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Everyday Corporations: Clubs and Civil Society 1688-1800

By

Brendan Mackie

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Thomas Laqueur
Professor James Vernon
Professor Heather Haveman

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Abstract

Everyday Corporations: Clubs and Civil Society 1688-1800

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Brendan Mackie

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University of California, Berkeley

Professor Thomas Laqueur, Chair

The explosive growth of British clubs over the 18th Century has been understood to have major implications for the histories of sociability, the public sphere, civil society, and masculinity. This dissertation looks at the history of clubs from another perspective, that of the history of organizations. To capture a robust narrative of club growth over the long term, a Digital Census of club activities was produced drawing from archive catalogues, contemporary newspapers, and secondary sources. Displaying these enumerations in data visualizations shows the steady growth in the per capita density of clubs over the long 18th Century. Clubs developed from marginal urban pastimes to inescapable cornerstones of everyday life. Clubs used minutes, democratic deliberation, and elected officers to maintain themselves: practices that were borrowed from the wider corporate world. This dissertation reframes the growth of civil society organizations like clubs as the spread of procedural, formal administration into everyday life. Corporate paperwork was used not only to make a rational organization but also to develop interested, embedded, local ties. The expansion of these corporate tools led to the development of a pluralistic civil society that included a huge range of increasingly specialized activities. A case study of change ringing, a form of English church bell ringing, shows how the pastime developed into a conspicuously complex amusement in order appeal to a niche of accurate middle-class men. But this civil society became specialized, fractured, and at times obscure. The fracturing of civil society came to a political crisis in the 1790s, with the French Revolution and the domestic British radical project for political reform. We have missed how this conflict was not just about reform against reaction, but also about the proper uses of civil society organizations. What resulted from the conflict was a conception of civil society as 'neutral', acting outside of the state or the market and limited self-interest.

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Introduction: "It Is In Society Alone That We Can Procure the Gratifications of Our Natural Desires"

The Trifrontal Society was a learned club founded in 1821 in the Scottish port city of Leith.[1] Every meeting, members would read essays aloud and hold a debate on a learned topic. Their subjects varied: a catalog of 200 meteors; a history of the rise of scientific institutions; and a discourse on the natural human propensity to congregate into groups. "Whence arises that delight, that inexpressible pleasure which most people feel in a society, composed of persons who are of the same dispositions and the same frame of mind as themselves?" asked the essay about human society written by member John Coldstream. Coldstream's answer was that society was a blessing, divinely constructed to make men better than what they would otherwise be:

> It is in society alone that the Creator has destined the abilities of man to be brought into play—it is in society alone that we can procure the gratifications of our natural desires—we can therefore conclude that this was the state for which man was intended by the great Author of his nature—and that the social system is not the result of accident, but of infinite goodness and wisdom.

The men of the Trifrontal Society used their organization to bring their own abilities "into play." Over the club's first year they founded a museum, a library, and an herbarium, and wrote and debated at least 28 essays. Their meetings were compelling, and started to stretch late into the night. "From a meeting of an hour at a time we have gradually seen ourselves engaged in no less than three and four hours of an evening, while no one was imagining how fast the time was passing." The Trifrontal Society resembled a great number of other clubs and societies. They held regular meetings. They were governed by formal rules. They elected officers. They even formed committees. Such formality allowed them to have a persistent identity over time and accomplish a great deal of highly specialized activity.

Eighteenth Century Britain was by no means the first place where voluntary organizations like the Leith Trifrontal Society thrived. A deep history of voluntary organization stretches back to fictive kinship groups, and encompasses associations as diverse as companies in Greece and Rome, the medieval guild, and Chinese secret societies.[2] Britain had active guilds and voluntary religious fraternities since at least the 13th century.[3] But something novel did happen to clubs in 18th Century Britain that marks its associational world out as distinctive, even momentous. From the end of the Civil Wars in the 1660s, the number of clubs per person steadily grew. In 1650 there was perhaps one club for every 2,250 men in Britain. By the time of the Trifontal Society in 1829 there was one club for every 85 men in Britain. Never before had voluntary associations been so common.

There was something peculiar about the Trifrontal Society that pushes us to reconsider this story of the growth of the British associational world. The group had only three members: John Coldstream, Charles Morton, and David Thorburn—and all were sixteen years old. Why did a group of sixteen-year-old boys feel the need to keep minutes, elect officers, and form administrative committees to

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[1] Its three minute books are held at Edinburgh Central Library Y/q/41/t --A9471-3.

[2] Robert T. Anderson, "Voluntary Associations in History," *American Anthropologist* 73, no. 1 (1971): 209–22.

[3] Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015).

organize their teenaged scientific pursuits? Why did the divinely constructed pleasures of society require the tedium of man-made laws and regulations? The young men of the Leith Trifrontal Society gave us one answer. They said that administrative formalities helped make their group more efficient and consistent:

> We can only expect success to our society and benefit to ourselves by a strict regard and attention to [rules]. If we begin to yield in any one point, the Society begins to lose its authority, and an inroad is made for further digressions. But if we attend to these laws and act up to them we may expect our Society to increase in vigor—in strength—and in honor.

This has been the obvious explanation for the expansion of organizations since at least Weber, who argued that modern bureaucratic organizations were more effective in a changing, uncertain, diverse world.[4] But it's unclear just how *useful* the minutes and committees were for the three teenagers of the Leith Trifrontal Society. Did they really need committees to help organize their late-night discussion sessions? We do know that these administrative practices were deeply *meaningful* to the young men. At the end of the club's second term they gathered money together to bind their minutes in a handsome leather book that gave them a great deal of pride. "When I saw the first volume of our Transactions bound," President Morton recalled a few weeks later, "I thought that now we had something like a foundation." They worked hard at their society, and it grew. They elected a corresponding member from Glasgow, and another from New South Wales. They eventually brought in more members, and changed their name to the Scientific Society of Leith (they had more than three fronts now). The club seems to have lost steam once the founding members reached 18, and they broke up some time after 1826.

This dissertation tells the history of the rise of clubs over the long 18th Century —roughly 1688 to 1815—taking seriously the meaning of club paperwork. Clubs' administrative tools identify them as one end of a *corporate continuum* that extended from clubs, to parish vestries, to joint stock companies, to company-states, to the state itself. Clubs adopted these practices, like Weber suggested, as a way of reducing the "friction" of running complex organizations in a changing world. Yet clubs also used these tools because they were intrinsically meaningful, as the three young men of the Trifrontal Society felt so proud when they bound their minutes together into a book. This cultural work helps us rethink the history of modern organizations. Most historical narratives of the rise of the organization focus on the large bureaucracies of factories and the government that took over the world after the middle of the 19th century. This dissertation shows that everyday life in Britain in the long 18th Century underwent a similar process of a spread organization using many of the features of Weberian bureaucracy: written rules, record-keeping, and disinterested officers. But clubs used their paperwork to do more than carry out an impersonal, effective administration. Strict adherence to procedure and paperwork helped people experience "that delight, that inexpressible pleasure which most people feel in a society."

The organization of everyday life through corporate tools constitutes the historical rise of civil society. We usually think of Civil Society as a negative place in between state and market, buffering the excesses of these larger forces. This is misleading. Civil Society arose historically in Britain through the extension of corporate administration into the spaces of everyday life. By the middle of the 18th

[4] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

Century, the expertise of how to establish and manage these organizations was so widespread that even teenagers were doing it. The spread of these practices generated a pluralistic Civil Society, in which men could voluntarily engage in a huge number of different activities and identities in an innumerable variety of different organizations. Civil society is not a space outside of organized life, it is the extension of this organization into the rhythms of everyday life.

Historiography

Clubs have been the subject of a wide but fractured historiography. There is a rich antiquarian tradition of club anecdotes,[5] and a huge number of single-organization 'club histories' usually by and for club members.[6] The contemporary historiography on clubs can be understood as beginning with Peter Clark's book *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800*. For Clark, the club emerged out of the social life of the tavern, cobbling together practices from the continental academy, fraternity, guild, and religious organizations. According to Clark, club growth after the Civil Wars (1642-1651) was spurred by a number of demographic, economic and cultural factors. On the demographic side was the unprecedented rate of urbanization. Britain over this time was becoming one of the most urban places on earth, and London one of the world's largest cities. At the same time the structure of the economy was changing, with men being pushed out of rural labor and finding work instead in cities, particularly in manufacturing and in services—often enjoying a much higher standard of living in the process.[7] On the cultural side, this young, urban society on the move was increasingly disconnected from traditional rural culture and needed new forms of sociability to find meaning and belonging. Clubs, in Clark's portrayal, were a flexible, commercial, urban amusement that spread across the English-speaking world because they were a good solution to the social and cultural problems of a growing urban population and a changing economy. They were broad based—taken up by great numbers of workers, gentry, and elites—and they flourished into hundreds of particular specializations, with a great deal of regional variety.

All subsequent studies of clubs owe a great debt to Clark, and for the past 20 years no scholar has produced a study of clubs with such a geographic and temporal reach.[8] The very smallest in scale are detailed case studies of individual clubs. These are only possible for the most well-documented organizations like Samuel Johnson's Literary Club (called simply *the Club*) which included individuals like Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, James Boswell, David Garrick, Edward Gibbon and Adam Smith, who all wrote a great deal and were written about a great deal. Using these extensive sources, there has been a rich historiography of the Club that shows much of the relationships the organization facilitated. Leo Damrosch's recent book gives an intimate group portrait of the club, attempting in the

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[5] See e.g. John Timbs, *Club Life of London: With Anecdotes of the Clubs, Coffee Houses, and Taverns of the Metropolis, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries*, electronic resource (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012298559; Charles Graves, *Leather Armchairs: The Chivas Regal Book of London Clubs* (London: Cassell, 1963).

[6] Seth Thévoz has catalogued over 100 such histories for over 60 individual clubs. "London Clubs Bibliography," Seth Alexander Thévoz, accessed April 27, 2021, http://www.sethalexanderthevoz.com/london-clubs-bibliography.

[7] For an updated account of the demographic and economic changes of the time, see Stephen Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[8] Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall, eds., *Association and Enlightenment: Scottish Clubs and Societies, 1700-1830* (Rutgers University Press, 2020) came to my attention too late to consult for this dissertation

process to recover the lost voices of the club room.[9] A similar narrative strategy of a sort of collective biography is used by Jenny Uglow in her book on the Lunar Society, a group in the Midlands that included industrialists like Matthew Bolton, experimenters like James Watt, and thinkers like Joseph Priestley.[10] The study of individual clubs with rich documentation has done more than any other to recover the rich texture of club life—the bonhomie, the space for eccentricity, and the wide opportunities for deep friendships. But the problem with this historiography is that there are only a very few clubs with a rich enough source base to make such a detailed study possible. The picture from these works may be especially clear, but it suggests a distorted picture of the broader phenomenon.

Another research program looks at clubs as an element of a new kind of sociability. After the Restoration in the 1660s, new kinds of social and political practices evolved, especially in the growing cities. These new practices took place in new 'public' venues like pleasure gardens, and often involved the consumption of consumer goods like coffee, tea or commemorative plates.[11] Numerous scholars have argued that clubs arose out of the particular culture of the London coffeehouse, one of the paradigmatic sites of this new sociability.[12] For contemporary scholars of sociability, clubs have been primarily studied as ways of understanding the development of this public sphere via the coffeehouse.[13] Like coffeehouses, clubs were places where people read and debated news. But unlike coffeehouses clubs were officially closed to outsiders—sometimes beadles would stand outside the club room door, armed with ceremonial maces to keep out strangers and protect the club's secrets. Valérie Capdeville in particular has done a great deal to explore the club's ambiguous balance between public and private. In her characterization, the club was a venue in which a man could encounter the public, read newspapers, and debate, but do so within a closed circle of his intimate friends in familiar and almost domestic surroundings.[14] The club developed a distinctive form of sociability, but it is less clear that it was *public*.

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[9] Leopold Damrosch, *The Club: Johnson, Boswell, and the Friends Who Shaped an Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

[10] Jennifer S. Uglow, *The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiousity Changed Theworld*, 1st American ed (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

[11] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance : Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford [England] :New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1989); Emma Griffin, *England's Revelry: A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes, 1660-1830*, 1 edition (Oxford ; New York: British Academy, 2005); Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé, eds., *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, Studies in the Eighteenth Century (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019).

[12] For a conventional account of the development of the coffeehouse to the club, see Stephen Hoare, *Palaces of Power: The Birth and Evolution of London's Clubland* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2019), 34–62.

[13] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 1st MIT Press paperback ed, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991); Craig J. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992).

[14] For some of Capedville's work in English see Valérie Capdeville, "Gender at Stake: The Role of Eighteenth-Century London Clubs in Shaping A New Model of English Masculinity," *Culture, Society & Masculinities* 4, no. 1 (January 2012): 13–32, https://doi.org/10.3149/csm.0401.13; Valérie Capdeville, "The Ambivalent Identity of Eighteenth-Century London Clubs as a Prelude to Victorian Clublife," *Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens*, no. 81 Printemps (September 6, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.1976; Valérie Capdeville, "Noise and Sound Reconciled: How London Clubs Shaped Conversation into a Social Art," *Études Épistémè. Revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe – XVIIIe siècles)*, no. 29 (June 21, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.1208; Valérie Capdeville, "Club Sociability and the Emergence of New

Clubs were exclusive in another important sense: the vast majority of them were closed to women. A number of female literary clubs have received scholarly attention, including the Scottish Fair Intellectual Society and the Bluestockings.[15] Leo Damrosch has argued that Hester Thrale's Streatham Circle was a more inclusive mirror of Johnson's more famous and formal Club—a "shadow club" that included both men and women.[16] A survey of female involvement in clubs includes some instances of female club-going in the 18th century, like the Female or Coterie Society.[17] Women were welcome in some respectable specialized clubs as spectators and sometimes participants, including musical and debating societies.[18] In hell-fire clubs in the 1730s, and cock and hen clubs in the 1770s and 1780s men and women gathered together for drinking and sex, but these have left behind few reliable sources describing their activities and membership, and it's impossible to know how common they were in practice.[19] These scattered examples may overstate the extent of female involvement in clubs. In my quantitative sample, before the 1760s there were hardly any female clubs at all, and after the 1760s only 0.5% of clubs included women. (We have not attended enough to the presence of women in the club room as laborers, serving food, drink or sex.) This all-male environment created a particular kind of masculinity. For Capdeville, the homosocial space of the club was a reaction to the model of politeness which British people thought particularly *French*, in which men restrained their speech and action to socialize with women. The club in contrast let men be English and free—free to talk about whatever topic they wanted, using whatever language they wanted; free furthermore to govern themselves, and free to drink to excess, but this freedom was built on the exclusion of women.[20] Similarly, looking at the 19th Century, Amy Milne-Smith used the London elite gentlemen's clubs to show the creation of a homosocial domestic space, that allowed men to enjoy a home away from home where they could be free of family responsibility.[21]

Another research program looks at clubs as elements in a new kind of information regime: venues where commercial, political and scientific information could be spread in new ways. It's clear that one of the draws of clubs was that they were places to share news, particularly commercial news. The novel information regime of the club has been seen as contributing to a new efflorescence of scientific

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'sociable' Practices," in *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. Alain Kerhervé, Studies in the Eighteenth Century (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019).

15 Derya Gurses Tarbuck, "Exercises in Women's Intellectual Sociability in the Eighteenth Century: The Fair Intellectual Club," *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 3 (April 3, 2015): 375–86, https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2014.964004; Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1st edition (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press, 1990); Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2008); Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism*, Palgrave Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print (Basingstoke, England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

16 Damrosch, *The Club*.

17 David Doughan and Peter Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain*, Woburn Education Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).

18 Mary Thale, "Women in London Debating Societies in 1780," *Gender & History* 7, no. 1 (1995): 5–24, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1995.tb00011.x; Donna T. Andrew, "Popular Culture and Public Debate: London 1780," *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 2 (1996): 405–23.

19 Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti : Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Daniel P. Mannix, *The Hellfire Club* (New York: Ibooks, 2001).

20 Capdeville, "Gender at Stake."

21 Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

advancement—an English Enlightenment.[22] This historiography explains the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution as a result of a novel scientific culture, including scientific publications, a "Republic of Letters," and a great many learned clubs. Clubs aided the spread of scientific knowledge by publishing experiments, uniting *savants* and *fabricants,* and helping educate the curious.[23] "Science seemed to require clubbing," write Margaret Jacob and Larry Stewart, describing the ubiquity of clubs in 18th Century scientific sociality.[24] Less linearly, Ileana Baird, using methods of social network analysis and Actor Network Theory, understands the novelty of coffeehouse- and club-dominated 18th Century sociability to be the sprawling networks produced by a much more promiscuous sharing of information.[25] Looking at the European context, Margaret Jacob sees the continental expansion of Freemasonry as the spread a distinctive British constitutional culture: self-governing, secular, republican—even democratic. For Jacob, it was the new ways of seeing oneself, of speaking, of collaborating together, spread through Masonic lodges, that provided the lived experience that would make the Enlightenment.[26]

Scholars have understood that the increasing number and density of clubs changed society as a whole. Tocqueville famously equated America's peculiar democracy with its strong network of associations and newspapers.[27] Involvement in such "minor matters" as the club could teach the finer points of democratic participation that could help the creation of a new kind of state. This link has been recently advanced by the research on civil society, particularly that of Robert Putnam.[28] But the precise links between the density of voluntary organizations and the salutary effects of civil society are both theoretically and empirically unclear, and an extensive research program has complicated but not clarified the issue.[29] In Britain, we can see the role of clubs as mollifying the excesses of capitalism perhaps most clearly through mutual aid clubs, like the numerous box clubs and Friendly Societies

[22] Although there is a consensus that there were European, French, and Scottish Enlightenments, if there was an English Enligthenment it looked very different. For the strongest case for an English Enlightenment see Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*, 1st American ed (New York: Norton, 2000).

[23] Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain,1700-1850*, The New Economic History of Britain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[24] Margaret C. Jacob and Larry Stewart, *Practical Matter* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 50–55.

[25] Ileana Baird, *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coteries* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNKNOWN: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2014), 17, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1859165.

[26] Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[27] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: And Two Essays on America*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003), 595–609.

[28] Tocqueville, 593; Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[29] C. M. Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, European Association of Social Anthropologists (London: Routledge, 1996); Frank Trentmann, ed., *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000); B. Edwards, M.W. Foley, and M. Diani, *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*, Civil Society (University Press of New England, 2001), https://books.google.com/books?id=_U196GHkto0C; Shanker Satyanath, Nico Voigtländer, and Hans-Joachim Voth, "Bowling for Fascism: Social Capital and the Rise of the Nazi Party," *Journal of Political Economy* 125, no. 2 (March 3, 2017): 478–526, https://doi.org/10.1086/690949.

that combined socializing with insurance provision.[30] Clubs were used to provide for a number of other public goods that the state failed to provide: they were used to organize urban improvements like public buildings, help regulate markets, and also to provide police services.[31]

Research on clubs not been confined to Britain. Clark and Capdeville have each explored how the British club form that had diffused to British North America developed its own particular character,[32] and there is a rich historiography on North American clubs. Indian clubs have received somewhat less attention, but they were major institutions in colonial life, particularly gentlemen's clubs which became homes away from home to the many single white men living in India. Mrinalini Sinha has shown how they can be understood as a "colonial" public sphere. Just as clubbability became the exclusive feature of British men, in India clubbability helped create the idea of the colonial elite as British, white and male.[33] Benjamin Cohen offered a more optimistic view, seeing Indian clubs as facilitating ties between British and Indian men in a limited but real public sphere.[34] Jessica Harland-Jacobs has the most geographically ambitious account of British associational life, looking at how Freemasonry travelled with the British empire, giving far-flung brothers abroad in the wider British Empire necessary institutions of belonging. This involved a dramatic change in Freemasonry's mentality, from cosmopolitan and at times radical to more conservative: a project of free, white male protestants working together to improve the world.[35]

The bulk of this historiography over the past two decades has provided more detail to Clark's already detailed description of clubs. We know that the clubs' contributions to both the public sphere and civil society were quite ambiguous. We know that the club form spread and diversified with great regional variation both across Britain and also around the whole world. But we still understand the club as mostly a social institution: a space in taverns or coffeehouses where people experimented with new ways of talking to one another. There is space for a reconsideration of clubs, not just as a social space, but as *organizations;* not just in the context of eating and drinking, but in the context of the development of the corporation and modern bureaucracies.

The Argument

This dissertation considers clubs in England, Scotland, and Wales. It begins in 1650 during the Civil Wars, when the word *club* was first being used to describe a new kind of social institution. Its main focus is the 18th Century, when club had matured, and sources are much more numerous and

30 Penelope Ismay, *Trust Among Strangers: Friendly Societies in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, United Kingdom : New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Daniel Weinbren, *The Oddfellows, 1810-2010: 200 Years of Making Friends and Helping People*, 1st Edition (Lancaster England: Carnegie Publishing, 2012).

31 David Phillips, "Good Men to Associate and Bad Men to Conspire : Associations for the Prosecution of Felons in England 1760–1860," in *Theories and Origins of the Modern Police* (Routledge, 2011), 331–88, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315084824-15.

32 Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 388–429.

33 Mrinalini Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 489–521.

34 Benjamin B. Cohen, *In the Club: Associational Life in Colonial South Asia*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

35 Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

illuminating. The dissertation ends with the political crisis over associations in the 1790s, but includes material until 1830.

This dissertation uses an expansive definition of clubs. It understands clubs to be *organizations*: they are formal groups that meet regularly for a particular purpose. These organizations are *voluntary*: members can enter and exit the organization without coercion. Members are not forced to participate in the club out of economic necessity, as is in the case with guilds; nor out of a feeling of moral obligation, as is the case of religious communities. Finally, clubs are *self-governing*: they have formal and informal methods of administration carried out by the membership themselves.

This large temporal and geographic scope presents a major methodological challenge. Evidence for these practices is scattered in a voluminous and often low-quality sources. How to consolidate these sources and use them to narrate a coherent development? To present a comprehensive overview of clubs, in **Chapter One** this dissertation updates Clark's quantitative accounts of clubs by using a novel combination of databases, archival research and data visualization. Whereas Clark narrated his account of clubs using a collage of representative anecdotes, this dissertation blends traditional narrative with interactive data visualizations to explore slow changes in everyday social practices. What we see is that clubs grew steadily and slowly across the country. Over time, they were used for new kinds of association, which changed their character and in some cases their composition.

By looking at the development of a particular genre of club paperwork, **Chapter Two** makes the case that clubs were on a corporate continuum that included other organizations like parish vestries, joint stock companies, and the state. What subsequent scholars have understood as Civil Society is better characterized as the spread of corporate paperwork practices into everyday life. That clubs were on such a corporate continuum was recognized by contemporaries. At the first anniversary of the Leith Trifrontal Society, the member David Thorburn wrote a valedictory address to the society in which he understood clubs to be the same kind of things as states:

> Man it has been remarked is a gregarious animal. Fitted with powers proper for the enjoyment of Society, he is almost never happy when out of it…. It is to this disposition then inherent in Man that we owe Societies of every kind. That anxious longing which man has of communicating with his fellow, prompts him to form what in a minor sense is termed a society, and in a more extended sense a state.

Chapter Three looks at the how clubs satisfied this "anxious longing which man has of communicating with his fellow." The disinterested rules of the club helped bring strangers together in the club room as equals. Once there, ordered rituals of physical pleasure—mainly group eating and drinking—evoked powerful prosocial emotions that helped to bind the members together as brothers. The procedural ordering of everyday life did not dissolve local, embodied, emotional ties: it facilitated them. But this regulation and amity did more than make a group of brothers from strangers. It also set the group against outsiders—particularly women.

This tension between exclusion and inclusion is reflected in the increasingly specialized activities clubs pursued. **Chapter Four** looks at the case study of competitive church bell ringing. Competitive church bell ringing provided a novel conspicuously complex cultural performance to middle-class men. Their activities became so highly specialized that it was impenetrably obscure to outsiders. If there was a civil society built from clubs, it was exclusive, fractured, and at times obscure.

Finally, **Chapter Five** looks at how the development of more effective administrative practices led to clubs being able to be thought capable of new actions—and how this pushed clubs into a kind of political controversy that defined the borders of civil society. Before the 1760s, clubs were really only confined to particular localities because by and large they lacked the administrative capacity to coordinate across large distances. Yet over time some groups cobbled together a number of practices that allowed for more effective trans-local coordination. This allowed clubs to be considered as solutions for new problems. There were proposals from the 1750s to the final break with North America, for example, to use a system of federated Chambers of Commerce to help ease tensions between the colony and the metropole. By the 1770s and 1780s, reformers were using clubs both to imagine and to organize political reform. In the 1790s, with related groups in France organizing an actual revolution, these forms of associating together became highly contested. In the process, a sphere of Civil Society was delineated, independent of politics and economics. Organizations that reached beyond these boundaries risked repression.

Chapter 1: Enumerating the "Associational World"

Introduction

In 1659, clubs were novelties. In that year, the diarist John Aubrey wrote "We now use the word *clubbe* for a soldality in a taverne."[1] By the time of *the Spectator* in 1711, the "little nocturnal assemblies" meeting in taverns were "commonly" being called clubs. Over the next fifty years, clubs diffused to such an extent that they were considered an element of the English character. In 1762 Edward Gibbon described his nights spent at the Cocoa-Tree Club as "a sight truly English."[2] By 1792 they had spread so far that clubs threatened to take over the metropolis itself: an observer worried that in London "every second house, within a certain range of the verge of the Court, has been let for clubs, and tolerated for gambling communities" causing a "fatal effect upon our manners."[3]

The novelty of British clubs can be overstated. Clubs were not unique to Britain, Europe, or the 18th century. Small, voluntary organizations are mentioned in the Athenian laws of Solon in the 6th century B.C. Classical Rome has organizations like the *collegium*, *sodalitas* and military "box" clubs.[4] A number of Chinese organizations fit the broad definition of club, like trade guilds, lineage associations, secret societies, and literary circles.[5] Nor were these voluntary organizations new to Britain itself in the long 18th century. From the 13th century if not before, there were large numbers of guilds, companies, societies, and associations, many of which were far closer to a social club than to firm or cartel.[6] Nineteenth-century antiquarians claimed that voluntary organizations were part of a deep-rooted Anglo-Germanic democratic inheritance.[7]

But in another respect, the associational world of 18th century Britain was something new: there were more clubs than perhaps at any time in history. By using a census of over 9000 clubs built from a number of archives, this chapter provides a systematic quantitative overview of the unprecedented growth of clubs from 1650 to 1830. Looking at these data, this chapter argues that growth of clubs

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[1] This citation is much-quoted, beginning perhaps with Timbs, *Club Life of London*, 4.

[2] Valérie Capdeville, "'Clubbability': A Revolution in London Sociability?" *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies / Lumen : travaux choisis de la Société canadienne d'étude du dix-huitième siècle* 35 (2016): 76, https://doi.org/10.7202/1035921ar.

[3] *Lloyd's Evening Post* (London, England), July 16, 1792 - July 18, 1792; Issue 5469. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2000533211

[4] Michael Ginsburg, "Roman Military Clubs and Their Social Functions," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 71 (1940): 149–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/283119; John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership." In Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World, Ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson, 16-30. London; New York: Routledge.," accessed October 29, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/14881771/Collegia_and_Thiasoi_Issues_in_Function_Taxonomy_and_Membership_In_Voluntary_Associations_in_the_Graeco_Roman_World_ed_John_S_Kloppenborg_and_Stephen_G_Wilson_16_30_London_New_York_Routledge.

[5] David Ownby and Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered : Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe); William T. Rowe, *Hankow : Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984); Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China : Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986).

[6] Over time groups could shift from voluntary organization to guild and from guild to voluntary organization. See the discussion of St. Mary's Masonic Lodge in Chapter 2, a lodge of 'operative' or working masons in Edinburgh that in the early 18th century reformed itself into a 'speculative' freemasonic lodge more along the lines of a club.

[7] *Remains, Historical and Literary, Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester* (Chetham Society., 1867), 2.

throughout Britain was less of a sudden revolution, and more of a persistent and steady accumulation.[8] The number of clubs per person in Britain grew on average about 2% a year from 1650 to 1830. This may seem slow, but the results were revolutionary. In 1650 there was perhaps one club for every 2,250 men in Britain. By 1829 there was perhaps one club for every 85. (These last two estimates are highly speculative.)[9]

The slowness of this growth can clarify the roots of Britain's precociously dense civil society. It was not linked to particular events: not the Glorious Revolution of 1688, not economic booms or busts, and not particular literary publications or cultural movements. Instead, the roots were deeper, likely on the level of demography and institutions. Increasing agricultural productivity combined with the enclosure movement (a political project limiting access to agricultural land) meant that a growing population moved to cities. At the same time, the old pillars of social life—the parish church, the agricultural community, guilds, the family, and the state—were slow and ineffectual in response to these changes. New institutions were needed to maintain social relations in this *society of strangers*. In the club, people borrowed forms of corporate organization like minutes, accounts, and constitutions, and used them to make stable venues of everyday sociability. The take-up of these tools was slow, uneven, and plodding—but by 1830 it had spread so much that clubs were an easily accessible tool for most men. These tools allowed for much greater flexibility in the institutions of everyday life. Clubs, unlike guilds, corporations, or parish churches, could be founded on a whim anywhere men gathered. They could be adopted to organize almost any group activity done by men with enough money and time to meet regularly. There were some legal restrictions: some clubs that could be considered trade combinations were effectively illegal, but they were infrequently prosecuted. Accordingly, the rich density of clubs that came to define British everyday life in the 18th century was diverse, voluntary, flexible, and changing.

Definitions, Methods and Caveats

First, what is a club? Clubs varied both in their activities and in their nomenclature. Characteristically, the Greenwich Youths, a bell-ringing society founded in 1683, described itself as a "Society, ffraternity, or Clubb."[10] In 1695, an unnamed London dining club referred to itself in the space of a single sentence as a "Clubb", a "Meeting," and a "Society."[11] At times, these words had different connotations. In 1778, two members of the Society of the Dilettanti, for "having called this respectable Society by the disrespectful name of *Club,* were fined a bumper each which they drank with all proper humility."[12] But more often the words *club*, *society*, *company*, and *society* were interchangeable. For ease

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[8] This is similar to the revisions of the path of the Industrial Revolution. What was once taken as a sudden change has been shown to be far more gradual. See e.g. N. F. R. Crafts and C. K. Harley, "Output Growth and the British Industrial Revolution: A Restatement of the Crafts-Harley View," *The Economic History Review* 45, no. 4 (1992): 703–30, https://doi.org/10.2307/2597415.

[9] In 1803, Poor Law returns recorded 9672 Friendly Societies in England and Wales, a number that's likely an undercount: for the same year, the census records 88 friendly societies, meaning that it records perhaps less than 1% of census activity. If this undercounting is consistent across both time and type of club—an assumption that is certainly wrong—then there would be one club for every 2,250 men in Britain in 1650 and one club for every 85 men in Britain in 1829. Although the estimate is speculative, it gives a directional sense of the dramatic increase in the density of clubs over this time period.

[10] William T. Cook, "The Organisation of the Exercise in the Seventeenth Century," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 1 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 78.

[11] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/113/MS03406

[12] Society of Antiquaries, B4

of expression, I refer to voluntary organizations in general throughout this dissertation, whether club, society, association, fraternity, society, meeting, lodge, or brotherhood as *clubs*.

More precisely, I take clubs to be stable organizations, with voluntary membership, and a self-governing administration. I'll explain these terms in turn. First, clubs are *organizations*. They are stable groups pursuing common purposes over an extended period of time. Their identities are independent of their membership: individuals may change without the organization's identity changing. Second, membership in these organizations is *voluntary*. Members are not forced to join the club out of necessity, as is the case with craft guilds, where membership is required to participate in certain markets or industrial communities. Members can also easily exit the organization, and the organization can easily expel members. Although many criminal conspiracies like the *Mafia* and the *Tiandinhui* share many similarities with clubs, they are not truly voluntary in that there is no easy option for members to exit the groups short of death. Finally, clubs are *self-governing*. They are administered ultimately by their members using forms of corporate administration that rely on face-to-face meetings and democratic procedure.[13]

To look more rigorously at the slow development of these everyday social practices, this project uses a novel method I call a *Digital Census*. The method is explained and defended in an appendix below. Here, I will provide a brief outline for non-specialists. The Digital Census is a systematic way of using computers to help record, organize, and visualize a search of a set of primary sources. At its simplest, the conceit of the Digital Census is that we can gain a new understanding of the past by systematically counting historical evidence, then displaying these enumerations in interactive data visualizations. There are three features to the method used in this project, none of which is novel on its own. The first is that the search aims to *comprehensively* look through every potential source that fits criteria in a given domain. The second is that observations are *systematically recorded* using modern database technology. In these first two points, this project has much in common with what I call *just counting* methods in the social sciences and the humanities, which have a long history outlined in the appendix. The method is not itself new to the study of British clubs: it resembles the method ysed by Peter Clark, in his groundbreaking book on clubs and societies published two decades ago.[14] The third, and the one that is most novel, is that these observations are reported as *interactive data visualizations*. The combination of quantification and interactive data visualization produces a hybrid between a historical narrative and an interactive data tool. The combination of these three methods results in a new approach to describing changes, especially in cultural history.

I looked through a variety of archives to comprehensively catalogue club activity in the 18th century. The major source is a search of the British National Archives catalogues for England, Scotland and Wales. Archivists have organized these collections by name of organization and date of records. I identified all clubs whose records were preserved in these archives between 1650 and 1830. I also recorded masonic lodges recorded from Lane's Masonic Records, an antiquarian encyclopedia of masonic lodges under the Grand Lodge of England. This constitutes the most complete source for 18th century associational life available to us today. Unfortunately, due to its completeness it distorts

[13] When, in the cases of many gentleman's clubs, administration is palmed off to an officer, the membership always retains authority in principle, and in practice has command over the most sensitive decisions like the acceptance and rejection of members.
[14] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*.

some of the aggregate analyses and so Lane's is not included in the majority of the analyses of the chapter: using the interactive data visualization tool, users can experiment with how the analyses look when Lane's is included. These two sources allow a broad but thin coverage: they show a great range of organizations but give us little information about them besides their names, location, and approximate dates of operation. Additionally, they are biased: the record only those clubs which left surviving records or those that were recorded by antiquaries, meaning that they are likely to record more established clubs. I queried additional archives to get a deeper and more complete view of club life. I searched for every mention of the word 'club' in the Burney Collection of 18th century newspapers which brought up over 40,000 results. From these, I made nearly 1800 individual observations of 1221 individual clubs. I attempted additional searches with cognate words including *society* and *association*, but these pulled up too many results to be usable under the time constraints of the project. I also conducted a search of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography for the word *club* and *lodge* for people born between 1600 and 1810. These returned 876 biographies in which 562 individual clubs were mentioned, and 206 biographies in which 104 individual masonic lodges were mentioned. Frequently these biographies would include precise dates of activity. Often, however, no dates were given, in which case I either turned to secondary sources or left the entry undated. Finally, I consulted a number of secondary source books, most notably Peter Clark's, and recorded references to particular clubs active in particular dates. I have found fewer clubs than Peter Clark: in 1799, for example, I record 999 clubs in Britain, while Clark records somewhere around 1300.[15] Full citations are available in the database.[16]

This method captures a fraction of historical club activity. We can estimate this undercounting. In 1803 Poor Law returns collected by Parliament recorded 9672 friendly societies in England and Wales (a number which is probably itself a significant undercount).[17] For the same year, this sample records only 88 Friendly Societies. This means we are capturing perhaps only 1% of the total club activity. What is clear from this is that if we can see a glimpse of clubs in the 18th century, it is only the tip of the iceberg. We know that the sample misses out on a great deal, but we cannot confidently estimate what it is that it misses out. There is a potential criticism that by *just counting* evidence in particular archives, this method reifies the archival survival biases that other historical methods correct for, particularly biases that reinforce social, gender, and racial hierarchies. My response to this is that counting archival traces is a first step. To gain granular, more critical understanding of the history of clubs, I will turn to traditional methods of cultural historical analysis in later chapters. The advantage of this method is that we can see clearly *some* consistent patterns in the surviving data, and although it is not complete, it is better than the convenience sampling that historical narrative is often based on.

