provide

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71 For example BLA photographs X373/124, Z49/188.
the framework and environment for respectable leisure but not the means or the organisation of events or activities. However Bedford Corporation was quick to 'adopt' facilities or events which would enhance the status or assets of the town. The example of the com exchange organ shows how this worked in practice.

The com exchange was municipally developed, owned and managed. Primarily a commercial space, it was also an important leisure venue. The addition of an organ, presented by Bedford Musical Society was a significant enhancement to the facility. The Musical Society had raised £1,000 by concerts and subscriptions, to purchase the organ. The accommodation in the com exchange was provided by the council on the basis that the organ was a 'gift', '...a good thing for the com exchange and the town' and would pass into municipal ownership. This method of mixing municipal and private effort to the same apparent end had a number of advantages; the council's property was enlarged or increased in value while the rate burden was not increased. Nor did the involvement of voluntary groups in municipal policy necessarily involve a loss of control or autonomy as in county towns councillors were often leading members of voluntary societies or clubs.

Competition between towns for middle class residents was fierce and continual and the effort to attract well-off residents often resulted in a focus on the apparently minor attractions of urban life. Rowing and music were two unlikely areas on which concern over Bedford's town status focussed. These two matters could be argued to represent the health (both actual and economic) and the urbanity or civilisation of Bedford and as such were arenas for debate and action by the municipal elite. The lack of organised competitive rowing in Bedford was perceived as a serious deficit in a town that wished to promote both its public school educational ethos and its healthy local properties. In 1893 the issue of 'Bands and Street Music' was raised at a town council meeting and it was noted that '...in certain competitions the Borough could not boast of a band who dared venture to compete with those of the surrounding area.' So it was suggested that 'Bedford might follow the example of other towns and obtain a good band, which would help make the town more

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attractive as a place of residence.'\textsuperscript{73} This argument was also utilised by interest groups wishing to gain extended municipal services.

In terms of civic events, municipal life was focused on the river and the embankment. By 1906, \textit{Mates Illustrated Guide to Bedford} informed potential residents and visitors that 'Bedford's proudest possession as a means of recreation is the noble River.' The guide gave an impression of a vibrant sporting life on the Ouse noting the presence of the schools' boat clubs and the 'open clubs both for rowing and swimming'.\textsuperscript{74} In addition there had been leisure boat hire available from the mid-century. The highlight of the social and civic year was the Bedford Regatta. The regatta was established in 1846 but had a tenuous existence for the first decades, despite support from the corporation and local traders.\textsuperscript{75} In 1879, the \textit{Bedford Bee}, puffed the event in the following excited tones:

\begin{quote}
The Regatta... is to be this year distinguished by increased prizes more sport and greater enthusiasm. We need not say more to insure public interest, for now it is known that these improved features have attracted some of the first crews in England, the people of Bedford will quicken their interest in this popular holiday and, we hope, will extend their subscriptions without delay.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

A week later the \textit{Bedford Bee} reported how 'The country folk came in their hundreds and flocked to the Rink, to Chetham's Recreation Ground and to the Embankment...'.\textsuperscript{77} This report shows how events such as the regatta were multi-functional. The Bedford regatta was both a status symbol, part of the specialist educational facilities of the town, and a developing central place leisure event which could act as a 'people magnet', drawing in the surrounding inhabitants to spend time and money in Bedford. Overall though the primary market for this type of event was clear, for while the regatta was open to all, there were implicit dress codes, which differentiated the affluent from the merely respectable. Photographs of regatta day

\textsuperscript{73} B. Summersgill, \textit{Bedford Town Band Centenary} (Bedford, 1994), pages unnumbered.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Mates Illustrated Guide to Bedford}.
\textsuperscript{75} Godber, \textit{History of Bedfordshire}, 521; Hamson, \textit{Bedford Town}.
\textsuperscript{76} BLA, \textit{The Bedford Bee}, 11 June 1879.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{The Bedford Bee}, 25 June 1879.
reveal a crush of hire boats and boater hats on Bedford Embankment. One resident recalled how:

the regatta was really a special occasion, a regular day out. I would go across Russell Park to the Embankment to make sure of a seat, and mother came later with her parasol to watch the world go by.

The tone of the entertainment was clearly set, in the 1880s:

the banks on either side of the river were lined with boats, two or three deep. Luncheon and tea parties were invited, and not to go to the Regatta was to be a society outcast.

Much of the amusement on and along the River Ouse was commercialised and costly, as with the boat hire. The anticipated market for these facilities was obvious: ‘The Rink’ on the Embankment advertised ‘200 skates, lawn tennis, various games’ and ‘dancing to a string band’. Towards the end of the nineteenth century riverside leisure also became more formalised with the establishment of rowing and swimming clubs.

Leisure activities in late Victorian Bedford were increasingly class-based and this was particularly true of activities attracting municipal support. In many late Victorian towns and cities the expansion of civic ritual and urban festivities were related to industrial activity or the development of the political party culture. In Bedford ‘traditions’ such as the town band and the regatta were a direct result of the civic nurturing of a genteel, leisured, middle class culture designed to attract and retain middle class residents.

The development of the parks was part of this municipal programme. By the Edwardian period the town boasted two parks (Russell Park and the People’s or Bedford Park) as well as the landscaped river embankment. The parks transformed

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81 *The Bedford Bee*, 3 September 1879, 194.
the peripheral areas of the town and, as in larger cities such as Birmingham and Leeds, park development attracted affluent residential suburbs. In 1881:

The town acquired the right to a People's Park of 61 acres, and the laying out of this ground occupied the attention of the Corporation for some years. As part of the scheme, De Parys Avenue, Park Avenue, Waldeck Avenue and the new side of Foster Hill road were formed and built upon during the same ten years. The Park (together with the porter's lodge, wrought iron gates, and pavilion, built by public subscription) was opened in 1888.\(^3\)

The same councillors who had supported the provision of municipal parks sometimes developed the new streets surrounding them. Hawkins, Bedford's most articulate councillor for the civic vision of leisure, was heavily involved in local residential property development, as were several other councillors.\(^4\)

**Social tone and respectable behaviour**

The remaking and marketing of Bedford meant that it was essential that the town environment signify an appropriate type of status to potential residents or those visiting the schools. It was also important to maintain a social tone in the town that would be acceptable to the middle class. The built environment could signal social tone while the leisure amenities controlled social interaction and influenced behaviour. There is no doubt that the late Victorian and Edwardian inhabitants of Bedford were obsessed with the smallest nuances of behaviour. Hopkinson has noted a continued preoccupation among the town's residents with behaviour and petty misdemeanor.\(^5\)

Examination of the items on the town council agendas in late Victorian Bedford also reveals a strong interest in the maintenance of a respectable environment.\(^6\) Just as environmental improvement focussed on the river so did the social policing. Constant complaints were made in council meetings throughout the 1870s about the behaviour witnessed along the riverbanks, in particular the behaviour of working class youths. The chief constable, Josselyn, reported to the council watch committee that:

\(^{4}\) M. McKeown, 'Joshua Hawkins'.
\(^{5}\) Hopkinson, 'Economy and Society', 46.
Constant complaints have been made... of the nuisance to ladies boating on the river in the neighbourhood of Bedford, caused by persons bathing at all hours and places, and frequently without any bathing dress.

This type of behaviour was, he explained, difficult to police:

I have instructed constables in plain clothes to patrol the banks of the river as frequently as possible but in the absence of any local regulations they are powerless to act unless in cases of indecent exposure.87

Bedford council passed new byelaws in an attempt to alleviate this problem but the issue was not resolved until public swimming facilities were provided. There were also concerns over issues of damage such as graffiti and vandalism, which could undermine the newly developed respectable tone of an area. In 1885, the council moved to ‘check the growing evil of persons defacing the property of the authority on the River Embankment’; rewards were offered for information and the police officially informed.88 The vandalism of the council’s ‘improvements’ could also signify local hostility to the changed ownership, environment and usage of the riverside area.

Ritual and behaviour were also influential in altering the tone of an urban area. Physical redevelopment and environmental change were not the only actions with which to designate specialist areas. In addition to the riverside environment and the parks, Bedford High Street and the market place were reconstructed as areas of middle class leisure through group behaviour. Certain status groups achieved this through exclusive (or excluding) conduct. The High Street, in particular, was used by the middle class ‘squatter’ residents as an arena for promenading and for the display of conspicuous consumption. This behaviour was time and group specific. In the 1880s and 1890s:

Every morning between 11 and 12.30 there was a regular parade of admirals, generals, colonels and other officers with their ladies up and down High Street between the Swan and St. Peter’s; and never was there such a doffing of hats and caps and so much bowing and saluting as

86 For example in BLA, Document ‘Borough B’, box 58, Minutes of the Embankment Committee.
87 A.F. Richer, Bedfordshire Police 1840-1900, (Bedford, 1990), 72.
88 BLA, Minutes of the Embankment Committee, 19th February 1885 and 30th April 1885.
friends and acquaintances met one another, often several times in one and the same morning. 89

Another Bedford school pupil recalled how:

About noon, especially in the school holidays, the street became something of a promenade. Early in the nineties a band of four or five musicians, cornet, violin and harp among them, regularly stationed themselves on the edge of the pavement. 90

In David Scobey's study of the promenading rituals of bourgeois New Yorkers in the nineteenth century he describes how '...they made seeing and being seen, in public and in motion, a core right of sociability - made it, in fact, a test of inclusion...' 91 Scobey's analysis of the function of the promenade throws light on the behaviour of the Bedford 'squatters' or incomers who used the High Street as a leisure area. The daily promenade enabled them to meet and to collect and exchange news on the schools and other local issues. It also distinguished them from 'Old Bedford' the lower or 'commercial' middle class of traders, manufacturers or professionals who were obliged to spend this time at their businesses. The contrast between these two groups is even more powerful when the physical mobility of the promenaders is considered against the background of the merchant static behind the shop counter. Scobey further argues that:

The display and mutual acknowledgement of 'respectability' enabled New Yorkers at the same time to police the boundaries of society, excluding or expelling those who transgressed its codes. 92

These codes operated in late Victorian Bedford too where, despite the provincial and economic nature of the town, respectable society was measured by its appearance. 'Promenading thus represented more than a form of leisure....It was a trial of legitimation'. 93 In Bedford the High Street promenade exemplified and maintained the growing gulf between the new residents and the town's 'traditional' middle class

89 Linnell, 'Late Victorian Bedford', 81.
92 Scobey, 'Anatomy of the promenade', 203.
93 Ibid., 203.
of tradesmen and their families. It was a distinction that hardened into the Edwardian era.

'Squatter' leisure rituals did not usurp the traditional commercial activities of the High Street and market areas. Instead the traders adjusted the wares and services on offer to their middle class patrons. However this commercial adjustment disguises the tensions and potential conflict in a county town which found itself being reshaped to suit the requirements of a particular class or, more accurately, status group. Bedford was evolving into a specialist environment from a varied role of local urban centre. This resulted in tensions but also created opportunities for the local elite to mould a previously mixed central place environment and economy into a specialist income magnet. The impetus to this change came from outside the town through educational reform, an expanding middle class and an expanding imperial administrative role requiring educated staff and salaried officials. The opportunity was seized and exploited locally. In late Victorian Bedford there were both winners and losers in this struggle for power and cultural dominance.

Conflicts and tensions
The adaptation of the county town to a specialist service centre with a specialised environment was not without difficulties. Local entrepreneurs and the municipal elite found real limits to their aspirations. These were primarily economic in nature since the niche marketing of Bedford combined with the rigid categorisation of the school hierarchy by the various commissions prevented the town moving upmarket. As the county town economy and environment became more focussed on its middle class residents a number of traditional county town functions came under pressure.

The relative decline of manufacturing activities in Bedford has been discussed above. In addition, there was also a loss of income derived from agricultural activities such as processing or outwork. Other, more traditional, central place activities evolved and changed in character. Markets remained important in Bedford, and if some specialist trades, such the straw plait traffic, had been lost, the general market was vibrant and livestock sales remained significant. Even in this respect Bedford’s proximity to London was important since Bedford was at the centre of a pig-breeding

94 Mann, 'The newcomers', 95.
area, had a large pig market and was well connected to the metropolitan market.\textsuperscript{95}

Some of the central place functions which county towns had always provided to their agricultural hinterlands, then, remained significant sources of trade and income in late Victorian Bedford. However, it was no longer possible for a county town in the position of Bedford to maintain its urban development and status on these areas of income alone.

The rural and agrarian aspects of the town’s economy were difficult to handle politically. Agriculture was considered important and highly respectable and with the Duke of Bedford known as a prominent local farmer, the reputation of Bedford’s pre-eminence as a local agricultural centre was zealously safeguarded. Markets and fairs brought substantial business into the town for traders and professionals although the actual activities involved sat less comfortably with the increasing specialisation of Bedford and a middle class service centre. Markets were relocated and by laws passed to regulate trading and behaviour.\textsuperscript{96}

The focus on leisure and respectability also hampered the wider economic expansion of Bedford. The council appreciated the benefit of industry to the town and did succeed in attracting some firms to relocate from the London area. However, they were careful to restrict industrial development to the western edge of the town beyond the river and the railway. Development in the eastern quarter was largely residential and educational. Employment opportunities for the working class were limited and new industry was geographically corralled into a defined area of the town. This limited the expansion of large employers, and hence the social tone and economy of Bedford as that of a middle class town, remained largely unchanged into the inter war period.

Some of the pre-industrial functions of the county town also experienced adverse trends. The agricultural hinterland no longer provided a guaranteed market or income for the town as it had done for centuries. Agrarian land values and farm incomes in Britain were under severe strain from the early 1870s through to at least

\textsuperscript{95} Richer, \textit{Bedfordshire Police 1840-1900}, 75.
the mid 1890s. Although Bedfordshire was less affected than other areas, particularly those arable clay soil regions, the effects of agricultural depression were felt. Bedfordshire was relatively insulated from the early effects of the agricultural depression at the beginning of the 1870s due to mixed farming and the proximity of London. Demand from the capital helped to support incomes initially but, by end of the decade, there were signs of recession. In June 1879, the Bedford Bee recorded:

The topic of the hour is the very handsome remission by the Duke of Bedford of the current half-year's rent, receipts for which have been sent to each tenant on the Bedford and Tavistock estates.

The impact of depression did not exempt the great estates surrounding the town and the Duke of Bedford, for example, was obliged to continue giving a half year remission on rents to tenants in 1885 and 1887. Recovery could not be foreseen; in 1895 the entire estate was revalued and the rental reduced by 55%. Had Bedford been solely reliant on its agrarian central place role, its economic prospect would have been bleak from the 1870s. The markets were under pressure from competition and trade was slow. Other forms of ‘traditional’ county town income derived from the hinterland, such as gentry leisure, were also disappearing.

County towns had a long tradition of providing leisure to an elite class within a regional and even a national context. In this sense Bedford's development of specialist services and a complementary environment was simply a question of building on an existing tradition or resource. However, the nature of the custom attracted had changed. There is little to suggest that late Victorian Bedford retained much business as an aristocratic or gentry centre. The assembly rooms, which had once been thronged with aristocratic visitors to the Bedford Balls and dances held during assizes and race meetings, were now largely used for middle class entertainment. The Bedford race meeting itself had ceased, being restricted to a single day meeting by 1873 and disappearing entirely in 1874 when the site of the unenclosed course was used for the Royal Agricultural Show.

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98 J. Godber, History of Bedfordshire 1066-1888 (Luton, 1969), 482.
In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Bedford had attracted the gentry and aristocracy for a variety of entertainment.\textsuperscript{101} Late Victorian aristocratic visitors to the county found their accommodation and entertainment in the great country houses and from which they viewed the agricultural improvements on estates like Woburn or Wrest.\textsuperscript{102} While some ‘county’ events survived it was often in different locations; the County Ball, for example, was held in Biggleswade in 1899. It was difficult for the county town to maintain its social supremacy and while Bedford Corn Exchange retained the ‘county’ hunt ball, on the whole urban social events were more middle class in nature.\textsuperscript{103}

The shift to providing urban leisure for the middle class also influenced the provision of amenities. Peter Bailey has described how ‘moral integrity and the code of respectability…were essential constituents of middle class identity and class consciousness’\textsuperscript{104} and explained how these two precepts also guided middle class leisure time. It was vital for the competitiveness of the town to develop amenities and facilities for its middle class residents. In so doing, not only were opportunities for health and recreation improved, these amenities also acted as the external manifestation of Bedford’s respectability as a town and place of residence. Towards the end of the period the \textit{Victoria County History} noted: ‘At present, Bedford, with its large parks, its fine river, and its new residential avenues is one of the most attractive of the smaller towns in the Midlands.’\textsuperscript{105}

Bailey also stresses the importance of ‘recreation through association’\textsuperscript{106} and the evidence would suggest that privatised leisure was becoming both more important and more divisive in Bedford in the 1890s and through the Edwardian period. Town societies and the corporation had stressed the importance of socially integrated leisure (but mainly focussed on the middle class) from the mid-century. There was an emphasis on the importance of the mixing of ‘gentlemen’ and the commercial

\textsuperscript{100} Cox, ‘Bedford Races’, 231.
\textsuperscript{101} See ‘The Diary of a Bedfordshire Squire: John Thomas Brooks of Flitwick 1794-1858’, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol. 66. See also chapter two.
\textsuperscript{103} BLA, Ball programmes, X456/8/1, X456/8/2.
\textsuperscript{106} Bailey, \textit{Leisure and Class}, 77.
community. Societies such as the Literary and Scientific Institute and the Musical Society met in public rooms and were patronised by both the local middle class of manufacturers, high street retailers and professionals, and the incoming squatters. A sample of forthcoming entertainment from the issue of The Bedford Bee dated 22nd October 1879 indicates the respectable, and fairly restricted, leisure choices on offer:

October 22- An Anti-Vaccination Lecture at the Assembly Rooms- 'Dr Nicholls, of London, will preside.'
October 25- 'Dr George MacDonald's Dramatic Performance of the Pilgrim's Progress' at the Bedford Rooms.
October 27- 'Miss Robertson's Concert' (Classical music)
October 28- Comic Opera Company, 'Pinafore'
November 12 & 13- Amateur Theatricals for the St Paul's Organ Fund at the Bedford Rooms.107

Although firmly middle class and somewhat 'educational' in nature these diversions were open, public and advertised; they encouraged mixing with the different sectors of the broader middle class of the county town. This was supported by the local press, who were almost obsessively concerned with forms of polite public behaviour.108 At the Bedford Calico Ball in 1879 the Bedford Bee described how;

We never saw people enjoy themselves more decorously, the quiet amusement being carried on without any approach to boisterousness. Considerable latitude is fairly allowable on popular holidays but so far as our experience goes there was nothing in the behaviour of skaters or dancers that at all differs from that of patrons of similar though more aristocratic amusements.109

Significantly the Bee noted that 'Among the visitors were some of the best known and respected tradesmen, professional men and gentlemen of the town.110

This attempt to build a cohesive town identity among the middle class in Bedford seems to have failed. As the squatter community grew in both numbers and relative size, they developed a separate community identity based on occupation and neighbourhood.111 Towards the end of the nineteenth century the growing scale (and

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107 The Bedford Bee, 22 October 1879, 303.
108 Hopkinson, 'Economy and society'.
109 The Bedford Bee, October 22, 1879, 303.
110 Ibid, 303.
111 Hopkinson, 'Economy and Society'.

probably expense) of middle class urban life, combined with this more exclusive 'status' identity, created a rift between the 'local' middle class composed of traders and professionals and the more affluent residential community. One such resident remembered that:

The 'Squatters', so called, constituted society, which was very exclusive, not to say snobbish. Besides the officers at the Barracks, only a few of the leading doctors, clergymen and lawyers were admitted, and hardly any of the business community.\footnote{Linnell, 'Late Victorian Bedford' 81.}

By the 1890s, social life and leisure were more highly privatised; men went to their clubs or societies, ladies visited at home. New associations or clubs were increasingly based in drawing rooms rather than constituting part of public life.

There is evidence that, later in the period, the 'traditional' county town petit bourgeoisie of shopkeepers and small traders became resistant to the expansion of respectable leisure amenities. They resented the increasing focus of municipal effort on municipal provision rather than the business element of urban life and felt that little was provided for 'the poor' or for locals.\footnote{BRB, \textit{Minutes of Bedford Town Council}, 1875-64 B2/15, 1864-72 B2/16, 1872-9 B2/17, 1880-1902 B2/18-21.} These people often regarded civic development as burdensome. Councillor Taylor, a retailer, objected to the 'gift' of the organ arguing that it would cost money to upkeep. At a council meeting he claimed that 'They all knew what an elephant they had in the Park in the shape of a pavilion and might it not be the same with this organ?'. Objectors to the civic programme such as Taylor however were outnumbered at these council meetings or ridiculed for their philistinism.\footnote{\textit{Bedfordshire Times}, June 16, 1899.}

Resistance to the development of the leisured environment was difficult and self-defeating as 'the shops of the High Street added the custom of the immigrants to their trade'.\footnote{Mann, 'The Newcomers', 95.} An example of how the influx of 'squatters', particularly those with colonial connections, influenced local life is the adapting stock carried by local traders. J & A Beagley, High Street Tailors were advertising their 'special
department': 'Indian and Colonial Outfits’ in 1890.116 Another factor was the relative shrinkage of the traders in the municipal elite; as the century progressed the shopocracy formed a smaller proportion of council members and there grew a grudging acceptance of both the squatter ascendancy and the residential nature of the town.117 For some, involvement in civic or social projects was a matter of commercial expediency. Henry Rose, one of the founders and committee members of the ‘exclusive’ musical society, was a music dealer who ran a pianoforte warehouse which he advertised on the reverse of the programmes.118

Conclusion
The municipal elite in Bedford was successful in re-establishing the county town as an educational and residential centre between 1860 and 1910. Specialisation was a necessary development to ensure the economic future of the town and many of the town’s inhabitants depended upon the expenditure of those attracted by new amenities. The creation of an elite leisured cultural lifestyle in the town through environmental changes and constructed ritual, however, exacerbated the differences which existed in the growing county town middle class. The pressure of the ‘squatter’ community, rooted in newly developed single status neighbourhoods with common aspirational value systems and a strong level of occupational coherence, added to this. The open, mixed, public nature of the county town middle class that was visible in the mid-century splintered into self-conscious status group identities. Far from uniting the middle class in Bedford, environmental change and the location, timing and nature of their leisure activities articulated and displayed the differences between them.

