

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CLIMATIC FOUNDATIONS

As an area of historical study the Greater Manchester County has the disadvantage of being without an history of its own. Created by Act of Parliament a little over ten years ago, it joins together many areas with distinct histories arising from the underlying geographical variations within its boundaries.

The Greater Manchester County is the administrative counterpart of 20th century urban development which has masked the diversity of old pre-industrial southeast Lancashire and northeast Cheshire.

The area has three dominant geographic characteristics: the moorlands; the plains; and the rivers, most notably the Mersey/Irwell system.

The central area of Greater Manchester County, which includes the major part of the conurbation, is an eastward extension of the Lancashire Plain, known as the 'Manchester Embayment' because it lies, like a bay, between high land to the north and east. North of Greater Manchester County lies the Rossendale Fells, a spur of high moorland extending westwards from the Pennines. The surrounding hills are between 1000 and 1500 feet in height, and carry peat up to six feet in depth; overall, the hill soil is shallow and infertile and unsuitable for growing crops. The area was once the Forest of Rossendale, but after a deforestation order of 1507 woodland was cleared and hill farms were established. Pastoralism, the raising of cattle and sheep, was important here from 1500 until 1800. The quality of the pasture is variable, improving on the lower slopes which now lie within the Greater Manchester County boundaries (Dormer and Tallis 1962).

Along the eastern edge of Greater Manchester County lies the main ridge of the Southern Pennines, mostly 1600 - 2000 feet above sea level. Much of the surface is covered with peat or poor grass land. The upper limit of farms lies between 1000 - 1500 feet; above that there is only rough grazing for sheep. The climate is harsh and restricts plant growth, with low temperatures and a short growing season. The temperature does not rise significantly above its winter level until May, and there is very little vegetative development or flowering before the middle of that month. Winds of gale force are common in every month and winter begins about the end of October. Rainfall is low compared with the other highland areas of Britain.

The Lancashire Plain accounts for most of the western and central part of the Greater Manchester County, and to the south of the Mersey valley the county boundary encloses part of the Cheshire Plain. The lowlands have a

milder climate, by comparison both with the moors and with other westerly facing parts of Britain. Opening as they do on to what is, climatically speaking, an inland sea, they avoid much of the torrential downpours brought by Atlantic winds to the South West of England. At the same time the hills give protection from the snow bearing easterlies. The lowland areas are fertile, and consist largely of glacial deposits.

In the northwest of the Greater Manchester County the plain rises around Wigan and Standish. For centuries the broad terraced valley of the Rivers Mersey and Irwell, which drains the plain, has been an important barrier to travel because of its mosses. Now the region's richest farmland, these areas of moss were largely waste until the early 19th century, when they were drained and reclaimed.

The barrier of the Mersey meant that for centuries northeast Cheshire developed quite separately from southeast Lancashire, and it was not until the twenties and thirties that the districts immediately south of the Mersey became part of one large conurbation.

The Greater Manchester County therefore brings together areas which were historically distinct, a fact that must be born in mind in any historic survey of the county.

Greater Manchester County lies in the mainly pastoral region of east Lancashire and northeast Cheshire, where farming is concentrated on sheep, mixed livestock, and an increasing proportion of dairying as the growth of the conurbation over the last two centuries has provided a ready market for dairy products. South of the Mersey, the better soils are likely to be under pasture, whereas to the north, the better soil is arable. The west of Greater Manchester County around Wigan, Leigh, and Atherton covers part of the southwest Lancashire area where farming is principally arable but also includes pigs, poultry, and hay production, the latter being produced for upland farms (Thomas and Perkins 1962). In this area west of the conurbation much market gardening also takes place on the alluvial soil and reclaimed mosses of the river valleys.

Settlements above the 500 foot contour are rare, and the large areas of uplands and moorland provide mainly rough grazing.

2 THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The country house, or home of the gentry, has its origins in the manor house of an earlier agricultural society. Before the Industrial Revolution the area, like northern England generally, was backward and poor by comparison with southern England.

Until the area between the Mersey and the

Ribble was annexed to the west Saxon kingdom by Edward the Elder, it had been a 'debatable land'. First a frontier between Briton and Angle, later between Northumbrian and Mercian, and finally between Viking and Saxon, it retained much of the wildness of a frontier area into later centuries, being generally more sparsely populated and poorer than average.

The Origins of the Country House

The country houses we see in Greater Manchester County today are predominantly the creation of the last 400 years. If one had to select a typical example it would no doubt be timber framed with wattle and daub or brick infilling, two or three storeys high with many gables and bays, and built after 1500. However, if we look at such a building closely or examine the documents of the family that owned it we will almost certainly find that it incorporates part of a still earlier building, or at least occupies the site of one that was probably a medieval manor house. Yet the manor house itself was the result of continuous and gradual development from the early halls of Norman barons and Saxon thanes, and before them the relatively simple structures of warrior chiefs of the Dark Ages.

The society that gave birth to the manor house is well known for its architectural achievements; the cathedrals, the abbeys, and the castles of the great lords. For most of the people, that is those who laboured in the fields creating the wealth of society, it would be the manor house which was the most obvious example of the power of their lord, and which tells us most about how people lived.

To understand the development of the country house we should first look at the society that was able to develop the manor house from the earlier halls.

The Early Halls

It is in the nature of things, that the halls of the early medieval period are those of which there are the fewest surviving physical remains. However, some idea of what they were like can be gained, from literary evidence and by deduction from the few examples revealed by archaeology. Greater Manchester County is especially fortunate in being able to count, amongst the known halls, several odd, untypical examples outside the main line of development.

The hall of the Saxon thane lies in the long line of development which begins in the prehistoric period and concludes with the establishment of the manor and country houses. The halls would be long, rectangular buildings of one storey, built from wood. We know something of the halls of kings; presumably those of the nobles would be somewhat similar, if smaller and less ornate.

The simple 'Great Hall' would be used for meals, entertainment and as a combination of audience room, council chamber, and court in which the lord conducted his business. By analogy with the more complex residences of the

king, it would be surrounded by smaller, detached buildings for the kitchens and other domestic purposes, and for the bedrooms or 'bowers' of the lord and his family. This would probably be surrounded by an earthwork and stockade (Whitelock 1974, 88). It is possible that this too has left its mark on the later development of halls in Lancashire and Cheshire. Certain halls, as late as the 17th or 18th centuries, were a complex of two or more structurally independent units, for example Denton Old Hall, Arden Hall, Ordsall Hall, and others (Smith 1970). There may be a distinction here between those cases where the separate buildings are of unequal status and are likely to form part of one household, and other examples, such as Rufford Hall and Pike House, where they seem to have been as independent of each other as any two neighbouring houses. Although most examples were joined together by the 17th century, at Pike House the larger building was rebuilt (1678) and refronted (18th century), while the smaller was abandoned and allowed to decay.

