

The Decline and Fall of George Hollis: 'Old Corruption' and Reform at the Hampshire Quarter Sessions c.1815-40*

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I

The 1830s have long been viewed as a watershed in English history. As one standard survey puts it, 'The reason why the age of discontent and unrest in England after the Napoleonic wars was transformed, without revolution, into the age of Victorian 'Equipoise', must be sought in the intervening decade of reform in the 1830s'.¹ The Whigs presided over Parliamentary, Poor Law, municipal, factory and police reform to list but the most obvious. Centuries-old abuses were swept aside as central government widened both the scope and scale of the state in the face of supposedly resistant localities. What disappeared is what contemporary Radicals termed 'Old Corruption'. According to their view, the country was controlled by a parasitic aristocratic elite whose greed was fed by creating fat offices for themselves to enjoy, unmindful of the needs of an overtaxed population.² Where differences within the elite existed, Radicals liked to explain them as struggles for the spoils of office. A frequently cited exemplar of 'Old Corruption' was Hampshire's George Rose. Until his death in 1818, Rose allegedly held sway in Hampshire affairs, whilst nationally in the late 1790s he was simultaneously and unashamedly Pitt's Secretary to the Treasury, Clerk of the Parliaments, Master of the Exchequer Pleas and a Verderer of the New Forest. Even George III was moved to jest that 'only a Secretary of State' could afford to maintain 'Cuffnells', Rose's country seat near Lyndhurst.³

Recent research has exploded many myths associated with 'Old Corruption': successive ministries after 1815 were slowly dismantling the fiscal-military state. Research has also questioned just how far the 1830s

witnessed a break with the past, and insofar as they did, what forces interplayed in the shaping of legislation and its implementation. Such work, however, necessarily focuses upon central government, the history of a particular area of policy, or has treated urban and industrial areas, since they were subject to the greatest transformation.⁴ Comparatively little attention has been devoted to the realities of government in rural England in the early nineteenth century, where the nuances of change, if any, were more subtle.⁵ The aim of the present paper is to consider those realities and changes in Hampshire, primarily by tracing the fortunes of one man, George Hollis, who made his career in the administration of its affairs.

First though, we might briefly remind ourselves of the milieu of county administration in which Hollis operated. The key figures were the magistrates, appointed by the Lord Chancellor on the recommendation of a county's Lord Lieutenant. Individually, justices could deal with a range of minor matters. Together, the magistrates of a locality met weekly or fortnightly in Petty Sessions – Hampshire was divided into nine such areas by the 1820s – to discharge business requiring two or more of their number. Most importantly, the county's magistrates met four times annually in Quarter Sessions, led by a chairman chosen by themselves from amongst their number, to discharge more consequential judicial and administrative responsibilities.⁶ To meet the costs of these, the Sessions was empowered to raise a county rate. Though the magistrates were unpaid, the office attracted fierce criticism from Radicals. As John Wade put it in the handbook of 'Old Corruption', *The Extraordinary Black Book*, 'these petty judges may be considered as so many irremovable and irresponsible functionaries, and the great power confided to them ... is very liable to be abused'.⁷

By the early nineteenth century, the Hampshire Quarter Sessions, like most counties, also had a bureaucracy to assist it. This was small, consisting of only half a dozen officials who received an income, principally the coroner, clerk of the peace and treasurer. The latter two offices were usually filled by local attorneys, in Hampshire's case in 1815 by Thomas Woodham and George Hollis respectively.⁸

With the coming of peace in 1815, Lords Lieutenant could largely afford to disregard the other county institution for which they were responsible, the militia. When the Duke of Wellington became Hampshire's Lord Lieutenant in 1820, he discovered that most of the routine business of the office could be discharged by the clerk to the lieutenancy. He saw no reason to break with the incumbent, Thomas Woodham, who also doubled as clerk of the peace.⁹ Though the magistrates had long since displaced him as the key royal officer in the local-

ities, the other county figure of historic significance was the high sheriff. By the nineteenth century the office was filled annually by a member of the gentry, but its expense made it one to be avoided. Technically, the high sheriff also presided in the ancient county court where his most important tasks were to convene county meetings, and oversee the election of knights of the shire. The routine business of the office, however, fell to the individual appointed by the sheriff to be his under-sheriff. In 1815 George Hollis filled that role alongside his duties as county treasurer.¹⁰

The traditional histories of this system are hostile in their assessment of its efficacy. Both J. Redlich and F.W. Hirst, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, were critical of what they considered to be growing, but unchecked, magisterial power. They consequently welcomed central government's restructuring of the English polity during the 1830s. In the past generation, however, historians have been more sympathetic to the old rural governors. David Eastwood bewails the 'tendency to underestimate both the vitality and political significance of English provincialism'. Even so, rural government was transformed, he concedes, between 1825 and 1850, not least by the creation of new institutions for poor law administration and policing. But the price was the 'erosion of the participatory traditions of local self-government in rural England ...'.¹¹ As will be argued below, the Hampshire evidence broadly endorses Eastwood's favourable evaluation of the rural governors, but it does suggest an important qualification to his contention concerning the participatory habits of the county elite.

II

Few were more vociferous in their condemnation of 'Old Corruption' or what he called 'the Thing', than William Cobbett. His *Political Register*, his empathy for the farm labourer, and his celebrated *Rural Rides* (most of which were undertaken across the southern counties from 1821), also mark him out as the pre-eminent Radical voice for the rural England of his generation. He was also presumably well-versed in Hampshire affairs, having lived and farmed at Botley from 1805-17.¹²

As Cobbett passed through Martyr Worthy in Hampshire in November 1825, he recalled a county meeting in Winchester of March 1817. Cobbett had moved unsuccessfully to amend a loyal address by the gentry and freeholders to the Prince Regent. In particular, he recalled 'one HOLLEST, a GEORGE HOLLET, who figured pretty bigly on that same loyal address ... I remember his coming up to me in the Grand Jury Chamber ... I remember his coming up to me as the Under Sheriff ... and

with all the sauciness of a thorough paced Pittite, *telling me to disperse or he would take me into custody!*' By 1825, however, Hollis (Cobbett was probably goading the egotistical Hollis by deliberately misspelling his name), was at the nadir of his fortunes, for he had recently lost his office as county treasurer following the revelation of errors in his accounts. Given their previous encounter Cobbett was 'glad that calamity has befallen him ...'.¹³

George Hollis was born in 1760.¹⁴ He began a legal career in 1778 as a clerk to Mr Durnford of Winchester. Durnford became clerk of the peace and Hollis acted briefly as his deputy from 1788 until Durnford's death in 1790. Hollis's career nevertheless continued to prosper, and in 1790 he was appointed under-sheriff for the first time. The office was meant to change hands annually, but Hollis occupied it for a more or less unbroken spell until 1824. Immediately determined to demonstrate his acumen, he took it upon himself to produce a copy of the poll of the 1790 Hampshire election, and followed this up with a review of what every parish should be contributing towards the county rate. Ironical though this was in light of subsequent events, he impressed the magistrates at the time: in 1796 he was rewarded with the county treasurership.¹⁵

