

**The Social and Political Contexts Which Led to the Building of
Harewood House
The Extraordinary Founding of a Dynasty: Henry Lascelles
Achievement Without Land**

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1. Introduction

In his brief essay 'The Power House' in *The Treasure Houses of Britain*, Mark Girouard says: 'A country house, and its surrounding estate, had four main functions, as far as its owners were concerned. It provided an income, it provided power, it provided prestige, and it provided a pleasant way of life.'¹ All of these can be said, and are indeed true, about Edwin Lascelles and his new home, Harewood House in the West Riding, Yorkshire². Though Girouard goes on to say that '... nor were any but a minority of country house owners only motivated by ambition and self-interest.'³ In this respect Harewood House is in the minority, because it was indeed purely a project of ambition and self-interest. Harewood House provided a way to climb the rough social ladder in mid-eighteenth century England for this wealthy mercantile family.

Most research on the Lascelles family would call the building of Harewood House (1759-1770s) by Edwin Lascelles the point at which the Lascelles family dynasty was truly established in Yorkshire. But that is to leave a big part of the story untold. They are merely looking at the final outcome and ignoring the causes. They do not question who the Lascelles family were, where the money came from nor what they had to overcome to reach the point of building a house which has been called the best house of the eighteenth century, which brought together the biggest names in architecture and design in England: John Carr, Robert Adam, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Thomas Chippendale and cost around £50,000.⁴ The building of the house was only the culmination of the founding of the dynasty, not the beginning and the end both.

¹ p. 22.

² Harewood House was first known as 'The New House at Gawthorpe'. The name Harewood House did not come into use until the late 1760s. For this paper I will use the spelling 'Gawthorpe' and not 'Gawthorp'.

³ p. 27.

⁴ Mauchline, p. 100.

Founding a dynasty was often a long, multi-step process. Focusing on the house alone leaves too many unanswered questions.

To help remedy this fact, I propose to look back into history before Harewood House was even conceived or the property owned by the Lascelles family. It is important to look at what the eighteenth century was like and also what led this family in particular down a path to such wealth. This paper is divided into two distinctive parts: general history and specific family history. The general history is divided again into three parts: society, landownership and power from landownership in eighteenth century England. These three sections are out of necessity short and somewhat superficial. Indeed entire books have been written about each topic individually. The brevity of the sections does not mean that they lack substance or depth. They are quite dense, but their main job is to put the Lascelles family into the contexts of the first half of the eighteenth century. To do this after each general section I have placed the Lascelles family history so direct comparisons can be immediately made. This will, in the end, show how remarkable this family was for the early eighteenth century.

Henry Lascelles, Edwin's father, is the key to this paper. He was the one who accumulated the fortune; he was the one who fought for and bought estates throughout Yorkshire; and he was the one who sent himself to Parliament to represent his interests and those of his family. At each step his motives will be questioned and hypothesis made, but in the end it will be shown that his goal was to make a fortune and found his family dynasty. Henry was a scrupulous business man with an amazing capacity to make money. His land purchases were *not* investments as was the case for most purchasers and holders of land at that time; he was already too rich to need that extra income and besides

he had more lucrative investments elsewhere. He was a man seemingly always ahead of his time. There are many generalizations that can be made in history, but for each it seems for each one Henry Lascelles was ahead of the curve. He was investing in far-reaching ventures literally around the globe before most men had even invested in safe government papers at home. He was also able to buy up some of the best land in the West Riding in Yorkshire, which was one of the most desirable areas in all of England, upon which Harewood House was later built.

One challenge with writing this paper today is the lack of certain details. Henry Lascelles died in 1753 and particulars about his life are missing. Among the other things that a peerage or political life brought was notoriety and therefore some paper-trail of life history. Even though in later-life Henry was in the House of Commons, little written records survive. The most important documentary evidence which we do have are some business records from the West Indies, government documents and his last will and testament. Luckily, recent scholarship has rediscovered Henry Lascelles, although it mostly concerns his West Indian ties, it does shed more light on his life as a whole.

What I propose to do is to merely open the door slightly onto Henry Lascelles. It will be shown how against all odds in the first half of the eighteenth century, the lower-class Henry Lascelles was able to transform his family into super-rich aristocrats and buy and build various estates across (mostly) Yorkshire. The ideas of property, property ownership, social standing and power will all be measured against the aristocracy and gentry of that timeframe. We will see how Henry, who though motivated largely by self-interest, stood up against all the gentry and peers of the realm and proved himself a truly worthy man and one ahead of his times.

As a note of caution when discussing the general trends throughout the eighteenth century I do focus more on the aristocrats and richer gentry than on the poorer gentry, farmers and peasants. This is not because they are the only group deserving of such attention, however, my reasons are twofold. First, they are important as a group because they did represent the power and wealth in the eighteenth century which shaped in many ways the entire century. The poor had little role in directing the century as a whole. Second, this elite group is the one to which the Lascelles family aspired and eventually belonged to, so therefore the focus, I feel, is justified.

2. Social Structure of Landed Society in England in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

The first thing that needs to be understood about the eighteenth century is its social structure in accordance with land ownership, or in other words the various levels of landed society. Those who controlled the land controlled the country. There are basically three distinct, yet broad groups of land owners: the aristocracy which included the peers; the gentry; and the land freeholders. What distinguishes them from each other is the *amount* of land held and the amount of income, if any, generated from the land.

In his many influential books, G. E. Mingay tries to define each group narrowly but ends up with broad, over-arching definitions for each. He argues that the true and crucial differences between the groups lie in their social status and political functions. The aristocracy ruled the country through the House of Lords and Government and locally through various appointments to positions such as Lords-Lieutenant. They were also leading society at the time, setting trends and being emulated by the lower levels. Often the gentry had a similar background to the aristocrats, and could enter parliament

through the House of Commons. The land freeholders were the electors and usually did not hold any office. Each group, Mingay says, had important and fairly distinct roles in eighteenth century English society.⁵ The other major divisor was income. Although there are disparities within single groups, the income differences between peers and land freeholders is quite remarkable. Though the dynamics of the groups changed somewhat throughout the century, each group still had a unique position and responsibility.

2.1. The Aristocracy

The aristocracy is the smallest of the groups and the easiest to measure and to understand. Whether we call the group aristocrats or 'great landlords', these few were at the very top of the social scale in England in the eighteenth century. To be an aristocrat meant that one had sufficient land, income and power to rule. The nobility or peers, naturally, belonged to this elite grouping. To be a peer one had to be given the title by the King directly or the title had to be inherited from one's father. There were always a finite number of peers throughout the eighteenth century. The spectrum of wealth and land held by aristocrats varied; there were certainly poor aristocrats who had inherited an old title without money. But on the whole they were great landowners with great incomes. Mingay estimates the yearly income for a peer from £5000 to £50,000. He also approximates that they owned about 20% of the cultivated land in England and Wales at the time.⁶ Though not the largest percentage of a group's holdings, it usually constituted the best and most sought-after lands in the country.

Unlike on the continent, where the aristocracy had legal privileges, the English aristocracy had none. It is indeed this lack of legal privileges which makes defining the

⁵ Mingay, 1963, p. 8.

⁶ Ibid, p. 26. and 1976, p. 59.

English aristocracy hard; there was never a need to make clear who did and who did not belong to this group.⁷ Within this group the only ones with any special rights and therefore strict legal definition were the peers. Within the peerage itself there are five ranks; baron, viscount, earl, marquess and finally duke at the very top. These are called the temporal peers; as apposed to the spiritual peers, the bishops and archbishops of the Church of England. The ranks of temporal peers fell under another four categories at the time: Ireland, Great Britain, Scotland and England.⁸ The English peerage was the most prestigious and sought after. Throughout most of the eighteenth century the number of peers was quite stable.⁹ Until the last decade of the eighteenth century there were never more than 200 English peers.¹⁰ In 1704, for example there were 161 peers and by 1780 that number had only grown to 182.¹¹ Over the entire period of the eighteenth century ‘there were only 1003 persons who held peerages’,¹² making it a small and very elite group. But to get the number of aristocrats we also have to include ‘great landlords’ or ‘magnets’. So to the 200 or so English peers Mingay has added about another 200 great landlords to give a total of 400 families who could be considered aristocrats in the eighteenth century.

2.2. Gentry: ‘Property without Peerage’

A much bigger group and one harder to assess is the gentry. The spectrum of wealth and land is quite varied within the gentry; some of the gentry were quite wealthy while others were merely well-off. The gentry included baronets, knights, esquires and simple

⁷ Bence-Jones, p. 23.

⁸ ‘The peerages of England and Scotland remained separate until the Act of Union of 1707, after which peerages of Great Britain were introduced.’ Bence-Jones, pp. 21-22.

⁹ The Government of William Pitt the Younger (1783-1801, 1804-1806) changed all that in the last decades of the century with a whole-sale giveaway of peerages. By centuries end there were around 300 peers. Mingay, 1963, p. 6.

¹⁰ Cannon, p. 32 (Chart).

¹¹ Habakkuk, p. 17. Though Cannon says that there were 189, p. 32.

¹² Wilson, p. 15.

gentlemen. As the century wore on, it also started to embrace more merchants, bankers and lawyers which were hardly ever called into the peerage. Mingay estimates that there could have been up to 20,000 gentry families and that their yearly income ranged from £300 to £5000. He also estimates that the gentry owned around 50% of all the cultivated land in England and Wales at the time.¹³ Though this is a greater percentage of land than the aristocracy the balance of power was not tipped during the century in their favor.

Though not as exclusive as the aristocracy, the gentry had the advantage of being more diverse. Since the gentry was in the middle-ground between the aristocracy and land freeholders it could attach itself to either, whichever was closer or perhaps of more use to their particular situation. There were commonalities to both groups. But what set them apart from the free landholders was that they, like the aristocracy, was that they were rentiers, in other words they earned a large part of their income from the land and investments and not from direct work. They lived the contented life of gentlemen.¹⁴

2.3. Land Freeholders

Land freeholders on the other hand, are quite different from the above two segments of society. Though some would divide this category into two sub-categories, it is easiest to simply say that land freeholders were people who had to work their own land and earn an income from their own physical labor. Some people would add a tiny group of owners who rented out small pieces of land to others; but for our purposes it is sufficient to say that land freeholders are one group of 'occupying owners'. Mingay estimates that there could have been upwards of 100,000 freeholding families and that their yearly income was anywhere from £30 to £700. It is interesting to note that at the high end, £700 is a

¹³ Mingay, 1963, p. 26. and 1976, p. 59.

¹⁴ Mingay, 1963, p. 6.

greater income than the poorest gentry, but still the land freeholders are not gentry, because they rely on their own labor. Mingay also estimates that at the beginning of the century freeholders owned up to 30% of the cultivated land in England and Wales, though by mid-century this percentage declined to around perhaps 20% because of the build-up of great estates by the gentry and aristocracy.¹⁵

2.4. Social Mobility

If we use Mingay's calculations of 400 aristocratic families, 20,000 gentry families and 100,000 freeholder families we get a total of 120,400 landed families in England at the time. It seems like a lot of families owned land. But when we look at the total population of England at the time, these numbers are quite low, making even the freeholders seem somewhat exclusive. The population of England in 1701 was 5,057,590. Twenty-five years later it was 5,263,374 and in 1751 it had reached 5,772,415.¹⁶ In fifty years, the population of England had grown at a fast pace, but entry into any of the landed classes did not keep up. The few still held most of the land.

Mobility in society can either be up or down. Established families could buy up or drop out. New families could buy in. Social mobility in the eighteenth century was possible, but not as common or easy as it has often been made out to be. Stone argues in his ground-breaking book, *An Open Elite?*, that there has been a big misconception about the ease of upward mobility in England throughout history. He shows how two things kept the ranks of the elite closed. First, 'the homogeneity of cultural values and

¹⁵ Mingay, 1963, p. 26. and 1976, p. 59.

¹⁶ Wrigley, Table 7.8. Though Cannon quotes the population 1701: 9.4 million and 1751: 10.5 million, p. 33.

behaviour' of this class, and second, 'the lack of any legal barriers based on privilege clearly to demarcate the different sectors and status groups from another'.¹⁷

2.4.1. The English Peerage

The English aristocracy had always been easier to access than others on the continent because of its lack of legal requirement to belong. But that said, it certainly took a lot of money and land to apply. Belonging to the aristocracy certainly did not automatically mean becoming a peer. Gaining an English peerage was usually a slow, drawn-out process, sometimes taking generations. Once one finally got a peerage, it often was an Irish peerage and of the lowest-rank, that of baron. If a family was lucky or did tremendous service for the country an elevation of peerage was in order. But these were most likely just one single step up the peerage ladder or from an Irish to an English peerage. In the entire eighteenth century excepting for promotion within the peerage there were only 229 new creations of peers. From these 229 at least 206 had a previous peerage connection: son/grandson of a peer, married to peer's daughter, Irish or Scottish peerage, etc. This leaves only twenty-three with no previous connections to the peerage at all. This is a very small percentage and really puts into question the openness of the English peerage to other levels of society.¹⁸ To put things more into proportion, of the 229 peerages created, 94 were created in the last twenty years of the century, making peerages even rarer before 1880.¹⁹

Another obstacle to a peerage could be the king's personal feelings or prejudices, though this often merely reflected standard societal sentiments; George II, for example,

¹⁷ Stone, p. 423.

