

THE *BUCKS GAZETTE* AND THE GRENVILLE FAMILY 1829–32 THE EARLY HISTORY OF A COUNTY NEWSPAPER

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The birth of provincial newspapers in Buckinghamshire coincided with a period of intense political ferment, and the Bucks Gazette in particular adopted a progressive, reformist stance which set it in conflict with the Grenville family. The files of the paper reflect the passions of the time.

For a large part of the 19th century in Britain, the dissemination of national and international news, and the expression of editorial opinions on these subjects – functions nowadays associated with national daily newspapers – were performed by local weekly ones. Local papers throughout the country printed a digest of national and international news, sent by their London agent, with comment from London journals, alongside local news from agents in towns and villages throughout the county. They also adopted an editorial line on international affairs, as well as domestic politics and religion – two subjects which often overlapped in the 19th Century.

An editorial on July 17th 1830, in the *Bucks Gazette*, the only 'Buckinghamshire-dedicated' newspaper in the years 1829–1831 loftily outlined its aspirations:

We are little interested about local feuds – Higher objects . . . occupy our attention, . . . we feel that we might leave such puny subjects . . . to the good sense of the people of the town.*

These papers had to pay the 'taxes on knowledge' – a stamp duty of 4d between 1819 and 1836, and 1d until 1855. There was also an advertisement tax until 1853 and a paper duty until 1861. Meaningful price comparisons are difficult to

make, but throughout 1829 the *Bucks Gazette* cost 7d (2.9p) and in November that year the Poor Law authorities in Cottesloe Hundred allowed old men unable to work, 4/- (20p) per week to live on, and old women 3/6 (17½p) (BG 14-11-29) – so each edition of the *Bucks Gazette* cost the equivalent of one day's allowance for a single person living on the 19th century equivalent of state subsistence benefits. This affected the development of the press in Britain – in 1830 there were at least 13 London daily papers but no provincial one until 1855, and although there were illegal 'un-stamped' – usually propagating radical politics, and impossible to suppress because of the publishers' willingness to go to jail for the expression of their beliefs – the high rate of duty (and absence of universal education) ensured that until the late 1850's there was nothing like a popular press. The high price of stamped newspapers (usually 7d and, after 1836, 5d), also meant they were usually 'filed' – kept in pubs, inns and coffee-houses, where customers were allowed to read them for an allotted period, while consuming food and drink bought on the premises. An advertisement in the *Bucks Herald* (25-2-32), for Deacon's Coffee House, in London, lists over 90 provincial English papers, five Scots and three Irish, saying:

Gentlemen are expected to order Refreshment to be entitled to read the Papers &c.; or to subscribe Four Shillings per Month . . . Terms of Refreshment very Moderate.

Most of Deacon's papers were 'county papers' like the *Bucks Gazette* – newspapers of high

*All quotes in this essay, unless stated otherwise, are editorial statements of opinion, from the leader page of the *Bucks Gazette*.

standing, printed in and circulating throughout a county, with agents and a smaller circulation in London and the major towns of the adjoining counties. County papers carried advertisements of 'county business' – official notices for things like the leasing of tolls on turnpike roads and the holding of Assizes and Quarter Sessions. Until the arrival of Poor Law Unions in 1834 and, much later, the county councils, the County Treasurer and the Clerk of the Peace, along with magistrates at parish and county level were the bulwarks of local government, and advertisements of county governmental business placed in a newspaper (on the front page – a practice maintained by the *London Times* until the 1960's) by the Clerk of the Peace conferred status as well as income – an official notice by Thomas Tindal, Clerk of the Peace, in the 15-5-30 *Bucks Gazette*, refers to previous official notices in the BG calling it: '... a weekly newspaper ... in which the advertisements of county business are usually inserted ...'. The status of county papers and their readers is also indicated by advertisements for goods and services in London, and sale notices, for land and estate auctions which could have been of interest only to the wealthiest inhabitants of a county.

The Bucks Gazette – a Whig/liberal paper.

The *Bucks Gazette* was first published in Aylesbury in 1821 as an offshoot of the older *Windsor and Eton Express*, established since 1812 at Windsor. The two papers shared reports, the 'Windsor and Eton' sometimes carrying the words 'Abridged from the "Bucks Gazette"' above news from Aylesbury. In February 1829 a prohibitively expensive change in the way the advertisement duty was levied forced the *Gazette* to become independent of the 'Windsor and Eton', though the two papers continued to co-operate until the New Year of 1831 – the 26-12-30 'Windsor and Eton' carries a 'general acknowledgement' for reports provided by the *Gazette* during the past year. Another Bucks newspaper – the *Bucks Chronicle* – had started and ceased, probably because it was competing for the same social and political constituency of readers and advertisers as the *Gazette* – Reynell, the *Gazette* editor, makes generous references to it in the *Gazette's* inaugural editorial on February 21st 1829, and

again in August 1831 (BG 27-8-31), for its talent and support of Parliamentary reform. By 1829 the *Gazette* was well established as a county paper – the 21-2-29 edition listed 45 agents – 4 in London, 11 in the major towns of Bucks, 29 in the county and/or principal towns of the six adjoining counties, and one at Marlborough. It carried news and comment from a wide spectrum of London papers, as well as items of unusual interest from other provincial papers.