Hollis's tenure as treasurer for the next quarter century was unremarkable. He was reappointed annually at the Easter Sessions and received a salary of £20 per annum. This was supplemented by the practice prevalent in most counties, of his being allowed to earn interest 'from the temporary balance left in his hands to meet the exigencies of the ensuing quarter'.¹⁶ The duties of treasurer, he set out in a letter of 1818. Foremost of these was collection of the county rate. Each quarter, this necessitated issuing each of Hampshire's 84 high constables with details of the sums due from each of the parishes within their hundred. In addition, the treasurer had to undertake, 'An examination of the Orders of the magistrates for the various Bills, and a constant interruption of other Business at many and uncertain Times: the payment of interest on the County Securities, and making out abstracts of them twice a year, & endorsing the payments each time on all the securities besides a considerable correspondence with the magistrates & their clerks, parish officers &c'. There were also account books to be maintained: separate ones for bridges, bridewells, gaols, County Hall and incidents as well as a general accounts book.¹⁷

Hollis's motive for cataloguing his duties was hardly arcane interest, for he had come to believe that his remuneration for the tasks was insufficient. By April 1822, most magistrates agreed. As the Chairman of Quarter Sessions, the Hon. Rev. George Herbert put it succinctly on the

first day of the Easter Sessions, 'is it to be expected that any man of talent and respectability will devote his time and labour to the county business for so mean a consideration ...'.¹⁸ In particular, the balance between each Quarter Sessions, from which Hollis derived his chief income from the office, had fallen significantly in recent years from a peak of £2,603 in Easter 1815 to an average of £360 in the five years since. The Quarter Sessions consequently agreed to vote Hollis a fixed salary of £100 per annum from the Midsummer Sessions of 1822 'in consideration of his long and faithful service'.¹⁹

In April 1823, just before the Easter Sessions, Hollis published, as normal, an abstract of the county's quarterly accounts in the Hampshire press. From these, one magistrate, the Rev. Robert Wright, spotted discrepancies. When the Sessions opened on 14 April, a committee was appointed 'to investigate the expenditure and accounts appertaining to the county and to examine all persons and papers connected with such investigation'. The matter was not at first regarded by the Sessions with any great seriousness; indeed Hollis was confirmed in his position as treasurer for another year.²⁰ But relative complacency quickly gave way to concern. At an adjourned meeting of the Sessions on 26 April, when 13 magistrates met with Hollis, procedural irregularities were unearthed 'of charging the county the interest of the bonds as paid before actual payment ... and that in future the Treasurer do only charge in his accounts the sums actually paid by him for such interest and that he do produce proper receipts for the same on passing his accounts'.²¹ Worse, Hollis admitted shortcomings with respect to rate payments received, but not credited to the county balance; and also to sums due, but not received. Worse still, he could not be precise as to details. The magistrates responded by establishing a fresh committee to continue investigations. This met at least five times before the next full Quarter Sessions, the most significant occasion being its meeting on 19 May. At this, the Chairman of Quarter Sessions, Herbert, charged Hollis with a failure extending back at least eight years to account properly for rate payments. Though he emphatically absolved Hollis of any charge of corruption, he did accuse him of negligence, and moved for his removal as treasurer. Herbert's motion was defeated 11-6, but the committee, 'after a good deal of opposition', did agree to his further motion to refrain from endorsing Hollis's statement that the county balance stood at £346 17s 6d.²²

Hollis proved slow to cooperate with the investigating magistrates, not least because he could not find all the documentary material required from him: only by September 1823 had he handed over all account books since 1768 – and even then he had not found those for 1806-9.²³ The

investigating committee's labours were thus incomplete when it reported to the full magisterial body at the Midsummer 1823 Sessions. But it had discovered enough to confirm and flesh out the accusations levelled by Herbert on 19 May, principally that Hollis had failed to ensure that all rate sums collected had been returned to the county, or even in some cases to ensure that they had ever been collected at all. Where Hollis had stated at the Easter 1823 Sessions that the sums in arrears amounted to £346 17s 6d, the investigating committee estimated the figure at closer to £3,500. This included sums owing as far back as 1815. Some £2,475 18s 8d of this, the committee believed might be recoverable, but some £1,036 it believed irrecoverable owing to the insolvency of the various high constables concerned or worse. William Head of Wherwell hundred, for example, should have returned £17 15s 4d at Midsummer 1816, but 'has long since been dead'. The investigating committee also charged that Hollis had compounded his confusion over what rates had been received by him by mixing the accounts of his various offices: 'The Report attributes the errors to a want of regularity in that department of the Treasurer's office, from his never having kept a separate account at his bankers of the county money ... from the Treasurer's accounts being blended together, considerable difficulty had arisen, and, in some instances, the rates were not placed to the credit of the county until some time after they were paid'.²⁴

Hollis did not dispute the substance of the two allegations; indeed he claimed a certain vindication in being charged with incompetence rather than embezzlement! But he did, both characteristically and paradoxically, deny that he should be saddled with much blame. High constables, he suggested, might have paid in sums without telling him; others might have paid them in to the clerk of the peace in error, or to his own clerks, Roberts and Thresher, who had omitted to tell him.²⁵ Such self-exculpation at the expense of his own employees was hardly endearing, nor were his frequent defensive sallies into the Hampshire press over the ensuing weeks particularly edifying. A renewed motion to suspend him was thus moved at the July 1823 Sessions, but Hollis preempted it by resigning. He appears to have intended resubmitting himself for election, but the Sessions resolved 'it highly inexpedient and improper that he should again fill the said office of Treasurer of the county'.²⁶ At the Michaelmas 1823 Sessions it was John Woodham, a nephew of the clerk of the peace, who was elected ahead of another Winchester attorney, Barnard Winter, to succeed Hollis as county treasurer.²⁷

Any hopes that affairs might now resume something of a norm proved shortlived. The magistrates continued their investigations into Hollis's

work for the county, and by the end of 1823 had discovered that there were also deficiencies in his militia account books dating back to 1798. The county militias were raised, ideally from volunteers from each parish, on a quota basis determined by the lieutenancy. If insufficient volunteers were forthcoming, parishes were balloted to make good the deficiency. Persons balloted could avoid service by paying for a substitute.²⁸ The law further provided that those parishes that had not raised the requisite number of men, could be fined £5 for each man short; the money being collected with the county rate. Hollis had been granted £30 per annum by the Sessions for this aspect of his work. With unfortunate prescience, he had declared that 'The Accounts of the Militia are very voluminous and troublesome'.²⁹ More troublesome than he realised: so far as the magistrates could tell, some £3,225 of militia payments were unaccounted for. This comprised some £1,454 due, but uncollected, from other counties, and £1,771 due, but uncollected, from Hampshire parishes. In addition, Hollis had received, but not paid over, a further £505 9s. As with the treasurer's accounts, however, the magistrates were forced to add the rider that their findings were approximate, 'by reason of the disorder and confusion in which these accounts had been kept by Mr Hollis'.³⁰