Big Patterns

Sustained Growth

Peter Clark's work showed how during the 18th century there was a "birth of an associational world" as the absolute number of clubs and societies in Britain increased. Yet during this same period, the population in Britain increased rapidly as well. All things being equal, we would expect that the number

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[15] See graph on Clark, 132. Unfortunately, because Clark's databases are now lost, I cannot get a precise count of the clubs in his database in 1799.

[16] Available via correspondence with the author.

[17] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 350.

of clubs should also increase, just as we would expect the number of loaves of bread, pubs, and horses to increase. To further clarify the nature of the growth of clubs, we need to know whether it was purely an effect of population growth, or whether clubs in fact grew faster than the growing population.

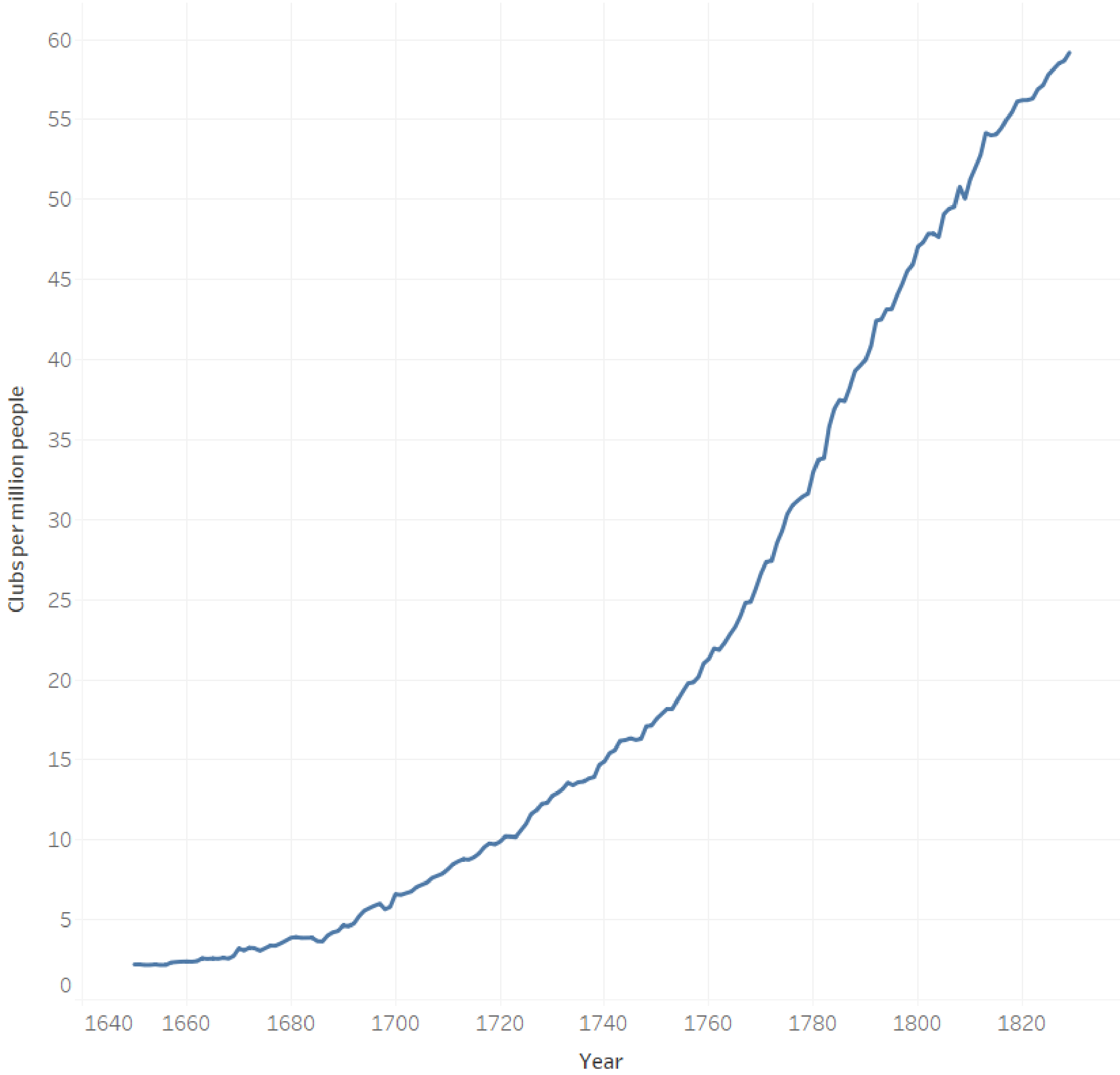

Figure 1 clubs per millions of people

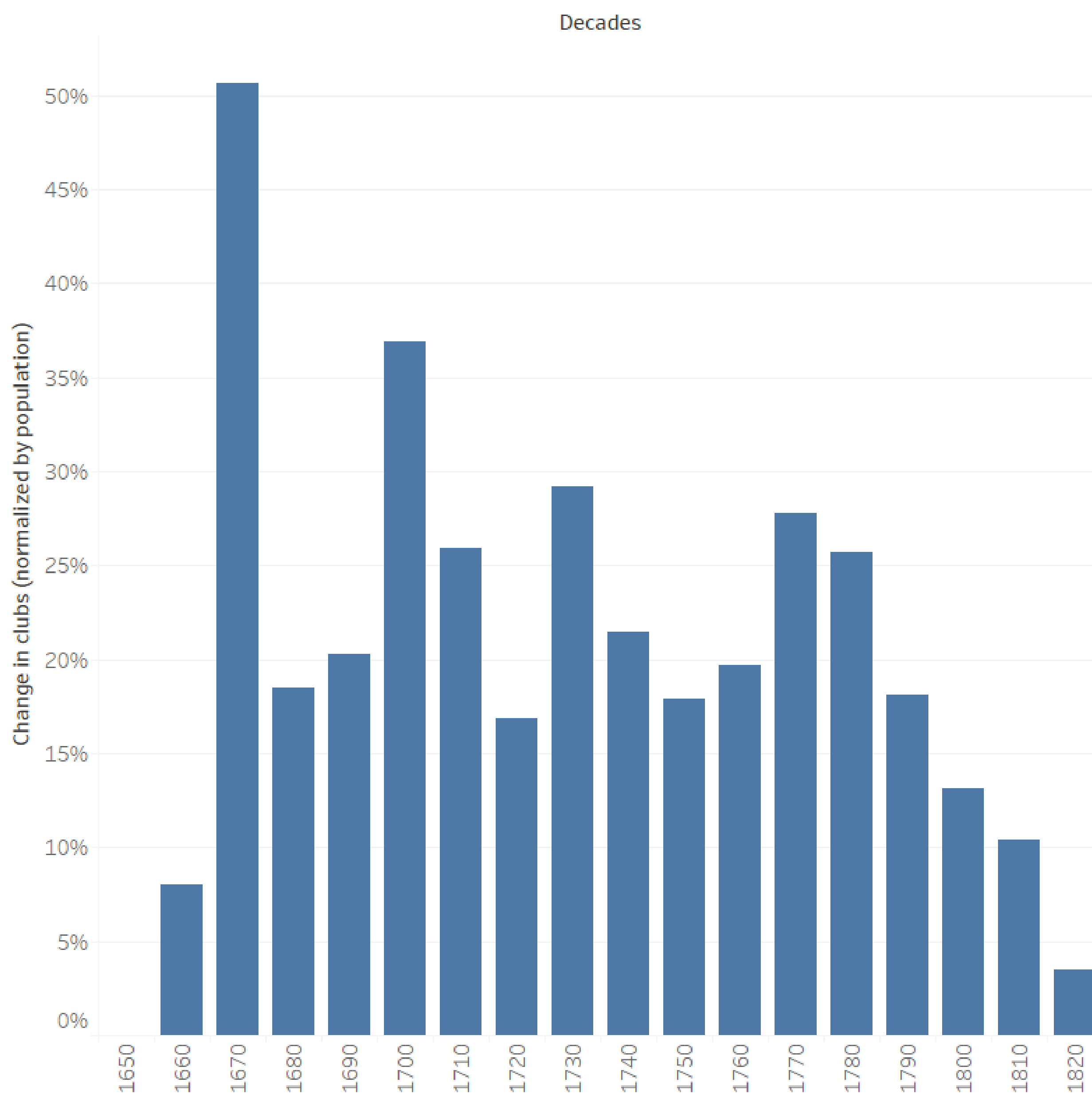

Figure 2

Figure 1 shows the number of clubs normalized by population.[18] Figure 2 shows the growth rates by decade, also normalized by population.[19] Looking at these figures, we can see that the number of clubs increased far faster than population from 1650 to 1830 – on average 1.9% a year. In every decade, the number of clubs grew faster than the population as a whole. (Note that the anomalous extremely high

[18] Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870*, 239–43.

[19] This is presented by decade because the annual numbers are too noisy. Additionally, this analysis in particular excludes newspaper sources (which end in 1800) and masonic lodges, which, because of internal dynamics declined greatly in number in the 19th century to an extent that distorts the data. Note that because of how these are normalized by population, this slightly overcounts clubs in the beginning of the decade, and undercounts clubs at the end of the decade.

rate of change in the 1670s is likely the result of small sample size for the data over those years—it is recording an increase from 18 clubs in the sample to 25, corrected for population.) For two periods totaling six decades, between 1680 and 1710 and between 1750 and 1780, this growth was exponential—that is, not only were the number of clubs per capita growing, the *rate of growth* was growing as well. If we assume that the Digital Census represents 1% of actual club activity—an assumption that remains at best an educated guess—we can estimate that by 1829 there was one club for every 85 men in Britain—although this number has to be treated as highly speculative. This is surprising: a powerful, sustained growth in the number of clubs, seemingly unchecked by events.

The rise of clubs in particular and of civil society in general has been explained as the result of a variety of endogenous and exogenous factors. Peter Clark has identified a number of "engines of growth" for the associational world: urbanization; high migration; the expansion of the 'service sector,' particularly pubs; urban improvements; newspapers; state failure to provide social insurance; party political tensions and the social confusion of a rapidly urbanizing culture; and a growing market for new forms of sociability. All of these factors certainly affected the character of British clubs. But my data can show that most were not 'engines of growth.' Clubs did not grow faster when times were more prosperous: nor did people flock to them when times were bad and there was greater need for social insurance. If party political tensions were an engine of growth, then we would expect growth to decrease in times of relative partisan truce, or to increase during periods of the rage of party. They don't. Surprisingly, given the recurrent military conflicts of the period, not even war slackened or stirred club growth. Perhaps the rise of clubs was linked with the spread of pubs, but without detailed geographic data on where pubs were more or less dense, this cannot be tested. The sources for the growth of clubs likely lie in something deeper and steadier.

We should be wary that this strong, sustained growth might be an artifact of biases in the data. The Census certainly undercounts less formal, smaller, poorer, and younger clubs. These weak, evanescent, clubs were precisely those that have the greatest likelihood of being upset by short-term cultural or economic shocks. There is some evidence that a more thorough census would record more variation in the numbers of clubs. Lane's Masonic Records is the most complete source we have and it shows more short-term variation than the Census as a whole. However, other evidence points to the fact that the Census is indeed sensitive to events on the level of *kind* of club, as next section will show. What is clear is that in the broad scale the growth of clubs was not largely checked at any time in the 18th century.

If we accept that there are only the most minor deviations from the pattern of sustained growth, something simpler and more structural suggests itself at the root of the 18th century growth of clubs. Figuring out precisely the 'why' is outside the bounds of this study. But the evidence points in the direction of the peculiar demographic and economic situation in 18th century Britain. Over this time period, a growing population increasingly flocked to cities. This was caused by two factors: cumulative improvements to agricultural productivity, and the political project of 'enclosure' that limited access to agricultural land. In cities, people took up new forms of work, increasingly in the service sector. Purchasing power increased, likely as a result of people working longer hours, and growing connections between Britain and global trade networks.[20] At the same time, the key institutions of belonging—the parish church, the family, and the community of agricultural labor—were all in their

[20] Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870*.

own ways impotent to deal with the problems arising from these economic and social developments. The state church's parish system was inflexible to the changing pattern of population growth. The British family was relatively weak and small, which meant that it was further disrupted by patterns of lifecycle urban migration.[21] There was a change in popular culture, as the structuring foundations of seasonal agricultural labor were replaced by an urban pattern of employment that had far fewer days off.[22] As the structure of work changed, the old 'moral economy' that had previously been the foundation of social life declined. Britain became a 'society of strangers' where people came to rely on abstract social relations in their everyday lives.[23] Clubs arose as one response to the problem of finding new institutions fit for an anonymous, individualist, capitalist (but not yet industrial), society on the move.

The Character of Sustained Growth

Looking at aggregates can also tell us much about the character of this growth: where clubs grew, who went to them, and how clubs organized themselves. What we see from this is that club-going was a national phenomenon, not just a London one. Only after the 1760s and 1770s were there a significant number of female-run clubs, but even at its height only about 0.5% of clubs in the sample included women. Although club-going was generally male-dominated, it covered a broad range of the population. It included not only the rich and the middle classes, but a significant number of working men. Finally, in the 18th century, clubs were largely local, having few links to other groups, suggesting that the rise of clubs was due not to the growth in any particular highly successful organization like the Freemasons, but instead a broader culture of self-organization that enabled small local groups unconnected with any others to create their own organizations—they were, in Arthur Stinchcombe's coinage, "organization-creating organizations."[24]

A note about the visualizations in this section: most include both Lane's Masonic Records and newspaper data from the Burney Collection. Because of the volatility of the records in Lane's, and the fact that the Burney collection ends in 1800, they suggest a steep drop-off in the number of clubs after 1800. Those interested in investigating how the different archives affect these patterns can toggle the archives on and off in [the online companion tool].

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[21] Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[22] Hans-Joachim Voth, "Time and Work in Eighteenth-Century London," *The Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 1 (1998): 29–58.

[23] James Vernon, *Distant Strangers: How Britain Became Modern*, Berkeley Series in British Studies 9 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Kevin Butterfield, *The Making of Tocqueville's America: Law and Association in the Early United States*, American Beginnings, 1500-1900 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[24] Arthur Stinchcombe, "Organization-Creating Organizations," *Trans-Action* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 1965): 34–35, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03180801.

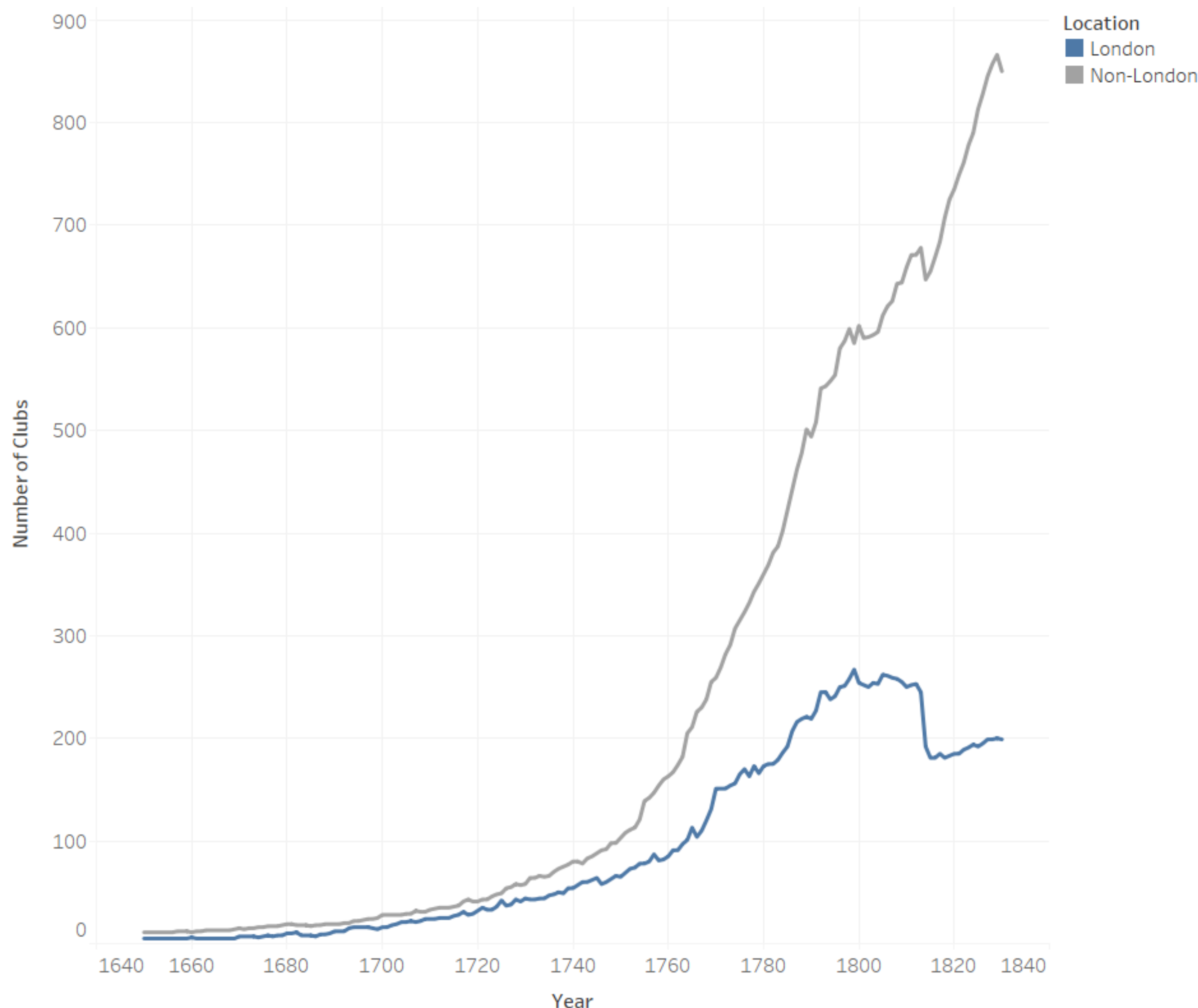

Figure 3 Clubs in and out of London—note, this is not normalized by population

Club-going especially after the 1740s was a national phenomenon. Many histories of clubs, particularly popular histories, focus on the London club to the exclusion of all others.[25] In many respects this focus on London is justified. Not only is the first evidence of British clubs concentrated in London, but the metropolis had more clubs than any other city by an order of magnitude.[26] This importance of London was not just quantitative. London was the location of the most famous clubs of the day: the fictional *Spectator's* club, Samuel Johnson's Literary Club, and Joseph Banks' network of learned clubs. It was London where there the frequently imitated gentlemen's clubs of Pall Mall emerged. Valérie Capdeville argued that the social life of London clubs created a novel kind of 'clubbable' sociability that then spread across the nation.[27] Even in highly specialized niches, London had outsized influence. Chapter 4 shows how London clubs spread the obscure practice of *change ringing*, a form of competitive church bell ringing, to the provinces. But the prominence of London can obscure the

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[25] See Seth Thévoz's extensive bibliography on London clubs. http://www.sethalexanderthevoz.com/london-clubs-bibliography
[26] This also makes London an ideal research site for clubs.
[27] Capdeville, "'Clubbability.'"

extent to which club-going was a *national* phenomenon. When corrected for population, the number of London clubs in the second half of the 18th century was not at all unusual compared with other large cities. As Figure 3 shows, the growth of London clubs was steady over the century, growing by around 40 times: but growth of clubs outside of London was much greater, increasing by nearly 90 times.

We can describe the national spread of clubs only in broad brushstrokes, because our region-level data is less complete. What is clear is that London was the great lodestar of club activity prior to the 18th century, but it was not the only place where there were clubs or club-like groups: we have evidence of clubs in in Bristol, Oxford, Nottingham, Edinburgh, but also in smaller cities like Bo'ness, in Scotland, and Ludlow, many of which were connected with the old tradition of craft and trade guilds. What the presence of clubs in such obscure places suggests is that there was, even at this early a date, a wide dispersion of clubs, although most did not leave behind thorough records that would allow a more complete reconstruction of their activities. In the 18th century, the large story is of a slow but determined growth, with increasing club activity roughly radiating from London in the south and the central belt of Scotland in the north. It is possible to narrate the details of this growth, but Figures L and M (available only online) present animations that tell these stories with greater clarity and less awkwardness than paragraphs of rich description would. Contrary to expectations, the data currently do not support a strong connection between speed of growth in particular cities and the growth of clubs. A number of fast-growing cities, particularly Hull and Sheffield, had unpromising club scenes up to 1800 according to this census, while comparatively slower-growing cities like York had more clubs per capita than the average.[28] Oxford and Cambridge were particularly active for their populations before the 19th century, which may be an effect of selection bias, as Oxford and Cambridge are features of the biographies of so many elite men who left records of their everyday lives.

[28] The reasons are unclear, perhaps differences in the economic situation of migrants. Fast-growing cities may have had the need for new institutions of belonging like clubs, but they may not have had the resources available for individuals to develop them. This may also be an effect of source bias, and these fast-growing cities may simply may not have been comparably favorable places for preserving evidence of club activity. It may also have been that the associations in fast-growing cities were more radical, or more antagonistic to traditional authority, and so more likely to hide their activities from a potentially repressive state. Sheffield had a rich radical associational life, most notably the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information, but these may have been intentionally obscured.

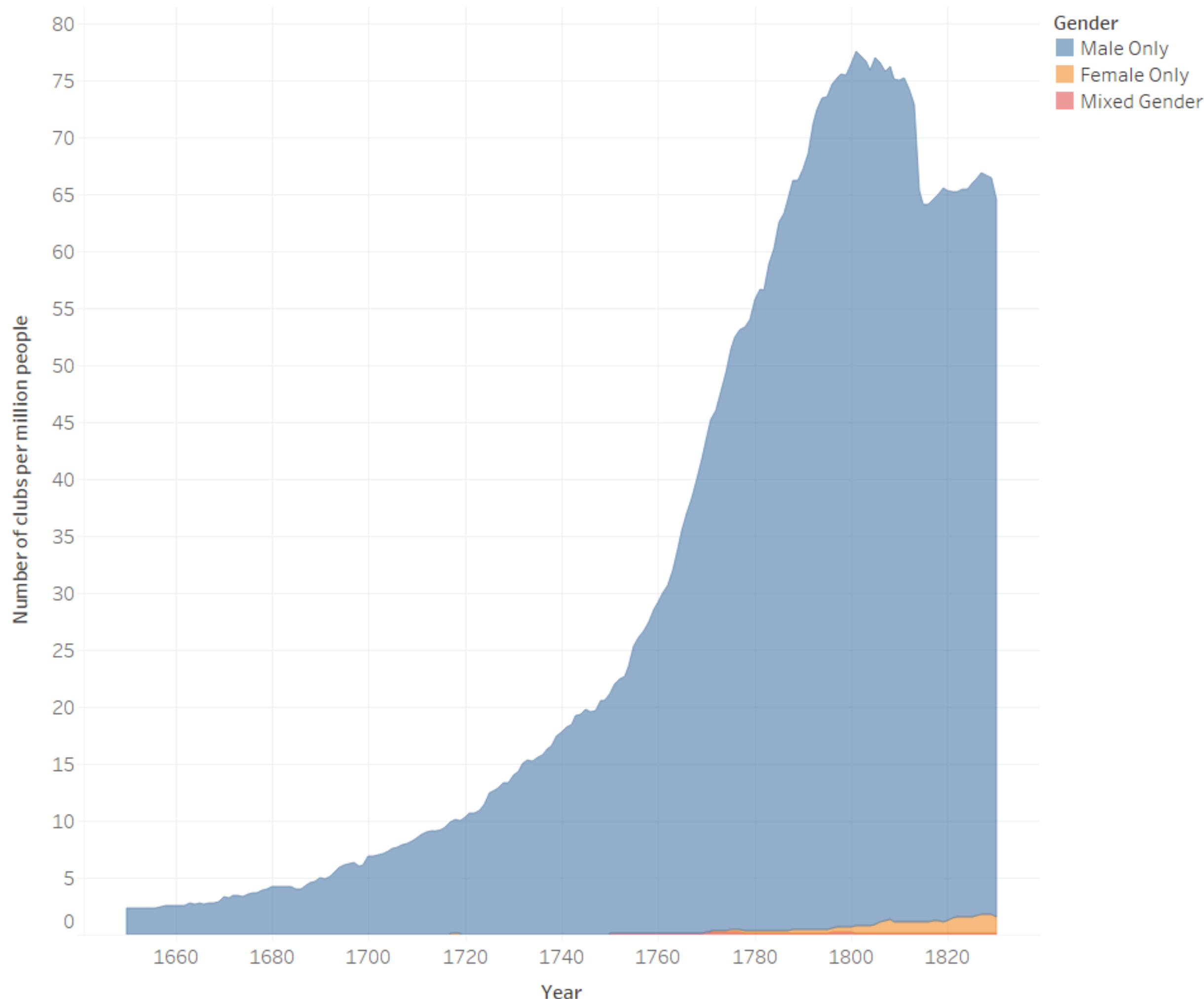

Figure 4 Gender in clubs

Figure 4 shows that clubs were almost entirely a male activity. Female clubs make up only a fraction of our sample: in 1798, they represented perhaps .5% of active clubs.[29] Female-run clubs tended to be one of three kinds: either mutual aid groups, charity groups, or groups devoted to 'the pleasures of the imagination.' These three types of clubs experienced sustained growth after the 1760s. We can understand this growth in female-run clubs as stemming from a change in the *composition* of the associational world itself, rather than a wider change in how people understood clubs to be gendered. Even as female associational activity became commonplace in pressure groups, religious associations, charities, and Friendly Societies in the 19th century, most kinds of clubs, from change ringing societies to gentlemen's clubs, were understood to be dominated by men. (For more on gender and clubs, see Chapter Three.)

[29] This number is broadly confirmed by other sources. 1803 returns suggested that 5% of Friendly Societies were female: in our sample it is 6%. See Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 364.

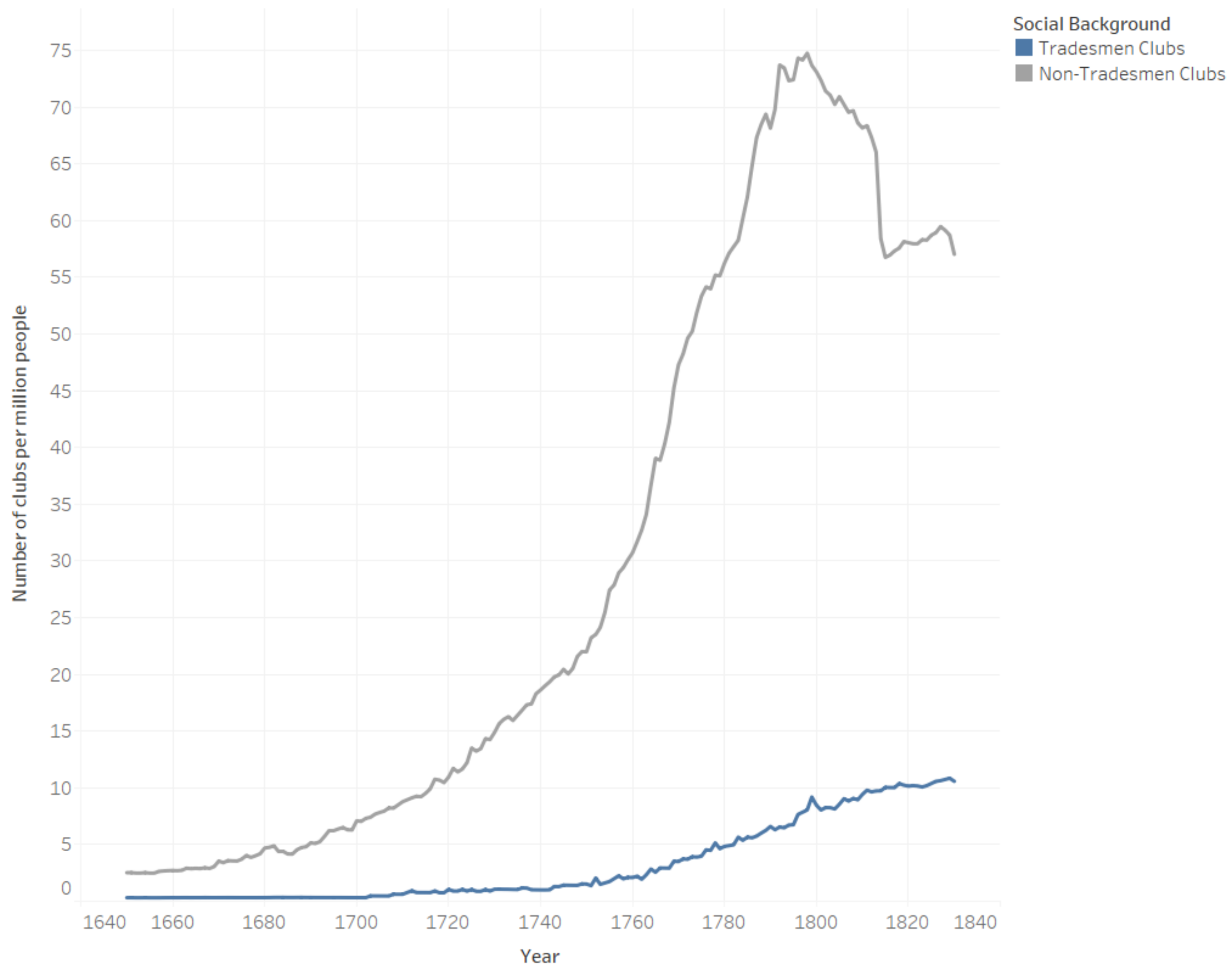

Figure 5 Tradesmen Clubs

Clubs were dominated by men, but what kind of men? The popular image of the 'leather armchairs' and marble facades of the London gentleman's clubs has made club-going seem like a particularly elite pastime.[30] Other scholars have seen clubs as primarily middle-classed and provincial.[31] However these data suggest that people up and down the social hierarchy participated in club life. Proverbially, club-going united people across class divides, and there is much evidence that clubs brought together what for the time were men from diverse social backgrounds. As early as 1680, a poem portrayed various clubmen coming together and forgetting the proper social order through the social solvent of alcohol:

> Cups reconcile Degrees, and Natures too;
> He Noblest is, who can in Drink out-do.[32]

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[30] Timbs, *Club Life of London*; Graves, *Leather Armchairs*.

[31] See e.g. Alexandra Mitchell, "Middle-Class Masculinity in Clubs and Associations: Manchester and Liverpool, 1800-1914" (Ph.D., Manchester, University of Manchester, 2012), https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/middleclass-masculinity-in-clubs-and-associations-manchester-and-liverpool-18001914(e3b42ff7-ef6c-4665-941d-d9f833137fb3).html.

[32] Charles Derby, Bacchanalia: Or, A Description of a Drunken Club, quoted in David Allen, "Political Clubs in Restoration London," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 3 (September 1976): 562, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00010384.

But the precise class composition of clubs is difficult to estimate. There is some evidence of clubs primarily serving working people, if not the very poorest. A number of clubs included illiterate men in their ranks: a quarter of the members of the Fenwick Weavers Society were unable to sign their name on the group's constitution.[33] A quantitative look at the composition of clubs in Figure 5 shows that there was a large proportion of clubs composed of working people: those that organized a particular trade, like the Fenwick Weaver's Society, and mutual aid societies.[34] This graph suggests that although club-going was outside the reach of the very poorest, it was open to far more than just the comfortable elite and the middling sort.

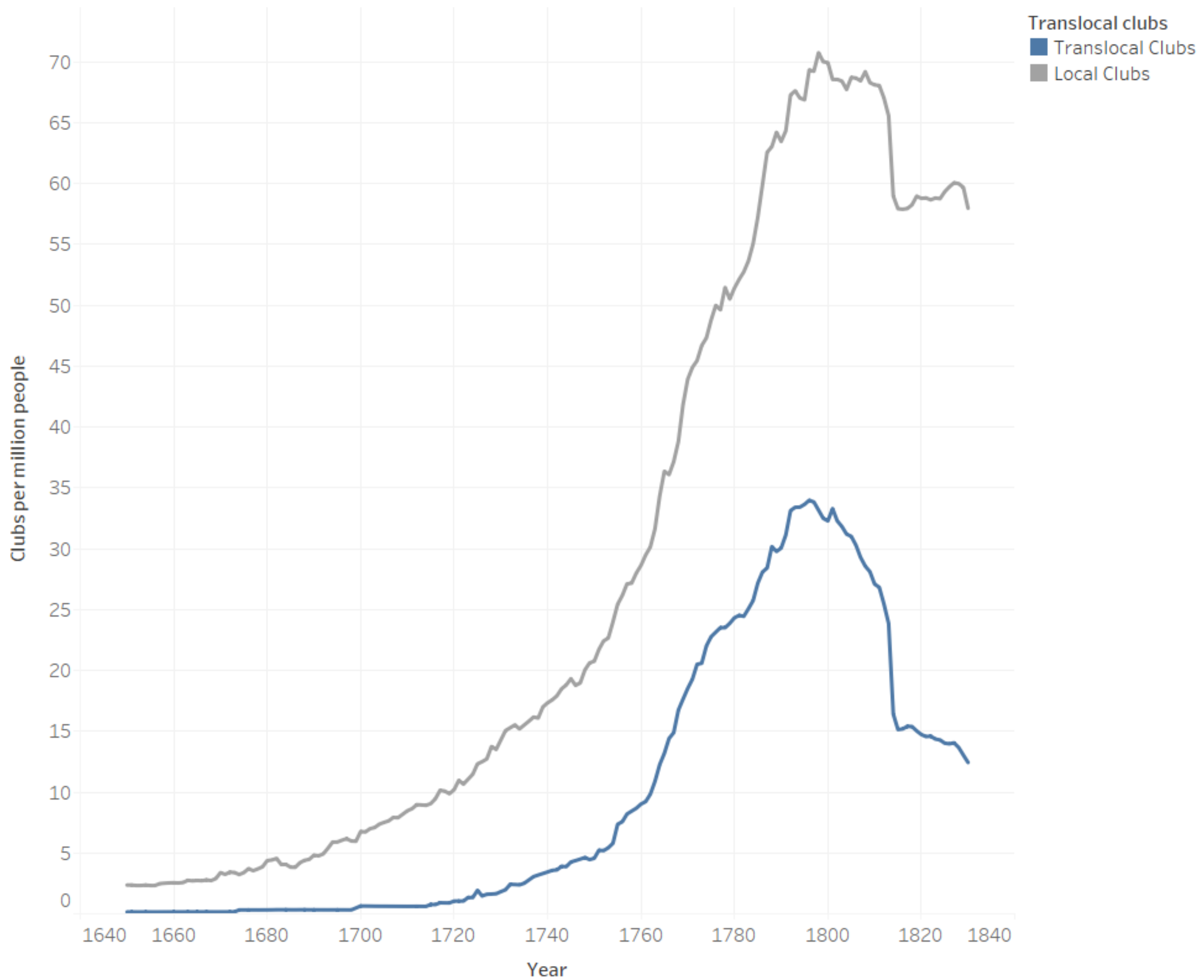

Figure 6 Trans-local Clubs (including Freemasons)

[33] National Library of Scotland, Acc.4702/1

[34] It should be noted that this is at best a blunt indicator of poor people's involvement in clubs. The fees charged in clubs included in this category varied, from the burdensome 7 and a half shilling entrance fee for the London Huguenot Club the Society of Lintot, to the much more modest penny-a-week clubs.