Reynell claimed he was following a course that might have occurred to him anyway:

... the *Bucks Gazette*, since its establishment as the County Paper for Buckinghamshire, in 1821 ... has gradually increased to so large a circulation, and attained to so high a station in the county, as to admit of this separation being carried into effect with increased advantage to the public, (BG 21-2-29)

He then made the statement of fearless independence of party political conformity which newspaper editors of all political complexion make, though, as the statement hints, the *Gazette* supported the liberal/radical, and Utilitarian ideas gaining currency in Parliament and elsewhere through the followers of Jeremy Bentham:

... we hold ourselves entirely unshackled by party, or party opinion, and pledge ourselves to advocate – temperately but firmly – "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Advocating this principle we have prospered ... hitherto ... (*ibid*).

At this time there had been a Tory government for just over a year, with Wellington as Prime Minister and Peel as Home Secretary. The Tories, representatives of the landed interest, were coping with a society in which agriculture (the employer of a majority of the population until 1851) was still agonisingly contracting from pre-1815, war-time, dimensions, while a landless, but wealthy new middle-class, often based in northern mill towns, was demanding power in an increasingly industrial and urban society. The Tories fell into three groups: the government, which under the leadership of Peel, was continuing a policy which Blake says '... amounted to one of compromise

with the middle-class' (CPPC p.21): those who wished to cope with changed circumstances by means of a paternalistic alliance with the working classes: and lastly the group known as the 'Ultras', who 'responded' to changed circumstances by striving to prevent all further change.

The Tory 'Ultras' and the Buckinghamshire Grenvilles.

The leading Ultra in the Commons was Richard Grenville, Marquess of Chandos, eldest son of the 1st Duke of Buckingham and Chandos. The Duke was a major landowner in north Bucks and a notorious 'boroughmonger' who virtually owned Buckingham and controlled the election of its MP's through the 12 members of Buckingham Corporation – all of them either tradesmen dependent on him, or beneficiaries of his son through the Yeomanry.¹

The Grenvilles perfectly exemplified the type of unearned, parasitic wealth fiercely disapproved of by liberal/Utilitarian supporters of reform and retrenchment. The Grenvilles' already considerable patrimony was made even greater by the Duke's father, the first Marquess of Buckingham, through a Tellership of the Exchequer: a lucrative sinecure obtained for him in 1763 at the age of ten, by his father, Richard Grenville, the Prime Minister. In 1810 the Marquess still had the Tellership, which was bringing in about £23,000 annually and had been the subject of individual mention during a 1797 Commons debate on sinecures – afterwards the Marquess admitted to gaining over £40,000 from the Tellership, just between 1795 and 1797.² The Tellership had died with him in 1813 and the first Duke, his son, despite this inherited wealth, and massive assets in the form of land in north Bucks and elsewhere, had run himself into serious debt by 1827, a position which worsened in later years,³ culminating in the spectacular bankruptcy, in 1848, of Chandos, by now the second Duke. The first Duke had an overwhelming interest in opposing Parliamentary Reform. He had received his Dukedom in return for giving Liverpool the parliamentary support of the Grenville 'Connection' – a group of between seven and ten M.P.'s, representing seats where the elections were controlled by the Duke.⁴

The Grenville lands and influence in north Bucks made Chandos an unassailable County Member before 1832, (voters in rural areas were represented by county MP's – two for Bucks). This, along with his vehement political opinions, gave Chandos, although he was not unusually talented, a sometimes quite prominent position in national politics. Contemporary descriptions suggest he was a man of bluff charm who mixed easily with his social inferiors, (the adjective 'manly' is used quite frequently) but was something of a demagogue with local sycophants, and one whose dogmatic and simplistic opinions made him enemies amongst contemporaries of real ability. The tone of reports in the *Bucks Herald* when he or his father controlled the editorial line also suggest he was a 'good hater' who harboured ill-will towards those who opposed his views, including his uncle, Lord Nugent, the Duke's younger brother, who was active in Bucks politics for the opposite political tendency, as one of two Whig MP's for Aylesbury. (Nugent, in public at least, seems never to have acknowledged his nephew's hostility). References in Beckett (pp. 91, 136–7 and 149) suggest Nugent was able to resist pressure from his family and pursue an independent political line, because he possessed independent wealth – he had been granted an annuity of £1,500 under the Marquess's will, secured on the income from the rents of the Wootton Estate in Bucks, as well as Gosfield Hall, a Grenville property in Essex, and a lump sum of £10,000. Nugent was always short of money, (possibly because of his elder brother's mismanagement of the estate – he never received the £10,000 just mentioned) and in late 1832 he resigned his Aylesbury seat and accepted a paid appointment, the governorship of the Ionian Islands. (Nonetheless when he died in 1851 he left no estate).