The ensuing argument between Hollis and Quarter Sessions assumed the pattern already established over outstanding rate payments. Quarter Sessions took the line that Hollis was responsible since he had never informed them of any deficiencies in payment. Hollis admitted his liability for the £505 9s, but denied any liability for the £3,225. Instead, he blamed others, principally the treasurers of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, for the bulk of the sums due from outside the county; and more generally Thomas Woodham, in his capacity as clerk to the lieutenancy, for having failed to demand accounts and issue summonses.³¹

By spring 1824 Hollis and the magistrates were deadlocked. Hollis was prepared to pay the £505 9s he had received in respect of militia money, together with £398 2s 4d of rate money which he had received but not credited, so long as £264 due to him for work as under-sheriff be offset. The magistrates were prepared to accept the latter claim, but not to ignore the uncollected rate and militia monies which together totalled some £5,000-6,000.³² Both sides agreed that arbitration would be the cheapest and speediest way forward. This proved impossible, most probably because Hollis could not, given the possible outcome, find securities to guarantee him. Quarter Sessions consequently authorised the commencement of legal proceedings in King's Bench.³³

After much delay, it was only at the 1829 Midsummer Sessions that

Richard Pollen as Chairman of Quarter Sessions (Herbert had died in 1825), could report that King's Bench had ruled on twelve points at issue. Both sides, he asserted, had been vindicated to some extent. The magistrates in particular had been able to recover £282 1 14s 2d for the ratepayers since investigations first began, whilst Hollis had been ordered to pay over balances and costs totalling about a further £700.³⁴ Pollen's claims were, in fact, far from ingenuous. As the indefatigable Hollis was quick to point out, he had been exonerated on ten of the twelve charges, the wording on the key ruling about the £3,225 of unpaid militia money being, 'that there was no obligation on Mr Hollis, by his bond or otherwise, to take any proceedings to recover from the Treasurers of other counties, nor from parishes within the county, money reimbursed under the Militia Acts; nor to make reports to the Magistrates in Session; nor to procure orders on the overseers of parishes within the county'.³⁵ This money, the magistrates now regarded as lost. The money they had recovered, moreover, in the form of rate arrears, was recovered relatively easily as the result of summonses issued to the offending high constables: they had not needed to take this issue before King's Bench. And Hollis had effectively offered to pay the other sums awarded to the county as early as 1824: in the event, procrastination born partly of straitened financial circumstances meant that the county did not receive the sums until well into the 1830s.³⁶ On top of this, the county had its own legal costs of £1,319 8s 9d. Allowing therefore, the truth of the magistrates' claims that the sums awarded and recovered amounted to approximately £3,500, the sums lost and expended in doing so were closer to £5,500. It was at best a pyrrhic victory. Hollis had some grounds for feeling vindicated.

III

At the very least, Hollis regarded himself as a scapegoat for the shortcomings of high constables. Worse though, he believed himself to be the victim of a conspiracy. In the first instance his suspicions fixed upon two magistrates, the Rev. Robert Wright and Sir James Gardiner, the former presumably because he had first spotted the anomalies in the treasurer's abstracts, the latter because he chaired the magistrates' first investigating committee in the spring of 1823. Hollis could not comprehend how two men who had 'long been friends' could treat him so and claimed that the committee 'has been managed in a way much to my prejudice, & with a view to induce me to *resign* or force me out of the Treasurership'.³⁷ Eighteen months later, Hollis remained convinced that the investigating committee, being the driving force into his conduct, had proved decisive

in turning other magistrates at Quarter Sessions against him, and that 'I have been the victim of a preconcerted and most illiberal attack'.³⁸

But Hollis adduced no evidence to support his claim – Gardiner, for example, abstained in the vote on the motion to suspend him in May 1823 – and the Sessions, as will be argued below, was too robust a body to be swayed simply by the arguments of an individual magistrate. We can dismiss this particular piece of speculation as mere paranoia on the part of Hollis. In any case, Hollis had come to the further conclusion that his real enemies were not members of the bench, but fellow attorneys. As Cobbett put it, 'he has been in good fat offices too long not to have made a great many persons think that his offices would be better in *their* hands; and they appear resolved to oust him'.³⁹ This theory is more plausible, for Hollis certainly had his professional enemies. In particular, the Winchester attorney, J.H. Buckle, pursued something of a crusade over several years against what he saw as both Hollis's heavy-handedness and incompetence towards several of his clients in his capacity as under-sheriff. The relationship between them is best described as one of mutual loathing, with vitriolic letters between them appearing in the press on a regular basis. In 1820, for example, Buckle wrote of 'this overgrown Under-Sheriff of 19 years standing [who] ... entails gross injustice on the public, and is a disgrace to the county'. Hollis replied, denying the imputations and, eschewing both relevance and political correctness, by drawing attention to the disfigurement which Buckle had suffered to an eye as the result of a firework accident at Winchester in 1806.⁴⁰

But Buckle was never seriously in the running for county offices. The real target of Hollis's suspicions was the Woodham family: Thomas Woodham was, after all, both clerk of the peace and clerk to the lieutenancy, whilst his nephew, John, had replaced Hollis as treasurer. The latter, according to one of Hollis's informants, 'was a Blackguard and he was the cause of it for that he wanted to marry Miss Kingsmill, and that she would not have him, unless he could get the office of Treasurer'.⁴¹ But Thomas was worse. He, according to Hollis, should have been held accountable for the deficiencies in the militia accounts. He, it was too, who employed clerks who had mistakenly received rate monies and then delayed in paying over, or had even embezzled the same. In short, '... all the proceedings against me have been under the management of my *real* enemy but *feigned* friend, the elder Woodham, who has been well paid for them by the County'.⁴²

That Thomas Woodham's office was not perfect is likely enough, but it is beyond credibility to believe that Woodham entered into some sort of conspiracy with Quarter Sessions against Hollis. Hollis, by his own admission, had worked amicably with Woodham for many years before

1823, and there were sufficient magistrates that opposed John Woodham's elevation to the treasurership to have ensured that any skullduggery would have been exposed.⁴³ We must, dismiss this theory too, therefore, as mere imagining on the part of Hollis.