Certain parallels have been observed in North Wales and the Marches. This has been explained as a way in which families could maintain unified estates despite the custom of partible inheritance. Whether this could apply to Lancashire and Cheshire in general is doubtful. Partible inheritance is more likely to survive in upland areas (Thisk 1967, 8; Tupling 1927), although perhaps we should also take into account the comment that Cheshire is basically Celtic in its settlement patterns (Sylvester 1960, 1-16). Partible inheritance also existed in Kent, where it was known as 'gavelkind', but it did not result in 'unit' halls.

Most Anglo-Saxon buildings were of timber, and in 1011 Byrhtferth of Ramsay described, with laudable succinctness, how to build your own hall: 'First, one examines the site and also hews the timber, and fits fairly the sills, and lays the beams, and fastens the rafters to the ridge-pole, and supports it with buttresses and afterwards adorns the house pleasantly'.

Stone seems to have been restricted to churches and some royal buildings; certainly it is unlikely to have been used much in medieval times in Greater Manchester County where timber remained the favoured building material until the late 17th century.

For this reason, in addition to the general backwardness and conservatism which appears to have characterised the medieval northwest, there are no notable new developments from hall to manor house such as can be seen in some stone-built structures in southern England, for example, stone vaulted undercrofts and first floor halls. Instead there is a more steady development of the timber framed hall.

Many manor houses were built on naturally defensive sites, or with a view to commanding a river valley or communication route, and examples of these include Arden Hall, Bury Manor House, Garret Hall, Radcliffe Tower, Smithills Hall, and Manchester Manor House, which replaced the castle. In 1403 and 1469

Radcliffe Tower and Bury Manor House respectively were granted a license to crenellate; the site at Bury is still known as Castle Croft, and at Radcliffe the tower which gave the hall its name survives today. A second tower and an intended stone hall were never built. The military significance of these preparations may have been no more than their use as symbols of status, and the same may be said of many of the moats which seem to have proliferated in the 14th century, especially on the clay lowlands on the west of Greater Manchester County.

Although many of the surviving country houses incorporated elements of the later medieval halls, there do not seem to be any significant remains earlier than the 14th century. However, it is almost certain that many halls existed before that as there are references to the family and the manor in written records, and it is most probable that the family would have lived on the same site.

For instance, the present structure of Worsley Old Hall goes back no further than the mid 16th century, but it is said that there was a hall here in 1066 or soon after; certainly Elisens de Worsley was one of the Norman Barons who went on the first Crusade of 1096.

In addition, Birch Hall was said to date from the early 13th century at least, although most of this had been destroyed by the rebuildings of the 17th and 19th centuries. Haigh Hall, which was demolished in 1820, dated from the 12th century, and 13th century dates are also proposed for Bramall, Hopwood, and Kempnall Halls.

By the later middle ages the hall had developed from the simple one storeyed, one roomed structure it had once been. At Smithills, Baguley, and Chetham's, we can see the trend toward the provision of service rooms at one end of the hall and private rooms for the lord and his family.

Medieval Society

For those at the bottom of the pyramid of medieval society, life was always precarious and even at the best of times the difference between the living conditions of the lords and the peasants was immense, a fact reflected in the dwellings themselves. Even as the common people laboured to build for their masters halls of stone or solid timber frames that in many cases lasted for centuries, they had for themselves the most impermanent of shelters; it is recorded that the men of Bamburgh dismantled their dwellings and carried the timbers into the castle when Scottish raiders came (Miller and Hatcher 1978), and it was not unknown for absconding serfs to take their homes with them.

Most people lived from harvest to harvest, and if actual starvation was rare, malnutrition was not. Just one wet summer, a drought, or a prolonged period of cold could bring disaster to the peasantry. Natural hazards were not the only ones. Warfare on a lesser or greater scale was endemic, though usually the effect would be localised. Miller and Hatcher (1978) estimated that there was only one period of more than

thirty years of internal peace in England from 1066 to 1348. The north in particular had been hard hit by Scottish and Norman armies in 1069-70, by the Scots again in 1174, and again in the 14th century.

Perhaps more relevant to our theme is the degree of individual lawlessness. Not only were individuals prone to settling quarrels by force, as surviving court records show, but outright banditry and feuding between families were not unknown.

The Legh family of Torkington, for instance, had a long standing feud with the neighbouring Mobberleys. John de Legh and William de Mobberley were both indicted (with scores of others) for indiscriminate pillaging in South Lancashire in 1322, ostensibly in order to put down rebels. However, it seems that John de Legh met a well known bandit and gathered a band of brigands around himself. In 1327 he, with his brother and four others, murdered de Mobberley and some of his followers, and were pardoned on condition that they fought against the Scots. A careful combination of lawlessness and service to the king enabled de Legh to build up the family estates and become the Duke of Lancaster's steward for Cheshire. In 1354 it was said that he was so powerful that no-one dared speak against him in any way (Harrop 1983, 12). In view of the number of enemies the Legh family must have acquired, it is not surprising that Broadoak, their hall at Torkington had, with a span of over 50 feet, one of the widest moats in the area.

It was people like de Legh and de Mobberley who made up the class that dominated the peasantry. However, the serfs received some degree of protection from traditional customs that controlled the actions of the lords. The lord did not have total or exclusive power as there were alternative authorities in the King's law, the church, and the community.

The Manor and the Manorial System

After the Conquest, the area between the Ribble and the Mersey was divided into six areas or 'hundreds'. The hundred of Salford covered the south-east corner of Lancashire, and most of the present area of Greater Manchester County. According to the Domesday Book these hundreds were annexed to royal manors as part of a general pattern, found in Lancashire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Cornwall, where the lands most recently incorporated into the kingdom were kept under close royal control (Cam 1932). They were part of the system of manorial organisation of society of which the manor house was the physical expression.

The manor was the local unit of the feudal system, which revolved around the exercise of military power. A man held land in turn for his service at arms, and a parcel of land would be described as a 'knights fee'.

The manorial system combined in one both rights of possession and rights of administration; the manor was both a centre of an 'estate' or parcel of land, and a 'state' claiming complete jurisdiction over those who settled in it. To

regard this as a confusion of public office and private property is merely to use the categories of modern society where they are inappropriate.

There has been continued doubt over the origins of the manor. It has been seen as the result of the subjection of a free community or as an evolution from earlier estate systems. In addition, it has been noted that in the mainly tribal society of the Celts there were also other elements tending toward manorial landownership, with serfs living side by side with free tenants, both classes being subject to food tribute.

Older theories of the manorial system stressed the holding of land in common; more recently Macfarlane (1978) has argued that English society was more individualistic than generally thought.

The manor might be broadly described as land held by the tenant (a knight) either directly of the king or of a tenant-in-chief; that is, one of the great lords, a baron, who in turn held from the king. A man might hold one, several, or many manors; a baron might hold some manors as knight's fee of another baron. A knight with many manors might be wealthier than some of the lesser barons.

