

[Please bear in mind that the content below is from preliminary investigations and the intention is to construct a more finely-tuned narrative from more extensive research.]

[Slide 1] [Music: Elgar, 'Carillon Chimes'; composed by Sir Edward Elgar in 1923 for the dedication of the Carillon Tower in Queen's Park in Loughborough; here on the organ; the original MS score was rediscovered in Charnwood Borough offices in 2012]]

Let's begin with an apparent paradox: when *some* towns and cities really began to expand in the late nineteenth century, their physical development was controlled by aristocratic landowners. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, England remained a basically agrarian society.

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Most urban places—towns and cities—did not extend outside their medieval boundaries even in the middle of the eighteenth century. By 1851, the situation had reversed, with a predominance of population in towns and cities. Migration into urban places and natural increase of urban populations necessitated the expansion of towns and cities. As part of this process, some urban places depended for their extension on aristocratic and gentle estates, for all of industrial, urban and suburban development. A few examples might suffice. First of all, the immense expansion of London was allowed by building leases on the aristocratic estates near London, such as the Grosvenor patrimony. As Martin Daunton has illustrated, Cardiff became the 'coal metropolis' because of the investment in the dockland area on the Bute estate. Dudley's industrialization occurred on aristocratic land, as Trevor Raybould has described. That other thriving industrial urban place, Sheffield, pertained to the extensive lordship and estates of the Duke of Norfolk. When popular entertainment and holidays were combined, some aristocratic landowners took advantage in promoting seaside towns: Skegness by the Earl of

Scarbrough and Eastbourne by the Duke of Devonshire.¹

That then is the general context for the expansion of Loughborough in the late nineteenth century, when it received its charter of incorporation as a borough and extended rapidly outside its longstanding boundaries.² Loughborough, like these other urban places, had been dominated by a single lordship—aristocratic landowner—from the late middle ages. If that aristocratic estate had maintained its integrity, Loughborough might have been as dependent for its expansion on that aristocratic landowner.³ One of the practical differences is in urban legal status. In urban places dominated by aristocratic landlords, leasehold became the prevalent status, the lord granting building leases for 800 years or 99 years. In other urban places, freehold became more usual.

So the narrative or story here is about the transformation of Loughborough from an early-modern small town under the tutelage of a dominant aristocratic landowner in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to borough status and expanding industrial and commercial modern urban centre in the late nineteenth century. The disintegration of the Hastings estate in Loughborough was critical to allowing the town's later physical and spatial expansion.⁴

[Slides 3 and 4]

Early-modern Loughborough was predominantly contained within two estates, the major lordship of the Hastings, earl and countess of Huntingdon, and the feoffees of the bridge trust. The

1 M. J. Daunton, *Coal Metropolis, Cardiff 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1977); D. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774-1967* (Leicester, 1980); T. Raybould, *Economic Emergence of the Black Country: Study of the Dudley Estate* (Taunton Abbot, 1973).

2 For socio-economic developments, P. Clark, 'Elite networking and the formation of an industrial small town: Loughborough, 1700-1840', in *Towns, Regions and Industries: Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands, c.1700-1840*, ed. N. Raven and J. Stobart (Manchester, 2005), pp. 161-75.

3 For the medieval and early-modern context, D. Postles, *A Town in its Parish: Loughborough, Origins to c.1640* (Loughborough, 2015); *The Aristocratic Estate: the Hastings in Leicestershire and South Derbyshire: papers given at a conference held in Loughborough University by the East Midlands Studies Unit Saturday 15 May 1982*, ed. M. Palmer (Loughborough, 1982).