In Bedford the need to attract and to maintain a large middle class residential community produced a civic vision that was centred upon the healthy provision of respectable leisure. This resulted in a fashionable environment centred on parks, the riverside and tree-lined avenues. Above all Bedford was famed for its schools but these alone were not enough to provide income to a modernising county town. Martin Wiener has described how middle class public schools embodied a rejection

116 BLA, Bedford c.1890, book number 5312, 169.
117 See below chapter seven.
118 BLA, Bedford Musical Society Minute Book, document X817/1/2.
of urban life and were usually isolated from it. In the case of Bedford, however, the relationship between the schools and urban life was intense and inter-dependent. The values of the Harpur Schools and, indirectly, the values of the Taunton Commission were those which dictated changes in the environment and social tone in late Victorian and Edwardian Bedford. They were not simply the values of the British middle class as a whole but, more accurately, the values of a certain sector of that class. These were the values of imperialism, health, respectability and ritual, which superseded those of independence, localism, non-conformity and 'trade' (as represented by the Bedford retailers). The 'squatter' or residential sector of the county town middle class in Bedford were concerned with an exclusive form of respectability and status as defined by a limited range of knowledge-based or state sponsored occupations, of conformity. These values aspired to, and encapsulated, the professional suburban life of public status and private consumption and it was on these values that the economy of late Victorian Bedford grew. Bedford entered the twentieth century insulated against the shocks of industrial decline, suburban growth and centralisation that undermined other, larger, urban areas after the Great War. Bedford's economy and environment had already adjusted to a lifestyle of serviced suburban consumerism.

\[119\] Wiener, English Culture, 21.
Chapter Six
The Unregulated Town: Lincoln 1860-1910

The epoch between 1860 and 1910 was a key period for the physical and social remodelling of the county town. Lincoln provides an alternative picture of county town specialisation to Bedford; it was a town where specialisation was industrial rather than institutional or residential. Lincoln was remade and redefined from the 1850s onwards. The appearance, economic structure and social rhythms of the town were transformed by the expansion of manufacturing activity which came to physically dominate Lincoln and brought environmental problems in its wake. Many aspects of mid and late Victorian Lincoln - its crowded streets, large mills and foundries, wharves and markets, poor housing and above all the dirty atmosphere, open drains and insanitary conditions - would have been familiar to those writers who described the mushrooming northern industrial towns of the 1830s and 1840s. The increasing reliance on manufacturing, combined with the cyclical and vulnerable nature of the iron industry,¹ created circumstances in which the urban outcomes for Lincoln were not promising. The attempt to develop a stable economic and social environment fell to the urban elite, most particularly to the town corporation. This chapter will focus on the municipal strategy implemented to manage urban change in late Victorian Lincoln.

In all urban centres the growth of industry and population in the nineteenth century produced physical and environmental problems which were mitigated by the actions of the urban elite through the actions of borough corporations and sanitary authorities. The search for, and action taken to produce, solutions to the new urban environmental problems went hand-in-hand with the expansion of local government.² In seeking the authority necessary to ameliorate local problems or to implement improvements corporations augmented and formalised their authority. From the

publication of the Webbs' *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act*, the historiography of the government of Victorian towns is the history of 'progress', of increasing regulation. It is a historiography of control, the control of activities, the environment, control of disease and regulation of the people. Many urban histories stress the improvement to the physical fabric of cities and to the lives of citizens. It is unusual to come across a history of a town or city which focuses on how little was achieved, how many potential improvements were resisted or ignored. However some places did oppose the expensive developments to the urban fabric which became the norm across the rest of urban Britain from the 1860s onwards. Lincoln was one of those towns. In Lincoln the problems of an ancient agricultural and cathedral centre adjusting to modern urban change and new social ascendancies converged on the central urban innovation of sanitary improvements. In Lincoln, as in other urban centres, 'To venture into the field of improvement was to encounter complex technical, financial and ideological disputes'.

**An insanitary town**

As early as 1849 a local report presented to Lincoln Corporation highlighted the sanitary defects in the town infrastructure, commenting that there was 'no system of connected underground drainage in Lincoln [only] surface or street drainage'. The report argued that if, following the recent railway development, the population should continue to grow 'the evils resulting from a total absence of combined sewerage will be daily augmented, and diseases which are consequent thereon, must prove more fatal in their effects'. At this point the mid-century Lincoln Corporation were already legally obliged to undertake sanitary improvements as the mortality rate was 24 in 1,000 and corporations were liable for improvements under the Health of Towns Act if the mortality rate rose above 23 in 1,000. Neither this fact nor the report had any impact on the behaviour of the municipal authority; no improvements were undertaken in the mid-century period.

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4 Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 175.
Over four decades from 1850 the Lincoln urban elite achieved very little in the field of environmental health improvement. Some actions were undertaken in the 1870s such as the purchase of the waterworks and the appointment of a municipal analyst but, as this chapter will demonstrate, these contributed little to public health. Other common municipal strategies to improve urban welfare including the supply of pure water, thorough drainage, slum clearance and efficient sewerage were not addressed until the 1890s. By the end of the nineteenth century the management of sewerage and the provision of water in Lincoln remained primitive and slum clearance was non-existent. The Inland Sanitary Survey of 1893-95 found the ‘Dwellings of poorer classes old and dilapidated [with] much crowding of houses in courts and alleys on both sides of the River’. While the urban infrastructure had changed little since the 1850s, industrial expansion had created a high concentration of working-class inhabitants (mainly foundry employees) concentrated ‘downhill’ in poor conditions in the lower town. The new speculative development combined with ancient working class cottages contributed to a slum problem which was ‘regarded with apathy for years by the city councillors’.

Victorian Lincoln, particularly the lower town, was a spectacularly unhealthy urban environment; ‘as late as 1886 the infant mortality rate for Lincoln was three times the national average’. By the time of the sanitary survey Lincoln had a population of over 41,000 persons and, although there was not widespread overcrowding, most of the water supply was ‘liable to contamination of a dangerous character’. Although the town was sewered and ‘removal of refuse apparently efficiently performed’ there were no byelaws controlling scavenging or offensive trades and the state of the common lodging houses was ‘very bad’. The town corporation acted as the sanitary authority for Lincoln and according to the survey ‘Administration by Sanitary Authority [was] very defective as a rule.’

Other aspects of urban governance were also found wanting. The Sanitary Survey found the Medical Officer of Health, Charles Harrison to be ‘Active and energetic,
and [giving] good advice' but the Inspector of Nuisances was 'unsatisfactory' in the performance of his duties. The isolation hospital was a 'temporary wooden building' with 'very unsatisfactory' sewerage and there was no disinfecting apparatus in the town. The Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act 1889 had not been adopted and the only plan for a cholera outbreak was more frequent scavaging.\(^\text{12}\) Like many industrial towns of the 1820s and 1830s, Lincoln in the 1890s presented the ideal conditions for the outbreak of an epidemic disease. However, it was a decade later before the full impact of sanitary neglect was felt. It should not have been surprising that when an epidemic did occur in the town, it was a water-borne disease. Typhoid appeared in Lincoln at the end of 1904; it spread rapidly, was at its most intense in 1905, and did not disappear until 1907.\(^\text{13}\) Over a thousand people were recorded as suffering from the disease during 1905 and 1906 and when the outbreak was over 131 people had died.\(^\text{14}\) The epidemic placed a strain on the urban management of Lincoln; the town was inadequately prepared for such a crisis and needed to take emergency measures such as the setting up of temporary hospital accommodation.\(^\text{15}\) It was one of the last significant outbreaks of typhoid in Britain, a disease that had appeared in most urban areas in the 1860s and 1870s. Thereafter 'isolated epidemics' occurred only in 'places with particularly inadequate systems of sewerage and water supply, as at Cambridge in 1887 and at Maidstone and Kings Lynn in 1897'.\(^\text{16}\)

Subsequent reports and investigations blamed the municipal authority for the epidemic. The reluctance of Lincoln council to tackle the issue of water supply and their subsequent prevarication when placed under central statutory pressure to do so have been described by Francis Hill in *Victorian Lincoln*.\(^\text{17}\) Hill demonstrates how the municipal elite, when acting first as the local board and later as the sanitary authority, were directly responsible for the environmental problems in the town. Why did Lincoln's elite leave the town so vulnerable? During a period when most urban authorities began to control their environments to improve urban health the

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^\text{15}\) Briscoe, English and Melrose, *Typhoid in Lincoln*.
\(^\text{16}\) Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 303.
\(^\text{17}\) Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, chapter 12.
Lincoln municipal elite took little action in this field. Why did they fail to implement adequate health and sanitary improvements when it was within their power to do so?

There are a number of possible explanations for the laissez-faire approach adopted towards environmental control in Lincoln. The first is an essentially economic explanation, favoured by Hill. The ratepayers objected to the costs of improvements. A second explanation lies in the dominant local ideology, that of free trade liberalism which rejected authoritarian interference with business and trade. A third possibility is that non-intervention was tied in with local identity and a resistance to external pressure to undertake urban regulation from central government.

Cost was a central concern in all municipalities contemplating improvements to the urban fabric and Lincoln was no different in this respect. Resistance to intervention in Lincoln was usually articulated in terms of cost but how far was this the real issue? Lincoln council was no worse off financially than many others; indeed as an ancient corporation it had many assets and sources of income including farmland and because of this was able to avoid raising a borough rate before 1874.\textsuperscript{18} There had never been a municipal or improvement rate in Lincoln prior to this date, although there were parish and poor rates. It has been argued that the lack of improvement in Lincoln in the mid-nineteenth century was due to the lack of a rates income.\textsuperscript{19} In 1866, the mainly Tory Lincoln Corporation adopted the Public Health Act of 1848 amidst much antipathy to the introduction of the rates as required by the act.\textsuperscript{20} Hill argues that this lack of a rate-paying tradition created antagonism towards any introduction of council rates,\textsuperscript{21} even though other rates were levied in the town by different bodies. According to Hill, the district rate introduced as a result of the Public Health Acts which created the Urban Sanitary Authority did not meet with the same hostility: ‘There was not the same psychological resistance to this as to the idea of a borough rate’.\textsuperscript{22} However Hill does not suggest why it was considered so important to avoid a borough rate. The local antipathy to a rated environment was

\textsuperscript{19} Wright, Lincolnshire Towns and Industry.
\textsuperscript{20} Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 167.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 47.
not purely a simple cost objection but part of a broader ideological concept of Lincoln’s urban function. The elite in Lincoln focussed on creating a specialist economic environment within the county town, a free trade area.

**Trade and improvement**

Late industrialisation and expansion in Lincoln had resulted in the development of a world-renowned agricultural engineering industry, albeit one with a limited production range and a restricted future. The town’s extensive ironworks were vulnerable to cyclical slumps. They experienced problems by the 1880s, were outdated by the 1890s and in terminal decline by 1920. The very existence and the subsequent development of the iron foundries was a triumph over poor communications and industrial retardation. However, the development of a large-scale industrial sector did not improve either Lincoln’s internal communications or its network to the outside world. They remained inadequate. Between 1860 and 1910 the urban elite attempted to compensate for, rather than resolve, this problem. For the ironmasters and industrialists alike the unregulated, low cost environment protected by the elite produced high levels of individual success and profit; for the merchants and traders it ensured business survival in the face of broader competition and locational disadvantage. The pursuit of a low cost, unregulated, low rate environment was particularly important to all the ‘trade’ elements on the council. The new industrialists were long-standing municipal office holders and the major iron masters all served on the council and other leading industrialists were prominent members. Not that the industrialists were against all civic improvements; Nathaniel Clayton, one of the largest ironmasters, argued for sanitary improvements and a district rate in the interests of his workforce but continued to oppose other civic spending.

Although the retardation of Lincoln’s environmental and sanitary development was unusual it was not unique. Barry Doyle argues for a correlation between urban genre and urban spending:

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22 Ibid., 171.
24 See chapter seven.
In the second half of the nineteenth century boroughs like Birmingham and Glasgow invested heavily in utilities, capital projects and social amenities, as did new towns like Middlesbrough, whilst older cities like Norwich proved very reluctant to spend before the end of the century.26 Arguably an established tradition in urban government may well have made older cities more conservative in their actions but other ideological influences were important in Victorian Lincoln. Richard Evans’ history of nineteenth century Hamburg describes a city where local economic priorities together with ideological beliefs combined to produce a notoriously unhealthy environment.27 Surprisingly, Hamburg makes an interesting comparison with Lincoln although the two places had few characteristics in common. Hamburg was much larger in scale than Lincoln, it was also almost a city-state, possessing far more autonomy than any British city in the same period. However, the method of urban governance was very similar to that pursued in Lincoln. In the interests of trade the Hamburg elite failed to regulate the urban environment for most of the nineteenth century with the result that the city became a ‘pre-eminent centre for typhoid’ in the 1880s. Hamburg experienced both typhoid and cholera outbreaks long after these diseases had been eradicated from other German towns and cities. In Hamburg ‘Virtually everything was ruthlessly subordinated by the Senate and by the Administration to the interests of trade.’28 The elite in Hamburg was able to achieve this because they had hegemonic domination over the city.

As the Lincoln elite were more mixed in their composition than those in Hamburg, their power was more limited and their programme of municipal government was not as strategically well organised or as clearly articulated. Lincoln council’s emphasis was just as strongly focussed on economic growth and the promotion of trade. In Hamburg the main source of income was based on goods traded through the port. The emphasis on free trade was expressed through the efficient transfer of physical goods and fiscal transactions in a commercial merchant city. In Lincoln the concept of free trade and liberalism took the form of providing a low-cost unregulated setting

28 Ibid., 33.
within which businesses could thrive. 'Free trade' measures taken by the council in Lincoln were concerned with modifying the environment to ensure the free-flow of goods and labour in order to foster industrial growth, 'externalities' or external diseconomies were not charged to the public purse but were absorbed by individuals in terms of health risks.29

The areas in which Lincoln council was active itself in urban management or supported individual actions were related directly to the trades and income of the town. There is evidence to suggest that in the middle decades of the nineteenth century the Lincoln municipal elite looked towards a 'northern' manufacturing model of town management focusing almost exclusively on the development of industry. In 1865 the council held a special meeting to promote the development of a railway line to 'open out the coalfields of Yorkshire and connect the Manufacturing Districts with Lincoln by a new and direct route'.30 The council concentrated on creating a central area in the town that enabled the expansion of both commercial and manufacturing activities, focusing on these aspects rather than on health or sanitary issues.

The development of the waterside and wharf area provides a good example of municipal priorities. Lincoln council owned and regulated the Brayford Pool, the waterside port and wharf area in the heart of the city. Although waterways were well-known risks as far as health was concerned, the council did little to improve the sanitation of the pool and river but did take action to improve the wharf access and ensure the free flow of goods.31 In direct contrast to towns such as Bedford and Worcester where these areas were cleaned and reconstructed for leisure purposes, the waterside area in Lincoln remained dedicated to trade and commerce throughout the nineteenth century.

In the 'downhill' industrial area of Lincoln, along the waterfront, the largest manufacturers had established themselves around the mid-century. Industry continued to expand and infill this area, until the 1890s. There is no evidence to

29 LA, L/1/1/11, Minutes and proceedings of the Common Council 1865-1877.
30 Ibid, 5th May 1865.
31 Ibid.
suggest that the council regulated this development in any way, a stance which is hardly surprising given the leading roles played by manufacturers in civic government. In fact the situation was quite the reverse. Lincoln’s industrial development was assisted by the refusal of the municipal government to regulate the siting of foundries or railway lines, to levy a borough rate, or to control the pollution of the local watercourse. Moreover the council was concerned to control the growing manufacturing workforce and assisting employers’ interest in relation to the availability and mobility of labour in the borough. The council achieved both through the unregulated housing for the working classes developed on the hill above the foundries by private speculative development and by providing council constructed footbridges across the River Witham to enable easy access to the workplaces. Early leisure provision for the working classes focussed on retaining them within the town, a motion proposing the development of a park argued:

The increased and increasing population of the city of Lincoln especially amongst the Artisans and the Working Classes whose occupations confine them to the workshop and place of business during the hours of labour, render it essential for the maintenance of health and the present facilities afforded by the railway system to townships and others make it desirable that some attractive place of public outdoor recreation should be provided to which the population of the city could be admitted either free of at a trifling cost.... no such place for public recreation now exists within the city.33

Labour was encouraged to settle and to remain in Lincoln, moving efficiently between home and workplace and spending both their earnings and leisure time within the borough. In Lincoln the concept of ‘trade’ within the free trade ideology was broadly constructed. It was widely understood that the various economic functions of the town were interdependent, so while the rhetorical emphasis was placed upon the iron industry and wharf-side activities, much of the support for municipal policies came from the shopocracy.

The influential nature of shop owners has been recognised in other studies of local government during this period and they have been described as initially radical

32 Wright, Lincolnshire Towns, 226-7.
33 L. A., Lincoln City Council, Notice of Motions, 26th October 1870, document L/1/1/7.
supporters of municipal reform. Their conservatism and thrift has been stressed for the later Victorian period. In Lincoln there was a direct and clear correlation between the industrial fortunes of the town and the prosperity of the retailers. When the iron industry experienced a slump in 1875, the Lincoln Co-Operative Society found that its sales were falling. Shopkeepers comprised approximately a third of the Lincoln municipal elite and, as in other towns, were influential in opposing civic spending. In terms of capital improvements to the urban fabric, the shopocracy have been described as the 'group most actively antagonistic to proposals of increased expenditure'. This was because of the retailer's intimate daily knowledge of the uncertain flow of urban income and expenditure. As one Leeds councillor argued:

"few persons know better than the grocers and tea dealers of the town how general trade is moving; the demand for the luxuries of life is a correct barometer of the means within the power of consumers."

Shopkeepers brought this retail-based concept of urban economics into the Lincoln council chamber and influenced municipal policy in relation civic expenditure.

Lincoln Corporation pursued three major strategies between 1860 and 1900. Firstly, the council was concerned to maintain a low cost, low rate environment. Secondly, councillors exhibited a strong local resistance to central government 'interference' and statutory authority, and finally, they established high levels of elite cohesion and advantage. This last was achieved through strong and active personal, professional, political, business and religious networks, which operated both within and outside the council chamber. Cohesion was further cemented by the first two measures. Avoidance of expenditure and antipathy to outside interference could temporarily unite factions within the corporation and assist in the construction of a local identity.

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35 H. Fraser, 'Municipal socialism and social policy' in Morris and Rodger (ed.s), The Victorian City, 261; Crossick, 'The emergence of the lower middle class'; 39.
36 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 203.
37 See below chapter seven.
38 Barber, 'Municipal Government in Leeds', in Fraser, Municipal Reform, 104.
39 Quoted in Barber, 'Municipal government in Leeds', 105.
As the case of Bedford showed, the need to develop a competitive specialism in the late Victorian county town created a tension with the traditional town functions. This was often expressed in conflict between modernisers and traditionalists. In Lincoln, just as there was a conflict between the expansion of industry and the gentry and professional urban functions and an obvious and growing divergence between the uphill and downhill communities, so there were conflicting agendas within the urban elite. The major manufacturers argued that Lincoln must remain a low cost environment; they claimed this compensated for the inconvenience of their relative isolation and kept their production costs competitive. At the same time they required a healthy and mobile workforce. The gentry and professional elements, concentrated ‘uphill’ around the Cathedral, wanted a healthy, clean and improved town in both environment and morals. In between these interests were the merchants and traders who wished to attract and maintain middle class and gentry custom to the town but without increasing their overheads. From the 1860s, the various networks of economic, social and political power in Lincoln converged upon the council chamber where local interests came into conflict with those agendas proposed by central government. From the mid-century onwards the municipal elite, as represented in the town corporation and sanitary authority, found themselves on the receiving end of increasing statutory obligations imposed centrally, all of which were expensive.

The diversity of aims and priorities among councillors and the broader residential rate-paying class created considerable potential for conflict within the urban elite, reflecting the underlying instability in the urban economy. The urban elite and, to an extent, the town economy was stabilised through the town corporation. Improvements to the urban fabric, which incurred high capital costs, were regarded as a threat to this stability and, according to Fraser, 'issues of improvement, superficially non-political, could in practice generate enormous political heat as urban society faced up to the problems of environmental control and the public provision of social utilities. Basic questions about the legitimate use of the power of

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the urban community were involved in the mundane subjects of water and drains.\textsuperscript{41}

In Lincoln the debate certainly focussed on water supply and drains but the issue in question was not that of the limitations or use of the municipal elite's power but that of the right of the municipality and locality to be in charge of its own affairs and spending. In Lincoln resistance to outside interference from central government and statutory obligation coalesced over the issue of sanitary improvement.

\textbf{Local government and central government}

Resistance to central government regulation and communication followed through into resistance to national legislation.\textsuperscript{42} In Lincoln practical issues of sanitary improvements were integrated with questions of legislative expansion and legal obligation. In 1865 the corporation heard how: 'The mayor and fourteen councillors and the surveyor have visited Worthing and Croydon for the purpose of enquiring into the practical working of drainage and sewerage utilisation adopted in those towns.' While they were there 'enquiries were made by several of the deputation as to the working of the Local Government Act.... Croydon has been held up as a total failure of all that was sought for [from the act].'\textsuperscript{43} Lincoln council was obliged to adopt the Act in 1866 but had not done so willingly. The resultant election produced a Conservative withdrawal and twenty years of Liberal party control in Lincoln.\textsuperscript{44}

Despite the apparent strength of the Liberal hold on Lincoln council for the following two decades there were internal factors which ultimately undermined the Liberal hegemony. In the middle of the nineteenth century local politics in Lincoln had revolved around an easy alliance of Tories and old-fashioned Whigs based on social equality and status connections. Hill pointed out that; 'Rich and respectable liberals had their advantages; they were willing to spend and easy to get on with, and the parties reached an understanding in 1862 which was attacked by the radicals who denounced “unprincipled coalition” and “disgraceful compromise”.'\textsuperscript{45} Hill regarded the socio-political split in the Lincoln elite as one between this group and the radicals

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{LA, Minutes and Proceedings of the Common Council}, 19\textsuperscript{th} December 1865.
\textsuperscript{44} Hill, \textit{Victorian Lincoln}, 45.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 44.
and 'noisy' or poorer Liberals. Local contemporaries had interpreted this situation in terms of occupations, perceiving politics in the 1850s as divided into two camps; those who made their money in trade and commerce facing an educated professional group which included the Cathedral authorities and clergy. This was very similar to the situation in another county town, Ipswich in the mid-century period where Phillip Hills found 'two main groups: Tory Anglicans and Liberals, many of whom (but by no means all) were non-conformists'. Further research however found that 'a number of common interests were evident in local economic and business matters' in these two groupings.