The manor was typically divided into two parts, the *desmesne* or home farm, and the land held by tenants for rent, usually in the form of so much labour per year on the lord's *desmesne*. Ideally the *desmesne* would be of size capable of being worked by the labour of the tenants, and the land in tenancy would be large enough, and the tenants numerous enough, to provide the *desmesne* with the labour required.

However, the typical manor was likely to be found in the arable south and centre of England, for there were regional differences caused by variations in climate and terrain, and perhaps by the differing traditions of the people who had settled there (Sylvester 1960, 1-16). This was particularly important in Cheshire.

The Cistercian monks, for instance, because of their rule of settling in remote places, ran all their estates as *desmesne* land, called *granges*, which were worked by lay brothers. At the other extreme, the smaller manorial holdings, like the land of wealthier free holders, would be wholly run as *desmesnes*, and since there would not be enough land to rent out to provide a labour force, labour would be provided by the land holder and his family themselves, with perhaps some hired help.

Other estates, such as those of the Templars, were nearly all let for rent, and the great baronial holdings, or 'honorial complexes' of the de Lacys or the Dukes of Lancaster which could include hundreds of manors, would have a very high proportion of land rented out. These cases would be amongst the first to move to money rents and develop production for the market. The manor was also a centre for administration and 'justice' in the affairs of the community.

In this sense the manor was 'state' as well as 'estate', for as well as matters directly relating to his tenants and the services they owed him, the lord in his manorial court could punish assault and theft, sometimes even impose the death penalty, and settle disputes between neighbours. Such courts might also exercise power over weights and measures.

However, more serious crimes 'against the King's peace' would be tried by the royal justices, and it was a distinguishing mark of the free man that he could take grievances to the King's court (Mingay 1976, 28).

If the power of the lord over his tenants is familiar, we should bear in mind the limitations to that power, for while the King's justices were unlikely to provide a sympathetic hearing for a peasant, or to accept his view of a matter rather than that of a lord, the King's legal system had taken over and ensured the smooth running of elements of a popular system, that of the Juries and shire moots, which gave a voice to the freemen of a hundred or county.

Most importantly we should remember that the 'manorial framework was a landowning and land-management grid superimposed on the settlement pattern of villages and hamlets', (Miller and Hatcher 1978, 20). It was the settlements which were the original and the more enduring centres of the community, and through them we can see the people acting as a community, and being held responsible collectively by the royal authorities (Cam 1968, 258).

The pattern of one manor, one village, one lord, though seen now as some sort of pattern for the manorial system, was not the norm or even the most common. In the wealthier, more densely inhabited parts of eastern England, manors of only part of a village were common, whereas in other parts of the country, particularly the less densely populated north, manors including two or more villages could be found. All of this made it easier for a community to retain some independence from its lord. The village itself might settle questions relating to the timing of sowing, which fields were to be sown with which crop, grazing on the common, and so on. In one particular case (Cam 1968, 261) the men of Sowerbury held land in common as a body from the Templars and paid rent for it - this as early as 1185. In such a case it is reasonable to assume that the village would have almost complete autonomy, since the Templars would be mainly concerned with a regular financial return and were obviously not concerned with exercising their rights of lordship or they would have installed a bailiff. This is in a line with the general policy of the order; what is remarkable is that they let the land to a community rather than to an individual. However, we must not confuse freedom for a community with the notion of freedom of the individual as it has come to be understood in the urban culture of the last four centuries. The individual in a peasant community with communal land-holding necessarily lived a life restricted by custom. Other villages would seem to have been dominated by the lord of the manor. It has

become clear that many medieval villages had not grown haphazardly from their original foundation by invading Anglo-Saxons; many appear to have been planned and laid down by the lords of the manor from the 10th to the 13th centuries. Instances of this are to be found in Northumberland, Durham and North Yorkshire, where planned villages seem to have been created by the larger landlords, either to make good the devastation of 1069-70, or as commercial undertakings, and such settlements were subject to strict manorial services.

The Lords

The way to advancement in medieval society was through service to one's lord and ultimately to the king. After the Conquest of 1066 the men who held Lancashire and Cheshire were those who served William at Hastings. Typical of the history of these early families is that of the descendants of Nicholas Fitz Gilbert de Talbois, one of the loyal warriors, who was granted the manor of Radcliffe. In the 13th century, William Radcliffe was entrusted by the king with the task of updating the Domesday survey, and his sons and grandsons fought for Edward I. The family prospered and the Radcliffes held, at various times, Smithills, Ordsall, Foxdenton and Wythenshawe Halls. In 1403 Henry IV allowed James Radcliffe to rebuild the old manor house with stone towers, in return for loyal service, and the Radcliffes fought in France for Henry V and Henry IV and were well rewarded for it.

John de Radclyffe (b 1392) gained a knighthood and his son Richard also distinguished himself, being rewarded with the hereditary stewardship of the Wapentake of Salford and Constablenesship of Liverpool castle. However, in 1436, Sir John and Sir Richard both being slain in battle, the manor was divided amongst Richard's three daughters.

Many other families have similar histories. Several of the Birch family are said to have distinguished themselves in the French wars of the 15th century, under Henry V and Henry VI, and this is supposed to be the reason for the three Fleurs de Lys on their coat of arms.

The Assheton family of Ashton was another which advanced itself by service to the crown. Sir Robert Assheton was Vice Chamberlain to Edward III, Admiral of the Narrow Seas, and Justice of Ireland. He was also Treasurer of the Exchequer and was held in such esteem by the King that he was appointed one of the executors in his last Will and Testament. After the death of King Edward, Sir Robert continued in favour at the court of Richard II. He was Warden of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover, the position he held at his death. Later Asshetons dabbled in alchemy, fought in the Wars of the Roses and at Flodden, and held offices such as Knight Marshall and Vice Constable of England.

3 THE POST MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The End of Medieval Society

Up until the middle of the 14th century, the area now known as Greater Manchester County

shared in the increase in population and the resultant need for more food production which was affecting the country as a whole, and which meant the switching of land use from pastoral to arable and the clearance (assarting) of new land. However this had relatively little effect on the landscape of the area, and both Cheshire and Lancashire, throughout the Middle Ages two of the poorest of counties (Bukatzch 1950-51, 180-202; Morris 1983, 23), remained basically pastoral, particularly within Greater Manchester County, where the bogs and mosses of the river valleys were to resist attempts to turn them into agricultural land until the 19th century.

Large scale commercial cattle production was a particular feature of north and east Lancashire, and this increased in the later 14th century. In common with the rest of England, indeed of Europe, Lancashire and Cheshire suffered from the Black Death, but the period of expansion had probably already come to an end by the beginning of the 14th century. With the abandonment of marginal, newly colonised land came the beginnings of a switch from arable to less labour intensive pastoral farming, a switch encouraged by the disruptive effects of the Scots raids of 1316 and 1322, and the rebellion of that year in South Lancashire, which as we have seen in the case of the de Legh family, was very destructive.