Cobbett's reading of Hollis's downfall was that his erstwhile antagonist had fallen victim to a typical piece of 'Old Corruption' political partisanship. 'Mr HOLLIS has been a tool for many years, of Old George Rose and the rest of that crew ... The BARINGS are now the great men in Hampshire. They were not such in the days of George Rose ... George Rose would have thrown his shield over Mr HOLLIS; his broad and brazen shield ... but it is not precisely the same set who have the power in their hands. Things therefore, take another turn. The Pittite jolter-heads are all broken-backed; and the BARINGS come forward with their well-known weight of metal. It was exceedingly unfortunate for Mr HOLLIS that Sir THOMAS BARING happened to be against him'.⁴⁴

Though Cobbett over-simplified the realities of Hampshire politics, his charge was both serious and plausible. As such, it must be examined. In the generation between 1790 and Waterloo, county politics had been dominated by the government interest which could command significant numbers of votes, especially in and around the Portsmouth dockyards. That interest had been managed by Sir George Rose.⁴⁵ But what Cobbett did not fully admit was that a number of the county's established gentry families resented the county's representation being dictated to them. An unwritten alliance existed between them and the government interest whereby two of the former sat for the county, on condition that they generally supported Pitt. The consequence was that between 1790 and 1820, with the brief exception of 1806-7, the county members were William Chute and Sir William Heathcote. Both belonged to the Hampshire Pitt Club established in 1801. Their chief election agent from 1806, as also the secretary to the Pitt Club, was none other than George Hollis.⁴⁶

Cobbett's reference to the Barings was an acknowledgement of that family's translation of part of its banking fortune into Hampshire acres. Sir Thomas's 8,000 acre Stratton Park estate was actually eclipsed in size by his younger brother Alexander's 15,000 acres which centred on The Grange. In the early 1820s both opposed Liverpool's Tory government. Although Cobbett exaggerated the degree of influence which the Barings exerted in county politics, he was right to sense that changes were in motion.⁴⁷ When Chute and Heathcote retired at the 1820 election, they were not succeeded by two supporters of Liverpool's Tory government. Instead the representation was shared between John Fleming of Stoneham Park, who was a nominee of the government

interest; and G.P. Jervoise, an independent country gentleman who inclined to back the Whigs. In his continuing capacity as chief election agent, Hollis had argued and searched in vain for a second friend of government.⁴⁸

Important though the changes of personnel and balance of acres were in Hampshire affairs, one must not divorce them from another phenomenon of great significance. This was the revival of what might be termed popular politics in Hampshire. Fuelled by the downturn in the agricultural economy after 1815, this was a phenomenon which clearly predated the 1820 election. It was used by those who opposed the Tory government, principally Sir Thomas and Alexander Baring, as well as the first Earl of Carnarvon, to try and advance their political agenda. In this they were opposed by their Tory counterparts, and rivalled by rural Radicals such as Cobbett.⁴⁹

The major occasions on which this battle for the hegemony of Hampshire's freeholders took place were a series of county meetings. The seemingly ubiquitous Hollis was, unsurprisingly, a willing agent of the Tory interest at such gatherings. His willingness to arrest Cobbett following the latter's alleged disrupting of an 1817 meeting has already been cited. The supposedly apolitical under-sheriff was also extremely active in 1819 in marshalling a counter-requisition against Sir Thomas Baring and Carnarvon's initiative to convene a county meeting to condemn the government for its support of the Manchester magistrates' conduct over the 'Peterloo Massacre'. Hollis even advised the high sheriff 'against the expediency as well as legality of calling the proposed meeting'.⁵⁰ Just over a year later, the Whig gentry did convene a meeting in support of Queen Caroline. But this was not before Hollis had taken it upon himself to circulate the county's clergy with copies of a loyal address to George IV, and praying that no such meeting take place. When the meeting finally did take place on 12 January 1821, it was as much concerned with Hollis's actions as under-sheriff as with the Queen. Alexander Baring explicitly accused Hollis of having abused the office. Hollis, typically choosing to face the hostile crowd, won himself few friends by responding that he had circulated the loyal address in his capacity as secretary to the Pitt Club.⁵¹

Small wonder then, that Cobbett believed that partisanship overspilled into the administrative arena in the early 1820s, and proved decisive in Hollis's fall from office. Though he himself had only infrequently attended Quarter Sessions, Rose's protege, William Sturges Bourne did fill the Sessions chair from 1817-22, whilst his successor but one was the Hon. Rev. George Herbert, Carnarvon's younger brother. Herbert's closest ally on the bench was Sir Thomas Baring, whose regular

attendance and chairmanship of the prison visiting justices committee was to make him the single most important figure in Hampshire county government for a generation.⁵² Partisanship appears to have played no small part in initially preventing Herbert from acceding to the chair, an unremunerated but prestigious position, when Sturges Bourne resigned it in 1822. When Herbert himself died in 1825, the Tory Member, John Fleming, wrote to Wellington expressing his concern that it would again fall into the hands of the 'opposition party'. He need not have worried: it passed to Richard Pollen, younger brother of Sir John, chairman of the Pitt Club.⁵³

Certainly in the early stages of the investigation into Hollis's affairs, Herbert believed that partisanship was negating an objective assessment. As he reported it to Sir Thomas Baring after the committee meeting of 19 May 1823 which had rejected his motion to suspend Hollis, there was a '... Big debate ... in which even Mr Chute became a most zealous orator for the secretary of the Pit[t] Club: for, in point of fact it was evidently in that character that he was supported'.⁵⁴ Herbert's suspicions were well-founded, for several times Hollis wrote to leading Tory figures soliciting their presence and support at Quarter Sessions, notably to the chairman of the Pitt Club, Sir John Pollen, and the county member, John Fleming. Even in the late 1820s Fleming was urging restraint on his fellow magistrates in pursuit of outstanding sums against Hollis, if only out of consideration for his large and demoralised family.⁵⁵ There are too, suggestions of partisanship in the contest for Hollis's successor as treasurer in October 1823, with both Carnarvon and Sir Thomas Baring backing Charles Bridger against the Tory, John Woodham.⁵⁶

It must be added, however, that as the details of the case against Hollis became known, signs of partisanship very largely disappeared. It was two of Hampshire's most prominent Tories, William Sloane-Stanley and the second Earl of Malmesbury, who moved the motion of August 1823 that Hollis be barred as a candidate for the treasurership. Even Hollis himself did not subscribe to Cobbett's suggestion that Sir Thomas Baring was behind his downfall: Baring indeed had only attended one of the six investigative meetings before the July 1823 Quarter Sessions, and the most that Hollis would impute to him was that, 'you have been the deluded instrument of inflicting much wrong on me'.⁵⁷ Neither did the passing of the Sessions chair from the Whig Herbert to the Tory Richard Pollen in July 1825, result in any discernible change of tack towards Hollis. It was the latter who, in 1832, dismissed Hollis's latest protestation of his innocence to the Hampshire press as 'utterly devoid of truth, extremely foolish, and improper'.⁵⁸

It is thus the absence rather the prevalence of partisanship which is

more striking in the magistrates' investigations into Hollis's affairs. The primary issue to be decided was simple enough: was Hollis corrupt or simply incompetent? On this some were initially ambivalent. One of Hollis's securities wrote that, 'I was a little nervous when I found that he was behind in his accounts with the county ... I had the strongest opinion of his Honourable principles and the banker being the co-security, I had never conceived any risque ... I never conceived him wise [but] ... if he is a rogue he is one of [the] most specious that I ever met with ...' In the event, Herbert's early and private assessment was surely the right one, that Hollis's main crime was caused '*chiefly by his Neglect ... [in allowing constables] to be six & seven rates in arrears & then run away insolvent*'.⁵⁹ It was an assessment overwhelmingly endorsed by magistrates Whig and Tory, by Cobbett, and even by Hollis himself. As such, his position as county treasurer was untenable.