The 'Bucks Gazette' and the Grenville Family

The *Bucks Gazette* vitriolically attacked the Dukes of Buckingham after the foundation of the *Bucks Herald* in 1832, claiming the '*Herald*' had been established as an unfairly-subsidised rival as it (the *Bucks Gazette*) had refused to follow the Grenville line. In April 1832, after calling the *Herald* the 'Duke's hireling journal in Bucks' the *Gazette* told readers it too could have received the

Duke's favour and would not have had to compete with the *Herald*:

We might have had their support, if we had consented to become their scaramouch. But we loved public principle with too much earnestness and fidelity to be able to consent to any such 'most filthy bargain' (BG 21 and 28/4/32).

This essay is intended to show how the *Bucks Gazette* disagreed with the Grenvilles, and other Bucks Ultras, for the three years that it was the sole county journal. The *Gazette's* opposition to the Ultras is unsurprising as in the aftermath of the Catholic Emancipation crisis it made clear its small sympathy for Tories more talented, moderate and liberal than the Ultras:

... the great merit of Mr Peel, is that his intelligence has been able to shake off that vulgar and besotted prejudice which would arrest the tide of improvement by setting up the barrier of no-innovation (BG 25-4-29)

Peel's support for Emancipation had caused him to lose his seat as MP for Oxford University to Sir Robert Inglis, and the 7-3-29 BG had criticised the Anglican graduates (many of them rural gentlemen and country parsons) who had ousted him, for electing a man so much less talented in his place. However (curiously anticipating the words of Peel's pupil, Gladstone, who said he was 'unmuzzled' in almost identical circumstances in 1865), it said good might come of evil, as now Peel was 'unshackelled' (*sic*).

Nonetheless, though it recognized Peel's talent, the *Gazette* viewed him as the best of a poor lot – the Ultras regarded Catholic Emancipation as a betrayal by government ministers, particularly Peel, and their journals that summer conducted a press campaign against the cabinet. The *Gazette*, agreed with them in attributing venal motives to Peel:

Mr Peel is to us a politician of a very objectionable character. Love of place appears to be his ruling passion; and though he has obtained vast credit for having done just something more than his predecessors... all his exertions are referable to the one inordinate desire of place holding. ... Mr Peel has... it is true, effected some good... but... it comes to us too much in the shape of an advantage yielded by an antagonist whose only object was some sinister advancement of his own peculiar interests... (BG 1-8-29)

As well as mistrusting moderate Tories, the *Bucks Gazette* opposed the Grenvilles on a number of important issues:

1 – Catholic Emancipation

The major planks of the Ultra position were opposition to Catholic Emancipation, opposition to Parliamentary Reform, and opposition to free trade in agricultural produce. The first major political event of the 19th century which the *Gazette* reported was the Catholic Emancipation crisis. Catholics had been ineligible for public office, and being Protestant had been part of being English, since the Settlement of 1688 had established the UK as a 'Protestant Nation with a Protestant Monarch'. Emancipation ended this, basically to rationalise the position of Ireland – overwhelmingly Catholic and represented since 1801 in the Westminster Parliament, where no Catholic could sit as an M.P. Emancipation had been unignorable since the summer of 1828 when Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic, had been elected MP for County Clare. Public interest had become intense that November when Wellington had given an outline scheme for Emancipation to the King and the first independent edition of the *Bucks Gazette* in 1829 contained reports of the progress of the Emancipation Bill through Parliament amid excitement which precluded the passage of any other legislation. Chandos's father, the Duke, was the son of a Catholic mother and his mother's sister was also Catholic, and the Grenvilles had supported Emancipation for a generation. Chandos however, fiercely supported the Scottish Protestant beliefs of his own mother and with his father abroad between 1827 and November 1829 (Beckett p.119) he led vociferous opposition to Emancipation in Aylesbury and Buckingham, through hastily-founded 'Brunswick Clubs', wall posters, public meetings and petitions to Parliament, as well as by proposing an amendment to the Bill in the House, to ensure no Catholic could become Prime Minister (Chadwick Vol. I, p. 18)

At first the *Gazette* reported the Emancipation controversy factually, without comment, quoting from journals of all political and religious colours. This is probably because popular opinion in Bucks (as in the rest of England) overwhelmingly supported the Tory Ultra position on Emancipa-

tion (see Appendix 1). The 7-3-29 BG listed the provisions of the Bill without comment and the 4-4-29 edition reported, also without comment, its third reading, mentioning that Chandos, (in a very characteristic statement) had told the House:

he had found no reason to alter the opinions he had formed . . . nor was a sufficient case . . . made out for . . . infringing on the constitution as established in 1688 . . . to the latest hour of his life he would continue to regret it.

By this time the Bill was clearly going to pass into law and the next *Bucks Gazette* allowed itself a comment for the first time – it pointed out that the proportion of voting Lords who had been in favour of the bill was greater than the proportion of Commons who had been so, and continued:

It must now occur to all sincere opposers of the Bill – and that they are numerous and most respectable cannot but be admitted – that a measure cannot be . . . very unsafe . . . which receives the assent of so large a body of . . . that House of Parliament least disposed to speculative change . . . now that the question is set at rest, the only reasonable and loyal course its to make its operation as beneficial as possible (BG 11-4-29).