4 For the spatial 'structure' of the county town and (after 1919) city, R. M. Pritchard, *Housing and the Spatial Structure of the City: Residential Mobility and the Housing Market in an English City Since the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1976). Loughborough was incorporated as a borough in 1888.

tenants of the lordship held their tenements and lands through copyhold for three lives. The feoffees' estate had originally been established under Thomas Burton's will of 1494, but was reconstituted after the Chantries Act of 1547 as a trust responsible for the maintenance of the grammar school and the bridges, both the immense Cotes bridge and the numerous small bridges and planks which traversed the streams and brooks in the town.⁵ After the regulatory act of 1571, the feoffees leased their lands in Loughborough and elsewhere for terms of 21 years.⁶ After 1614, the earl of Huntingdon also resorted to 21-year leases, but only on the new cottages which were constructed, retaining copyhold tenures on the predominant part of the estate. Some free tenants existed in the town and parish, but the extent of their landholding was not significant in the greater realm of Loughborough landownership. At the end of the sixteenth century, some 37 are enumerated in the Huntingdon lordship. One external free tenant, Francis Staesmore, gent., of Hoton, demised a cottage near the pinfold in Hallgate (now Pinfold Gate) for a term of 21 years to Hugh Voare, a labourer, for a rent of 6s. p.a., in 1576.⁷ These minor exceptions, however, simply emphasize how the town was constrained by the lordship of the Hastings family.

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If we reconstruct the town in the late sixteenth century, it had barely exceeded its apparent extent of the late fourteenth century. In the early seventeenth century, some additional expansion occurred on the periphery, in the Rushes, Woodgate and Leicester Lane, but preponderantly additional cottages.

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5 The National Archives, London, PROB 11/11/42 (will 12 June 1494). The origins are, however, contested and may have been confused: A. White, *A History of Loughborough Endowed Schools* (Loughborough, 1969), pp. 2-25.

6 *Ecclesiastical Leases Act 1571* (1571 c.10) (Regnal 13 Eliz I).

7 Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) DG9/177. See also DE667/127 where he is described as of Quorndon, gent., as owner of land in Loughborough.

Let's then briefly consider the range of documentary material which will reveal the landownership of Loughborough over the next three centuries. The most substantial accumulation of material consists of the Hastings Manuscripts in the Huntington Library in San Marino in California, illustrated by this commission from the dowager Countess of Huntingdon to her gentle neighbour, Sir William Skipwith, knight, and Francis Repps and Thomas Harrys to act as her commissioners to survey her lands in Loughborough and Barrow-upon-Soar in 1607.⁸

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Intermittently, during the eighteenth century, the Poll Books provide evidence of the 40s. freeholders who voted. The Poll Books record the actual votes cast at the hustings.⁹ Secret ballots were not introduced until the 1872 Ballot Act. The Poll Books thus record each voter by name and how the vote was cast. The election for Loughborough voters involved two knights of the shire for the county's representation in Parliament, so the franchise was limited to 40s. freeholders. Two Poll Books are easily accessible, 1775 and 1830.¹⁰ The actual *register of electors* between 1780 and 1832 was contained within the Land Tax returns: the register of those liable to the contribution of Land Tax assessed on their lands, from which the evidence of 40s. freehold was extracted. Our problem with the Land Tax returns is that from 1798 taxpayers were allowed to redeem the Land Tax by compounding, by paying a lump sum. The return of 1784 thus is an apposite selection since it is a few years into the new arrangement, but well in advance of the transformation of 1798.¹¹ There are differences in the composition of the Land Tax return and the Poll Books. The Land Tax return contains all those liable to pay tax on any amount of land whilst the Poll Book is limited to 40s. freehold. Another divergence

8 Transcribed at D. Postles, "[T]he estates of sundry of my tenauntes': landholding in Loughborough in "Tawney's century", *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXXXVII (2013), pp. 205-6.

9 J. Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge, 1967).

10 *An Extant Copy of the Poll for the County of Leicestershire* [January 1775] (Leicester, 1775); *The Poll at the Electing of Two Knights of the Shire* (Leicester, 1830), pp. 54-8; both in ROLLR.

11 ROLLR DE2517 (21 May 1784).

is that the Land Tax return specifies the owners/proprietors and their residence, tenants, and the location of the land, whilst the Poll Book merely identifies the voter with no further information. The Land Tax thus supplies important geographical information about landownership in the town, but the Poll Book simply a name and a count of freeholders.