Perhaps the most important development of the later medieval period was the increased prosperity of southeast Lancashire, principally the Salford Hundred, which is the core of the modern Greater Manchester County. It is clear from the lay subsidy rolls of 1334 that the southwest of the county was wealthier than the southeast (Morris 1983, fig 13). This was not due simply to better land for growing crops, but also to the potential for coastal trade and the trade brought in by the river crossing at Warrington.

By 1524-5 (Morris 1983, fig 14) the southeast had clearly overtaken the southwest as the wealthiest area in the county, while Wigan and Warrington had remained as relatively affluent as before. It is clear that this change was associated 'in the changing economic conditions' (Morris 1983, 25) with a decline in arable agriculture, which no longer gave as great a return as pastoralism, and so a new emphasis on sheep and the textile industry emerged (VCH 1911, vol 3, 270-1).

The rise of the textile industry means in effect the rise of the woollen industry, though linen was also important at Wigan. The woollen industry, both the rearing of sheep and the fulling mills, was based in the countryside. Of the 14 fulling mills in Lancashire in the early 16th century, only three woollen mills, (Rochdale, Manchester and Salford) were found in the Salford hundred. It seems that a large part of the increased wealth of this area was due to its being a centre for trade as well as for manufacturing.

The Later Winged Hall

The change from open hall to winged hall which

took place in this century, effectively added some of the characteristics of the first floor hall to the basic 'barn'. This would have been the first stage of the development away from the old pattern in which the lord's hall was surrounded by a series of domestic outbuildings, towards a later format in which the public and private functions of the manor were carried out under one roof, sheltering squire and servant alike.

In the 15th century the single winged hall gave way to the larger double winged hall. Smithills Hall is probably an early example of the double winged hall, having the pantry and the buttery at the west end of the great hall and the private apartments at the east, reached by door at the side of a raised dais where the lord would dine, and hold court. The double winged hall gradually became more elaborate in the next century, with the addition of galleries and fireplaces.

The gazetteer entries reveal that the 16th and 17th centuries seem to have been times of great change for the country houses and the larger surviving farm houses. Many houses were built, many earlier ones rebuilt. Among the many halls of this time which have survived either to the present day or long enough to be recorded, there are, in addition to those already mentioned: Wythenshawe, Garret and Clayton (Manchester); Holcroft, Hawkeley, Crooke and Bispham (Wigan); Bradshaw, Darcy Lever, and Great Lever (Bolton); Birchinley and Falinge Fold (Rochdale); Hyde, Goyt, and Cinderland (Tameside); Monk's, Worsley and Great Woolden (Salford); Bent (Oldham), and Brandlesholme (Bury); not forgetting a particularly fine example in Agecroft Hall, originally of Salford, now in America.

Many of those houses, which from their appearance seem to be clearly of 18th century date, will be found to be built on the site of a 16th or 17th century predecessor or to be a facade on an earlier structure. Hoskins (1977, 165) speaks of the 'great rebuilding'...

'What kind of society was it that made such a lasting impact on our county, and how did it produce the necessary wealth?'

This rebuilding was a national phenomenon, but perhaps especially significant for Greater Manchester in heralding the early stages of a process which was to lead the county from poverty to prosperity.

The Post Medieval Society

In most of England the early modern period saw the first moves towards the spirit of improvement and rational analysis which was to create the agricultural revolution of the 18th century. A sign of the times was the appearance of books giving advice on how to manage the land to best advantage. The first was by Fitzherbert and appeared in 1523; the second was published in 1557 and has the remarkable quality, to modern taste, of being written throughout in rhyming couplets. It was written by Thomas Tusser and was full of advice

relating to all aspects of husbandry from crop rotation to the care of livestock. It was the beginning of a flood of books which, from that day to this, have shared Tusser's concern for efficiency and improvement, if not his literary style.

The search for improved agricultural techniques was one of the more profound signs of a new age. At the time there were also other more obvious developments which convulsed the rural community and affected the standing of the gentry, as we may now call those who held the lordship of a manor or some similar position of wealth and power in the county. The most important changes were the dissolution of the monasteries, which released much land to individual farmers, enclosure, the rise of the gentry, (table 1), and the bringing of new capital to the land as a result either of gentry going into trade or law, or by successful members of other walks of life crowning their success elsewhere by joining the landed classes.

Percentage of land owned by:	1436 (England only)	c1690 England and Wales	c1790 England and Wales	1870 (England only)
I Great Owners	15-20	15-20	20-25	24
II Gentry	25	45-50	50	55
III Yeoman Freeholders	20	25-33	15	10
IV Church and Crown	25-35	5-10	10	10

From: Mingay (1976, 59)

The importance of the first two of these, the sale of monastic lands and enclosure, is generally conceded, but the rise of the gentry and the related topic of the new sources of income for the landed classes have been the subject of fierce controversy. These four things are closely inter-related and it is quite clear that the first two were of comparatively little importance in Greater Manchester, which contained much already ancient enclosure and relatively few religious estates. In this area, it is likely that continuity and stability were as much a characteristic of the landed classes as change or growth. The patterns in southern England do not indicate what to expect in the North, and it is possible that this will affect a view of the divisions within the gentry at the time of the Civil War.

Patterns of land holding

Whatever Henry VIII's reforms may have meant politically or spiritually to the population of the Manchester Embayment. The dissolution of the monasteries probably had less impact on land holding patterns here than elsewhere. There had only been three ecclesiastical foundations of any kind in the area now covered

by Greater Manchester (Morris, 1983, 21-2). One of these was the short-lived Praemonstratensian Friary at Warburton, of the time of Henry II, another a Cluniac Cell at Kersal, and the third the Collegiate Church of Manchester which had quite extensive holdings in and around the town (notably Kirkmanshume). The Collegiate Church did not lose its lands, and thus Henry's reforms probably failed to have any great effect on land ownership patterns. Monks Hall (Salford) derives its name from the fact that it had once been a rectory manor of the Cistercian Abbey of Whalley, which held the lands in the area. Individual families might have benefitted from the Dissolution in the same way as did the Holcrofts of Holcroft Hall, who dealt in confiscated monastic lands. Sir John Holcroft was Sheriff of Lancashire in 1554 and afterwards raised a force of 100 men to serve Queen Mary in the Scottish Wars. He was succeeded by his brother who was a recusant and, as such, provides an example of how the gentry altered their sympathies with succeeding monarchs and how families could be divided by the controversies of the time.

Despite the geomorphological variation between different parts of Greater Manchester it is safe to say that Lancashire and Cheshire, broadly speaking, fell within the highland zone of England in terms of land use and settlement patterns. It has been noted that the standard manorial pattern of land holding and settlement was less likely to hold in more sparsely populated, less wealthy areas of the north of England. It seems likely that 'common fields and co-operative husbandry were best suited to, and survived longest in, areas of mixed husbandry, whereas they either never came into existence or met an early death in pastoral areas' (Thirsk 1967, 7).