Within a week the Bill was law, and the next BG, after reiterating the previous week's editorial, told readers in a final reference to Catholic Emancipation:

That it will tend to restore peace is . . . evidenced by the fact that Brunswick Clubs . . . are about to be dissolved; and that . . . even now large sums of money are about to be invested in mortgages in landed property in Ireland . . . it will relieve the Catholics from degrading and oppressive laws . . . (and) the Protestants from an unprofitable and burdensome monopoly . . . we look forward with gladness to the day when the political, and not the religious, merit of the candidate will obtain . . . the suffrages of the Irish nation (BG 18-4-29).

2 – Reform.

There had been Reform movements before the French Wars. In 1782 Buckingham had been on a list of rotten boroughs to be reformed by Pitt and John Wilkes, the MP for Aylesbury, and in 1821 Grampond in Cornwall had been disfranchised and its two seats given to the county of Yorkshire. Sir Thomas Fremantle, the Grenville-nominated MP for Buckingham, who had received a Secretaryship to the Treasury from Peel (SRP pp 90–

91) and had voted for emancipation in accordance with the wishes of Peel and the Duke of Buckingham, was typical of many rotten-borough MP's. Only government control of such men had secured a majority for Emancipation in the face of public hostility, and as Emancipation faded into the past, public attention gradually turned to Parliamentary Reform as Tory Ultras like the Marquess of Blandford, who introduced a Reform Bill in January 1830, adopted the cause, hoping that a more representative parliament would repeal Emancipation. As public interest grew, an editorial in the 9-5-29 BG, deplored the ineffectual punishment of electoral corruption, and the perverse redistribution of seats, after the East Retford case saying: 'It is . . . consolatory, however, to see how . . . liberal notions and feelings are gaining ground' – after mentioning different trends of thought towards Reform it concluded: 'The public will be quite content that their cause (i.e. Reform) is making its way'.

The county journals were conservative however, and the *Gazette's* attitude to Reform was ambivalent – it did not regard it as a noble democratic aspiration. That July an editorial dismissed not only Tory Reform ideologues, like Blandford, but also Radical ones like Cobbett and Hunt, who advocated annual parliaments and universal suffrage ('Their claims are perhaps useful, as affording a foil to claims more moderate'). The *Gazette* believed men would not seek to elect their masters in a well-governed prosperous society:

. . . the agriculturists are impoverished, commerce is partially arrested . . . we hear complaints, turn where we may, that capital and industry are not . . . yielding anything like what is considered to be a fair return. It is then from this . . . that we argue the probability of . . . Reform . . . becoming once again a popular topic. It was originally begotten and nurtured by a community of suffering . . . as . . . the last hope of relief . . . however men's conditions palpably improved; provisions . . . and raiment could be obtained . . . and the people soon became too much engaged with . . . making the most of their good fortune to trouble their heads longer, with the theory of . . . popular representation . . . Reform will make but little way so long as it is opposed by a ministry possessing ordinary discretion, and so long as the privations of the multitude do not exceed common endurance (BG 18-7-29).

With this the BG dismissed Reform until the following January, when it reported the inaugural

meeting in Birmingham, of 10,000 supporters of Thomas Attwood's Political Union, (northern industrial cities were regarded with trepidation in rural southern counties and Attwood, a Radical banker, was mentioned by name in the *Bucks Herald's* anti-railway editorial on the 21st of the same month). The Union was intended to form:

... a coalition among the middling and lower orders of society. The object of the persons composing this "Political Union" is to work a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament.

Before concluding with an admission of the need for Parliamentary Reform the BG expressed reservations based on the fear of mobs – it quoted what it called an 'apposite' editorial from the *Morning Chronicle*, deploring the founding of such organisations on a semi-permanent basis:

Mr Attwood . . . may be a Machiavellian . . . it is nothing unusual for persons of that class to produce results which they never calculated upon . . . de Retz tells us of a coxcombical Duke, . . . exceedingly popular with the rabble of Paris, who to evince his power and gratify his vanity, used to assemble the multitude, but found to his cost that it was much easier to assemble them than to get rid of them when once assembled. . . . But, really, differing as we do from Mr Attwood . . . we cannot help thinking that the Address he has drawn up will do much good in more respects than one . . . He distinctly shows that, from the very constitution of Parliament, the Members are nearly the worst persons that can be found for managing the affairs of the country.

This was followed by ten months' silence on Reform as the *Gazette* concentrated its attention on the effects of poverty during the bitter winter which followed the poor harvest of 1829 (caused, some said, by divine wrath at the success of Catholic Emancipation). It consistently advocated the 'liberal' Whig policies of 'retrenchment' and 'economy' – the cutting back of royal and governmental expenditure, which it regarded as the cause of high taxes – which the *Gazette* identified, along with high farm rents from aristocratic landowners, like the Grenvilles, as a major cause of the distress, particularly in farming counties like Buckinghamshire. Like the country at large, the *Gazette* apparently began to see Reform as an essential prerequisite for economy and a return to prosperity, after Wellington's speech to the Lords in the new parliament in No-

vember 1830. There had been popular enthusiasm for Reform since that summer's election, following the death of George IV, however Wellington dismissed absolutely the need for any change to the existing parliamentary system and the wave of popular anger which followed this, caused the collapse of his government. In a valedictory the 20-11-30 BG said:

... he was . . . addressing himself to the crazy disciples of the tottering school of prejudice. He heard the million demanding reform . . . and he quailed . . . the hero of Waterloo and Catholic Emancipation, when he should have stepped boldly forward, took an ill-judged step in the rear and has fallen.