¹⁸ Cannon, p. 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 26.

was especially prone to anti-Semitism at this time.²⁰ If one passed all of these hurdles, there were plenty more. No matter how much one deserved a peerage or an elevation of rank there was the general existing notion that each rank had a corresponding amount of income and landed estate needed to sustain it, and obviously the greater the rank the greater the income and land needed to support it.²¹ If a person did not have the associated income, no peerage would be forthcoming. Likewise, an increase in income was necessary for an elevation within the peerage. There were even peers who refused elevations to a higher rank because they thought themselves not rich enough to bear the increased financial responsibility.²²

Money or land alone was not enough. Connections and good lineage were also helpful. 'The peer of obscure social origin was rare [...] The great merchants and financiers were rewarded less lavishly, by baronetcies or by Irish peerages.'²³ No matter how successful one was, breaking into the peerage was quite difficult in the first half of the eighteenth century.²⁴ It was only possible to climb so high up the social ladder. The men who made it were high-ranking military men such as admirals or generals, some lawyers and politicians. But most new peers were simply younger sons of aristocratic families. The peerage, which endeavored for exclusivity, had indeed built-up an institution which perpetuated those ideals.²⁵ The barriers to the peerage were just too great for most, especially the new merchant and financiers. These men had to wait until

²⁰ See the case of Samson Gideon. Sutherland, pp. 400-401.

²¹ Habakkuk, p. 13.

²² i.e. the Marquess of Lansdowne, former Viceroy of India refused a Dukedom. Bence-Jones, p. 24-25.

²³ Habakkuk, p. 18.

²⁴ 'Whereas in the history of other European countries, it is easy to find examples of successful men who, from obscure beginnings, have rocketed to dukedoms, this has happened very seldom in Britain. Of the dukedoms now in existence, only one—Marlborough—was conferred on a man who was the son of a commoner and started life without the prospect of inheriting either a title or large estates; for through the great Duke of Wellington might likewise be thought of as a "self-made Duke", he was born with the prefix Honourable, being the younger son of an earl' Bence-Jones, pp. 24-25.

²⁵ Mingay, 1963, p. 27.

after 1784 when King George III and Pitt the younger gave away, 'wholesale', peerages to self-made men of business.²⁶

2.4.2. The Mobility of Men of Business

Unlike in other European countries, England had only one elite class, the aristocracy. In many other countries there was the additional class of successful, town-based merchants who formed their own hereditary elite.²⁷ If men of business wanted social status they had to go for the traditional aristocracy. From the beginning of the eighteenth century new ways to wealth were being created. Trade was becoming ever important and to support this trade financing was also evolving quickly. The Empire played a huge part in this and many men took advantage of the situation and went off to India or the West Indies and started trading around the globe. Never before in history was it possible for so many people to make such great amounts of money so swiftly; the possibilities seemed endless.

Mingay does caution here that even though there was mobility inside English society the barriers were also great.²⁸ Nonetheless, there were men ambitious and rich enough to take on the old, established society. The gentry was becoming a conglomeration of the old landed gentry and the new wealthy lawyers, military men and ever so slowly, merchants. The wealthy merchant could now buy estates, though not nearly as large as the aristocracy. But there could be sufficient to help them gain some position in gentry society. 'In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which saw

²⁶ 'Until the burst of new creations of 1784, the peerage remained a small body, and the new creations were little more than enough to replace peerages which had become extinct. The number of new creations was indeed larger than this might suggest, for the mortality among noble families in the eighteenth century was high; of the forty-five peerages created by Anne, thirteen had become extinct before 1784. [...] Anne created thirty new peerages (apart, that is, from promotions within the peerage), George I twenty-eight and George II thirty-nine; in the first twenty-three years of his reign, George III created forty-seven.' Habakkuk, p. 17

²⁷ Stone, p. 256.

²⁸ Mingay, 1963, p. 26.

the growth of British commerce and overseas interests, it was natural that a large number of new landed dynasties should have been founded; and while it was difficult for the very rich to buy enough land to set themselves up as territorial magnates, it was comparatively easy to become landed on a more modest scale.²⁹

There were at least three problems with many of these new wealthy merchant families which often kept them out of the aristocracy; one was personal, one dynastic, the other money. The aristocracy often simply did not like these new families. ‘The landed interest, for their part, felt a mounting dislike, not to say a contemptuous hostility, towards the men of business. The “commercial interest” was blamed for bringing on wars which had to be fought at the cost to the landowners...’³⁰ This snobbery was in itself almost enough to keep out newcomers. Another hindrance was that these merchant families were often based on the success of a single generation or two. There were few true mercantile dynasties.³¹ Once the founder of the fortune was dead the family frequently fell back into obscurity because the sons, instead of learning the trade, wanted to be gentlemen. So unlike the great aristocratic families who made sure of the continuation of the family, the merchants often did not.

The other problem was a lack of money. First, when the founder died, the family had to survive on a limited amount with no injections of new money. The money simply ran out. Second, the amounts brought back from Empire exploits or made businesses in England were just not enough to compete with the aristocracy. Though some merchant families turned themselves into landed families at this time, most often the money was

²⁹ Bence-Jones, p. 140.

³⁰ Mingay, 1963, p. 265.

³¹ Habakkuk, p. 16.

only enough to buy small estates, ones on a much smaller scale than the aristocracy.³² But the gentry always did have one tool to use for advancement: marriage. Strategic marriages were made to daughters or, better yet to sons, of richer gentry or aristocratic families. It was one sure way to socially improve a family by being connected to a more powerful, richer family. Not only could this bring in money directly in the form of dowries, it could also bring inheritances of land and money at some later point in time. It was the goal of most families to make advantageous marriages for all of their children.³³

Around the mid century incomes started to grow and the differences of wealth within groups became more pronounced. The poorest peers were now poorer than many of the gentry, and the poorest gentry were far poorer than the richest freeholders. Single definitions of each group were becoming impossible to give. The aristocrats were trying to protect their property, while the gentry was acting more and more aristocratic and the freeholders were still trying to become gentry. ‘While fortunate cadet branches of landed families found themselves coming into major estates with the extinction of direct lines, there was nothing comparable to the sixteenth-century influx of new-made gentlemen rising from the yeomanry or from careers in law and business. At least for the period 1650-1750, this was not a pronouncedly open elite.’³⁴

Men of business made up a tiny fraction of the aristocracy. The few exceptions to this rule were unfortunately usually quite conspicuous and therefore throw off the perception of the group as a whole. As one example of how closed the elite was, in a survey of three counties of the men who bought their way into the elite, over a 340 year

³² Bence-Jones, p. 57.

³³ Christie, pp. 99, 108.

³⁴ Rosenheim, p. 3.

period, ending in 1880, only six percent were men of business.³⁵ Often men who moved up in society were a group already within the circle of the aristocracy and gentry. ‘Most of the newcomers were rising parish gentry or office-holders or lawyers, men from backgrounds not too dissimilar to those of the existing county elite. Only a small handful of very rich merchants succeeded in buying their way into the elite, and by the second generation they were fully assimilated.’³⁶ Men of business could attain the rank of gentry, but compared to their wealth it was usually a step down.

2.5 The Lascelles Family History until 1739

‘The family of Lascelles is one of the oldest in the country, and has long been of considerable importance. There is a village named Lassele in Normandy, from whence it is probable they may have derived their name.’³⁷ Though the family is ‘one of the oldest in the country’ there is little known about them before the 1650s. We do know that the family did live in Yorkshire and that the family had a few distinct branches. For the early history of the family I will be discussing three generations of Lascelles’ starting with Francis (and his brother Thomas), his son Daniel and his son Henry. The family had held minor local positions until the time of Francis Lascelles (1612-1667) and his brother, Thomas (1624-1697). Thomas was a Member of Parliament for Northallerton and landowner, owning many of the burgages there himself.³⁸ Though he held the position for quite a long time, he was an inactive member. In May 1693, he was appointed housekeeper to the Excise Office at an annual salary of £200, which he held until his death. Two years after he died in April 1699, there was an Act passed to appoint trustees

³⁵ Stone, p. 403.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 402.

³⁷ Jones, p. 280.

³⁸ In 1660 and from 1689- c. Nov 1697.

to sell his estates in order to clear his debts. Thus the land and its possible social and political implications left the family.³⁹

Francis Lascelles had six children, of which Daniel (1655-1734) was the youngest. Born with no hope of inheritance, Daniel had to make his own way. He was relatively successful. He was returned in a by-election as a member of the House of Commons for the burgage borough of Northallerton for a short period in 1702;⁴⁰ though like his uncle, he did not partake in proceedings and never stood for election again. Unlike his uncle Thomas, it is doubtful that he owned land there. He was a Justice of the Peace and later High Sheriff of Yorkshire.⁴¹

Daniel Lascelles had five children who lived into adulthood. George (1681-1726) the eldest was set to inherit his father's estate. Henry (1690-1753) the second son and fourth child was born in Northallerton. Henry's mother later died in childbirth and Daniel remarried. From this marriage came Edward, Henry's half-brother. So even though Henry Lascelles was born into a lower-level gentry family with a small amount of land, the land in itself did him no good because he was not set to inherit any of it. His family was probably not of as much assistance as a rich gentry or aristocratic family would have been in helping him along. But something that his family did give him was direction. A distinctive feature of the Lascelles family was that some of the sons went to the West Indies to seek their fortunes. Specifically, they went to Barbados.

³⁹ Cruickshanks, et al, vol. IV, p 590.

⁴⁰ From 3 Feb 1702- 2 July 1702

⁴¹ Jones, p. 292. and Cruickshanks, et al, vol. IV, pp. 589-590.

2.5.1. Henry Lascelles in Barbados, 1712

Barbados has the advantage of being the first port of call in the West Indies because of its easterly position and good winds. Barbados was first discovered by an English captain in 1624; by 1638 nearly all of the useful land was occupied.⁴² In general, the West Indies were known as a hideout for misfits, bandits or unsuccessful individuals from all over the world, but Barbados was different. It was rich in the fertile soil and blessed with a good location and superb weather. The obvious crop for such conditions would have been tobacco, but prices had been constantly falling, and then came sugarcane. Barbados was the first island to introduce sugarcane and started to export it around the late 1650s. The export of sugar became a huge business; naturally England wanted to have more influence over the island and started to tighten their control. They were not going to miss out on the prestige or the excise taxes. Barbados was soon to become the most important West Indian colony that the English possessed. But alongside sugarcane, came the other ‘unnatural’ introduction to the islands, slave-labor.⁴³ ‘Economically, the West Indies were the most valued part of the British empire in the eighteenth century. Sugar, cultivated at low cost by slave labour and marketed in Europe, was a great source of wealth; and the provisioning of the islands with slaves and almost every necessity of life, an important branch of British commerce.’⁴⁴ Barbados was therefore a nice place to be. It had a large European population, and was even called ‘little England’.

There was already another branch of the family which had settled in Barbados as early as 1638.⁴⁵ But the most important connection to Barbados was through Edward Lascelles who arrived on the island in 1687 and worked in partnership with two or three

⁴² Sheridan, pp. 81-83.

⁴³ Pares, 1936, p. 196. and 1961, p. 222.

⁴⁴ Namier, vol. I, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Smith and Walvin, p. 3.

of his brothers. He was mainly a sugar merchant, but was probably also trading in slaves. In 1702, he moved back to London to trade as a merchant. In 1708, he bought two plantations on Barbados. He continued to trade in the islands until his death in 1726.⁴⁶ Though this was not a direct forefather of Henry Lascelles, having any family on the island and in business surely opened some doors. At the very least it gave him a focus and someplace to start from. Henry's elder brother was in Barbados probably by 1707 but left for England when Henry arrived in 1712. Henry was twenty-two when he made Barbados his home. By 1716, Henry was married and had three children, Edwin, Daniel and another Henry. Also by this time it is likely that Henry's younger half-brother, Edward was also on Barbados.⁴⁷ It is interesting that all three sons of Daniel were on the island or working together in conjunction through London. Daniel wanted to make sure that all of his sons had advantages in life, not just his eldest son and heir.

Though the three brothers were to benefit from the Barbados connection, Henry proved to be the most successful. Besides learning the sugar market, soon after arrival, he became Collector of Customs in 1715 and held the job for fifteen years until 1730. It was a major position in the ever-important trade with the West Indies, especially for a twenty-five year old man. It was during this time that he learned about trade, accounting and negotiating that would help him so much in the future. At the same time as being Collector of Customs, Henry became a merchant in his own right. He had a hand in victualling and in direct trade back to England. Since the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, there was a surge in sugar demand, unfortunately because of the new supply, prices fell and

⁴⁶ Smith and Walvin, pp. 5-6. Ironically, these estates would be inherited by his daughter who was married to Henry's son Daniel.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

would not rise again until about 1740. Nonetheless supplying sugar could still be profitable.⁴⁸

Henry made the first of his extended trips back to England in 1720-21. Sadly, while in England his wife died at the age of thirty-two. Henry made two more trips to England; in 1728-29 and 1730-31.⁴⁹ Back on Barbados Henry married for a second time. Again she was a Barbadian lady of English heritage. In 1730, he resigned as Collector of Customs and his half-brother Edward immediately took over the position. Henry had by this time gained significant power on the Island. He had been there long enough to know most everyone. He was on friendly terms with most of the governors and the big plantation owners. Everything though was not always cheerful on the island. Both Henry and his brother were accused of stealing up to half of the customs due to the crown and later this would come back to haunt Henry in 1744. But he was certainly a rich man when he left the Island.