In these areas, rather than a large central village ('nucleated settlement'), people would have lived in small hamlets, or in single and relatively isolated farmsteads. The household would have run its affairs with a relatively low level of association with its neighbours and such communities would have been subject to low levels of manorial control.

Rodgers (1955) has used the contemporary evidence from 1450-1558 to divide Lancashire according to the proportions of land used for arable, pasture, and meadow (see fig 3).

Even in that part where farming was mixed a higher proportion of land was under cultivation. (Thirsk 1967, 81) states that field crops were used primarily to meet domestic needs and the surplus then used for feeding livestock. Consequently, Greater Manchester County could at this time still be described as a pastoral county, in that its economy was concerned with raising livestock, and not arable crops, for the market.

Because of these differences in the basic pattern of land holding, records of enclosure and enclosure acts are scarce. In Cheshire, enclosure started as early as the 14th century, and by the late 18th century only one parliamentary act had been passed for the

enclosure of common fields in the county.

In both Lancashire and Cheshire exchange of strips of land enabled it to be parcelled out by individuals, and agreements between townships divided up common pasture, which then could be divided up further amongst individuals. Land was relatively abundant and so enclosure took place in a calm atmosphere, without the social stresses apparent in other parts of England.

A rising gentry?

The fate of landlords, whether of the nobility or the gentry, 'old' family or 'new', seems to have owed a great deal to the individual circumstances and abilities of the particular heads of the families. The changes that occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries were generally favourable to the gentry. The Tudors had established a more stable stronger monarchy which reduced the independence of the magnates. The decline of the great landowners has been, broadly speaking, related to a rising gentry; however, it should be remembered that Lancashire was still very much dominated by the Stanley family of the Earls of Derby. This remained true up to and even beyond the Civil War, and it may be that the gentry of Lancashire did not conform to the general pattern of increasing prosperity.

However, Greater Manchester can show examples of rising gentry purchasing more land and building new halls, of established families exploiting new sources of income such as coal or textiles, and of men using money acquired by trade to establish themselves as gentry.

The position of a family would be affected by its attitude towards the religious changes of the times. A family which did not accept the reformed religion was obviously less likely to rise than one that did. Despite these reforms, Catholicism remained strong throughout most of Lancashire. Birchley Hall (Wigan) is one of many which had 'hides' built to conceal priests. The Greater Manchester area itself was strongly Protestant, Bolton and Manchester being referred to as 'Little Genevas', but even in this enclave some major families remained Catholic. The Byrom family were recusants and the Anderton family temporized before eventually openly avowing their Catholicism. Both of these families took the King's side in the Civil War. The Langtree family of Standish Hall were also recusants and finally paid the price for this during the Commonwealth, for although Thomas Langtree did not take an active part against Parliament, his lands were sequestered and he was overwhelmed by debt, whereupon the family disappeared into obscurity.

The interesting feature of this period is the change in status of families and the increasing use of sources of income other than rent and the farming of desmesne land. In agriculture, as the raising of sheep became more important, so some families became involved in textile manufacturing or trading. Conversely, some wealthy merchants sought to buy land and some families, for example the Seddons of Prestolee,

the Radcliffes of Chadderton and Foxdenton, derived income from coal mining.

The Mosley family were local gentry who were able to buy new holdings (Ancoats Hall) and became Lords of the Manor. The Bankes family were an example of a family formerly involved in trade who began to base their wealth in land. James Bankes was a citizen and goldsmith who succeeded through trade in establishing himself and his family on a firm social and financial basis for upwards of 300 years. The pewterer's craft was an hereditary family occupation (the first Bankes on record being Adam, a brasier who, in his will of 1597, bequeathed all his pewter to his son). About 1569 James Bankes was in partnership with John Ballet, a London goldsmith, and married John's sister Elizabeth. Although the Tudor goldsmiths had not yet risen to the prominence they attained as bankers during the 17th century, they were involved in considerable transactions, such as money lending. In 1558, when funds were being raised to defeat the Armada James was one of ten London goldsmiths selected as 'meet to lend money' to the Queen. He contributed £100.

In 1595-6 he returned to his native Lancashire and bought the manor of Winstanley. His passion for the acquisition of land and gradual transformation from merchant to squire is an example of the turnover of land during the 16th century. With few exceptions all James' purchases were from the impoverished 'old order', two transactions being the indirect outcome of the dispersal of church lands.

The first record of a purchase of land by James Bankes is in 1578 in Hindley, land which he then gave to his brother William (Mayor of Wigan in 1579). With the expansion of industry and of farming for gain as opposed to subsistence, land became the best investment and so James bought land with mineral wealth, as Lancashire was rich in coal.

In 1592 James married again, his second wife being Susan, the daughter of William Shevington, a London haberdasher. Three Shevington brothers had acquired considerable land in Lancashire and William also owned land in Worsley and Wardley Hall. These descended to Susan as heiress of their father, uncles and sisters. In 1601 she sold the Eccles property and the property inherited from one of the three brothers to the widow of the youngest brother, Francis (founder of Wigan Grammar School 1597). Another purchase of land by James Bankes was Sankey House (The Stone House or Old Fields) occupied by the Bankes family until 1574.

James retired from active participation in the goldsmiths trade about 1590-92. His principal acquisition was the manor of Winstanley (from Edmund Winstanley) in 1595-6. Documents show that James made two surveys of his land before his death in 1617 (1600 and 1610). He advocated the idea of a twenty one year term for his tenants instead of the customary three lives with an easy rent and large fine. The policy was abandoned in 1610 due to economic conditions and local custom.

More typical of this new gentry were those engaged in the textile trades. James Lightbourne, who died in 1621, was a woollen draper and owner of Lightbourne Hall. As well as wool and cotton, linen and silk provided the fortunes of some families. The Bayley family, originally from the Blackburn area, were silk weavers and moved into cotton and general trade, acquiring Hope Hall (by 1698) and later Booth Hall.

In 1625 Ralph Worsley, a prosperous linen draper of Manchester, purchased Platt Hall and associated land in Rusholme. The most prominent member of the family was Charles Worsley, an active Parliamentarian, who gained the rank of Major General and in 1654 was Manchester's first member of Parliament. He was buried in Henry VII's chapel, Westminster Abbey.

One of the best known of the 'mercantile gentry' is Humphrey Chetham, who was born in 1580 at Crumpsall Hall, and had extensive interests in textiles both around Greater Manchester and in London. He was twice High Sheriff of Manchester and founder of Chetham's Hospital School and Library.

The Seddons of Prestolee were probably typical of many families in combining agricultural and commercial activities. Ralph Seddon (d 1612), left an inventory which shows that he had cows, oxen and calves to a value of around £77. There is also recorded at least £60 of goods relating to the textile trade and ranging from looms and materials for bleaching, to finished goods. It seems likely that Ralph was one of the earliest traders in cotton, which first came into widespread use around 1560, with the introduction of fustians.