Although the chairman of Quarter Sessions occasionally updated the magistrates on the progress of events in the Hollis affair, other matters inevitably assumed centre stage after 1823. Even Hollis gradually tired of submitting letters to the Hampshire press protesting his relative innocence: Cobbett described him in 1825 as 'quite an inoffensive harmless creature'.⁶⁰ Hollis's fortunes never recovered. In addition to losing his £100 per annum treasurer's salary, his disgrace dissuaded future high sheriffs from nominating him as under-sheriff. The latter was worth £400-500 per annum to him. To compound matters further, his proprietorship of the Itchen Navigation, a ten mile stretch of water that ran from Southampton to Winchester, necessitated considerable capital outlay. From as early as 1823, he was borrowing heavily, and subsequently lamented that the cumulative blows had adversely affected his family's well-being, for Mrs Hollis's 'mental sufferings have reduced her almost to a skeleton, and most seriously injured the Health of my 5 Daughters, and broken the spirits of my 6 Sons'.⁶¹

But the old pugnacity remained. During the agricultural labourers' disturbances of 1830, Hollis wrote to the Home Office attributing the outbreaks to Cobbett's inflammatory propaganda, and urging firm action against 'Persons of the basest & most dangerous Character'.⁶² His electoral experience too continued to be valued, and he acted as the Tory Fleming's agent until his defeat at the 1831 election. On that occasion even Hollis was forced to concede that '*the Madness of the people for Reform is beyond Belief*'. When his imagined nemesis, Thomas Woodham, replaced him for the unsuccessful 1832 election, Hollis was quick to lay the blame at Woodham's door.⁶³ Bitter enmities clearly persisted. Thereafter Hollis disappears from the public record, except for a brief notice in the local press in December 1844, announcing his death at the age of 84.⁶⁴

IV

Although Hollis's personality and story are unique, he was nevertheless typical of the sort of person who flourished in rural government in the era of 'Old Corruption'. Almost invariably, these officials were shadowy country attorneys who derived their income from fees, often filled more than one post, owed their advancement to gentry patrons, and even saw their offices as akin to family property. More than once Hollis lamented that he had hoped to pass on some of *his* offices to his sons.⁶⁵

The foregoing case study also reveals the complexity of financial affairs in rural government. The minutiae of rating and militia affairs clearly required more attention and competence than Hollis was able or willing to devote to them. But he had a point in arguing that it was not he alone who was guilty of shortcomings. The system of high and parish constables, officials who often served reluctantly, and ostensibly for only a year, clearly militated against professional, bureaucratic routine. The amateurish and traditional practice of remunerating such officials by fees, rather than by a fixed salary, was also open to obvious abuse and difficult to police.⁶⁶

The Hollis affair is thus important less for itself than for what it led to, for in Hampshire it was a clear catalyst for reform. In its wake, Sir Thomas Baring chaired a committee whose remit was to come up with suggestions for greater efficiency and retrenchment. Several attempts were made to improve the constabulary system whose deficiencies had been highlighted during the Hollis investigations. The Michaelmas 1824 Sessions, for example, resolved that JPs insist upon high constables and/or their deputies providing bonds or securities 'for the money to be collected by the deputy on account of county rates and for the due and faithful execution of his office'.⁶⁷ Above all though, the Quarter Sessions responded to the Hollis affair by creating a finance committee 'for ensuring an effective control over the accounts of the county'. Appointed annually from 1824, this was to consist of two JPs from each of the county's nine Petty Sessional divisions. It would convene 'on the Monday preceding the commencement of every Sessions to receive and examine the Treasurer's accounts and all other matters connected with the county receipts and expenditure'. Such reforms were not, as the Webbs believed, evidence for the growth of a sinister 'extra-legal oligarchy'.⁶⁸ Rather, they were pragmatic responses to proven shortcomings.

But if the creation of the finance committee was the consequence of contingency, it needs also to be seen in the context of a wider picture of reform at the Hampshire Quarter Sessions, a process which predated the

Hollis affair and one whose genesis was largely independent of direct interference from central government. This is important in that it reveals the capacity of the old county governors for reform – as also their limits – and also shows them to be fully alive to wider tensions in rural society.

Many of the reforms undertaken by Quarter Sessions after 1815 were admittedly mundane. Thus the Sessions voted to dismiss a bridewell officer for drunkenness in 1817. There were also moves away from the use of fees as the means of remuneration for county officials. From 1815, for example, the governor of the county gaol was given a salary of £200 in lieu of some fees; from 1818, when the salary was increased to £400, the use of fees was scrapped altogether.⁶⁹ Redundantly as it turned out, even the procedures for auditing the treasurer's accounts were revised in October 1821. From that time, the task was to take place in the privacy of the Grand Jury Chamber away from the hubbub of open court.⁷⁰ But other reforms were of much greater consequence. In 1816, Quarter Sessions voted on whether to adopt the permissive Act of 1808 which would have allowed the county to erect a lunatic asylum at a projected cost of £6,000. In the event this did not go ahead, but prison alterations costing over £6,000 between 1817 and 1821 did. This moreover, at a time when the rural economy was in depression and the rates were already rising – from just over £9,000 in 1817 to £16,819 in 1821 – because of the increased cost of trials resulting from higher levels of crime.⁷¹

What such initiatives show is that a significant number of Hampshire magistrates were genuinely moved by a desire to reform society, notwithstanding that those initiatives would be unpopular because of their cost. It is difficult to characterise them as a group, for they included political opponents such as Sir Thomas Baring, George Rose and William Sturges Bourne. The first was probably moved most by Evangelical ties, the latter two not a little by having served on parliamentary select committees on lunacy. There were others who supported reform in one area whilst rejecting it in another: the Rev. Robert Wright, for example, endorsed prison reform whilst rejecting lunacy reform. Where reformers did agree, however, was on their insistence that they were not being profligate with the rates. Rather, they attempted to claim the moral high ground by arguing that they had a responsibility to the whole community, not just a section of it.⁷²

Their opponents at Quarter Sessions are best characterised less as anti-reformers than as economisers. As a group they are likewise heterogeneous, though the lead seems to have been taken by some of the older gentry families, the type that Cobbett often lauded as independent

country gentlemen. For them, the need to be retrenchment-conscious in the difficult years for the rural economy after 1815 was paramount. Thus they fiercely opposed the plans for a lunatic asylum. If the cause of retrenchment could be advanced by reform, however, they would embrace it. Thus there was widespread support when, in 1818, Quarter Sessions ordered the first comprehensive revaluation of the county rate in sixty years. There was also broad-based support for prison reform on the grounds that it might save money to the ratepayer in the longer term by reducing crime.⁷³