2.5.2. Henry Lascelles Back in England, 1734

Henry's elder brother, George died in 1729, so Henry had the de facto position of being head of the family when he returned to England in 1734. In the fall of that year on September 5th his father died. Henry was most likely the executor of his father's estate, though the bulk went to George's eldest son, William (Henry's nephew), we can assume nevertheless that both Henry and his half-brother Edward got legacies of a few thousand pounds each.⁵⁰ Henry decided to stay in England for the rest of his life and made his home in London. It may seem odd to leave everything behind and 'start over' in

⁴⁸ Based on: Sheridan, pp. 496-497 (Appendix V).

⁴⁹ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, p. 439 (footnote). Though the last two trips could have actually been one extended trip from 1729 to 1731.

⁵⁰ Smith and Walvin, p. 10.

England, but it was very common to be an ‘absentee’ planter and to live most of one’s life back in England. England was always home.⁵¹

For Henry returning to England was more a matter of business, since all goods and financing went through London, he thought it best to be there in person. Armed with what he knew about the West Indies, customs, sugar, trade and with his many connections, Henry decided to become a merchant in London. Almost immediately upon arrival in England he set up a firm under his own name. His main business was as a sugar-factor. The main job of a sugar-factor is to act as an agent for a planter and sell his sugar and rum for a commission. The sugar he was selling came from the West Indies, though not always from Barbados. ‘The sugar factor’s art consisted mainly in the power to take two decisions – when to sell, and in what lots. It was always his interest and his inclination to sell rather than keep: before he could land the sugars he had to advance the duties and the freight out of his own pocket, sometimes to the tune of several thousand pounds if a large fleet came in together. Of course he wanted to get this back as soon as possible.’⁵² Up to this point Henry had only been Collector of Customs and a small merchant with some sideline activities. As he became richer, he broadened his scope of business dealings. He started to operate in more fields and what’s more important in more fields successfully. Henry’s grand-plan was just starting to come to the surface.

His business soon became more varied. There was a big switch in the nature of Henry’s business focus. He was still selling sugar and rum at a commission in London. But on top of that he was also getting more involved in other areas. Ship owning was the most natural of his sideline activities. Though he had dabbled in this before coming to

⁵¹ Namier, vol. I, p. 156.

⁵² Pares, 1956, p. 257.

England, it was after he got there that he really focused more on maritime activities other than sugar trading. It just complimented his other activities and made sense to have ships in order to transport all the goods between England and the West Indies. At this time, whole ships were rarely owned by one person; shares in ships were common though and Henry had shares in many. A usual share could be as little as one-sixteenth or one-eighth, an exceptional share was five-sixteenths. But this was enough to give a voice in how the ship was run and which (or whose) goods it would pick up and deliver first. It helped keep one free from the mercy of captains and their own interests.⁵³ He was now becoming a rich merchant, but he was still not in the possession of English land. But this was only the tip of the iceberg for Henry.

3. Landownership in England: The Mechanisms for Perpetual Possession

When discussing landownership in England it is necessary to focus attention on the bigger estates of the aristocracy and richer gentry, because they were of such consequence to the rest of society. For centuries there was a certain relationship between the lords of the shire and the other levels of society. The lord took care of the area. He had a paternal outlook and many people depended on him. It was his job to see that everything functioned properly and legally and that the people under his care were looked after. Through the centuries this symbiotic relationship wore away. However, in the eighteenth century, this relationship was still partly intact and land was the common factor which bound them and formed part of the basis of English society. The land provided food and most people (rentiers, farmers, laborers, small merchants, etc.) made

⁵³ Pares, 1961, p. 206.

their living directly or indirectly from it. With this high dependence on land it was naturally of great value to everyone and much in demand.

Stone says that the prime objective of landowning families was preserving tradition and was five-fold: keeping the family seat, keeping the surrounding land, keeping the family heirlooms, keeping the family name and keeping any hereditary title.⁵⁴ To accomplish these things two basic legal mechanisms were practiced that kept land in the perpetual ownership of the few: primogeniture and strict settlement. Both of these have the over-riding concern of keeping the family property intact. Primogeniture is the notion that an estate will always descend to and be inherited by one male heir only. To ensure this, the mechanism of the 'entail' was used. An entail is 'a deed which settled the succession of an estate inalienably upon the descendants of an individual owner, in a specifically described order of precedence.'⁵⁵ Entailing limits the inheritance of property in a specified way to a particular succession of heirs. This goes hand-in-hand with primogeniture ideas and often passed over all females and sometimes even jumped to other branches of the family tree to distant cousins just to find a 'suitable' male beneficiary. When an estate did pass from one generation to the next, the normal division of assets ended up being about a third to general heirs and debts and the other two-thirds to the primary male heir.⁵⁶

The other mechanism used to assure landowners' continual dominance in England was strict settlement. 'A deed of settlement was signed which secured house and estate for the heir, often on his marriage. This meant that he was unable to sell the estate or to

⁵⁴ Stone, p. 72.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 82.

mortgage it, and it required a private Act of Parliament to break the settlement.’⁵⁷ Strict settlement could include part or all of an estate. So even when the property was inherited by a suitable male heir, not only was the house and most of the land kept ‘in the family’ in the possession of one person, but that heir was not free to sell or do with it as he pleased. At the beginning of the eighteenth century as much as half of the country was under strict settlement.⁵⁸ It was the landowners looking after themselves, protecting themselves from individual heirs who could otherwise ruin the estates and the balance of power built up through the centuries. It was this unique and overriding mindset of long-term family interest which made England so special during this time: ‘land could be made the vehicle of family purpose; its ownership could be determined for long periods ahead by the exercise of the general will of the family, in a way which was not true of other forms of property. [...] What a landowner did with his land was determined by a complex of decisions, in origin reaching far back into the family history, in effect stretching forward to his grandchildren yet unborn.’⁵⁹ To this aim, the current ‘owner’ of a property was merely a tenant for life. It has been argued that these mechanisms were in actuality not so strict and less of a restricting legal issue than may appear. What made them so strong and long lasting was simply a strong mindset to keep the family property together that overrode all other considerations.⁶⁰ These mechanisms in effect guaranteed that huge areas of land were literally kept in trust for generations, which kept a lot of land out of general circulation and made it unavailable for any new purchasers.⁶¹

This system was usually only hindered by the number of children, especially girls and widows. Younger sons were not so much of a burden on an estate. Though they

⁵⁷ Christie, p. 98.

⁵⁸ Mingay, 1976, p. 110.

⁵⁹ Habakkuk, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Stone, p. 76.

⁶¹ ‘somewhere between a half and two-thirds of land owned by large landowners was settled’ Wilson, p. 19.

often received a capital sum, they more often than not, choose to draw interest from this sum in the form of a life annuity, thus the principal stayed in the family. Beyond that they were left to their own devices. Thankfully in the eighteenth century new opportunities were becoming available; they could now enter industry, the church, the military and government ministries much more easily and openly. But to this end younger sons were downwardly mobile.⁶² Daughters on the other hand would not only receive the same capital sum, but also substantial dowries. The more daughters one had, the more dowries that needed to be paid out upon marriage. Widows in their own right would often receive annual annuities, called a jointure, which would in addition allow them the use of various parts of the property or houses for their lifetime. These payouts often robbed valuable resources from estates. Within most families the amount of jointures and annuities grew throughout the century, becoming more of a burden on the family. Depending on the annuity amounts and the longevity of the children and widows, this could be enough of a drain to ruin an estate. On rare occasions, parts of estates were distributed before death, for the early benefit of the heirs. The poorer gentry for their part also adhered to parts of the above, but since not as much was usually at stake, strict adherence was not always the case. Contrasting the great landowners, or even the gentry, the lesser landlords often chose a 'partible inheritance' or equal distribution of property among children. Partible inheritance was not equal, the eldest son still usually got a bigger proportion, but in most cases, each child got a percentage of the estate. Both of these methods would naturally reduce the size of an estate, but in reality it was common for the property to stay together, because the multiple heirs would often lease or sell back their shares to one member of the family.⁶³

⁶² Stone, pp. 83, 256-257.

⁶³ Christie, p. 99. and Mingay, 1976, p. 115.

3.1. Land as Income and Investment

For most families, as an investment, owning land was the surest and safest place to put money. Without many other possibilities for investment, unmovable and stable soil was the only conceivable place to put money for countless numbers of people. ‘For a long time the ownership of land was the only secure form of investment; until proper fire insurance was developed there was an element of risk in owning buildings, and the stock market did not exist. It was not until the eighteenth century that government bonds or shares in the East India Company became an important alternative...’⁶⁴

The single most important aspect about land was that it was often the biggest source of income for aristocratic and gentry families. But that income came indirectly. It was made from farming, but circuitously through tenant farmers who rented the land and paid the landowner for that privilege, making the landowners rentiers. It was the exception if a large landowner himself made any money from his own farming activities, more than likely his own farm activity was for his private house, dining table or pleasure. ‘At the beginning of the eighteenth century “the landed interest”, commonly defined as landowners and farmers, disposed of roughly half the total wealth of the nation, though comprising less than one-fifth of the families of England and Wales. Rent alone from the 25 million acres of cultivated land in England and Wales in the first decade of the century added up to £11 million, about one-quarter of the entire national income.’⁶⁵

The amount of land owned and the rents earned varied throughout England. There were, for example, not many large estates in the south and south-west of England. ‘A country house estate had to generate enough income to support the house and to keep

⁶⁴ Girouard, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁵ Kennedy, p. 30.

its owner in the style of a gentleman. At the upper level, some noblemen owned several hundred thousand acres, or even (in Scotland, and including much barren land) over a million acres.’⁶⁶ It was the quality of the land and soil that was the true mark of a good estate. The average income of a peer in 1690 was £5000 to £6000 in the 1750s it was around £7,500.⁶⁷ Mingay reckons that to have such an income an estate of 10,000 to 20,000 acres was necessary. Though there were many gentry landowners with estates of about 5,000 acres, the wealth and incomes of the great aristocracy far surpassed them.⁶⁸

The amount of income therefore dictated the style of life and level of society attainable. So if one wanted to climb to the next level of gentry or aristocracy more land was needed to give a greater annual income. There was an internal way to increase the value of land already owned through physical improvements. Physical improvements such as better roads which made improved access available, better housing to make people happier, better drainage and better marling. These long-term improvement strategies were also long-term profit strategies. With a few small investments the quality of life would be better for tenants, productivity would be higher and rents could be raised.

Sometimes though, there was a need for quicker, shorter-term profits and land, depending on location and luck, could also produce this. If an estate was close enough or directly in an urban area, land development for other commercial or housing use was an option. The closer to a city the better, best if some land was owned around the City of London where exorbitant land values meant a lot of money to the owner.⁶⁹ If land was on the coast, docks could be put up or improved to lure new shipping. But more than the

⁶⁶ Girouard, p. 23.

⁶⁷ Wilson, p. 18. Calculation: ‘It has been estimated that the average income of the peerage in 1690 was £5000 to £6000; and a century later £10,000’ I merely took the difference from 5000 and 10,000 to get the income of the 1750s.

⁶⁸ Mingay, 1963, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁹ ‘The Earls of Salisbury derived 16 per cent of their gross landed rental from London rents in the mid-seventeenth century, increasing that amount to 30 per cent in 1677 and nearly 40 per cent by 1720...’ Rosenheim, p. 75.

land's location, it was natural resources like timber, which played an important part in short-term profits. 'Timber was the asset that the greatest number possessed, and even those relatively indifferent to estate management tended to keep track of it. [...] trees were economically exploited for use about one's estate, for annual income, and for sporadic infusions of cash.'⁷⁰ Estates sometimes had other natural resources such as coal, stone quarries, rivers for water power and lead and lime which could be mined. These resources led to brick and ironworks, limekilns and other associated production. Sometimes the landowner took it in his own hands to harness and administer these resources, but more often because of technical problems and the general uncertainty landowners contracted out the land to someone else to do it. Thus, responsibility passed to someone else, hopefully someone with experience and expertise. Though some fortunes were made, more often than not, returns from these activities were disappointing. Rent from land still proved on the whole more profitable.⁷¹

3.1.1. Other Benefits of Land Ownership

The other benefits of landownership were many. Having a country seat, being able to borrow on expected future income or inheritance all added to the social structure of England in the eighteenth century. Owning land made a family legitimate. Though this 'compensation income' is incalculable, it was the basis for the social structure of the time. It turned 'old' families into 'ancient' families. The land was not only the family home; it also gave an inestimable 'sense of identity from generation to generation.'⁷²

⁷⁰ Rosenheim, p. 75.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 78. and Mingay, 1976, pp. 98-99.

⁷² Habakkuk, p. 2.