The following week's edition celebrated the King's summons to Earl Grey, who had attempted unsuccessfully to introduce a Reform Bill over thirty years earlier. Since he had succeeded the widely-detested George IV the previous summer, William IV had experienced a 'PR honeymoon', being perceived as a liberal and reforming 'sailor King', who favoured retrenchment and economy. The *Gazette* told its readers:

Earl Grey has formed his administration. It is liberal in the strict sense of the word. Economy will be enforced – the King sanctions it. Reform will be carried – the King is a Reformer!! Let the lovers of their country triumph, that the lovers of corruption must hide their heads at last. . . . Lord Nugent has accepted office, and therefore once again appeals to the electors of Aylesbury. . . . His Lordship has endeared himself by a long course of public virtue . . . strict attention to the business of his constituents, sound judgement unflinching independence . . . are his claims to their attachment. . . . That such a man has attached himself to the new administration is a sufficient guarantee that the work of reformation will be undertaken honestly and heartily. (BG 27-11-30).

However the *Gazette's* attention was immediately diverted from Reform again by the 'Swing' disturbances, (which it attributed (BG 29-1-31) jointly to poverty caused by the previous misgovernment of Wellington and Peel, and – fatuously – to the rioters' ignorance of what the Victorians called 'political economy' i.e. economics – caused by the high price of newspapers). By February 5th 1831 though, the *Gazette* was able to announce that the Grey cabinet would release the terms of the Reform Bill on March the 1st. Grey's was a caretaker minority government however, ap-

pointed by the King to introduce Reform, and by the following week it was becoming clear that it was having to negotiate with the same opponents of reform as before:

Bitter... will be the disappointment and deep the indignation of the country, if, betrayed by its professed friends, the great measure of Reform, and almost equally important, the financial arrangements for the time to come are not founded on a principle of unequivocal liberality... there will be... another general election if ministers fail in their attempts to carry their reforming measure. (BG 12-2-31).

This began a series of Reform editorials. When the terms of the bill were announced the *Gazette* commented: Of the details of the measure we have not room to speak, but they are sufficiently liberal to be worth the most vigorous support'. The bill's opponents were dismissed vitriolically: 'If doubts were entertained on this subject, the very character of the opposition should be esteemed a testimony sufficiently potent to effect their removal' and 'We are persuaded the boroughmongers... abandon the ground of reason as hopeless (BG 5 & 12-3-31).

By Monday the 19th of April the *Gazette* had reported well-attended meetings in support of Reform in all the major towns in Bucks (except Buckingham – the Grenville fief) and in Parliament the bill had received a second reading. That day Grey's government which had been continuously fighting harassment from the Ultras, finally lost a division, precipitating a general election. The following Friday, the *Gazette*, in its Market Square office, delayed going to press until the last moment in a vain attempt to report what proved to be scenes of uproar in the Commons, as MP's attempted to roar each other down, amid the booming of cannon announcing the arrival of William IV to prorogue Parliament:

Crisis... Latest Intelligence – Friday Afternoon... the King will go to Parliament in *person*. Will the boroughmongers now be satisfied of the King's devotion to the cause of his people?'

Second edition – Bucks Gazette Office – Saturday Morning The Prorogation... The scene was such as to beggar description...'

After this excitement, the next Friday's editorial respectfully suggested to county voters that

they should disagree with Chandos' views on Reform:

Freeholders of Bucks... many of you are doubtless, personally attached to the Lord Chandos... Your Sovereign, to whom you owe your first allegiance, and your Country, to whom you owe your warmest attachment, now... demand of you... dare you... be instrumental in the perpetuation of... the selling of seats in Parliament... Will you, Freeholders of Bucks, vote for the bill...? (BG 7-5-31)

They did not – Nugent and Rickford were elected again for Aylesbury, with Lord Kirkwall, an anti-reform candidate, coming third, but the county voters returned Chandos as one of the two members for Bucks. Farmers after 1832 tended to be Tories as the Tories were the party of agricultural protectionism but in any case Chandos' return to Parliament was a foregone conclusion because of the overwhelming power of his family over traders and tenant farmers who voted publicly. The *Gazette* editorial for 14-5-31 criticised these voters bitterly for electing him, especially as John Smith, a Carrington family nominee and a supporter of Reform, had been returned as the other member (probably because of a trade-off of the kind mentioned earlier):

Shame to the county of Buckingham!... while in other places where the people were free... in the county in which we write, in Buckingham,... Duke and Marquis-ridden and empty Buckingham, the reply has been what? Lord Chandos and Mr Smith – slavery and no slavery – boroughmongering, and no boroughmongering – corruption and no corruption, ... no Reform and Reform. (BG 14-5-31).