This scenario of magistrates arguing about the merits of reform versus economy exposes several flaws in the Radical critique of 'Old Corruption' when applied to rural government. Radicals argued that the landowning elite legislated out of self-interest. The local government career of Sir Thomas Baring and other magistrates moved by humanitarian impulses proves otherwise. When such figures failed to get their way, as they did with the proposal for a lunatic asylum in 1816, the failure can hardly be said to mark the victory of aristocratic self-interest. Rather, it was a victory for the ratepayer, for it was they who surely decisively influenced the majority on that occasion. Magistrates were not answerable to an electorate in a literal sense, but they were answerable to a wider community of which they were the social leaders. That community was well-informed of magisterial goings on through the burgeoning newspaper press.⁷⁴ The truth of this fact is demonstrated by a heated debate carried on over several Sessions in 1821-22 as to whether public business should be transacted in open court or behind closed doors. There was certainly a body of feeling which believed that the prison alterations might have been rejected had the debate not been conducted in the latter forum.⁷⁵ Above all, however, the mere fact that one can divide magistrates into reformers and economisers gives the lie to the notion that Quarter Sessions was the monolithic instrument of a narrow elite within which one or two dominant individuals held sway. The asylum motion of 1816 had been defeated by 14-13 with political antagonists Rose and Carnarvon, arguably then Hampshire's Tory and Whig political leaders, both to be found amongst the minority.⁷⁶

This delineation of magistrates as reformers and economisers also suggests a possible framework with which to understand the county governors' response to the legislative schemes emanating from central government during the 1830s. Not least it suggests that the notion of a division between those in national government who wanted to centralise, and those in local government who wanted to cling to old ways, is largely illusory. Though it lies beyond the scope of the present article, the response of the Hampshire Quarter Sessions to the events of

that supposedly tumultuous decade might briefly be mentioned. The most significant measure, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, appears to have been more or less universally welcomed by magistrates and ratepayers alike, because it both overhauled a system of poor relief which was widely felt to be deficient – thus satisfying reformers – and offered the very real prospect of saving money – to the obvious delight of economisers, if not the poor. True, it led to the creation of a new and alien administrative unit, the Poor Law Union, but members of the Hampshire gentry appear to have cooperated amicably with the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners in the grouping together of ancient parishes for that purpose.⁷⁷ The other major reform of the 1830s to impact upon county government, the permissive 1839 Rural Police Act, also found substantial favour with the magistrates. Here at last central government was empowering Quarter Sessions to supersede the old constabulary system with a new professional force, whilst, as with prison reform in the 1820s, holding out the prospect of saving money, presuming that the new force would reduce crime.⁷⁸ As has recently and rightly been written, 'Ruling rural England was a process of negotiation, not only between central and local government but also between local policy implementation and those upon whom such policies impacted'.⁷⁹

Proponents of the 'Old Corruption', thesis, who often evolved into critics of Whig policy, pointed out that such reforms only pleased ratepayers at the expense of the poor: there can be no gainsaying that both the New Poor Law and the reformed police were unpopular with the lower orders.⁸⁰ Returning finally to the Hollis affair, however, there was a more fundamental element in the Radical critique of 'Old Corruption', that could not be evaded. This was the continued existence of an unelected magistracy to be the county governors. As Cobbett gleefully pointed out, for all of Hollis's shortcomings, was it not the magistrates who were ultimately at fault? 'The county', he wrote, 'is placed in a pretty situation: its Treasurer has had his accounts regularly passed by the Magistrates; and these Magistrates come at last and discover that they have for a long time been passing accounts that they ought not to pass ... I am astonished that they should think of calling Mr HOLLIS to account without being prepared for rendering an account of their own conduct'. Even one magistrate, the Rev. James Orde, did not deny the corollary. He went so far as to declare publicly at the Midsummer 1823 Sessions that they were 'as culpable as the Treasurer himself'.⁸¹

But Orde's was essentially a lone voice, one motivated by what he considered to be the magistrates' over-hasty adoption of the expensive prison alterations. For the rest it was this public questioning of their

competence that caused them to so quickly close ranks against Hollis during 1823. On this, the question of their legitimacy as the governors of rural society, there could be no compromise. That this was the supervening consideration for Quarter Sessions in the Hollis affair was quickly recognised by its chairman, the Hon. Rev. George Herbert when he wrote privately about '... this most important question for the respectability of the magistracy in the eyes of the yeomanry of the County'.⁸² Even Sir Thomas Baring, who happily appeared on public platforms at this time demanding reform of the national legislature, as the precondition to a redress of rural grievances, did not for an instant apply his logic to local government. Instead, as we have seen, he took the lead in trying to demonstrate that the unelected magistracy could respond to proven grievances. Baring wanted reform of Parliament, not a social revolution.⁸³

Quarter Sessions' exculpatory efforts succeeded: the Hollis affair did not stir ratepayers' passions as Cobbett had hoped. Why was this? Partly the magistrates were fortunate, for the falling prices in agriculture which had underpinned rural discontent took an upward spiral in the first months of 1823 at the very time that Hollis's deficiencies were revealed. Second, county expenditure stabilised after the peak of £16,819 in 1821: average annual expenditure was just under £13,000 for the rest of the decade, and no new major financial initiative was announced by the Sessions. Expenditure only resumed an upward trend as a result of the legal costs which followed the agricultural labourers' disturbances of autumn 1830. The latter brought forth a myriad of demands, but reform of county government was conspicuous by its absence.⁸⁴

The complexity of Captain Swing is a salutary reminder of the need to see matters in perspective. Rural discontents were of a compendious nature. Though the Hollis affair filled many columns in the Hampshire press, the sums involved were relatively small. The sums in dispute between Hollis and the magistrates were some £5,000-£6,000 spread over several years or more. By contrast, Hampshire's poor rate expenditure in 1823 totalled £191,516.85 Whilst ratepayers may have been increasingly convinced of the case against the poor laws and the unreformed electoral system by 1830, they were very far from being persuaded by one against the magistrates. The latter may have been imperfect and popular rural support for its traditional leaders was, and would become, increasingly conditional. But there was no obvious alternative to them, if what was wanted was inexpensive and minimalist government. Proposals in Parliament during the 1830s to create ratepayer-elected county boards found little support. Elected county councils only became a reality in 1888. This is unsurprising, given that a recent historian of the state has

judged that even in 1900 'a relatively cheap and disinterested government that let society look after itself was widely considered an unexceptionable one. It was also one well-suited for the preservation of a narrow ruling elite'.⁸⁶

And yet the county governors faced a danger, one that takes us back to Eastwood's thesis about participation. This was the reluctance of many in the commission of the peace to be active in county government. Eastwood sees the decline of this 'participatory tradition' as being a consequence of the institutional reforms after 1832. The Hampshire evidence suggests that there were problems before this. In 1821 there were 283 names listed in the commission of the peace, but only 152 of these had even bothered to take the oaths which qualified them to act as magistrates. But the average attendance at Quarter Sessions was only just above thirty in the first half of the 1820s, and that was inflated by the 73 who attended in Michaelmas 1823 at the height of the Hollis affair, one of the half dozen highest turnouts in the first half of the nineteenth century. Only 27 had bothered to attend and vote on the asylum motion of 1816, one of the most consequential issues of the era.⁸⁷