Land also made it possible for the owners to borrow huge sums of money against its value. Fortunes ebbed and flowed within single families. Some were extremely extravagant and spent huge sums, while others barely spent at all. This fluctuation of finances oftentimes left families in poor financial condition. Even with the great incomes from land, they sometimes outspent income multiple times. To sustain this type of life, loans were needed. Money from mortgages was occasionally used for capital investments like buying land. But more often the money was needed to deal with family settlements, take care of simple debt or frivolous spending:⁷³ ‘... the greater part of their mortgages in this century were not for productive enterprise, but to provide portions for their daughters or to fund short-term debts incurred in periods of living beyond their income. Though the more affluent members of the class are to be found among the lenders, most of the loans were provided by lawyers, merchants and by what was known in contemporary parlance as the monied interests.’⁷⁴ Many landlords accumulated debts so large that the interest payments ate up their entire annual income alone.

3.2. The Growth of Big Estates

There is a curious phenomenon that happened in the early eighteenth century regarding landownership. Contrary to the logic of a more just society, the aristocracy and rich gentry gained even more land and power than in the previous centuries, shutting out the poor and newcomers quite successfully. In England, though there were no legal restrictions to buying land, anyone with money was, in principal eligible, the growth of large estates hindered purchases of large tracks of land.

⁷³ Wilson, p. 19.

⁷⁴ Habakkuk, p. 9.

Political stability is often trumpeted as the most important reason that led to the social changes of the eighteenth century. After the Glorious Revolution, political upheaval and high taxation of the seventeenth century the ushering in of the Hanoverian Dynasty with King George I in 1714 heralded a time of peace and prosperity. One of the major changes was the limited powers of the Crown. No longer could good connections to the king give gifts of political office or monopolies. Nor could land any longer be given or taken by his whim. In principle, to gain wealth or title meant working for it. The freedoms allotted to men of individual liberty and equality before the law added to the stability of the new century.⁷⁵ This political stability let the economy grow and develop and made many rich people. Though many that gained were already rich and landowners; this cemented their hold on their estates. Though Habakkuk points to the two decades after George I became king and the larger number of estates which changed hands due perhaps to high war taxes,⁷⁶ this was early on in the century and proved to be the exception to the later rule. However, when an unlucky landowner was forced to sell land to raise money, the first thing to go was detached, outlying and least-favored properties. This could usually stave off bankruptcy and the best land and especially the house were held to the very last. This left only piecemeal, small estates for the new rich to buy. The new families had a real up-hill struggle. At this rate building up an estate of any size took generations by slowly trying to buy other small neighboring properties.⁷⁷

Another side effect of political stability was that people felt more at ease investing money in improvements to the estates they already owned. Technological advancements, better science and better machines were making farming easier, more predictable and profitable. This led to higher productivity. Higher productivity equaled more income for

⁷⁵ Mingay, 1963, pp. 27, 259.

⁷⁶ p. 16.

⁷⁷ Cannon, p. 128. and Mingay, 1963, p. 28.

the farmers which meant that rents could be raised, which was more money for the landowners. Estates also began to be run professionally for the first time and consolidating was the most practical way of doing this. Here two more mechanisms came into play: consolidation and enclosure. By consolidating larger estates and putting an agent in charge of it made things run more smoothly and added to productivity. Some estates were so large and spread out that there were various agents placed throughout the county which reported to one landowner.

Enclosure is the process of surveying land and then literally fencing it in. Enclosure's goal was to get rid of the open-field system of cultivation which had ruled England for centuries. Landowners did not like to see land going to 'waste' and not bringing in an income. So they started to buy more and more 'open' or 'free' land. Landowners enclosed commons and unused lands and made them profitable for themselves. They also deviously used enclosure to sometimes secure mineral rights.⁷⁸ But on the whole lands which were formerly overstocked, underused, or had depleted soil were turned around. Crop rotation was put in place and land was managed more efficiently. This enclosure process was happening as early as the seventeenth century, but it was around the mid-eighteenth century when it became the goal of many landowners. After this time landowners often took matters into their own hands and if they could not buy land from the smaller freeholder, they would try to get an Act of Parliament passed, the so-called private enclosure acts. Ironically the actual fencing in of the property was often the most expensive part of the whole process.⁷⁹ All of this led to dramatic changes in the buying of land and the social structure as a whole because it nearly kept out any new buyers. It is also often blamed for the lock-out of the poorer

⁷⁸ Mingay, 1976, p. 97.

⁷⁹ Mingay, 1963, pp. 179-186.

freeholders from land and high unemployment in rural England at the time. Though this could be overstatement, it is true that the amount of first-time landowning families had shrunk drastically from the last two centuries to a new low between the 1730s and 1800.⁸⁰

If anyone was going to buy 'up' in the landownership market it was the newly rich merchants and financiers. But they were definitely going to have to pay above the normal economic rate for the property, because land was more than economics. Land ownership was only for the truly ambitious and wealthy. 'To enter the ranks of only the middling gentry, to have, say, a comfortable residence and an estate worth a thousand a year, meant an outlay of about £30,000 in the middle eighteenth century. To become a great landlord, with a large house and 10,000 acres, would mean a capital outlay of well over £100,000. Very few men could amass a sum of that order in a lifetime, and the acquisition of a great estate was more frequently the patient work of several generations.'⁸¹ But there were men who could and did raise that kind of money and the second half of the eighteenth century did see the inflow of some new landowners from the merchant, industrial and professional classes. But again this influx was small in comparison to the mobility of the past two centuries, hindered by the lack of available land and people unwilling to sell.⁸²

Here it would be careless to simplify things and say that the aristocracy and richer gentry were taking over all the land from the poorer landowners. It is true that taxation and the rise in living standards took a greater toll on the poorer gentry and freeholders than it did on the aristocracy. It is also true that the aristocracy were more insulated from

⁸⁰ Mingay, 1963, p. 39.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 26.

⁸² Ibid, p. 47.

economic slumps by the size and diversification of their lands.⁸³ But as Cannon points out: ‘The percentage of cultivated land in England and Wales in the hands of the landed aristocracy was, in Thompson's view, between 15% and 20% in 1688, rose to between 20% and 25% by 1790 [...] it may be worth remembering that the shift in the landed balance of power may have been a comparatively modest one.’⁸⁴

3.3. Land vs. Other Investment Opportunities

Contrary to current popular belief, there were other investment alternatives besides land open to people with extra money to invest. To say it was common to invest in things other than land would be to overstate the truth, but the groundwork was set in place by the early eighteenth century for new investment options. London, not the countryside, was the control-center for these new options. There were many reasons for London’s dominance in trade and financial matters. At the beginning of the eighteenth century ‘three-quarters of the foreign commerce of England passed through this one port.’⁸⁵ Geographically, London was located on the Thames, which created a safe harbor yet was close enough for fast access to the open sea. ‘Another reason, important but less obvious, was the freedom enjoyed by merchants to set out on almost any venture that seemed good to them. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the old monopolies which had hampered enterprise had largely disappeared, either abolished by statute or defeated by the resistance of the law courts to any action in restraint of trade. In England there was far greater freedom both of internal traffic and of enterprise overseas than in most other

⁸³ Mingay, 1963, p. 260.

⁸⁴ p. 132.

⁸⁵ Gill, p. 9.

countries. This freedom to experiment, and to follow up the most promising lines of trade, was an important factor in economic progress...'⁸⁶

To complement the freedom merchants enjoyed was the idea of credit. As early as the sixteenth century, credit was quite common in England for trade and merchants. In the seventeenth century great developments were made in the financial system of England. By the late seventeenth century the Bank of England 'which soon became one of the greatest banks of issue in the world'⁸⁷ was set up and the government was using long and short-term funds to take care of the national debt. All of this helped to increase productivity throughout England; merchants could have more goods on hand, producers must therefore produce more giving more choice to customers and making more money all around.⁸⁸ Soon joint-stock companies and mortgages, private and through other businesses were becoming more popular.⁸⁹ Through the empire, stock in new companies like the East India Company was also gaining prevalence. It certainly took a certain man of acumen to brave these fairly new and uncharted territories of finance, but there was great opportunity to make a lot of money in a short amount of time, much faster than with land in many cases. There were, of course, a few set backs, the greatest being the South Sea Bubble scheme in 1720, which affected around 30,000 individuals, groups and corporations.⁹⁰ This surely scared many investors away from the newer forms of investments and back to concentrating on land purchasing and improvements on current land holdings. There were many aristocrats who did invest in things other than land. Among others were the first Earl of Shaftesbury, first Baron Ashburnham, Earl of

⁸⁶ Gill, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

⁸⁹ Rosenheim, p. 74. and Gill, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁰ Rosenheim, p. 82. Henry's half-brother, Edward, was the South Sea Company agent in Barbados.

Warrington and famously the Duke of Chandos.⁹¹ Still they counted for a very small percentage: ‘Nobles accounted for less than 1 per cent of government stock outstanding in 1719 and less than 2 per cent of that in 1750.’⁹²

It has been argued that a basic lack of knowledge of other forms of investment kept the nobility out. But poor communication cannot be blamed, for the aristocrats and richer gentry all had residences in London and must have heard the talk that was going on all around them, whether socially or through their activities in the Houses of Parliament. Even for those country gentlemen who never set foot in London: ‘John Houghton’s *Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* gave prices for eight different shares in 1692 and for sixty-three companies only two years later. London newspapers also printed share prices in the 1690s, as did provincial papers as soon as they appeared in the next century, and a monthly like the *Gentleman’s Magazine* included them from its inception in 1731.’⁹³ So everyone with any social contact knew about the changes happening in the finances.

After the South Sea problems people were more cautious and more likely to invest in government-backed schemes like ‘government papers’. But loans based on mortgages quickly became the most popular investments; they were safe and secure because they were backed by the value of land and no longer by penal bond only. The second most popular place for investment at that time was in the mortgage market. An unavoidable side effect of this was that property became more professionally managed. Land needed to be surveyed professionally for the first time and accountants were called

⁹¹ See Rosenheim, pp. 80-85.

⁹² Ibid, p. 79.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 81.

in to estimate the annual value of property to back the loans.⁹⁴ Yet by the mid-eighteenth century the majority of aristocrats and rich gentry lived as rentiers. Most were still unwilling to invest in risky and new ways even with potentially huge profits. Tangible land was still the most important thing to the elite.⁹⁵

3.4. Henry Lascelles Buys Gawthorpe, 1739

The land at Gawthorpe and Harwood was first recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086. For many centuries after that the properties belonged to the Gascoigne Family. It then passed to the Wentworth Family through marriage. In 1656, after the execution of Thomas Wentworth, the first Earl of Strafford, his son lost possession of the estate and it came to the Cutler Family. When Sir John Cutler died in 1693, he divided his estate between his daughter, Elizabeth, who was married to the Earl of Radnor, and a relative, John Boulter. Elizabeth died three years later without children and the entire estate was in the hands of John through the mechanism of primogenital inheritance.⁹⁶ Besides for a small upsurge in sales in the 1710s and 1720s, generally as the century wore on fewer estates were coming up for sale. Boulter's son Edmund was one of the unfortunate who could not hold onto the estate. He was forced by debt to sell the entire estate in 1739.⁹⁷ Henry was one of the lucky who was able to buy during the fury of sales that Habakkuk talks about. In an ironic way Henry was buying land which he could legitimately claim a distant ancestor, the Gascoignes, had once owned. Henry paid £63,827.⁹⁸ It has been calculated that the sale price indicates that the property was about 6000-8000 acres.⁹⁹ Henry was now a landowner, and as with everything he did, he did it on a grand scale.

⁹⁴ Rosenheim, pp. 84, 86.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Greenwood, p. 141. and Mauchline, p. 10.

⁹⁷ Kennedy, p. 27. Though Greenwood incorrectly claims it was 1738, p. 142.

⁹⁸ Mauchline, p. 170. This is John Carr's valuation. The actual cost could have been as high as £68,828.

⁹⁹ Wilson, p. 323.

The estate consisted of a large amount of land, a medieval church re-constructed around 1410 which contained the best fifteenth century monuments in England, a castle of ‘ancient’ origins built around 1370 called Harewood Castle, a manor house called Gawthorpe Hall and the village of Harewood. Henry Lascelles had hit the jackpot. The location of Gawthorpe could not have been more ideal. It sat in the West Riding of Yorkshire, one of the most desirable areas in all of England. Yorkshire was also his ‘home’ county. It was seven miles south from the popular spa town of Harrogate, seven miles north from the town of Leeds and twenty miles west of York, the ‘capital’ of Northern England, a town with a substantial society. ‘In the mid eighteenth century the social radius of a country house neighbourhood stretched no more than nine or ten miles, a distance limited by a sound pair of coach horses’.¹⁰⁰ Geographically, Gawthorpe was well suited.

What we know about Gawthorpe Hall itself comes from a print dated 1722. It seems to have been a fine old two-story house which had considerable seventeenth-century alterations and additions. It was then in the Queen Anne style. It sat in a beautiful valley, had a large stable, a chapel, various other outbuildings, walled in gardens, paved walkways, orchards and abutted fields for planting and grazing. It was the house of a country gentry gentleman with the surrounding and supporting land.¹⁰¹

It was also at this time that Henry bought his own plantation in Barbados, at Holetown.¹⁰² So not only was he expanding his assets in England he was also buying in the West Indies for the first time. Henry’s first major purchase of land in England had been really successful and it underscores his desire to stay in England. But one year after

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, p. 58.