The following week though, a triumphant editorial prematurely banished doubts as to the immediate success of Reform: 'The battle... may now be considered as over', and the 28-5-31 editorial predicted the Lords would not dare reject the bill in the face of support for it from the King, Commons and country, especially as the King could swamp the Lords with newly ennobled pro-reform peers. After this the *Gazette* ignored Reform topics, apart from the June editorials, mentioned earlier, on political bias in the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry, until October 8th, when the Lords, as had become widely expected, rejected the bill. The *Gazette*, going to press that day, before the Lords' rejection, advocated public demonstra-

tions if the bill was lost, combined with the creation of massive numbers of pro-Reform peers. By the time it came out again the news that the Lords had rejected the bill was stale (some Aylesbury Tories had wished to celebrate earlier in the week by ringing the church bells, but had been prevented by Mr Morley, the pro-Reform vicar (BG 5-1131) and the *Gazette* merely commented that the Lords had been ill-advised. By November 5th pro-Reform riots had taken place in Derby, Nottingham, Bristol and other towns and the *Gazette*, (which had of course advocated demonstrations four weeks earlier) defended itself:

Rioting . . . is all but sure to occur whenever a wrong continues to be inflicted on a country . . . To the account of the boroughmongers do we lay all the mischief that shall have occurred . . . To pretend that the rioting is part and parcel of the Reform policy is the height of impudence. (BG 5-11-31)

The *Gazette's* final editorial for 1831 was impassioned – it described the departing year as: 'ever memorable in the history of England as the period in which was introduced for the first time . . . a bill to reform the . . . Commons' House . . .'. The contest between the Reformers and their opponents was described in Biblical language not unsuited to a primaevial contest between good and evil, ('. . . bruising the head of boroughmongery' . . .). After castigating the enemies to Reform as 'venomous and filthy things . . . hateful to men's sight' it expressed fierce approval for:

the principle of Reform . . . which will trample in the dust all the ill-gotten influence of the land's grandees . . . that principle of salvation to the country and destruction to the evil power of its . . . oppressors. (BG 31-12-31)

3 – The Chandos Clause

The *Gazette* was an opponent of the clause inserted by Chandos into the Reform Bill enfranchising farmers who were not freeholders but paid £50 rent. Until the secret ballot in 1872 and the extension of the rural vote by the 1884 Reform Act, it was possible for local families like the Grenvilles, firstly to select Parliamentary candidates (sometimes in a trade-off with their political rivals – one Tory and one Liberal candidate for two seats) and secondly to influence the way tenants voted – twenty-seven years later, when further reform was in the air a letter to the *Gazette* by 'A

Working Man but not a Flunkey' said that without the ballot the urban working man would be as deferential as the £10 householders were (BG 12-2-59). Chandos' name is still associated with the clause enfranchising farmers who paid £50 rent (he and his supporters seem to have referred to it as the 'Farmers' Clause' – and his enemies as the 'Chandos' or 'Tenants-at-Will' clause emphasising the dependant status of tenant farmers). Most farmers were Tories as for obvious reasons they supported the Tory policy on agricultural Protectionism, but in any case they rented their farms from landowners. The Grenvilles were major landowners and Chandos' bankruptcy was partly the result of expenditure on obtaining yet more land in north Bucks – the *Gazette* suggested a motive other than disinterested admiration, for Chandos's help to the farmers:

. . . we will be much surprised if they (farmers who payed £50 rent) are able, successfully, to resist the power of their landlords. It has been pretended they are as independent a body as the £10 householders. This is a gross piece of cajolery, addressed to the vanity of the farmers to get their sanction to what will prove to the landlord a means of additional power' (BG 27-8-31).

The *Gazette* pointed out that £10 urban householders were often genuinely independent of their landlords as they could move house, depriving their landlord of his rent, whereas a farmer who moved would deprive himself of his living, while the landlord continued to cultivate profitably his own land. Chandos had been one of the two county members since that May, and the *Gazette* summed up the probable result of his eponymous clause as: ' . . . a considerable addition to the county constituency' (*ibid*). The view usually expressed by later historians confirms the *Gazette's* prediction Halévy (p.61) included Bucks without comment among eight county seats won by the opponents of Reform in the December 1832 election because of the 'Chandos Clause'.

4 – The Buckinghamshire Yeomanry

The Buckinghamshire Yeomanry was one of the militias intended to defend the country against foreign invasion and domestic disorder (yeomanry cavalry in Manchester had bloodily broken up a peaceful demonstration at the 'Peterloo Massacre' in 1816). The Yeomanry was commanded

by the Marquess of Chandos, who had prevented its disbandment in 1828 by sponsoring it as his private cavalry with himself as Colonel Commandant, Chandos was besotted with it and it was a bastion of Ultra political sympathies with reform enthusiasts unrepresented in its ranks. The only surviving Individual portraits of Chandos are in Yeomanry uniform, and it was eventually one of the causes of his spectacular bankruptcy – Beckett says (pp. 138 and 153) that Chandos' father, the duke, was 'heavily involved both personally and financially in the county militia and yeomanry' and 'The Yeomanry must have cost him (Chandos) a small fortune, but Chandos kept no accounts'. He also calls it 'a contentious area within county society' and tells how in January 1831 the Duke attempted to remove three officers as they were connected with trade – in short the Yeomanry was, or had the potential to be, what would now be called a right-wing paramilitary organisation, commanded by a leader of the Tory Ultras.