The social divide within the Liberals continued long after the Liberal-Tory alliance dissolved in the late 1860s, as did the tacit acceptance of Tory representation of the upper or cathedral ward. As the alliance had proved, there was little proper party organisation in the county towns beyond the brief intervals of parliamentary elections. In the last three decades of the century the party machines became more organised and Lincoln liberals became more unified, only to split again over the Home Rule bill. Other fault-lines were created by religious distinctions within the liberals even though the majority were non-conformists and by new occupational differences. These differences probably prevented the rise of an ideologically driven Liberal caucus in Lincoln who needed to promote and be associated with improvements in the way that the dominant Liberal caucuses in Birmingham or Bedford had. In late Victorian Lincoln party politics came second to low rates and elections were lost rather than won over the previous term's rate increases.

Other identifiable groups in the council also suffered from factionalism. The professional group on the council, which had allied with the Tories at mid-century, also found themselves with new allegiances. Professional income was no longer simply dependent upon the patronage of the gentry and the cathedral close.

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47 P. Hills, 'Division and cohesion in the nineteenth-century middle class: The case of Ipswich 1830-1870' in *Urban History Yearbook 1987* (Leicester, 1987), 44.
Professionals were now just as likely to be employed by institutions or by the corporation itself. Professionals in the late Victorian period belonged to communities of knowledge and occupational bodies located beyond the borough boundary and they could promote these external values and ideas within the locality. John Davis has argued that the increasing professionalisation of powerful figures in the boroughs in the late nineteenth century promoted central authority over local democracy. It is argued that the growth of an established municipal staff in the town clerk's, sanitary and engineering departments, for example, promoted knowledge-based professional values in the town hall over local ones. Certainly some professionals, such as the medical officers of health, had divided loyalties. This was a period when they had enjoyed increased access to fellow professionals and new information and techniques but they were constrained in their opinions and actions by a necessary loyalty to the corporations or communities which employed them.

It has been argued that the presence of professionals on a town council had a direct impact on its 'improving' nature. Professionals, it is argued, were more likely to demand an improved, respectable sanitary environment. In Lincoln, however, this does not seem to have been the case. Lincoln professionals were mainly represented by solicitors; doctors were present in the council chamber between 1860 and 1910 but only in very small numbers. The professional presence failed to create a more interventionist policy in Lincoln. There are two main reasons for this and both explanations lie in the dominant presence of solicitors. Firstly, there is little evidence of a communality of interest among all professional men in this period and there was nothing to suggest that solicitors would identify with doctors, for example. Although they were distinguished from other councillors by their professional status, different professionals belonged to very different worlds at this time.

The second reason for the lack of 'professional' solidarity in municipal policy was the close relationship between the local legal community and the industrialists. Far

51 See above, chapter three.
52 J. Davis, 'Local government and centrality' a paper given at the Centre for Urban History seminar, University of Leicester, 15th December 1995.
from feeling a ‘taint’ arising from an association with ‘trade’ the Lincoln lawyers relied upon their links with industry for significant portions of their income. Many of the solicitor councillors were also company directors. Evans found that this was also the case in late nineteenth century Hamburg where ‘...the lawyers in the Senate could not afford to stray too far from the paths which the merchant community expected them to take.’ He explains that they were constrained by opinion and informal pressures operating through social networks and these are explored in chapter eight which analyses the intense network of social, familial, business and occupational connections operating within the Lincoln municipal elite. These networks enabled the elite to maintain stability and to resist outside pressure; it is also possible that they inhibited the development of party politics and a party programme of urban management. Lincoln was not unusual in this respect, since in Norwich during the same period Doyle notes that:

[the] enduring absence of party discipline from municipal government...was partly a result of the importance of pressure groups who were intimately bound up with the whole fabric of city politics.56

Local identity, social consciousness and economic connections were all more powerful foci of individual loyalties in late Victorian Lincoln than professional or party ideologies.

The lack of an ideological commitment to urban improvement, the emphasis on constraining expenditure, combined with the absence of a tradition of civic intervention, resulted in a deficit of capital investment in the urban fabric of Lincoln. By the time the sanitary authority was created in 1866, what little piped water Lincoln had was of uncertain quality and there was no underground drainage and few municipal facilities generally. Objections to this state of affairs from whatever quarter were met with hostility or derision at council meetings. Conveniently Lincoln council also sat as the sanitary authority. In Hamburg Evans describes the anti-interventionism as ‘official rhetoric or hegemonic ideology’ but notes it was

54 Read, Professional Men.
55 Evans, Death in Hamburg, 21.
57 LA, L/11/17 Lincoln City Council, Notice of Motions 1860s.
locally termed 'common sense' and this was also the case in Lincoln. Internal objections and external pressures combined to further delay improvement.

Municipal government in Lincoln was characterised by resistance to, and resentment of, central government 'interference' and statutory authority. There was little sympathy with modern ideas or with demands issuing from parliament or the Local Government Board in London. This resistance became a central characteristic of Lincoln council between 1860 and the 1890s, defining its municipal power. John Garrard has argued that 'The power of municipal elites was often limited and of unpredictable quality. It was limited by the complexity of municipal business and by the consequently rising influence of municipal servants.' In Lincoln the power of the council, particularly with regard to handling environmental or sanitary issues, was severely hampered but by self-limitation and by resistance to external authority. The complexity of municipal business that Garrard refers to was utilised by the corporation for their own ends but most noticeably in the pursuit of a liberal business environment and in deflecting the requirements of central government. The corporation conducted a type of guerrilla resistance to central authority utilising the procedures of formal meetings, reports and committee work.

The Sanitary Act of 1866 marked a decisive shift in the central government stance towards local government; the permissive was replaced by enforcement. It was some time after this date before any significant improvements were carried out in Lincoln. The council, acting as the Urban Sanitary Authority, took a number of environmental actions in the late Victorian period, including the purchase of the gasworks and waterworks and the beginnings of sewerage and electricity provision in the town. Despite the legal obligations imposed on all urban sanitary authorities there remained in Lincoln a resistance to investment in large-scale projects, such as drainage, which produced urban disruption and required high levels of capital expense. It is significant that the gas and water plants were purchased after they had proved their commercial viability, while the development of anything resembling

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58 Evans, Death in Hamburg, 33.
60 LA, Correspondence of Lincoln Local Board 1866-91.
61 Garrard, Leadership and Power, 222.
effective sewerage occurred much later. Hill has described this period in Lincoln’s history as one of ‘reluctant progress’ and regards the Lincoln elite as a group who only reacted when pushed into producing improvements by legislative obligation.63

In 1870 the Home Secretary investigated the provision of sewerage in Lincoln and, following constant political pressure, drainage was laid at the end of the 1870s, twenty years later than in most other towns. Not that the comparison was considered to be important; Lincoln Corporation believed that they understood local conditions best and invitations to visit other town corporations or to join them in campaigns were generally refused. Government enquiries were derided and MOH reports were refuted aggressively.64 Where the corporation was legally obliged to make improvements, as in the case of water provision, it was possible for them to bat an issue back and forward between different authorities, boards or committees in order to avoid expensive action. Lincoln council members sat as both the city corporation and, on separate occasions, as the sanitary authority. In 1891 the council sitting in committee resolved:

That it is inexpedient to adopt the provision of the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, 1889 unless and until the Urban Sanitary Authority are prepared to provide a reasonable amount of hospital accommodation to provide for cases requiring compulsory isolation, and that the Council be recommended to provide for such accommodation at a cost not exceeding £4,000.65

Between the two authorities composed of the same individuals the hospital provision was delayed and, when provided, inadequate. This delay was not simply cost-related as many of the councillors objected to the idea of isolation involving the separation of families or mother and child and, perhaps predictably therefore, Lincoln was also a strong centre of the anti-vaccination campaign. This delaying strategy was also used to avoid other forms of intervention, and, in this manner, problems with the water supply were allowed to rumble on for more than thirty years until the typhoid epidemic of 1905.

63 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 220.
64 LA, Correspondence of Lincoln Local Board 1866-91.
65 LA, L.Lin 614, City of Lincoln Epitomes, Urban Sanitary Authority Meetings, 1891-94, 15/12/1891.
Compared to other municipal authorities Lincoln passed little local legislation. In the 1860s Lincoln City passed by laws to regulate nuisances and slaughter houses both in 1866, and the Lincoln Commons Act was passed by Parliament in 1870. The Lincoln Commons Act allowed the council to purchase, drain and regulate activities on common land which had previously been used by the city's freemen for grazing. The council wished to make the land available for the leisure of the industrial workforce.\textsuperscript{66} In 1880 bye laws relating to new streets and buildings were brought into force and regulations on common lodging houses introduced in 1882. Despite this apparent progress in urban improvement, enforcement was another matter. By the 1890s the Inland Sanitary Survey found that the common lodging houses were in a 'very bad' state and the slaughter houses 'generally dirty and dilapidated'.\textsuperscript{67} While the council had adopted regulations on dairies, cowsheds and milk shops, these were also found to be in a poor state, particularly those owned by the municipal council itself.\textsuperscript{68}

The lack of improvements even under statutory obligation and the failure to enforce regulations in Lincoln soon drew the attention of the Local Government Board, an agency established in 1871 following the Royal Sanitary Commission of the 1860s and joint pressure from the British Medical Association and the Social Science Association.\textsuperscript{69} According to Christine Bellamy the four main duties of the Board were to 'make delegated legislation' in the form of 'General Orders'; to act as a policing authority to protect ratepayers and clients; to arbitrate between local authorities and other organisations or groups; and, finally to ensure 'the public accountability of local government'.\textsuperscript{70} For their prevarication in various areas of provision Lincoln City Council was brought to the notice of the Local Government Board and, on occasions, into direct conflict. The habitual response of the council to ignore all new statutory requirements or responsibilities for as long as possible was antithetical to the operation of the Board which sought effective local implementation of national legislation. If in Lincoln the permissive Public Health

\textsuperscript{66} LA, Lincoln City Bye Laws.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} C. Bellamy, Administering Central-Local Relations, 1871-1919: The Local Government Board in its Fiscal and Cultural Context (Manchester, 1988), 112.
Act of 1848 was ignored successfully for some time, the compulsory statutes fared little better and the 1858 Local Government Act was not adopted until 1866.\textsuperscript{71}

The presence of another elite powerful body within the borough also raised the negative profile of Lincoln in London. When the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral were unhappy with a council service they complained directly to the Local Government Board.\textsuperscript{72} The Local Government Board wrote to the Lincoln Sanitary Authority in 1891 forcing the authority to ‘consider’ a ‘...letter from the Local Government Board containing a complaint from the Precentor of Lincoln’. However, ‘the Local Government Board had few positive financial inducements to offer the localities and operated in a climate in which neither the political will or the local capacity to fund the local services could be assumed.’\textsuperscript{73} The board could complain, cajole, pressurise and demand, but, ultimately, they could not force change in the provinces. Lincoln was not the only town to object to outside ‘interference’; Brian Barber found similar attitudes in Leeds between 1860 and 1910. In Leeds the limited nature of the sewerage system and the breakdown in scavenging led to an appalling insanitary state of affairs by 1865, but Leeds councillors were defiant claiming ‘We are not ashamed of our town, nor afraid to live in it’.\textsuperscript{74} The Leeds councillors continued to scorn outside evaluation and after the formation of the Local Government Board resisted or ignored its authority for as long as possible asserting their own authority instead. One example of this was the fact that Leeds council allowed the building of back-to-back houses, against all the strictures of the Board, until they were finally outlawed by national legislation in 1909.\textsuperscript{75}

In Lincoln as in Leeds it was rare to find acceptance or validation of external criticism; there was only resentment. The council, acting as the urban sanitary authority, received continual complaints about environmental issues, particularly with regard to water supply, but rejected criticism. When the council received:

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 136-7.
\textsuperscript{71} Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 166-7.
\textsuperscript{72} LA, L.Lin 614, City of Lincoln Epitomes, Urban Sanitary Authority Meetings, 1891-94, 27/2/1891.
\textsuperscript{73} Bellamy, Administering Central-Local Relations 1871-1919, 111.
\textsuperscript{74} B. Barber, 'Municipal government in Leeds 1835-1914' in Derek Fraser (ed.), Municipal Reform and the Industrial City, (Leicester, 1982), 69.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 72.
A letter from the Army Service Corps, at Sheffield, complaining about the quality of water supplied at the Barracks, Lincoln... the clerk was directed to reply that the Corporation take all possible precautions to render the supply of water to the city pure and fit for domestic purposes.  

The complaints and personnel emanating from the Local Government Board in London only seem to have hardened local convictions as to their right to run the town as they saw fit.

Religious and cultural influences were also strong local factors in the rejection of outside evaluation. W.B. Maltby a chemist, councillor and Methodist attributed that the city's health problems 'to the mysterious workings of a Superior Power' at a council meeting in 1864 and called for 'temperance, proper food, ventilation and better houses'.

Seven Lincoln mayors during this period were Wesleyan Methodists, several were also lay preachers and 'moral' explanations for social and economic problems remained popular in Lincoln long after they had become discredited in other areas. There was also a local scepticism about the developments in sanitary science and technology, which was surprising given the uptake of new forms of industrial technologies in late Victorian Lincoln. The local scepticism about the desirability and feasibility of modern improvements was obvious to a visitor who arrived in the midst of the long-delayed underground sewerage project:

Lincoln is at present in a disorganised state; the streets and roads have not yet recovered the excavation made in laying the main pipes for the new system of drainage, and the smaller pipes have all to be laid after the apparatus for pumping the sewerage is complete. Whether, when it is done it will be successful, is with many a subject of doubt...

The development of municipal government and services in Lincoln best fits Jose Harris's description of local government as a 'piecemeal creation'. Far from being locally generated or innovative Lincoln's municipal actions were largely a result of external pressures and obligations finally acceded to after a long period of

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procrastination. All improvements before the 1880s were undertaken with 'reluctance'. However, after the 1888 local government reforms Lincoln became a county borough and the municipal elite became slightly more proactive. Lincoln remained at least a couple of decades behind many Victorian cities in environmental control though the corporation had no intention of admitting this.

In 1899 Lincoln hosted the annual provincial conference of the Association of Sanitary Inspectors. Despite the questionable sanitary condition of the town at this time the corporation maintained a united front in the face of such expert outsiders. The mayor, Hugh Wyatt, made the opening speech to the conference claiming that 'Sanitary work, to his mind, was one of the blessings of the age' and that 'He was glad to be able to be able to tell the Sanitary Inspectors that the Lincoln of today was a much healthier city than it was 20 years ago'. The mayor requested that 'any little defects should not be too severely criticised'. The mayor's speech was followed by welcoming speeches from the Dean, the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee of the Corporation and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH). The chairman told the sanitary inspectors that 'Lincoln was full of difficult problems' and the MOH Dr Harrison supported him saying that '...Lincoln was an old city, and, as they knew there was considerable difficulty in introducing the latest sanitary improvements into such a place'. However the MOH asserted 'In the newer parts of town he believed [the sanitary inspectors] would find nothing to condemn'. On the whole the civic authorities pointed to the improvements that had been undertaken and argued that Lincoln was no more insanitary than any other comparable ancient settlement - mention was made of the Roman drains! The corporation blamed the town's slow start in sanitation on external factors such as poor legislation and conflicting scientific information and upon the internal problems of ancient buildings and local citizens who objected to improvements.

Only the Dean of the Cathedral departed from the local line telling the inspectors that 'they would be able to judge and say how far there are things that want correcting in

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80 Fraser, Power and Authority, 151.
82 Ibid., 47.
Lincoln'. He was not above giving the visitors some broad hints as to what these things might be and the sanitary inspectors were:

invited to discuss subjects which were of vital and burning interest to the people of Lincoln .... slaughter-houses, water supplies, and the possibility of there being some day in Lincoln to pick a flower without being compelled to wash their hands directly afterwards.\(^8^3\)

He also drew a pointed comparison between the building of former times in the shape of the Cathedral and the modern development in downhill Lincoln. By the time of the conference the cathedral authorities had been campaigning for improvements with little success for four decades and remained unhappy with the state of the town.

The same lack of intervention and regulation by the elite that resulted in an unhealthy environment, high mortality, and general squalor also failed to produce any external manifestations of civic pride in late Victorian Lincoln. The wave of municipal building that occurred in towns and cities across Britain in this period bypassed Lincoln. The town had no purpose built town hall, no municipal offices or fire station, no museum or library building. The council did their utmost to avoid capital projects which would incur high levels of investment. The occupational and economic structure of Lincoln produced very little support or, apparently, demand for cultural amenities. In comparison to other county towns Lincoln facilities for further, technical or self-education were lacking. The Lincoln Mechanics' Institute suffered from a chronic lack of support and funding which produced a long slow decline. Its patrons were unable to shame either the municipal authority or the broader middle class into supporting the Institute.\(^8^4\) There was little attention paid to civic, cultural or educational amenities and Lincoln gained many of these institutions much later than other urban communities. Late development and a resistance to outside modernising pressures led to high costs in the long run. Industry had undermined Lincoln's middle-class and gentry service role and its ability to attract visitors and as a consequence from the mid-nineteenth century Lincoln's 'county' social events such as the castle balls and race meetings also declined.

\(^8^3\) Ibid., 45.

\(^8^4\) LA, Lincoln Mechanics' Institute 31st Annual Report, 1864.
The table below demonstrates how the policies and strategies developed by the municipal elite in Lincoln echoed those used in the local heavy industries. In many instances the requirements of the iron industry and those of the urban community as a whole were regarded as analogous.

**Table 7 Sources of Urban Instability and Elite Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of instability in Lincoln’s urban economy 1860-1910</th>
<th>Action taken by the urban elite to promote stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New young industries</td>
<td>Spread risk through elite- directorships/ No regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain demand (tariff barriers, depression)</td>
<td>Diversify product range/ seek wider market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remoteness from centre</td>
<td>Improve local mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High local costs</td>
<td>Keep rates low and retain labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapidly growing population</td>
<td>Control urban mobility and activities of working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Specialise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing elite interests</td>
<td>Exploit professional, kinship and religious networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus on providing an environment that would foster trade and industry meant that the municipal elite in Lincoln was not alert to the developmental opportunities produced by existing resources. In Lincoln the corporation gave no attention to the possibility of attracting affluent residents, for example Lincoln Corporation failed to exploit opportunities such as the expanding educational arena. The Christ’s Hospital School is a good example of an amenity which the borough council had the power to develop and exploit but chose instead to ignore. The school was an endowed establishment. In 1857 the council noted that ‘...the government of Christ’s Hospital is placed in the hands of the Town Council....this body having the election of the majority of the Governors’ and the ‘Mayor being also Master of the Hospital’. This matter was not raised in a council meeting for the purposes of taking direct action with regard to the school but rather to press for an annual report on the ‘state of the finances and condition’ of the institution. While elites in other county towns were beginning to build upon their institutional and educational assets Lincoln
council was concerned to establish basic business practice at Christ’s Hospital. In 1882 a motion was brought demanding that municipal provision of funds to schools should be resumed; the council had stopped all grants and donations to ‘charitable or other institutions’ due to the ‘parlous’ state of civic finances. Education was still considered within a context which was primarily economic.

Lincoln Corporation did produce some recreational improvements during the late Victorian period. The council drained and improved the commons, changing this open space from agricultural to leisure use. They purchased under a local act another common previously used by privileged freemen but which was re-landscaped to provide an arboretum and a park for the industrial workforce. The council also levelled some areas of open common for the cricket clubs which were based on foundry firms and so once again the municipal programme supported the commercial priority by focussing on the workforce.

While the corporation did not make any effort to maintain Lincoln’s position as a gentry leisure centre or to develop the town for residential or educational purposes, they were concerned to maintain Lincoln’s status as an agricultural marketing centre. Notices of council motions throughout the 1860s reveal concerns about the state of the pavements, the markets, including the ‘disgraceful state of the pens’ and a constant grumbling about the ‘waste of water’. The corporation developed a more formal market place and organised seasonal fairs and sales designating specific places for the purpose and providing them with livestock pens. These improvements altered the character and atmosphere of Lincoln and contributed to the increasingly urban character of the county town.

Municipal action was conceived of in primarily economic terms and it was this which led to municipal trading in Lincoln. From the late 1860s municipal trading was increasingly regarded as the answer to maintaining a competitive environment. The purchase of private companies to provide municipal services enabled the

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85 LA, L/1/1/7, Lincoln City Council, Notice of Motions 1860s, 27th December, 1857.
86 Lincoln Corporation Notice of Motions 1860s.
87 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 222.
89 Lincoln City Council, Notice of motions 1860s.
corporation to avoid capital investment. Lincoln council began with the purchase of the local waterworks company in 1871, followed by the gas undertaking which involved lengthy negotiations and was only completed in 1885. The council then purchased a tram company in 1902. All of these were well established and had been trading for some time but the council was able to popularise and expand the services to new users within the city. In 1888 Lincoln council ran a series of lectures to promote the use of ‘small gas cooking stoves to the working men and their wives’ in an effort to expand gas uptake.

The corporation of Lincoln did not have the same resistance to the provision of services extended to the broader population through municipal trading that they had to providing amenities or services ‘on the rates’. This was probably because the majority of the councillors ran at least one business of their own and perceived themselves as ‘businessmen’ first and foremost. It was a short step from their own counters and offices to running a corporation business. From an ideological standpoint municipal trading also had inherent advantages; the expansion of municipal services to the working classes, for example, was simply a question of developing more paying customers for gas and trams; the non-conformist shopkeepers had no objections to this. Just as in Birmingham, municipal businesses were expected to be profitable and increase council income. There was no question of providing services for the many at the expense of the few; the concept of a programme municipal socialism that can be found in large Victorian cities such as Glasgow was not articulated in Lincoln.