¹⁰¹ Stroud, p. 148. and Kennedy, p. 25. The print is in Jewell, *The History and Antiquities of Harewood*.

¹⁰² Smith and Walvin date this c. 1738, p. 24 (Table 2).

the purchase Henry put his son Edwin in charge of the property and perhaps even at this early date transferred the title deed to him. Henry was too busy in London to deal with it. Besides it was a way to place Edwin in the realm of the aristocracy. In 1748, Edwin, not Henry, was being described as Lord of the Manor of Harewood in the parish register.¹⁰³ It is interesting to note that even in his Will, Henry called himself 'of London' and not 'of Harewood' or 'of Northallerton'.

3.4.1. The Founding of Lascelles and Maxwell, 1743

Henry himself had settled in London in Great Ormond Street. As we know, he started in business almost immediately upon arrival back in England. But it was not until 1743, when in partnership with George Maxwell that the famous commission-house of Lascelles & Maxwell was founded. Though Henry later often used it as a front for his many other business activities, at the beginning the firm's main business was sugar-factoring. Though the price of sugar varied, it seems that Henry was always able to make a profit. In England, Henry sold to grocers and refiners who made up 90% of transactions, and to exporters and speculators. At this time the re-exportation of sugar out of England was quite rare, so he concentrated on the domestic market.¹⁰⁴

In addition to merely selling the sugar of the planters in the West Indies, the firm also effectively became agents and executors for the planters in England. For his clients, he would do most anything: 'He invested their money for them if they had any; he dealt with government departments on their behalf; he got sugar machinery made in accordance with the models or drawings which they sent to him; he interviewed suppliers of unsatisfactory goods; he prosecuted their law-suits [...] On one occasion the house

¹⁰³ Kennedy, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Pares, 1956, p. 255.

even looked out for a seat in parliament for a friend who was an officer in command of the squadron on the Jamaica station.’¹⁰⁵ One year after its founding, Lascelles & Maxwell had sixty-eight correspondents, most of which were in Barbados.¹⁰⁶

It is hard to separate Henry Lascelles from the firm of Lascelles & Maxwell, because he *was* the firm in so many ways. Though all his activities often get put under the heading of Lascelles & Maxwell, it is important to understand that he had many business activities outside of the firm. Henry’s ability to make money for the firm and himself was uncanny. But it was also important for him to start diversifying more at this time. Sugar prices were at their highest from 1700-1710, after that they began to fall because of greater productivity in the West Indies, which decimated prices. Not to mention that slaves and the machines needed to harvest and refine sugar were becoming more expensive. From 1720-1740s prices were at their lowest. It would take twenty years for the price to recover and make sugar really profitable again.¹⁰⁷ Sugar could no longer be depended on as the cash-cow that it once was. In actuality, the mercantile part of Henry’s business activities was probably the least significant of his business interests after 1734.¹⁰⁸ In these depressed times, if Henry was to stay on top, he would have to find yet more various ways to make money.

3.4.2. Slave Trading

The slave trade was one way in which Henry diversified his business activities. He probably came to it relatively early since his first wife’s father, Edwin Carter, had been slaving since at least 1685 and other Lascelles had been involved in it on Barbados at the

¹⁰⁵ Pares, 1961, pp. 210-211.

¹⁰⁶ Sheridan, p. 297.

¹⁰⁷ Pares, 1956, p. 254. and Smith, *Economic History Review*, pp. 457 (Table 7), 459.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, p. 23.

end of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁹ Since Barbados was the first port of call, it was a natural drop-off point for a large number of slaves. But the slave trade was changing rapidly. In the beginning, the ships would arrive from Africa full of slaves who would be literally auctioned off for sugar. The sugar was then immediately loaded and the ship sailed back to England with its new cargo. But when the price of slaves rose and the price of sugar fell this became impossible. The amounts of equivalent sugar needed were simply too much. So merchants were introduced to handle the sales and the credit given to the captains. This too developed and the merchants became the ones to buy the slaves outright from the beginning and sell them off later themselves. This became expensive and only the rich or well backed could participate.¹¹⁰ Alternative ways to trade slaves needed to be developed.

During Henry's time on Barbados from 1712-1734, approximately 74,000 slaves were imported onto the Island.¹¹¹ We know that Henry, in partnership with others, ran the slave ship the *Argyle* in the 1730s. This ship made the triangle from London to Africa where it would pick up slaves and continue on to Barbados or South Carolina. When the *Argyle* became too old to sail, it was replaced with the 180-ton *Girlington*.¹¹² In 1736, a group which included Henry, got together to finance a 'floating factory' scheme. A floating factory¹¹³ was a ship that was stationed off the coast of Africa which held slaves and received European goods in exchange for those slaves. The slaves were transferred to the new ship and taken to the West Indies or America. This particular ship, the old *Argyle*, was anchored off the Gold Coast of Guinea near Cape Coast Castle. There were agents on land who organized the slaves and other goods for the factory ship. The group

¹⁰⁹ Smith, *The New England Quarterly*, p. 513 (footnote).

¹¹⁰ Pares, 1961, pp. 222-223.

¹¹¹ Calculations made from chart, based on yearly averages: Sheridan, p. 142 (Table 7.4).

¹¹² Hamilton, p. 8.

¹¹³ This phrase literally means 'stationed ship'.

thought that this experiment in slaving would last five or six years or literally until the Argyle fell apart at sea. The assets would be divided and if it were profitable enough they could do it again. The scheme was not that profitable and was ended in 1744. The captain and other agents had taken huge shares of the profits without authorization. For all the troubles, this proved to be not much more profitable than ordinary African trade.¹¹⁴

This certainly does not mean that Henry gave up on slaving. He was given a contract to victual from the Admiralty along the African coast near Cape Coast in 1738. This was exactly the same place where he was slaving. So after delivering the goods to the navy he filled the empty ship with slaves and shipped them back to the West Indies or South Carolina. In 1749, he was still supplying the stations at Cape Coast Castle and James Fort on the Gambia River and shipping slaves back in the empty ships.¹¹⁵ When Henry died he still had interests in at least four slaving ships.¹¹⁶ During Henry's lifetime over 150,000 slaves were imported onto Barbados alone.¹¹⁷

3.4.3. Victualling in the West Indies

The West Indies being a very important outpost for the empire, interests had to be well guarded, which led to a great amount of naval traffic among all the mercantile ships. These naval ships needed to be supplied with provisions, or 'victualled', and care given to sick or injured sailors. Though it is impossible to say exactly when Henry first got contracts to victual ships, it was probably around 1729. In October 1739, the same year that Henry bought Gawthorpe, war was declared against Spain over conflicting claims in the Americas; this came to be known as the War of Jenkins' Ear. Things get confusing

¹¹⁴ Gill, pp. 91-95.

¹¹⁵ Hamilton, pp. 8, 14.

¹¹⁶ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Rough calculation made from: Sheridan, p. 247 (Table 11.2). From 1627-1775, 373,400 slaves were imported into Barbados. Of those about 40,000 were re-exported.

because the French were soon brought into a separate war, and this conflict merged into the greater War of Austrian Succession in 1740. The French, like the Spanish, had a big interest in the West Indies. The fighting in the Americas was over trade and land; the French were especially interested in owning more sugar islands. The intensity of the wars ebbed and flowed, still many lives were lost and little gained. By 1734, we know that Henry had the contracts from the Victualling Board and the Sick and Hurt Board for the Leeward Islands (based at Antigua) and for Barbados. The outbreak of war seemed a way to make huge profits. Before the war there were never more than four ships and 740 men on these islands. By 1741, there were seven ships and 1290 men and by 1743, there were between thirteen and fifteen ships at any one time stationed there.¹¹⁸

Henry was now contractually obligated to supply the ships with foodstuffs and other necessities at a promised rate. He was also to supply everything but medicine for the injured and hospitalized sailors on these islands; foodstuffs, doctors, burials, etc. 'By mid-century, the costs of these supplies consumed up to one-quarter of all navy expenses'.¹¹⁹ This was a big responsibility for the Admiralty to put in the hands of a civilian, but it was certainly a lucrative business to be in. However, it took someone with connections and good credit to succeed. Foodstuffs and other supplies had to be harnessed from all over the world, with war, little supplies and embargoes this could be difficult. Henry used contacts from Philadelphia and New York to Ireland, England and all throughout the West Indies to find the supplies he needed. As one example of the money to be made in victualling at this time, one supplier in Philadelphia made £24,000 by supplying Lascelles, which he in turn then sold to the navy for even more profit.¹²⁰

But even Henry could be defeated sometime. Because of some substandard supplies and

¹¹⁸ Hamilton, pp. 4-5, 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Smith, The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books, p. 23.

probably also because of the investigation into his actions when he was Collector of Customs, Henry lost the contracts in May 1744 to a competitor. Peace was finally declared in 1748 and things returned more to normal. Ironically, in March 1749, a certain George Maxwell got the victualling contracts that Henry had lost. George was Henry's partner in Lascelles & Maxwell. There was no coincidence here.¹²¹ But in a way, losing the contracts was a blessing in disguise for Henry. Now he could take all the money he had earned and all the money that would otherwise be tied up in victualling and concentrate on lending it for profit.

3.4.4. Money Lending

The most important way that Henry made money during his life was through money lending. To lend money, again one needed a lot of it on hand or good credit and connections. Henry had all of these. As his other businesses grew, he could afford to loan out more and more money. With his half-brother, Edward, on Barbados until his death in 1747 as Collector of Customs to help supervise, at first Henry loaned money mostly to Island planters whom he personally knew and with no security. The 'security' he had was the price of sugar. But as prices were falling lenders could no longer count on it to repay debts. Soon it became standard to loan with the security of a mortgage based on the land. In 1732, the Colonial Debts Act was passed. 'This measure introduced legal uniformity in the treatment of debtors throughout the British colonial empire. Specifically, the act rendered land, houses, and chattels (including the enslaved) liable for the satisfaction of debts.'¹²² Thus these loans suddenly became more secure, legally binding and enforceable throughout the Empire. Alongside this, were interest rates and usury laws. In Barbados the legal maximum interest rate which was once 15 percent; was

¹²¹ Hamilton, pp. 14-15.

¹²² Smith, *Economic History Review*, p. 455.

brought down in 1688 to 10 percent; in 1729 to 8 percent; and in 1752 to 6 percent. Even at 6% it was quite a high rate of interest. Henry's average 'rate of return, weighted by the amount of the loan, was 6.98 per cent between 1732 and 1753.'¹²³ This reason alone makes it clear why these loans were so popular. The return on investment was almost guaranteed higher than any other investment opportunity at the time.

The Wars of Jenkins' Ear and Austrian Succession had great effects on the West Indies from 1739 to 1748. Trade became riskier and with the threat of invasion or occupation few wanted to hold mortgages on land which could be taken by the enemy at any time. Though he was not the only one to keep lending, he actually increased his lending at this time; which besides a good return earned him friendships with the planters.¹²⁴ The big increase in his lending after the year 1744 was surely partly due to the fact that he had lost the victualling contracts for the Leeward Islands and Barbados. He no longer had the capital intensive business of victualling to worry about and it enabled him to put that money into other investments. But lending money was surely not in the gentlemen's book of conduct.

Loans to West Indian Planters by Henry Lascelles¹²⁵

1730-1734	£28,523
1735-1739	12,747
1740-1744	26,987
1745-1749	45,467
1750-1753	112,624
Total	£226,772

Beside his personal loans to the West Indies, Henry also loaned the firm Lascelles & Maxwell itself quite a bit of his own money so that they in turn could also lend and do other business. Once he was settled in England, he additionally started to lend within

¹²³ Smith, *Economic History Review*, pp. 445, 447.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 449, 454.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 438 (Table 1).

England itself taking as security domestic land. Henry made 28 different personal loans within England with a total value of £183,147. These loans were at a much lower 4.1% interest rate as opposed to the higher 6+% in the West Indies. These English loans were obviously not as lucrative; therefore, we may assume that they also had some political or influencing dynamic, which the West India loan did not.¹²⁶ Smith recons the real purpose behind the commission house of Lascelles & Maxwell was always more than merely to be a merchant house selling sugar. He believes that it was just a means to help Henry with his money lending. Money lending was a means in itself. Money lending was not an added bonus to attract planters to the firm so that they would give it their sugar to sell. The loans were much more valuable and had a greater return than mere factoring. To get the same return on selling sugar, Henry would have had to broker over 30% of all the sugar sold in London at the time, which with all the other competing factors in the city would have been impossible.¹²⁷

To top off a rounded portfolio, Henry also invested money in the stock market, bank stock, the East India Company, Navy annuities and 3% government annuities. From 1735-1743 Henry made 143 stock trades, which average almost eighteen a year. Smith has come to the conclusion that unlike other merchants of the time Henry did not shift resources from one type of investment to another for profit; selling stock to buy land, or selling land to have more capital to lend. He had a well balanced portfolio until the end of his life when the proportion of his wealth lent out to West India planters was 64% of his investments.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Smith, *Economic History Review*, p. 441.

¹²⁷ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, pp. 26-27.