Even the average figures for those attending moreover, is misleadingly inflated, for those figures refer to the number of magistrates who were present for the first day's business; not those who stayed to discharge onerous and tedious business for the whole of the Sessions week. In January 1822, for example, 45 attended the first day, but by the second day only half a dozen remained. It was a problem of which the dedicated minority was acutely aware. The attempt to increase participation was a main reason why the new finance committee established in the wake of the Hollis affair was to consist of two magistrates from each of Hampshire's Petty Sessional divisions. But the problem persisted, such that in 1836 Quarter Sessions had to decree that at least one magistrate from each of the Petty Sessional divisions remain throughout the Sessions week. In fact, the percentage of qualified magistrates attending Quarter Sessions remained virtually constant between 1815 and 1850 at a little over 15 per cent.⁸⁸ Longer term, this hardly boded well in a state that inclined to place new and more complicated responsibilities upon the localities. Ultimately therefore, the greatest threat posed to the old order in county government came not from disaffected ratepayers, still less from Radicals. Rather it came from a reluctance to act on the part of many magistrates themselves.

- * I should like to thank Dr Andrew Spicer for his advice in the preparation of this article. My thanks are due also to Mrs Michaela Foster, and an anonymous editor's reader, for their comments upon an earlier draft. I am grateful to the staffs of the Hartley Library at Southampton University, Hampshire Record Office in Winchester and the Bodleian Library at Oxford for helping me with access to collections in their care.
- 1 Geoffrey Finlayson, *England in the Eighteen Thirties* (London, 1969), p. v. See also William C. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth. Early Victorian Attitudes toward State Intervention* (Newton Abbot, 1971). More recently, B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 9; A. Burns and J. Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform. Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003), especially ch. 1-3. Also useful is John Prest, *Liberty and Locality. Parliament, Permissive legislation and Ratepayers Democracies in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990).
 - 2 The best treatment is P. Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption'. The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996), especially pp. 139-150. See also W. D. Rubinstein, 'The End of 'Old Corruption' in Britain, 1780-1860', *Past and Present* 101 (1983), 55-86.
 - 3 Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption'*, pp. 65, 155. For George Rose (1744-1818), see R.G. Thorne's entry in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004), 47, pp. 745-49.
 - 4 Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption'*, ch. 5; Finlayson, *England in the Eighteen Thirties*, pp. 64-72; I. Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830-41. The Politics of Government* (Stanford, 1990); A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-39* (London, 1978), ch. 5; D. Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester, 1982).
 - 5 Notable exceptions are D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England. Tradition and Transformation in Local Government* (Oxford, 1994); D. Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London, 1997). See also R.E. Foster, *The Politics of County Power. Wellington and the Hampshire Gentlemen 1820-1852* (Hemel Hempstead, 1990); R. Olney, *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1979).
 - 6 Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, ch. 3 *passim*. See also B. Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London, 1980), ch. 3. On financial aspects generally, see M. Daunt, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain, 1799-1914* (Cambridge, 2001).
 - 7 John Wade (ed.), *The Extraordinary Black Book* (New York, 1970, reprint of 1832 edition), p. 303.
 - 8 R.E. Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government in Hampshire during the lord lieutenancy of the first Duke of Wellington, 1820-1852' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Southampton University, 1986), pp. 72-3. Technically, Woodham was only deputy clerk of the peace, with the clerkship proper belonging to William Dale Farr, who farmed the deputyship to Woodham for £200 per annum. Woodham discharged the duties of the office and made considerably more than £200 per annum from the resulting fees.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, appendix D, pp. 408-10.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, appendix C, pp. 406-7; Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, pp. 45-7.

- 11 Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, pp. 1, 261; J. Redlich and F.W. Hirst, *The History of Local Government in England* (London, 1900); Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Parish and the County* (London, 1906).
- 12 I. Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1992); G. Spater, *William Cobbett. The Poor Man's Friend* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1982), ch. 20, *passim*.
- 13 W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (Harmondsworth, 1967), pp. 144-45, 282-83; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 March 1817.
- 14 The biographical information is taken from Hollis's letter to the *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 January 1824.
- 15 A copy of Hollis's work is to be found in the Cope Collection of the Hartley Library, Southampton University (hereafter HL), under the title *Nomina Villarum*. Technically, under-sheriffs could not serve successive years in office, but this law was commonly broken. See Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, pp. 52-5. In Hampshire the law was observed through the fiction of appointing George's brother, Joseph (a Romsey printer), to be under-sheriff in alternate years.
- 16 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 6 April 1822. On the office generally, see J. Cornwall, 'The County Treasurers, 1678-1889', *Records of Buckinghamshire* 16 (1953-60), 179-92.
- 17 Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, p.42; Hampshire Record Office, Winchester (hereafter HRO) 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 5 Jan. 1818. This bundle is unsorted. All correspondence in it is to Sir Thomas Baring.
- 18 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 6 April 1822.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 25 July 1822; HRO, Quarter Sessions Order Book, Q.O.33, 15 July 1822.
- 20 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 14 April 1823; HRO, Q.O.33, 8 April 1823.
- 21 HRO, Q.O.33, 26 April 1823
- 22 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 May 1823; HRO, Q.O.33, 3, 17, 19, 21 May, 30 June, and 5 July 1823. HRO 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Herbert to Baring, 23 May 1823.
- 23 *Ibid.*, Hollis to Baring, 13 September 1823.
- 24 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 21 July, 1823; HRO, Q.O.33, 15 July 1823.
- 25 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers for Hollis's 16 page report. See also *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 July 1823.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 1 September 1823; HRO, Q.O.33, 30 August 1823.
- 27 Winter succeeded Woodham in an unopposed election in July 1824. HRO, Q.O.34, 13 July 1824; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 19 July, 1824.
- 28 Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, pp.67-69. See also J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1997).
- 29 HRO 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 5 Jan. 1818. Historians have agreed with Hollis about the complexity of militia affairs: there were no fewer than 35 Acts passed relating to the militia between 1802 and 1809. See Sir John Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army 1803-1814*, (London, 1909).
- 30 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 20 October 1823 and 19 January 1824; HRO, Q.O.34 11 October 1823 and 13 January 1824.
- 31 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 20 October 1823.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 3 May 1824; HRO, Q.O.34 24 April 1824.