Ralph's eldest son and heir, Peter, was a friend and correspondent of Nathan Walworth (or Walwork) of a neighbouring family. (Zambwell Wallwork of Kersley had cotton yarn amongst his goods as early as 1604). The case of Nathan Walworth shows that offices of profit need not mean solely those of the crown, and that the gentry might still prosper in the service of the great landowners rather than by coming into competition with them. For many years Nathan was steward to the Earls of Pembroke and lived principally (to judge from his surviving correspondence) at Baynard's castle on the Thames at London. Although not wealthy, Nathan certainly became a well to do old bachelor, and founded a new chapel at Ringley where he had been born in 1572.

In fact whatever may have been the case in other counties, such as Sussex, (Thirsk 1967, 285) very few of the Lancashire gentry, by 1642, had pursued careers concerned with, or derived income from, non-agricultural sources other than coal mining (Blackwood 1978, 16-17). In part this may have been due to the large number of Roman Catholic gentry families who were legally excluded by an Act of 1606 from holding public office. Only 43 out of 774 gentry families had coal mining interests during the early 17th century, and the majority of these still derived the greater part of their income from agriculture. Thomas Charnock of Astley had a colliery at Bradford, near

Manchester, which a private survey of 1662 valued at £150, or equivalent to half of his total income in 1641.

However, the possibility of gain was offset by the need for heavy investment and the consequent risk of heavy losses. Charnock had invested several hundreds of pounds in his Bradford colliery under James I, and this may be the cause of his debts and subsequent sale of land under Charles I (*ibid.*, 15-16).

Any estimate of the position of the gentry is hindered by the difficulty of defining the data. Even among contemporaries there was no agreement as to where the boundaries might be drawn, and within the gentry itself the differences in wealth and status could be considerable. Of course historians can define their intention and decide for themselves what they will regard as constituting the group they wish to study, but this can mask the difficulty that the same person may claim different status at different times, and independently of his claims may be accorded differing degrees of status. Blackwood (1978, 4) has pointed out that in practice 'esquire' and especially 'gentleman' were vague and often meaningless terms. Despite these difficulties Blackwood concludes that there was a considerable upward and downward mobility in early Stuart Lancashire, and that most of the new gentry had risen from the ranks of the yeomen. In other words society had not yet reached the stage where there were large purchases of land by wealthy town dwellers, merchants, lawyers etc. The gentry of Lancashire and Cheshire were at this time deeply rooted in their counties. In 1642 81% of Lancashire gentry had been settled in the county before 1485; compared to only 40% in Hertfordshire (*ibid.*, 23).

All the above considerations relate events in Greater Manchester County to theories which account for national phenomena such as enclosure, the position of the gentry etc. More important locally, and ultimately nationally as well, was the development of southeast Lancashire away from the rest of the northwest. The earlier economic success of southwest Lancashire had lessened by the early 16th century, its position usurped by the southeast. During the 16th and 17th centuries the area around Manchester continued to develop. Enclosure and the extension of sheep rearing on the moors went hand in hand with the growth of the textile industry, as smallholders sought to augment their income by engaging in the domestic production of woollen goods, or by sending wool down to the towns. It is even possible that it was the previous lack of prosperity of southeast Lancashire that had given an impetus to the development of the woollen industry. The growth of the woollen industry had also been influenced by the rigidity of trade regulations in the town charters of Liverpool and Wigan (Walker 1939, 54ff). In this regard it should be pointed out that, local government organisation of 1974 notwithstanding, Wigan belongs decidedly to southwest Lancashire and not southeast Lancashire.

In addition to its developing industry the

southeast was distinguished by its increasing enthusiasm, first for the reformed faith and then for puritanism and presbyterianism, while the rest of the county remained heavily under the influence of Popery. This seems to correlate with the growth of the textile trades, as the same opinions prevailed in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The Earl of Newcastle seems to have acquired a permanent distrust of textile workers, for in his recommendations to Charles II on his restoration he argues that theology should only be discussed in Latin, for 'the Bible in English under every weaver's ... arm hath done us much hurt'.

While it is very difficult to distinguish between Parliamentarians and Royalists in terms of wealth or status, it is quite clear that there is a very high correlation between religious and political loyalties. For an interesting expression of this see the letter from Presbyterian and Parliamentary Peter Seddon to his younger brother John, a captain in the King's army (Fletcher 1879-80).

Catholic families rallied to the Crown and so were doubly liable to suffer penalties under the Republic. James Anderton was captured by Parliamentary forces in 1643, his lands sequestered and sold to one Richard Bell. Although the greater part of the family's lands were regained after the restoration, the family never recovered financially and in 1683 sold the manor and estates to Lord Molyneux.

The Radclyffes of Foxdenton Hall experienced greater personal loss but were able to retain their family's social position. Both Sir William Radclyffe and his heir fought for the King at Edgehill (1642) and were killed. The second son, William 'The Foxdenton Redhead' was knighted on the field for gallantry. This may help to explain why the family remained so prosperous. In 1698 Alexander Radclyffe was able to pull down the existing hall and build a completely new one, a hall which stands today.

Nevertheless, being on the winning side was no guarantee of prosperity. Peter Egerton of Shaw Hall, a prominent Parliamentarian who took part in the defence of Manchester, became a magistrate and sat on the committee for sequestering 'delinquents' estates. He was succeeded by his son Leonard and grandson Peter, but the family became impoverished and sold their lands in the late 17th century. Shaw Hall itself was finally sold by Peter Egerton in 1722.

The Duckenfield family of Dukinfield Hall supplied one of the notable Parliamentary leaders of Cheshire in Colonel Robert Duckenfield, who joined Sir William Brereton at the beginning of the Civil War. After the Restoration the Colonel was tried and imprisoned for his part in the execution of the Earl of Derby, but this does not seem to have adversely affected the fortunes of the rest of the family, who continued to hold their estates. The Colonel's son, also Robert, was created Baronet in 1665.

Those who prospered most were, perhaps, those who were not too forward for either cause. Sir

Roger Bradshaigh of Haig Hall was arrested in 1650 as a suspected Royalist but was later released. At the Restoration he was made Mayor of Wigan. He owned Cannel mines and took out patents for porcelain, so it is likely that he was reasonably prosperous at this time. By 1684, when he died, his finances were in poor shape. As has been seen, the degree of investment required by the coal industry could be prohibitive, and it is likely that he was not able to develop his interests in porcelain.

The growing interest of the rural landowners in investment in industry set the scene for the changes that came about in the following centuries.

4 THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

The coming of industry

The 18th and 19th centuries heralded the widespread change in Greater Manchester from an agricultural society to an industrial one. During this period the population rose dramatically and large scale immigration took place as industry came to generate more and more wealth.