¹²⁸ Smith, *Economic History Review*, pp. 446-448, 463.

4. Power Through Landownership

The idea that power was gained by the ownership of land was nothing new in the eighteenth century in England. Indeed land had been the *key* to power for hundreds of years. This idea has roots back into the eighth century with kings and knights. A knight needed enough area for one horse, this land was granted by the king in return of a pledge of allegiance. The more power one got the more land that was allotted from the king. This land then could be given out to ‘lesser lords and the lesser lords sublet further to create links of personal allegiance’. This turned into the feudal system and brought about the Middle Ages in England.¹²⁹ The idea that money and not mere loyalty could be made from land came much later when there was no more need for knights as such. By the eighteenth century, power was centralized in London with Parliament and the Monarch. ‘In England political power and social standing depended to a greater extent than elsewhere on the ownership of landed property as opposed to lineage or royal favour.’¹³⁰ Landowners justified their control of the country by their huge stake in the physical property of it. They argued that since they owned so much of it, they would do their utmost to govern it properly.

There are a few direct and many indirect ways in which landowners could wield power. The most obvious is either being in the House of Lord or Commons. If a seat could not be won or bought, then landed families could nominate people for local level government positions such as a Justice of the Peace. There is the oft-repeated quote from H. J. Habakkuk: ‘From some eighteenth century memoirs one might suppose that England was a federation of country houses.’¹³¹ In part this is true: ‘The great owners’

¹²⁹ Lacey, p. 43.

¹³⁰ Habakkuk, pp. 15-16.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 4.

share in government was unquestionably disproportionate to their stake in the countryside. They dominated the Lords and controlled a large minority of the Commons, and at the local level their influence as members of the government and as lords-lieutenant sustained their authority over the gentry and the commercial and professional classes of all but the largest towns.¹³²

4.1. National Level Government

Being a peer automatically meant being a Member in the House of Lords. There was no opt-out mechanism at that time; though whether one actually got involved was a personal choice, but for those peers hungry for power it was literally gratis authority. The peerage was already small, but if you discount all the non-participating peers, the number of peers who were active was small. This small exclusive group led the House of Lords, which at that time was a powerful executive body. Each participating member had a strong voice.

The other place for peers, other aristocracy and the gentry was in high-level governmental positions. Leaders of parties, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, heads of ministries were most often first and foremost large landowners.¹³³ One illustration of this are the first prime ministers from 1715-1800¹³⁴: at their investiture, of the seventeen men who held this office, six were earls, one a marquis and four dukes.¹³⁵ As another illustration, Prime Minister Pelham's Cabinet of 1743, consisted of six dukes and the Archbishop of Canterbury out of sixteen members, and it was not until 1859, that a

¹³² Mingay, 1963, p. 111.

¹³³ Even into the last century this is true. Herbert Asquith, elected in 1908, was the first Prime Minister not to own a substantial country estate. Lacey, p. 17.

¹³⁴ There is some disagreement about when the office of prime minister became official. Some historians say 1721; others claim c.1715 because of de facto powers. Either way Robert Walpole is considered the first prime minister.

¹³⁵ Hostettler, p. 411 (Appendix).

mostly non-peer cabinet existed.¹³⁶ These jobs had two important consequences for the people involved. It gave power and it gave a generous income which could supplement rental incomes.¹³⁷

Though it is hard to put a definitive number on it, large landowning families were directly providing around eighty percent of the members to the House of Commons during this century.¹³⁸ The Commons was often a place for the sons of peers or large landowners. Elder sons of peers were just waiting until they inherited the peerage and would then ascend into the House of Lords. Other sons could make a career in the Commons. There was even a law passed in 1710 which made landownership and a certain income a requirement before anyone could stand for election to the House of Commons. Candidates for Parliament for county seats needed to have an income of £600 from land while burgess candidates needed an income of £300. Though it could be gotten around in some cases, it was not repealed until 1858.¹³⁹

Up to 1761 over three-fifths of the House consisted of Irish peers, the sons of English and Scottish peers, wealthy gentry and the “independent country gentlemen”. Even many of the Members who earned their living by trade, the law or office, were connected with the aristocracy and with land. Between fifty and sixty of the Members were merchants, about the same number army or naval officers, and a slightly lower number lawyers. After 1761, the gradual rise in the numbers of merchants and lawyers seemed to reflect the expansion of the economy and the growth of the middle classes.¹⁴⁰

The power of the peers over the House of Commons had been wearing off from the beginning of the century. New families with land were slowly moving into positions where a seat in the Commons was attainable. These landowners had every reason to want

¹³⁶ Wilson, p. 15.

¹³⁷ Habakkuk, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Girouard, p. 22.

¹³⁹ Hostettler, pp. 407-408.

¹⁴⁰ Mingay, 1963, p. 113.

to be in the Commons, because it let them promote their own local interests; everything from enclosures, canals, turnpikes and improvements, which could be turned into bills and then Acts of Parliament by the Upper House. It was naturally in their interest to be in control of the destiny of their local area. They had everything to gain from it.¹⁴¹ Not only would it help them bring useful and profitable things to their areas, it would help them in preventing things they did not like, such as a new turnpike through their property.

4.2. Local Level Government

Local influence was used equally by the aristocracy as by the gentry, the amount of influence depended naturally on the amount of money one was willing to spend. Often the choice of going for local or county office was of a financial nature. It was naturally cheaper to get appointments or control small areas than it was larger ones like boroughs or counties. Unlike today, when local government is handled by bureaucrats, local government in England of the eighteenth century was run by Justices of the Peace and Sheriffs. Like members of Parliament, the Justice of the Peace also had to be a landowner. After the Act of 1731 his land had to have an income of £100, up from £20 previously. It was not an insignificant amount of income, but still any candidate needed to have good connections since this position was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, usually the greatest landowner in an area.¹⁴² Among the jobs of the Justices of the Peace were the collection of parliamentary and local taxes, regulating inns and alehouses, ensuring that the local population maintained roads, managing the Poor Law, investigating incidents of robbery and training and drilling the local militia.¹⁴³ With so many jobs covering such a broad range of issues, the Justice of the Peace was likely to

¹⁴¹ Christie, p. 103. and Mingay, 1963, p. 116.

¹⁴² Habakkuk, p. 11., Wilson, p. 16. and Mingay, 1976, pp. 127-128.

¹⁴³ Christie, p. 103. and Mingay, 1976, p. 126.

come into contact with everyone under his control. Above him were often a Sheriff and Deputy-Lieutenant. These were powerful positions, but not ones necessarily coveted. The positions of Justice and Sheriff were very time-consuming and costly; for most of the aristocracy they were more trouble than they were worth. As a consequence these positions were left to social-conscious gentry with an eye towards an elevated status.

4.3. Voting in England

Here it is important to explain the electoral system in eighteenth century England. The most important thing to know is who in fact could vote. By a 1430 statute, to qualify to vote throughout England at the county level, one had to have ‘the possession of freehold property valued for the land tax at 40 shillings per annum’.¹⁴⁴ This statute actually stayed in place for the next four centuries.¹⁴⁵ In addition to that, since 1406 voting was held in the open, so it was easy to see exactly how someone voted¹⁴⁶. Only men were allowed franchise in England at this time.¹⁴⁷ ‘When George I had come to the throne in 1714, 5.5% of the population, some 300,000 men, were entitled to vote, but derisory as that was it compares well with the 3.1% on the eve of the Reform Act of 1832 and 4.7% after the Act. Whilst the population had risen rapidly by 1832 the proportion of electors was in the meantime actually decreasing.’¹⁴⁸

England was divided into constituencies first by county (40) and each county was further divided into boroughs (203) and oddly enough, Oxford and Cambridge were also considered constituencies in their own right. Yorkshire, the county of the Lascelles

¹⁴⁴ Namier, vol. I, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Hostettler, pp. 12-13, 407. In 1653, Cromwell increased the threshold to £200 freeholders, but the next year it was reversed back to 40 shillings.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Women were allowed franchise in freeman and burgh boroughs if they held burgh with voting rights. In reality they could only transfer this vote to a male relative, who in turn could vote as he wished or sell the vote. Ibid, p. 18.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 40.

family, was the biggest county and had the most voters in England in the first half of the eighteenth century; anywhere from 15,000-18,000.¹⁴⁹ It was divided into 14 boroughs; Aldborough, Beverley, Boroughbridge, Hedon, Kingston-Upon-Hill, Knaresborough, Malton, Northallerton, Pontefract, Richmond, Ripon, Scarborough, Thirsk and York.¹⁵⁰ The boroughs, unlike the counties, were not uniform in any sense and are therefore quite confusing to understand. Boroughs are the remnants of times when the king decided that an area should return members to Parliament. He alone made the choice by writ and as one can imagine the decision often was politically advantageous to him. Because of varying stages of a town's development, boroughs were many sizes and were therefore divided into six further groups; householder, freeman, scot and lot, corporation, burghage and freeholder boroughs. Each type of borough had different rules and returned one to four members to Parliament depending on size and other, historical reasons.¹⁵¹ The number of electorates could be anywhere from seven to seven-thousand. But the average borough was quite small; in the mid-eighteenth century still only forty-seven had more than 500 voters.¹⁵² The smaller the electorate the easier it could be controlled.

4.4. Influence of Landowners

Often called 'patronage', a more important way in which landowners held power was indirect influence over others. Wealthy landowners could control entire districts or boroughs and its entire citizenry through various means. But mainly it was the vote over which landowners wanted to have influence. It was important for landowners to have tenants who voted the way that the landowners wanted. If the tenants threatened differently then the landowners had a few ways to influence them. Sheer bribery was a

¹⁴⁹ Second-tier counties had less than half that number.

¹⁵⁰ Cruickshanks, et al. vol. II, pp. 717-756. and Sedgwick, vol. I, pp. 357-365.

¹⁵¹ Namier, vol. I, p. 10. and Hostettler, pp. 15-22.

¹⁵² Mingay, 1976, p. 75.

simple, but expensive way. To gain favor, rents could be lowered (thus reducing your own income) and money lent to gain the favor of tenants, or conversely tenants could be evicted for their non-support. But more than this, a landowner was expected to patronize local tradesmen and in general show concern for the welfare of the locals and be courteous to neighboring landowners.¹⁵³ Namier makes a real point about this fact: 'Yet by itself property was rarely sufficient in any but a very small constituency or a burgh borough. It was a base on which to build a parliamentary interest, an essential foundation, but no more. Where there were real voters, they had to be wooed and cajoled; the patron had to show concern for their material welfare and respect their political and social prejudices. The interest derived from property had to be supplemented by services to the electorate.'¹⁵⁴

The other type of landowner-based influence at this time was from various 'interest' or 'pressure' groups, which put pressure on Parliament for policies and law to their advantage. These loose associations were people with common interests in such things as the East or West Indies and were often rich financiers, merchants and suppliers. These men were both in and outside of Parliament. Some strove for peace for easier trade; some wanted war because they were victuallers; still others wanted to keep maximum interest rates high.¹⁵⁵ Besides small groups of people, two big companies stick out during this time as wielding a lot of influence through their landowning directors; the South Seas Company and the East India Company. For example, at the East India Company: 'Of the twenty-four directors a few always sat in the House, attracted thither, like other prominent merchants, by the prospect of government contracts and other suitable rewards. The Company's stock-books also show a number of other M.P.'s as

¹⁵³ Mingay, 1963, p. 125. and Namier, vol. I, pp. 47, 49.

¹⁵⁴ Namier, vol. I, p. 47.

¹⁵⁵ Mingay, 1976, p. 74.

large holders of stock and thus likely to react with the directors on matters concerning the Company.¹⁵⁶ The rich West India men were well connected and had a lot of influence not only in the West Indies, but on a more national level in England itself. Henry Lascelles was one of them.

4.4.1. Expense of Influence

One of the reasons why men were willing to spend so much time and effort getting elected was pure status. Namier calls it ‘a fashion of the times’ to represent one’s home county in parliament.¹⁵⁷ The expense that some landowners went to in order to gain votes was astronomical though; whether it was for hosting the locals, or for hand-out bribes, as the century wore on, the amounts spent skyrocketed. One reason why county elections were so expensive was that it took place in the county town; most people lived quite far away and needed to be brought into the town ‘fed, liquored, and lodged at the candidates’ expense’.¹⁵⁸ An un-contested election cost hundreds of pounds while a contested election could cost thousands.¹⁵⁹

Another thing that made elections more expensive at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the Septennial Act of 1716. This act mandated parliamentary sessions of set seven-year periods. As a side-effect since seats in parliament were now guaranteed longer, they became more valuable. Now richer aristocrats and gentry were putting more and more money into elections, which kept out lesser landowners. Competition for votes was becoming stronger: ‘The number of contests in boroughs with small electorates fell by three-quarters between 1715 and 1761, and in the seven general

¹⁵⁶ Sutherland, p. 161.