Municipal trading also offered the possibility of reinforcing the authority of the elite within the borough as it involved both an extension of control and an opportunity to frame local legislation. When the council drew up the Lincoln Corporation Tramways Act 1900 they rolled together provisions enabling them to borrow money, to reduce payments to another fund, and to carry out street works and improvements ‘as necessary’. Lincoln was particularly keen on trying to extend its dominion over

90 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 27.
93 H. Fraser, ‘Municipal socialism and social policy’ in Morris and Rodger, The Victorian City, 262.
94 LA, Lincoln Corporations Tramways Act 1900.
the fast growing suburbs outside the borough boundary and local legislation provided a back-door to additional spatial control. Both the tramway and gas provisions involved encroachment into Bracebridge, an independent suburban ribbon development with rural district status. Bracebridge had long been an extra-municipal thorn in Lincoln council’s side. The suburb had successfully fended off attempts to incorporate it into Lincoln for some decades and attained recognition as a separate urban district in 1898. To add insult to injury Bracebridge was dependent upon Lincoln for gas and water, while discharging its sewerage into the River Witham opposite the place where Lincoln took its water supply.95

Municipal purchase and trading was not an unusual proceeding; many councils bought out a variety of services which had previously been provided by private companies or individuals as a way of enhancing or regulating provision to ratepayers.96 They also offered the possibility of providing an indirect subsidy to local business.97 What was different in Lincoln was that these purchases were not made to support existing council-developed facilities but rather to fill a gap where there had previously been no council activity. Nor do they seem to have been purchased as part of a coherent municipal programme but as opportunistic responses to statutory requirements or economic events. On some occasions the municipal purchase of a service in Lincoln actually retarded the development of the service. The case of water provision was a prime example, it fell far behind technical and sanitary innovations and quality improvements after municipal purchase due to continued stalling on behalf of the council and sanitary authority. In this way municipal trading was used to support a general long-term policy of laissez-faire and under-investment.

By the early twentieth century the town was obviously stagnating and had lost its role as a marketing and consumer centre. The late Victorian elite successfully sacrificed a great deal of urban development to produce a modern large-scale industry in Lincoln and the resultant over-dependence on one single urban sector made the community vulnerable to slump. This was apparent to some sectors of the

95 N.R. Wright, *Lincolnshire Towns and Industry 1700-1914* (Lincoln, 1982),
96 Waller, *Town, State and Nation*, 312.
urban elite, particularly the shopocracy, as early as the 1870s, but did not fully strike home for another fifty years. The narrow view of the responsibilities of urban government pursued in Lincoln also created vulnerability. The poor environment resulting from non-intervention and the adverse publicity generated by it caused the non-industrial aspects of the town to decline. Generally, as responsibilities were acquired, voluntarily or otherwise, town councils expanded their spheres of operations. In Lincoln the council’s reluctance to assume these responsibilities meant that the governance of Lincoln remained weak and narrowly based.

Derek Fraser has argued that ‘the development of urban government in corporate towns ...sprang from no overall plan but was a response to local government problems as they were perceived in the local context’ (my italics). However, what was a problem to an urban governmental elite in any given local environment depended on the aims and activities of the elite. Thus urban historians have focussed on the composition of urban elites in an effort to understand the motivation behind different municipal strategies. In the county towns the elites had many similarities yet, as Lincoln and Bedford have shown their strategies might be very different. What was perceived as a problem in Bedford did not necessarily qualify as one in Lincoln. More subtly, what constituted a problem requiring a response rather than merely recognition, was even more locally determined.

In late Victorian Lincoln ideals of civic consciousness and public health were sacrificed to the perceived need to produce an unregulated cheap manufacturing and trading environment. Elite choices shaped the environment of late Victorian Lincoln and the lives of its citizens but also had implications for the long-term economic development of the town. In 1961, a study of British towns grouped Lincoln with Ipswich, Worcester, Gloucester and Peterborough as a ‘mainly commercial centre with some industry’ despite the decline of Lincoln’s industrial activities half a century earlier. Bedford was described as belonging to a class of towns categorised as ‘spas, professional and administrative centres’ along with Bath, Cheltenham,

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97 R.J. Morris ‘Externalities, the market, power structures and the urban agenda’, Urban History Yearbook, 17, (1990), 99-109.
98 Fraser, Power and Authority, 151.
Cambridge and Exeter. This indicates that the choices made by the elites in late Victorian county towns influenced urban development for a century afterwards. In 1961 the urban category of county town was no longer in use but the specialist activities and the urban identities fostered by the county town elites in the late Victorian period were still discernible in the characters of their towns in the twentieth century.

This chapter and the previous one considered two very different cases of county town adaptation in the period between 1860 and 1910. Both Bedford and Lincoln municipal elites developed specialist competitive characteristics in their county towns and ‘remade’ the town environment accordingly. The townscapes, employment and social structures were moulded to support urban specialisation and increasingly reflected new competitive priorities. Despite the fact that the municipal corporations of Bedford and Lincoln pursued similar strategies, privileging certain activities and values, the resultant environments could be considered to represent contrasting possibilities of late Victorian urban development. Institutions were important components of this process, whether they were individual institutions, such as the schools and hospital in Bedford, around which new activities and markets could be developed or more encompassing authoritative urban institutions. In the process of ‘remaking’ the towns tensions and conflicts arose between traditional elements and ‘modern’ specialist developments.

Chapter Seven
The Municipal Elite in the County Town

The remaking of county towns in the late nineteenth century was managed and directed by the urban elite. The previous chapters described how the county town municipal elites in both Bedford and Lincoln pursued distinct visions of urban development and contrived to follow coherent strategies for urban change across a sustained period of time. How did the elites in these county towns manage to exert such a strong influence over the environment and the economy? How did they reach across the different interests of members to achieve consensus about, or at least to mitigate opposition to the changes that reshaped their towns? In order to understand the processes of adaptation that occurred in the county town between 1860 and 1910 it is necessary to develop a coherent picture of the structure and composition of the urban elite.

Defining the urban elite

In the eighteenth century the social and economic benefits arising from the exercise of power over the town remained largely the preserve of the aristocracy, despite the continual ‘rise’ of the middle class presence in the urban areas and the extension of property related privileges. County towns were often prime examples of urban areas under aristocratic dominance; as established gentry leisure centres in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries their economies were partly dependent upon landed agricultural incomes. Politically, many county towns had been only one or two steps away from pocket boroughs, a situation that lasted into the nineteenth century until the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832. County towns and landed titles were often synonymous. Those towns which had not experienced early industrialisation were more likely to retain aristocratic residents and interest into the nineteenth century and Bedford and Lincoln were no exceptions. Bedford had a long tradition of returning Russells (Dukes of Bedford) and Whitbreads to

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Parliament, while in Lincoln the Sibthorps (local gentry) and the Monsons (local peerage) fought it out, a Sibthorp candidate spending £3,000 on voters in one day in the 1818 election.4

Following the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 the growing and increasingly affluent urban middle classes gained urban power and began to impose new economic social, cultural and moral frameworks on the town environment and on urban functions. Urban historians have examined the open conflict and the underlying tensions that were to be found between the new middle class represented by the reformed corporations and the neighbouring aristocracy.5 This tension gradually abated in the late Victorian period as new compromises evolved or, in some areas the aristocracy withdrew from town life.6 As a result of these changes, the urban elite in the second part of the nineteenth century was mainly comprised of the urban middle class in the county town.

In the context of the shifting and evolving towns and cities of the nineteenth century historians have found the urban elite difficult to define, definitions have been elusive, yet the concept of an urban elite is apparently straightforward. The elite comprised those who possessed political, social and economic power over their fellow citizens. Morris has observed that a study of an urban elite is essentially a study of power.7 In defining the elite various qualifications are considered important. Firstly, the elite must reside or have a function within the town or city, so as to distinguish them from central government. They must be an integrated part of urban life, attached to a specific locale. Secondly, they must be active in urban life in some form.8 Narrowing the definition of the elite to those who were the wealthiest present or of the highest status in the community and assuming that leadership ‘automatically’ follows is flawed as wealth and social seclusion are frequently related.

4 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 15.
7 Morris, Class, Sect and Party, 1.
8 P. Hills, 'Division and cohesion in the nineteenth-century middle class: The case of Ipswich 1830-1870' in Urban History Yearbook 1987 (Leicester, 1987), 43.
Research on urban elites has been concerned with analysing the composition or actions of elites in order to develop an understanding of class formation and inter-class relationships in the urban arena. From the outset Briggs' comparison of elites in Birmingham and Manchester spawned comparative studies. Examples included Hennock's work on the municipal elites of Birmingham and Leeds and Smith's analysis of the difference in elite structures in Birmingham and Sheffield. These studies related elite composition to the broader occupational structures of the cities and sought to establish an economic and structural base to explain elite composition and strategies. For Morris the Victorian urban elite comprises the entire urban middle class, a diverse but coherent group which functioned as a class in order to protect and preserve their property-based status and privileges against erosion by other classes, building the moral and physical landscape of the urban environment.

This class-based definition contrasts with Garrard's political status argument. Garrard perceives the elite as an 'urban squirearchy' characterised by political position. This would make the concentration on local government a logical way of accessing the urban elite, as Garrard argues that social background was not important. Garrard considers the political elite was 'open' and 'social position was not so much inherited as earned', though he concedes that 'political leaders were generally also social leaders'.

If political and social status were largely inseparable in town life so were economic and class privileges. The urban elite in this period can be defined either as a class or as a status group. There are difficulties inherent in both approaches. Class based analysis risks producing a broad-brush picture, ignoring local differences and areas of friction. Certainly there was an identifiable urban middle class in the Victorian town, defined by and defining themselves by, property. Since property rights conferred political ones for much of the nineteenth century this class enjoyed very real power over their environment and fellow citizens. So if the whole urban middle

class is considered to comprise the urban elite this disguises the fissures and discords within that class and assumes an equitable dispersal of power across the class and a common interest in exerting it. As Mark Girouard describes:

A Victorian town was a battlefield. Liberals fought against Conservatives. Dissenters fought against the Church of England. Protestants fought against Catholics.... Protectionists fought against free-traders. The drink interest fought against the temperance interest. The pulpit fought against the stage. Goths fought against classicists. The godly fought against the ungodly. One shop fought to win custom from another.13

Much of this conflict occurred within the middle class and produced many different points of stress and possible fragmentation in any middle class elite formation and policy implementation.

Focusing on wealth and status as an elite qualification can also be misleading. Narrowing the definition of the elite to those who were the wealthiest or of the highest status in the community and assuming that leadership 'automatically' follows is problematic as the major landowners and industrialists may have divorced themselves entirely from any form of civic activity.14 To consider the politically active as forming an open elite divorced from inherent social influence or class considerations is to ignore what was a world of day-to-day distinctions and anxieties for any respectable Victorian: it was no coincidence that political leaders and social leaders were often the same people. In smaller communities such as county towns pluralism was even more intense that in the Victorian city, and a single individual could hold many positions simultaneously based upon their political, social and financial status.15

Hennock, Trainor and other urban historians have tried to avoid these difficulties by using office-holding in local institutions as a requirement for elite membership.16

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12 Garrard, Leadership and Power, 31-2.
15 Hills, 'Division and cohesion in the nineteenth-century middle class', 43.
16 Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons; R. Trainor Black Country Elites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialised Area 1830-1900 (Oxford, 1993); P. Jones 'Studying the middle class in nineteenth century Britain: Perspective, sources and methodology in a comparative study of the middle class in
This identifies the active individuals and allows some measure of the divisions between those who were privileged in the urban environment. Office holding provides a clear-cut and manageable methodology which enables elite structure to be analysed. Elite activity can be examined through the decisions made by the municipal authority, philanthropic bodies or local boards. In many ways this is the most pragmatic way of defining and studying the urban elite and elite activity; it allows the identification of key individuals and the analysis of elite motivation and action through institutional and corporate activity. Taking office-holding as a starting point for the urban elite it is possible to consider linkages to the wider middle-class and the extent to which the entire middle class ‘fed into’ the elite or were linked to them. We can begin to understand how the elite operated through different institutions and how urban associations and institutions offered routes into the urban elite producing a broader understanding of the social structure and mobility operating in any given town. This chapter will focus on the municipal elites of the two case study towns in order to understand the economic and social networks behind the remaking of the county towns between 1860 and 1910.

The county town elite
In both Bedford and Lincoln in the late Victorian period the municipal corporation was the key institution in the ‘remaking’ process and, for this reason, the county town elite has been defined as those participating in municipal government. This definition is not entirely unproblematic. The municipal authority was not the only institution wielding power in many county towns. In some towns the influence of the council was actually secondary to, or competed with, that of another institution. In the cases of Bedford and Lincoln, the Harpur Trust and the Anglican Church respectively, were examples of powerful institutions operating within the municipal boundary. Despite this, the municipal corporation exerted the most authority over the urban environment and was the single most important body controlling the reshaping of the town between 1860 and 1910. The situation was complicated by the fact that town corporations sometimes composed a part, or the whole, of other governing bodies, even ones with which they competed for power or policy control.

Bedford Corporation participated in the government of the Harpur Trust while both Bedford and Lincoln corporations also sat as the sanitary authorities for their towns. Another problem with restricting the definition of elite members to the most visible and clearly defined part of elite activity, the municipal corporation, is that the elite is confined to an entirely male cohort. This denies the influence of many women in the county town, particularly their roles in the formation of social relations and social policy during this period. Despite these limitations the municipal authority provides a focus for understanding the strategies and processes that remade county towns like Bedford and Lincoln between 1860 and 1910.

Municipal corporations in Victorian county towns differed little in structure from those in larger cities but they were older, smaller and generally followed a tradition of pre-modern urban government. This had produced a county town elite that was established, stable and often dynastic in character. Unlike many industrial urban areas which had been lacking in administrative bodies, municipal government was not particularly new to county towns. The majority of county town municipalities were reformed, rather than incorporated, in 1835. These boroughs often had a long history, many traditions and rituals and the corporations had previous experience of co-operation (or of non-co-operation) with other urban bodies. In Bedford, for example, more work was undertaken by the Improvement Commissioners that by the old corporation. This is not to argue that the arrangements in the Municipal Corporations Act 1835 had a less radical impact in county towns; reform often swept away small oligarchies, replacing them with a broader personnel and occasionally exposing corruption at the same time. Such was the case in Leicester where the activities of the unreformed council became famed for their extravagance. Municipal reform also revealed the diverse nature of the propertied class in county towns. In Lincoln reform removed the Anglican stranglehold on local government and the new corporation included two Roman Catholics, two Wesleyans and two Unitarians. The greatest changes in the structure of municipal government in the county town occurred before the mid-century but the greatest challenges for the councils and the

bulk of their urban activity occurred with town growth in the second part of the century.

The long traditions of aristocratic influence and local government in the county town suggests that there was a greater potential for conflict between the old elite of the ancien regime and the newly politically powerful middle classes.\textsuperscript{20} In the context of research into this tension it seems reasonable to expect that the relationship between these classes would have been more fraught in county towns, which had experienced a closer relationship to landed life, than many new urban centres. Both Bedford and Lincoln in the late nineteenth century were free of a dominant single aristocratic landholding presence. The Select Committee Report on Town Holdings of 1889 found that the land in both towns was largely freehold and there were no major urban landlords, with the exception of the Anglican Church in Lincoln which owned the Cathedral and the surrounding close.\textsuperscript{21} Although both towns were surrounded by powerful landowners, within the urban borough boundaries Bedford and Lincoln were free from the aristocratic influence and management that can be seen in smaller landlord towns such as Woburn in Bedfordshire or Stamford in Lincolnshire. These county towns also lacked the aristocratic urban investment that occurred in larger industrial centres such as the influence of the Calthorpes on the suburban growth of Birmingham or Bute's development of Cardiff.\textsuperscript{22} The county status of the towns meant that these towns were still subject to the occasional or seasonal influence of the county aristocracy and gentry, in particular that of the largest landholders in their hinterlands, particularly in the mid-nineteenth century. Bedford, for example, maintained civil relations with the Russells (Dukes of Bedford) and often made claims upon the relationship when promoting civic events or improvements. The Russells, however, were not large landowners in the town and were far more influential in the smaller towns on, or bordering, their estates. On the whole both Bedford and Lincoln were largely free of day-to-day aristocratic investment and influence in a period when class society in Britain was at its 'zenith'.\textsuperscript{23}


This vacuum in social and political leadership meant that the middle class urban elite in the county town possessed a great deal of local power. One of the characteristic features of county town life prior to municipal reform was the presence of small local governing bodies and the tradition of merchants, traders and modest artisans participating in local decision making. Participation had often been facilitated by urban privileges granted through purchase or birth, such as the ancient status of 'Freeman' which, in towns such as Lincoln, granted voting rights as well as grazing and trading ones. This meant that prior to nineteenth century municipal reform there was a long experience of limited local government amongst some of the middling classes and the wealthy in county towns. After 1835 social and political power was reconstructed through the form of the municipal corporation (town council). The councils formed a nexus of elite social, economic, occupational and professional networks in the late Victorian county town.

The Town Corporations
Who were the members of the county town municipal elite? Councillors can be categorised by occupation, social status (closely related to occupation but not identical), by religion, political affiliations or by their level of integration in the local community. The last is perhaps, the richest, but also the most haphazard method of assessment as it relies upon discernible forms of connectivity an assessment of the level of linkages an individual had to others through kin or business. This method is dependent upon highly visible information such as family names or local printed sources such as newspapers. The level of obvious individual connectedness or integration remains important, however, as it promotes an impression of the broader functioning and interdependence of social and economic activities within the middle class. The question of the motivation underpinning participation in municipal activities remains separate: did membership constitute an established social status or simply a visible step towards the attainment of it?

The material for this chapter is derived from a database of municipal councillors, aldermen and mayors created for the period 1860-1910, for the case study towns.

The database was created from a variety of printed sources, including trade directories and the local press, supplemented by unpublished sources including municipal records and archive documents. The database includes the names of councillors, their addresses, occupations, the amount of time they served on the council, the position each member attained, their politics, religion, kin and corporate connections. Other more diverse information such as educational background and membership of the masons has been included in a miscellaneous section where found. Predictably, the database is not complete; it was not possible to obtain the same information for all the individuals in all categories of information.

The 1835 municipal reforms had a limited impact in Bedford; it was not until 1860 that Bedford Corporation finally took over the responsibilities of the Improvement Commissioners and became a fully 'modern' council. Bedford borough was divided simply into two wards, the Eastern and Western Wards. The corporation comprised nine councillors representing each ward plus six aldermen, 24 individuals in total. The Corporation also acted as the Sanitary Authority and participated in governing the Harpur Trust. In Lincoln, ward politics were more complex: the council comprised three wards initially, which corresponded to the topographical layout of the town with the wards, Upper, Middle and Lower, corresponding to the areas around the Cathedral, the central High Street retailing area and the industrial lower town. These reflected the spatial and social divisions within urban Lincoln described in chapter two. Each ward returned six councillors and

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2 Hill, Victorian Lincoln.
26 Database compiled from: Bedford Borough Records, Minutes of Bedford Town Council 1875-1902; Bedford Central Library Local Collection, J. Coombes, Recollections, Personal and Political, (Bedford, 1889) and The Mayoralty of Bedford, with brief notices of some of its mayors (Bedford, 1894); LA Biography of Lincoln City Council members holding office 1835-1914 miscellaneous deposit 157; Minutes and proceedings of the Common Council 1865-1877, document L/1/1/11; The Lincolnshire Directory, 1855; White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1872 (Sheffield, 1872); Lincoln Pocket Guide (Lincoln, 1874); White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882 (Sheffield, 1882); Cook's Lincoln Directory, 1885 (Lincoln, 1885); Cook's Lincoln Directory, 1897 (Lincoln, 1897); Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire (London, 1896); Ruddock's Lincoln Directory (Lincoln, 1903); Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire (London, 1906); Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire (London, 1909); History, Topography and Directory of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire (London, 1862); Directory of Bedford 1871, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives, book no. 157; Harrod's Directory of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxonshire 1876 (London, 1876); The Bedfordshire Directory 1885 (London, 1885); Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1885 (London, 1885); Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1890 (London, 1890); Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1906 (London, 1906); Kelly's Directory of Bedfordshire 1910 (London, 1910).
27 Godber, History of Bedfordshire, 486.
28 Bedford Borough Records, Minutes of Bedford Town Council.
these eighteen, plus six aldermen, made up the council. The ward system was redrawn during the period under discussion, a reform which essentially divided the existing three wards in half, creating six new ones: Minster, Castle, Abbey, Carholme, Park and Witham wards. The councillors were also divided into three per ward so the overall shape of the constituency and the number of representatives remained the same. In Lincoln the municipal boundary and the parliamentary boundary were co-extensive and both excluded the extensive suburban ribbon development of Bracebridge to the south of the town. From 1867 Lincoln Corporation also sat as the Urban Sanitary Authority.

Who were the councillors? Occupational structure has been taken as an indicator of the type of council a town possessed in several urban studies and in both of the case study county towns occupation does provide a key to analysing council composition. With the exception of the three identifiable groupings of manufacturers, professionals and retailers, there was a wide variety of occupations among county town councillors which revealed the breadth and diversity of the provincial small town middle class. These occupations reflected the service and marketing base of the daily economy in the towns; among the humbler, artisan occupations of councillors bootmakers, saddlers, turners and a tinner are represented. Closer inspection, however, reveals that several of these artisans were also retailers and some owned substantial properties or had ‘good’ linkages within the middle class and so they were at the more affluent end of their trades. Wealthier councillors included the large iron masters, established merchants and professionals. County town councils were different in composition to those of industrial centres or Victorian cities and three groups appeared to be particularly important in the county town council between 1860 and 1910; manufacturers, professionals and retailers.