The Houses

The houses of this period reflect this increase in prosperity. Many were rebuilt in architecturally 'classical' styles, and in several cases owners had completely new residences built, whilst many older halls were either demolished or let to multiple tenants. Two fine examples of the 18th century country house at its grandest lie just over the Greater Manchester County boundary at Tatton Park, where the old hall was let out and a completely new hall built, and at Lyme Park, where the Elizabethan hall was remodelled and given a classical Palladian exterior between 1725-35. The magnificence of these buildings reflects the wealth, stability and self confidence of the landed ruling class.

Other halls are, by comparison, almost modest. Many were built by small landowners and men who, having made money in trade and manufacturing, sought to move into landed society. The 'Canal Duke', the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, built for himself, between 1760-1770, a fine new building in the classical style overlooking his canal at Worsley, which became known as the 'Brick House' to distinguish it from the timber framed old Worsley Hall. The Brick Hall only survived until 1840 when it was demolished and replaced by the 'New Hall' nearby.

Platt (1764), Chadderton, Chaddock (1780), Adlington and Alkrington Halls are examples of relatively pure 18th century halls although many more had substantial additions or were modernized in this period. During these centuries there was a great increase in urban development which swallowed up many houses previously sited in the countryside. Many were demolished for developmental, industrial or other purposes, or taken over by Corporations.

Ancoats Hall, once the home of the Mosley family, after a partial rebuilding in the 18th century, was completely demolished and replaced by a brick building in the Gothic style in 1827. By the end of the 19th century the 'country house' could be something of a misnomer, being inaccurate both as to function and location. In the industrial northwest the society that had produced them had clearly been superseded by an urban society.

What kind of society was it that produced these late country houses, and how did it interact with the new industrial society that was born in its midst?

Landed Society in the 18th century and later.

This period is notable for a great degree of social and political stability, in the context of the revolutionary upheavals which had characterised the previous century, and the sweeping social changes which were to accompany the growth of urban development during the following century. Indeed it was probably this very security that made possible the accumulation of wealth and the subsequent investment that spurred on the Industrial Revolution.

The 'Glorious Revolution' had finally limited the power of the Crown and put the landowners firmly in the saddle, a state of affairs that was to last into the 19th century. The merchants and manufacturers were no more than junior partners of the landowners and it was not until after 1760 that the number of merchants among members of Parliament began to rise.

From the Restoration to the accession of George II it is probable that there was a further shift in the distribution of landed property in favour of the gentry, at the expense of the yeomanry, (Mingay 1976, 69). However, the most important movement was the increasing growth of large estates, and this continued up until the end of the 19th century.

In accordance with their social status, wealth and political power, landowners can be divided into three broad classes: those of peer, gentleman, and freeholder or yeoman. However, these categories often overlapped and it is more relevant from the economic point of view to use just two categories; the landlord and the owner-occupier. It was the distinguishing mark of the gentleman that, even if he managed his own home farm and drew some part of his income from the sale of produce, he had an independent income from rents, mortgages, and investments, and perhaps also from a profession or the profits of office. It was this that made possible the leisured life of the gentleman, and which produced the amateurs of science and literature.

More importantly, it was such members of the landowning class who were able to pursue the idea of improvement in agriculture and investment both in land and industry.

It is probable that improvements in agriculture

were stimulated by the ascendancy of large estates, by the purchase of land by those who had profited in trade (which also tended to reinforce the growth of large estates), and by that spirit of enquiry which made farming a hobby for gentlemen. This latter went so far that George III himself, 'Varmer George', contributed to the 'Agricultural Magazine' under the pseudonym of Robinson.

From the end of the 17th century at least, circumstances tended to favour the growth of large estates. The gentry, though still important in local affairs, found national affairs dominated by the magnates, who increasingly controlled elections by virtue of the large amounts of money they were able to disburse. The expanding electorate of an expanding population, in this case paradoxically, worked to concentrate power in the hands of the few. It has been said (Habakkuk, quoted in Mingay 1976, 74) 'from some 18th century memoirs one might suppose that England was a federation of country houses.' It was this political system which passed Acts of Parliament to make possible the undertakings of men like the "Canal Duke", the promoters of turnpikes, and, later, the first railways.

Smaller landowners were less able to survive fluctuations in the market and the effects of taxation on their limited incomes and so were more likely to sell-out as a result of bad seasons or disease. In a time of expansion, those without the capital to invest would fall behind, and be less able to maintain their social position, or the burden of their administrative responsibilities. Consequently they would often sell to a wealthier neighbour, or to the incoming merchant. With the expanding markets for food and raw materials, especially after 1760, large scale farming, employing the newest techniques and large amounts of capital, became more profitable.

It is also likely that some landowners disposed of land in order to raise capital that they hoped to invest more profitably in trade.

By the end of the 18th century only about one fifth of the cultivated land was worked by its owners, by the end of the 19th century this was down to around one tenth. This phenomenon was less marked in the North West, perhaps because growing trade and manufacturing industry attracted capital (Mingay 1976). One of the major investments in the early stages of the industrial revolution in the northwest - the Bridgewater Canal - was funded by a very large collection of estates indeed, and yet even so it stretched the Duke's finances to the limit.

Landowners and the Industrial Revolution

In 1741 Britain exported £20,000 worth of cotton goods. In 1790 the figure was £1,662,369, a more than eighty fold increase. What was the landowner's part in this?

As has been seen, the landowners of Greater Manchester were already engaged in coal mining. Small landowners, like the Seddons, engaged in textile manufacture and trade as well as

agriculture, and it has been suggested that merchants buying their way into the gentry were particularly likely to invest in new agricultural methods, as they sought a good return on their capital as well as social standing. The 'industrialist squire' as Mingay has dubbed him, was active in Cumberland, Wales, the Midlands and the area of Greater Manchester. In 1743, John Andrews of Little Lever bequeathed coal-mines to the area. Aiken (1795, 450-1) gives a glimpse of the increasing degree of investment needed to win coal in the face of the problem of flooding. George Hyde Clark of Hyde Hall had a mill on the river for corn and a 'water-engine' for a coal mine. Downstream was another 'wear' belonging to Mr John Arden 'for the purpose of another coal engine'. The area, Aiken writes, 'abounds with coal'.

Even before his involvement with the Duke of Bridgewater, James Brindley had won fame for his ingenious scheme for draining 'Wet-earth' Colliery, near Bolton.

In 1780 Alexander, Earl of Crawford acquired Haigh Hall through marriage. As well as being involved in the coal market and transport, he started the Haigh Ironworks in 1790. His enterprises seem to have been profitable, for he apparently spent large amounts of money restoring the hall. In 1825, the present Haigh Hall was built on the site of the old hall, by James, Earl of Crawford.