¹⁵⁷ Namier, vol. I, p. 5.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Mingay, 1963, p. 112.

elections between 1760 and the end of the century only a tenth of all the seats were disputed.¹⁶⁰

4.4.2. Influence Exaggerated?

As we have seen, there are numerous reasons why people wanted to be in these various positions of power. But the cost and other issues lead to the question: has the power of the landowners in general and to influence elections and nominations been exaggerated? Two things are clear; a relatively small number of peers and aristocrats controlled more than their share of the power and that this share of influence grew as the century wore on.¹⁶¹ Mingay also directs us to the fact that in comparison to the amount of land owned compared to gentry, aristocracy had a disproportionate amount of power: ‘but apart from the inclusion of a few of the most wealthy gentry families in the governing circle and a substantial and influential representation of country gentlemen in the Commons – some sixty or eight out of over 550 – they had little direct control over the broad course of politics.’¹⁶²

Over time the cost of these elections became so high that of the landowners who could afford nominations at all, very few could afford more than one. In 1761, 55 peers successfully influenced 111 out of 417 borough elections.¹⁶³ Most landowners influence therefore did not stretch much further than their own property, which is all most landowners wanted. A small minority cared for things beyond their ‘domain’. Controlling national politics was for the few, though the high cost shows that these

¹⁶⁰ Mingay, 1963, p. 123.

¹⁶¹ Cannon, p. 175.

¹⁶² Mingay, 1976, p. 74.

¹⁶³ Mingay, 1963, p. 112.

limited nominations were in great demand. The costs simply became too burdensome for most to bear.¹⁶⁴

4.5. Henry Lascelles: Political Power and Influence

Throughout the Lascelles family history they had been in many positions of power; often on a local level, but also sometimes in Parliament. Being involved in politics was necessary for any great man of business. It was advantageous to have powerful friends who could both warn you and do your bidding for you, especially at a time when Empire policies were first being created. Power is both a cause as well as a consequence of success. Power and influence simply increase power and influence. Henry took constant advantage of influential people he knew. Many of his business activities would not have been possible without his political connections.

Throughout his life Henry had used various levels of influence. Unlike the landowners in England, he was not interested in influencing things on a small local level. He had more global plans than that. In the West Indies he relied on governors and other rich planters; in return he would often help them to win seats on the local assembly or to gain colonial positions. He himself was quite influential being the collector of customs. He made contacts and allies as he went along. He was able to garner very lucrative contracts from the Admiralty for victualling in the West Indies and along the African coast. When he returned to England he was able to turn himself into a merchant and financier through connections already made. In England he was friends with numerous political figures, many of whom had strong West India ties themselves. Henry, a Whig, became a personal friend of Sir Robert Walpole: ‘This brought him certain advantages:

¹⁶⁴ In 1760 ‘even such a grandee as the Duke of Bedford had only four boroughs at his disposal, the Duke of Devonshire only three and several of the Dukes none at all.’ Habakkuk, p. 14.

for example, in 1740, by speaking to the prime minister, he obtained the privilege of transshipping some prize Spanish tobacco contrary to the letter of customs regulations.¹⁶⁵ Walpole's fall from power in 1742 must have been a serious setback to Henry. But he got over it and focused on other powerful friends.

4.5.1. The East India Company, 1742

Throughout its history the East India Company was one of the most powerful enterprises in the world. It was founded in 1600 and the Dutch and French East India Companies were soon established to compete with it. But its most prosperous time was in the eighteenth century. The company became so important and powerful that a symbiotic relationship was formed with the government that would help stabilize both the government and the company and help the economy as a whole grow. The company needed a charter to function and the government needed cash to manage its debts. So the government would extract a loan at a good interest rate from the company and the company's charter would be forthcoming. One mark of esteem and the influence of Henry, even after Walpole's fall, was his being asked to be a member of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in 1742.¹⁶⁶ With only twenty-four members at any time, this was a much coveted position. One can only guess at the graft that made this company and its directors rich. Surely Henry could not be innocent of what would today be called insider-trading. Being a director obviously made one privy to all the business dealing and more importantly future dealing of the company.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Pares, 1961, p. 200.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Economic History Review*, p. 447. Though Sedgwick puts the dates at 1737-45, vol. III, p. 199.

¹⁶⁷ Sutherland, pp. 157, 161-162.

4.5.2. Henry Lascelles in Parliament, 1745

Various members of the Lascelles family had for generations represented Northallerton in the House of Commons. Northallerton was a burgage borough. Burgage boroughs are the most complicated for contemporary minds to understand because they beckon back to feudal times and are completely undemocratic: ‘...the franchise in burgage boroughs was attached to property, not to persons, and could not be increased or diminished; and they were predestined to become pocket boroughs. For if one man owned a majority of the burgages, he was in a position to control the representation of the borough, no matter the size of the electorate; and a Member who could say that he sat by burgage tenure was understood to have an absolutely safe seat.’¹⁶⁸ This type of borough and its parliamentary representation right, was handed down to the eldest son like any other piece of property.¹⁶⁹ The last family member to own burgages in Northallerton was Henry’s great uncle, Thomas, and they were sold by his executors in 1699. Since then no Lascelles had owned burgages or stood for election there.

Most point to a single incident which forced Henry into Parliament as the ultimate tool to use against his accusers. Henry and his half-brother, Edward, had long been accused of ‘irregularities’ in their accounting as Collectors of Customs in Barbados. But in 1744, Edward who was still in Barbados as Collector of Customs was suspended and Henry’s account was surcharged £30,072¹⁷⁰ for money due by Exchequer on advice from the Surveyor-General of Customs for the southern district of America. Henry was in luck though, because at this time his friends, the Pelhams, were coming into powerful ministerial positions. Ironically, in this same year Henry was convinced to loan the

¹⁶⁸ Namier, vol. I, p. 30.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁷⁰ Smith, The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books, p. 22. This was £39,995.14s.4d in Barbadian currency. It must be remembered that this was money from 1715-1730 and probably made many of Henry’s business ventures possible.

government £90,000 at a very reasonable interest rate.¹⁷¹ But Henry knew that the way to settle the allegations once and for all was to become a parliamentarian himself. First he got his son, Edwin, elected as the member for Scarborough. Next, William Smelt, the then current member of Northallerton, was curiously appointed receiver-general of casual revenue at Barbados which meant he had to vacate his seat; obviously Henry and his connections were at work again. A writ was ordered and on May 16, 1745 and Henry entered the House of Commons. Since the property at Gawthorpe did not bestow automatic political power, Henry needed to get it elsewhere. To be sure of success he bought the borough of Northallerton from Smelt; though it is not clear if he bought it before, during or after being elected, he nonetheless became the owner of Northallerton with its automatic election to Parliament for £7,053 around this time.¹⁷² In November of that same year, the Treasury ordered the Customs to end all investigations into the Lascelles' past customs dealings.¹⁷³ His plan had worked. The estimates vary, but one-third to one-half of the customs vanished while Henry was collector. Henry's ability to supply finance and influence seemed unending and he was able to get out of a scandal which could have cost him a huge portion of his fortune.

But this is more unusual than it sounds, for at this time it was quite rare for anyone with West India ties to be in the House of Commons at all. From 1715 to 1754 there were only 27 members (from a total of around 550) who were either born in, or owned estates in the West Indies. Of these 27, only 5 were merchants.¹⁷⁴ From 1754 to 1761 there were only fifteen men with West India connections returned at general or by-

¹⁷¹ Wilson, p. 323.

¹⁷² Private communication from S. Smith, Jan. 20, 2005. Though this is in disagreement with the oft-quoted, un-sourced figure £23,000 of Mauchline (p. 11). According to Pares it was only £13,000. 1961, p. 201.

¹⁷³ Pares, 1961, pp. 200-201. Edward was given back his position as collector of customs in 1747.

¹⁷⁴ Sedgwick, vol. I, p. 153.

elections to the Commons.¹⁷⁵ ‘It was only after 1760 that a sharp rise occurred in the number of merchants and lawyers sitting in the Commons, a presage of things to come. In eighteenth-century Parliaments some two-thirds of the Commons were landowners.’¹⁷⁶

Even more difficult, was entering into a burgage borough. Of the fourteen boroughs in Yorkshire, eight were burgage. An oddly high percentage since there were only twenty-nine in the entire country. Of these, seventeen were closed by 1754, which means that owning the land was the only way to get elected. Even the boroughs that were open were not open to outsiders. No one stood a chance at entering without first owning land or having the sanction of a large landowner in the area.¹⁷⁷ Henry satisfied this by buying the land at Northallerton. Again, it was not the land which conferred power on Henry, but his money. The land came second. Henry held his seat until 1752, when he became Chief Steward and Keeper of the Courts of Honor of Berkhamstead, which included parcels of the land and possessions of His Majesty’s Duchy of Cornwall. It was the first time anyone had used a stewardship to get out of Parliament and he kept the position until his death.¹⁷⁸ His two sons combined then controlled the seat for another thirty-eight years.¹⁷⁹

4.5.3. Later Business Activities of Henry Lascelles

After George Maxwell came back from Barbados in 1743 and Lascelles & Maxwell was established, Henry seems to have done less of the day-to-day work of the firm and spent an increasing amount of time with his family.¹⁸⁰ But he was not resting on his laurels.

¹⁷⁵ Namier, vol. I, p. 157.

¹⁷⁶ Mingay, 1963, p. 10.

¹⁷⁷ Namier, vol. I, pp. 31, 33-34.

¹⁷⁸ Jones, p. 294. and Sedgwick, vol. II, p. 200.

¹⁷⁹ Sedgwick, vol. I, p. 361. and vol. II, p. 198.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *Economic History Review*, p. 455.

There was plenty more money to be made. Though he no longer took such an active part in victualling or sugar factoring, he continued to lend money privately, now at an ever increasing rate both in the West Indies and England. In 1750, Henry nearing sixty, retired from active work at Lascelles & Maxwell and made his son Daniel a partner. He also simply handed over the credits that planters owed him personally to the house.¹⁸¹

He did continue to add land in England to his holdings. In the last years of his life, he bought properties from the Earl of Carlisle for £39,340, a farm from a Mrs. Middleton for £1,800, and the estate of his nephew William Lascelles at Stank. The estate of his nephew is doubly ironic because it was the estate that once belonged to Henry's father and was denied to him because of primogeniture and went to his older brother. Now he simply bought it outright from his poor relations.¹⁸²

The money and power commanded by Henry Lascelles was seldom seen in England. His acumen for business and for making money was phenomenal. But on October 6th 1753 Henry Lascelles died of what was reported as a gruesome suicide after slitting his throat and arms. He was sixty-two. His obituary in the *London Magazine* said only: 'Henry Lascelles, Esq; a very great Barbadoes merchant, and sometime member of parliament for Northallerton.' He was buried ten days later at Northallerton.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Pares, 1961, p. 225.

¹⁸² Smith and Walvin, p. 10.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, pp. 27-28.

5. The Legacy of Henry Lascelles after 1753

In August, less than two months before his death, Henry wrote a lengthy and complex will. After other legacies, annuities and debts were paid the remaining money was divided among his sons. Since Henry was a younger son and made his fortune himself, he decided alone how it was to be divided. He was not stuck with primogeniture or strict settlement as were so many other wealthy families. Edwin received two-thirds of his father's fortune and the rest of the property not already under his charge. Daniel received only one-third of the fortune, but as compensation, he took a senior partnership in the firm,¹⁸⁴ Lascelles & Maxwell, which brought in enough income for him to later buy his own estates in Yorkshire and Barbados. Henry, the youngest son, who was also sometimes a captain for the East India Company, only received £14,000 in cash, though it is not clear why he inherited so little. Regardless of the tiny sum to the youngest son, it is interesting to note that Henry chose to disregard primogeniture and strict settlement which were key to English landownership at this time. Though not unheard of, Henry divided his property more evenly. Maybe Henry thought his estate was big enough to withstand being broken in two, or maybe he was taking care of his children contrasting his father before him. One strange thing that Henry did though was to entail his estate. In his will he made it clear that if his children failed to have a male heir the property was *not* to go to his elder brother's children in strict adherence to primogeniture. His fortune would descend to the children of his younger half-brother Edward. His sons, Edwin and Daniel, were executors and they were to choose which of the three eligible cousins would inherit if the need arose.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Though at this time he was already a partner.

¹⁸⁵ The Will of Henry Lascelles, 1753. and Smith, The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books, p. 36.

What was Henry's estate worth? His will puts his personal estate at £250,000. He estimated the value of his properties throughout England at £53,682 and in the West Indies at £8,000. But Smith thinks that this is a low estimate of Henry's wealth. An account book of the same year puts his total estate at £392,704. This seems more accurate for two reasons. He had already transferred over the valuable Gawthorpe property to Edwin and outstanding loans of £108,846 to his sons and the firm of Lascelles & Maxwell. These figures were not included in his estate, but were definitely his doing alone and could rightly be called his assets. If these are added in, Henry's total fortune could have been as much as £456,673.¹⁸⁶ No matter the exact sum, Henry made a huge fortune in his life, and very little of it came from direct landownership.

At his death the greatest part of his fortune was tied up in loans backed by mortgages both in England and the West Indies. He had £251,286 lent out at interest and held by mortgages, which constituted 64% of his fortune. If the average income of a peer around 1750 was £7,500, one example of Henry's wealth is that his income in 1753 from *interest* alone from loans outstanding was probably between £12,500 and £15,000 annually. At his death the loans could not simply be called in, so they stood. But while they stood, sugar prices fell and many planters defaulted and their plantations were taken over by his heirs. In the last half of the eighteenth century, the Lascelles family became the absentee owners of over 20 plantations, though not all at any one time.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, p. 28. and Private communication from S. Smith, Jan 20, 2005.