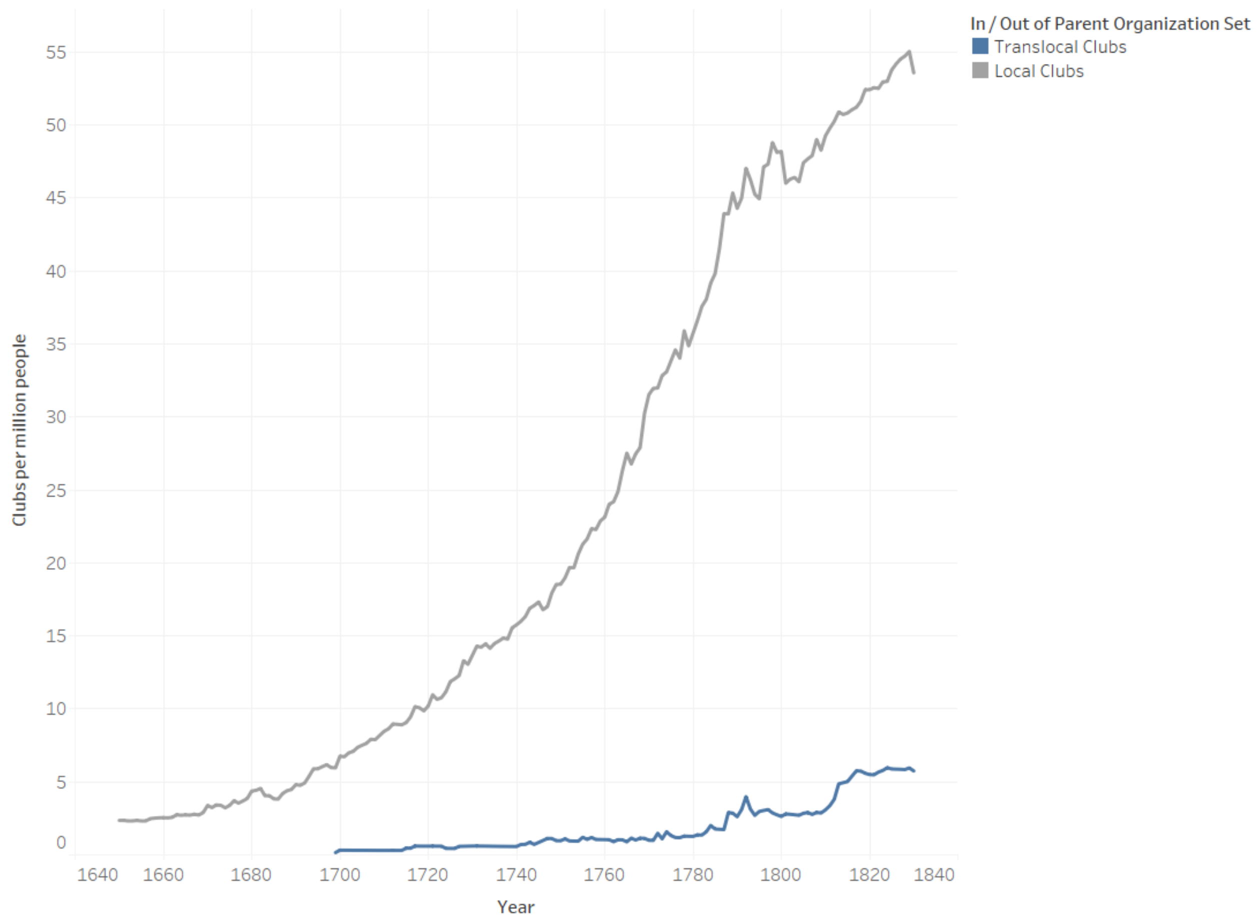

Figure 6 Trans-local clubs (excluding Free-masons)

Finally, how were clubs organized? Theda Skocpol, looking at the American case in the 19th century, considers confederated societies as the *essence* of the associational world. They were not "the icing on the US associational cake" but "the cake itself."[35] Trans-locality has implications for the nature of civil society. If organized, trans-local federated societies are the seeds of civil society, then civil society has more to do with the growth of particular large *organizations* than with the spread of particular kinds of *cultures* of self-organization. In Britain there is evidence of a number of clubs that coordinated their activities through federated hierarchical organizations. The Freemasons' federated structure in particular was imitated widely by other secret societies over our time period. But such trans-local confederations make up only a fraction of associational life in the long 18th century, as Figures 6 and 7 shows. This suggests that the roots of civil society contrary to Skocpol were small independent clubs arising autochthonously out of an everyday culture of self-organization.[36]

Specialization

[35] Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series, v. 8 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 30.

[36] Although masons in general make up a disproportionate amount of our sample, when accounting for sampling bias federated societies like the masons do not make up an overwhelming proportion of our sample.

Clubs were not a monolith: even in the early period of club growth they were marked by an incredible diversity of clientele, purpose, and organization. This section looks at how the composition of clubs changed over time by breaking out the Census by type of clubs. What we see from these detailed examinations is that the club form was highly flexible. It also meant that the club was continually being used for new purposes as conditions changed. This was different from other everyday institutions, like guilds and other corporations and the parish church, which were difficult to establish and so could only change slowly.

I have categorized most of the clubs in my sample by how they grouped people together. Two types grouped people together by *commonality*. There were those that did so through common *identity*, like a common trade, or a common native place; and those that did so through a common voluntary *activity*, like a change ringing group, a curling club, or a scientific club. Other clubs brought people together to *improve* something. Some clubs sought to give their members some kind of *benefit*; others sought to *reform* the world outside the club. Finally, there were *religious*, *secret*, or *convivial* clubs. These categories have been determined at times with minimal information. Additionally, there is significant overlap between them. Many native place groups, which are categorized here as groups of a particular *interest*, also provided mutual aid, and so could be construed as *benefit* clubs.

The following paragraphs narrate these changes, and are intended as companions to the data visualizations on Figures 9, 10 and 11. They are not comprehensive summaries of the data, but rather broad, top-line results that may be of more general interest. Rather than using data to present a single narrative, these visualizations are intended to offer readers multiple ways in, a tool to use, rather than a thread to follow. Figure 9 shows the relative numbers of different types of clubs in the sample.[37] Two online-only tools allow deeper exploration of this data. Figure 11 is a tool that shows the change in each type, selectable via a drop-down menu on the right. Figure 12 shows the different subtypes each type is composed of. A drop-down menu on the top right allows the user to select the type they want to look at.

Finally, a warning: given the limitations of the census, we should be more suspicious of the results in this section as they are based on a comparatively smaller number of observations. It is not always clear whether declines or increases reflect 'real' changes to associational activity, or are effects of selection bias. For understanding any one of these phenomena in depth, it is much better to turn to more specialized studies, which not only can more rigorously marshal the available evidence, but can better put the evidence into context. What this section can provide is an understanding of the relative change in the category of clubs in general.

[37] This excludes secret societies like the Freemasons and other pseudo-masonic groups because the comprehensiveness of Lane's Masonic Records distorts the sample.

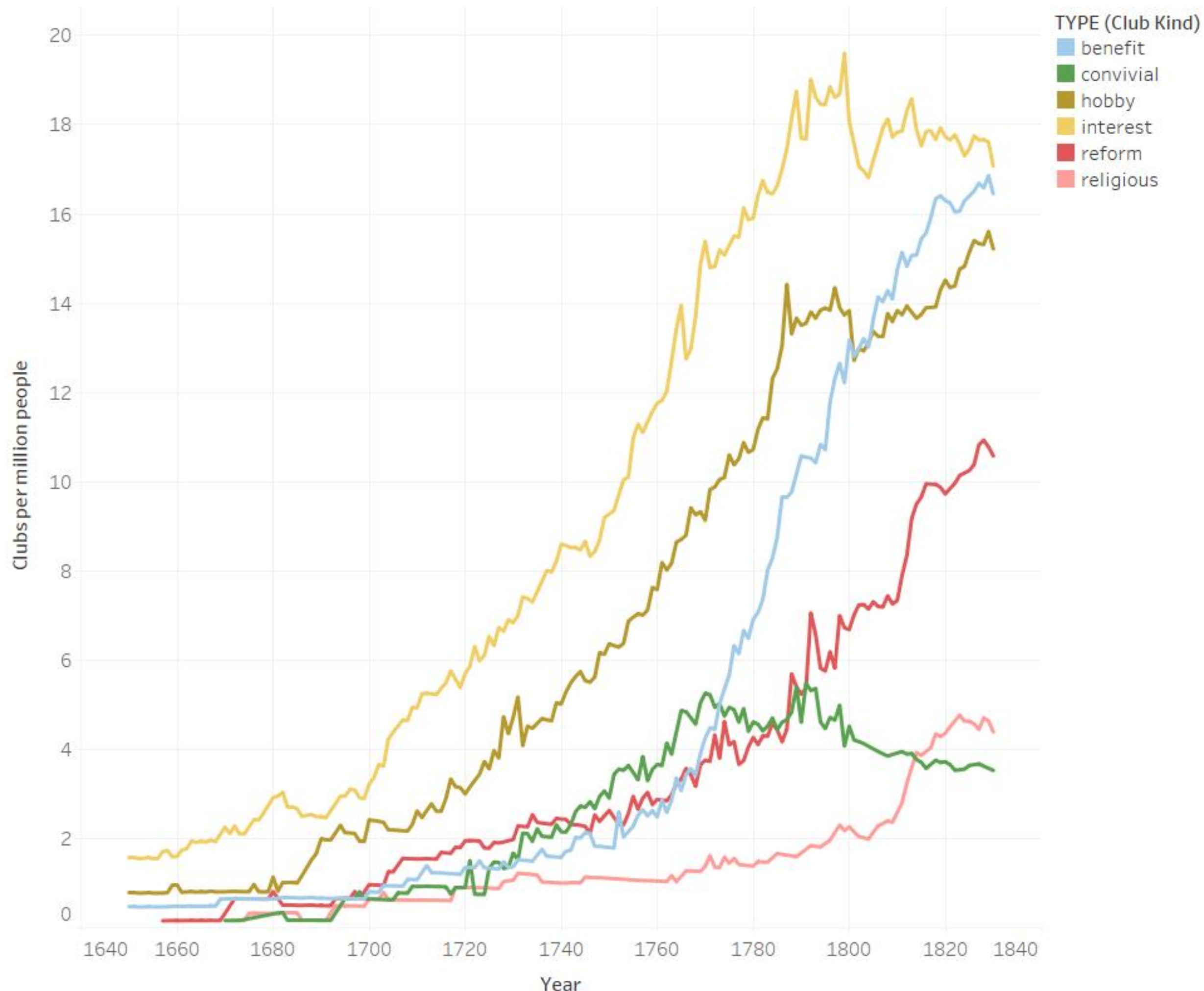

Figure 7 Clubs by type (excluding secret societies)

Interest

The use of the corporate form to organize people who shared a common *interest* began in Britain with the medieval guilds, if not earlier. They gained much power and importance in urban Europe, and in Britain they were frequently chartered, either by the Crown, urban authorities, or the weight of tradition. By the long 18th century guilds had been steadily broken by a more integrated national market, although they remained an important social venue in many cities including London.[38] Yet our data show people continued to make small everyday corporations to represent their common interests. What these new groups lacked in official sanction and in legal power, they made up for in scale and breadth. Particularly important were trade clubs, which grew continually until the end of our sample. Because these were much easier to form and to join, they represented a much wider variety of interests than the old guild system which relied on difficult-to-secure charters. Many trade clubs represented journeymen whose conditions were deteriorating over the 18th century, or other underrepresented

[38] J. R. Kellett, "The Breakdown of Gild and Corporation Control Over the Handicraft and Retail Trade in London," *The Economic History Review* 10, no. 3 (1958): 381–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.1958.tb00013.x.

groups. Similar interest groups were central to the institutionalization of the professions, which were growing with the development of the urban service economy. The most notable is the Smeatonean Society for Civil Engineers founded in 1771, which inspired the founding in 1818 of the Institution for Civil Engineers, both of which exist to this day.[39]

Activity

Clubs were also frequently used to group people together around a common *activity*. They grew steadily over the century after the 1680s, increasing per capita around 15 times. Clubs were used to organize a huge variety of activities. The most common kind of *activity* club were what I call here anachronistically *sports* clubs, those, that ordered a physical group activity, including change ringing, golf, carriage racing, boxing, archery, cricket, and curling. They grew by tenfold over our time period. Learned societies are the next largest category. In the late 17th century they were mostly scientific societies. After 1790 there was a large growth in societies devoted to literature and philosophy.[40] Finally, we must mention those clubs devoted to the 'pleasures of the imagination'—music, literary societies, and book clubs—which demonstrate much more modest growth than what we would expect from their predominance in a historiography dominated by literary sources. Music clubs began to increase in the 1710s, but take off around 1760, although they plateau after 1787. Literary societies like Samuel Johnson's Club and the Bluestockings make up only a small fraction of the clubs in our sample and grow only about four fold over our time period. Book clubs grow in importance after 1750, increasing by 13 times relative to population at large. By 1774, a writer in the Middlesex Journal said that "every town has a book club, to which the country gentlemen regularly resort."[41] What is striking here is the remarkable variety in the activities the same club form could be used to organize: glee clubs, cricket matches, and the publication of scientific papers.

Benefit

The biggest change in the composition of the associational world was the rise of *benefit* clubs after the 1750s. I use this term to refer to those organizations that existed primarily to provide their members with some kind of aid, access to capital, insurance, or other concrete assistance. The most well-studied of these are the Friendly Societies which became so important to the lives of working people in the 19th century.[42] Benefit clubs experienced exponential growth rates for fifty years, between 1730 and 1780. The growth really picks up in the 1750s, slows in the 1780s, and further slows in the 1790s when clubs of working people came under considerable public skepticism and state regulation. Yet their growth remained strong enough to overtake activity-based clubs in 1800, and, by the end of our time period, to nearly overtake clubs based around interest.

Reform

Finally, there were reform clubs—those clubs that sought to change things outside of their membership which have been studied under the rubric of mainly middle-class 'subscriber

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[39] J. G. Watson, *The Civils: The Story of the Institution of Civil Engineers* (London: Thomas Telford, 1988).

[40] See e.g. Chris E. Makepeace, *Science and Technology in Manchester: Two Hundred Years of the Lit. and Phil* (Manchester: Manchester Literary & Philosophical Publications, 1984).

[41] *Middlesex Journal and Evening Advertiser* (London, England), July 28, 1774 - July 30, 1774; Issue 833. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale Document Number Z2000771656

[42] Ismay, *Trust Among Strangers*.

democracies'.[43] These encompassed a large variety of organization. The most prominent in the sample are those I denote as 'charities'—groups whose primary activity was to collect money from a membership and then use this to aid people, from providing clothing for soldiers, to poor children's education. Reform clubs grew over 30 times relative to population from 1770. There were a number of political reform groups, but these are considerably volatile, expanding for example during the time of Wilkes and the American Revolution, and the centenary of the Glorious Revolution in 1788, but just as quickly petering out, as often a result of changing fads as of organized repression. Similarly, there were great spikes in self-consciously 'loyal' societies, particularly in 1792 as a response to the rise of radical societies and the French Revolution. After 1805, societies that sought to reform places outside of Britain grew, much influenced by William Wilberforce—including overseas missionary societies, and also an increasing number of anti-slavery societies.

Conclusion

The data visualizations in this chapter allow us to see the development of the associational world from a new vantage point. Yes, clubs and societies grew over the long 18th Century, just as we knew that they had. But what is surprising is the precise scale of their growth, and its character. Clubs steadily grew faster than the population as a whole. The steadily increasing density of clubs suggests deep roots for club-going: likely rapid population growth and urbanization, and the weakness of 'old regime' institutions to deal with the problems this rapid growth threw up. Whereas in 1650 there were perhaps 2,250 men for every club in Britain, in 1800 there were 85. The steady growth of clubs per person was due not just to the geographic spread of clubs, but also by clubs diversifying into new types and new purposes. Over the 180 years captured by this census, new kinds of associations rose to meet new political, economic and cultural circumstances. The club, as opposed to other forms of social organization, was incredibly flexible. It could be started by any group of men in a tavern with some paper, a pen, and officers, but it could expand to accomplish great feats of collective action, from provisioning social insurance to organizing sports matches to advocating for an end to the slave trade. The increasing density of such clubs, and clubs' propensity to teach men how to start new clubs, amounted to a dramatic change in everyday life. Before the growth of clubs, the scope of everyday voluntary activity for most men in Britain was small. After the growth of clubs, any man who could overcome the low barrier of having enough money and time could participate in the huge diversity of voluntary activity. This amounted not just to a change in the marketplace for amusements, but, as Chapter Two will go on to show, the strengthening of a precocious British *civil society*.

[43] R. J. Morris, "Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780–1850: An Analysis," *The Historical Journal* 26, no. 01 (1983): 95–118, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00019610.

Chapter 2: Everyday Corporations

Introduction: Punch House and Club

In the last decades of the 18th Century, a retired dragoon named John Shaw ran a punch house in Manchester that attracted the "most opulent manufactures" of the town, all Tories, all "genuine Church and King men."[1] Sometime in the 1780s, this group underwent a momentous change: they began to elect officers, including a President and a Vice President, and to hold formal meetings, including an annual feast. When John Shaw died in 1796, the punch house was sold. The men who had met at John Shaw's punch house soon reassembled at another drinking house under a new name: John Shaw's Club. The men of John Shaw's *Club* could do many things that the assembled men of John Shaw's *punch house* would have found impossible. They were able to collect and maintain a fund of money to pay for their regular meetings and for larger expenses like portraits of John Shaw and his servant Molly. More remarkably, the club continued to meet long after John Shaw's punch house was broken up, and long after the deaths of the original members—John Shaw's Club was still meeting well into the 20th century.

Throughout the 18th century, there were many groups like John Shaw's Club, where quotidian social gatherings established themselves on more formal grounds. This chapter looks at an underappreciated catalyst for such formalization: corporate paperwork. To make the punch house into a club required formal administration: the keeping of minutes, accounts, rules, votes, the election of officers, and countless meetings to settle the tedious questions like where to meet and when. I refer to these practices as *paperwork*, borrowing a coinage from Ben Kafka referring more specifically to 19th century bureaucracy.[2] Paperwork connects clubs with a wider corporate history that usually focuses on economic and political organizations like joint-stock companies and parish vestries.[3] Recently the "constitutional turn" in corporate history has extended this research to connect the economic development of European capitalism with the political development of European imperialism.[4] This research has revealed an overlapping patchwork of public bodies under the heading of the corporation, including states, company-states, local authorities, and joint stock companies.[5] It has missed the long-tail of what I call the *corporate continuum*: small, voluntaristic, everyday corporations like clubs. These

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[1] Information on John Shaw's Club comes from Manchester Central Library M485/3 and /1/3

[2] Ben Kafka, "Paperwork: The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 12 (2009): 340–53; Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing: Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (New York: Zone Books, 2012).

[3] Philip J. Stern, "The Corporation in History," in *The Corporation: A Critical, Multi-Disciplinary Handbook*, ed. Andre Spicer and Grietje Baars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 21–46, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139681025.002; Emily Erikson and Valentina Assenova, "Introduction: New Forms of Organization and the Coordination of Political and Commercial Actors," book-part, Chartering Capitalism: Organizing Markets, States, and Publics, August 10, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1108/S0198-871920150000029001; William A. Pettigrew, "Corporate Constitutionalism and the Dialogue between the Global and Local in Seventeenth-Century English History," *Itinerario* 39, no. 3 (2015): 487–501, https://doi.org/10.1017/S016511531500090X.

[5] Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

used the same set of administrative, political, and ritual tools as their bigger corporate cousins. They were just smaller, often less permanent, and comparatively weak.

This chapter describes the features of club paperwork that developed over the long 18th century: minutes, the constitution, democratic deliberation, and officers, and how they connected the club to a corporate continuum that was sometimes fluid: guilds became clubs, clubs gained official charters, Friendly Societies of workers were painted as illegal trading combinations. There are indications that this paperwork was done not only in elite clubs of well-educated men close to power, but also in clubs of the poor and obscure. The famous description of clubs in the ninth issue of the newssheet *The Spectator* (1711) ends with a list of rules made by a "Two-penny Club" that were hung on the wall of their tavern meeting room. These rules were already by that time boilerplate, including the price of admission, various fines, and the rights of duties of members.[6] The sophisticated records of many similar tavern benefit clubs throughout the century show that even the illiterate could be involved with paperwork. The Garstang Friendly Society in 1770, for example, had 45 members, a full 20% of whom could not sign their own name—many of whom still served as club officers.[7]

Using paperwork to put clubs on a corporate continuum changes how we see the development of historical civil society. Civil society is usually understood *negatively*: it is neither the state, nor the market, nor the family, but instead a mass of in-between organizations like clubs, charities, or pressure groups. The larger this "third sector", the greater the buffer between individuals and the power of the modern state. But this definition does not help us understand the historical rise of civil society, because it depends on an anachronistic separation between state and market that in the long 18th century was still often quite blurry. Phil Withington has described how "society" in that period combined practices of "voluntary and purposeful association" like companies and plantations with new styles of face-to-face "civil" behavior.[8] This chapter looks at a related process: how men combined the public paperwork of the corporation with the private sociability of the tavern to create a new kind of civil society.

Paperwork

The word *club* originates from the practice of gathering or *clubbing* money together at the end of a night to split a bill at a tavern. Over time the word came to mean the stable organization that arose from this alehouse accounting. Samuel Johnson's 1755 Dictionary defines *club* in both senses: as both "the shot or dividend of a reckoning, paid by the company in just proportions," and also as "an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions."[9] The practical difficulty of splitting the reckoning shouldn't be underestimated. Clubs needed to agree on where to meet and when; on how much they

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[6] Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. Daniel F. Bond (Oxford University Press, 1965), 39, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102140540.

[7] Lancashire Record Office DDX 1096/1. The society had a system by which two members at a time would serve as steward—a job that required at least some writing ability in order to record the accounts—and the society always paired an illiterate steward with a literate one

[8] Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, U.K. ; Malden, Mass: Polity, 2010).

[9] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: London, 1755*, 1st ed (Oakland, Calif: Octavo, 2005).

were to pay for their food and drink; what to do with the money left over (if there was money left over) or how to cover their debts (if any debt remained at the end of the night.)

To solve these problems, clubs used practices from a wider tradition of corporate paperwork. The longer history of these administrative practices is still obscure. It is clear that organizations of all kinds used very similar forms of record keeping. Impressionistically, there is a striking similarity between any minute book from the 18th century, regardless of whether it was from a hospital, a charity, a joint-stock company, or a drinking club.[10] I have found no explicit texts describing how to do this paperwork, how to keep minutes, how to write a constitution, how to make rules, or how to serve as a club officer, It is likely that administrative skills were learned through practice, as they were learned in other corporations. Parliamentary indexer Edward Moore described how Members of Parliament needed to learn "a Kind of *Parliamentary Grammar*" which included importantly knowing "the *Forms* and *Order of its Proceedings*." But these could not be learned through books, instead they had to be learned through the experience of participating in Parliament itself.[11] A similar learning-through-doing probably happened in clubs.

There were four common elements to this paperwork as it developed in clubs: minutes; constitutions; democratic deliberation; and officers. These gave organizations recipes for recreating action consistently over time, given changing personnel and circumstances. The next sections describe these practices and their connection with the wider corporate world, before showing how they became institutionalized over the 18th century.

Minutes

Minute books were used by all forms of corporations as a way of keeping records of meetings, resolutions, and other corporate activities.[12] The 17th century constitution of the chartered London guild the Society of Stationers established that the society would hire a clerk who was responsible "for the entering and registering of all Decrees, Ordinances, Acts, Agreements, [and] Orders" in a book set aside for that purpose.[13] Similarly, almost every corporation employed Secretaries or Clerks to write minutes, send letters, and otherwise keep account of the group's the non-financial business.[14] Clubs were no different in the attention they paid to their minutes.

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[10] I realized that there was a widespread genre of non-financial record keeping in my first months working in the London Metropolitan Archives. I had recognized that clubs kept a particular kind of minutes, and had grown familiar with these practices. As I was walking to lunch one day, I saw another scholar working on a book that I instantly recognized as this genre of record keeping. It was a minute book—but it was the minute book of the Foundling Society, not a club. I realized then that there was an underrecognized similarity in record keeping between a broad range of organizations but I could find little work done on how this minute keeping practice arose or spread.

[11] Moore quoted in Paul Seaward, "Parliamentary Law in the Eighteenth Century: From Commonplace to Treatise," in *Essays on the History of Parliamentary Procedure: In Honour of Thomas Erskine May*, ed. Paul Evans, Hart Studies in Constitutional Law, volume 7 (Oxford, UK ; Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2017), 107–8.

[12] We do not know enough about the minute as an administrative genre. We do know that it was incredibly widespread, but its deeper history remains obscure.

[13] Stationers' Company (London, England), ed., *The Orders, Rules, and Ordinances Ordained, Devised, and Made by the Master and Keepers or Wardens and Comminalty of the Mystery or Art of Stationers of the City of London, for the Well Governing of That Society* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1678), 15–16.

[14] For the wider corporate use of minute books see any corporate constitution or rules, e.g. Melton House of Industry, ed., *Rules and Orders, for Regulating the Meetings and Proceedings of the Directors and Acting Guardians, of the Poor, and for the Better Governing, Regulating, and Employing the Poor of the Hundreds of Loes and Wilford*, electronic resource (Woodbridge: printed by

There is a strong family resemblance between club minute books. Minutes were kept separate from accounts. Every meeting would get its minute, often each on its own page, organized in chronological order. Even planned meetings that were not held because members failed to attend were given a minute. Minutes were headed by the date, which often including the place of meeting. This was followed by a list of members present, usually with the chairperson at the head of the list and the secretary at the foot. Finally, there was the body of the minute itself. This recorded *all* official club business, large or small. For example: "Memorandum, this night Mr. Woodford treated the club with a bowl of punch."[15] One interesting difference between the minutes of clubs and those of many other corporations is that in clubs the list of members present is at the *head* of the minute; in other corporations the list of people present is usually at the *foot* of the minute. I have not found any explicit justification of this practice, but it does appear to have been a conscious decision in some cases. I will discuss below the case of a Masonic Lodge that changed its character from medieval guild to modern club: with this change, the location of the names of members present moved from the foot of the minute (as was done in larger corporations) to the head (as was done in clubs.)

Clubs began to keep minutes in order to organize the regular payment of a tavern bill. Over time these accounts accreted into more formal paperwork that could regulate not just finances but group behavior. The example of the first memoranda of an unnamed London dining society shows this process of accounts turning into minutes.[16] In the 1680s, the club regulated that

> on every Club night the names of the members of this Society shall be called over by the books wherein they are entered, a quarter of an hour before the time the Club ought to be broke up, and that every member then present shall pay his Club and forfeiture for absents at the time his name is called.

The clubs' early minute book amounts to the sheets on which this attendance was recorded: they record the members of the club, presences, absences, fines, and payments. But the habit of keeping these records allowed the secretaries to do more than simply keep track of who belonged to the club and who owed it money. Secretaries came to write minutes on the reverse of the attendance sheets when they made an extraordinary decision whose outcome needed to be preserved. Most in the early years of this unnamed dining club concerned voting in new members. The remainder were all about the complexities of managing and paying for a group meal, like how to make up for a deficit in the club's funds caused by the increasing price of wine. Over time, minutes came to get their own dedicated sheet, and were written for every meeting, not just the exceptional times when the club needed to make a particular resolution.

R. Loder, 1792), 7, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T046943&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW106375623&vrsn=1.0&srchtp=a&d4=0.33&n=10&SU=0LRL+OR+0LRI; *The Rules, Orders, and Regulations, of the Society of Engravers Instituted at London 1802* (London, 1804), 23, 29, 30; *Articles, Covenants, Rules and Orders, of the Building Association* (Dartmouth Street, Westminster: J. Hayes, 1807), 15–16, 41; *First Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire Into the Municipal Corporations in England and Wales*, Parliamentary Papers (London: The House of Commons, 1835), passim.

[15] Henry Horwitz, W. A Speck, and W. A Gray, *London Politics, 1713-1717.* (London: London Record Society, 2005).

[16] London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/113/MS03406

There are few explicit descriptions of how minutes should be written. We know that note-keeping practices were consciously taught to children.[17] There was clearly a knack for writing minutes that became widespread. One of the best-preserved examples of club minute taking comes from 1759, when the Edinburgh Belles-Lettres Society (a college debating society whose members included David Hume and Henry Dundas) resolved that they were "sensible that their Minutes are not wrote so accurately as they ought to be." They blamed this on the "present practice of writing their proceedings into the Minute book the same night that such proceedings are held." Their proposed reform provided numerous opportunities for the society to review and affirm the content of the minutes before they were entered in the book. First, "the Secretary shall take down their minutes upon a separate piece of paper," and not directly into the club's minute book as had been done before. At the close of the meeting, the Secretary was to read the minutes out loud. If they were found to be correct, these rough pages were to "be marked by the President with his initials" to affirm them. Then the Secretary would write these affirmed minutes "verbatim in the minute book betwixt the meeting thereafter." At the beginning of the next meeting, before the club elected its nightly President, the Secretary would present both the affirmed rough minutes and the new minutes in the club's minute book, and these "would be compared together and the minute book signed by the President in the presence of the society."[18] We know that most clubs had similar audits, although not as frequently and not as fastidiously. More formal clubs would begin their meetings by reading over the minutes of the last meeting and affirming them; more often, minutes were audited along with the accounts at the club's regular occasional feasts along with its financial accounts. This extended description points to an important character of the club minutes: they were to represent the *collective* decisions of the club rather than the actions of the members of the club as *individuals*. Even for a proposal to be written into the minute book, it needed to be affirmed by a second member. Similarly, minute books only rarely record the content of debates or disagreements. The minute books were a record of the corporate activity of the club, and so everything within them needed to be the product of some kind of corporate.

Constitution and Rules

The minute book did not just contain records of club business. They also contained the club's rules. Special attention is due to the formal list of rules that filled the first pages of the club's minute book, often called the *constitution*. These constitutions were imitations of the charters by which more formal corporations established their authority and their legal status. On rare occasions, club officers complained about their constitution's lack of legal standing and tried to secure formal recognition. In 1786 Josiah Wedgewood, the co-chair of the lobbying group the General Chamber of Manufactures argued that it should attempt to legally incorporate because doing so would give the body "an existence beside what we are often twitted with, a self-delegated one. We could answer the question—What is a chamber? which stood so much in our way last year."[19] But the General Chamber never did secure a charter, and most clubs were wholly satisfied with the "self-delegated" character expressed in their constitutions.

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[17] Matthew Daniel Eddy, "The Nature of Notebooks: How Enlightenment Schoolchildren Transformed the Tabula Rasa," *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 2 (April 2018): 275–307, https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.239.

[18] National Library of Scotland Adv.Ms.23.3.4

[19] Quoted in R. J. Bennett, *Local Business Voice: The History of Chambers of Commerce in Britain, Ireland, and Revolutionary America, 1760-2011*, electronic resource (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199584734.001.0001.

Like the corporate charters on which they were based, club constitutions combined a discussion of the nature and purpose of the society with practical rules about the club's everyday administration. Characteristically, the rules of the London Religious Society, written in 1718, began by establishing the group's identity and the duties of its members: "That the sole design of this Society being to promote Real Holiness of heart and Life, it is absolutely necessary that the Persons who enter into it do seriously Resolve to apply themselves in good earnest to all means proper to make them rise unto Salvation."[20] It continued with the more worldly matters: the periodicity of meeting (every week), the purpose of meetings ("to Encourage each other in practical Holiness by discoursing on Spiritual subjects & reading God's Holy Word & to Almighty God & praise his name together."), and then a long list of rules that mostly related to dues to be paid by members and the fines they could incur for misbehavior. This document helped to run the club's meetings. It instructed new members on the purpose and character of the society, reminded old members of their rights and duties, and gave the club secretary a way of ensuring that people would follow the rules they had previously agreed to.

The constitution also became identified with the character of the club itself. In imitation of corporate charters club constitutions were frequently very beautiful, written in intricate calligraphy, often on expensive materials like vellum. In 1761 the Fenwick Weavers Society, made up of poor tradesmen, spent the sum of five and a half shillings to so "engrave" their charter—about a week's wages for a farm laborer at the time.[21] Constitutions were at the center of many club rituals, particularly initiation, where new members would ritually sign the constitution, affirming before all that they would abide by the club's collective will. The Liverpool Unanimous Society was not unusual in reading out its constitution—written at the front of the club's minute book—at the club's regular feasts.[22] In the 18th century, as commercial life became increasingly dominated by written letters, paper money, credit, and other handwritten paper financial instruments, people came to know one another's signatures intimately, and rely on them as a sign of binding agreement.[23] Signing the club's constitution was thus a momentous public agreement to abide by the club's laws, violation of which could cause real damage a man's reputation, and thus the credit necessary to conduct basic business. Sometimes the constitution would be considered especially resistant to revision. The Whig H.S. Club spoke of the special set of decisions that had been made "upon the settling of this club"[24] as being more-or-less permanent. The Culpar Fife Chapman Society, a Scottish society of traveling salesmen, insisted that any constitutional changes be proposed a full year before they could be voted on to resist unnecessary changes to it.[25] But in practice the constitution was a living document. Over the decades that minute books were in use, the rules changed, and there were clauses struck out, new ones inserted, whole rules done away with. The 22 "Orders for the Good Government of the Candlewick Ward Club" from its first minute

[20] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/090/MS06479
[21] National Library of Scotland Acc 4702/1. Wage estimates from Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870*, 311.
[22] Liverpool Archives, 367 UNA/1
[23] Donna T. Andrew and Randall McGowen, *The Perreaus and Mrs. Rudd: Forgery and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 18, 23.
[24] Horwitz, Speck, and Gray, *London Politics, 1713-1717.*, 11.
[25] National Records of Scotland Ms.200

book are covered in erasures and amendments. Twelve rules have been changed in some way, and six rules have been erased. Most constitutions are covered in similar erasures and revisions.[26]

There was another set of rules that had a subordinate relationship to the rules of the constitution. I call these 'by-laws', although this designation was not in much contemporary use. These are those rules that were agreed upon in the normal course of business and recorded in a minute, but which for whatever did not become engrossed in the club's constitution. In the course of a single 1709 meeting of the Honorable Board of Loyal Brotherhood, an elite London dining club, the members made a number of resolutions, including to change their place of meeting, that members absent three times without excuse "shall be liable to expulsion" and that "the Book to be closed after the first Lady is toasted," in other words, the club would no longer formally meet—and thus pay for drinks—after a certain period. Although these by-laws were noted in the club's minute book, they were not transferred to its constitution, or what the Brotherhood called its 'roll.' Over time clubs came to have a mass of these by-laws.[27]

The difference between the constitution and the by-laws had much to do with the material limitations of paperwork. The constitution was easy to reference during the work of the meeting because it was at the front of the minute book or written on a separate document that was often hung on the walls of the club room. But these pages would eventually fill up, at which point the constitution could no longer be added to unless the book be rebound or the charter be reengraved. The by-laws on the other hand were scattered in various minutes, and so if they were not immediately brought into regular club practice, they could be completely forgotten. This bothered some societies, and they would look through their minutes to try to bring their documents into a rational order. In 1762 the Commercial Society of Edinburgh called for "a Recapitulation of the Laws of the Society as they now Stand, to precent the Trouble of Always searching through the sederunts for the alterations made on the original contract."[28] (This kind of rule hygiene was common to British corporations of all kinds: from 1621 the House of Lords would "engross" their rules after every session, often "reduced under apt parliamentary titles" for easier reference.[29])

Democratic Deliberation

The club meeting was run by formal democratic processes heavily reliant on paperwork.[30] In the club members had to sit with their heads uncovered during the session (except the chair). Members should stand to speak, talk only one at a time, and address themselves to an officer, or be silenced by the chair and possibly fined. In the part of the club meeting when members considered 'business', members would stand to propose a resolution. If another member seconded this proposal, then the secretary would write it down in the club's minute book. At the next meeting, the secretary would read the resolution aloud, and the resolution would be debated before being put to a vote. The secretary would record the outcome of the vote in a minute. The majority carried the question, but there was a strong

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[26] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/004/MS02841/001
[27] London Metropolitan Archives A/BLB/001
[28] National Library of Scotland Ms. 9097
[29] David Natzler, "Manuals Before May: From the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century," in *Essays on the History of Parliamentary Procedure: In Honour of Thomas Erskine May*, Hart Studies in Constitutional Law, volume 7 (Oxford, UK ; Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2017), 91.
[30] Huw V. Bowen, "The 'Little Parliament': The General Court of the East India Company, 1750-1784," *The Historical Journal* 34, no. 4 (1991): 857–72.

injunction in many cases to achieve unanimity, particularly for important questions, following the wider corporate preference for consensus.[31] These rules of order were similar to those in use in other corporations. Henry Scobell's *Memorials of the Method and Maner of Proceedings in Parliament* (published in 1656) included rules of "decorum" that would be well recognized by any club throughout the 18th century.[32]

The emphasis on deliberation connects with broader 18th century understandings of the salutary effects of sociability, famously summed up by the Earl of Shaftesbury: through socializing "we polish one another, and rub off our Corners and rough Sides by a sort of amicable collision."[33] The formal procedures of club's decision-making were self-consciously used to give this "amicable collision" more time to work. The Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society explained that delays between proposing voting on resolutions was a way of making sure that no law be passed without "due deliberation."[34] This delay was especially important in the sensitive process of evaluating the character of potential members. The unnamed London dining club we have discussed earlier in 1795 resolved to keep its lists of prospective members open for an entire month, so that "the Present Members may have an opportunity of forming themselves of the character &tc of the Gentlemen Proposed."[35] Deliberation was important because it was believed it could correct for the deficiencies of individual members. The radical thinker John Thewall. in the *Rights of Nature against the Usurpations of Establishments* argued that the improving nature of sociability meant that even groups of unlearned workingmen could club together to make real political decisions.