However it is evident that some gentry lost estates and their descendants moved into trade. Holcroft Hall had passed to the Tyldesley family by marriage in 1697 and in the 18th century at least two members of the Holcroft family, father and son, both called Richard, carried on the trade of draper.

There are, nevertheless, more instances of traders acquiring halls and estates. The early members of the Bayley family seem to have come from the neighbourhood of Blackburn, and prospered as silk weavers. By 1698 Daniel Bayley, a prosperous merchant was residing at Hope Hall. His son was educated at Edinburgh University and settled down to the life and duties of a country gentleman. He became one of the leading men of the district, a JP and High Sheriff. Samuel Bayley of Booth Hall was a cotton merchant, a business carried on for several generations by his descendants. The Bayleys acquired Booth Hall in 1781, when Thomas Bayley inherited from his uncle John Diggles, and the Diggles family too had made their money in trade. The three sons of Thomas Bayley who inherited his property were described as: gentleman of London Stock Exchange; Merchant, of Manchester; and simply, gentleman. Members of the family were also active in the East India Company, trade with Russia, and prison reform. The New Bayley Prison, completed in 1790, took its name from them.

Around 1770 Brandleshome Old Hall was sold to Richard Powell of Heaton Norris, a merchant.

William Allen, a banker of Manchester, acquired Davyhulme Hall and Newcroft Hall along with the

lordship of Urmston Manor. When Allen became bankrupt in 1788, Davyhulme was sold to Henry Norris, a Manchester Merchant.

The Byrom family had been more fortunate. In 1710 the spendthrift John Byrom of Byrom Hall had been able to sell 'the royalty, manor and demesne of Byrom' to Joseph Byrom, a wealthy Manchester mercer, so keeping it in the family.

In 1731 Chaddock Hall and its estate were sold to Samuel Clowes, a Manchester merchant. The Clowes family were long prominent in Manchester and Salford; Great Clowes Street is still a reminder of them today.

Not all purchasers were necessarily local. In 1794 Thomas Coke sold a part of Crumpsall estate to a Liverpool merchant William Marsden.

It is clear then that the interaction between the landed and mercantile classes was close and lively, in fact very often both roles were united in the same man. However, it is difficult to draw general conclusions on the precise extent of landed involvement.

Greater Manchester cannot show any dominating characters like the Duke of Norfolk who largely planned and financed the creation of Glossop as a cotton town, or Sir Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood who turned Fleetwood into an important port. It seems that the role of gentry in business tended, naturally enough to be related to land, to the extraction of minerals, or in the development of building or transport. According to J R Ward (quoted in Mingay 1976, 103), 'Landowners provided just under one third of the shareholding of all 18th century canals in England'.

The great example, indeed the pioneer in many ways, was the Duke of Bridgewater, who had his canal built to bring coal from his mines at Worsley to Manchester. He later proposed to extend his canal from Manchester to Runcorn in order to link Manchester and Liverpool more efficiently than by the 'old Navigation', along the Mersey and Irwell. The opposition to this move was led by Lord Strange, son of the Earl of Derby, and this is a reminder that different landowners had different interests. For all the benefits of improved transport for some, it might mean a reduction in the value of adjacent property, or competition on transport routes, and a break in the local monopoly, by importing goods from outside to other members of the gentry. A few decades later when the first Bills were put before Parliament to build the Manchester to Liverpool railway, the Bridgewater Trust spent £10,000 opposing the project.

As the industrial revolution progressed, its demand for capital increased, and this was supplied more and more from within industry itself, allowing the landowners to fall into the background. In 1841-7 two fifths of 'gentry' members of the commons had money invested in railways, insurance, banking, mining, docks, canals and similar enterprises. As a result, the majority still relied on their incomes from the land, sometimes the profits of

farming, but in most cases rents and royalties, no doubt with something invested in consols or government annuities for security's sake.

In the textile industry it would seem that as the factory system replaced home manufacturing, then the interest of landed society was also replaced by that of the new mill-owner. Despite the cases of merchants buying halls exemplified above, the opinion of Gatrell (1971) that 'contrary to a widespread belief, only a handful of cotton magnates acquired landed status in the first half of the (19th) century' should be noted. Such was the intensely competitive and insecure nature of the cotton industry that the cotton-masters were most likely to re-invest as much as possible, in order to gain an edge against competitors. Alternatively, they may have spent money on land, so that easily realised reserves would carry their business through the periodic downswings of the industry.

However, from the 1840's many halls appear on early OS maps which are surely the result of wealth being generated by industry. Nevertheless, no industrialist ever matched building on the scale of Eaton Hall which, after it had been rebuilt and extended by Waterhouse for the Duke of Westminster in 1870-82, disfigured a large part of the Cheshire countryside until its demolition in 1961-63. One of the grandest of the 19th century halls in Greater Manchester County was Worsley New Hall, built by Lord Egerton between 1840-46 at a cost of £41,000.

The Demise of the Country House

Many of the 19th century buildings have proved less durable than their predecessors and have already vanished. One surviving example of these later country houses or devolved halls is The Towers, now the Shirley Institute, on Wilmslow Road. Never a country house in the sense of being the centre of an estate, it provided easy access to the city and displayed the wealth of its owner, J E Taylor, the proprietor and editor of 'The Guardian'. Here, clearly, was a man who wished to display his position in society but did not or could not go the whole way and claim the position of country gentleman.

The country house in the North West does not seem to have enjoyed the early 20th century Indian Summer that it did in the South, as instanced by Haver Castle, Middleton Park, Cornbury Park and many others, though Sir Edwin Lutyens had designed Ednaston Manor, Derbyshire in 1913, and Gledstone Hall, Yorkshire as late as 1925-7.

By the late 19th century the country house in Greater Manchester was caught between the agricultural depression and the continuing urban expansion. The depression did not hit pastoral areas like Lancashire as hard as the arable areas, and Fletcher (1910) shows that during the depression the value of gross output from Livestock farms in Lancashire rose by one third (Clemenson 1982, 102). Instead of buying or building locally it was now more attractive for the merchant to buy further afield, where

many of the landed gentry were only too willing to sell, as shown by the Lancashire cotton spinner who bought Hengrave Hall, Suffolk (Girouard, 1980, 300).

What can be seen in Greater Manchester is the beginning of what became so common in the next century; demolition, conversion from family to institutional use, purchase by local corporations, and subdivision into separate dwellings.

As early as 1788 much of Great Lever Hall was demolished to prevent the expense of repairs. Dukinfield was converted into cottages around 1877 and Ancoats Hall became an art gallery in the same year. However, Susan Fanny Gregge-Hopwood, who owned Hopwood Hall in 1855, restored Jacobean and Tudor parts of the house and added period furniture, an early example of an activity familiar in the twentieth century.

In the next century the pattern of land holding was to change completely. The society that created the country house was finally overwhelmed by the new urban world, and was faced with the problem of what to do with the country house.

Fig 2.1 LAND USE AND RELIEF IN GREATER MANCHESTER