Research has shown that the level of participation of manufacturers in urban government in the nineteenth century varied with the nature of the town or city and its ranking in the urban hierarchy. In the county town the number of manufacturers in the municipal elite was modest. This was not due to their exclusion but a

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reflection of the limited nature of the manufacturing sector in the county town. There is evidence to suggest that the participation of manufacturers in local government was both beneficial to themselves and welcomed by others in the elite, for although there were not many large prosperous manufacturers in Bedford and Lincoln, they were both dynamic and respected in local government. In highly specialist towns, dominated by a single industry, it was usual for the industrialists to dominate the council; in Blackburn in 1881 and 1891, for example, 85% of town councillors were major employers in the cotton or iron sectors.\footnote{31} In other industrial centres, including Bolton and Wolverhampton, councils were also dominated by manufacturers, while in the rest of the Black Country the percentage of industrialists in the urban elite ranged from 23% in Dudley to 49% in Bilston.\footnote{32}

In Bedford the largest manufacturers, the Howard brothers, both became town councillors, as did Geoffrey Howard, the firm’s director a generation later.\footnote{33} The new heavy industries were also represented on Lincoln council; all the major ironmasters served on the council and the leading industrialists almost took turns at the mayoral office through the 1850s.\footnote{34} From 1860, however, there was a decline in the proportion of manufacturers on Lincoln council, only 12% of councillors were engaged in manufacturing activities and this figure includes the few who were skilled artisans such as cabinetmakers and tailors. Despite the fact that Lincoln was becoming increasingly dependent upon manufacturing for urban wealth creation and employment there was no sign of manufacturers ‘packing’ the council chamber. One reason for this was the very large scale of the manufacturing plants; there were actually very few ironmasters or partners in these concerns and a handful of men owned the major plants in Lincoln. These individuals possessed a great deal of local power, spending long periods on the council and their grip on municipal power provides an important key to understanding how Lincoln, in particular, was reshaped around the singular demands of the iron industry. The large manufacturer was more successful in obtaining office than the representatives of medium-sized companies

\footnote{31}{P. Joyce, \textit{Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England} (Brighton, 1980), 169.}
\footnote{32}{J. Garrard, \textit{Leadership and Power}, 18; Trainor, \textit{Black Country Elites}.}
\footnote{33}{BLA B2/18-21, \textit{Minutes of Bedford Town Council}, 1880-1902.}
\footnote{34}{LA, \textit{Biography of Lincoln City Council members}.}
and lighter manufacturing industries. Neither of these latter types of firm were well represented in the municipal elite in Bedford or Lincoln between 1860 and 1910.

In industrial and larger urban areas the major industrialists withdrew from civic life as their own wealth and social standing increased, but there is little evidence of this occurring in the county town. Most of the major firms represented in the municipal elites in the middle of the century were still present at the end of the nineteenth century, often, as in the case of the Howards in Bedford, there was simply a generational change in personnel. Despite the small numbers of large-scale manufacturers in the county towns, and in Lincoln in particular, it is obvious that they possessed a great deal of long-term political influence. Large manufacturers were elected to office easily and proved successful in municipal ambitions; in Lincoln 20% of mayors between 1860 and 1910 were manufacturers. Once in office manufacturers had almost a 50% probability of achieving mayoral status. This suggests that the broader electorate welcomed manufacturers and considered the experience of large-scale business as beneficial to local government. It also demonstrates that these large manufacturers had an active interest in participating heavily in local government and were able to mobilise councillors from other occupational groups around their own agendas as they did in Lincoln.

Another recognisable occupational group in the municipal elite was the professional grouping (that is professionals who were elected to office rather than professionals employed by the municipal authority). Professionals maintained a steady presence in Bedford and Lincoln town councils over the period 1860-1911. This was in stark contrast to larger Victorian cities where professionals were under-represented or did not appear in the council chamber until the twentieth century. In Birmingham, Hennock has described the presence of professionals as 'numerically insignificant' before 1911, noting an influx just prior to the First World War and following the borough boundary extension. The significant amount of professionals in both Lincoln and Bedford councils reflected the preference of professionals to live within

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36 Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, 40.
the borough boundary as noted in a previous chapter. In larger towns or cities, many professionals chose to live in the growing suburbia, which were frequently outside the borough boundary, as in the case of Birmingham. The most noticeable aspect of professional participation in county town councils was the stability of their presence. Despite the growing absolute numbers of professionals in both towns and their increasing economic and cultural importance, the number of councillors with professional occupations remained stable. There was neither a decline in their status as numbers increased in the area, nor any evidence of extended political influence. The professional presence remained steady throughout the period despite electoral upsets. The failure of professionals to expand the number of seats they controlled lasted into the twentieth century. This stability of presence and numbers was maintained through networks of professional patronage and strong linkages to councillors with different economic interests.

Professionals in the municipal governing elite belonged to an increasingly diverse range of occupations, but medical and legal men were the most successful amongst professionals in Bedford and Lincoln. In Bedford professionals comprised 13% of councillors. Over half of these professionals were ‘solicitors’, ‘lawyers’ or ‘attorneys’, amongst the rest were veterinary surgeons, medical surgeons and architects. Nearly one fifth of Lincoln’s councillors were professionals. They were mainly engaged in the medical or legal fields but included an accountant and architect. Chemists have not been included here with professionals as they were primarily high street retailers, and had they been included in the professional class then this group would comprise 23% of Lincoln councillors. In Bedford, if the marginal professions of chemist and author were included then the level of professionals was 17% of the municipal elite. Concentrating on the central professional grouping, and excluding marginal occupations such as chemists, professionals maintained a consistent presence in the council chamber and achieved municipal office with the same consistency.

37 See above chapter four.
38 LA, Biography of Lincoln City Council.
Table 8, Professionals in Lincoln Corporation 1860-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1882</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1860-1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of professionals on council</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals as a percentage of councillors</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Lincolnshire Archives Biography of Lincoln City Council members holding office 1835-191, miscellaneous deposit 157; Minutes and proceedings of the Common Council 1865-1877; White’s History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1872 (Sheffield, 1872); White’s History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire 1882 (Sheffield, 1882); Ruddock’s Lincoln Directory (Lincoln, 1903).

At the beginning of the period, in 1860, Lincoln council contained four professionals, all medical (see table 8). By 1872, the professional presence had dropped to two councillors, both solicitors, but by 1882 there were again four professionals on the council, all of whom were solicitors. Between 1860 and 1910 professionals comprised 19% of Lincoln councillors and 17% of mayoral terms. Once within the municipal government in both county towns professionals were surprisingly successful; if a professional was elected to the council he had a 1 in 4 probability of achieving mayoral office. This suggests that the council and the rate-paying electorate valued professional status and knowledge only to a slightly lesser degree than they valued manufacturers. The presence of professionals in the municipal elite also reflected the probable strength of the professional vote among the rate paying electorate in county towns.

Over half of the professionals in Bedford Corporation and two thirds of the professionals in Lincoln council were solicitors and it is worth examining these individuals further as they achieved very successful municipal careers. These county town solicitors reveal the closely networked, compact and parochial nature of the county town urban elite. In Lincoln, three of these councillors became mayors and one became deputy mayor, while two accepted the permanent salaried position of town clerk on resigning their seats. Only two solicitors served just a single term on the council, one of these was John Swan. Swan served for only three years between 1879 and 1882 and when he left office, his partner in practice, Thomas Bourne remained in the council. Bourne had been elected for the Middle Ward in 1881, he
served for a total period of thirteen years and retired in 1891. In the meantime Frederick Brogden, a solicitor previously articled to Swan and Bourne, was returned by the Middle Ward in 1889 for five years. This suggests that although John Swan only sat in the council for three years, his personal influence and council connections could have extended over a total period of sixteen years. Although belonging to different political parties, all three solicitors were connected by profession and by a single business practice, they all lived in the ‘uphill’ area of Lincoln and were active in the volunteers.

A limited number of professionals were welcomed in the municipal elite and it seems they could retain these positions as long as they wished. The case of Lincoln’s Middle Ward also suggests that certain positions were ‘safe seats’ for professionals and that personal and occupational connections were highly influential. John Swan’s connections with Lincoln council also shows the strong linkage between a single business practice and electoral success in a particular ward suggesting that the municipal electoral process was tightly controlled and orchestrated. Overall, the solicitors in the Lincoln municipal elite were more likely to be Conservative than Liberal. They also tended to represent the Upper or Middle wards (Cathedral and upper town) rather than the Lower Ward (industrial ‘down hill’ area).

Why were solicitors more successful in getting elected than other professionals? The profession of solicitor allowed access to, and movement between, a number of urban public positions which produced privileged knowledge of both national policy and local economics. Among the solicitors who were councillors in Bedford and Lincoln were those who were intimately connected to the central place dealing and administrative role of the county town and were directly involved in state and county administration. These were solicitors who held the positions of superintendent registrar, registrar, clerk to the high court, clerk to the assize court, official receiver and assistant receiver. As well as being a part of the municipal elite these solicitors were closely linked to the status and function of the county town through their profession. These factors gave solicitors access to sources of power in the urban environment, other than that of the municipal corporation, which proved beneficial to

39 Biography of Lincoln City Council members; Kelly’s Directory of Lincolnshire 1890, 23.
their municipal careers. Solicitors in the council also maintained strong business links in the wider community outside their own profession. In Lincoln half held directorships in local companies other than their own practices and between them they controlled the chairmanships of the Lincolnshire and Lindsey Banking Co., the Lincolnshire Chronicle Co. (the local newspaper) and the Lincoln Brick Co. They also held two directorships in The Royal Insurance Company, one in the Lincoln Corn Exchange Co. and the Lincoln Wagon and Engine Co.. These directorships linked them out to the wider industrial economy, to the commercial middle class and their own clients but also linked back to other councillors who were directors of the same firms. Professionals and manufacturers were closely allied. In a case of economic trouble, even the Official Receiver was a solicitor and councillor. Non-profit making organizations could offer the same possibilities, such as the Conservative Working Men's Club (solicitor as chairman) or the Freemasons (solicitor as Grandmaster). Even internal municipal committees offered possibilities for consolidating professional linkages or common cultural loyalties that might overcome political considerations such as the Lincoln City Council Public Library Committee with its solicitor as chairman (Liberal) and solicitor as treasurer (Conservative).

If town life was the 'information superhighway' of nineteenth century society then solicitors were uniquely placed at interchanges where they could access and use information to their best advantage. In county towns professional knowledge led to local urban power and high social status. Those solicitors with the most, or the 'best' linkages tended to enjoy longer municipal careers, but those whose time on the council was very brief arguably still possessed impressive, if opaque, connections and potential influence. Solicitor councillors demonstrated the highly networked nature of the county town elite and the necessity for successful councillors to be well connected to other members of the elite in addition to possessing specialist knowledge and status. The example of the solicitors in the elite also demonstrates how in county towns specific professional knowledge translated into local urban

40 Lincoln Central Library local collection, G.R. Riley, The Rise of Industrial Lincoln 1800-1959 (unpublished manuscript); Biography of Lincoln City Council members.
power and social status. Professionals were important and influential players in municipal government and urban development. The strong urban connections, which ran through professional, company, social and familial groupings and networks, enabled the municipal elite to exert influence and authority across the urban space in many ways.

The presence of professionals amongst municipal elites did not, however, produce characteristic or identifiable ‘professional’ policies or urban strategies. While professionals have been thought to support urban improvement when present in councils, chapter six demonstrated that this was not the case in late Victorian Lincoln. Significantly, the professionals in Lincoln’s municipal elite were tightly linked to the industrial and ‘trade’ sectors of the county town economy. In Bedford there was a greater diversity of professionals in the municipal elite, including surgeons, architects and a veterinary surgeon. It is likely that they were supporters of urban improvements as many of them were dependent upon the middle class residents attracted to the town for at least a portion of their incomes. The fact that professionals comprised an important occupational grouping in both of the county town municipal elites and yet Bedford and Lincoln councils pursued very different visions of urban specialisation, shows that local conditions and economic imperatives could override the cultural values that historians attribute to particular occupational and social groups.43

The composition of Bedford and Lincoln councils reveals a county town municipal elite which was, at its core, a shopocracy, dominated by traders and merchants incorporating the influential larger manufacturers and a modest but stable section of professionals. Just under a quarter of the county town municipal elite was directly dependent upon the general marketing and central place function of the county town. Almost a quarter of councillors in Lincoln and 21% of those in Bedford were retailers in one form or another. As in all towns during this period these retailers were very varied in character.44 In the county town elite chemists, drapers, grocers and wine and spirit merchants all feature strongly, but saddlers, seed merchants,
confectioners and hairdressers also appear in the retailing group. These individuals were all heavily dependent upon the general economic wellbeing of the county town, on its ability to compete with other urban centres, to draw consumers in from the hinterland and to provide a passing trade affluent enough to maintain daily sales. These were the more central and successful retailers in the towns, their premises were in the High Street or the central areas, many had premises with double frontages or occupied two buildings, very few of them were neighbourhood or suburban shopkeepers. In terms of social status many of these retailers had a local significance, reputation and sometimes wealth which stretched beyond the lower middle class 'shopkeeper' label.

The social status of councillors

The social status of councillors in the county town was complex and often highly localised in its significance. Following Armstrong, a system of social stratification derived from the 1951 census has been used. This system transfers information about occupations into a model of social scale descending from A1 classification, people with high social status, through to D classifications, those who were socially marginal or occupied in anti-social trades such as scavenging. This system of classification is problematic and the most relevant caveat here is the broad nature of class C which contains many diverse occupations including manufacturing and retail trades. Armstrong found approximately half of the population of York fell into this category and urban historians have been wary of the way such a system obscures recognised social and income differences. However, Armstrong devised his method of classification while analysing the social structure of a county town and it may be that the tendency for the inhabitants to bunch into class C was actually a reflection of the mixed marketing and manufacturing function of the county town. Here Armstrong's classification system has been applied to the members of the corporations of Bedford and Lincoln in order to shed further light on the composition

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45 Biography of Lincoln City Council members.
47 R Dennis, English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography (Cambridge, 1984), 188.
of the urban elite and also to give some indication of the spatial arrangement of social power in the council ward system.

Only 13% of Bedford councillors and 18% of Lincoln councillors could be categorised as belonging to the A1 group, namely those with professional status. Accountants, architects, attorneys, solicitors and surgeons all qualify as A1 citizens or 'natural' social leaders. The core of councillors in both towns could be classified as C group members, 48% of Lincoln councillors and 30% of Bedford council members belonged to either CI or CII groups, skilled workers or small businessmen, with shop proprietor and engineer prime examples of the type of occupation that made up this group. The stability of the 'middle' middle or lower middle class group shows the strength of the attraction of municipal office to the wider urban middle class. This coherence of social status within the county town elite contributed to the strength of municipal strategies and could provide a key to the long-term stability of the elite and the programme of reshaping the county town. It is probable that those belonging to social status group C, (the majority of councillors), would share similar social values. These members were lacking in the independence that wealth or professional status bestowed and were highly dependent upon the health of the local urban economy. For those in social status group C, literally the 'middling sort', income and status were tied to the success of the town. Unlike those members who belonged to the A1 social group, they had no possibility of maintaining their position independent of the urban fortunes of specific place (although the example of the Lincoln solicitors shows that professional status did not always guarantee this independence). For this reason the support of this 'middling' section of the elite was essential to the programme of 'remaking' the county town and it is highly likely that both Bedford and Lincoln were remade towards a civic vision which reflected, to a large extent, the values of this group. The successful 'remaking' of a town and the reorientation of its economy was essential to the personal success and the business survival of the councillors belonging to social group C. Business imperatives and personal culture fed into the reshaping of what Girouard termed the town 'battlefield', in search of an advantageous competitive environment.

Social status impacted on both access to municipal office and on the further success of councillors. For example, status determined candidate selection in some wards.
The evidence shows that electoral success in Lincoln was highly dependent upon a good candidate-to-ward match. Lincoln borough wards were differentiated by status reflecting the high level of segregation within the town, which was supported by its extreme urban topography. Lincoln council was less diverse, in terms of social status, than Bedford council, and the ward system was more rigid. The housing in Lincoln’s Upper Ward remained socially exclusive long into the twentieth century and this was reflected by the preference of its voters to return candidates of a higher social status.

Table 9 Lincoln councillors classified as A1 status by ward 1860-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moving down the scale there were only two county town councillors who can be categorised as belonging to social classification D and both were found within Lincoln’s municipal elite. These were a rope manufacturer and a tinner and both served short terms of six and three years respectively. The lack of individuals rating below C2 status suggests that it was very difficult for ‘marginal’ members of the middle class to participate in municipal life other than as ratepayers.

In both Bedford and Lincoln, the municipal elite was numerically very small, even taking into account the scale of the urban settlement. In the course of half a century the list of municipal elite members comprised only 119 individuals in Lincoln and 131 in Bedford. Given that each of the councils numbered twenty-four individuals at anytime in the period 1860 to 1910 it is surprising that the numbers of council members were not larger. The relatively low number of council members across the fifty-year period can be explained by the longevity of service in both towns. The county town councils had a low level of turnover in their personnel, a characteristic which differentiated them from industrial centres or larger Victorian cities. In towns

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48 See chapter one.
such as Salford or Bolton the ‘average triennial turnover of council members’ was between 36 and 45 per cent.\textsuperscript{49} In both Bedford and Lincoln, the municipal elite was far more stable in its composition. In Lincoln the average number of years served by councillors, both in their capacity as elected representatives and as aldermen was 21. This indicates a very high level of stability which was increased by a significant number of councillors who served up to twice as long as this; one member served for 49 years, while two others managed 46 and 44 years in office. Overall the period of time served by individuals declined across the period. All of the above mentioned individuals joined the council before 1850, and those joining in the 1890s tended to serve for fifteen years or less, although there were two exceptions with individuals serving for 20 and 22 years respectively. The earlier in the period that an individual joined the council the longer they were likely to serve; indeed the longest serving member, John Snow, a surgeon, was mayor in 1825, long before municipal reform, and only left the council in 1874.

**Graph 10 Time served by Lincoln Corporation councillors**

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{graph10.png}
\caption{Total years served by Lincoln councillors}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{49} Garrard, *Leadership and Power*, 65.
Focusing on dates of departure from council service reveals periods of stability in Lincoln council membership and periods of renewal; there was almost a generational turnover. Members who departed from the council in the 1860s served 10.5 years on average and those leaving service in the 1870s 12.6 years. In comparison members departing in the 1880s had served an average of only 7.5 years suggesting a phase of instability and renewal while a core of long-term members departed in the 1880s after serving an average of 15.3 years. The majority of town councillors served less than ten years but only one fifth could be considered to be transient serving three years or less. These members were more than balanced by a hard-core of career councillors who served for many terms and achieved the office of alderman or served several terms as mayor.

John Garrard has suggested that the turnover of councillors in Victorian towns was due to the 'difficult' nature of council life.\textsuperscript{50} Certainly attendance could be time-consuming particularly for the small businessman who may not have had suitable staff to manage the business during his absence. However Garrard's study was based on an industrial town and indicates the availability of candidates in rapidly expanding urban areas. In older provincial towns, with their slower growth, there fewer suitable candidates materialised. It is significant that the years 1870 to 1880 can be regarded as the ones of greatest instability or, conversely as a period of renewal for the Lincoln corporation. This was also the decade of greatest increase in the population of the town. In the eleven years between 1870 and the close of 1880, thirty new individuals were elected to municipal office. It was an unusually high number: between 1860 and 1870 inclusive there were 17 new individuals returned and between 1891-1901 13 new members joined the council. The period 1870-1880 then is a key one. These new members were returned in blocks in pivotal years: 1872, 1878, 1879 and 1880 all saw four new members returned, while three new members were elected in 1874 and 1875.\textsuperscript{51} This was the decade when Lincoln and its iron foundries were expanding most dramatically and the character of the city was changing rapidly.

\textsuperscript{50} Garrard, \textit{Leadership and Power}, 64.
Coherence in the composition and policies of the Bedford and Lincoln municipal elites was possible due to the stability of the elite with many long-term members. However the town councils had enough turnover to accommodate rising and aspirational members of the middle class and to accommodate culturally influential groups such as professionals. Common aims were reinforced by similar social status and economic interests among councillors, combined with a pragmatic acceptance of the ‘status quo’ operating in some wards. Further evidence suggests that at the core of the municipal elite there was a small group of powerful individuals able to drive policy since urban renewal was strongly linked to individual mayors in both towns. The proportion of councillors who served mayoral terms indicates an inner ‘aristocracy’ of councillors functioning within the municipal structure of the county town. Very few of the councillors served as mayor and those few often served more than one term; this had the effect of making the ‘upper ranks’ of municipal government relatively inaccessible. In Bedford, for example, there were fifty mayoral terms between 1860 and 1910 and 131 councillors available but only 29 individuals served the town as mayor. Gaining access to the ‘inner circle’ of municipal success was related to occupation but was more dependent upon other less visible, urban networks.

Table 10 Mayors of Victorian urban centres classified by occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Manufacturers</th>
<th>Shop/Trade</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolverhampton 1848-1889</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester 1835-1883</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln 1860-1899</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford 1860-1899</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The figures for Wolverhampton and Leicester mayors are taken from J. Smith ‘The governance of Wolverhampton, 1848-1888’, (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2001), figures for Bedford and Lincoln taken from databases.

The evidence shows that it was possible for a small retailer to gain access to a municipal seat for a single term or two but it was significantly harder to maintain a long-term municipal career. In some occupations, good networking may have made serving extras terms redundant, such as in the case of the Lincoln solicitors, other
interest groups, like the medical community for example, may only have needed to maintain a single occupational representative on the council. For those who wanted to achieve mayoral office or pursue a long-term council career it was necessary to be well integrated in the local middle class and to have strong business and social connections.

**Family influence in the municipal elite**

Councillors maintained corporate cohesion and gained personal advantage through active and enduring professional, political, business and religious networks and personal ties. Serving councillors were often linked to each other through ties of marriage or through company directorships and many councillors sat on each other's company boards. Kinship and occupational links, particularly through professional or trade associations, were two of the strongest networks operating in the municipal elite and often allowed a disproportionate level of local influence. Between 1860 and 1910, Bedford council contained seventeen matching pairs of surnames while Lincoln council contained fifteen pairs of matching surnames, one group of three matching names and one group of four matching surnames, indicating a high level of kinship ties within the council. Examination exposes at least six father-son relationships in the Lincoln membership list: Brogdens, Cottinghams, Fosters, Newsums, Pratts, and Vickers, though there were no examples of the two generations serving concurrently. There are other examples of kin ties within Lincoln council, both through the sharing of surnames, such as the two Lowes, uncle and nephew, and the Bainbridge brothers. Individuals were also linked to each other through the less visible links of marriage creating wider kin networks, one example is Nathaniel Clayton who served on Lincoln council between 1854 and 1863. Clayton had two sons-in-law, one of whom Alfred Shuttleworth, was the son of his business partner Joseph Shuttleworth, who served on the council between 1857 and 1863. Clayton's other son-in-law, Robert Swan, was the brother and business partner of John Swan, council member between 1879-1882. William Cottingham provides a more coherent example of family connection and continuity in the municipal elite. A chemist, Cottingham served on the council between 1866 and 1894 and when he left office in 1894 his son Henry joined the council, serving the same ward. William Cottingham's sons-in-law did not serve on the council (although one had a brother who did) but they were both well-connected in local commerce.
These family connections reveal the high levels of patronage at work within the provincial middle class. J.M. Bourne has argued those family connections were a prime system for the exercise of patronage:

Family was pregnant with obligations, dilemmas and opportunities.... The duty to pursue family ends was potent but unsentimental. It arose out of necessity. There was no security outside family.52

Family then provided an efficient gateway of access to privilege even outside of the class which had perfected it, the landed aristocracy. In the nineteenth century 'patronage was a fundamental middle class concern' and this was no less relevant in the urban environment.53 In smaller towns like Bedford, the names of individuals, the activities and prosperity of their businesses and their personal reputations were all synonymous. When J. Hamson published Bedford Town and Townsmen in 1896 he mingled these different aspects of public and personal life together in his reminiscences; 'George Handscomb Miller (father of Mr Joseph Miller) had a stoneyard. Mayor and Alderman of the borough he adorned the...High-Street with some very good shops.'54 The county town municipal elite shows how family obligations and kin ties could also contribute to urban stability and long-term renewal through the generations. Families could also provide powerful vehicles for ideological and political continuity.