> Whatever presses men together… may generate some vices, is favorable to the diffusion of knowledge, and ultimately promotive of human liberty. Hence every large workshop and manufactory is a sort of political society, which no act of parliament can silence, and no magistrate disperse…. Each brings, as it were, into the common bank his mite of information, and putting it to a sort of circulating usance, each contributor has the advantage of a large interest, without any diminution of capital.[36]

Sociability may lead to vice, like drinking, but it could also lead to discussion that could polish the workshop into an authentic "political society" by clubbing together the information of the members. In 1829, the Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry argued that collective deliberation of a committee could be used particularly by groups of women to overcome the deficiencies of their sex: "a committee will often arrive at sounder and wiser conclusions on any practical question than an individual would

[31] See e.g. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India*, 11.
[32] Henry Scobell, *Memorials of the Method and Maner of Proceedings in Parliament in Passing Bills Together with Several Rules and Customs, Which by Long and Constant Practice Have Obtained the Name of Orders of the House. Gathered by Observation, and out of the Journal Books from the Time of Edward 6. By H. S. E. C.P.* (London, England, p. London), 6–9, http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240899476/citation/FB1047FE1A4A4BD1PQ/1.
[33] Anthony Ashley Cooper Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Douglas den Uyl (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 42, https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/shaftesbury-characteristicks-of-men-manners-opinions-times-vol-1.
[34] National Library of Scotland Dep 374/2
[35] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/113/MS03406
[36] John Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature, against the Usurpations of Establishments. A Series of Letters to the People of Britain, on the State of Public Affairs, and the Recent Effusions of ... Edmund Burke. By John Thelwall. Letter the First*, electronic resource, Second edition (London: published by H. D. Symonds; and J. March, Norwich, 1796), 21–24, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T165701&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW106865961&vrsn=1.0&srchtp=a&d4=0.33&n=10&SU=0LRL+OR+0LRI.

be likely to form…. The business at hand, under the care of a regular and judicious committee, will be generally conducted with greater order, method and regularity, than will probably attach to the efforts of any solitary individual."[37] Paperwork could establish this kind of improving sociability in a more formal, regular, and ordered way, and so improve the group's capacity for self-government.

Officers

The club was not an absolute democracy, instead, it delegated much of its power to officers. These positions importantly were determined by some kind of paperwork, usually a vote, which would be duly recorded in the club's minutes. The three key offices of President, Treasurer and Secretary were defined by their different areas of administration. The executive (called variously the President, Preses or Chair) was mainly responsible for the government of the meeting. It was he who called the club meeting into order, silenced members when they spoke over each other, and determined when the meeting would end. The Stirling Port Club resolved that its chairperson (elected nightly) should "direct all matters of form and Punctilio respecting the Club for that night."[38] They were also the ultimate representative of the club: the Watt Club described the role of the chair as analogous to a private individual hosting friends at his table.[39] The Treasurer and Secretary were responsible for the club's paperwork. Often the roles were united in a single officer who did the accounts, kept the minutes, sent letters, paid bills and so on. When the roles were separated, this was accompanied by a record-keeping distinction. The secretary was the officer responsible for everything literate: the minutes and the meetings; the treasurer was responsible for everything numerate: the accounts and the money.

Club officers were accorded with respect. Often the president sat on a special chair, or at the very least was seated at the head of the table. When he took his seat, the meeting was called to order, and the minute book would be opened on his right-hand side. The Eclectic Book Society, a London-area book club, admonished a member for disrespecting the officers of the club and thus the club itself. Not only had he tendered his resignation when he was next in rotation to host the club meeting, he had sent his letter announcing his resignation in "mutilated condition… informally" to the chairman and not formally to the secretary. A number of annoyed letters were exchanged. The officers lambasted the member for not knowing proper corporate procedure. "Your own experience, Sir, must long ere this have taught you, that any disrespect shown to an officer of a society, is an insult to the whole body, and is usually and justly censured."[40] By the 19th century, clearly, the status of club officers was so well known they could expect proper treatment from their clubbable members.

The roles of these officers in the club were very similar to those of larger corporations, and relied on the same tacit skills. The President needed to know how to call a meeting into order. The secretary needed to know how to write a minute in a good hand. The treasurer needed to know how to correct and audit financial accounts. Men, like Sir Joseph Banks, often occupied these roles both in formal organizations and in clubs. Clubs sometimes stipulated necessary skills for each office that could also

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[37] Elizabeth Gurney Fry and Gil Skidmore, *Elizabeth Fry: A Quaker Life: Selected Letters and Writings*, The Sacred Literature Series (Lanham, Md: AltaMira Press, 2005), 12.
[38] National Library of Scotland Acc 7862/3
[39] *History and Regulations of the Watt Club, Greenock* (Greenock: Printed in the Register's Office, 1827), 4, https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/assets/attach/4608/Watt%20Club%20of%20Greenock%20Regulations%201828%20Web%20CS1-2-1.pdf.
[40] London Metropolitan Archives COL/CN/01/01/006

be used in the same roles in a corporation. In 1790 the Charitable Society kept at the house of Edward Wilkinson in Chatburn stipulated that its master "must be a person who can Write and inspect Accounts."[41] The Lancashire Clergy Society, a charitable society for Catholic priests, had a regulation that allowed members to appoint acting officers if the elected officers didn't have the proper skills to carry out their duties. If the Brethren "do not judge [the officer] so good an economist, or so well qualified to manage money-affairs as some other Priest or Priests in the same Hundred," they were to vote in another officer "to manage their temporal or money affairs who shall have the style or title of Steward of the Funds for such hundred."[42] It could be difficult to get a member to volunteer for these onerous and often unpaid positions. The Eastwood Militia Society in 1819, for example, had four ballots for the office of Collector before they found a member who would rather serve as collector than pay the fine for refusing the office.[43] But clubs survived because the tacit skills of holding these offices were widespread enough that presidents, secretaries, and treasurers could usually be found to continually do the club's paperwork.

Institutionalization

By 1700, a small number of elite London clubs were conforming to the highly formal administrative practices outlined above. Most clubs did not. Clubs could operate for quite some time before they adopted minutes, a constitution, formal meetings, and officers. A box club for Huguenot refugees in London seems to have been founded in 1687, but only formalized its rules only in 1720.[44] The Cape Club, an Edinburgh literary society first met in 1764 but only set down its rules and procedures in 1768 as it started to gain many new members.[45] The Watt Club of Greenock started as an informal group of friends in 1813 and only later came to use paperwork. The "Meetings were conducted upon the model of private life; no other regulation being deemed necessary to ensure the uninterrupted harmony which characterized the Society, than that the individual in the Chair should be addressed with the same good breeding which a Gentleman sitting at his own table might expect from the friends invited to partake of his hospitality."[46] External events often encouraged the adoption of paperwork, like an influx of new members who needed to be better disciplined in the rules of the club, as in the Cape Club; or a new, more complicated undertaking, like the Watt Club, which after it began meeting decided to work to commemorate the birthplace of James Watt.

Over the 18th century club paperwork became institutionalized. Increasingly the club became identical with its paperwork: clubs were only considered to be properly founded only when it drew up a constitution, elected officers, and the President signed the minute of the first meeting. The precocious clubman Maurice Johnson started the Spalding Gentleman's society in 1709 to bring the learned discussion he had experienced in London to his Lincolnshire market town. Johnson recalled later that these first meetings were incomplete, "'twas onely meeting at a coffeehouse upon tryal how such a designe might succeed." It was only three years later, in 1712, "the time when it was fixed upon rules

[41] Lancashire Record Office DDX 28/301
[42] Lancashire Record Office RCCF 3/1
[43] National Library of Scotland Ms.2693
[44] Huguenot Society of London, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* (Huguenot Society of London., 1902), 204.
[45] Edinburgh University Library La.III.464
[46] *History and Regulations of the Watt Club, Greenock*, 4.

signed or subscribed," when the club was properly founded.[47] By the 1760s, clubs were frequently founded with a performative act of paperwork: getting the minute books and writing their first minutes. Club paperwork became institutionalized—it was widely recognized as a stable, set of practices that people could take for granted. When they joined a club, they could expect a certain kind of paperwork and procedure.[48]

A representative example this process of slow conformity to an institutionalized record keeping genre comes from the minutes of the Candlewick Ward Club, one of many of the City of London's 'Ward' clubs.[49] The club was made up of often politically-ambitious men of the neighborhood: by the late 1740s, the members were giving each other gifts of wine on the occasion of being elected to London's Common Council.[50] The bulk of the club's first minute book, started in 1736, is made up of attendance lists like those used by the unnamed London dining club mentioned above. These lists were made up of grids, with the names of members listed along the rows, and dates of meetings in the columns. When a member was present and paid their club for a particular meeting, the steward would mark the cell with an X. When they were absent or otherwise failed to pay their club, the cell was left blank until the member had paid the money they owed. The steward would use these sheets to call the roll, to identify members who owed the club money, to balance the club's finances during its semi-regular audits, and to ratify decisions to make a new member by adding a new name to the sheet, or remove a member by crossing his name off.

But the club also had to make other decisions which fit awkwardly in the attendance sheet's grid, and the steward responded to these by taking a few blank attendance sheets (still underlaid with the pencil grid-marks) and using these for minutes. Early in the book there are four sheets devoted to minutes. They are not kept in chronological order: on one sheet are minutes from 1747, 1748, 1756, and 1759; another has minutes from 1744, 1746, and 1747; the next from 1743, 1744, 1747, 1748, 1749, and 1752; the one after that from 1740 and 1741. The character of these minutes is equally various. Some are accounts memorializing the "Money left in hand" after a meeting, so that the steward would be held accountable to the money left in the club box. Others record gifts of wine for the table on particular occasions, particularly the births or marriages of children. Others noted wagers made between members. (In 1741 Mr. Tyson bet Mr. Oliver that his handwriting was better; we do not know who won.) The minutes are sometimes sloppy: there's a half-completed minute in the middle of the very first sheet, stopped mid-entry—"Memorandum the 20 April 1748."

A major formalization in the club's administration occurred in 1755. Here the addition of what would become a rote phrase appears on the bottom of the quarterly attendance sheets: "The account settled and the money expended." This is likely a record of an audit that took place at the club's quarterly meeting. The next page—a list of fines—ends with the same rote phrase "The account settled and the money expended." Over the ensuing years, these notes of settlement are repeated in the same language

[47] Spalding Gentlemen's Society, *The Minute-Books of The Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 1712-1755* (Lincoln Record Society, 1981).

[48] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Anchor books ed, Anchor Books; A589 (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, 1967).

[49] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/004/MS02841/001-003

[50] For more on the bets of the Candlewick Ward Club, see my piece in the Journal of History of Ideas Blog. https://jhiblog.org/2017/10/23/wager-and-wine-at-the-candlewick-ward-club/

again and again, sometimes saddled with additional information—fines, bets, feast menus, elections, and other extraordinary occurrences, written in increasingly regular form. Sometimes these referred formally to the club's rules by number. "September 16th 1759. Mr. Thomas Ellridge was Expelled pursuant to the 16th Order." (For nonattendance.) This additional information slowly compounds, and the spare sheets devoted to the minutes increasingly fill up, and the minutes increasingly become more sophisticated and formal.

At the club's meeting in Michaelmas 1774, a more dramatic change occurred. At once, a new treasurer was elected, the company moved their regular meetings to new rooms in the Red Lion in Clements' Lane, and the club reformed its rules. At the first meeting the club held at their new venue, the members passed the unusual resolution that "this Club should continue subject to its original Rules and Orders." Perhaps these resolutions were such a turning point that the members felt the need to reaffirm their commitment to them. The minutes were thenceforward kept in much more careful order. Indeed, the next account is headed with a title "The Treasurer of the Candlewick Ward Club" in showy calligraphy. This new treasurer undertook a major renovation in the club's record-keeping practices. It was likely this treasurer who went through the previous fifty years of attendance sheets, memos, and accounts, and wrote them "in regular form" in the back of the club book, that is, chronologically, rationally, and legibly, and continued these well-ordered minutes over the next decade. But it would take a new minute book—donated to the group by the Alderman of Candlewick Ward in 1785—for the administrative procedure of the club to conform fully to the institutionalized club paperwork practices described above.[51] This new book opens with a revised list of rules—much clearer, with the unspoken customs now made explicit, and the various rules put under rational headings. In this minute book, the minutes have finally been distinguished from the accounts and the attendance sheets. They have their own sheets, and they lack the grids of account paper. The club would continue this form of administration for at least a century.

By the end of the long 18th century these practices had become so institutionalized that clubs that didn't keep records and have officers had to provide some justification of their informality. In a later memoir, the jurist Henry Cockburn wrote that his club, the Friday Society of Edinburgh, had none of the usual club paperwork. "We have no fines—no constitutions—no presidents—no forms—no accounts. Some of these appear in a few of our earlier proceedings but they were scarcely ever attended to & they soon disappeared. The only office of the institution are a Secretary & his squire a chairman." Cockburn connected the club's lack of records with the club's social preeminence: it could run up massive dinner bills, and also run itself without paperwork. "The club may date its decline from the day on which it has an election, or makes a law, or gets cheap," Cockburn boasted.[52] Most clubs were more common and cheap, however, and by the time Cockburn was writing had to have elections, make laws, have presidents, fines, accounts, and minute books or else they were not considered a club.

Everyday Corporations

[51] London Metropolitan Archives CLC/004/MS02841/002

[52] National Library of Scotland MS.15943

Clubs were widely recognized as everyday corporations. They, like other corporations, used paperwork to manage their regular meetings and to establish persistent organizational identity. We can see the corporate continuum through instances that clubs changed their identity, whether consciously, through misunderstanding, or by contestation.

Organizations could sometimes change their position on the corporate continuum more or less consciously. The St Mary's Chapel Freemason's Lodge provides the clearest example of this in the available sources. Its early minute books show a change in category from Edinburgh trade guild to respectable club, and how this was intimately connected with changes in paperwork. At the time of the Lodge's first surviving minutes in 1599 it was a company of working or 'operative' masons. Much of the minute books are concerned with managing the trade of Edinburgh masons, like binding apprentices to masters, and ensuring that masons did not steal one another's work.[53] From the middle of the 17th Century the Lodge admitted a number of 'speculative' masons, that is, members who were interested in the mystical and convivial nature of the Lodge's meetings, but even early in the 18th century the group's minutes still dealt mainly with matters of trade concern.

In the 18th century the growing interest in Freemasonry as a social club for curious urbanites put pressure on the guild nature of St Mary's Lodge, as the Lodge admitted more and more speculative members, particularly after the publication of James Anderson's influential *Constitutions* in 1723.[54] In 1726 tensions between the speculative and operative masons came to a head. The Lodge considered a pair of proposals that amounted to a referendum on its character. Should the lodge admit "severall creditable tradesmen" to the lodge on the payment of large admission fees? Or should it reduce its admission fees so that more working apprentices and journeymen masons could comfortably join? In other words, should it be a club for sophisticated urbanites, or a guild of working masons? The Lodge decided in favor of the working masons. Two masons, including James Mack, a long-running warden, quit the society in protest. Mack returned a year later and attempted again to admit the honorable tradesmen again. Through some procedural wrangling, he won the vote, and the lodge proceeded to admit a large number of new members including a saddler, a writer, a plumber, a vinter "all burgesses", a watchmaker, and a "sclater", along with members of another lodge, perhaps a break-off lodge of speculative masons. With this vote, the Lodge seems to have changed its essential character from a guild of tradesmen to a club of urban professionals. This was accompanied by a change in record-keeping practices. Tellingly, whereas the old minutes were *subscribed* by members, the minutes directly following this vote are *superscripted*, which was the common form amongst clubs. At the same time, the group instituted a large number of administrative reforms similar in character to the usual regulations of urban social clubs. They resolved to have an annual audit of their financial accounts, and the regular keeping of minutes, that the "clerk to booke this and all preceeding sederunts not formerly booked for which thir presens shall be a sufficient warrand." A box was donated, and the members "appointed their money and wrytes to be kept in the said Box." These practices stuck, and thereafter the club's

[53] Freemason's Hall BS 166 (I) EDI Fol

[54] James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons: Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, Etc., of the Most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity. For the Use of the Lodges*, electronic resource, Neuausgaben Und Uebersetzungen Aelterer Freimaurerischer Werke. I. Band (London: Printed by William Hunter, for John Senex at the Globe, and John Hooke at the Flower-de-luce, 1723), http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570206.

minutes were kept in the regular order that would be familiar to any diligent club secretary in Edinburgh or London, or even Spalding or Halifax.

Other clubs went the opposite direction, from private social club to chartered society. Most famously, this happened in the cases of the Royal Society and a number of other London learned societies, which began as private gatherings but soon gained royal charters. Many clubs sought formal recognition and the legal rights it conferred, although at the time it was very difficult to secure. The Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society received a charter from the city in 1800 after having been in operation for over two decades. The reasoning was preserved in the charter. As

> the society had increased much since its institution, and new members were daily admitted, their funds were also increasing, but not being a legal society, or body corporate, in order to enable them to manage their funds and regulate their affairs with proper effect, therefore praying the right honorable the lord provost, magistrates, & Council to grant a Seal of Cause, constituting or creating the said club or society and all others who shall hereafter enter with them, into one body politic and corporate, or legal incorporation, under the name & title of the Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society, and as such, and by the Name & title, to have a perpetual endurance & succession so as to enable the petitioners & their successors in office, for the use and behoof of the said society, to hold property, real or personal, and with power, with consent of the majority of the said society at any general meetings to be held by the said society, to make bye laws and regulations for the management of the Society and its funds.. [it can] sue, plead & defend and to be sued & defended

in courts of law. Yet this charter did little to change the nature of the Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society—it had managed its affairs with "proper effect" for two decades already!—all it did was to ensure that it would be recognized as a formal group in certain legal contexts.

The gradient between club and corporation could be dangerous for those groups that were regarded with some suspicion by authority. Clubs of tradesmen in particular were portrayed as illegitimate corporations acting without a charter for the narrow benefit of their own members. This was technically illegal and could be prosecuted. In 1725 for example, a club of woolcombers at Alton in Hampshire was prosecuted for improperly using the tools of the corporation to illegally govern their trade. They were

> charged with forming themselves into an unlawful Club or Society… and presuming to act as a Body corporate, by electing two Supervisors and a Book-Keeper, keeping a common Seal, and making By-Laws or Orders, by which the pretend to determine who hath a Right to the Woolcombers Trade, how many Apprentices each Master should keep at one time, and who is qualified to take them.

Their crime amounted to an improper use of paperwork—of using minute books, rules and seals without proper authority. The club responded with what had become a common defense: "they acted only as a Charitable Society." The members of the club were found guilty of being an illegal

combination and their group broken up.[55] Trade clubs for this reason frequently insisted that they were not arrogating the powers of the corporation to themselves, but instead they were just social clubs that happened to include all the members of a particular trade. The Fenwick Weaver Society's charter awkwardly tries to have it both ways:

> although we are not nor can be erected into a corporation, yet it would be greatly to the advantage of the trade of weavers in the parish of Fenwick that proper regulations were established amongst us for the better ordering and government of said Trade.[56]

This is somewhat muddled. The Fenwick Weavers Society were not a corporation, and could not be, but they still assembled themselves into what could be called a "body corporate" to regulate themselves and their trade, using the same tools as the corporation, and to the same purposes, but without precisely having the same character.

The corporate continuum was often similarly muddled. A guild could become a club. A club could gain a charter and become something like a formal academy. There could be legal disagreements about whether a group was 'just' a social club or whether it was an illegal trade combination. This was possible because clubs and more formal corporations used a similar kind of corporate paperwork, and this put them all on a broad continuum. When the St Mary's Lodge stopped regulating the trade of Edinburgh masons, it did not need to radically change its minute books, its account books, its processes of electing in new members and its officers because guilds and clubs used the same paperwork to regulate themselves. When the Edinburgh Burgess Golf Society gained its charter, nothing in its character dramatically changed except for the fact that there could no longer be any doubt about its corporate personhood. When the Alton Woolcombers were accused of being an unlawful trade society, the prosecution pointed to their use of officers and minute books—tools that were indeed used by innocent box clubs, but also by illegal corporations. The lines dividing the corporate continuum were often blurry and unclear.

Conclusion: A Civil Society of Paperwork

To make a stable group, men over the 18th century used paperwork borrowed from the wider corporate world. They took up minute books, attendance sheets, made proposals, held votes, deliberated, drafted constitutions, and elected officers. Paperwork was instrumentally useful in helping solve the small-scale coordination problems that bedeviled regular social activity. But paperwork was also performative. By doing the corporate work, clubs were identifying themselves as corporations—and, eventually, a particular *kind* of everyday corporation: the club.

It required constant work and many sheets of paper: holding meetings, taking attendance, collecting money, and making minutes of it all. The fact that over the 18th century, an increasingly large number of people were literate, numerate, and capable enough to continue such work points to a larger spread of the knack for paperwork and the material tools that helped facilitate it.

Britain's civil society was built on the foundation of corporate paperwork. Civil society arose not merely as a negative space in between the Leviathan organizations of the state and market on the one

[55] Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer (London, England), Saturday, July 31, 1725; Issue 14. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2001590247

[56] National Library of Scotland Acc 4702/3

side and the family and locality on the other. They were institutions where these two worlds were bridged, where embedded, emotional friendships were structured by the regulations and procedures of corporate procedure. Clubs employed the instrumental rationality of legal forms like constitutions and rules, but used this formality to govern the embedded, quotidian matters of regular tavern socializing and friendship. Phil Withington has shown how in early modern England the word *company* included a broad continuum of social practices that could "join and fasten" people together—ranging from informal social practices, to formal organizations.[57] Paperwork was used to make *company* in both senses. It created trustworthy, persistent, efficient organizations capable of handling the complexity of 18th century Britain's growing cities and changing economies. It also made company by creating spaces where individuals could *belong*, where men in particular could develop interested, emotional ties with one another, as the next chapter will show.

[57] Phil Withington, "Company and Sociability in Early Modern England," *Social History* 32, no. 3 (2007): 297.

Chapter 3: Tools of Belonging

Introduction

The Liverpool Unanimous Society (founded in 1753) was an unremarkable 18th century dining club made up of around a dozen elite young men.[1] They met weekly for dinner from September to April. Sometimes members would treat the club to a meal of venison or turtle. Once the club held a subscription to give charity to the poor. More often the club gathered just to eat, drink, and talk. It was similar to countless other social organizations from fictive kin groups to college fraternities: a group that held regular meetings for the purposes of social pleasure.

What was distinctive about the Liverpool Unanimous Society and the other clubs of Britain's long 18th century (1688-1815) was that they used the paperwork discussed in the last chapter to organize their pleasurable social meetings. The Liverpool Unanimous Society had enumerated rules, kept minutes, and held votes. Newly admitted members swore an oath to obey the club's constitution, to pay its fines, and to vote impartially, after which they signed their name at the bottom of the page of the minute book on which the constitution was written. This regularity was maintained by elected officers, a President and a Secretary, who swore on their accession that they would ensure the club's meetings would proceed in good order, that they would apply the rules disinterestedly, and that they would accurately keep the society's money and accounts.[2] This focus on strict procedure did not undermine the club's attention to social pleasure: at times, the two were even interchangeable. In January 1778, for example, the Liverpool Unanimous Society decided to do away with the oath it gave to its incoming officers. Instead, "the President and Secretary Elect should only drink the Constitutional Glass to the Health of the Members."[3]

This chapter will explore the close relationship between the club's disinterested paperwork—the oath on the club's minute book—and its amiable ritual—"the Constitutional Glass" that replaced this oath. First, the chapter will unpack the cultural work of club paperwork by looking at what one early 19th century club officer held up as its three guiding principles: "regularity, punctuality and impartiality." Second, the chapter will show how clubs' "cheerful society of the table" evoked a set of positive emotions I call *amity*. These had the potential to transform strangers into brothers. Finally, the chapter will show how these tools of belonging were used not only to include, but to exclude. People who could not be disciplined by paperwork, or who could not be trusted to respectably share amity, were not able to fully participate in club life. Special attention will be paid to women. It was this combination of paperwork and amity, of association and corporation, that led to the peculiar brotherly exclusion that marked British social life. Tocqueville, writing about the English, remarked:

> I cannot completely understand how "the spirit of association" and the "spirit of exclusion" both came to be so highly developed in the same people, and often to be

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[1] In a testimony to both the eminence of the group and the fluidity between different kinds of corporations, one member, Thomas Golightly, became the Mayor and then the Treasurer of the Liverpool Corporation.

[2] The Liverpool Unanimous Society's minute book is at the Liverpool Archives, 367 UNA/1. It is discussed in Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as It Was During the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century. 1775 to 1800* (J. Mawdsley and son, 1853), 290–98; rules reprinted 514-517.

[3] Liverpool Records Office 367 UNA/1

> so intimately combined. Example a club; what better example of association than the union of individuals who form the club? What more exclusive than the corporate personality represented by the club?[4]

Regularity, Punctuality, and Impartiality

The clearest extended justification of the meaning of club paperwork that I have found comes from a speech given in 1813 by William White, the secretary of the Eclectic Book Society, a small London book club. White had been the secretary of the club since its founding three years earlier and had recently announced his resignation. The Eclectic Book Society responded with a unanimous vote of thanks, and an honorary "Secretary's Medal" worth one pound seven shillings. White was touched at this recognition. He thought that a simple thanks in response would be "too cold, too indifferent, too unfeeling," so instead he gave a speech laying out in detail the "principals upon which I have acted" in managing the club: "regularity, punctuality [by which we today might mean scrupulousness] and impartiality."[5]

Regularity

To explain why this principle of regularity was so "absolutely necessary" for the club, White made a somewhat obscure comparison between the club's regulations and its interior design. When a man decorates a room well, it was the principle of regularity that "must distribute the furniture & appoint each part its proper place and situation." The same, White argued, was true of the club's administration. White unhelpfully says little more on the matter. But our knowledge of the meanings of interior design gives some clue. In the 19th century, as Deborah Cohen has shown, interior design was a masculine activity in which a unified taste arranged household objects in a pleasing order.[6] White seems to be suggesting that a similar process happened when men framed and executed the rules of their club.

The importance of such judicious selection and execution of rules can be seen in the work clubs did to keep their meetings running in what they called 'good order.' The Liverpool Unanimous Society's constitution enjoined that the President "shall keep a Book in a Regular manner." The Friendly Society of Shuttleton, Middle Quarter, and Sandhill insisted that following rules of order was "essential to the Existence of every society." It was the peculiar English "love of order" which spurred the men of John Shaw's punch house to nominate and elect officers, and thus "assume the character of a club."[7] The usual explanation for this regular good order is *efficiency,* particularly in managing a diverse group of strangers who might otherwise lack common ground. For example, the *Rules and Orders for Regulating the Meetings and Proceedings of the Directors and Acting Guardians of the Poor,* in Wildford from 1792, gives an efficient justification for corporate regularity. The need for "general rules" was "evident to every one who is conversant in Public Business." This was particularly true in diverse organizations in which "Persons dissimilar in their understandings, and perhaps their views, must necessarily meet together." Without rules, such diverse organizations would be confused, inefficient, and inconsistent. Each decision would be determined by

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[4] Cited in Valérie Capdeville "Transferring the British Club Model to the American Colonies: Mapping Spaces and Networks of Power (1720-70)", RSEAA XVII-XVIII 74 (2017), 18

[5] White's speech is written in the Eclectic Book Club's minute book: London Metropolitan Archives CLC/064/MS00988A

[6] Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[7] Manchester Archives M485/1/3

> different understandings… or the mutable humours, caprices of passions of Mankind. Under such Circumstances, every Question, (however often it may have been determin'd before) will at the times of meeting to transact Business be agitated anew, with all the violence of Controversy and all the obstinacy of Error.[8]

The regular application of laws and attention to precedents was the only way to turn a diverse body into a unified group. This is the explanation for the formalization of the modern organization since Weber: that formal, written, predictable forms of administration are good ways of dealing with the novel complexity and diversity of the modern world.[9] But efficiency and regularity could not be the whole explanation for the attention to good order in clubs, because even small, homogenous clubs without any public business to transact like the Liverpool Unanimous Society and the Leith Trifrontal Society also insisted on "general rules" and "good order."

Like regularity in interior design, the club's unifying order was seen as pleasing in and of itself. The most sophisticated description for intrinsic value of club order comes from the masonic Apollo Society for the Lovers of Music and Architecture founded in 1725 (also called the Philomusicae Lodge.) In their constitution, they related the good order of their lodge with the well-measured harmony of music and architecture, directly echoing White's more obscure metaphor of the club's regularity as interior design. Both music and architecture "constitute a perfect Harmony by Just Rules, Due Proportions, Exact Symmetry, without which neither can arrive to any Degree of Perfection." In the same way that perfect harmony in the arts of music and architecture can "charm our senses," the perfect harmony of a well-ordered club can "preside over our actions." This well-ordered club meeting then produced "those Social Virtues Friendship and Loyalty."[10] The regularity of the club could do more than make a unified corporate identity out of the "different understandings… or the mutable humours, caprices of passions of Mankind"—it could make a beautiful harmony out of this diversity.

Punctuality

White's second principle of club administration was *punctuality*. Clubs frequently stressed the importance of the modern sense of the word *punctual*. Club meetings began and often ended at set times, and these were marked out by ritual—sitting and standing, opening and closing the club book, and locking and unlocking the club box. Great attention was paid to clock time. The Liverpool Unanimous Society was not unusual in resolving that the club's start time should be determined by the clock in the house at which it met, and its ending time be determined by the President's watch.

White was not using punctuality in the modern sense to mean *on time*, however, but in a now-obsolete sense meaning scrupulous attention to procedure. White described how in his management of the Eclectic Book Society, he had adhered to even the most "trivial" rules "with tenacity." Rules which the members had thought "frivolous and unimportant" still had to be followed. In the same way that "a small leak will sink a large ship" violating a small rule would set a "dangerous precedent" by which rules of "greater magnitude" might be broken, and thus the very "foundation of the society" would be undermined. White acknowledged that in practicing this extreme punctuality he was unusual and even eccentric. As discussed in Chapter Two, club members would frequently ignore or forget old or

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[8] British Library 9 1426

[9] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 956–1005.

[10] BL Add MS 23202

inconvenient laws. But club practice reveals a widespread belief that members should *generally* adhere to the club's procedures.[11] Clubs worked constantly to ensure that members were reminded of the rules so that they could be punctually applied. In 1776, a visitor to a debating club was asked on entering the club room, "to read the laws of the club, which were elegantly framed and glazed, hung up in the front of the room." The Secretary of the Unanimous Club, like many other clubs, would recite the clubs' rules every quarterly dinner meeting.[12] Nineteenth Century Friendly Societies forced new members to buy a rule book on their admission, and these would be marked up by the member in pencil as the club's rules were changed over the years.

People understood clubs and their rules as reflections of the larger contractual, rule-bound social order. Famously, Hobbes argued that individuals could only escape the "nasty, brutish and short" state of nature by agreeing to submit to a single sovereign authority through a social contract.[13] For Locke, families in the state of nature agreed to give up their power to form "one body politic under one government" and thus to submit to the "determination of the majority."[14] These contractual depictions of society were reflected in folk explanations. This was, as E.P. Thompson recognized, recapitulated in the "rules of obscure clubs meeting in the taverns or 'hush shops' of industrial England."[15] They were common throughout the associational world. Take a speech on society given by a member of the Edinburgh Pantheon Society, a debating club, in 1788:

> Society is composed of many Individuals, all of whom, by the law of nature, are equally free; but by the law of nature there can be no Society, the word itself implies a Contract or Bargain, by which each member becomes bound to part with a share of his natural rights, in order to Obtain advantages, which in a state of nature he could not enjoy…. So the man who becomes a member of Society, parts with a share of his possessions to secure the remainder, or rather to maintain the law, by which each member is bound and from which each derives protection. This state is called Civil Society, because the whole members being on an equal footing, enjoying equal privileges, and the same degree of protection, are considered as one man, and an injury done to any one of these is held as done to them all, because it infringes the law from which all of the derive protection.[16]

The club was founded on a similar "contract or bargain." As Chapter Two showed, the club's society was solemnified by an *actual* physical contract, signed by all members of the society. Punctuality was particularly important to the society of the club: it was the equal protection and equal applications of the social contract that united disparate individuals into a single body.

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[11] Clubs often noted when their violations of their rules should not set a precedent. See e.g. NLS Adv.MS.5.1.6. In 1762 Mr. Urquhart missed three meetings in a row, and by the rules should have been expelled. "But several favorable Circumstances occurring in his case, the Society were inclined as special *Gratia* to continue him a member declaring nevertheless that this should not serve as a precedent in time coming."

[12] Liverpool Archives UNA/1

[13] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Christopher Brooke, First Edition (Harmondsworth, Meddlesex: Penguin Classics, 2017).

[14] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, First edition, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), para. 97.

[15] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 422.

[16] NLS MS 9834

Unlike the social contract, this club contract was explicit and concrete, its rights and privileges laid out in enumerated rules any member could read. Rather than being buried in the obscurity of history, the club's contract was generated through open debate, and agreed to by all members at the founding of the club and again on each new members' initiation. Although they were not all so punctual as White, clubs recognized that their survival depended on their adherence to their rules, traditions, and officers. Some flexibility in rule-following was certainly possible. But too little punctuality was understood to threaten to break the club's corporate identity.