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The final information for our purposes consists of the *Return of Owners of Land* published in 1873 as a Parliamentary Paper.¹² The purpose of the return was to include all owners of more than one acre of land, arranged by county. The data consist of the landowners and their residence, the amount of land, and an estimated annual rental value. The complication here is that we have to assume that when the address of the owner is specified as Loughborough, the land was actually located there. A further register of landowners was compiled under the 1910 Finance Act, but is not considered here—it's beyond the chronological remit.

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So now is the time to consider the narrative of the development of landholding and the expansion of Loughborough over the three centuries from c.1600 to c.1900. The first event is the involvement of Henry, Earl of Huntingdon in the Civil War, which resulted in the slighting of his residence at Ashby-de-la-Zouche and indebtedness. The consequence was that his successor, Ferdinando, 6th Earl, was obliged to dispose of some of the Loughborough estate in 1653-54.¹³ Despite the enforced sale, the general effect was minimal, both for the Hastings family and for Loughborough. The evidence for this assertion is the disposition of the Huntingdon lands in the town in 1784, from the

12 *Return of Owners of Land 1873 Volume I* (London, 1875; C.1097-I). For the context, D. Postles, 'The Return of Owners of Land and the transformations of the 1870s', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXXXIV (2010), pp. 221-50.

13 Huntingdon Library, HAM Box 26, folder 21 (sale book, 1653-54); HAM Box 40, folder 13 (part of the estate 'to be presented out of sale'); HAM Box 84, folders 2-3 (lands in the 1653-54 sale); HAM Box 84, folders 13-15 (sales in Ashby-de-la-Zouche). ROLLR DE 667/129-133 for a few of the parcels sold.

Land Tax assessment.

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For the moment, let's examine the information in the Land Tax assessment and the Poll Books and then return to the domination of the town by the Huntingdon estate in 1784. The first feature which we can observe is the increase in the number of owners of land between 1775 and 1784. Since the basic qualification is 40s. freehold, the numbers reflect the increase in the number of small holdings. Compare the number in 1784, however, with the proliferation in numbers of 40s. freeholders in 1830. Something very significant has happened between 1784 and 1830. If we return to the dominance of the town in 1784, we can then elicit the change which subsequently occurred.

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It can quite easily be discerned that the town was still dominated by the Huntingdon estate and, to a lesser extent, by the feoffees' estate. What is also obvious is that there has been fragmentation and division of the tenements of the Huntingdon estate, which reflects that any population increase had been accommodated by subdividing the tenements rather than any appreciable expansion of the built-up area.

[Slide 11 – maps the tenants of Huntingdon and the feoffees]

The cataclysmic event was still to occur: the major disposal of the estates between 1810 and 1814 by Francis Rawdon-Hastings. Rawdon-Hastings received the estates already encumbered with debt, but his political activity exacerbated the situation.

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His remedy was to prosecute a private act of Parliament to disencumber the Leicestershire estate and to protect his wife's inheritance, the so-called Moira Act of 1808.¹⁴ The receipt from the sales of

¹⁴ Marilyn Palmer, 'Francis Rawdon-Hastings, First Marquis of Hastings, and the development of the Leicestershire estates, 1780-1830', in *The Aristocratic Estate*, ed. Palmer, pp. 56-67. 48 Geo. 3 c.cliv Earl of Moira and Countess of

the Leicestershire estates in Loughborough and Ashby between 1809 and 1813 raised £116,000, allowing him to liquidate his debts and also concentrate on the remodelling of Donington Castle.¹⁵ The disposal of the Loughborough estate was prosecuted through three auctions at the Bull's Head in Loughborough in 1809-10.

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In 1809, an auction involved 252 lots, succeeded by the offer of a further 220 lots in 1810, with a subsequent sale of residual estate.¹⁶ The significant aspect here is not just the sale of the estate, which did indeed bring into play land for expansion, but the disposal in more than 400 lots. The partition of the estate in this manner released land for building and thus facilitated the building development of the town. The transfer of the estate as a single entity would have acted as an encumbrance on rapid building. The division into smaller properties and lots assisted the small, piecemeal development of building which contributed to the expansion of Loughborough outside its traditional urban boundaries.