While family advantage could not necessarily guarantee election to the municipal elite there is no doubt that in the introspective atmosphere of smaller towns a familiar surname could carry a resonance of authority in itself. The name Howard had very positive connotations in the Bedford area even before any form of electioneering began. In both towns certain councillors were noted in local publications as coming from 'old' Bedford or 'old' Lincoln families. 'Old' town families were perceived as intimately connected to the urban fortunes of the county town and councillors used this perception to their advantage. The evidence suggests that in the late Victorian period municipal government in the county town was often a logical extension of the

53 Bourne, Patronage and Society, 133.
54 J. Hamson, Bedford Town and Townsmen (Bedford 1896), 32.
family business. J.M. Bourne argues that 'there was no really coherent or consistent attempt to create an alternative patronage nexus applied to radical purposes....The ethos of Victorian local government ...was firmly rooted in 'economy' and the ratepayer was King'.

The composition of the town councils in Bedford and Lincoln would suggest that there was no dichotomy between family advantage and ratepayer endorsement in county town politics. Family connections in the municipal elite were exerted in the pursuit of low rates, municipal programmes and control of the central town area, particularly since the majority of name pairings on both councils belonged the either high street retailers or manufacturers. The strong kinship links and familial networks operating within the county town municipal elite invested the corporations with consistent strategies and visions over an extended period of time.

Religious networks in the municipal elite

Religion was another unifying force in the elite and it played a significant part in town politics. In the county town there was extensive involvement in municipal affairs by non-conformists in particular. Both Bedford and Lincoln contained large dissenting communities and these congregations were reflected in the council chambers. In Bedford, the non-conformist community could be largely characterised as 'Old' Dissent. Bedfordshire had long been a centre for Quakers and Baptists and the town had struggled to develop secular institutions. The Bedford charity, the Harper Trust governed partly by the town corporation, offered a non-sectarian education which had been hard-won by local non-conformists. Dissent and non-conformism in Bedford was given a 'respectable' tone by its long local tradition and by the solid provincial affluence of many of its adherents such as the Howard family. Michael Hopkinson argues that:

Bedford was a "Bible Belt" town...Taking into account the afternoon and evening services, popular with non-conformists, at least two thirds of Bedfordinians were in Church on Census Sunday. It was one of the highest attendances in the country....two thirds of Bedford's church attendances

55 Bourne, Patronage and Society, 133.
56 Coombs, Recollections, Personal and Political, (Bedford, 1889); J. Godber, History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888 (Bedford, 1969).
57 See the debate over education which ran in The Bedfordshire Times and Independent in 1870.
were of dissenters and other Nonconformists, compared with about 43% nationally.\textsuperscript{58}

Bedford councillors came from both Anglican and non-conformist backgrounds but the most prominent, successful and longest-serving councillors were dissenters. James Coombes (three times mayor) and J.T Hobson (twice mayor) were members of the Bunyan Meeting,\textsuperscript{59} while John Howard, the plough manufacturer, and his sons James and Frederick were all Methodists. Both John and James Howard served terms as mayor as did the ardent Wesleyan Methodist Thomas Tokelove Grey. Although many Bedford councillors were staunch Anglicans, the non-conformist nature of the town’s middling classes made dissent an asset in civic ambition. William Kilpin, a member of the Bunyan meeting, exemplifies this, achieving a single term as mayor despite being a High Street ironmonger, a potentially negative occupation in terms of social mobility. In Kilpin’s case we cannot be sure whether his religion or his marriage to the daughter of another councillor, a bank manager, provided the spring to his municipal success. However there is little doubt that religious affiliations provided social connections in Bedford, as non-conformity was not class exclusive as in other urban areas.

Non-conformists possessed a high level of social acceptability and civic confidence in Victorian Bedford. There is little evidence of sectarian strife in the town and only the Catholics seem to have been considered as beyond the social pale. In Lincoln religion was a different matter. As a cathedral town Lincoln was dominated physically, visually, socially and symbolically by the Anglican community who lived literally at the top of the town. Despite the fact that Lincolnshire was a stronghold of non-conformism, particularly of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism, urban non-conformists felt the need to assert themselves. Francis Hill noted that the iron founder and major manufacturer Ruston:

took the corporation in state to Newland [a Congregational Chapel] when he was mayor in 1870, this being noted in the minute book as proof of the better feeling regarding dissenters. In that same year the city council resolved to withhold its annual subscription to the county hospital until

\textsuperscript{58} Hopkinson, \textit{Economy and Society}, 53.
\textsuperscript{59} Coombes, \textit{Recollections, Personal and Political}. 

the rule compelling its officers to be members of the Church of England was expunged.60

Ruston himself was a Congregationalist but 21% of Lincoln councillors were Methodists and active non-conformists; 16% of Lincoln councillors were Wesleyan Methodists. This Wesleyan Methodist group supplied seven out of ten Lincoln mayors during the period 1860-1910, of whom two, Edward Harrison and four times mayor Hugh Wyatt, were also lay preachers. Indeed Lincoln councillors were commonly lay preachers, Sunday school superintendents and temperance campaigners.61 W.B. Maltby a chemist, councillor and Methodist attributed the city's health problems to the mysterious workings of a superior power at a council meeting in 1864 and argued for temperance, proper food and ventilation.62

In Lincoln religion was highly class orientated. James Obelkevich argues that this was so for the wider Lincolnshire Lindsey area where 'in a capitalist economy and class society it was above all the social classes that shaped religious life.'63 Methodism also promoted communication and improved relationships and mobility between town and countryside as preachers and worshippers moved around and between circuits.64 This communication and common bond also promoted business interests and confidence among Methodists. There is no doubt that non-conformity was highly acceptable among the wider voting middle class and among the business community. 'Wesleyans eagerly promoted the larger ideal of self-improvement and their enthusiasm for it reflects the growing influence of secular and middle class values in Methodism'.65 Non-conformity and Methodism were prime sources of values shaping the civic vision of Lincoln as a liberal hard-working town. In both Bedford and Lincoln the values of non-conformity were analogous with those of independent trading and small town urban life. Non-conformists made an impact on the old rituals such as the corporation's annual church procession and on institutions

60 Hill, Victorian Lincoln (Cambridge, 1974), 251.
61 Biography of Lincoln City Council Members; W. Leary, Methodism in the City of Lincoln (Lincoln, 1969), 21; Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 233.
62 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 166.
64 Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society, 204.
65 Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society, 209.
such as the schools and infirmaries and Lincoln council were successful in their efforts to open up the hospital offices.

The municipal ward structure in Lincoln clearly illustrates the social limitations operating in the elite. In accordance with the town's topographical structure Lincoln's Upper Ward (later Castle and Cathedral Wards) reflected the Anglican, Tory and cathedral middle class ratepayers who inhabited the area. This ward had more in common with the 'Barchester' image of the cathedral county town than it did with the economic manufacturing base of Lincoln which lay downhill. Although not all the religious inclinations of the councillors are known, except where they were active in the local churches, the figures indicate a clear bias against non-conformists in the Upper Ward.

Table 11 Non-conformist councillors in Lincoln Corporation wards 1860-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upper Ward</th>
<th>Middle Ward</th>
<th>Lower Ward</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
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Table 12 Political affiliations of councillors representing Lincoln's Upper Ward 1860-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Liberal Unionist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures illustrate the limited nature of the non-conformist municipal triumph. While Liberal Methodists and other non-conformists could hold the balance of power on the council and achieve the office of Mayor with relative ease, the social elite represented by the Upper Ward and its Cathedral remained an impenetrable bastion. Lincoln was a town polarised by social class and religion. The changes wrought by industrialisation, population growth and municipal policies did not change the essential social structure of the town. The four non-conformist councillors representing the Upper Ward included two Methodists, a Congregationalist and a
Catholic. Of the two Methodists, one was a grocer, with Upper Ward premises (convenient to the Close), and the other was an accountant. The accountant, Benjamin Vickers, was extremely well-connected being from an ‘old’ Lincoln family, secretary to the Midland Counties Insurance Company, an eminent Freemason, a JP, married to the daughter of a local farmer and prominent in several local societies. All of these factors assisted his selection and election in the Upper Ward. Vickers eventually became a Sheriff of Lincoln. The exclusivity of the Upper Ward in Lincoln was also reflected by its predominant choice of Conservative candidates although it was not until relatively late in the period that formal party politics made an impact on local municipal elections.

Party politics
Neither Bedford nor Lincoln was remade in the image of a party political vision of urban success, although Bedford Corporation’s coherent municipal reshaping of the central environment may have owed something to the influence of Chamberlain’s Birmingham. The dominant ideology in Lincoln was liberal, but there was no organised party programme in municipal politics in either town for the majority of the period 1860 to 1910. It is not even easy to establish the political loyalties of many of the members in the municipal elite in Bedford or Lincoln. When the results of municipal elections were announced in the local press they did not necessarily include any statement of which parties they represented. Political affiliations were not explicitly stated in the corporation’s own election results or in the local press while formal political clubs and membership lists were developed quite late in the period. There are two main reasons for the lack of clear political divisions: firstly party politics developed later in these county towns than in the larger urban centres. Many candidates stood for municipal election simply on their business or moral profile in the local community; as an established landowner and JP, or as a respectable, successful and well-known businessman. These individuals frequently had Tory or Liberal sympathies but campaigned without organised party membership or backing. Secondly, there was often no need for the press in a smaller town to

66 Biography of Lincoln City Council members; Kelly’s Directory of Lincolnshire 1892.
68 See for example the reporting of the municipal and mayoral elections in the Bedfordshire Times and Independent, 2nd and 16th November 1869 editions.
announce formally the political inclinations of the candidates as they were generally already known to the middle-class electorate, or could be surmised from the other information given about a candidate, for example, whether they were active in any particular religious denomination. This contemporary understanding of an assumed, unstated, but often existent relationship between social/religious backgrounds and political leanings was also clearly demonstrated in the candidates returned in Lincoln’s Upper Ward. Due to these factors and the lack of party-organised political discussion in contemporary records it is not possible to establish party political contacts for all the council members in Lincoln or Bedford. However in both towns councillors acted as local agents for parliamentary candidates or political parties.

If there was little discussion of party politics in mid-Victorian Lincoln it was almost non-existent in Victorian Bedford. Bedford was a ‘traditionally radical’ parliamentary constituency but ‘Although the Members of Parliament returned were generally evenly split between Tory and Whig camps, the Tories were often barely distinguishable from their opponents in matters of policy’. In Bedford municipal elections followed the same form and were mainly fought on the grounds of local spending priorities and concerns over the level of the rates rather than ideological factors. It may be argued that these issues were really party issues in disguise but there was a long tradition of Bedford municipal politics being free from party influence and even an anti-spending party such as the Bedford Reform Party was conservative in its spending policies rather than a Conservative party. Party political structures were often formalised in county towns in the 1880s, the decade when most county towns gained political clubs and dedicated buildings, the Bedford Conservative Club, for example, was established in 1889.

Francis Hill has argued that mid-century local politics in Lincoln were characterised by class and by the split between the trade and commercial interest on one hand and the churchmen (the Anglican gentry) and professionals on the other. Loyalties were assumed to follow income sectors and party politics were of little importance. In 1862 the alliance between Whigs and Tories on the council was condemned by the

69 Hopkinson, 'Economy and society', 57.
70 Coombes, Recollections
71 McKeown, ‘Joshua Hawkins and Liberals in local government’.
local press as an ‘unprincipled coalition’. However other evidence would suggest that social antagonisms and snobbery were more important as the Lincoln liberals showed. The liberals themselves were divided, mainly along class lines, between those who were progressive, these tended to be the larger, established manufacturers and merchants, and the more reactionary shopkeepers and smaller traders who generally opposed all spending. As politics became more formalised along party lines in the late nineteenth century more campaigns were fought on national politics and party organisation became more central to the process, Lincolnshire liberals were still independent enough to reject the official party candidate in the parliamentary elections of 1883. The local Liberal organisation was divided finally by the issue of Home Rule over which it split noisily and acrimoniously exposing long-term disunity. It is also probable that the liberal hegemony which operated in both Bedford and Lincoln in the 1860s and 1870s was undermined later in the period by the loss of support from the influential retailing sector of the municipal elite. Crossick has noted how: ‘The drift of the lower middle class toward Toryism was one facet of the declining viability of mid-Victorian liberalism’. It was a testament to the strength of the stability of the municipal elite and to the cross party support for urban specialisation that the programmes of urban restructuring in Bedford and Lincoln survived this period of political shift.

The character of the elite
There is no evidence to suggest that the county town councils represented a super-wealthy or an occupation-led elite operating within the local middle class in the same manner as in the Victorian city. Occupational differences in both Lincoln and Bedford councils suggest rather a broad representation of the local middle class as a whole. Social leaders such as bankers and barristers were present but in small numbers owing to the urban scale of county towns. This is not to argue that anyone who might be considered middle class historically could automatically gain entry into municipal government in the county town; various factors determined the acceptability of municipal candidates. Religious, kin and business connections were all advantageous to a municipal career but above all a good reputation for

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72 Hill, Victorian Lincoln,
73 Ibid., 153.
74 Crossick, ‘The emergence of the lower middle class’, 39.
respectability and other public work was vital. In both towns there appear to have been smaller super-elite groups in existence within the council chamber. The evidence from the Upper Ward in Lincoln, the patterns of success in the mayoralities and the differing lengths of service of different councillors suggest that simple participation in local government did not automatically result in the building of a solid municipal career or in access to high status office. Only a small proportion of the councillors continued in municipal service and acquired municipal office. While it was acceptable to be lower middle class or a self-made man in the county town this did not mean it was possible to be elected in any ward, or, by extension, to be accepted by all sectors of the local middle class community. So to serve a term or more in a less than desirable ward was comparatively accessible but key positions and high social status remained open to the few. Lincoln appears to have been far more rigid in this respect than Bedford, which was a more ‘open’ council and did not have as hierarchical a division of seats as in Lincoln. This may have been a result of the later and more fluid residential segregation in Bedford.

To sum up, the county town urban elite between 1860 and 1910 can be seen as a middle class grouping. Although apparently coherent, within this grouping intense hierarchical distinctions were made, based on non-political alignments, social status or economic interest. The members of the municipal corporations in the county town comprised a relatively small elite. Corporations reflected a broad range of middle class occupations, were highly stable and reveal extensive networks converging on and operating within the council chamber. Patronage, kinship, common business interests, professional attachment and informal association within the county town middle class all continued into and through municipal government. Within the county town corporation there existed differentiated levels or ‘inner circles’ of elite association revealing the tensions and hierarchies within the provincial urban middle class at this time. The nature of the relationship between the broad swath of ratepayers and the municipal corporation in this period remains complex and disputed. There is no doubt that those with power to govern the urban environment comprised an elite group within the middle class and also within the urban population as a whole.
Council membership relied upon a hard core of established county town families and their associates together with co-opted lower middle class members whose participation was often quite temporary. While there was not a definitive range of occupations which marked out these core members, merchants, professionals and high street retailers featured prominently with the occasional banker, while small grocers, drapers and those characterised as drapers were more likely to serve on a temporary basis. While professionals became more important in the economy and function of the county town during the period under discussion, the proportion of professionals in the council remained constant. The county town councillors reflected the broad nature of the urban middle class whilst being weighted heavily towards the lower end of the scale. There is very little evidence of any direct aristocratic or gentry influence on the councils in the period 1860 to 1910 although many councillors had business links to local gentry and some councillors had kin or marriage connections to landowners outside the town. The municipal government in the county town reflected the local middle class as a whole; they were urban and industrialised as opposed to industrial and reflected the diversity and differences within the local middle class. The county town councils were not particularly economically (in terms of income) or socially coherent; however they were exceptionally stable. Local interest, property and visible or invisible linkages united the councillors. The strongest bond was an interest in the well-being of the locality, very few of the members of the municipal elite had any economic interests, bar some transport investment and agricultural land, outside of the county town. The few councillors who had extra-urban economic interests beyond the locality tended to be tied to the region. Railway investment was a prime example, however the majority of councillors were united by business and property concerns within the borough itself.\textsuperscript{75} The personal fortunes of councillors were tied into the urban survival and development of the county town. This is, perhaps, another reason why professionals were successful in the municipal elite, their growing professional loyalty and confidence, although linked to a national network, did not challenge local interests but gave them more influence and status in a local context. In this sense participation in municipal government united the disparate elements of the local middle class.

\textsuperscript{75} The Bedford Literary and Philosophical Institute housed a separate room for the promotion and trading of railway stocks among the town and county elite.
The other major factor promoting unified municipal elites and general middle class stability was the small scale of the towns. In order for any middle class venture to flourish it was necessary to appeal to both the top manufacturers and to the 'marginal' middle class. As the nineteenth century progressed, middle class lifestyles and culture in particular income brackets became more homogenous; the cultural differences between manufacturers and professionals or between Non-conformists and Anglicans were ameliorated. In Bedford or Lincoln the small number of 'respectable' families forced social mixing within the broader middle class. However the apparent openness of provincial town life was deceptive; to achieve long term municipal success often required the work, or networking, of a lifetime.

Chapter Eight
The Municipal Elite in the Townscape

This chapter considers the intense relationship between the county town municipal elite and the townscape. In the county town the urban elite enjoyed a stability and confidence created by the familiarity scale of the small town environment. They benefited from an unchallenged jurisdiction over the urban space of the town. The central chapters of this thesis examined the influence of the municipal elite in developing specialist activities in the county town and in regulating or encouraging particular functions in the central urban space. The changing municipal priorities around the uses of the central and riverside areas of Bedford and Lincoln and the physical impact on these areas have been discussed. The fortunes and lifestyles of the individual members of the municipal elite went hand-in-hand with the development of urban specialisation and expansion. The incomes of the councillors were dependent upon the growth of the local economy. In their personal lives the residential interests and living styles of the county town councillors revealed their relationship to the evolving urban environment and provide an important insight into the motivations of the elite in remaking the county town between 1860 and 1910. During this period the housing choices of the municipal elite also demonstrated the developing spatial and social segregation in the county towns.

The intensity of the relationship between the elite and the townscape is illustrated by the housing choices of the elite. In Lincoln, 80% of the municipal elite resided within the borough, while in Bedford, the proportion was 79% and the minority of councillors who lived outside the county town borough resided in villages within three miles of the borough boundary.1 The stability of the presence of the elite within the borough between 1860 and 1910 offers an alternative portrait of the changing lifestyles of the late Victorian elites to that presented in studies of the Victorian city.

1 Information for this chapter is taken from the database of councillors discussed above, see footnote 25, chapter seven.
In the expanding industrial towns and cities of the nineteenth century urban development produced increasingly defined spatial and social segregation and, by the second half of the century, people and commercial functions were separated into distinct geographical areas of urban activity in a pattern common to the growing cities. Through this process the increasing segregation of different social classes became a distinctive characteristic of the Victorian city and a subject of interest from the 1840s to the present day.

In comparison, it has been argued that smaller provincial towns experienced lower levels of segregation in the nineteenth century. These towns have been considered to remain more mixed in function, with commercial activities and domestic residences mingled together, and accordingly, with inhabitants of different classes living side by side. Class divisions, it is argued, were not so harsh in smaller urban centres either spatially or socially as in larger cities. Residential segregation has been taken as the external manifestation of the multi-layered class separation at work in the Victorian city, and, simultaneously, as a component part of class formation. Conversely, the lack of obvious residential segregation in an urban settlement has also been taken to signal a more unified, less class-conscious society. Stephen Royle notes that two important characteristics of small town life in the late nineteenth century were the institutionalised social activities and the growth of municipalism suggesting a broad social participation in urban life. In this sense residential segregation was significant not just for what it revealed about the townscape but also about the town society and especially about those elements of the urban elite who had most choice in the market.


3 R. Dennis, English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: a Social Geography (Cambridge, 1984), 211.


Residential segregation and the county town elite

It has been argued that, in the Victorian city, the increasing distance of the middle class suburbs from the city centres by the end of the nineteenth century detached the middle class elites and 'social leaders' from urban management and re-focussed their energies on their own neighbourhoods. While this pattern is apparent in some large cities and industrial towns, studies have failed to find it in the county town. In Exeter, for example, the middle class housing developed between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries was located within walking distance of the city centre on newly available urban land. Barry Doyle found the Norwich middle class also lived in suburbs close to the town centre. While the middle class as a whole tended to live within the boundary of the county town, the municipal elite were 'spatially wedded' to the borough. This was also the case in both Bedford and Lincoln between 1860 and 1910. The affluent county town elite lived within the borough boundary as their fathers had previously, albeit often in new streets and developments. Even in the Edwardian era this pattern can be identified, indeed Doyle argues that in Norwich, the 'vast majority of the middle class, and especially the Liberal middle class, [were] resident within the city boundaries, paying city rates and taking part in city centre-based activities such as chapel life' well into the twentieth century.

The stability of elite residence combined with the 'dynastic' nature of sectors of the municipal elite (described above, chapter seven) further strengthened with relationship between the elite and the townscape. For many members of the county town elite urban management was regarded as a 'birthright'. There is no evidence to suggest that the county town elite considered urban government to be a 'stepping-stone' to further extra-borough ambitions and very few councillors, even among the wealthiest, moved out of the town.

In terms of social mobility, very few members of the municipal elite outgrew the town or broke into the higher echelons of county society. In theory this would have...