Impartiality

White considered the most important principle of club administration to be impartiality, by which he meant two related things. First, the club was impartial because the members were all *equal* during the club meeting. "Whatever difference may exist respecting our age, our circumstance, our situation, and callings in life—in this Society we are all upon a level, here we admit of no distinction." Second, when members represented the club, they had to act impartially, that is, for the good of the club. Officers in particular, White said, must "administer justice alike to everyone," with a disinterested self-control.

One way this equitable impartiality was expressed was through the metaphor that club members were *brothers*. This usage stretched back at least to the medieval guild. Brothers were obligated to care for one another, but with less condescension and deference than other caring relationships like parenthood or marriage. In the early 18th century, the Norman Society, a Huguenot benefit society in London, articulated this sense of brotherly equality. The club brought its members together as equals "without affection or distinction of age, prestige or seniority." The members were to rely "on each other as brothers … having a reciprocal deference and honesty."[17]

This brotherly equality was another reason for the importance of punctuality: all members were supposed to be treated equally by the club's corporate government, as all members were equals. In 1817, another Edinburgh debating society, the Select Society (1811)[18], noted in its club book that a particular member—Mr. Alexander—had been appointed to the Bar. The next meeting a member complained that although he as an individual was happy for Mr. Alexander's success, it was inappropriate to express this pleasure with the corporate voice of the club because it threatened the club's equality:

> He valued Mr. Alexander as much as any man and entertained for him personally a sincere esteem. But he thought that the notice which was taken of his advancement was of bad example, quite foreign to the proper objects of the society and calculated in its results to create the most considerable distinctions between the different members—there had been other Gentlemen deserving equally well of the Society who upon similar occasions had not been so distinguished and of course with regard to them the particular attention which had been paid to Mr. Alexander was a marked injustice.[19]

[17] Huguenot Society of London, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* (Huguenot Society of London., 1902), 206.
[18] Not to be confused with the earlier Edinburgh club called the Select Society.
[19] NLS Ms 163

This distinction between Mr. Alexander and all those others who had been good fortune was not just unfair: it was "quite foreign to the proper objects of the society." This was because the proper objects of the society included the equal and punctual application of its laws.

This equality was particularly important in benefit clubs. In these, members needed to be able to trust that they could rely on the box, no matter how much money they themselves had put in. The 1805 rules of the Irvine and Halfway Female Friendly Society distinguish themselves from a charity by their equality: "Every member, whether poor or rich, when in trouble, has a right to, and must receive, the benefit affixed by the Society to her particular case." Without this equality, the money disbursed to the club's members would have to be understood "as charity." With the equality, the money was better understood as respectable "self-help" because the members were all equal components of a single corporate body.[20] This echoes the explanation of Civil Society given by the Edinburgh Pantheon Society above: because the members are all equally subject to the same rules and procedures, they could be united together.

This ethos of impartiality furthermore explains the puzzling and widespread practice of clubs levying fines or forfeits against members when they enjoyed good fortune. Just as clubs would fine members' bad behavior—their backbiting, their swearing—they would also commonly "fine" their good fortune—their election to public office, their marriages, and the births of their children. The Liverpool Unanimous Society ruled that members who had the good luck to be married should pay a hefty "fine" of 10 shillings 6 pence the first night they returned to the club after their wedding, to be paid in drink.[21] These fines allowed members to bring their unequal good fortune to the recognition of the corporate body of the club without it creating "considerable distinctions between the different members." The good fortune was ritually inverted—it was treated like a misdemeanor that had to be rectified through a fine: better still that this punishment meant that the fortunate member would pay for the club's drinks that night. (Similar practices are found in many egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies in which equality is maintained by denigrating an individual's unequal success, as in the custom of 'insulting the meat.')[22]

The second sense of impartiality White discussed was that the members of the club should act in their corporate capacity for the common good, not for their own individual interest. The Liverpool Unanimous Society made new members swear that they should give their votes in club debates without "Favor or Affection, Prejudice or Malice, but […] from an impartial Heart, and from no other Motive whatsoever." This need for impartial voting was a reason for the adoption of the secret ballot in many clubs. The Free Gardeners of East Lothian resolved in 1806 to switch to using a box and balls when voting in new members, as the system of secret voting

> will save much feeling to the members, as by the present mode of asking the members vote verbally they must inadvertently give a reason for their objection and it being a matter of much delicacy to do so; perhaps expressing these to the

[20] Jane Rendall, "'The Principle of Mutual Support': Female Friendly Societies in Scotland, c. 1789–1830," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (May 1, 2020): 29, https://doi.org/10.3366/jshs.2020.0285.
[21] Liverpool Record Office 367 UNA/1
[22] Christopher Boehm et al., "Egalitarian Behavior and Reverse Dominance Hierarchy [and Comments and Reply]," *Current Anthropology* 34, no. 3 (June 1, 1993): 227–54, https://doi.org/10.1086/204166.

> resentment of the intended member, many have been silent on the acceptance of such who by no means approved of their admission.[23]

The inequality of club officers challenged both senses of impartiality. The officers were not treated "all upon a level," instead they were given special honors as representatives of the club. Furthermore, officers held real power over their fellow members. The club responded to the challenge officers posed to the impartiality of the club through the regularity and punctuality of their paperwork. Officers were to act in accordance with the general rules previously agreed to by the club. Their adherence to these rules could be in principle monitored by the members at large, as the officers were to make their actions legible through paperwork: they were to write down their decisions, their fines, the money they had on hand, and their debts. They were not above the club: they were representatives of the club's corporate decisions. To uphold this impartiality, William White insisted that the club officer was to consider his offices as a kind of *vocation*, an identity that required him to be held to a different, more onerous standard of behavior. "As a Member I may be allowed to think and speak and act as I please but as an officer I may not. My office I regard as *sacred*, nor can I admit of the least irregularity or violation of order."[24] To properly embody the club's corporate decisions, the officer himself had to be strictly regular, punctual, and impartial.

Club administration was regular, punctual and impartial in its means, but not in its ends. We can see this from a curious omission in White's speech. When White celebrated the club, he did not talk about its practical accomplishments: he did not present any data on the number of books the society had bought and lent, the frequency of its meetings, the growth of its membership, or the state of its funds—data which he could have very easily produced. White pointed to a far more emotional, personal, and interested version of success. The club was successful, White said, because it created a space of "harmony and beauty."

Amity

To look more clearly at how the club developed this "harmony and beauty" we will turn to another speech given at another club, the Salton Farming Society, a Scottish agricultural improvement club active in the early 19th century. It spent much time, money, and effort on what it called its "public work": it gave premiums for agricultural improvement, it planned local infrastructure improvements, and it heard essays on local weeds, the use of seed drills, and the breeding of domestic animals. But this public work was not its only focus. Like most other clubs, the Salton Farming Society also spent time and money on group dinners, "for the sake of Society and good neighborhood." Its founding Preses,[25] General John Fletcher Campbell (the patron of the club, a member of the Edinburgh Royal Society, Laird of Salton, and local improver),[26] took the time to explain the connection between the club's public work and its social dinners in a speech read at the club's first meeting. In doing so he echoed Shaftesbury, Chesterfield and others who presented sociability as both essential both for the moral development of the individual, and for the creation of a harmonious society.

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[23] SNR GD420/3

[24] LMA CLC/064/MS00988A

[25] The Scottish term for President or presiding officer.

[26] During his tenure in Salton, he founded schools, improved roads, and built bridges to improve the area's desultory commerce. On his death he left 500 pounds to the society, and another 500 to a similar club in Kippen. See Fletcher Campbell's obituary in *The Farmer's Magazine*, 1807, 131–33.

"Acquaintance," Fletcher Campbell said, not only broadens an individual's "social connections," it also "wears off that doubt or prejudice, which a person unknown, or the face of a stranger, sometimes creates." Furthermore, acquaintance "preserves good neighborhood, of great importance to those who reside in the country." How to develop acquaintance? "The cheerful society of the table." There, the "cares of the day being forgot, the heart opens… in the participation of the social meal." There, neighbors could forget their differences and come together united as a neighborhood.[27] The promotion of such social dinners, Fletcher Campbell said, would *alone* make the Salton Farming Society worth its effort and expense.

This section will look at how the "cheerful society of the table" was every bit as important for the everyday corporation as the regularity, punctuality and impartiality of its paperwork. Eating and drinking together encouraged men to feel a set of prosocial emotions that I refer to as *amity*. These practices reveal that one of the goals of clubs like the Salton Farming Society was not merely the promotion of "public work," or the discussion of the "public sphere," or the furthering of collective material interests—it was the creation of a private social space where men could develop warm, interested, emotional ties with one another.

Christian Brotherhood and Muscular Bonding

Members described the experience of being in a club meeting through a number of interrelated words: brotherhood, love, brotherly love, amity, acquaintance, unanimity, unity, concord, harmony, hilarity, happiness, conviviality, company, neighborhood, and society. I will be referring to these emotions collectively as *amity*. The word is commonly used in club names, constitutions, and descriptions. Amity also clearly expresses the pleasurable emotions generated from being physically in the same room with a group of people. Yet unlike similar words in currency at the time, like *brotherhood, neighborhood* and *friendship,* amity does not necessarily denote a particular *kind* of relationship. One can be amiable without necessarily being brothers, neighbors, or friends. Unlike words like *harmony*, *unanimity* and *unity*, amity does not carry a strong sense of social cohesion, but a weaker sense of general concord. Amity is more specific than *conviviality*, which covered many different kinds of pleasurable consumption practices at the time.[28] Finally, amity has fallen out of general use today, and so it more clearly denotes an emotion rooted in the particular historical context of the long 18th Century.

Amity was common in the older corporate tradition of the guild. Gervase Rosser has argued that the early medieval guild combined purposeful religious work with the development of a secular Christian community through the promotion of pro-social emotions. Men and women's involvement in these groups was a form of religious life outside of the monastery, whose practices habituated the individual to social virtue. This ethic of Christian mutual care was symbolically represented by the embrace, the handshake, and the kiss of peace. It was practically instantiated by both the fulfillment of religious functions, like having mass said for the living and dead members, hiring priests, and attending funerals; and also by social pleasures, including sharing bread (which was one meaning of the words *company* and *companion*), drinking, feasting, and procession. Some 18th century clubs consciously saw themselves in this tradition of Christian amity. In 1781, a religious "Amiable and Humane Society" explained that

[27] SNR CS96/4644

[28] Ian David Newman, *The Romantic Tavern: Literature and Conviviality in the Age of Revolution*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 125 (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 24–28.

its goal was for members to act "wholly of one mind, as brethren united, guiding [ourselves] by the example of that Society of Primitive Christians, having but one heart and one soul."[29] The end of this Amiable and Humane Society was not merely mutual aid, but the creation of a brotherhood, and this feeling of brotherhood was not merely good in itself, but was instructive of a purer Christian ethic.

In the 18th century club, however, the social practices that created a "brethren united" were more often focused around the pleasures of the social meal than the rites of mass or burial, more often held in the tavern than the church.[30] In transporting Christian amity from the parish to the public house, amity became less and less solemnly religious, and more and more amiable.[31] To understand how these tavern practices could evoke a sense of amity, it helps to pick up a concept developed by William H. McNeill called *muscular bonding*. Muscular bonding is created by groups engaging in pleasurable synchronized movements like military drill, chorus, and dance. These, McNeill argued, tend to provoke in their participants profoundly euphoric emotions of belonging. Such emotions are necessary to understand the development of social cohesion in mass societies, but they have been understudied by historians working from written sources, because the "generalized emotional exaltation" of muscular bonding has no content behind it, no meaning other than wordless euphoria. Accordingly, instances of muscular bonding rarely show up in written sources, and when they do, they are frequently inarticulate, as they can only point to the pleasure of togetherness.[32]

Muscular bonding generated amity that bound the group together. The sudden growth of Freemasonic lodges in 1722 was explained by the fact that Freemasonry could create more amiable spaces than other groups. "Ingenious men of all faculties and stations," wrote James Anderson, an influential proponent of Freemasonry, recognized that the "Cement of the Lodge was Love and Friendship" and that these emotions were more present in Freemasonry "than [in] other Societies, then often disturbed by warm Disputes."[33] Club goers sometimes suggested that their social practices had a deeper meaning that was difficult to put into words. The *Ahiman Rezon*, an early masonic guidebook, portrayed the ritual practices of the lodge as having a pedagogical, ethical value that resisted verbal summary. Lodges were the "only Seminaries where Men (in the most pleasant and clearest Manner) may hear, understand and learn their Duty to God; and also to their Neighbors." The act of running the lodge united humanity into "one sacred Band." This experience of unity was "pleasant and clear"—in contrast to the act of *talking* about God and religion, which would only lead to faction,

[29] James Doran, *Rules and Orders to Be Observed by an Amicable and Humane Society, ... Established on the Sixth of May, 1781, under the Direction of James Doran To Which Are Annexed the Bona Mors; or Art of Dying Happily* (London, 1781).
[30] There is a sense at the time that religious life among dissenters was transferring from churches and chapels and into taverns and private homes. A contemporary complained of how "Religion seems to have left the Church, and to have taken refuge in the tavern. Religious doctrines are promoted by dinners, and conviction worked by bumpers of wine. The Unitarians are formed into a convivial club, and the sentiments of this sect promulgated at the Crown and Anchor." *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London, England), April 16, 1791 - April 19, 1791; Issue 4681. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Gale Document Number: Z2001315640
[31] For the sociable meaning of company, see Withington, "Company and Sociability in Early Modern England."
[32] William Hardy McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1995).
[33] I have lost the original source but the quote is reprinted in George Oliver, *The Revelations of a Square: Exhibiting a Graphic Display of the Sayings and Doings of Eminent Free and Accepted Masons, from the Revival in 1717 by Dr. Desaguliers, to the Reunion in 1813 by Their R. H., the Duke of Kent and Sussex* (Masonic Publishing Company, 1866), 18.

and disputation.[34] Few clubs were as sophisticated or as obscure in their ritual practice as the masonic lodge: but this section will show that all club meetings sought to unite their members in similar way through the profound "pleasant and clear" but inarticulate muscular bonding.

Cheerful Society of the Table

Almost every club, no matter its size, social composition, and outward purpose, met at some time throughout the year over food and drink, paid for out of the clubs' corporate funds. Eating together (especially at night) has been shown to be almost a universal feature in human group bonding.[35] The Spectator noted that the club was based on communal eating and drinking because these were pleasures that everyone could agree on:

> Our Modern celebrated Clubs are founded upon Eating and Drinking, which are Points wherein most Men agree, and in which the Learned and Illiterate, the Dull and the Airy, the Philosopher and the Buffoon, can all of them bear a Part.[36]

These meals varied in extravagance, but they were almost always *shared*: food served from the same plate, drink from the same cup or bowl, and tobacco from the same plate or box.[37] 21st Century psychologists have shown that sharing meals, particularly from a common plate, promotes trust and cooperation.[38] The Liverpool Unanimous Society weekly laid out a modest meal of bread, butter and cheese, but it allowed members to order more food if they wished, and it often had feasts sharing hard-to-get delicacies, like turtle and venison. The Eclectic Book Society held its monthly meeting at members' houses, with the host providing refreshments at his own expense, and a special annual dinner hosted in rotation. The Salton Farming Society asked its members to pay the hefty fee of 10 shillings every annual meeting, which was to cover its food and drink with extra left for the society's funds. Some clubs were distinguished by particular dishes: many farming societies, like the Nairnshire Farming Society, set the tables of their social dinners with dishes made only from local ingredients.[39] The Secretary of the Thursday Club (one of the Royal Society's two dining clubs) recorded around five food gifts a year for about 40 years, most often hard-to-access delicacies like venison, turtle, haunches of beef, pickled salmon, and fruit.[40]

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[34] Laurence Dermott, *Ahiman Rezon*, First (London: printed for the editor, and sold by Brother James Bedford, 1756), 23, Gale Document Numbe: CW116598598.

[35] Robin Dunbar, "Breaking Bread: The Functions of Social Eating," *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* 3, no. 3 (September 1, 2017): 198–211, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40750-017-0061-4.

[36] Spectator, No.9. This was somewhat ironic, as the clubs the Spectator then goes on to highlight—the Kit-Cat Club, the Calves Head Club, and the October Club—were all highly partisan. Although men could agree on the consumption of mutton pies at the Kit Cat, the words shared at the Kit Cat would divide them. What's important to note here is that the Spectator is identifying group eating and drinking as a fundamental foundation to these assemblies—before being divided by partisanship, men could be united by social dining.

[37] The exception was 'free and easy' societies, which usually were free and easy because each man was responsible for paying only for his own food and drink, making involvement in them more informal.

[38] Kaitlin Woolley and Ayelet Fishbach, "Shared Plates, Shared Minds: Consuming From a Shared Plate Promotes Cooperation," *Psychological Science* 30, no. 4 (April 1, 2019): 541–52, https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797619830633.

[39] NLS Acc.3744

[40] India Mandelkern, "The Language of Food Gifts in an Eighteenth-Century Dining Club," in *Food & Communication*, vol. 2015, Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery (Prospect Books, 2016), 258–64.

Figure 8. Tobacco Box of the Society of Past Overseers of St. Margarets and St John the Evangelist, Westminster from https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/three-centuries-of-entertaining-engravings-wh7w2wvvhv5 for a history of the additions to the tobacco box see *A Description of the Westminster Tobacco Box, the Property of the Past Overseers' Society of St. Margaret and St. John the Evangelist, Westminster*. London, 1887. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822043026640.

Clubs commonly practiced synchronized drinking rituals, particularly drinking healths (also called toasting.)[41] Drinking healths involved many synchronized movements. First, a member would stand and propose a toast. The group would signal their assent by muttering and clinking their glasses. Then everyone would stand and raise their glasses above their heads, before simultaneously bringing the glasses to their lips to drink. Just as in other instances of muscular bonding, in drinking the health the unified movements of the body created a strong pleasurable pro-social emotion.[42] At times these were

[41] In the early 18th century, toasts were drank to (usually absent) women; healths drank to men and to political institutions. By the middle of the century, this distinction had broken down.

[42] Judith Hawley, "Taste and Toasts in Early Eighteenth-Century Club Culture," in *Taste and the Senses in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée, LAPASEC: Landau Paris Studies on the Eighteenth Century 3 (Trier:

explicitly compared with the ordered pleasures of military drill, McNeill's paradigmatic site of muscular bonding. Toasting, said the *Social and Convivial Toast-master* in 1841 was a way "of keeping people together, or (as I may say, in the military Phrase) of mustering and ranking them together in the same company."[43] The sense of unity and euphoria that attends other forms of muscular bonding was highlighted by the psychoactive properties of alcohol, which can blur the distinction between self and other.[44] The Capeiad, a collection of poems written by the bohemian Edinburgh Cape Club, contains a 1769 poem extolling how their drunken "talks and laughs" made a feeling of "Social Glee" that jumped across the boundaries between individuals, uniting the group by making the individuals all feel the same pleasure:

> The Quick Electrick, touch of Social Glee
> Thrills thro' each breast, while all according Hearts
> Catch the same tone & with measure move.[45]

The importance of these social meals can be seen by the fact that those few clubs that did not serve food and drink at their meetings were frequently supplemented by auxiliary clubs that did. For a time, the Royal Society of London was associated with two competing dining clubs; the Royal College of Physicians also had two dining clubs, which merged in 1834. The Society of Antiquaries founded a dining club in 1774. After the meetings of the Literary Society of Edinburgh finished the members went to a nearby oyster bar where they reconvened themselves into "the Club", to eat, drink and talk.[46]

Paperwork helped create amity, but amity was rarely preserved in paperwork. As is the case of most muscular bonding, the feeling of the "The Quick Electrick, touch of Social Glee" that the "cheerful society of the table" inspired was hard to put into words. The members of the Trifrontal Society, the Leith learned society that opened this dissertation, admitted that social life evoked an "inexpressible pleasure."[47] In a representative elision, The New Thursday Club, another Edinburgh club, enjoyed a convivial meeting on New Year's 1819, and couldn't or wouldn't put the experience into words. "It would be idle & superfluous here to enumerate the many instances of real enjoyment that characterized this happy evening—nothing could exceed the harmony & mirth which was throughout maintained."[48] One surviving source for verbal descriptions of amity are the lyrics of club drinking songs. Over and over again, these songs extolled amiable ritual's capacity to unite the group together into a single body. Here's a song printed on a delftware club punchbowl: the members of the club

> meet o'er our jolly full bowls
> As we mingle our liquors we mingle our souls.[49]

The club made a harmony of men the same way the punch bowl made a harmony of liquors. The *Anacreontic Song*, the anthem of the London musical club the Anacreontic Society (whose tune was

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Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011), 7, https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/taste-and-toasts-in-early-eighteenthcentury-club-culture(f4003546-41c3-4537-8044-39aa1edcfc14)/export.html.

[43] Cited in Newman, *The Romantic Tavern*, 207.

[44] Robin Dunbar et al., "Functional Benefits of (Modest) Alcohol Consumption," *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* 3 (December 28, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/s40750-016-0058-4; Scott Wiltermuth and Chip Heath, "Synchrony and Cooperation," *Psychological Science* 20 (February 1, 2009): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02253.x.

[45] Edinburgh University Library La.III.464

[46] Dictionary of National Biography, Sir Walter Scott

[47] Edinburgh Central Library Y/q/41/t --A9471

[48] Edinburgh Central Library, Y/HS/2865/N53/T

[49] Cited in Karen Harvey, "Ritual Encounters: Punch Parties and Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, no. 214 (2012): 191.

borrowed for the *Star Spangled Banner*) was sung every club meeting after supper. For the last verse the club joined hands and sang:[50]

> Ye Sons of Anacreon, then join Hand in Hand;
> Preserve Unanimity, Friendship, and Love!
> [….]
> While thus we agree,
> Our Toast let it be.
> May our Club flourish happy, united, and free!
> And long may the Sons of Anacreon intwine
> The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's Vine.[51]

Tools of Belonging

Paperwork and amity worked together as *tools of belonging*. The universal human need to belong, according to the psychologists Baumeister and Leary, is satisfied only when our pleasant interactions with other people "take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare."[52] Not only do people need pleasant social experiences: these need to be embedded in a predictable and reliable structure. In the world of 18th century Britain, the institutions that could provide such a structure for belonging were fraying. Clubs were one new institution that stepped into the void to provide a stable framework in which individuals could find (for a time) the amity and stability that could make them feel *belonging*.

Clubs could moreover encourage belonging between men who might think of themselves as very different from one another. Although today the all-male club is a by-word for social exclusion, in the long 18th century the club was notable for the diversity of its membership. Even the celebrated urban clubs that are disproportionately represented in surviving records often connected urban elite men across marked barriers of native place, creed, party, or interest. Addison and Steele's paradigmatic and often-imitated *Spectator Club* included a Tory landowner, a lawyer, a fashionable fop, a clergyman, a businessman, and a solider, along with the urbane Mr. Spectator himself. Contemporaries recognized that the club allowed men to socialize with a diverse group of people. In 1823, a member of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society said that its meetings had produced "a neutral territory," where "persons of every variety of opinion" could enjoy the

> lively interchange of the courtesies of life…. Individuals whom the accidental circumstances of society, or the rigid lines of demarcation often prescribed by the jealousies and suspicions of party, had kept perpetually asunder, have been brought into mutual acquaintance, and have learned, for a time at least, to forget their particularities in the pursuit of a common object.[53]

In the club, the structure necessary for belonging amongst a diverse group of men was provided by paperwork. The club's paperwork could efface those differences that kept people apart, whether it was

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[50] Richard John Samuel Stevens, *Recollections of R.J.S. Stevens: An Organist in Georgian London* (SIU Press, 1992), 25.
[51] For an extended discussion of the Anacreontic Society and conviviality, see Newman, *The Romantic Tavern*, 98–103.
[52] Roy F Baumeister and Mark R Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.," *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): 497.
[53] Leeds University Library SC/LPLS/02/2/2/1

inequality, differences in party or creed, or simple animosity. Club rules frequently prevented members from gossiping about one another, 'backbiting' (a term that had been used in the old guilds), giving brothers mean nicknames, or complaining about other members' conduct. This was particularly important for box clubs, in which there was a worry that members might disparage their needy brothers for requiring relief. A Female Friendly Society in Spalding in 1807 ordered that its members should not "reproach another for receiving relief from the society."[54]

Bound by the regular punctuality of the club, polite men of every opinion and background could meet together as equals—"for a time at least." Thus, unequal strangers, who were kept apart outside the club room by the "accidents of circumstance" could be brought together temporarily as trusting equals, even brothers, assured not by trust in one another's characters—but simply in their trust that all agreed to abide punctually by the club's rules and decisions. As such, clubs amounted to a routinization of sociability: what was improvised, ad hoc, and implicit outside the "neutral sphere" of the club became predictable, rule-bound, and explicit within it. This routinization of social life is part of a wider story. In a society of strangers, people reached towards rational, formal, legal, and universal methods for predictably managing their increasingly anonymous communities that might otherwise be dissolved by a changing world.[55] But this is only one side of the story. The groups were not only formal, procedural, and predictable, they were also very local, private, and emotional. In the same way that music brought together sounds into chords, and architecture balanced the components of a façade, the club's harmony transformed the strangers of the club into a brotherhood, united not only in interest, but by warm emotional bonds of fellow-feeling and mutual pleasure.

Enmity and Exclusion

This chapter has shown how the club's paperwork could create a neutral territory where many salient social distinctions could be temporarily effaced in the name of amity and common purpose. "Here we admit of no distinction," William White had said. Age, trade, class, party, creed—all could be set aside for the sake of brotherly amity. But it's important to underline the fact that each club chose to ignore only *some* differences while at the same time paying a great deal of attention to others. These differences mattered, and often were basis of the exclusion of non-members.

The root of much of this aversion to outsiders was amity itself. Emotional identification with a group can lead to visceral enmity to out-groups, including violence.[56] There were worries stretching back to the time of the medieval guilds that ostensibly amiable brotherhoods divided rather than united the community. In the end of the 14th century, a follower of John Wyclif denounced all guilds as conspiring to "bear up each other, yea, in wrong and oppress other men in their right by their wit and power."[57] The concern was shared about 18th century everyday corporations. Adam Smith famously wrote "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." This was because "by giving them a common interest to manage," the members had to assume a corporate power that would be inevitably used to favor the insider over the outsider. Although we usually take

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[54] BL 8225a 57

[55] Vernon, *Distant Strangers*; Butterfield, *The Making of Tocqueville's America*.

[56] Janice M. Beyer and David Nino, "Culture as a Source, Expression and Reinforcer of Emotions in Organizations," in *Emotions at Work: Theory, Research and Applications for Management*, ed. Roy L. Payne and Gary L. Cooper, n.d., 173–97.

[57] Cited in Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages*, 52.

Smith to be talking about combinations of a purely economic sort here, he makes clear that he is discussing *all* corporations, even those made "for merriment and diversion." For Smith, all came to the same end: preferment, exclusion, and discrimination. The "corporation spirit" was marked by "the jealousy of strangers."[58]

The amiable practices of the club room further emphasized the division between brother and stranger. Secret societies taught their new members grips and passwords that distinguished strangers from brothers. Larger clubs appointed beadles armed with ceremonial maces and swords to guard the door to the club room and check all in-comers' credentials. Club members frequently wore sartorial markers of their membership that set them apart from other men: regalia, hats, rings, and armbands. Clubs frequently made members swear not to reveal the secrets of the club to outsiders, even when it was not clear that the club had any secrets to reveal: the Unanimous Society of Liverpool in 1753 insisted that nobody could tell such secrets "(except to a Brother Member) on any Acct. whatsoever" on punishment of a two shilling fine—but what secrets could it have?[59]

Breaking the club's secrecy was dangerous even in trivial matters because it brought the club's activities into the open, where brotherly equality and impartiality could not be assured by the club's paperwork. In December 1821, an unflattering account of the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society's private discussions was published in the local newspapers. The members worried that this threatened the club. If people were able to sneer at the discussions that took place in the sacred space of the club meeting, the club complained, a "fatal check will be given to the freedom of its Investigations and its objects be thereby unalterably prejudiced."[60] To maintain the club meeting as a space apart where individuals could talk freely with one another, members had to keep it outside of the public eye. Only the club's corporate activity—that activity authorized by the club's paperwork—could be brought into the public without the club's amity being threatened.

It is important, then, to pay attention to the kinds of things that separated the clubbable from the unclubbable. One difference that the club could never efface was the difference between men and women. Contemporaries saw the club as a place of distinctly *male* socializing. An observer in 1792 said that the recent growth in clubs had led to a: "separation of the sexes [which] has introduced a vulgarity in our dress, a grossness in our conversation, and a clownishness in our manners, nay more, it has banished the remnant of hospitality."[61] Recent scholarship has agreed with this assessment, describing the club as a paradigmatic homosocial social space, "an Eveless Eden" where men socialized only with other men.

Interestingly, it was possible to imagine men and women clubbing together outside of Britain. Many French clubs organized on the British model came to admit women, sometimes as equal co-governors. In the early 18th century French Masonic lodges had somewhat libertine "*societies androgynes*" where men and women met together, and in the second half of the 18th century they had "lodges of adoption"

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[58] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Reprint edition (New York, N.Y: Bantam Classics, 2003), 173–74.
[59] Liverpool Record Office 367 UNA/1
[60] Leeds University Library SC/LPLS/02/2/2/1
[61] *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Friday, August 3, 1792; Issue 18121. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Gale Document Number Z2001223816

were women met under brotherly supervision, but with active female management.[62] Women participated in French Revolutionary Clubs, both in auxiliary societies in least 27 cities and in mixed clubs, although they were segregated in special galleries, and young unmarried women were still frequently excluded from participation.[63]

Valérie Capdeville showed how London clubs' homosociality was defined in opposition to a French model of polite 'mixed' conversation. In the club, English men could talk as men without having to restrain themselves to protect women's sensibilities. In the salon, on the contrary, men were improved by controlling themselves so as to be fit to socialize with women.[64] Women may have excluded from British clubs because the taverns in which clubs met were associated with tobacco smoking, heavy drinking, dueling, gambling, and prostitution.[65] This section will add to these accounts by looking at how the emotional aspects of the corporation worked to exclude women. Women were thought to be incapable of proper corporate behavior. Furthermore, they were not thought to be fit partners for amity, because sharing physical pleasures had potential sexual connotations that damaged the reputation of the club and its members.

Women and the Corporation

Women were active participants in the market economy, but they were barred from participating in *corporate* life when men were present. Women could own and trade stock, and this enabled them to attend stockholders' meetings and vote on corporate decisions: by 1783 women made up 16% of holders of East India Company stock. But unlike male stockholders, women never gave speeches at company meetings, and only seldom participated in the written public debate about the proper activities of the corporations they owned.[66] More pointedly, women were excluded from the political life of the town corporation. Naomi Tadmor showed that in the 18th Century men retreated to a 'private' sphere of male-dominated parish vestry where they discussed matters of interest to the public—while women were increasingly responsible for the economic life of the household.[67] One reason for this exclusion from the political side of corporate life was that women were thought to be incapable of engaging in debate. In a series of parodic speeches, women's debating societies were depicted as falling into trivial fights about fashion and manners, rather than the real work of rationally debating public business.[68] Additionally, women were not thought to be prepared for the rough and

[62] Cecile Revayger, "Women Barred from Masonic 'Work': A British Phenomenon," in *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Isabelle Baudino and Jacques Carré (Routledge, 2017), 125.
[63] M. A. Kennedy and Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793-1795* (Berghahn Books, 2000), 105.
[64] Capdeville, "Gender at Stake."
[65] See "Tobacco's Publics" in William Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social Sense*, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press), accessed May 5, 2020, https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198844136.001.0001/oso-9780198844136.
[66] Susan Staves, "Investments, Votes, and 'Bribes': Women as Shareholders in the Chartered National Companies," in *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. Hilda L. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 260, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558580.017.
[67] Naomi Tadmor, "Where Was Mrs Turner? Governence and Gender in an Eighteenth-Century Village," in *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard, and John Walter, Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History, v. 14 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013).
[68] Thale, "Women in London Debating Societies in 1780," 6.

tumble that characterized many British political assemblies—they did not have thick enough skin to withstand the boos and jeers of the hostile crowd.

This exclusion extended to the everyday corporation of the club. Many female clubs hired male clerks to keep their accounts. Because women frequently kept accounts for their households, this was likely due to impropriety of women running corporations, rather than their incapacity at accounting. [69] On the first meeting of a London all-female box club in 1720 described in a parodic newspaper paragraph, the members resolved to not admit any men, but "that Resolution was no sooner made than broke; for as none of them could write, they found themselves oblig'd to admit of a Clerk, who attends, not to take Minutes, but to keep the Account of Cash received and disburs'd." This male clerk had "also a Power of silencing them when they are too loud, which Power he finds himself often obliged to exert, in regard every Night the Sisterhood meet they have very warm Debates." The female club members could not learn this good order: "they are under a little better Order in this Point than they were at first," and "since they have a Law in force amongst them to restrain that unruly Member the Tongue; and those who exercise it too freely, are thereby obliged to forfeit something into the Box:" and "a very considerable Sum is collected this Way."[70] The same joke that women were not fit to be members of clubs because they talked too much survived to at least 1790: whereas real corporations had strict regulations that men could only speak one at a time, a satirical female club ruled that "in case of any dispute, the Stewardess only, and two complainants, viz., three persons, shall speak at once!"[71] This resistance to women running clubs had practical effects. In 1798 Eliza Fletcher founded a female charitable Friendly Society, but she had great trouble getting the club's rules sanctioned by the Edinburgh magistrates: "for ladies to take any share, especially a leading share, in the management of a public institution, was considered so novel and extraordinary a proceeding as ought not to be countenanced."[72]

The magistrates of Edinburgh were ignorant that by 1798 women had come to run many everyday corporations, from clubs to improvement societies—just without the involvement of men. As early as the 1720s there are indications of female clubs: in Edinburgh in 1724 a long-running female literary society, likely the Fair Intellectual Club (founded 1717) was described as having its own "History, Rules and Constitution…. with the conventual Address of Mistress Speaker to the lovely Speakerhood, and the admissory Speech, of one of the Ladies, as set forth by the able pen of Mistress Secretary."[73] By the end of the century, many everyday corporations were run entirely by women in very good order,

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[69] Daniel Weinbren, "The Fraternity of Female Friendly Societies," in *Gender and Fraternal Orders in Europe, 1300-2000*, ed. Máire Fedelma Cross (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 205, http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=414687.

[70] *London Journal (1720)* (London, England), Saturday, February 2, 1723; Issue CLXXXIV. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Z2001383080

[71] *General Evening Post* (London, England), March 30, 1790 - April 1, 1790; Issue 8810. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Gale Document Number Z2000472669

[72] Rendall, "'The Principle of Mutual Support,'" 27.

[73] Plain Dealer (1724) (London, England), Friday, August 28, 1724; Issue XLVI. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. For more on the Fair intellectual club see M. C, *An Account of the Fair Intellectual-Club in Edinburgh: In a Letter to a Honourable Member of an Athenian Society There. By a Young Lady, the Secretary of the Club*, electronic resource (Edinburgh: printed by J. M'Euan and Company, and to be sold at the said J. M'Euan's shop in Edinburgh, and T. Coxin London, 1720), http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T073473&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW105277830&vrsn=1.0&srchtp=a&d4=0.33&n=10&SU=0LRL+OR+0LRI; Tarbuck, "Exercises in Women's Intellectual Sociability in the Eighteenth Century."

including benefit societies, pressure groups, charities, and literary clubs. Elizabeth Fry, the Quaker prison reformer, explicitly encouraged women to use the tools of the everyday corporation to better manage their charitable activities, to hold meetings, keep records, and make votes.[74] By the 19th century, large voluntary associations that with local branches, like the Anti-Slavery Society, frequently had self-managing female 'auxiliaries.'[75] Yet men and women never managed clubs together. Why, despite these examples, were women not welcomed into clubs as equal partners?