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How this transition occurred in practice is illustrated by the 1873 *Return of Owners of Land*. We have to recapitulate here that the *Return* of 1873 related to all landowners with an acre of land or more. An acre of urban land was a considerable amount. In Loughborough, 92 landowners possessed more than one acre of land. As can be observed in Table 16, this number of owners considerably exceeded all the other market towns in the county, apart from Melton. The second point, also in Table 16, is that the average amount of land held by each owner in Loughborough was much smaller than

Loudon Estates, 1808; ROLLR DE 667/208 is a copy of the Act; DE 667/202 an abstract of title produced for the transaction.

15 Palmer, 'Francis Rawdon-Hastings', pp. 58-9, 63.

16 Ian J. E. Keil, 'Loughborough and the end of the Hastings connexion: continuity or change?', in *The Aristocratic Estate*, ed. Palmer, pp. 68-94, at p. 70. I owe an inordinate debt to this paper, but my conclusions are slightly different. Keil considered that the sale represented continuity because the demographic and occupational transformations were already in train. I demur, because the continued expansion would have been truncated without the sale of the estate. Keil concentrated on the demographic and occupational position, through the suit rolls of the court and the census returns of 1801-11. The extension of the chronology to the late nineteenth-century requires some change of emphasis.

elsewhere, The contrast is particularly pronounced in comparison with Lutterworth, which was dominated by the Goodacre estate. The third indicator, from Table 15, is the average value of an acre of land in Loughborough by comparison with the other market towns: considerably higher in Loughborough.

The situation which evolved then is that in the early nineteenth century, landowning in Loughborough was transformed from the dominance of one aristocratic estate to a multitude of smaller landowners. The size of holdings was conducive for urban building, since the parcels of land were predominantly small and amenable for jobbing builders to develop. The value of this land for building was correspondingly high.

Here, we can return to Ian Keil's question about continuity or change? Certainly, formative economic and social change had already commenced in Loughborough in the late eighteenth century. In that sense, there was continuity. On the other hand, much of the building infrastructure in the town was constructed within the traditional bounds of the built-up centre, through multiple-occupation and the division of existing housing stock. The extinction of the Hastings estate and its replacement by small lots facilitated the expansion of the built area with new housing and industrial development, breaking out of the stranglehold of the traditional centre. Now, it is possible that, had the Hastings estate remained intact, the family would have promoted that extension of the built-up area, as happened in, say, Edgbaston, Cardiff or Sheffield. On the other hand, the character of the development would have been more controlled by the dominant landlord. The disposal of the Hastings estates in lots for building was recognition by Rawdon-Hastings of the manner of maximizing the proceeds of the sale whilst also inadvertently enabling the piecemeal expansion of the town.

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To end on a note which connects with other aspects of today, Loughborough was not completely

devoid of larger landowners in 1873. Thomas Burton's Charity maintained its estate of several hundred acres, although its holdings extended throughout north Leicestershire. Its estate of more than 347 acres was valued at more than £1,404 in gross estimated rental value. A principal arrival as landowner, however, was Henry Fearon, about whose Grade-II-listed fountain of 1870 you will already have been made familiar. Fearon (1802-1885) was presented to the rectory of Loughborough in 1848. From 1863 to 1884, he also acted as archdeacon of Leicester, from his rectory in Loughborough, where he died a year after resigning as archdeacon.¹⁷ Fearon's lands amounted to 314 acres 0 roods and 21 perches, valued in terms of gross estimated rental at £1, 085 12s. 0d. These two landed accumulations represented the pinnacle of landowning in Loughborough, an apex far exceeding the average of other landowners.

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¹⁷ Terence Y. Cocks, 'The archdeacons of Leicester, 1092-1992', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXVII (1993), pp. 40-1.