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7 S. A. Royle, 'The development of small towns in Britain' in Daunton, Cambridge Urban History, 175-6.
been more achievable in Lincolnshire than in Bedfordshire. Firstly, county society in rural Lincolnshire was a great deal more affordable than in the south of England during this period; it has been calculated that it was possible to live like a gentleman in Lincolnshire on 1,000 acres or less, a relatively small estate.\(^2\) Secondly, in the 1870s Lincolnshire was conspicuous for its ‘untitled aristocracy’.\(^3\) Against this apparent openness was a lack of availability of land. Lincolnshire landed estates were larger than usual, and a produced a relatively closed county society. R.J. Olney argued that there was ‘little movement of new families into the higher strata of Lincolnshire society’. Olney found most of the new society members were married into the ‘minor’ gentry and he noted that bankers were particularly welcomed.\(^4\)

Among the Lincoln municipal elite the most ‘successful’ individual in terms of social mobility was Joseph Shuttleworth of Clayton and Shuttleworth, one of the Lincoln’s largest agricultural machinery iron foundries. Shuttleworth was the son of a boat builder who made enough money in his own lifetime to purchase two country estates, one immediately outside Lincoln at Hartsholme and a second in Bedfordshire. The first was purchased in 1861, the year of his second marriage to the daughter of Lieutenant Colonel Ellison of Boultham Hall, Shuttleworth’s entry to the rural gentry.\(^5\)

At least three other Lincoln councillors married into the local gentry, although of different occupations, they were all well connected with ‘good’ addresses and held extensive directorships or public positions. They were men of means. Lawrence Stone has argued that these were also exceptional; ‘those who did move up were rarely successful men of business. Most of the newcomers were rising parish gentry or office holders or lawyers, men from backgrounds not too dissimilar to those of the existing county elite.’\(^6\) For those without such advantages rural society still held attractions and several councillors purchased land or farms around the town. On the whole, though the majority of the county town municipal elite remained firmly attached to the town, living and dying within the borough. They showed little desire

\(^{11}\) Doyle, ‘The structure of elite power’, 198.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 42.
\(^{15}\) LA miscellaneous deposit 157, *Biography of Lincoln City Council members holding office 1835-1914*. 
to achieve gentry or metropolitan lifestyles suggesting that the relatively limited expansion of the county town in the late Victorian period still offered enough possibilities to expand elite lifestyles and enjoy enhanced social status.

Municipal government in the county town between 1860 and 1910 was a reflection of traditional middle class forms of urban association and control, not a replacement of them. As the previous chapter demonstrated, earlier forms of association and patronage such as family and religious affiliation remained important and influential in the county town between 1860 and 1910 while new networks of connection such as professional bodies and temperance societies joined them. The complex structure of family, professional and associational connections at work within the councils illustrates the essential middle class nature of these institutions, suggesting that even as late as the early twentieth century, county towns were still the preserve of the middle class merchant and professional. The personal, social and business interests of the elite were expressed through municipal government and where these converged, further strengthened elite stability. The continued presence of the elite within the borough boundary over several generations provided an additional area of common interest, creating a confidence among the elite which enabled long-term programmes of urban management.

In Bedford and Lincoln, as in Norwich and Exeter the municipal elites lived within the borough but the pattern of settlement changed between 1860 and 1910. When the addresses of the municipal elites are plotted on town maps the individual urban townscapes and residential patterns of Lincoln and Bedford are immediately apparent (see figs. 3 and 4). In Lincoln the extreme divide between the uphill and downhill areas created two distinct urban environments with the narrow ribbon of High Street and Steep Hill linking them. In Bedford, the pattern of urban development took a much more nuclear form, radiating from the High Street and riverside intersection. As has been noted on earlier chapters, living uphill in Lincoln allowed a physical and social advantage over the town, a 'naturally' elite location for which Bedford with its relatively flat geography and lack of obvious distinctive physical attractions could supply no comparison.

Figure 3 Residences of Bedford councillors 1861 and 1890

Source: See chapter seven footnote 26.
Figure 4 Residences of Lincoln councillors 1860-1910

Source: Biography of Lincoln City Members.
Why did the majority of the county town municipal elite remain so close to the town centre? Richard Dennis has argued that:

The outmigration of the middle classes was a very slow process. Indeed, we require more detailed information...to determine whether the central middle class became the suburban middle class, or whether the latter were new middle class households.\(^{17}\)

Bedford and Lincoln had no shortage of suitable new middle class housing developments on the outskirts of the towns to which the elite might be attracted. The Lincoln Pocket Guide of 1880 described ‘...many neat villa-like residences rising on all sides of the town’.\(^{18}\) While in Bedford, the demand for respectable housing was well understood:

A large number of retired officers, widows of clergymen and professional men, reside in and near Bedford, in order to secure the educational advantages afforded in the town; and many houses have been built in the outskirts to suit their requirements.\(^{19}\)

Yet the councillors in both towns were reluctant to move out and take up residence in these new streets and suburbs.

Returning to Dennis’ point about whether outmigration in Victorian towns involved the same households, there is little evidence of this among the municipal elite. In Bedford those members of the municipal elite who lived on the fringes of town, in the newest suburbs, were also newcomers to the town. They did not belong to the families that had participated in municipal affairs a generation earlier.\(^{20}\) Newly built properties were synonymous with ‘squatters’ (the residential community), or new arrivals and so it benefited most councillors to associate themselves with the older, more permanent areas of the town. The association of status and place for the municipal elite in the county town was intense and militated against the classic Victorian city pattern of elite suburbs developing on the edge of the urban area.

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\(^{17}\) Dennis, English Industrial Cities, 217.
\(^{19}\) Kelly’s Directory of Bedfordshire 1890 (London, 1890), 19.
\(^{20}\) Information taken from database of councillors described in chapter seven
In Lincoln, councillors relocated to properties further uphill, rather than further out, as they were able to afford them, while in Bedford they moved to larger properties and separated home and business.

In the Bedford and Lincoln elites two major factors inhibited outmigration. In Lincoln the central residential magnet was the elitism of the cathedral close. The physical geography of the town, together with the enduring presence of the cathedral, combined to form an inviolable bastion of privilege, which could not be threatened by either urban development or fashion. Throughout the period 1860 to 1910 the cathedral close housed a political and social elite. It was the most socially advantageous place to live; no upmarket suburb could offer the same status. This elite up-hill, status was reinforced by the lack of environmental regulation in the downhill area of the town; in Lincoln upward social mobility was literally vital on health grounds as well as for social status.21 In Bedford early out-migration had been discouraged by the provision of Harpur Trust education free to those resident within the borough. The residential qualification was abandoned in 1873, with the advent of the Taunton Reforms, and after this date new suburban areas emerged for the affluent arriving in search of low cost education.

The new developments of middle class housing on the edge of Bedford were soon inhabited by clearly defined groups of residents. H.E. Mann moved to Glebe Road, Bedford with his family in 1885:

The houses were not much to look at. A neighbour recalled that, when house-hunting . . . he had asked the agent doubtfully, ‘And what sort of people live here?’ But they were better than they looked.... Some of the mothers were widows, some of the fathers ex-army officers. Most of them had several children. Such service connections and such families were typical, but in the eighties and nineties newcomers added variety: a few schoolmasters, a local editor, a violinist, a painter (but he came later) a gentleman rider and job-master, and for a short time the author Fergus Hume. I doubt whether the rent of any house exceeded £35.22

By the 1890s the variety of occupants in Glebe Road could have been due to the removal of ex-service families, particularly from the East Indies, into two further

21 See above chapter six.
suburban developments known locally as ‘saints’ and ‘poets’ after the names of the avenues.\(^2\)

From 1873 onwards, the Bedford middle class became segregated into cluster patterns, so rapidly that, by the 1880s, certain streets were already the preserves of particular status or occupational groups. An analysis of the 1881 census shows that of Bedford inhabitants born in India 37% (106 people) lived in just three streets: Asburnham Road, Alexander Road and Kimbolton Road.\(^2\)\(^4\) This extreme clustering and quasi-reconstruction of ex-patriate communities within the town, combined with the poor quality and low external appearance of the new speculative suburban housing, accounts for the wide berth given to these estates by the municipal elite. Bedford councillors preferred elite residential areas established before the mid-century, or alternatively, individually designed properties.

The residential choices of the municipal elite show that, although there was not a typical ‘Chicago School’ model of urban development evolving, a degree of residential segregation did develop in the county town during the period 1860 to 1910.\(^2\)\(^5\) As the municipal elite remade the town urban space became specialised and status orientated. Identifiable areas of social status came into existence, which were small in scale but extremely significant locally. Richard Dennis has argued that, in smaller communities, ‘the social meaning of street-by-street segregation would have been the same as that of district-by-district segregation in a larger city’.\(^2\)\(^6\)

What form did ‘street-by-street’ segregation take and what was its significance to the urban elite? In the mid-century the county town municipal elite lived in, or close to, the town centres, gradually expanding into selected inner suburbs by the early twentieth century. This is a pattern that was common to county towns and some other types of urban development. Doyle argues that the suburbanisation of Norwich’s middle class:

close to the city centre [mirrored] the experience of the west midlands and the smaller towns of the north-west, rather than the dispersal...observed in Manchester, Leeds and Preston.27

The favoured suburbs were either those close to established elite areas or new developments with easy access to the town centre, rather than on the outskirts of the borough. This was also the case in both Bedford and Lincoln where there was a clear but diminishing concentration around the High Streets throughout the whole period, suggesting a continuance of a close home and business relationship. The location of the municipal elite in Bedford and Lincoln also demonstrated the importance attached to the desirability of having appropriate neighbours. Where councillors resided in suburban streets in both towns they were rarely to be found alone and lived in elite enclaves with other councillors. It is possible to identify clear patterns of elite settlement and spatial segregation emerging between 1860 and 1910 in both Lincoln and Bedford.

The residential distribution of council members in Lincoln produced three main areas of elite location. These were along the High Street, in the ‘uphill’ area around the cathedral and on new roads and developments which were literally ‘going uphill’. The establishment of the ‘uphill’ area of Lincoln as the most desirable residential area was not surprising; life on and above ‘the cliff’ was cleaner and healthier than among the industries downhill.28 It was standard practice for the Victorian urban middle class to seek out elevated locations not only to escape smoke and pollution, but also because elevated sites were thought to be inherently beneficial to mental and physical health and satisfied the ‘middle-class obsession with scenery’.29 There was also a psychological and social advantage to the middle class in being able to survey the surrounding urban area, their business interests and their employees. In late Victorian Lincoln the newly developed uphill areas of elite residence overlooked the manufacturing and trading district that lay downhill along the watercourse. It is likely that uphill Lincoln had been an area of elite residence since the Roman period.

26 Dennis, English Industrial Cities, 245.
29 M.A. Simpson, ‘The West End of Glasgow 1830-1914’ in Simpson and Lloyd, Middle Class Housing, 51.
and remained so throughout the nineteenth century. In contrast to many Victorian cities, the focus of elite residence in Lincoln remained stable across the Victorian period. There was a slight shift from the High Street area, but overall the pattern of elite residence suggested that the uphill area around the cathedral remained influential and if admittance could not be gained then proximity was important. For members of the elite who had made their money in the commercial activities and trades of the lower town the uphill neighbourhood exerted its attraction more strongly as the population of Lincoln increased.

A comparison of the residential location of Lincoln councillors in 1860 with those in 1900 shows a consolidation of addresses at some distance from the lower town and commercial areas. By 1900 members of the municipal elite were more likely to live on roads and terraces ascending the cliff than in the area around the Cathedral itself, suggesting both a shortage of appropriate uphill property available and, perhaps a certain arriviste quality to the elite by this time. The desirability of Lincoln's uphill area is apparent in a pattern of increasing elite location along roads climbing the cliff- the Lindum and Yarborough Roads. Lindum Terrace, a nineteenth century development, which emerged from the end of the Lindum Road, combined the possibility of new uphill residences with views over the industrial activity of the lower town and out to open country.

By contrast, Bedford was a more socially and economically mixed urban environment. At first glance the members of Bedford's municipal elite were scattered across the borough, unlike the situation in Lincoln. It seems that councillors could live equally well in either the eastern or western wards of the town. However there was a distinct pattern to their residence. Most of the councillors lived in the main established urban area north of the River Ouse. Hopkinson found a distinct pattern of residential segregation emerging in late nineteenth century Bedford with:

A tendency for the more prosperous residents to seek accommodation away from the older and more congested core areas, which the poorer

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workers were gradually being forced to occupy. The middle classes had established their households on the suburban margins.31

Despite this development of peripheral middle class suburbs, Bedford’s municipal elite was clustered along the High Street or in the streets leading into it. Some outward movement from the High Street, east along the Embankment and north along the newly developed De Parys Avenue, was socially acceptable, judged by the addresses of Bedford councillors.

Hopkinson has analysed the level of residential segregation in late Victorian Bedford using a combination of valuation, property size and construction type combined with decorative characteristics. He found the property zoning pattern in the town had six major characteristics. Firstly, there was ‘a survival of much greater heterogeneity of house types in the eastern area north of the river’; secondly, that newly developed areas ‘displayed a coherent status pattern’ which was generally either ‘middle class housing or housing developed for industrial workers’. Thirdly, that there were remaining areas of poor quality housing stock dating from the 17th century. The fourth characteristic was that high class residential areas were ‘generally peripheral and located along major transport routes or close to collecting points.’ The final two characteristics identified by Hopkinson were a lack of open undeveloped space, because new suburbs were built close to the centre as in-filling, and the ‘persistence of relatively better property, often in commercial usage, along the main roads into lower class housing districts’.32

Hopkinson’s categories are highly relevant as the pattern of residence for the municipal elite conforms well to the last three. In Bedford, councillors’ residences concentrated around the High Street area, a second group lived in a ‘ribbon development’ pattern along the main routes out of the town while a third group resided in small clusters in specific, newly developed suburban streets. These findings would suggest that the location of elite residence in Bedford was highly significant in a local context and that the apparently random spread of residence between eastern and western sides of the town was both deceptive and socially

32 Ibid., 49.
significant. With the exception of the crowded area around the High Street, houses in the western part of Bedford were more likely to be in well-laid out in segregated streets (Hopkinson’s ‘coherent status’); the eastern side of town was more densely built up with a piecemeal street pattern. Councillors also lived on the main routes out of town often in small enclaves of respectability along roads of mixed function.

The fact that there were coherent patterns to elite residence shows the level of significance attached to location. This meaning was extremely localised and specific, for example where councillors lived on the main mixed roads they often lived in better property or in small groups of villas, created by opportunistic ribbon development. Only those very familiar with the immediate area would realise the importance of living at one end of a road as opposed to the other, or understand from an address which houses were closer to the park or otherwise more desirable properties, nevertheless these distinctions were significant. In Bedford, addresses were generally given with house numbers, a practice which was much less widespread in Lincoln before 1900 where houses were still generally known by name. This was despite the fact that the population of Lincoln was consistently larger than that of Bedford across this period.

The three different types of elite residential areas in Bedford had distinct characteristics. Tavistock Road proves a good example of main route ‘ribbon development’ in Bedford. It was a road which ran from the top of the High Street, into the main route to Rushden and the Midlands. Hopkinson describes Tavistock Street as ‘very varied in both type of use and in value of property’ with gentry, professional and skilled artisan inhabitants living along the road in different clusters at the mid-century. However Hopkinson notes that by the late Victorian period ‘the pressure of traffic and commercial pressure and commercial functions was driving residents away into terraces and ‘places’ behind the main street.\(^{33}\) Of the councillors who lived on Tavistock Road between 1860 and 1910, two, Richard Black and Charles Lester, were builders located at numbers 171 and 121; closer to the centre of town was the Crown Hotel, the residence and business address of Charles Shelton ‘wine, spirit and porter merchant’. Charles Dines, a veterinary

\(^{33}\) Hopkinson, ‘Economy and society’, 43.
surgeon lived close to the Crown, while Henry Thody, solicitor, lived at number two, almost on St Peter's Green. The road remained fairly mixed in both function and inhabitants but one's location along Tavistock Road made a significant difference. Using Armstrong's classification of social status as a system of assessment produces a subtler picture of elite location on main routes. In Bedford, the social status of councillors diminished from A1 status at the top of Tavistock Road, close to the centre of town, down to CII status further out. This is an inversion of the type of pattern we might find in the Victorian city with roads such as the Bristol Road in Birmingham or the London Road in Leicester becoming progressively more socially exclusive away from the city centre.

Where Bedford councillors lived in new in-fill suburban streets they were unevenly spread. Councillors clustered into selected streets ignoring similar or even adjacent ones. Thus we find two councillors living in The Grove and two in Rothsay Gardens, which ran parallel to it, but no-one living Rothsay Place which connected the two. This pattern repeated itself throughout Bedford; most councillors lived in a street that contained another councillor demonstrating the importance of street status and suitable neighbours to the municipal elite. Some streets were 'approved' for residence by those who were part of the core of old Bedford families or by those with municipal ambition, while other streets and roads were abandoned entirely to working class inhabitants, or to the middle class 'squatter' community.

The outward movement of the middle class in the Victorian city, can be regarded as a defensive movement. Did the emergence of residential patterns among the county town elite result from a similar impulse? Residential segregation by social status did exist in the county town in the late Victorian period and produced a further 'clustering' pattern of settlement among the municipal elite. Segregation was related to the development of urban specialisation and it is significant that there were clearer patterns of segregation in Lincoln, where industry created pollution, than in Bedford where the elite wished to create a respectable town. County town residential

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34 Information taken from database of councillors described above chapter seven.
segregation was small in scale but locally significant and intensified with population growth in the 1870s and 1880s. This segregation followed a street-by-street and ‘clustering’ pattern rather than following the Chicago School or other models that could be found in the larger Victorian city.\textsuperscript{37}

The residential clustering patterns of the municipal elites in Bedford and Lincoln showed strong occupational influences. Members of the elite who were occupied in manufacturing or heavier occupations were more likely to move away from their occupations, while professional men ‘had little practical motivation to separate family life from those business premises which were neither dirty, nor noisy and which did not involve the social threat of a large workforce.’\textsuperscript{38} In Lincoln, the larger manufacturers were more successful in moving ‘uphill’ and moved earlier than other members of the municipal elite, possibly because they were also wealthier than many of their contemporaries. When they did move away from their businesses, professional members of the municipal elite moved into streets that housed other professionals. This is apparent in Bedford where certain streets had developed as professional residential quarters by the 1881 census. At this time there were thirty-seven households in the town headed by solicitors or solicitor’s clerks. These were mainly clustered into seven streets; five households in Cauldwell Street, four in Mill Street, four on the Bromham Road, three on St Cuthbert’s Street and two each on Harpur Street, Peel Street and St Paul’s Square.\textsuperscript{39} Members of the municipal elite followed this pattern of occupational-based segregation but it was somewhat mitigated by factors such as the generational possession of established central town property and the stigmatisation associated in Bedford with the newer peripheral developments.

A closer analysis of an elite residential cluster in Lincoln demonstrates how connections less obvious than occupation were also influential in choosing residential location. An examination of the councillors who lived in Lindum Terrace, an ‘uphill’ area of Lincoln, reveals a number of areas of common personal

\textsuperscript{36} For a discussion of this debate see F.M.L. Thompson, ‘The rise of suburbia’ in R.J. Morris and R.Rodger (eds), \textit{The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History 1820-1914} (London, 1993), 149-180.

\textsuperscript{37} Pooley, ‘Patterns on the ground’; Dennis, \textit{English Industrial Cities}.

\textsuperscript{38} Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, 366.
and economic interest connecting them. These links included marriage connections and common interest through company directorships. The only apparent outsider was Edwin Pratt who lacked any personal extra-municipal connection to the other elite residents. He did however possess several advantages which enabled him entry into municipal politics; he was well enough off to style himself ‘gentleman’, could afford a good property and, probably most importantly, had previously been employed as clerk to the corporation of Derby so had a thorough knowledge of borough finances.40

Although the residential clustering of the municipal elite intensified with population expansion it was a characteristic of the county town municipal elite which pre-dated urban expansion and can be seen an external expression of the intense web of connections which bound the elite together. The similarities between the councillors, who lived in Melville Street, Lincoln, for example, show how the clustering of elite members into certain streets was due to more than just the geographical availability of suitable status properties.

Melville Street was in the ‘downhill’ area of Lincoln and ran between the River Witham and the Great Northern and Great Eastern railway lines (fig. 5). In the 1840s new houses ‘of a superior kind’ were available on Melville Street,41 but by the 1860s, the street was close to the Sheaf Iron Works and in the heart of Lincoln’s industrial area. The councillors who resided in the street, such as John Wilkinson, belonged to the mid-century period and were part of an older, traditional county town economy. Wilkinson joined the council in 1849 and served until 1860, he was the owner of the Witham Steam Packet, the main shipping carrier eventually superseded by the railway. His neighbours on Melville Street were Edward Cooling and William Huddleston; both were builders and only served short terms as councillors. Huddleston was out of office in 1866 and Cooling died in 1872. Melville Street failed to supply any more councillors and both the Witham Steam Packet and

39 Census 1881, CD rom.
40 Biography of Lincoln City Council members.
41 Hill, Victorian Lincoln, 128.
Figure 5 ‘Down hill’ Lincoln, showing Melville Street and the industrial zone.

Source: Ruddock’s Revised Map of the City of Lincoln 1887, Lincoln Library Local Studies Collection.
Huddleston's building company, which had once employed 140 men, ceased trading.\(^{42}\)

The demise of Melville Street as an elite location reflected the changing economy of Lincoln and the increasing pressure put on both traditional business activities and on the physical environment by the increasing dominance of manufacturing. Its decline was also a consequence of the relentless uphill movement of Lincoln's decision makers. Melville Street's decline occurred at the precise time when Lincoln was experiencing its greatest population and industrial growth; correspondingly downhill Lincoln was becoming a single-class proletariat environment associated with work and income generation. The examination of professional households in chapter three demonstrated strong residential clustering in the county town based on occupation, and the location of the municipal elite indicates that there was a clear status consideration in 'flocking together'.

This thesis has argued that the county town municipal elite was a strong network of interconnecting urban interests, pro-development and holding hegemony over the urban environment to mould or neglect as they wished. How does the pattern of elite residence relate to this analysis? In many ways the growth of recognizable elite areas was a reflection of the success the elite experienced in developing their county towns. Late nineteenth century urban expansion produced a wider choice of middle class housing as populations grew to support speculative suburban development and the concentration of the elite into particular streets could be regarded as a direct result of the market provision of more suitable housing.\(^{43}\) However the clustering of councillors' households and the deliberate avoidance of some new middle class residential areas suggest that further social factors were at work.