Women and Amity

The Italian tourist Ferri de Saint-Constant asked why the English excluded women from their conversation. His English counterpart answered. "Oh, their presence would be a source of trouble and restraint for us: we wouldn't be able to express ourselves freely, not give our toasts." Saint-Constant's interpretation of this was blunt: "You mean that you wouldn't be able to indulge in scandalous excess, destroy your constitution and your principles, abandon yourselves to intemperance and obscenity."[76] Saint-Constant was harsh. We can see that the presence of women damaged men's amity in two distinct ways apart from restricting free speech, free drinking, and free gambling.

First, there was a widespread suspicion that when men and women might use the secrecy of the club to hide illicit sex. When British masonic lodges began hesitantly to debate whether to admit women in the 1780s, they were concerned that doing so might strengthen the suspicion that their secret rituals were sexual.[77] In newspaper accounts of clubs of men and women being broken up by authorities, the simple coexistence of women and men in a club room was enough to suggest sexual impropriety. In the late 1790s a club of actors and theater-goers called the Property Club was the subject of numerous newspaper satires because it included actresses in its membership. The True Briton called it a "cock and hen club."[78] A member defended the club in the *General Evening Post* by insisting on its regularity and punctuality—the refreshments were served "with some order" and the presence of ladies "tends to preserve decorum."[79]

Second, this sexual possibility of men and women in the club room together could destroy the club's amity because it led to the jealousy of sexual competition. A revealing account comes from a newspaper paragraph in 1749. It describes two women stepping into a club room where they demonstrated "Courage and kind Behaviour… in particular to Mr. H. C." There is a strong connotation that this courageous behavior was sexual. This was a problem, because Mr. H. C. had been singled out, made unequal to his brothers by the two young women's attentions. The writer invited the women back, promising that "they may depend on being elegantly entertained, and kindly and tenderly used round the Table; and afterwards (if agreeable to these Virago's) be matriculated into the said Society."[80] The women's kind treatment of Mr. H.C. had made him unequal, or made the other

[74] Fry and Skidmore, *Elizabeth Fry*, 14.
[75] See e.g. the records of the Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society active from 1825 in Ryland Library, Eng Ms 743
[76] Quoted in Capdeville, "Gender at Stake," 19.
[77] Revayger, "Women Barred from Masonic 'Work': A British Phenomenon."
[78] True Briton (1793) (London, England), Wednesday, August 30, 1797; Issue 1461. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2001568246
[79] General Evening Post (London, England), September 7, 1797 - September 9, 1797; Issue 10 125. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2000485147
[80] *General Advertiser (1744)* (London, England), Friday, June 23, 1749; Issue 4577. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale Document Number Z2000420153

members jealous: the writer's solution to restore the equality of the club, was for the women to come back, and to allow themselves to be "tenderly used" by the whole table—their pleasures shared equally and communally as those of a loving cup.

Women and Men

Men and women could participate in club life together if they shared neither amity nor corporate responsibility. Women and men participated in clubs when they were bonded together by the pleasures of the imagination rather than the pleasures of the body. Singing societies often admitted women to participate in concerts. As early as 1723 women were welcome at the Crown Tavern Music Club's annual St. Cecilia Day concert, but women attending musical clubs became more common in the 1780s.[81] The Bath Catch Club had a number of "musical feasts" at which women and men both participated. But just as women left men at the end of the meal in order that men could talk bawdy and smoke, in the Catch Club's concerts the women "withdrew… between one and two o'clock…. The Gentlemen then gave a greater license to their choice of songs, and continued in great mirth and harmony until four or five in the morning."[82] Women were allowed to participate in the club, but they were barred from sharing the amiable bawdy songs the club sang at night.[83] Debating clubs sometimes invited women to watch but not participate in particular debates in special galleries. In the flush of debating societies in the 1780s, there were a handful that allowed female speakers, most famously La Belle Assemblee which had audiences of up to 700 men and women.[84] This happened outside London, as well: the Edinburgh Literary Society, an early 19th century debating club, often encouraged women to come to its debates, particularly about subjects of love and marriage: there's the sense that a number of members were using the debates to court particular women.[85] A number of literary societies like the Blue Stockings included men and women where the pleasures of literature were shared, although notably none have to my knowledge left minutes, suggesting that they relied less on formal corporate paperwork. Towards the end of the 18th century the wives of Freemasons were increasingly encouraged to participate in their husband's para-masonic activities, joining the lodge after its work, participating in charity drives, and even attending annual ladies' nights.[86] Group sports, particularly country sports, came to be enjoyed by men and women in country clubs after the 1780s. The British Archers in North Wales, founded sometime around 1787, included both men and women.[87]

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81 *London Journal (1720)* (London, England), Saturday, November 16, 1723; Issue CCXXV. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

82 *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, January 18, 1791; Issue 5541. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

83 Similarly, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire attended a meeting of the Anacreontic Society hidden from view behind the latticed balcony of the tavern assembly room. But she and other ladies stayed past dinner to listen to the club's bawdy convivial singing, members complained that "some of the comic songs not being exactly calculated for the entertainment of ladies, the singers were restrained." This led to mass resignation, and eventually the disbanding of the society. The incident is described in full in Newman, *The Romantic Tavern*, 105.

84 Thale, "Women in London Debating Societies in 1780."

85 Edinburgh Central Library As/122/e23l. There are indications that the members were trying in this way to impress potential marriage partners.

86 Revayger, "Women Barred from Masonic 'Work': A British Phenomenon," 124.

87 *General Evening Post* (London, England), August 14, 1787 - August 16, 1787; Issue 8382. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*. Gale Document Number Z2000468335.

But tellingly, at these occasions food and drink were not shared. The meetings of the British Archers in North Wales were held at private houses, not taverns, and the food was a cold "collation" with "a limitation… made as to the number of dishes: and the display of anything hot… punished by a fine of five guineas." In musical feasts where men and women gathered to sing together, they were restrained from eating and drinking together. In the Bath Catch Club's musical feasts women and men were to fill their plates from different sides of the supper tables. This "prevented [the men] from tattling with the fair sex," which forced them instead to give "the greatest attention to the music." In 1815 a Cornwall masonic lodge voted unanimously that no wine and fruit be provided to women at its ladies' night as "the gratifications of the Ladies consisted not in eating and drinking, but in beholding their Husbands, Sons and Brothers met together for charitable purposes in Love and Harmony."[88] Additionally, group drinking seems to have been restricted in all of these meetings—there is not a single account I have found of a club toast while women are present. Literary societies met at private houses in the day, where the opportunity of the good company of wine and beer were less likely, and instead the group met over tea and snacks. Even female-only societies had to resist amity. They rarely met in taverns, and did so more often over tea, and even diligent research has failed to find anything close to the convivial activity of their male counterparts.[89]

There were some exceptions to the closure of amity at the extremes of power and respectability. A number of elite clubs included exceptional women. The Sublime Society of the Beef-Steak elected a female president in the 1730s. In the 1760s and 1770s there was a mixed-sex club, first at the Gentlemen's Club Almack's, and later in its own rooms under the name of the Female Coterie. What distinguished these were the social eminence of their members.[90] At the other end of the spectrum, there is some evidence of working-class cock and hen clubs, which organized mixed-sex socializing, singing, dancing, and perhaps sex, especially after the 1770s, although it's unclear how organized these groups were. There were, it was reported, both male and female Presidents of one club, although this detail may be satirical.[91]

Conclusion

The club used two related tools to turn strangers into brothers. First, it used paperwork. This established it as an institution that would persist throughout time, and was governed by a certain kind of regularity, punctuality, and impartiality. Within these meetings, clubs used the muscular bonding of synchronized eating and drinking. The amiable feelings evoked by these rituals were not only pleasurable, they also bound the group together. Both tools pushed the strangers of the club to identify with one another as *brothers*, and to continue to invest in the club week after week, year after year. But these same tools of belonging also determined who could be included and who could be excluded from the club. All clubs made a distinction between insider and outsider, and all could use this as a base of enmity, exploitation, and exclusion. Women were thought to be particularly unclubbable. They could neither be trusted with participating in corporate political life, nor could they be trusted to share

[88] Revayger, "Women Barred from Masonic 'Work': A British Phenomenon," 122.
[89] Rendall, "'The Principle of Mutual Support,'" 33.
[90] Supporting Capdeville's thesis that homosocial clubbability was defined against mixed French sociability, a large number of mixed clubs like the Female Coterie included French in their names.
[91] London Chronicle (London, England), March 13, 1788 - March 15, 1788; Issue 4896. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2000588222

amity. There were some very limited opportunities for women and men to club together. But, on the whole, women were excluded from a civil society defined by paperwork and amity.

Chapter 4: Ringing the Changes: Conspicuous Complexity, Clubs and Civil Society

In 1787, the town of Halifax, West Yorkshire, gathered a large subscription to have a new ring of bells installed in the parish church. In October, these bells were opened with a two-day performance by seven different *change ringing* societies. The local Halifax society opened by giving an abbreviated "abstract of a bob major" in 40 minutes, doing "the performers much honour." Performances followed from groups from Bradford (who rang a peal of "crown bob, containing 5040 changes, in three hours and ten minutes"); Wakefield ("triples, 5040 changes, in three hours and twenty-nine minutes"); and Leeds ("bob triples, 5040 changes, in three hours and sixteen minutes.") The next day the performances continued: the London College Youths rang "5088 changes of a tripple bob" in three hours and thirty-five minutes; followed by the ringers of Ashton-under-Line who rang "5040 changes, triples" in three hours and three minutes; the ringers of Sowerby ended the day, but only rang 4500 changes, stopped from completing a *full peal* by nightfall.[1] Over the two-day celebration, the new bells of Halifax were ringing for over *19 hours*, and could be heard for miles.

This performance suggests a small mystery. The ringers practiced a particular kind of English church bell-ringing called change ringing, in which a group—each man pulling a rope attached to a single bell—ring complicated patterns with names like Triple Bob and Cambridge Surprise. By 1787, these peals had become something of an art. Composers competed to make the most ornate 'true' methods. Ringing bands throughout the country raced to earn the distinction of ringing the first, the longest, or most complicated peal on the largest rings of bells. Enough of the general public could appreciate change ringing that a "connoisseur" in the audience at Halifax could write and publish a poem celebrating the superior performances of the Ashton-Under-Line and London ringers. But why? These ringers, as far as we can tell, were amateurs—they rang not to make a living, but for their own amusement. How did the performances become so long, so exhausting, so obscure, and so complicated? Why did the community of Halifax pay over 350 pounds—20 years of a farm laborer's wages[2]—to improve their bells, and why did ringing bands from as far away as London journey to Halifax to ring these bells for 19 hours?

This chapter will explore this process by looking at how change ringing clubs competed in their *conspicuous complexity*. Change ringers distinguished themselves from other groups of ringers through their mastery of a superlatively complex group activity. This appealed to a growing class of middling men whose lives were marked by accuracy and self-control.

This small mystery opens up a bigger mystery about British civil society. Eighteenth Century British culture has a startling number of highly specialized pastimes: glee singing, curling, amateur natural history, and mountaineering just to name a few. These highly niche activities were often organized by clubs. We can see the increasing elaboration of club purposes in the data from the Digital Census. In the 1650s, my quantitative sample records only a little more than a dozen different types of clubs. By

[1] Samuel Midgley and William Bentley, *The History of the Town and Parish of Halifax*, History of Halifax (Halifax: J. Milner, 1789), 203–11, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008645497.

[2] Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870*, 311 estimate that in 1800 the average farm laborer's annual wage in 1800 is 15.25 pounds.

the 1830 the number is closer to 300. (See Figure 1)[3] Qualitatively the activities intensified: their performances became more difficult, their periods of training longer, and their jargon more obscure.

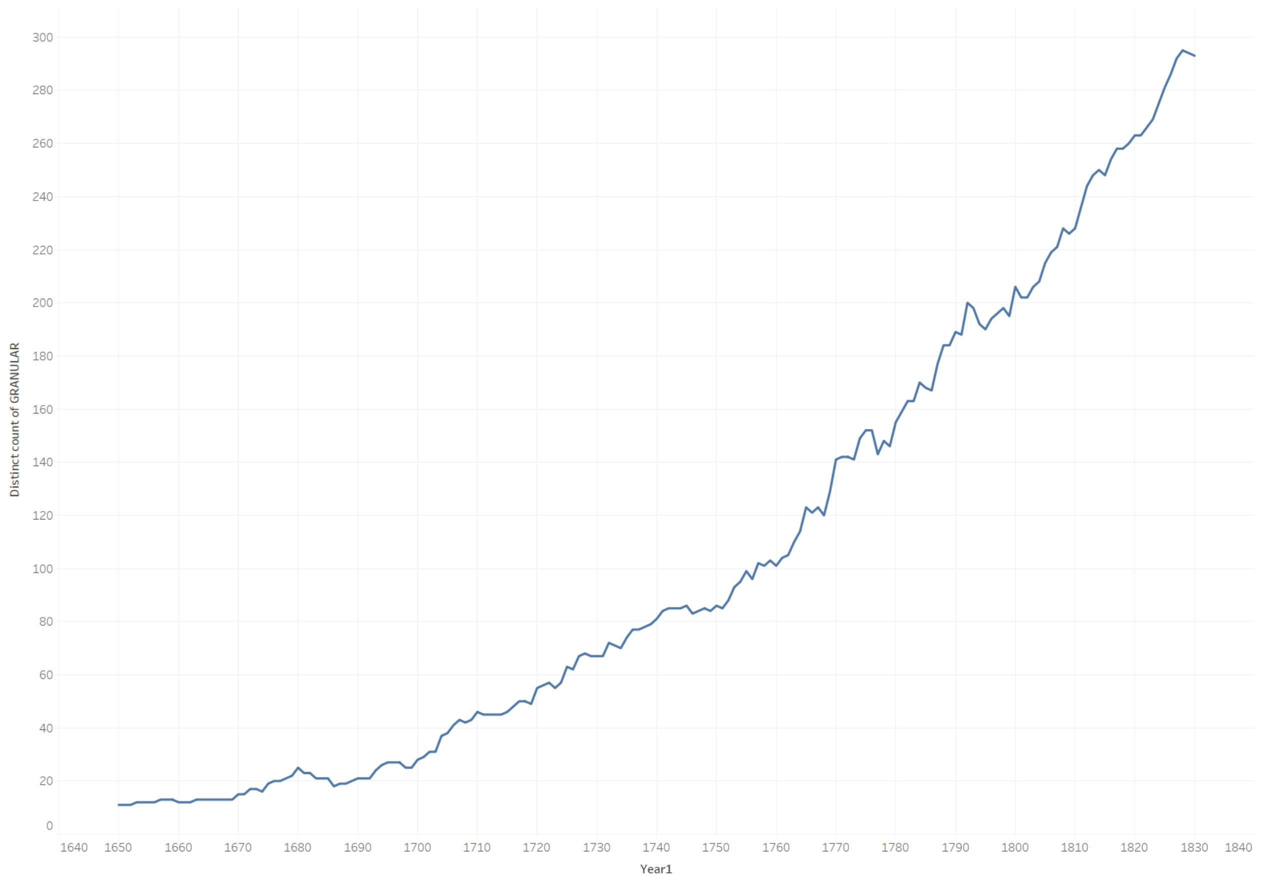

Figure 9 Number of club specializations

In this we can perceive a tension in 18th century culture. Some men could take advantage of the unprecedented diversity of a pluralistic cultural marketplace to engage in a huge variety of activities, from boxing to change ringing to learning Latin. But at the same time, these activities appealed to small niches that were often obscure to outsiders. Society became diverse and pluralistic, but also niched and exclusive. The complex elaboration of church bell ringing shows this process in miniature. In the old parish, the bells had rung to call the community together. Now the bells were rung by private groups of pleasure ringers, who rang the bells in obscure, complicated patterns that only connoisseurs could understand.

Change Ringing

[3] These 'types' are subjective and this enumeration is meant to be suggestive of an increasingly complexity, and not completely reflective of it.

In change ringing, ringers don't ring the bells at random; nor do they ring the bells to play a tune. Instead, each ringer works a single rope connected to a single bell, ringing in methods that ensure the ringers never repeat the same order of bells. The origins of change ringing are somewhat obscure. Before the 1650s, young English men would often ring church bells for fun. A German visitor to England in 1602 remarked that young men would bet on "who will pull a bell the longest and ring it in the most approved fashion."[4] The author John Bunyan (born in 1628) was an avid church bell ringer in his youth:

> I had taken much delight in Ringing, but my Conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such practice was but vain, and therefore forced myself to leave it, yet my Mind hankered, wherefore I should go to the Steeplehouse, and look on, though I durst not Ring.[5]

The phrase 'change ringing' was first used in 1614, and *call changes,* where each change is "called" by a conductor, may have been performed even earlier.[6] The first evidence of formally organized ringing society comes from the rulebook of the Cheapside Scholars from 1636, which gives the date of founding of the society as 1603.[7] The first true change ringing *methods* were developed by the early 1650s. In so-called "method ringing" multiple bells swap their position each round. To accomplish this, each ringer must memorize complicated patterns of movement themselves, rather than relying on the calls of a conductor to track the bells' changes. (See Figure 2) By the middle of the 17th century a number of ringing societies were ringing these new methods, particularly in London and Norwich. The popularity of method ringing was spread by a series of printed manuals. The first ringing manual, the *Tintinnalogia*, was published in in 1668, a second, the *Campanalogia*, was published in 1677 and a third, the *Campanalogia Improved* was published in 1702.[8]

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[4] Cyril A. Wratten, "Trials of Skill," in *Change Ringing: The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 2 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 28.

[5] John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, The ninth edition, with his character. (London, 1716), 14, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319485404&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

[6] John C. Eisel, "The Development of Change Ringing in the Seventeenth Century," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 1 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 40.

[7] Cook, "The Organisation of the Exercise in the Seventeenth Century," 71.

[8] See John C. Eisel, "Tintinnalogia," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 1, 3 vols. ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 50–58; John C. Eisel, "Campanalogia," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 1, 3 vols. ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 59–67.

12345		
21354	21543	21435
23145	25134	24153
32415	52314	42513
34251	53241	45231
43521	35421	54321
45312	34512	53412
54132	43152	35142
51423	41325	31524
15243	14235	13254
12534	12453	12345

Figure 10 A ringing diagram of Grandsire Cinqs, from Clavis Campanalogia, 20

The development of change ringing was facilitated by technical improvements in bell hanging.[9] In order to have the precise control necessary for change ringing, bells needed to be hung in a manner that allowed them to be rang in 'full circle', that is, that each time the bell rings it travels nearly 360 degrees, beginning and ending with the bell's mouth opening upwards. This produced the loudest sound, and also allowed ringers to precisely time when the clapper hits the side of the bell. Fittings, ropes, and frames also improved over time, making performances much less physically demanding, while also giving ringers even more control. Furthermore, bell towers needed to be improved to withstand the huge forces produced by big bells swinging for hours, which could often make bell towers sway back and forth dramatically—and even sometimes collapse.

Over the 17th and 18th centuries the number of bells in England increased and many bell towers were augmented and improved. (See Figure 3, below.) This augmentation could be quite expensive. It cost the city of Halifax upwards of 350 pounds for "taking down and carrying away the old Bells, and bringing and hanging the new ones"—including 21 pounds given by the ringers themselves.[10] The expansion of bells and improvement of bell towers was part of a wider program of urban improvement called the *English Urban Renaissance* by Peter Borsay.[11] Over the long 18th Century cities were made more civil: new, classical houses were erected; streets were lit and paved; new public areas like squares, inns, and sports fields were built; new social venues like commodious coffeehouses, theaters, assembly rooms, and pleasure gardens were instituted. There was a contest for a new kind of local status of a well-ordered, polite, and polished urban environment. Importantly for this story, churches were repaired and modernized, which included fixing bells and improving belltowers.

Change ringing societies could only arise where there were convenient rings of bells. The largest density of bells in England were in areas marked by old patterns of rural wealth, particularly the wool trade, and accessible stone—as one change ringing geographer described it, a "diagonal from Cornwall to the Humber, roughly coinciding—east of Devon—with the main band of limestone country."[12] But not all places with convenient bells developed change ringing. Change ringing was especially

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[9] Ron Johnston, "A Most Public of Musical Performances: The English Art of Change-Ringing," *GeoJournal* 65, no. 1/2 (2006): 17–31; John C Eisel, "Developments in Bell Hanging," in *Change Ringing: The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson and Central Council of Church Bell Ringers., vol. 1 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 18–27.
[10] Midgley and Bentley, *The History of the Town and Parish of Halifax*, 203.
[11] Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance : Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770*.
[12] Johnston, "A Most Public of Musical Performances: The English Art of Change-Ringing," 20.

strong in the South and the South-East, while it was absent in Dorset, Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. Change ringing societies thrived mainly in cities: rural clubs did not last long. Of particular importance was London, which came to have an especially large concentration of change ringing clubs and bells, and a great influence on provincial societies.[13] London clubs sent out touring groups, especially to ring inaugural performances on new bells.[14] Over 40% of the 1864 full peals rang over the 18th century were done by London clubs.[15] The example of the London clubs clearly had much influence on the spread of provincial clubs—many borrowed their name from the most wide-ranging touring company, the College Youths.

Although change ringing took place within the parish church and sometimes accompanied religious activities, it was much closer to a secular sport than religious observance.[16] Some change ringing groups did not even provide ringers to the parish to call parishioners to Sunday services. In many places, the belfry became thought of as separate from the rest of the church, with the bellringers being responsible both for the bell tower's keys and its upkeep. This divide between bell tower and the parish church seems to have happened during the civil wars of the 1650s, when religious reformers barred ringing except for necessary church offices like calling the community to prayer.[17] This is not to say that ringing societies were always completely disconnected from the parish. Members of ringing societies sometimes served in church offices and could receive perquisites from the parish for occasional ringing. The ringers of Leeds were paid to ring the parish bells for Sunday services and special occasions. When the Vicar died they carried him to his grave "for which wee received one shilling a pair of black gloves each and plenty of good drink when wee returned from church."[18] But the change ringing of the Leeds Ringers was not by itself considered religious or solemn.

With the parish reluctant to authorize pleasure ringing, ringers increasingly turned to the model of the club to organize their activities. These groups were called by various names: societies, bands, companies, or youths. Importantly, they were run through the paperwork of the everyday corporation discussed in the previous two chapters. In 1683 the rules of the Scholars of Chepesyde consciously connected their paperwork to the wider corporate world: "for that no Society either of profit or pleasure can well stand and continue without form and order" they wrote, the society should incorporate itself into a public body with a name and accompanying corporate identity, rules, officers, and formal meetings.[19] The Leeds Ringers, like many other change ringing societies, used language borrowed from the old guild: a man joined the group by "paying for his freedom."[20] Like other clubs, change ringing societies had meetings at public drinking houses, where they would use their paperwork to arrange the group's food and drink. William Laughton, a member of a number of London ringing

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[13] William T. Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 3, 3 vols. ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 10–87.
[14] Cyril A. Wratten, "Influence of the Towns," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 3 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 7.
[15] Johnston, "A Most Public of Musical Performances: The English Art of Change-Ringing," 24.
[16] William T. Cook, "The Development of Change Ringing as a Secular Sport," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson and Central Council of Church Bell Ringers. ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 28–39.
[17] Johnston, "A Most Public of Musical Performances: The English Art of Change-Ringing."
[18] West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, RBP68/58/1
[19] Ernest Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing* (East Ardsley, Yorkshire: E.P. Pub. Ltd., 1974), 71.
[20] West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, RBP68/58/1

societies in the 1720s and 1730s, describes the meetings of the Rambling Club of Ringers as organizing both the specialized activity of ringing and what Chapter Three called *amity*:

> Each night we'd mirth as well as ringing,
> Tales told by some, by others singing,
> A noble living, by and by.[21]

Like benefit societies, the members of a ringing club were expected to attend other members' funerals, at which they would toll a "dead" or muffled peal in mourning. Change ringing clubs on occasion even provided a form of insurance from their box: the Leeds Ringers for example spent 20 shillings "burying money" on the occasion of their members' deaths. Change ringing societies in other words were *clubs*.

At the same time as change ringing was spreading across the country, groups were attempting longer, more complicated peals. By the late 18th century, performances like those in Halifax could set the bells ringing from dawn until dusk. To understand why, we need to look at how change ringers distinguished themselves from other kinds of ringers by the achievement of what ringers call a 'full peal' and why they thought that these full peals were worth so much time and effort.

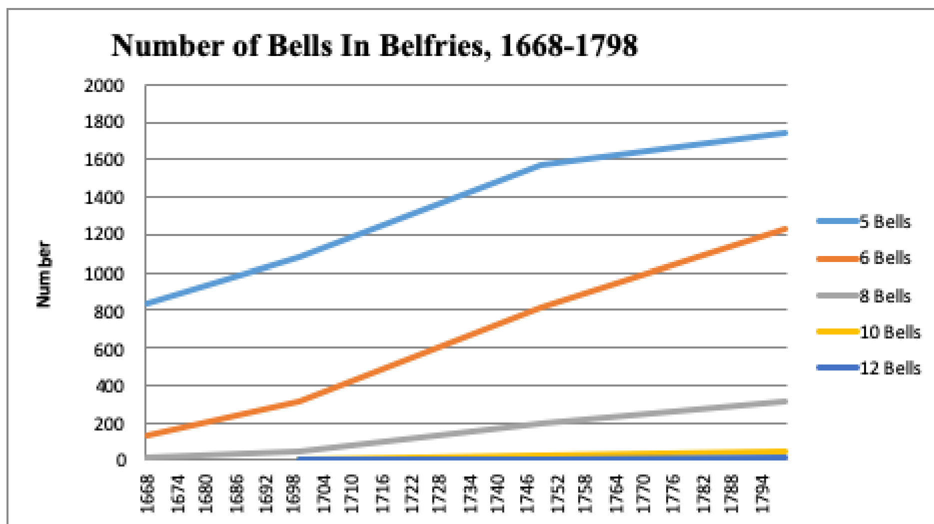

Figure 2 Number of Bells in English Belfries

Distinction

Change ringers, especially in the 17th and early 18th centuries, were eager to distinguish themselves from other kinds of ringers.[22] The *Campanalogia Improved*, a key change ringing handbook published in 1702, complained about the common belief that bell ringing was done by "infamous" people, and by

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[21] Quoted in Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, 99.
[22] This is similar to the account of cultural distinction in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000).

> Persons whose Subsistence for themselves and Families is gain'd by painful and hard Labour: and therefore not a fit and commendable Exercise and Recreation for one that had been genteelly and handsomely brought up and educated.[23]

These infamous ringers could be distinguished into two types. The first were the "wild young men."[24] These men rang and drank, often in the setting of rural festivals like Wakes Weeks. In a satire from the 1720s change ringing was presented as a gateway to frivolous rural socializing by drunken young men:

> By the age of sixteen, I became a company-keeper, being led into idle conversation by my extraordinary love to ringing; insomuch, that in a short time I was acquainted with every sett of bells in the whole country: neither could I be prevailed with to absent myself from Wakes, being called thereunto by the harmony of the steeple.[25]

Ringing at this time was more physically taxing than it would be later in the century and was accordingly a hobby primarily of young men—a fact that can be seen in the use of the word *Youths* in the names of many ringing societies. It was often sweaty work, and ringers traditionally slaked their thirst with beer. A bell cast in 1702 in Walsgrave-on-Sowe, Warwickshire was inscribed: "HEARKEN DO YE HEAR OVR CLAPERES WANT BEERE."[26] Belfries often had dedicated beer jugs for the ringers—some as large as 2 liters. This drunken rural pleasure ringing had a rough connotation. In 1743, a list of sports of the common people included ringing along with wrestling, football, cricket, and throwing at cocks. As late as 1776 *A General History of Music* extolled English bell ringing for its inventiveness, but also called it "a recreation chiefly of the lower sort of people."[27]

Another group rang the bells out of necessity, not drunken pleasure. In some parishes, privileged poor people had access to the bells and would ring as a form of ritual begging, especially funerals and weddings.[28] These may have been called "scroof ringers" or "scruffers" and usually did not ring with a set group.[29] The most notorious were the ringers of Bath. "The Etiquette is, that whoever enters Bath with a Set of Horses, their Arrival must be announced by the Clappers of Four-and-twenty Bells, while Two Hundred miserable Sick are to be tortured by them." The newcomers were expected to pay for this honor.[30] Scroofs could shame people who refused to pay for their ringing. In Newcastle

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[23] D. and C.M., *Campanalogia Improved: Or, the Art of Ringing Made Easie:* (London, 1702), 2, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3306289024&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

[24] *An Account of Many Remarkable Passages of the Life of Oliver Sansom* (London, 1710), 7, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3320382665&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

[25] *The History of John Bull. And Poems on Several Occasions, by Dr. Jonathan Swift with Several Miscellaneous Pieces, by Dr. Swift and Mr. Pope.* (London, 1750), 152,

[26] John C. Eisel, "Changing Attitudes to Bells and Their Usage," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson and Central Council of Church Bell Ringers., vol. 2 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 25.

[27] *The History and Present State of the British Islands*, vol. Volume 1 (London, 1743), 143, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CB3328876048&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

[28] Tim Hitchcock, *Down and out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London ; New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 208.

[29] Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," 20.

[30] *The New Prose Bath Guide, for the Year 1778* ([London?], 1778), 91, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3300372837&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

in 1763 a Quaker refused to pay for ringing his wedding, and the bells rang a funeral knell as he walked down the aisle.[31]

Change ringers wanted to mark themselves as different from both the wild young pleasure ringers and the begging scroof ringers. The first strategy they employed was to emphasize that change ringing was a sport of the elites, not poor and infamous men. The fact that in the 17th century Matthew Hale, the future lord chief justice of the King's Bench, was a member of the College Youths was often repeated by ringing's boosters.[32] The author of *Campanalogia* insisted that bell ringing had been practiced by "several Learned and Eminent Persons, both Clergy and Laymen of good Estates." In 1730 the Society of London Scholars announced in the newspapers that the group was "now grown very numerous, several Gentlemen and Persons of Fortune being Members."[33]

The London societies did seem to include some elite men in their membership, but the mass of their membership was clearly not drawn from the upper echelons, especially outside of London. The precise social composition of change ringing societies is difficult to pin down, however. One piece of evidence is the groups' schedules of fees. The Leeds Ringers had a graduated series of entry fees that were out of reach of the common worker but accessible to a member of the middling sorts: 10 shillings for a member who could not yet ring; 7 shillings 6 pence for a member who could ring on five or six bells; and 5 shillings for a "master of the art" who could ring on up to eight bells.[34] The Society of Union Scholars, a London club, had a shilling entry fee, six pence weekly fee, and charged 2 shillings 6 pence for its annual dinner.[35] By comparison, in 1800 the daily wage of a building craftsman was around 3 shillings, a building laborer around 2 shillings, and a farm laborer a shilling and a half.[36] These fees put change ringing membership out of the reach of the very poorest, but certainly open to prosperous workers. Another piece of evidence is that change ringing societies could access a great deal of money from their members. The 24 pounds it cost to recast and rehang two treble bells in Hereford in 1770 was paid for by a general subscription, of which the Hereford College Youths paid 16 pounds. Twenty years later the club pledged twenty pounds to erect two additional treble bells.[37] A milk carrier left a huge bequest of 300 pounds to his ringing society on his death.[38] The members of change ringing clubs worked and were often defined by their occupations, but they could be quite prosperous.

A clearer picture would emerge if we could systematically survey the occupations of change ringers, but this proves difficult. There are lists of names included in the paperwork of change ringing societies, and lists of performers preserved on memorial peal boards, but in most cases these names cannot be connected with any occupation. This itself points to the fact that most change ringers, even celebrated ringers in the most elite London companies, were obscure enough that biographical information on them is scarce—compare this with elite London clubs like the Royal Society Club, or the Society of

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[31] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London, England), December 15, 1763 - December 17, 1763; Issue 435. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[32] Wilson, *Change Ringing; the Art and Science of Change Ringing on Church and Hand Bells*, 56.
[33] *Daily Post* (London, England), Tuesday, December 8, 1730; Issue 3501.*17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[34] West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, RBP68/58/1
[35] BL ADD MS 19371
[36] Figures from Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870*, 311.
[37] Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, 149.
[38] *General Evening Post* (London, England), April 5, 1787 - April 7, 1787; Issue 8324. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

the Dilettanti, of Samuel Johnson's Club, where biographical information can be found for a great bulk of members. When we do get occupational information about change ringers, we see that they tended to be men who had some capital and free time, but who still had to work. Interestingly, there is a predominance of men whose professions placed a high standard on accuracy and precision. John Patrick, "the first inventor of ringing those Peals which are now in use" was a "weather-glass" maker, that is, a manufacturer of precision instruments including barometers.[39] There were many clockmakers and watch-makers in the ranks of change ringers.[40] The legendary Fabian Stedman, godfather to the first ringing manual *Tintinnalogia,* was a printer. Change ringers also frequently came from the growing urban service industries: one ringer was a thatcher, crier, and auctioneer,[41] another was a schoolmaster,[42] another was the clerk of the victualling office, and another was a fashionable London tobacconist connected with theater performers,[43] an example of one of the urban entrepreneurs of a growing consumer society.[44]

These largely middling change ringers came to differentiate themselves through the public challenge of ringing a 'full peal.'[45] A full peal is the accomplishment of ringing all the 5040 possible permutations on a ring of seven bells. It generally takes upwards of three hours. The first full peals were recorded in Norwich in 1715 and then in London in 1717. The difficulty of the full peal at this early date can be seen by the fact that over a year separated these two initial performances. The first peal rang outside of Norwich and London was in Mortlake, Surrey, in 1721, less than ten miles from London via the Thames; in 1722 there was another full peal rang at Stroud, Gloucester.[46] Once the feasibility of the full peal had been demonstrated, the practice became more common and spread. In the 1730s the London newspapers were littered with competing paragraphs left by the preeminent London societies, each claiming to have rung more, longer, better full peals.[47] By 1735 there were peals being rung in provincial cities like Bristol and York. By the 1750s, the performance of a full peal had become the defining mark of a change ringing society, and peals became much more complicated as groups competed for more honors. In 1756 the ringers of Leek, a market town in Staffordshire, bragged that they rang the more complicated Treble Bobs, as "Single Bob and Double Bob Peals are only fit for Learners and Boys to ring."[48] Their rivals only rang Royal Bob, "one of the easiest Treble Peals in all

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[39] *London Evening Post* (London, England), October 17, 1730 - October 20, 1730; Issue 448. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[40] Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, 98.
[41] *Evening Mail* (London, England), February 10, 1792 - February 13, 1792; Issue 463. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[42] Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, 87.
[43] Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," 27.
[44] Neil. McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H.Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society : The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982).
[45] Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," 16.
[46] Cyril A. Wratten, "The Growth of Change Ringing," in *Change Ringing : The History of an English Art*, ed. J. Sanderson, vol. 2 ([Cheltenham]: Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987), 52.
[47] *Daily Journal* (London, England), Tuesday, February 1, 1732; Issue 3456. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, Daily Post (London, England), Wednesday, February 16, 1732; Issue 3874, Daily Journal (London, England), Thursday, February 17, 1732; Issue 3470.*
[48] *Schofield's Middlewich Journal or General Advertiser*(Middlewich, England), August 24, 1756 - August 31, 1756; Issue 8.*17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

Campanalogia, and may be performed without any Difficulty, by any one of the meanest Capacity."[49] Sometimes these rivalries erupted into public brawls.[50] This competition resulted in extreme performances, particularly in attempts to ring full peals on larger and larger rings of bells. When the bells of St. Botolph Bishopsgate were opened in 1783, the London College Youths rang the bells from morning to night, racking up over *15,000* changes, and while this was an unusual and extreme feat of endurance, it was by no means isolated.[51]

By the middle of the century ringers were conscious that over the previous generation, their recreation had matured, particularly through the development of peal ringing. In 1756 on the death of the influential ringer, conductor and method composer Benjamin Annable, a eulogy printed in a London newspaper celebrated his achievements in the strongest terms:

> Till his Time Ringing was only called an Art, but from the Strength of his great Genius he married it to the Mathematics and tis now a Science. This man in figures and Ringing was like a Newton in Philosophy, a Radcliffe in Physics, a Harwicke in Wisdom and Law, a Handel in Music, a Shakespeare in Writing, and a Garrick in Acting.[52]

(Annable was clearly a member of the middling sorts. He was the son of a porter, and seems to have worked as a baker—prosperous enough that he could participate with a great deal of energy in the activities of his change ringing society, the College Youths, but still a person who needed to regularly attend to his business.[53]) Achievements like Annable's, and those of marathon ringing matches, had by the 1790s thoroughly changed the perception of change ringing in the public. In 1792 the Sporting Magazine included change ringing in a list of "spirited, manly and athletic exercises" that "men of pleasure" might enjoy, like hunting, hawking, fishing, archery, pedestrianism, and billiards.[54] They no longer needed to fear being mistaken for wild young men, or poor scroof ringers. These prosperous middling ringers could ring *peals*. How did the accomplishment of a peal successfully create this distinction?