The BG of 11-6-31 had commented adversely on the political bias of the Yeomanry and the 18-6-31 edition contained a letter by a Yeomanry trooper which, while admitting the Yeomanry was almost completely Tory, dismissed unease over its political bias:

... whatever may be the general opinion throughout the county, with regard to his (Chandos') political conduct, I feel convinced that in all generous and unprejudiced minds, unity of sentiment must prevail on this subject.

A *Gazette* editorial on the same page dismissed this as the writing of a 'noodle' and asked how Chandos would feel if he were a yeoman in a militia under the command of a Reform enthusiast:

Let us . . . imagine a Reformer in command of a yeomanry corps composed, say, of a few . . . peace-loving farmers – a considerable number of most respectable tenantry, with farms at high nominal rents . . . but with a yearly reduction dependent on the . . . good humour of the above-named reformer and on the subserviency never halting for breath . . . add to these . . . the vassals in the last degree with no veil to cover the shame of their political prostitution . . .

The *Gazette* reached the obvious conclusion that Chandos would quickly leave such a yeomanry, but the implicit meaning of the *Gazette's*

editorial was of course that the Bucks Yeomanry was an Ultra version of this hypothetical Reform yeomanry – manned by 'politically prostituted vassals' and tenantry dependent for its solvency on a yearly rent reduction from *its* Commanding Officer. The editorial continued ironically: 'We have put merely an hypothesis' and turned to a real example of political bias in the yeomanry – the Countess Verulam, when presenting new colours to the Herts Yeomanry – commanded by her son – had said:

I do not expect . . . that you will have to settle the broils of nations on British ground, but we have other and nearer dangers to avert in the restless and innovating spirit of the times: it is from the miseries that may be produced by this that we look for your protection.

The *Gazette* then quoted the pro-reform *Bedford Chronicle* (with which it merged the following spring). The *Chronicle* had said the speech:

... points to the probability of a struggle between the people at large and the Aristocratic few . . . a body of armed dependants are exhorted to "protect" the arrogant faction of course by violence . . . against the mass of their fellow countrymen. In feudal times when one great house was at war with another, such displays might be useful, but it is not physical force that bears the palm at the present day:

(In July the government disarmed the yeomanries and the Bucks Yeomanry disappears from the *Gazette* editorial columns as a cause for serious concern).

5 – Railways

The *Gazette* was opposed to the Grenvilles on the question of railways. The immense impact of railways on 19th century society is difficult to comprehend today – the *Bucks Free Press*, (founded in 1856 partly as the result of an extension to the branch railway system), contains many references to railway excursions by ordinary people in the 1850's and 60's to museums, galleries and exhibitions in London and on pleasure trips to previously inaccessible places – one account (BFP 20-8-58) mentions an excursion to London by 1,000 people (about a sixth of the population of High Wycombe) despite torrential rain. Butler, the editor, was old enough to recall the pre-railway era and an editorial: 'Go by Third Class' said:

We know not that any modern discovery can be named

more valuable to the public than railway travelling. . . It has accomplished a social revolution'. . . It would require a volume to trace out even briefly the various effects of this great discovery upon the commerce, social habits and life of the nation (BFP 30-7-64).

Conservatives in the 1830's feared the railways though – Wellington's attributed remark, that he disapproved of railways as they made it easier for the working classes to travel, is often misunderstood today as a crusty drollery. However, in the aftermath of the 'Swing' riots and at a time of revolution in France, the easy mobility railways conferred was genuinely feared, here and abroad, as a potential engine of revolution – between 1831 and 1846 the reactionary Pope, Gregory XVI, prevented the establishment of an Italian railway network by forbidding the construction of railways throughout the extensive Papal territories in Italy. In this country in 1832, the Grenville family and other landowners in north Bucks and the adjoining counties, advertised public meetings and Parliamentary petitions to oppose the planned line of the London and Birmingham Railway through the Chilterns via Aylesbury and Buckingham. The following year one of the few things which distracted the newly-founded *Bucks Herald*, from attacks on the Reform Bill and the Grey government, was the planned London to Birmingham Railway. An editorial in the third issue of the *Bucks Herald* on the subject justified the fears of the conservative rural gentry in Bucks and Hertfordshire:

. . . we have bestowed our most serious attention on the subject, and the result of that reflection inclines most decidedly *against* the scheme. . . on local, and general and political grounds. . . *Locally* because we believe it will prejudice the interests of Bucks. . . this rail road, which will convey from Birmingham to London in five hours and a half, will. . . turn the town (Aylesbury) into a thoroughfare and render conveyance so cheap as wholly to destroy the profits of small tradesmen. . . *Generally* it will at once ruin the coach masters, the canal proprietors, and carriers. The "circulation of capital" is moonshine, and. . . only temporary as will be the employ of the labourer. . . to terminate in a greater evil, and more universal want of occupation. . . We will not advert to the individual property which it will deteriorate. . . *Politically*. . . we think that to keep Birmingham at twelve hours' transit from the capital is highly desirable. . . especially at this juncture – Were it within five hours' and an half. . . we should have ten thousand or twenty thousand artificers, pikes in hand in London. . . National Unions would be within a two-penny post distance. . . Mr Attwood. . . could indulge in a

morning's harangue at Birmingham, a noon-day's speechification at Spa Fields, and return to. . . a five o'clock dinner. Again. . . this scheme. . . (will) render all England a mass of smoke and ironworks – Rurality would be utterly destroyed. . . The manufacturers (i.e the factory hands) would come into close contact with the agriculturists, and inoculate them with their own habits of sedition, radicalism, and dram-drinking. It would always be requisite to keep large bodies of military in readiness. . . and that would be nugatory or beyond any benefit which the mere rapidity of conveyance between Birmingham and London could confer.

The *Herald* concluded: 'These are. . . our objections, given impartially, and as such open to refutation'. (The line of the railway eventually went through Wolverton, missing Aylesbury and Buckingham).

The popular perception of the *Bucks Herald* as a mouthpiece for the Grenvilles was well-founded – they sponsored it during the 1830's and the editorial just quoted can safely be regarded as an expression of the views of the Duke of Buckingham and his family. Once again though, the *Bucks Gazette*, almost a year earlier, had adopted a view opposite to that of the Grenvilles, recommending the railway on the 'circulation of capital' grounds the *Herald* had dismissed as 'moonshine':

We will give our reasons why we are firm advocates of the London and Birmingham Railway Company and why. . . the scheme, above all others now before the public, is eminently entitled to general support and approbation. . . one of the most generally acknowledged evils of the present day, is the want of adequate employment for the labouring poor. This grand undertaking alone will, it is calculated, afford employment for thirty thousand of them for three years. . . Is this not worthy the consideration of overseers. . . in parishes overburthened with unemployed paupers? . . . It will cause, moreover, an estimated outlay of between three and four millions of money. And from whence will this vast sum be drawn? From the pockets of the wealthy and rich capitalists, in whose hands it at present lies unproductive and valueless, to disseminate activity and life to the labouring population of the extensive tract of country through which it passes. . . with the exception of the royalty upon the iron used, and the expences of surveying, the remainder of the outlay goes almost entirely in labor (BG 12-2-31).

The *Gazette* said it would 'probably' return to the subject the following week, when it would outline other arguments in favour of the railway, while:

examining a little the nature of the opposition brought against it, and the arguments if such they may be called, which have been adduced in support of this ungenerous opposition. (*Ibid*).

This promises well for a biting attack on the 'agriculturists' – the rural gentry and farmers who were the most stalwart supporters of Chandos and the other Ultras, but unfortunately the *Gazette* did not mention railways the following week and subsequent issues became gradually preoccupied by Reform.

Conclusion

The Grenvilles could hardly have been well-disposed towards the *Bucks Gazette* – it had urged county voters to withdraw their support from the Marquis of Chandos and then associated his election with: 'Shame to the county of Buckingham! . . . slavery . . . boroughmongering, (and) . . . corruption'. It had attacked the Yeomanry and advocated railways, Reform, (and Emancipation previously), in the county which was the centre of influence for Chandos and his family. It clearly opposed the institutions they supported and supported institutions which were in conflict with their political and financial interests.

By the end of 1832 a 'prospectus' (BH 7-1-32) had been circulating in the county, advertising the launch of a new paper in Aylesbury. The new paper – a counter-voice to the *Gazette* – was the *Bucks Herald*, which had over half its circulation sponsored at times by the Grenvilles, until Chandos' bankruptcy in 1848.

Notes

1. Bucks County Reference Library Copy of Parliamentary Report on the Corporation of Buckingham, Municipal Corporations Commission, 1833, Reference L182:35.
2. Beckett, pp. 84–8
3. Beckett, pp. 138–159
4. Beckett, p. 107

Abbreviations:

- BG: *Bucks Gazette*
BH: *Bucks Herald*
CPXC: See Blake (Bibliography)
DNB: *The Dictionary of National Biography*
SRP: Gash, Norman. *Sir Robert Peel: the Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830*, (Harlow 1986)

The passion contained in the *Gazette's* Reform editorial on New Year's Eve 1831, must have been increased by the knowledge that such a newspaper was about to be launched, and run at an unfair commercial loss by a family which had grown fat at the public expense. For the time being however, the *Gazette's* impassioned valedictory to 1831, in the middle of what had become a prolonged struggle to reform Parliament, is a suitable point at which to leave its affairs.

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Appendix

Popular Opposition to Catholic Emancipation

The 21-3-29 BG quotes Mr Rickford, telling the Commons that he had recently presented them a petition opposing Emancipation, signed by 811 inhabitants of Aylesbury Parish, whereas another, in support, presented by Lord Nugent, only contained 151 signatures from 'the town and neighbourhood of Aylesbury'. Rickford also claimed Nugent's petition contained fewer than 40 signatures from 'Aylesbury persons'.

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