As the economies of Bedford and Lincoln became ever more specialised from the 1870s, population growth and expanding business networks made the personal knowledge of individuals and neighbourhoods increasingly difficult. County town growth did not reach the level which produced 'the superficiality, the anonymity, and

\(^{42}\) LA miscellaneous deposit 157, *Biography of Lincoln City Council members holding office 1835-1914*.

\(^{43}\) Thompson, 'The rise of suburbia', 155.
the transitory character of urban social relations' in the Victorian city. However, urban life in the county town was becoming less personal and more highly organised. By the 1890s, the 'middling' class in the county town had grown and was no longer the knowable community that it had been in the mid-century. Residential clustering therefore reinforced personal knowledge and strengthened group identity among the municipal elite.

The residential choices made by the municipal elites of Bedford and Lincoln between 1860 and 1910 were also indicative of important changes in their status and lifestyles. In addition to appropriate location and suitable neighbours, domesticity, space and conspicuous consumption were the requirements of the municipal elite in the late nineteenth century. It was also becoming desirable to live in some style. When Alderman Brogden died in 1881, the inventory of his property in Lindum Terrace, Lincoln listed a parlour, library, dining room, breakfast room and entrance hall, four bedrooms, a bathroom and three dressing rooms plus assorted servants' rooms, kitchens and pantries. This new style of suburban living suggests certain sectors of the municipal elite, most noticeably the manufacturers and professionals were becoming increasingly bourgeois and consolidating their business and social linkages through a common culture and lifestyle as well as through location.

The increasing residential clustering of the municipal elite in the county town over the period 1860 to 1910 suggests that it was no longer possible to maintain a municipal career without the status symbol of a residential property. What was required, in the way of establishment and material possessions, to be considered solidly middle class in the county town was changing between 1860 and 1910. In mid-nineteenth century Bedford it was possible for a man who lived and worked on the High Street to become a civic leader and both George Miller, a tailor (mayor 1857), and William Nash, a 'beer, wine and spirit merchant' (mayor 1865 and 1866), achieved this. By the 1900s, however the preferred location for residence for public figures was on the Kimbolton Road or the redeveloped Embankment and most of the mayors lived in one of these two locations. By the early twentieth century status had

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44 Wirth, 'Urbanism as a way of life', 192.
45 Dennis, *English Industrial Cities*, 218.
46 L.A Howitt Collection, document 2/1, *Brogden Inventory*. 
become harder to achieve and location was both a more important and a more expensive component of this. By 1910 the lifestyle of the local councillor and public figure in the county town was significantly different to that in the mid-century. While it was perfectly respectable to live on the same premises as one's business in the mid-century, and many councillors did, it was rare in the 1890s to find a councillor who did not separate his business and domestic life. By the end of the nineteenth century the municipal elite had become segregated (on however small a scale) from their employees into an elite-approved enclave. Relocation within the county town, particularly from the high street area, did not only offer increased social status, but reflected also changing values among the municipal elite between 1860 and 1910.

Houses in new elite areas differed substantially from those in the central high street or older elite areas. Lindum Terrace in Lincoln, for example, offered a new type of house and style of living to the elite. Contrary to the name, the houses were semi-detached or detached, set well back from the road in large gardens down long drives. These properties were very different to those in the High Street, which were next door to, or above, commercial businesses, or even those in the Minster Close which were built in eighteenth century terraces with little space for leisure. Established elite areas such as the Cathedral Close in Lincoln, had housing designed for very public lives; residents were always observed coming or going. Georgian and Regency front doors often opened directly onto the street. By contrast the newer elite housing in the central suburbs was designed around private family life. Above all new houses offered gardens and these were becoming increasingly important to the urban middle class from the mid-nineteenth century. A villa set in a garden ‘proclaimed the values of privacy, order, taste and the appreciation of nature in a controlled environment’ and these became the property style of choice for the municipal elite.48

The issue of control was an important one; it should be remembered that the county towns remained, for the whole of this period, ‘walking towns’. Members of the municipal elite did walk across the county town almost continually; from their home to their place of work, to corporation meetings, to their clubs and to social events. In this context, the house with a garden set within the municipal borough, often no more than five or six minutes from the commercial heart of the town, took on a greater significance. The garden separated the home from the business, the domestic from the commercial, the private man from the public. It also offered a retreat from the increasingly crowded county town centre.

Residential patterns and elite formation

In both Bedford and Lincoln the municipal elite lived in, or close to, the town centre throughout the period. They lived in select middle class enclaves and developed new, relatively central, residential streets for themselves, often in close proximity to areas of municipal redevelopment such as parks and landscaped streets. The property interests of the municipal elites were closely linked to areas of urban improvement, in the case of Bedford, and carefully located away from industrial development in Lincoln. Through the possession of local property the elite invested their profits back into the urban fabric of the county town and through this they were linked to an agenda of urban management as well as to the renewal of the county town economy and image.

Local factors in residential patterns were also extremely important in the formation and consciousness of the municipal elite. While the Victorian city has been identified as a crucible of middle class formation, the county town already possessed a loosely established governing middle class by the mid-nineteenth century. These people often had roots in the ‘middling sort’ of the eighteenth

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century. They were a disparate grouping who were closely related to the central place urban functions of the county town; the bankers, merchants and shipping agents who facilitated trade, the shopkeepers and innkeepers who attracted custom, the lawyers, doctors and professionals who provided services and the manufacturers and employers. In a small nineteenth century town these people formed a common community separated from the majority of labouring citizens by their possession of property and from the gentry and aristocracy by their need to earn a living. While internal factions and competition created division and tensions within this group it can be argued that they had enough in common and experienced sufficient social interaction to be considered a class. These were the men from whom the municipal elite was drawn after 1835.

From the 1860s onwards professionalism, increasing wealth and distance from daily business among some sectors of this community, combined with new and bourgeois lifestyles created gulf between, for example, the High Street trader and the manufacturer that had been barely visible in 1850. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls have described how:

historians have felt more comfortable in using a broad brush terminology once we pass into the latter half of the nineteenth century. They have been more inclined to accept that classes have been made by this time and have accordingly turned their attention more to the relationships within or between them. There is less emphasis upon the local and provincial and the distinctiveness of urban elites and more interest in the patterns of national life and culture.

The composition of the urban elites in Bedford and Lincoln can be categorised in this 'broad brush' way and we can find many of the characteristics that we would expect in this period. In the county town elite we can see the relatively small numbers of manufacturers, the growing influence of professionals, the similarities of scale and stability in the provincial elite and the increased influence of 'national life' in the rise of party issues and organisation. However turning to the issues of local distinctiveness the elites of Bedford and Lincoln are revealed to be more closely

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52 A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, The Making of the British Middle Class?, intro xxxvi.
allied to the commercial interests of their urban milieus than they are to an abstract class identity. Previous chapters have shown how local, though not necessarily parochial, economic interest and personal networks exercised more obligations than abstract national 'class' ideas such as allegiance to party or ideological standpoints. Values that historians have believed to be central to middle class identity during this period such as belief in 'improvement', 'cleanliness', technological advances in healthcare, environmental management, belief in social mobility and sectarian identity were all subjugated to the values attached to local priorities of urban specialisation and economic growth. In remaking their towns the county town middle class was also 'made', or perhaps remade, in a locally defined image. Through the 'remaking' of the county town the fault-line in the wider middle class and in the municipal elite between the two groups which Morris describes as the 'traditional middle-class of professionals and manufacturers' and the petit bourgeois of 'shopkeepers and small masters' widened.53 Urban specialisation created a new wealthier elite by the end of the nineteenth century but the permanence and strength of the relationship between the municipal elite and the townscape ensured support from across the municipal electorate. It was the strong local identity of the municipal elite and the fact that both their private and public lives were seen to be firmly rooted in the townscape that provided the base for their urban power between 1860 and 1910. These factors also resulted in a flexibility that enabled the elite to absorb new members and responsibilities ensuring the long-term maintenance of elite agendas of urban renewal.

53 Morris, Class, Sect and Party, 11.
Conclusion

This study has considered how two county towns were successfully ‘remade’ in the period 1860-1910. The process of successfully redefining urban functions and town reputations was a complex one and further complicated by the background of national urban consolidation, an increasingly centralised economy and regional integration. Much of what we know about British society in the late Victorian period we understand against a background of urban conurbations, agricultural depression, foreign competition, industrial slowdown, regional integration, imperial pride and a growing faith in ‘social science’. Urban change in the county towns between 1860-1910 reflected many of these trends but also demonstrated the ragged and patchy nature of these developments and of ‘national life’. In many county towns the ‘industrial revolution’, in terms of factory working and high technology, was still novel in the 1870s. The county town was different in many ways from the larger cities but needs to be understood in the context of existing research on the Victorian city.

The development of the county town between 1860 and 1910 followed an alternative pattern to that of the Victorian city. The first obvious difference is in timing. In both of the case study towns and in many other county towns the pivotal decades of growth occurred after the mid-nineteenth century with the 1870s being particularly important. This was the decade of greatest population expansion but also a period when the municipal elite experienced generational change and became aware of their the full extent of their strength and power. In many county towns the municipal reform of 1835 had little impact until the coming of the sanitary authority and the implementation of the Local Government Act in 1871.

The second major difference between the county town and the Victorian city was that while all county towns became industrialised to some extent, not all became industrial centres. Between 1860 and 1910 the county town experienced a shift from the role of a marketing and primary processing centre to that of a manufacturing or service urban centre. In most industrialised Victorian towns urban specialisation hinged on an industrial specialism; the refinement of process or product. In some
county towns the drive towards specialisation took the form of a retarded manufacturing 'revolution' and manufacturing was always a more important component of the county town economy than has been generally recognised. However in the county town urban specialisation had a broader meaning, it could result in the town developing a reputation for a particular service or an environmental advantage.

Two main aspects influenced the development of county town urban specialisms: location and the existing resource base. Location was an important variable, with county towns in different regions exhibiting diverse levels of metropolitanism and provincialism across the period. The recasting of the economic and communicative structures of Britain from the late eighteenth century onwards undermined the essential function and nature of the county town. Alongside the new urban hierarchy the economic foci of Britain shifted twice within the nineteenth century: first towards the northern manufacturing conurbations and then south to the London services. The location of an urban centre in relation to the core or peripheral areas of the nation became more significant.

In the face of locational disadvantage and urban competition, specialisation emerged as a strategy to combat a declining urban status and income. County towns within reach of London were more likely to develop a specialist service sector rather than a manufacturing specialism. However, specialist activities could only be developed from the existing resources around the town. An examination of county towns in the 1850s shows that many, such as Shrewsbury, had a number of potential routes to development; ironworking, education, retailing and consumer centre, for example, but the drive towards urban survival caused even the least promising towns to look anew at their old features. Sam Johnson's research on Lancaster shows how a declining county town turned institutional provision to economic advantage.1

Specialisation was a risky process. Even in towns, such as Bedford, where the core amenity (the Harpur Trust grammar school) was already established and funded,

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extra investment or regulation was required. Regulation of labour, space or even social tone, was central to the success of the urban specialism. In its most crude form all urban activities were subordinate to the expanding specialism. In both Bedford and Lincoln the policy of urban regulation privileged the central activity, with which the towns became identified, above all other considerations. Bye laws were often used to enforce this, Bedford, for example, remained an important centre for agricultural livestock markets, particularly for the pig trade, throughout the period but livestock traffic and markets were moved to the town margin and discouraged from affecting the respectable educational tone of the town. Between 1860 and 1910 county towns experienced increasing levels of regulation. Urban space, work, social relations and gender were all subject to greater control, both informal regulation through the decline of custom, street life, townhouses and homework and formal regulation through spatial controls of walls and boundaries, formalised factory working, bye laws and suburban development. Much of the central urban space was regulated and reconstructed as an integral economic part of specialisation.

The late Victorian county town elite consciously pursued and managed the development of urban specialisation. The smaller physical and demographic scale of the county town permitted a more extensive elite authority than the expanding city. The controlled scale of the county town borough and the relative weight and power of the commercial middle class within this small world enabled the middle class urban elite greater environmental and social dominance than their counterparts in the ever-expanding and often chaotic metropolis during this period. Urban space in the late Victorian county town was reconstructed economically and physically as an external manifestation of local middle class values.

In Bedford and Lincoln the towns were reconstructed around value sets which can be regarded as completely different, even oppositional. Lincoln was a hive of non-conformist industrial activity and the town was crowded, grimy and similar to a northern mill town in atmosphere. Lincoln’s elite can be seen as a group of hard-headed capitalists pursuing a ‘where there’s muck, there’s brass’ strategy. While in Bedford the town was remade around the values of the respectable, leisured middle class whose income was one-step removed from the activities which generated it, or who thrived in the ‘new’ occupations in the state or commercial service sectors. In
these contrasts is evidence of the north/south, industrial/commercial, radical/establishment dichotomies that many historians have noted operating in late Victorian Britain as a whole, and specifically within the British middle class, at this time. In both towns the environments and space of the central urban areas were 'remade' and transparently reflected these values. Nevertheless this characterisation is over-simplistic. Bedford and Lincoln had common elements in their elites; the shopocracy and professionals formed important components of both urban elites, non-conformists and more established groups often worked together to achieve a particular result. Even at the height of Bedford's reputation for educational and residential respectability the council were quick to see the advantages of attracting industry to the town so long as it was confined to the urban margins.

Two fundamental characteristics of the county town elite enabled them to remake their towns. The first was their sophisticated understanding of urban function. This is evident in both Bedford and Lincoln. Whilst driving and supporting urban specialisation the elite tried hard to retain the traditional or existing economic base of the county town. Aspects of traditional central place functions remained important to the county town economy. The traditional administrative role of the county town was strengthened and expanded in this period. This resulted from the endorsement of the state increasingly devolving administrative duties and authority and the increasing dominance of the institution in urban life. The period 1860 to 1910 saw the redevelopment or upgrading of county hospitals, court buildings, corn exchanges, markets and theatres but above all the county town elite recognised that their town must develop a national or international reputation for one particular activity or service. The second characteristic of the county town elite was their confidence or mental hegemony over the urban space. The county town elite never doubted their right or their ability to control the urban environment, or to shape both space and society locally. Their very identity was strongly tied to place and their class-consciousness was further reinforced through urban management. This suggests that urban management was actually a variable in middle class class-formation and not the management of the 'theatre' in which it occurred.

The municipal elite in the county town was tightly formed. Although diverse in occupation, members of the elite were knitted together by a fretwork of visible and
invisible linkages which criss-crossed the structures of the county town. Pluralistic and dynastic in nature the elite exercised extensive control both directly and indirectly within the urban environment, control based on information, obligation and organisation. Their hegemony was extended and sustained both by the commitments and powers imposed upon the municipality by central government. This new and expanding authority consolidated cohesion and status in the elite even if, as in the case of Lincoln, cohesion was developed in the process of resisting national government. Although membership of the municipal elite was desirable and advantageous for its members the business of the municipality came second to their own businesses.

The fact that shopocracy and professional groupings behaved in different ways in the case study towns and produced different policy outcomes shows to what extent the local elites and the wider middle class cohered around urban specialisation. In the county town between 1860 and 1910 the middle class remade or redefined themselves through a process in which urban management and economic specialisation were critical. Urban management also demonstrates how far class or group consciousness was shifting and becoming more carefully defined in this period. The county town municipal elite was not a closed oligarchy but the difficulty of access increased in this period. Elite membership became both more costly and more socially exclusive. Less affluent individuals such as artisans and small traders who formed part of the county town municipal elite in the mid-nineteenth century were no longer visible in urban management by the end of the century. It is doubtful whether they were still accepted locally as being of the 'middling sort'. As more professionals and second-generation industrialists entered the elite, the poorer smaller shopkeepers and artisans were excluded. To some extent the urban elite (and, by implication, the middle class) was locally defined in the mid-century but subject to change across this period. By the end of the century there was more emphasis on coherent social status in the elite and on electing councillors with similar levels of affluence and lifestyle. Just as towns became more alike by the end of the Victorian period, so did urban elites; even Lincoln's municipal elite were beginning to express an interest in the arts and technical education by the 1890s.² In

both towns the elites were more inclined to take on capital intensive or socially expansive projects by the end of the period rather than concentrating on providing low-cost services to a narrowly-defined constituency.

One of the most notable aspects of the process of remaking was the way in which the middle class county town elite remade the townscape. The strength and authority of the municipal elite enable them to channel and direct economic change and municipal power in pursuit of a defined vision of urban specialisation. The particular focus or specialisation identified was contiguous with elite interests. The urban identity, economic structure and physical environment of the county town was remade in the late nineteenth century in the image and interests of the urban elite. They constructed a small urban world which would assure their futures and the future of their milieu, although these developments were articulated in terms of the town or whole community. Their hegemony over the central physical space of the county town, in particular, was almost complete. The previously mixed usage and mixed class space of the county town high street and central areas were changed to a middle class vision of regulated, controlled retailing respectability. Agricultural markets, fairs and traders were regulated in both towns while in Bedford industry and the working class were pushed outwards. In Lincoln industrial traffic was prioritised and the unregulated space of the commons with their traditional and mixed economic activities such as Freeman’s grazing rights were gradually eroded.

In this process of remaking urban environment and image professionals and government/public employees played an important role both within the elite and the wider middle class as information brokers and consumers. County towns became the preferred location for professionals and the presence of this particular occupational group shaped urban culture and nurtured new institutions and businesses which added to town status. Professionals were leaders of social tone and supporters of policies which promoted core middle class interests, however locally defined. The salaried lifestyles of the professionals impacted on employment opportunities, the retail sector, cultural life and the social tone of the county town. Between 1860 and 1910 the process of remaking the county town was subject to location factors. County towns exhibited different and fluctuating levels of provincialism or metropolitan influence across the period dependent upon their
location and communication networks. The growth of London was itself a factor as its sphere of influence widened and rail commuting opened up the possibility of towns becoming ‘dormitories’. In terms of urban type, county towns in this period had most in common with some of the more ‘respectable’ seaside resorts. Their demographic and economic structures were similar; in both urban genres women were in the majority, there were high concentrations of children and professionals and an expansive personal services sector including domestic servants, laundry workers and art and music tutors. However, the county town urban genre, which has been regarded as primarily an eighteenth century urban type, was not entirely undermined by Victorian development. Despite the different processes which redefined town images, county towns were very much a type and, despite textural differences and the effect of the First World War, retained recognisable characteristics in common.

County and administrative towns remain largely under researched, although the recently formed County Town Research Group aims to rectify this situation in time. This thesis has been a start in its attempt to demonstrate the process of ‘modernisation’ occurring in the county town between 1860 and 1910, though the study has touched on certain themes that could not be fully explored. Because such areas as county town class relations, the impact of institutions and the issue of urban adaptability in smaller provincial towns remain under researched some of the conclusions presented here must remain tentative. Not since Armstrong’s research on York undertaken in the 1960s has there been any sustained research on the Victorian working class outside the metropolitan or industrial areas, for example. While this issue was not part of the remit of this thesis, it is not enough to assume that the experiences of working class life, of factory work and changing leisure patterns, for example, were the same for the working class in the county town as for those in London or Birmingham. More research is required to establish the economic relationship between the development of the county town and the availability of labour. For example, before the 1860s county towns seem to have played a ‘stepping-stone’ role in migration while the sudden population growth in the 1870s and 1880s suggests that these towns had become end destinations in their own right.
As regards the remaking of the county town how far were the working class co-opted into the urban vision of the elite? Certainly in Lincoln the working class were an essential and visible part of urban specialisation. Skilled and unskilled labour was central to urban competitiveness and the need to continue to incorporate the working class resulted in a local acceptance of working class organisations such as the trade unions and the development of provision for technical education. Class division in Lincoln was not as hard-line as in many other towns since non-conformity provided common ground between many employers and their workforces although there is evidence that attitudes hardened and class relations became more antagonistic in periods of trade downturn. In Bedford there is little evidence of the participation of the working class in the process of remaking the town. Bedford’s working class was largely ‘invisible’ working as servants, shop assistants, or labouring in the new factories on the town edges. In Bedford the modern proletariat was marginalised socially and actually, in the town’s geography, living and working away from the centre. Local emphasis was placed on educating the working class and promoting ‘respectable’ behaviour although the elite was unwilling to use coercion. By the Edwardian era however, strong church identities and the promotion of a respectable consumer society in Bedford led to more mixing in municipal sponsored areas such as parks, embankments and town events, although all accounts agree that ‘snobbery’ was the predominant tone. Bedford had no visible working class participation in civic events; trade unions were not represented in civic events as they were in Lincoln. However, the dominance of the few large ironmasters in Lincoln and the vulnerability of the local industries combined with the town’s geographical isolation may have meant that the Lincoln working class had fewer options than in Bedford. Class relations in the county towns would benefit from research and possibly provide a varied picture to complement the images of Jones’ outcast Londoners or Joyce’s factory proletariat.

3 Due to the small size of the police force Bedford was unable to police its working class; accommodation had to be reached. This was illustrated when the Corporation attempted to close an ‘immoral’ popular recreation ground but were obliged to reopen it as they were unable to afford to police the ensuing working class demonstration. See A.F. Richer, Bedfordshire Police 1840-1900 (Bedford, 1990).
This thesis has demonstrated the importance of the professional to the county town economy and development and this remains an important area for future research. Historians such as Perkin have argued that the development of the professional culture in society in this period had a significant impact on British society as a whole and on its form and development in the twentieth century. The county town was a nursery for professional development and, due to the dominance of the professional class, can be regarded as a stronger urban expression of professional values and culture in the late Victorian period than the larger cities. This thesis has shown the power of professionals in two county towns, and comparative research involving the study of a county town and industrial city could examine the impact of this status group on urban development. Further research could also explore how far large institutions provided an ‘engine’ of urban development and redevelopment.

The issue of ‘remaking the town’ addressed by this thesis was to be just as important in the twentieth as in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century saw two world wars and two major depressions threaten not just the stability, but the very survival, of many urban areas. Some towns and cities have been through several regenerations, rising, in some cases quite literally, from the ashes. Some have survived the many decades of problems developing new industries ‘just in time’, always apparently able to adapt to circumstances, while others, less fortunate, have experienced almost a century of urban decline. By the end of the twentieth century county towns proved to be some of the most buoyant urban centres. They had been able to develop the lighter consumer industries which pulled them out of the post-1918 slump, to retain enough identity to survive post-1945 redevelopment and centrally-organised expansion, and with strong enough service sectors to handle the late twentieth-century shift to a service economy. Those county towns that had adapted successfully to the economic and social changes of the nineteenth century were best fitted to adapt to the upheavals of the twentieth.
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