Conspicuous Complexity

Change ringers demonstrated their public status through the *conspicuous complexity* of peal ringing. A full peal could not be rung by a group of drunken pleasure ringers because they did not have the regularity, punctuality or civility necessary to put in such long practice in such ordered groups. Change ringing was laudable, said a 18th century ringing manual *the Campanalogia Improved*, only when conducted by "a skillful number of Persons incorporated and united into a Society, sober, and made

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[49] *Schofield's Middlewich Journal or Cheshire Advertiser* (Middlewich, England), November 16, 1756 - November 23, 1756; Issue 20.*17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[50] See the rivalry between the Leeds and Wakefield ringers: West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, RBP68/58/1
[51] *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, England), Monday, February 10, 1783; Issue 1955.*17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*
[52] *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, February 9, 1756; Issue 6641. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* In 2006 the Ancient Society of College Youths rang two peals in honor of the 250th anniversary of his death.
[53] Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," 25.
[54] *Lloyd's Evening Post*(London, England), October 22, 1792 - October 24, 1792; Issue 5511.*17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

subject to Orders and Rules, consistent and coherent with civility and genteel Behavior."[55] The young men at Wakes Week could not manage this self-government. Neither could a full peal be done by the poor ringers who used church bells to beg. These groups could only ring "in a confus'd Manner, and without any Order, this being the Primitive Way of Ringing."[56] The poor could not manage the skill to ring changes. The complexity of peal ringing allowed change ringing groups to insist on their higher status.

This adapts Thorstein Veblen's concept of a culture of *conspicuous consumption*. In Veblen's account, a parasitic *leisure class* distinguishes itself through its capacity to spend money, time, and effort on the public consumption of scarce goods. Lower classes emulate this conspicuous consumption in a self-destructive search for status.[57] *Conspicuous complexity* is similar. A group distinguishes itself through its public consumption of leisure activities. But these are not acts of luxurious pecuniary *consumption*, but instead demonstrations great skill, accuracy, and complexity. Change ringing was not conspicuously *expensive*, it was conspicuously *difficult*. Very few people had the time, self-control, physical endurance, and accuracy to ring a peal. That was the point.

One indication of the self-conscious difficulty of change ringing is the jargon ringers used to describe their methods and performances. This account of a ringing contest from 1808 shows both the obscurity of the change ringers' language, and the difficulty of pulling off a "true" peal:

> The College Youths of Ashton-under-Line, ascended St Michael's Gothic tower, and rung a superlatively fine half peal (say 2,520 changes) made the single in fine stile, and rang most nobly fine to the 21st treble lead of the sixth course, when the conductor of the peal called a bob two treble leads too soon, which threw the bells out of course, and then they were obliged to call bobs irregularly afterwards for some time.–The two last courses were rung true, after all the miscalling; the single at last completely made, and round at the change of 5,012, being the two treble leads short of the whole peal, (or 28 changes) which initled the Oldham Youths to the wager of 40 guineas.[58]

The public came to see change ringing as complex, meticulous and comprehensive, if not a little ridiculous. Proverbially, to *ring the changes* on a topic meant discussing its every possible angle, repeating the same words over and over again, winning an argument by dogged thoroughness, just as the change ringers succeeded by exhausting every combination of a ring of bells.[59]

This complexity was related to other keywords of the 18th Century: civility, *politeness* and *order*. The Union Scholars rules stated that "No Man be admitted except he is a civil Man and sufficient Ringer."[60] Annable's contributions to ringing methods was described in the ringing textbook *Clavis Campanalogia*

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55 J.D. and C.M., *Campanalogia Improved: Or, the Art of Ringing Made Easie:* (London, 1702), 3, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3306289024&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
56 John Pointer, *Oxoniensis Academia: Or, the Antiquities and Curiosities of the University of Oxford* (London, 1749), 77, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=ucberkeley&tabID=T001&docId=CW3303685203&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
57 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2007).
58 "Sporting Magazine.," *Sporting Magazine.* 32 (1808): 177–78.
59 "Ring, v.1," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), sec. 17.a, accessed July 25, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166072#eid25421120.
60 British Library ADD MS 19371

as a rational improvement of a previously disordered tradition: "when [Annable] entered this vast field of rude and uncultivated waste, like a skillful planter, [he] divided it all into regular parts and proportions."[61] Ringing societies used their rules to make their members' behavior ordered and regular. Rules were commonly made against drinking before ringing, swearing, smoking, and gambling;[62] the Bristol Union Youths had particularly detailed rules against peeing in the steeple, fighting, smoking, using nicknames, and wearing dirty shirts to Sunday ringing.[63] Although change ringers drank beer while they rang, they specifically insisted on remaining relatively sober while ringing because ringing a full peal required so much concentration. One bell-tower beer jug in Beccles, Suffolk had was inscribed with a poem encouraging temperance:

> When I am fill'd with liquor strong,
> Each man drink once & then ding dong.
> Drink not too much to Cloud your knobbs
> Lest you forget to make the bobs.[64]

As complicated peals came to define change ringing, the practice shifted from something seen as adjacent to music to something more abstract like science or mathematics. In the 17th century, change ringing used many musical metaphors like *composer*, *conductor*, *touch* (a short piece) and *prick* (to write out a score). But by the 18th century when peals came to dominate the practice, change ringing was seen as somewhere between *mathematics, art, science* and *exercise*—an achievement distinguished by its complexity and accuracy, rather than its beauty. Take this description of the London Youths performance of a peal of Cambridge Surprise in 1780:

> From the abstruse form of composition, and the peculiarity of striking the above peal, is esteemed by all connoisseurs who are masters of that art, to be the most intricate performance ever done since the art was invented, and seems to shed a luster on the performers, so as to rival both ancient and modern performances, and render them candidates for the Temple of Fame.[65]

The performance of the London Youths was praiseworthy because it was difficult, not beautiful. The turn to complexity was accompanied by a shift from *hearing* to *seeing* the bells. Ringing manuals throughout the 17th and most of the 18th century emphasized the importance of the ringers *listening* to the bells or to the conductor as they rang to be able to know their position in the method. But this would not work for the new complicated peals that became popular after the middle of the 18th century, because there is a significant two second delay between the action of the ringer pulling their rope and the clapper sounding the side of the bell. For more complicated peals, ringers needed to *watch* the ropes as they were pulled—gaining what ringers today call 'ropesight.' This advice first found its way into a ringing manual in 1813, but ringing experts suggest that some of the highly complicated peals rung in the late 18th century could only have been done by following a visual method rather than an aural one. This early shift to ropesight becomes clear when we realize that by the second half of the

[61] Cited in Cook, "London Ringers and Ringing in the Eighteenth Century," 26.
[62] Morris, *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, 62–63.
[63] Morris, 63, 176.
[64] Eisel, "Changing Attitudes to Bells and Their Usage," 26.
[65] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, February 1, 1780; Issue 3340. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.*

18th century ringing bands practiced together with their bells silenced—and thus needed to watch the bells rather than listen to them to understand what they were doing.[66]

Why did the middling sorts need a new way of ringing bells? The influential 'bi-polar' model of culture associated with E.P. Thompson and Peter Burke split 18th century culture into two halves: elite and popular.[67] This left the middling sorts stranded. They could be understood to be attempting and largely failing at imitating the ruinously expensive culture of the upper classes. At the same time, they were alienated from a receding traditional rural culture. Dancing around the maypole, throwing at cocks, bear baiting, even horse racing was about physical release, which might undermine the image of moderate self-control that was so central to the credit-conscious middling sorts. Furthermore, these traditional amusements were embedded in rhythms of seasonal rural labor that were less and less respected by the hard-working, prosperous men of the growing cities.

In recent years there has been an attempt to recover a distinctive culture of the middling sorts that was more than just a bad imitation of the elite or a nostalgic souvenir of an old Merrie England.[68] The conspicuous complexity of change ringing was part of this culture. It emphasized many of the values and skills of the middling sorts. Ringers needed numeracy to memorize change ringing methods, just as middle-class men needed numeracy to keep their accounts and manage their finances. (More impressionistically, the notation of change ringing methods resembles the columns of numbers in account books. I have often found change ringing methods idly pricked out by treasurers and secretaries on the back of account books.)[69] Ringers needed self-control and patience to practice their peals to perfection, just as they needed patience and self-control to learn how to make their "weather-glasses" and other precision instruments. Change ringing, then, was a fit amusement for literate, numerate, prosperous men who might want to play with numbers in their spare time.

But unlike their work, which was mostly private and cerebral, the performance of this accurate, complex amusement was very conspicuous: it was public, loud, and physical. Short of cannon fire, church bell ringing was the loudest man-made sound a person living in the 18th century would likely hear. Cognitive psychology research suggests that humans tend to associate big, high things like church bells with power and status.[70] Change ringers took over these very public instruments for their own purposes. Why? Change ringing—frequently described of as 'manly' by its practitioners—offered model of masculinity that emphasized physical self-control, endurance, moderation, and precision. This was not a manliness of courage and display, or a manliness of appetite and strength, but a manliness of endurance, probity and accuracy. This was not distinction through the public

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[66] For an example of ringers practicing with silent bells, see West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, RBP68/58/1 where the ringers of Wakefield are described as struggling to practice on bells "both silent and open."

[67] E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edition (Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2009).

[68] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft809nb544.

[69] Mathematicians have seen 17th century peal compositors as mathematical pioneers. See Arthur T. White, "Fabian Stedman: The First Group Theorist?," *The American Mathematical Monthly* 103, no. 9 (1996): 771–78, https://doi.org/10.2307/2974446.

[70] Thomas W. Schubert, "Your Highness: Vertical Positions as Perceptual Symbols of Power.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2005): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.1.1; Thomas W. Schubert, Sven Waldzus, and Beate Seibt, "More than a Metaphor: How the Understanding of Power Is Grounded in Experience," in *Spatial Dimensions of Social Thought*, ed. Thomas W. Schubert, Anne Maass, and ebrary, Inc, Applications of Cognitive Linguistics 18 (Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10515782.

consumption of luxury goods, but instead distinction through the public creation of complex cooperative activity. In ascending to the biggest, tallest, loudest thing in the community—the bells—and ringing them in a painfully intricate fashion, these men were claiming that they were valuable, and valuable in a new way. Valuable because they were accurate, hard-working, numerate men who capable of feats of self-control, like ringing church bells in complicated mathematical permutations for 12 hours straight.

Conclusion: A Pluralistic Marketplace of Amusements

Historians have understood that over the 18th century, culture became more national. It became more commercial. It was done in new special-purpose spaces connected with a wider "consumer society." Recreations were less tied with old structures like rhythms of seasonal labor, local tradition, and the parish church. Instead, recreation came to be improved, 'rational', and formalized. The development of change ringing fits into these processes. In it, we see the rise of a particular *national* style of ringing, spreading from Norwich and particularly London. This was spread by a new *commercial* culture. While ringers had been meeting for centuries in the bell-tower, now after ringing they would take their meetings in new club rooms in public houses. Change ringing was particularly an *urban* activity—although many bell towers were in rural areas, few change ringing societies thrived outside of the cities.[71] Change ringing amounted to a *rationalization* of tradition: it took an old pastime that was seen as perhaps too exuberant and subjected it to new rules that made it civil and polite.

The example of change ringing can extend our understanding of the history of popular culture in two ways. First, change ringing underscores that importance of *organization* to the development of 18th century culture. Change ringing, like many amusements, took place in formal groups, because only in formal groups could people get the necessary investment of time and money to get the expertise to participate in the practice. Numerous other cultural institutions of the time, from singing societies, to political organizations also made use of the club form for the same reason: it allowed them to coordinate cooperation on a much wider scale, much more consistently. The long 18th century saw the development of many amusements into well-developed modern pastimes, from curling and cricket to mountaineering. All came to have their own formal groups, written rules, jargons, and distinctive mentalities. The thick civil society of 18th century Britain, in other words, facilitated a pluralization of culture.

Second, the development of change ringing reveals a tension at the heart of the nascent pluralistic civil society of 18th Century Britain. It was at once open and voluntaristic; but also fractured and exclusive. In a way that was historically novel, men could pursue activities and even identities from a diverse cultural marketplace. A man could visit a political society on one day, a book club the next, and then practice his change ringing in the evening—he needed only free time, spending money, and the social capital to gain membership in the right societies. Yet this more capacious pluralistic society was fractured and closed. The different groups men could belong to were largely separate from each other. They did not attempt to represent any larger group, instead they were particular and niched. Their activities were often obscure to outsiders, and even laughable. Women were barred from it all. Culture was pluralistic and voluntary, but it had lost its unity.

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[71] Wratten, "Influence of the Towns," 1–2.

The next chapter will look at how this fractured civil society became heavily contested by both the state and private groups. People came to understand, and fear, the power of organized voluntary activity. This came to a head with two events. First, the French Revolution, whose political clubs were directly inspired by British clubs, descended into fearful violence. Second, increasingly powerful tools of association were picked up by large groups of working-class radicals. The combination of these two events led to a widescale reckoning over the status of this pluralistic civil society itself.

Chapter 5: Club-Ocracy: Paperwork, Politics, and Civil Society

Introduction

In July 1792, the MP Lord Sheffield gave a speech in the town of Lewes warning against the "mischievous spirit of change and association," then rising in both Britain and France. British political reform groups, Lord Sheffield argued, were identical to those "certain societies which had overturned all religion and all government in France." French societies like the notorious Jacobin Club had in fact been "copied from Associations and corresponding Committees which took place not long since in North America;" and ultimately these "American Associations were borrowed from similar ones, which in the time of Charles the First did not redress but overset the Constitution and established a Military Government in its place." Lord Sheffield knew which side of this battle he was on. He "would not prefer club government to that mild, equal, just and steady government under which we so happily flourished." After his speech, as if to embody how immanent the threat was, "a person not known to the meeting, presented the Sheriff with a letter from MR. PAINE, which was met with an unfavorable reception, being cast unopened upon the table, and torn to pieces with distinguished marks of contempt."[1]

Up and down the country there were dozens of similar meetings, where dignitaries gave similar concerned speeches and signed their names to similar resolutions against Tom Paine and the clubs that promulgated his work.[2] This chapter argues that in some ways we have misunderstood this familiar conflict of the nascent left and right wings of modern politics: it was not just about *reform* against *reaction*, but a contest about the proper field of activity for increasingly powerful civil society organizations. Lord Sheffield and others like him saw the left-wing political reformers not only as advocating *democracy*, but as threatening what one commentator called "club-ocracy"[3] and Lord Sheffield called "club government." How could Lord Sheffield imagine that this *club-ocracy* had become so powerful that it threatened the traditional order of society throughout much of the Atlantic World?[4]

Lord Sheffield was correct in understanding the political reform movements of the 1790s as part of a long tradition of association, a tradition that had since the time of Charles I been growing increasingly sophisticated, powerful, and national. But by focusing on political associations only, Lord Sheffield overlooked the whole story. What changed, this chapter will argue, was that these associations had access to increasingly powerful administrative tools that allowed them to coordinate at greater distances. Club-ocracy was only imaginable because club administrators had become skilled at new tools of association. Lord Sheffield misunderstood his own role in this conflict as well. He was certain that he was on the side of traditional, mild, equal, just and steady government against the radicalism

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[1] Diary or Woodfall's Register (London, England), Friday, October 22, 1790; Issue 491. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2000296635

[2] Austin Mitchell, "The Association Movement of 1792-3," *The Historical Journal* 4, no. 1 (1961): 56–77.

[3] Whitehall Evening Post (1770) (London, England), July 19, 1791 - July 21, 1791; Issue 6698. Burney Collection. Gale Document Number Z2001632634

[4] If Lord Sheffield had turned his attention to Hispanic South America, he would have had further cause for alarm. The Revolutions against the Spanish crown were in part organized by people involved in the Great American Reunion Lodge of North America, based in London, including Simon Bolivar and Francisco de Miranda. Later, these revolutionaries' self-organizing Juntas would turn into governments.

of club-ocracy: but he was as much a club-ocrat as Tom Paine. The associations that organized the meeting at which he spoke used the very same administrative tools as those groups promoting Parliamentary Reform.

To understand how clubs became so powerful, this chapter will mostly ignore the *savants* like Tom Paine and Edmund Burke. Instead, it will pay more attention to the mostly unnamed *fabricants* who worked to administer these thousands of voluntary organizations.[5] Before the 1760s, few clubs had the administrative capacity to cooperate at anything more than a local scale. This meant that clubs were not used to organize political action during times of national crisis, like the Excise Crisis of 1733-4 or the Jacobite Risings of 1745. Starting around the 1760s, however, fabricants started to experiment with administrative practices allowing them to better coordinate with distant groups: corresponding societies, committees, and a federated structure. As these practices were improved, clubs came to be seen as solutions to a greater bundle of problems: problems of poverty, of public order, of Empire, and of course problems of political representation. This set the stage for the conflicts of the 1790s. Club government was possible because sophisticated administrative practices were developed that could coordinate activity across great distances.

Indeed, club government was not just a weapon in the conflict of the 1790s: it was one of its prizes. Could clubs represent the whole nation? Or were they something less than the nation—something civic or private? Could any group of fellows in a tavern who elected a President and drew up some rules be considered a *club*? Or did clubs need something more to speak in the public sphere—like authorization from traditional authorities, or a certain *kind* of member, or a certain scope of activity? Club government survived the conflict, but in the process clearer lines were drawn between would be considered legitimately 'political,' what would be 'public' and what would be 'private'—and in the process, created a distinctive place, a 'civil society' that was separated from economic and political life.

Before the 1760s: Talk, But Little Action

Before the 1760s, it was unimaginable that clubs could overturn the order of the entire nation, because no single club possessed the capacity to act at a regional, much less a national scale. Clubs were very *local* public bodies. They lacked the capacity to reach beyond the club rooms where they regularly met.

What clubs could do in this early period, as shown Chapter One, was to gather people together around common interests or common activities. But these were local concerns. We might imagine that native place societies would coordinate their activities trans-locally, that the natives of Wiltshire in different parts of the country would work together for their common Wiltshire interests. But they did not. We might also expect that clubs representing political parties would try to work on a regional or national scale. But political clubs had a very local remit: there was much "party clubbing" especially in London, but these were concerned mostly with local politics and local elections.[6] Tellingly, clubs played little or no part in political crises in the first half of the 18th century. For example, in 1733-4 there were protests against the increase in the Excise tax for consumer goods, particularly salt. These protests employed what we might think of as traditional tools of political contestation: arguments in the press,

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[5] I am borrowing the terms savant and fabricant from the history of science, see e.g. Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*.
[6] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 73.

public meetings, and the collective effervescence of public demonstrations. Yet there were no clubs formed to organize this anti-Excise-tax protest—no formal, persistent meetings of a definite membership.[7] A similar lack of coordinated political action can be seen in Jacobitism, the support for the exiled Stuart kings. There was a rich sociability of Jacobitism: there were Jacobite social spaces, Jacobite toasts, Jacobite songs, and of course Jacobite clubs.[8] But during the Jacobite Uprising of 1745, Jacobite clubs did not act in a coordinated manner to support the cause of the Stuarts: these clubs were prepared only to raise a toast to the king across the water; they were not capable of raising an army to support him.[9]

Clubs were often places to *talk* about public things—about international events, national problems, and high politics—but they were not spaces to *do* public things. Clubs were, like the coffeehouses before them, places to read newspapers and share news. Indeed, one of the first printed uses of the word *club* to mean a group of people meeting socially together, from 1644, emphasized news-reading: at a "twopenny club" in Oxford, a "set convention of Newes-mongers" met to discuss politics.[10] Many provincial clubs timed their meetings to coincide with the delivery of the London post, so that they could pore over the latest periodicals.[11] Club meetings were proverbially filled with talk of politics. In these characteristics, the clubs resemble the Habermasian public sphere: a place where people gathered to discuss about topics of public interest.[12] But for all the *talk* of politics in clubs before the 1760s, the club was only used in a very limited way to organize political *action*. Critics complained that mechanics were wasting their time at clubs by reading newspapers and discussing politics, but not that clubs would rise up in revolution and overturn the social order.[13]

Clubs, for all their penetration and variety, were not made for the purposes of organizing a large number of people across distances. As Chapter Two showed, they used their corporate paperwork to solve the problems of assembling men around an amiable table. Concerns of club government had only become possible because by the 1790s practices allowing for effective trans-local administration had become widespread enough to be at the fingertips of potential club presidents and secretaries throughout the nation. We can piece this story together by looking at the development of some of these administrative tools.

Diffusion of Trans-local Paperwork Practices

The *fabricants* of the club slowly assembled a toolkit of administrative practices that allowed them to act at larger geographic scales. The sources of these tools were various—other clubs, corporations,

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[7] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People : England 1727-1783*, New Oxford History of England (Oxford :Oxford ;New York: Clarendon Press ;Oxford University Press, 1989), 28–33.

[8] Neil Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[9] See e.g. *General Evening Post* (London, England), December 7, 1745 - December 10, 1745; Issue 1904. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale Document Number Z2000434286 in which a club is accused of reading the Pretender's declarations and talking about them, and meeting convivially around Jacobite rituals, but there is no sense of any danger that the club itself should arrange any practical threat to the state beyond talk.

[10] *Spie Communicating Intelligence from Oxford* (London, England), April 4, 1644 - April 11, 1644; Issue 11. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale document Number Z2001419029

[11] See e.g. *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* (London, England), Saturday, August 29, 1724; Issue 305. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale Document Number Z2001599011

[12] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

[13] *Grub Street Journal* (London, England), Thursday, November 16, 1732; Issue 151. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.* Gale Document Number Z2000498137

dissenting chapels, the military, and the old guild tradition. This section will show a selection of these developments in order to demonstrate that these tools were spreading, and that they allowed clubs to group together at longer distances. After surveying some minor tools, the section will look at three major developments: the proliferation of the committee, the 'subscriber democracy,' and finally the federation.

Club secretaries actively shared what we might call today administrative best practices. In the middle of the 17th century, the Oxford Philosophical Society sent its minutes to a number of other learned societies, including the Dublin Philosophical Society, "Articles for the better regulating of our proceedings," which it hoped other groups would use as a model for reforming their own societies[14] New clubs frequently sought out and copied the administrative paperwork of role-model organizations, particularly role model organizations from London.[15] In 1722, for example, William Stuckey, the founder of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society was making connections between provincial antiquarian societies and the London Society of Antiquaries. These included direct requests for examples of effective paperwork. In November 1722 Stuckey "acquainted the Society [of Antiquaries] that Mr Jos. Sparks desir'd a Copy of our Orders for that they had Enacted a Society of Antiquaries at Peterburgh which was to be a Cell or Subordinate to ours, as that some years ago established at Spalding, and therefore they intended to proceed in the same method & by the same rules."[16] A century later, new clubs were more frequently copying other groups' administrative materials because they were more widely available.[17] Many were even printed explicitly to serve as examples to other clubs.[18]

Club secretaries spent more time at the physical work of corresponding with other clubs: drafting letters, reading correspondence, and coordinating with other organizations. William Stuckey mentioned above was a precocious letter writer, and even convinced Isaac Newton to be a correspondent of the Spading Gentleman's Society. He also established postal relationships with other antiquarian societies, sharing interesting information with groups not only in London, but in Northampton, the Deepings and Grantham, and Peterborough.[19] While William Stuckey was an unusually active secretary for his time, after 1760 he would no longer have seemed eccentric, especially as postal services grew much more effective and regular. After 1760, club Secretaries were as a matter of course communicating with their counterparts in London and provincial cities. When the Leeds Chamber of Commerce was established in April 1785, one of its first acts was to write to groups in Norwich, Birmingham, Rochdale, Manchester, Halifax, Sheffield, and Exeter that the society was established, "explaining its nature & proposed objects & requesting their concurrence in all matters which may concern the general Interests of Trade & Manufactures."[20] This signals a great deal of

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[14] British Library Add MS 4811

[15] This was common throughout the corporate world. Some Danish "company states" copied their charters exactly from their Dutch counterparts. See Andrew Phillips and J. C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World*, 1st ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 67.

[16] Society of Antiquaries Library 1

[17] There are many instances of clubs borrowing the administrative model of other clubs at their founding, including British Library Add MS 19718 Manchester Archives GB127.M8/1.

[18] For example, in 1797 Frederick Eden published a collection of club rules to help spread beneficial regulations, see Ismay, *Trust Among Strangers*, 72.

[19] Diana Honeybone and Michael Honeybone, eds., *The Correspondence of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 1710-1761*, Annotated edition (Lincoln : Woodbridge: London Record Society, 2010).

[20] Leeds University Library Ms [Deposit] 1951/1

institutionalized administrative facility: the club Secretary knew about these different groups, was able to reach them, and knew how to draft letters to them.

Clubs also participated in a growing national print culture. Many clubs printed their own materials, particularly learned societies which imitated continental academies in publishing periodicals of essays. Moral reform societies in the late 17th century published so-called *Black Lists* of offenders successfully prosecuted for moral crimes.[21] Sporting societies spent much effort in sending information about matches to newspapers, as when the neighboring Leeds and Wakefield change ringing clubs published dueling scurrilous poems in the local press in the 1760s.[22] Clubs could also send copies of resolutions and minutes to be printed in the press in order to make a public statement on behalf of their group, to brag about a particular donation, or to make a political statement. Printed histories like Josiah Woodward's account of London religious societies and Anderson's Masonic constitutions promulgated the mentalities and spirits of particular kinds of clubs to a nation-wide audience.[23] Clubs also frequently printed one-sheet tracts, both as propaganda, and to share pertinent information, like the lyrics to club anthems. At the dinners of the Revolution Society, attendees sat down to their amiable meal and found specially-printed pamphlets slid beneath their plates.[24]

Two major improvements helped clubs coordinate much more effectively over long distances. The first was the committee. The committee would meet outside of normal club hours, and was authorized to act in the club's corporate capacity to deal with a number of issues, particularly the club's routine administrative business.[25] The committee form also allowed for the pursuit of more specialized activities by allowing interested members to meet outside of the rest of the group. The Society of the Dilettanti in 1778 appointed a committee to consider "the Dress that would be proper for the Very High Steward and at the same time arrange the folds of the Presidents Toga."[26] The Society of Arts was particularly heavy with committees with highly specialized remits, and this was copied by those numerous improvement societies that were inspired by it: the Society for Promoting Natural History, founded in 1783, had at its founding committees for Zoology, Botany, Entomology, "Extraneous Fossils," "Conchology," Mineralogy, and "Papers."[27] This was not simply a matter of efficiency. The Leith Trifrontal Society, then made up of three 16 year old boys, formed various committees to handle administrative questions—but these committees of course had the same composition as the club at large, namely, the same three 16-year old boys.[28]

Most importantly for this account were those committees like the "Papers" committee of the Society for Promoting Natural History. These handled the groups' correspondence. Groups had special corresponding members who would be sent the club's minutes and transactions, and were expected in turn to send interesting information on to the club. These committees could also communicate with the corresponding committees of other clubs. These were most fully developed perhaps in the

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21 Andrew Gordon Craig, "Movement for the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1715" (Ph.D., Edinburgh, Edinburgh University, 1980), 65.
22 See West Yorkshire Archives, RBP68/58/1
23 Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 262–63.
24 BL Add MS 64814
25 Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 255.
26 Society of Antiquaries Library B4
27 Society for Promoting Natural History, *Rules and Order to Be Observed, Etc.* (London, 1785, 1785).
28 Edinburgh Central Library Y/q/41/t --A9471

Committees of Correspondence that arose in colonial North America after the 1760s. These were local voluntary organizations that were formally connected with others through the postal system, first to deal with problems like the Stamp Act, and then on a more permanent basis, eventually becoming the model for many official independent colonial political bodies.

The fullest expression of the growing supremacy of the committee was what Clark calls "public subscription associations" and Morris calls "subscriber democracies." These were organizations that included Mechanics Institutions, Literary and Philosophical Societies, Bible and Missionary Societies, and Anti-Slavery societies. Additionally, some Friendly Societies were administered by committees of wealthy 'honorary' members who paid large premiums to establish the box, on behalf of the general membership who lacked the capacity to govern the club themselves.[29] These groups were distinguished by having the vast majority of their business handled by committees. Rank and file members were important only insofar as they paid their regular subscriptions, but they had little hand in the groups' government.[30] These groups could be more effective and more targeted: they could have larger membership lists, as they did not need to deal with the trouble of large administrative meetings, and thus they could amass more money and more influence. But this came at the expense of the group's self-government.

At the furthest end of administrative complexity was the fully federated society, which included most notably the Freemasons and other secret societies. This form combined committees with active self-governing cells or divisions. The federated form deserves special attention because it would prove to be the basis of much of the most active trans-local political societies in the 1780s and especially the 1790s. We can hazard that the tools were originally developed by those working-class guilds-cum-clubs that had to coordinate workers across a given region, particularly journeymen, who were supposed to go on the tramp for a number of years.[31] In this form, local meetings were just the bottom of a more extended administrative pyramid. Members from one local division were recognized by other divisions through passwords, tickets, secret handshakes, or knowledge of secret rituals. Elected delegates from local divisions had their own meetings where administrative questions were tackled.

[29] For examples of Friendly Societies run by a committee of wealthy people, see the Leeds Female Benefit Society which was run by 11 committee members and three treasurers (West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds, WYL485/6) and the Barwick Female Society (West Yorkshire Archives WYL450)

[30] See Morris, "Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780–1850: An Analysis," 101–3 for a deeper description of the administrative character of subscriber democracies. Morris speculates on the origin of subscriber democracies. Their reliance on annual meetings that united a largely silent paying membership with an active committee likely was borrowed from Joint Stock Companies. The practice of the annual auditing of accounts, Morris says, came from the dissenting chapel, but this was a practice that was even by the early 18th century spread throughout many everyday corporations, where the election of officers for the year was accompanied by a ritual audit. The third source, according to Morris, was the sociability of the public house, although he overstates that there was "little formality or structure to their proceedings." See Morris 104-5. What is clear is that groups all across the associational world were pulling administrative practices from a wide variety of sources.

[31] For an example of these rules outside of masonry, see the Free Gardeners GD420/35, whose regulations from 1676 notably include distinctions between speculative and operative members, and also include rules for providing "admitted gardeners travelling for improvement be entertained for two or three days by the Brethern who they come or at least till they have shewed them their labour, prudence and skill and without any cost to the traveller." For an example from England see Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post (London, England), Saturday, February 22, 1718; Issue 63. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Trade clubs, by their very nature, were at best legally dubious, and the paperwork that serves as our primary source for these organizations could be used as proof of criminal activity. Because of that, this paperwork was more likely to be destroyed, if it was kept in the first place—and it certainly was not, as Anderson did with Freemasonic organization—to be printed.

There could be several levels to these meetings. The Ubiquarians was a London-area secret society active from the 1730s that organized hiking trips. Its strict precedence for feast days shows the administrative complexity of even such an obscure club: a Dictator was at the head, followed by the Consuls, the Praetors of the Provinces, "according to the date of their constitutions," the Master, the Chaplin, the Quaestor (the treasurer), the Secretary, the Six Patrician Senators, the twelve Senators of the Grand Convention, the representatives of the Provinces in the Grand Senate, the Officers and Senators of the Provinces, the Patricians and past Dictators, all the Patricians of the Provinces, the Brethren—that is, the rank-and-file members, according to seniority of admission, followed finally by the "provincial" Brethren.[32]

New Tools, New Problems

Because of these more sophisticated administrative practices, by the 1760s clubs could begin to gather more people across greater distances with tighter coordination. This expanded their power. In 1760, Jonas Hanway (founder of the Marine Society) founded the Troop Society to support the widows and children of soldiers killed in war. Subscriptions were gathered from clubs in Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester and Sheffield; Freemasons Lodges in Portsmouth and Wapping; servant's clubs, workingmen's clubs, tavern clubs, dissenting chapels, and a "Club of Old Maids." The group in this way, along with individual contributions, raised 7,406 pounds.[33] This new capacity made clubs fit for new and bigger problems, problems that fifty years earlier would not been conceivable for bottom-up voluntary activity to confront. To show how these developments were related to the diffusion of new administrative forms, this section will look at how after the 1750s club were increasingly used to solve problems of national poverty through the benefit club, and problems of the imperial economy through Chambers of Commerce. In both these developments, contemporaries recognized that clubs needed some form of administrative reform to scale them up from the national to the local—what that administrative reform was depending on the class of the people to be governed, and the nature of their work.

Benefit Clubs

I use the term *benefit club* to refer to those clubs which combined regular amiable meetings with insurance provision. They went by a great variety of names over the 18th century, including box clubs and brotherly societies, before becoming institutionalized in the 1790s under the name of Friendly Societies. I use the earlier term *benefit club* to refer to the longer history of these groups, rather than the later 18th and 19th century history designated by the term *Friendly Society*. The administrative model of the benefit club was simple: at every meeting, members would pay money both to defray the reckoning of the meeting itself, and also paid a certain fee "to the box." The money saved in this way over the years was used to provide insurance for members: either to defray wages lost due to sickness or incapacity, or to pay for funerals, or to support widows and orphans. By the 1760s, benefit clubs had

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32 Lewisham Local History Library A/67/3/1. The organization may have spread as far as Barbados.

33 Jonas Hanway, *An Account of the Society for the Encouragement of the British Troops in Germany and North America with the Motives to the Making a Present to Those Troops, Also to the Widows and Orphans of Such of Them as Have Died in Defence of Their Country, Particularly at the Battles of Thonhausen, Quebec, &c.*, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche Series = CIHM/ICMH Collection de Microfiches ;No. 35419 (London: [s.n.], 1760), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100266340; cited in Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66–67.

become so widespread they were already considered a familiar fixture of everyday life. This is also the time that we see benefit clubs increasing in the Digital Census (see Figure 1). They were exceedingly local concerns: not inclined to communicate or cooperate with other benefit clubs, even in the same city.