¹⁸⁷ *The Will of Henry Lascelles, 1753*. and Smith and Walvin, pp. 11-12. Sheridan breaks Henry's estates into West India and England connections: 'his investments in Barbados and West India trade and shipping amounted to £122,904 or 31.3 per cent of total assets. Second, his English assets, including his Harewood estate in Yorkshire, loans, and investments in the funds, amount to £220,453, or 56.1 per cent. Third, a miscellaneous category, including his son's marriage settlement, personal property, and personal loans, amounts to £49,347, or 12.6 per cent. If the items in the third category are pro-rated among the first two, it would appear that the West Indies accounted for 35 per cent and England for 65 per cent of Henry Lascelles' assets.' p. 298. Though he was wrong about the Harewood estate, it is an interesting point of view. But it must be remembered that even though many of the loans were secured by English land, the money was mostly on loan in the West Indies.

Henry Lascelles' Assets in 1753¹⁸⁸

Cash	959.	14.	3 £ sterling
Bank 3½ annuities	23,326.		
Bank Stock	4,290.		
India Stock	970.		
London Assurance Company for £1,000 capital stock 1,130.			
Bank circulation for a 10% payment	510.	10.	
Shares in 21 ships	15,749.	19.	9
Lascelles & Maxwell for their bond	14,000.		
English estates	53,681.	14.	9
Hole plantation in Barbados	8,000.		
Personal loans	29,077.	3.	3
Loans on security of land and houses in England	137,055.	10.	4
Loan on security of sugar plantation in Barbados	85,153.	15.	8
Trading ventures on own account	3,939.	4.	
Trustee for marriage settlement of son Edwin	12,418.		
Miscellaneous	2,442.	8.	9
 Total	 392,704.	 0.	 1

The other legacy Henry left was that of the firm Lascelles & Maxwell. It continued to do business under the same name with his son Daniel as senior partner until 1763. The focus of business was now distinctly on financing, but they still also acted as sugar factors and agents for West Indian planters. Since the Lascelles had removed themselves permanently to England, the firm ran their family plantations in Barbados until 1954. The connection only died in 1970 when the last plantations on Barbados were sold after nearly 190 years of island association. Lascelles & Maxwell, though now under a different name, is still operating today, still doing business in the Caribbean.¹⁸⁹

5.1. Edwin Lascelles and the Building of Harewood House c.1759-1771

Henry probably never wanted to build a country house, he was almost certainly too consumed with business matters to even think about it. Edwin on the other hand lived in the country at the prized estate of Gawthorpe. After Henry's death, Edwin backed by his new inheritance, felt the time was right to build a new house. He wanted something

¹⁸⁸ Sheridan, p. 297 (Chart) from Henry Lascelles' account book, 1753.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books, pp. 5, 8, 14.

appropriate for his family status and the old manor house in the valley at Gawthorpe no longer suited the new prestige of his family. Though there were alterations to the old house the year after his father died in 1754-55 by John Carr, Edwin waited a full four years before work on Harewood House began.¹⁹⁰ 'With the family estate went the family house, the physical expression of the standing of the family and the tangible repository of its traditions. When the founder of a new family replaced or rebuilt an adequate existing mansion, it was not solely because of changing taste or want of room, but because building a family home was an integral part of the founding of a family. There was no market in second-hand mansions in eighteenth-century England.'¹⁹¹

On the most conspicuous hill within the Gawthorpe property, work commenced on Harewood House in 1759 and major construction took until 1771.¹⁹² This was a time when few great houses were being built, especially in Yorkshire, but Edwin had the money and a vision.¹⁹³ He was also a fastidious builder and a demanding client. The fact that there are numerous plans and drawings for Harewood House by different competing architects shows that Edwin was no mere patron of the arts, he was a hands-on builder who wanted to have a say in everything. After all, he was laying down the bricks and mortar to cement his family dynasty, he was building for eternity. Harewood House was a statement of his family's power and status. It was also a way into the upper-reaches of society and possibly to the much-coveted peerage. At the same time Edwin also started to re-build Harewood village in an appropriate 'model village' style to compliment his

¹⁹⁰ Wragg, p. 154.

¹⁹¹ Habakkuk, p. 3.

¹⁹² Mauchline, p. 8.

¹⁹³ In the decade of 1750 only seven houses were rebuilt or completely newly built for the eighty-six family 'seats' in the West Riding of Yorkshire. In the decades of 1760 and 1770 there were only four total. Wilson, p. 206 (Table 4).

new wealth. He built cottages, a school, an inn and a ribbon factory for its lucky citizenry.¹⁹⁴

Edwin also made two advantageous marriages. He was socially climbing through his wives. His first wife, Elizabeth, was the daughter and heir of a baronet. He married her in 1747 and had two children who died young. Elizabeth also died quite young in 1764 and never saw Harewood House completed. Six years later in 1770, he married again. Jane was the niece of the 8th Duke of Somerset and was first married to Sir John Flemming, also a baronet, before his death. Social acceptance and a peerage must have seemed just around the corner.

Edwin did not merely live off of the income from his estates, he was active in politics. In all, Edwin was in the House of Commons for 45 years.¹⁹⁵ Starting in 1744, he first represented Scarborough and later Northallerton, but then he became one of the two members for the county of Yorkshire. 'Edwin Lascelles was in politics, however, rather as a landowner than a merchant. He reached the height of his political career in the years between 1761 and 1780, when he represented the county of York.'¹⁹⁶ His brother, Daniel, in the mean time was the member for Northallerton from April 1752-Dec 1780. But he gave up his seat when his brother needed one. So Edwin ended his time in the Commons as member for Northallerton. Though Edwin was in politics for so long, there is only one record of his taking active part in any debate, and that was of a local-interest nature; a canal.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Wragg, p. 156. Constructed from 1750s-1807.

¹⁹⁵ Sedgwick, vol. I, p. 138.

¹⁹⁶ Mauchline, p. 11.

¹⁹⁷ Namier, vol. III, pp. 22-23.

In 1784, Daniel died and his estates passed to Edwin. So the formerly divided estate of Henry Lascelles was now completely in Edwin's hands. This included money, loans outstanding and his property in Yorkshire and the West Indies.¹⁹⁸ So even though Henry was careful to divide up his estate for his sons, it nonetheless, came back together as a whole within thirty years after his death.

5.2. Peerage, 1790

In 1790, thanks to the Pitt government, Edwin Lascelles entered the peerage. He skipped the traditional baronetcy and Irish peerage and was made a peer of England, though of the lowest rank; baron. He therefore ascended into the House of Lords where he ended his political career. He died five years later at the age of eighty-two on March 25th 1795.

The estate Edwin left is a testament to what his father had accumulated.

According to Joseph Farington and his oft-quoted diary on June 20, 1795:

Lord Harewood, (the late), left a fortune of at least £50,000 a year Mr Dew [solicitor] said. – He had £16000 a year in Yorkshire, at least £25,000 a yr. in the West Indies. £200,000 in the 3 pr. Cts. Besides a variety of property in different situations. He had left Lady Harewood abt. £4000 a yr. for life and she will have abt. £20,000 to dispose of. – To General Lascelles, £2000 a yr. for life and £10,000. – The bulk of his fortune He has bequeathed to his cousin E. Lascelles elder Brother of the General.¹⁹⁹

Henry's income greatly surpassed that of the average peer in 1753. If the average annual income of a peer in 1790 was £10,000 or even if it was double that, Edwin with his £50,000 a year makes many peers look like paupers. The Lascelles' were now truly the equal of the greatest landowner. They could match the greatest incomes and estates, and what's more important the social standing of the aristocratic elite, the peers.

¹⁹⁸ Mauchline, p. 25.

¹⁹⁹ Greig, pp. 100-101.

Edwin never dropped his Barbados connections as many claim. He owned plantations and the family still had his own interest in Lascelles & Maxwell, though he never took an active part in the running of the firm. Edwin's estate, like that of his father, showed debts owed to him from West Indies planters secured by mortgage, bond or judgment. Edwin was owed around £128,930.²⁰⁰ This confirms that besides loans still outstanding from Henry's time, Edwin himself had loaned some money to planters, though most of his money was in property and securities in England. The West India connections of the family were still strong in 1795.²⁰¹ No matter what the family had become, they owed everything to sugar, the West Indies and Henry Lascelles.

According to his father's will and entailment, since Edwin had no heirs, he was to choose the cousin to whom the entire estate passed. He chose Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Lascelles, who was (not surprisingly) M.P. for Northallerton. The barony became extinct with Edwin's death, but was revived for his heir. This time the levels of baron and viscount were passed, and Edward Lascelles became Baron Harewood, Viscount Lascelles and the first Earl of Harewood in 1796. Once the family made it into the peerage the elevation to earl was very fast.²⁰² 'In the space of sixty years Henry and Edwin Lascelles had put together a large estate, built the most influential Yorkshire house of the second half of the eighteenth century, and – there could be no greater testimony of their standing – represented the county in Parliament. By the 1790s they had come to rival the interests of the Rockingham-Fitzwilliams, *the* Yorkshire political dynasty for most of the eighteenth century.'²⁰³ Not only was the family very rich at the end of the eighteenth century, but as lasting proof to the family's standing the Lascelles still live at

²⁰⁰ Smith and Walvin, p. 27

²⁰¹ Smith, *The Lascelles & Maxwell Letter Books*, p. 6.

²⁰² Kennedy, p. 57.

²⁰³ Wilson, p. 324.

Harewood House today. The current Earl of Harewood is the seventh in his family and his son Viscount Lascelles is set to become the eighth.

6. Conclusion

When Henry Lascelles died he left an amazing legacy. Within his relatively short lifetime Henry had personally managed the fortune of the family and watched it grow from almost nothing to one of the greatest in the country. Besides being one of the richest men in England he was also one of the most powerful and well-connected. He was a personal friend of ministers, prime ministers, members of Parliament and governors throughout the Empire and could call on them for assistance whenever needed. With a hand in government through his seat in the House of Commons and his various other private businesses, Henry was well respected and probably feared. He was unquestionably part of the aristocracy, but not esteemed enough for a peerage. During his lifetime peerages were not easy to attain, especially for merchants. Henry would not live long enough to see the end of the century when the peerage became more open. Henry naturally wanted a peerage; it was the dream of most. All of his actions lead us to believe he was building up his family to take this natural step.

The story of Henry Lascelles and his ascendance from mere gentry to the richest aristocracy is amazing for many reasons. To be successful in eighteenth century England one normally had to come from a rich family or inherit an estate. The odds were against any new-comers to enter this closed world. Landownership was the key to the success of the aristocracy and gentry. Land brought rental income, prestige and power. Henry was not lucky enough to fall into such an inheritance. He was from an average gentry family, though some members had been in Parliament, they were neither rich nor big landowners.

Henry had to make it on his own. He was assisted on his journey by family connections in the West Indies, but his success lay in his own intelligence, timing and good judgment. If family connections were all it took, then his brothers and cousins should all have become as rich. But they did not.

Henry had two objectives, to make a fortune and found his family in Yorkshire. His concentration on business matters shows us what interested him the most, for without money no family could be accepted. The making of money was more important to him than the buying of landed estates. Yes, he did buy property, both in England and Barbados in his first years back in England, but it was step only possible after making a fortune. To Henry personally the land was secondary. The fact that his son was put in charge of the property shows us that Henry obviously wanted to give his son a good start in society. His investment in land had very little to do with financial security as was common at the time; he was too rich and too savvy to need to depend on traditional income from land. The only time that Henry needed land was at Northallerton, but that was because of its automatic elections to the Commons. He was well beyond the normal mindset which only approved investing in land because it was safe; he had experience and indeed investments and influence all over the world.

He eschewed traditional thinking about how to make money and gain power. He did not need land like the aristocracy and gentry. He would do it another way. He stole customs money from the Crown, built up a large sugar-factoring business, traded slaves, vicatalled Royal Navy ships, invested money in funds and stocks and lent money to planters and later to individuals in England. He was so ahead of the aristocracy in this regard as to almost be from another era altogether. His understanding of politicking and

influence was so keen that hardly anything stood in his way. There was nothing traditional about Henry or his methods.

Traditional classification of Henry Lascelles is not possible. He transcended all the typical stereotypes. He was well written, but not a gentleman. He was super-rich, but not a peer. He was a landowner, but business came first. He broke all the rules and stepped over most class boundaries. The fortune Henry left his family was staggering. He single-handedly transformed his family from an average Yorkshire gentry family into a family which competed in the highest levels of the aristocracy. When he died, his sons, Edwin and Daniel, were both in the House of Commons. He put the foundations in place for his son Edwin to build one of the greatest country houses in England of all time. Harewood was not merely an exercise in artistry and craftsmanship, nor was it only a family home. It was a symbol of the family's place in society. Old Gawthorpe Hall had moved from the valley to the top of the hill and become Harewood House; so too had the family moved from behind the tree to the top of the tallest hill. Henry would have been proud. But it is very ironic that whereas Henry was so cunning and revolutionary in his money making, his later heirs would revert to depending on landownership as their major source of income. Some things never change.

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