- 33 Ibid., 13 July & 11 October 1824, 17 January 1825.
- 34 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 July and 26 October 1829; HRO, Q.O.36, 20 October 1829 and 12 January 1830.
- 35 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 October 1829.
- 36 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, letters from Hollis to Baring of 26 & 30 October and 31 December 1831. HRO, Q.O.37, 3 April 1832 records that Hollis still owed the county £733.
- 37 Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter BodL), Clarendon Papers, C.374 Hollis to J. F. Barham, 18 May 1823. I am grateful to the Earl of Clarendon for permission to quote from these papers.
- 38 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 16 October 1824.
- 39 *Political Register*, 30 August 1823.
- 40 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 14 August and 4 September 1820. HRO, 12M60/78 Compton Papers, Buckle to Compton, 9 January 1820.
- 41 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 24 June 1831.
- 42 Ibid., for Hollis's report of 1823 containing his charges against Woodham; BodL, Clarendon Papers, C.374 Hollis to Barham, 11 July 1823.
- 43 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 20 October 1823.
- 44 Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, pp. 144-5.
- 45 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 263-4.
- 46 Foster, *Politics of County Power*, pp. 105-7. For an undated list of 46 members of the Pitt Club see HL, Palmerston Papers, box 26.
- 47 P. Ziegler, *The Sixth Great Power. Barings, 1762-1929* (London, 1988), passim. Sir Francis (1740-1810), started the bank in 1762, and bought Stratton in 1801. Alexander Baring, later Lord Ashburton (1773-1848), played little part in Hampshire affairs beyond the early 1820s, and became a Conservative during the 1830s. It was Sir Thomas Baring, second baronet (1772-1848), who was to be the great family figure in Hampshire affairs.
- 48 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 270-3 for the 1820 election; HL Palmerston Papers, box 195, Fleming to Palmerston, 20 February 1820. Fleming (d. 1844), high sheriff in 1817, sat uninterrupted from 1820-1831.
- 49 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', ch. 9 passim; Spater, *William Cobbett*, pp. 417-21.
- 50 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 266-8; HRO, 12M60/79 Compton Papers, letters from Hollis to Compton of 8 September and 9 October 1819. H.C. Compton (1789-1866), was high sheriff in 1819 and later served as a Tory county member.
- 51 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 268-70; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 January 1821.
- 52 For Sturges Bourne (1769-1845), ODNB, 6, pp. 863-4. He was chairman of Quarter Sessions from 1817 until Jan. 1822 when the chair passed to Sir John Newbolt. On his death, the Hon. Rev. G.A. Herbert was elected unopposed in April 1823. When he died, Richard Pollen (1786-1838), was elected unopposed in July 1825.
- 53 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 108-9; HL, Wellington Papers, 1/807, Fleming to Wellington, 31 March 1825; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 21 January 1822. Sir J. W. Pollen (1784-1863), colonel of militia, and erstwhile Andover M.P., also, according to Cobbett owed his advancement to Rose.

- 54 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Herbert to Baring, 23 May 1823. Chute had a reputation for never speaking in public.
- 55 BodL, Clarendon Papers, C.373 letters from Hollis to Barham of 11 July 1823 and 8 January 1825. See also the copy of Hollis's circular to selected magistrates dated 4 January 1825.
- 56 Ibid., C.374 Hollis to Barham, 18 May 1823; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 20 Oct. 1823.
- 57 HRO, Q.O.33, 30 August 1823; 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 16 Oct. 1824.
- 58 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 9 July 1832.
- 59 Ibid., Herbert to Baring, 23 May 1823; BodL, Clarendon Papers, C.380 Hocchepied to Barham, 3 December 1823.
- 60 Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, pp. 282-3.
- 61 BodL, Clarendon Papers, C.374 Hollis to Barham, 2 April 1823; HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 26 October and 31 December 1831.
- 62 The National Archives, Kew, Home Office Papers, H.O.52/7, Hollis to Melbourne, 10 December 1830.
- 63 HL, Wellington Papers, 4/1/3/4/18 Hollis to Fleming, 28 April 1831, 4/1/4/3/20 Hollis to Wellington, 3 October 1832, 4/1/4/3/24 Hollis to Wellington, 9 October 1832, 4/1/4/3/27 Hollis to Wellington, 14 October 1832.
- 64 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 14 December 1844.
- 65 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Hollis to Baring, 14 October 1826; Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, pp.61-4.
- 66 Ibid., pp. 83-7; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 219-22; more generally, see D. Philips and R.D. Storch, *Policing Provincial Britain. The Politics of Reform* (London, 1999).
- 67 HRO, Q.O.35, 4 April 1826.
- 68 HRO, Q.O.34, 11 October 1824; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 19 July 1824; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 111-16; Webb, *The Parish and the County*, especially book 2, ch. 5.
- 69 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 October 1818; HRO, Q.O.31, 11 October 1818, Q.O.31, 13 October 1817.
- 70 HRO, Q.O.32, 15 October 1821; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 21 July 1823.
- 71 Ibid., 25 October 1821 & 25 July 1825; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 89-94.
- 72 Ibid., pp. 90-91; Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption'*, ch. 5 passim.
- 73 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 6 April 1818; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 89-90.
- 74 A good overview is provided by P. Harling, 'Rethinking 'Old Corruption'', *Past and Present* 141 (1995), 127-58.
- 75 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 October 1821 & 8 April 1822.
- 76 Ibid., 16 January 1816; HRO, Q.O.30, 8 January 1816; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 108-11.
- 77 Foster, *Politics of County Power*, pp. 156-7. On this theme see P. Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New poor Law', *English Historical Review* 107 (1992), 30-53. For an assessment from 'below', see R. Wells, 'Poor Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' during the Agricultural

- Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History* 23 (2001), 52-115.
- 78 R. E. Foster, 'A Cure for Crime? The Hampshire Constabulary 1839-1856', *Southern History* 12 (1990), 48-67; Philips and Storch, *Policing Provincial Britain*, especially pp. 136-66.
 - 79 C.J. Griffin, '"Policy on the Hoof": Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830', *Rural History* 15 (2004), 142.
 - 80 Standard introductions are R.D. Storch, 'The Plague of the Blue Locusts. Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840-57', *International Review of Social History* 20 (1975), 61-90, but compare with Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 240-6; N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971).
 - 81 Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, pp. 145-6; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 21 July 1823.
 - 82 HRO, 92M95/F2/2 Baring Papers, Herbert to Baring, 23 May 1823.
 - 83 Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 274-80; HL, Cope Collection, contains a full *Report of Proceedings of a meeting of the County of Hants held at Winchester, March 1, 1823*; Burns and Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, p.99.
 - 84 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 25 October 1821 and 25 July 1825; Spater, William Cobbett, p. 421.
 - 85 Figures derived from W. White, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1859), p. 18. By 1834 poor rate spending had risen further to £203,466; Wells, 'Poor Law Reform', 89-96.
 - 86 P. Harling, *The Modern British State* (London, 2001), p. 266. Compare Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?*, p. 604 for a similar assessment; Foster, *Politics of County Power*, especially pp. 31-7. See also F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England 1734-1832* (Oxford, 1989).
 - 87 Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.261; Foster, 'Leadership, Politics and Government', pp. 42-5, 57-62.
 - 88 *Ibid.*, p. 58; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 21 January 1822; HRO, Q.O. 38, 5 April 1836.