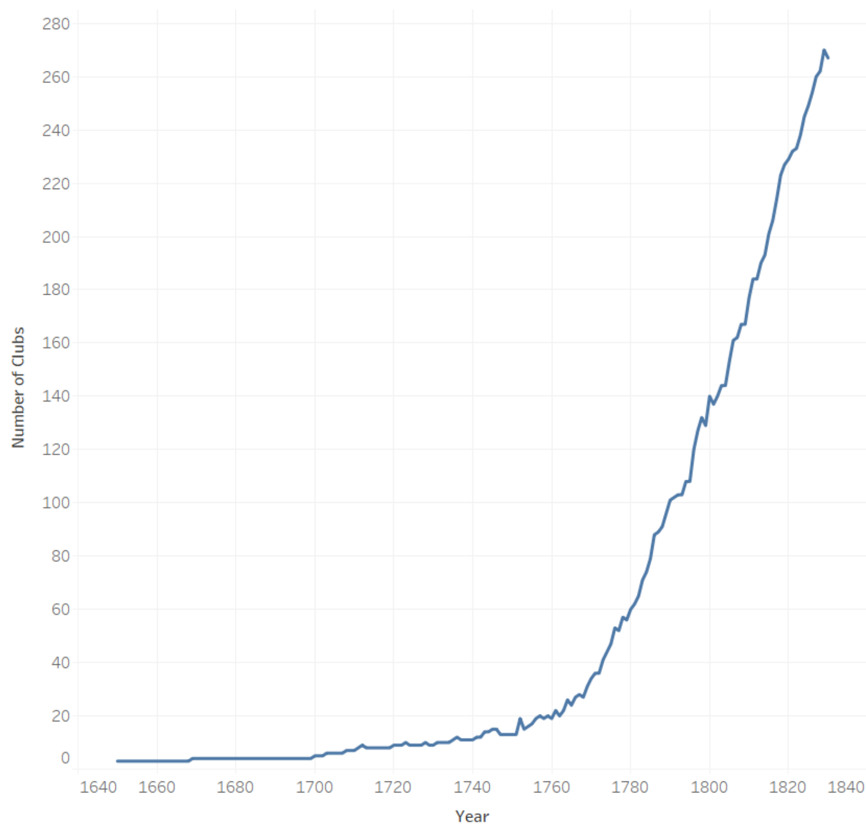

Figure 11 Number of Benefit Clubs In the Digital Census

The increased capacity for club coordination opened a space where projectors could imagine local benefit clubs joining together for a larger purpose: the alleviation of national poverty. Starting in the 1770s if not earlier, a number of thinkers came to propose benefit clubs or Friendly Societies as a component of plans for Poor Law Reform. Of 517 treatises in the Goldsmith-Kress Library of Economic Literature written on the Poor Laws between 1780 and 1834 surveyed by Penelope Ismay, 193 of them—or 37%—proposed some version of a benefit club as part of their solutions.[34]

The broader development of the Friendly Society has been dealt with in greater depth in Professor Ismay's work, but there are two things to note for this chapter. First, these projectors were concerned not only with the internal workings of the local benefit club—these had been worked out well enough in practice, even when experts saw much room for improvement—but how these local groups could be joined together through *administration* to be more effective at larger scales. Frequently, they imagined that his coordination should come from the state. Joseph Townsend's *Dissertation Upon the Poor Laws* proposed to make Friendly Societies universal and obligatory. The Friendly Society "should be pushed as far as it will go: it should be firmly established, made universal, and subjected to wholesome

[34] Ismay, *Trust Among Strangers*, 48.

regulations."[35] Acland in *A Plan for Rendering the Poor Independent of Public Contribution* not only proposed that box clubs be brought under more firm actuarial grounds by among other things graduating contributions by income, gender, and military service: he also proposed a "one general Club, or Society"[36] to cover everyone in the nation, to be established by Parliament.[37]

Secondly, there was an overlap between this movement to use federated benefit clubs to solve problems of national poverty and the movement to use federated political clubs to solve problems of parliamentary reform. As early as December 1772, James Townsend, then Lord Mayor of London, a one-time enthusiastic supporter of Wilkes, one of the members of the Society of Gentlemen Supporters of the Bill of Rights, and one of the founders of the Constitutional Society in 1781, was reported to have a scheme of poor relief that he would present to Parliament "to institute a club in every parish in England (something after the manner of the Benefit Clubs in London) for the better provision of the poor, as well as of tradesmen and others" as an alternative to the poor rates.[38] This scheme was famously expanded by the younger brother Joseph Townsend in his *Dissertation Upon the Poor Laws* 14 years later.

Chambers of Commerce

The idea of joining local clubs together in a federation was also used as a solution to the problems of Empire and the national economy, particularly through the understudied Chamber of Commerce movement.[39] Although today Chambers of Commerce are not particularly club-like, their 18th century ancestors were very much in the broader club continuum. What distinguished them was that they brought together merchants and manufacturers to lobby for their mutual interests. There were three ways they did this. They could undertake improvement schemes themselves. They could lobby local authorities. Or they could lobby the national government. But this is where their distinctiveness ends. Like other clubs, they elected members and officers, were self-governing, and managed themselves with a particular style of paperwork. Like other clubs they were multi-purpose, and often were quite amiable. Their meetings took place at taverns, and there was clearly drinking at meetings. Indeed, the General Chamber in London was denigrated in a mocking poem from 1787 as just another drinking club: where men "met ev'ry evening to talk o'er a pot."[40]

What concerns us most here are the proposals and attempts to unite these local chambers to form some kind of national or even imperial organization. One of the first came from the economic writer

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[35] Joseph Townsend, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws*, electronic resource (London: Printed for C. Dilly, 1786), 89, http://uclibs.org/PID/126171.

[36] John Acland, *A Plan for Rendering the Poor Independent on Public Contribution: Founded on the Basis of the Friendly Societies, Commonly Called Clubs. By the Rev. John Acland, ... To Which Is Added, a Letter from Dr.Price, Containing His Sentiments and Calculations on the Subject*, electronic resource (Exeter: printed and sold by R. Thorn. Sold also by Messrs. Rivington, T. Cadell, and J. Debrett, London; and by all other booksellers, 1786), 10, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T211676&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW107682722&vrsn=1.0&srchtp=a&d4=0.33&n=10&SU=0LRL+OR+0LRI.

[37] His work also has digressions on the paperwork that would be undertaken by the officers of this universal club—which were to be unelected Churchwardens or Overseers—as they collected and disbursed money—his plan, he supposed, would allow officers to count possibly 200 members' contributions an hour. See Acland 31-7

[38] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, December 28, 1772; Issue 1123. 17th-18th *Century Burney Collection Newspapers* Gale Document Number Z2000825805

[39] The following discussion is based on Bennett, *Local Business Voice*.

[40] Quoted in Bennett, 420–21.

Malachy Postlethwayte in the 1750s. Inspired by the French chambers of commerce, Postlethwayte proposed that similar chambers could be used to manage disputes with the British Empire by hearing representations about "abuses and difficulties and trade, and also complaints relating to impositions in trade, made by the governors and other public officials."[41] Instead of advocating for Americans to be represented directly in Parliament, these plans proposed indirect representation: merchants and manufacturers could make their voices known through a politically-connected network of voluntary associations. Similar proposals were in the air up until the final break with America: in the 1760s there were proposals by Birmingham industrialists to make a national committee of manufacturers to lobby the government for better imperial management.[42] In 1772, the writer Thomas Mortimer proposed that there should be a Chamber in each parish and county throughout the Atlantic world that would communicate with one another about industrial and commercial problems. If this had been implemented earlier, he observed, "we should have never heard of the Stamp Act, nor some of the other Acts of Parliament still unrepealed."[43] The hope was that the Empire could be united not by making political representation more equitable, but by establishing interstitial voluntary institutions that united and made amiable different interests.

After the American Revolution, proposals for networks of Chambers of Commerce resurfaced. Several manufacturing towns created a correspondence committee from 1784 that would become the General Chamber of Manufactures in early 1785.[44] This body began as a petition campaign in textile manufacturing towns, particularly Manchester and Birmingham, against a new Excise tax on fustian. A number of local Chambers of Commerce, including the Glasgow Chamber and many from Lancashire, sent delegates to London to lodge protests against these new taxes. There were traditional protests as well, including a march of weavers from Oldham to Manchester. This agitation was eventually successful, and in April 1785, the fustian tax was repealed. The General Chamber was settled on a more formal basis in March 1785, when delegates from 20 manufacturing towns assembled in the London Tavern to discuss opposition to Prime Minister Pitt's proposals to create a free trade area between mainland Britain and Ireland, animated by many leading industrialists including Josiah Wedgwood, the famous pottery magnate (and member of the Lunar Society.) The Chamber eventually had 21 official delegates including representatives from seven provincial chambers who met in London monthly. But the larger membership of the group also included individual representatives from provincial manufacturing towns that did not have formal Chambers, and many individual manufacturers and tradesmen, especially a number of small London tradesmen.

The Chamber used a number of the administrative tools outlined above to scale up its activities beyond the reach of the London public houses in which it met. It published a journal, *the Merchants and Manufacturers Magazine of Trade and Commerce*. It used the national press to advertise that it would encourage the creation of other local chambers: it advertised that it had "got the raw materials, a lawyer and a skin of parchment ready" for any that sought to incorporate itself. It engaged in postal correspondence with other Chambers, serving for a time as an information clearinghouse about news

[41] Quoted in Bennett, 96.
[42] Bennett, 410–11.
[43] Cited in Bennett, 98.
[44] This account follows the one in Bennett, *Local Business Voice*.

coming out of London. Finally, it was run by a series of committees, whose activities were authorized by meetings of the general membership.

The General Chamber had great weight behind it: just three days after establishing itself, representatives met with Prime Minister Pitt asking him to delay the proposals for the free trade zone with Ireland, although Pitt did not immediately agree to these demands. The Chamber responded with an aggressive petitioning campaign animated in part from local Chambers both in Ireland and mainland Britain that wrung out a number of particular concessions from Pitt. The concessions thus gained proved too difficult for the Irish Parliament to swallow and the bill was quashed—another success.

The Chambers collapsed because of the administrative difficulties of trying to square so many different regional interests with the administrative tools at hand over the long term, especially as individuals exploited weak parts in the administration's structure. The critical events were the 1786-7 negotiations of what would become the Eden Treaty, which finally settled commercial duties between France and Britain after the cessation of hostilities in the American Revolutionary War.[45] In these negotiations, there was much at stake for how to represent the interests of trade and manufacture—Pitt told Eden to sideline the Chambers of Commerce, although this may have been because Eden was a known supporter of the Chambers. Nevertheless, many of the leading lights of the General Chamber and the local Chambers were consulted by Eden individually if not as a corporate body, particularly Josiah Wedgewood, and there was a commitment by both Pitt and Eden to make a treaty favorable to the 'new' industries which they saw as the country's future. As a result, the General Chamber in December of 1786 resolved to support the resulting treaty. These resolutions were published widely in the press.

This course of action was resented particularly by the Manchester radical manufacturer Thomas Walker, an avowed opponent of Pitt, and a leading light of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, who claimed that a cabal of treaty supporters had usurped control of the General Chamber and had created a false consensus contrary to the true wishes of the manufactures of the nation. Walker flooded the subsequent meetings of the General Chamber with small London artisans who supported him and were hostile to the treaty, and the weight of these members carried the votes against the Eden Treaty. By February 1787, the Chamber's meetings were fractious, the bad blood was spilling out into the press, and many of the key members resigned in disgust. In the subsequent administrative jostling, there were a number of competing resolutions. Walker, supported by his small radical London artisans, passed resolutions hostile to the Eden Treaty; Josiah Wedgewood, representing the establishment view, attempted to reform the administration of the General Chamber itself, and weight the votes so that representatives of the provincial Chambers be given more representation—but this failed. The General Chamber, eventually firmly controlled by Walker and his group of small London tradesmen, published resolutions against the treaty in 1787: the powerful provincial interests were unhappy, and their provincial Chambers withdrew their support altogether. The General Chamber could no longer claim to represent the voices of the provincial chambers. The Chamber slumped, grew irrelevant, and was forgotten, although many (like Wedgewood) hoped that it would return again when the time came.

[45] The initial peace treaty between Britain and France in 1783 had called for a more permanent commercial treaty to be signed by 1786.

The example of the General Chamber shows both the uses and the limits of the federated forms of administration. By clubbing together Chambers and leading industrialists, the General Chamber was able to unite the voices of a number of powerful interests, and so could annoy and influence the Prime Minister for their advantage. This comity was created through paperwork: through the monthly meetings of the General Chamber which were communicated through letters to provincial Chambers; and also through the meetings of the various Chambers of Commerce themselves, which read these letters, discussed them, and authorized their delegates to speak on their behalf. When Pitt met with the delegates of the General Chamber, he knew that the representatives of the General Chamber were connected through committees, letters, meetings and votes, with a great number of influential people throughout the country. But this paperwork took constant work to renew, and it was liable to internal administrative problems. The crisis of Eden Treaty revealed tensions that the fabricants of the General Chamber could not rectify.

The differences between the plans of Friendly Societies and Chambers of Commerce gives a hint how this administrative paperwork was influenced by class and position. Those people who imagined that benefit clubs could be linked together to make a national solution to poverty did so by removing the important self-governing component of benefit clubs, because although the poor were recognized as being able (somewhat wastefully) to manage their own local box clubs, they could not be trusted with the bigger responsibility of a federated society on a national scale. For the poor to be clubbed together, their paperwork had to come from above—from the state and the local authorities. The men who made up the General Chamber could club together while remain self-governing because they were respectable, and in many cases extremely wealthy. But in this, they were betrayed by the tools of their association. They believed that within the club, the decisions would be guided by those who were the most respectable, the most wealthy, and the most representative of provincial manufacturing interests. But in their administration they gave equal weight to the nameless London artisan and to the representative of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Walker cannily used the club's democratic base to overthrow the will of this committee. The men had thought that these new tools would work for them, but they had their own logic that they could not entirely control.

New Tools, New Politics

The development of these administrative practices allowed savants to think of a new kind of politics in which local voluntary organizations were clubbed together to represent the nation as a whole. There were two components to this. First, people began to see clubs, particularly naïve small-scale organizations like benefit societies, as a pure form of British government, standing in stark contrast with the venality and corruption of Parliament and the King's ministers. Second, people experimented with ways to connect and unify these pure local groups so that they could reform—or perhaps even challenge—this corrupted state.

Political reformers used the example of the self-governing club to argue for the capacity of common people to participate in politics. A dialogue, *The Principles of Government*, written in 1783 by Sir William "Orientalist" Jones, is a clear example of this connection between the ideal of good government and the practices of small clubs. Jones was minor poet, jurist, and linguist, who is remembered today for his coinage of the term *Indo-European*. He was close with the great literary and political men of the age: he was a member of Johnson's famous literary Club, of the Royal Society, of the Club of Honest

Whigs, and was a staunch supporter of the American cause.[46] *The Principles of Government* was written—in French originally—to settle a bet between Jones, Benjamin Franklin, and the comte de Vergennes, a French stateman, about whether it was possible to logically communicate principles of government to the uneducated. Jones's dialogue won the bet, and he translated the piece into English, after which it was circulated in manuscript, and was subsequently published by the Society for Constitutional Information in 1782. Parts of it—particularly the implication that citizens could legitimately engage in violent revolution against the state in certain circumstances—were controversial enough to have the piece judged seditious libel,[47] and its ideas were in wide enough circulation that in 1794 a direct response to the piece was published by conservative critics.[48]

The turns of the argument of Jones' *Principles of Government* are worth discussing in full.[49] The dialogue starts with a *Scholar* attempting to get a *Peasant* to sign a petition for parliamentary reform—likely one of the petitions circulated by the Yorkshire Association Movement active at the time.[50] The Peasant is reluctant to think about anything political: he's just a simple farmer, he says, content to stick with his labor and "leave what we cannot comprehend to King and Parliament." The Scholar disagrees. The Peasant is much more than a farmer, he is a "Free member of a free state" already, and he already has "higher things to mind than [he] may conceive." To prove this, the Scholar turns to the local village club. Just like the nation, the club is devoted to both the happiness and security of its members. The Peasant goes to the club "to be merry and happy for a few hours a week." But also he goes to the club because through contributing to the box he gains security for himself. The nation, too, is a group of people assembled for its own good and its own security. This is the Scholar's key move: "Did it never occur to you, that every state or nation was only a great *club*?"

If we agree that the state is only a great club, then the example of the club can illuminate the proper rights and duties of the state. Although the club President had particular powers that set him above the rest of the members at large, he was bound by "a set of equal rules, which are signed by every new comer." The pamphlet sharpens when the Scholar asks the Peasant to imagine what the club would do if it had been subverted by a club President who insisted that he should be treated as "a perpetual master," and who altered "your rules at his arbitrary rule and pleasure?" The Peasant is clear: "We should expel him." What would the club do if this unjust President backed up his authority with a mob, who then robbed the box of its money? The Peasant says the club would take back what is theirs through force of arms. "We are all good players at single stick, and each of us has a stout cudgel or quarter-staff in the corner of his room."

The Peasant is eventually convinced by the Scholar about the need for reform, to make the state run more like the club, and signs the petition. "I never wrote my name, ill as it may be written, with greater

[46] Garland Cannon, "Sir William Jones and Anglo-American Relations during the American Revolution," *Modern Philology* 76, no. 1 (1978): 29–45.
[47] This eventually led to the passage of Fox's Libel Act of 1792.
[48] *Spectacles for Sans-Culottes of Full Age; or A Dialogue on Government, between a Gentleman and a Farmer*, electronic resource (Dublin: Printed: by John Bettson, Kevin-Street, and soldby all the booksellers, 1794).
[49] The metaphor of the club as the state and the club president as King became a trope used widely elsewhere. See e.g. the essay *the King Can Do No Wrong* St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post (London, England), September 20, 1791 - September 22, 1791; Issue 4757. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2001316559
[50] Ian R. Christie, "The Yorkshire Association, 1780-4: A Study in Political Organization," *The Historical Journal* 3, no. 2 (1960): 144–61.

eagerness." The Scholar wants the Peasant to do much more than simply sign his name to a program of parliamentary reform, however. The Peasant needed to be prepared to defend his rights with force "or the state should cease to be a state." This required more than just cudgels and quarter-staffs. The Scholar gives the Peasant a firelock gun and urges him to practice with it with his brothers in the club, in case they should need to do more to protect their state than just sign a petition.

Defending the state with force of arms was not idle talk—Jones had been part of a push to encourage the formation of militia societies throughout Britain that would arm and train people in the use of "musket and bayonet." This could only happen according to Jones in organized groups: "since the only safe and certain mode of using [guns] with effect is by acting in a body, it is the duty of the whole civil state to know the platoon-exercise, and to learn it in companies."[51] He wrote a plan for such semi-voluntary societies in *An Inquiry into the Legal Mode of Suppressing Riots* (1780) in the shadow of the Gordon Riots. This proposed groups of 60 "men or more, voluntarily associated for the sole purpose of joining their power, when legally summoned."[52] Jones' proposal inspired a similar plan by Lord Shelburne which was circulated to a number of towns. Several militia societies were founded as a result, including one in Manchester, formed specifically to club together middling men ("tradesmen, shopkeepers and other substantial and reputable inhabitants of the town of Manchester.")[53] It was in communication with a similar body in Liverpool. These societies were not completely voluntary. They were supposed to be authorized by a higher authority (the Manchester Militia Society took pains to point out that its formation had been agreed to by a majority of the men at a public meeting), and were intended to be used to suppress riots only. But privately Jones wished them to be completely voluntary and self-governing, and potentially to be used against the despotic power of the state itself, not just used to put down riots. Jones wrote to Wilkes that by arming and training themselves voluntarily "The people of England have it now in their power to be really, not nominally a people."[54] Clubs of men, united by correspondence, made powerful through money and arms, could, in Jones' eyes, reanimate the corrupted British nation.

The spread of various forms of corresponding and federated administrative models opened up the space to imagine that this pure, deliberative local club could be scaled up to represent the nation itself. You see such proposals in the work of parliamentary reform organizations. Obadiah Hulme, in his influential publication *An Historical Essay on the English Constitution*, proposed a federated system of clubs to coordinate political reform. Each "market town" even perhaps "in every parish… with public virtue still left" would enter into a "legal association" which would "mutually correspond with each other, that they may act in concert, for the public good."[55] This method was continued in proposals

[51] William Jones, *An Inquiry into the Legal Mode of Suppressing Riots. With a Constitutional Plan of Future Defence. Published in July 1780. By William Jones, Esq; of the Middle Temple. The Second Edition, Corrected. To Which Is Now Added A Speech on the Nomination of Candidates to Represent the County of Middlesex, 9th Sept. 1780, &c.* (London: printed for C. Dilly, in The Poultry, 1782), 19–20, http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0105933695/ECCO?u=ucberkeley&sid=zotero&xid=4912b62e.
[52] Jones, 37.
[53] Lancashire Archives 2P 288
[54] Jones Letters 2:540 Quoted in Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 190.
[55] Obadiah Hulme, *An Historical Essay on the English Constitution: Or, an Impartial Inquiry into the Elective Power of the People, from the First Establishment of the Saxons in This Kingdom. Wherein the Right of Parliament, to Tax Our Distant Provinces, Is Explained, and Justified, upon Such Constitutional Principles as Will Afford an Equal Security to the Colonists, as to Their Brethren at*

for a national convention, where the authority of local meetings could be connected together through deputations, correspondence, and formal administrative cooperation.[56] Burgh, inspired by the success of agitation to repeal the Stamp Act, proposed to make a "Grand national association for restoring the constitution." These forms were used in North America through the Corresponding Committees to create a national political convention. Thomas Walker was inspired to create the General Chamber by Burgh's proposals for a Grand National Association.[57] In these responses, the nation could be remade by gathering the nation in its most primitive form: the local club or meeting. The administrative practices that were now at hand which could with some awkwardness knit such local groups together, and represent not just a group of men, but the nation as a whole.

In the poem *An Ode In Imitation of Alcaus,* William Jones rhetorically asked, "What is the state?" The state was not comprised of buildings or battlements, he said, but instead was

> men, high-minded men [….]
> Men, who their duties know,
> But know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain,
> Prevent the long-aimed blow,
> And crush the tyrant while they rend the chain.

The problem was how to get these men the power to crush the tyrant and rend the chain, how to arm them with flintlocks instead of cudgels, how to train them to resist the tyrant in coordinated companies that could properly use these firelocks. Without Leviathan's tools—taxes, armies, excise men, ministers—these men could not hope to crush even the weakest tyrant. After the 1760s, there were various solutions that all proposed administrative practices to make effective groups out of individuals: state oversight, correspondence committees, or federations. The practical difficulty of implementing these solutions was great, and a great deal of experimentation was needed to make them more widely practicable. The Parliamentary Reform societies were by and large top-down organizations, and had very little of the pure club government of the local tavern benefit society. The General Chamber of Manufactures collapsed in recrimination and bad publicity because it could not find a solution of how to represent both provincial interests and individual small tradesmen. These examples demonstrated that trans-local coordinated action was possible. This was what made club government so worrisome in 1792: the new reform societies had finally built effective ways of connecting small, local groups together under a unified voice.

Club-Ocracy

Clubs had been criticized in some way for most of their existence, and this criticism mounted as clubs increased in power. There were echoes of the criticisms that had been dogging clubs for over a century: that they were illegal corporations without charters; that they gathered people together under improper or facetious commonalities; that they were inevitably "conspiracies against the public"; and that improper things were being done behind the secrecy of the club room's closed doors. But as the power

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Home (London: printed for Edward and Charles Dilly in the Poultry, 1771), 161, http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0102793227/ECCO?u=ucberkeley&sid=zotero&xid=f227b47b.

[56] T.M. Parssinen, "Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771-1848," *English Historical Review* 88, no. 348 (1973): 504–33.

[57] Bennett, *Local Business Voice*, 411.

of clubs increased, these old criticisms were joined by new ones—that the new pluralistic public of clubs threatened the entire social order itself.

Events gave these criticisms more urgency, particularly the rise of political reform movements in both Britain and France. Since the 1780s, there had been associations clamoring for Parliamentary Reform. In 1789, meetings celebrating the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 coincided with the beginning of the French Revolution. British political reformers latched onto the occasion, and spoke with great force about the need for reform, with the London Revolution Society pushing for the formation of corresponding societies across the nation, while also sending letters to the French National Assembly flush with hope for a new age of the Rights of Man. In London, Edinburgh, and many provincial cities, societies for political reform were duly established. Most notably, while the earlier movements were confined primarily to the middling sorts and often secured the sanction of elites, there were a number of reform groups—notoriously the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information (founded in late 1791) and the London Corresponding Society (founded in January 1792)—that were aimed at a much broader base of poorer (but not destitute) workmen. Within half a year the SSCI had perhaps 2,500 members, and the LCS may have had as many as 3000 members at its height. Each inspired a number of offshoot groups around the country.

The success of radical and especially working-class political reform groups rode the back of their mastery of administrative improvements discussed in this chapter. What was new about the LCS was not so much its penny fees and its resolution that the number of members be unlimited, as E.P. Thompson argued.[58] Instead it was its ambitious federated structure, and the fact that its leader Thomas Hardy and his colleagues were able to effectively deploy and manage this structure for years, dealing not only with the problems of thousands of members, but also active state repression. Paperwork was of immense importance to the running of workers' groups: the penny a week fee of the LCS, unusually, did not go to providing refreshments for the meeting, or to the box, but instead to the costs of keeping the paperwork organization alive—it was to pay for "the postage of letters, in stationary & in print, in such matters as may be good for the information of the society."[59]

The basic structure of the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information and the LCS resembled that of the Masonic Lodge.[60] It is likely that the LCS borrowed the federated form directly from the SSCI, but there are some who suggest that Thomas Hardy was independently inspired by his participation in London tavern secret societies, perhaps the Gregorians.[61] In both, local groups, called divisions, met weekly, where they would go through the work of the group—debating, discussing, and learning politics. These local divisions were ideally capped at 30, 36 or 60 people (numbers differed). When a division grew too big, it was split into two or more new divisions, although in practice many divisions grew much larger. Each division would send its delegates—most often the Chair and Treasurer—to a regular General Meeting. Unlike in the subscriber democracies where committees were the locus of real power, in the LCS, at least in written statute, the divisions remained the basis of

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[58] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*.
[59] BL Add MS 27812
[60] For a description of the administration of the SSCI, see A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979), 169.
[61] Goodwin, 195.

power. Divisions had the power to recall their delegates at any time, and divisions expected their delegates to consult with them about key decisions.

These groups came under suspicion not only because of their radical content, but because of their structure, especially since this linked them directly with French radical societies. Most prominently, French radical organizations like the Jacobin Club used the English word *club* rather than the French *coterie* or *societie*. This was part of a wider borrowing of British administrative practices by French radicals. In 1789, French Revolutionaries explicitly asked their counterparts in the English radical movement for aid in maintaining their paperwork. The political reformer Samuel Romilly was asked by the Comte de Sarsfield for a guide to parliamentary procedure in advance of the first meetings of the Estates General. Jeremy Bentham's *Political Tactics* began as an attempt to help the Assemblée by digesting and rationalizing Westminster Parliamentary procedure.[62] The French clearly saw that British corporate practices would be a model for their own.

Fears about clubs increased because the French explicitly sought to spread their political revolution, and it seemed that clubs would be a main vector for this contagion. In November 1792, the French National Assembly passed a decree that it would spread the Revolution—and promise "fraternity and assistance to all people who wish to recover their liberty."[63] This would happen—as it had in France—through associations. British political reform societies continued a hopeful correspondence with their French counterparts despite the growing bloodiness of the Revolution. The French envoy received delegations from many, including the LCS. After the news spread about the success of the French in the Battle of Valmy, the number of members in political reform associations surged, and some groups had public celebrations—despite the fact that the British were on the side of France's enemies.[64] A worry spread that radical political clubs were French fifth columns. A satirical letter from "Crispin Heel-Tap", clearly a stand-in for Thomas Hardy of the LCS, (dated "Last Year of Slavery" from "Cobbler's Hall") shows these fears. Our plan, wrote "Crispin"

> Which is the French plan, because the French have sent it to our Club and pay all expenses, through our Chairman, who is a Democrat, disguised as a French Count's Valet… is to level all Englishmen to one common standard, and make the rich till the ground as the poor do; and as every person is to be his own master, we shall have no taxes, no laws, no religion, no King, Lord or Bishop, no Judges, no Lawyers, nor anyone to impede our will, but we shall be all alike, enjoying Liberty and Equality.[65]

Government informers writing of the seditious talk of the LCS in 1792 also mentioned large numbers of suspicious clubs of foreigners who they thought were French spies.[66] Lord Sheffield, writing to Edward Gibbon in November, feared that clubs of Frenchmen and their associates consisting "of many thousands" were preparing perhaps to attack the Tower of London on the 1st of December "to

[62] Seaward, "Parliamentary Law in the Eighteenth Century: From Commonplace to Treatise," 107–8.
[63] Quoted in Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846*, electronic resource (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10211783.
[64] Hilton, 66.
[65] Evening Mail (London, England), August 31, 1792 - September 3, 1792; Issue 550. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Document Number Z2000316626
[66] Quoted in Clive Emsley, "The London 'Insurrection' of December 1792: Fact, Fiction, or Fantasy?," *Journal of British Studies* 17, no. 2 (1978): 73–74, https://doi.org/10.1086/385722.

deliver the hundred thousand muskets in the armoury to the people, who they supposed would follow them."[67] In 1794, officers searched the house of Robert Watt, a member of the Scottish Friends of the People and a frequent correspondent of the LCS, finding 12 pike heads and 2 battle axes. One plotter said, "these weapons were the first of a very large number and quantity, actually ordered to be made, and intended to be privately dispersed among the members of various societies throughout Scotland."[68] It seemed that a British Bastille was possible, and that it would be accomplished through British political clubs with French support.

The state responded. A number of acts were passed to check the power of the societies for political reform. Already in May of 1792 there had been a Royal Proclamation against seditious meetings and publications, aimed particularly at Paine's *Rights of Man* and the groups that printed it, distributed it, and discussed it. Subsequently there was the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act, the Seditious Meetings And Assemblies Act (both December 1795); the Seduction from Duty Act (1797, after a series of naval mutinies), the Act against Administering Unlawful Oaths (1797, clearly targeting the association's tool of making members swear an oath on admission), the Newspapers Publication Act (1798-9), the Act for the more Effective Suppression of Societies established for Seditious and Treasonable Purposes (1799), and finally the two combination Acts (1799-1800) which made it easier to prosecute people engaged in illegal associations, primarily trade unions, or groups suspected of being trade unions. More generally, there was an effort to block access of these groups to those spaces of association necessary to have meetings in the first place. Legal penalties were levelled against publicans who suffered radical groups to meet in their taverns. Printers were persecuted, and their presses confiscated. The effect was to stop well-known groups from meeting. The London Corresponding Society's divisions had to scramble to find space big enough to hold their meetings, and were eventually forced to the expensive solution of hiring private rooms, including large auction rooms, to hold general meetings.[69]

The target of this repression was often the very tools of clubbing together that this chapter has argued had been a major development over the previous forty years. The use of paperwork itself came to be seen as seditious. In 1793, a J.P. complained that shag workers in Banbury had "of late years associated, formed laws of their own, and set those of their country at defiance."[70] Making and maintaining their own laws allowed them to stand against the laws of the country—and so making and maintaining laws itself was suspect. The reactionary group the Society for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers, in apologizing for its own use of "private meetings", claimed that "To associate in the forms in which *they* do"—meaning Hardy and the LCS—"is always seditious, and very often treasonable: they all appear to be offenders against the law."[71]

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[67] Quoted in Emsley, 78–79.

[68] Cited in Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia?: Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 19.

[69] Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, 237.

[70] A. Aspinall, ed., *The Early English Trade Unions: Documents from the Home Office Papers in the Public Record Office*, electronic resource, Nineteenth Century Collections Online: British Politics and Society (London: Batchworth Press, 1949), 19, http://ncco.galegroup.com/gdc/ncco/MonographsDetailsPage/MonographsDetailsWindow?disableHighlighting=false&prodId=NCCO&action=1&activityType=BasicSearch&javax.portlet.action=viewPortletAction&documentId=GALE%7CEFWPZY678478683&dviSelectedPage=1.

[71] Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (London, England), ed., *Liberty and Property Preserved against Republicans and Levellers: A Collection of Tracts, Recommended to Perusal at the Present Crisis. Part the First.*

This suspicion and repression spilled over to similar kinds of federated society, unless they were under tight control and firmly in support of the regime. This led to a Europe-wide paranoia about the extent, powers, and purposes of Freemasons, particularly through the writings of Abbe Barruel who in 1797 argued that the French Revolution had been the conscious plot of Freemasons to overthrow monarchy, church, and society. We have emphasized throughout this chapter how Freemasonry was the precocious forerunner of the form of federated society that was only now in the 1790s influencing politics. This was not lost on people who saw that many political revolutionaries were themselves Freemasons, in both North and South America and in Europe. Freemasons were not helped by their much-publicized secrecy. Before, people had snickered it was sexual deviancy that was being concealed by Masonic secrecy. Now the concern was much more dire: that the secret content of Freemasonry was Republican and Atheistic, and that it was a cabal devoted to securing for itself control of the world government.

Clubs of working people in general were coming under greater suspicion. They had always been illegal, especially those that brought together members of a particular trade, as many benefit clubs had. But despite their illegality, they were widely allowed to act in secret, if they were not outright tolerated; and were only actively repressed when their activities became too public. In the 1790s, people began to notice them more: whether because more of them were founded, or because people were more fearful of them, or both. In 1791, Thomas Bayley, a JP near Manchester, wrote Home Secretary Henry Dundas about "a very general spirit of combination amongst all sorts of labourers and artisans, who are in a state of disaffection to all legal control."[72] Fears of such combinations grew sharply as the decade wore on, particularly groups of clubs coordinating over larger areas. The collection of early trade union documents put together by Aspinall chronicles letters streaming into the Government complaining of clubs of workmen: among the "carpenters and masters of the coal flats at Liverpool" in May 1792;[73] the colliers in Bristol inspired by "shoemakers and other tradesmen" in August; the ship carpenters in Yarmouth, the seamen in the Tyne, the sailors in Aberdeen. In 1799, strikes by clubs of journeymen were seen as unusually seditious. An association of cotton weavers in Bolton "threatens harm" not only because it wanted to regulate wages, but they wanted to "move the Country and ultimately to petition Parliament for a redress of grievances." This group was observed to be organized "into divisional committees and a central committee" and, like others, was designed to be contagious: "pains are taking to confederate the neighboring towns."[74] As a result of such concerns, new powers were given to Magistrates to prosecute these illegal societies in the Combination Acts of 1799.

The problem with the clubs was that they were "enabled to act in unison with one another." The tools of association were targeted in response: the government sought "any means that can be devised for destroying the communication which the journeymen keep up through the medium of those public

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To Which Are Prefixed the Proceedings of the Society for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, electronic resource (London: removed from the European Magazine warehouse. Now printed and sold by J. Downes. These publications in books only are sold by Messrs. Hookham and Carpenter; J. Debrett; and J. Sewell, 1793), 8, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T081925&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW108131659&vrsn=1.0&srchtp=a&d4=0.33&n=10&SU=0LRL+OR+0LRI.

[72] Aspinall, *The Early English Trade Unions*, 1.

[73] Aspinall, 3.

[74] Aspinall, 18.

houses, in the language of their trade called houses of call" where, it was acknowledged, the club members "keep up a correspondence of each other," which allowed them "to act in concert whenever they think proper to strike or withdraw themselves from work." (These houses of call used a federated structure: each house of call's society was considered "as divisions of the Society at large, and consequently have delegates or representatives chosen from among them to communicate their resolutions to each other, and to manage their respective funds, and to enable them to act in a systematic manner.")[75]

Yet it was not just political clubs and secret societies that could be corrupted by the mischievous spirit of association: it was *all* clubs, even the naïve village club of Jones' peasant. A tract published by the Society for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers described a once harmonious and prosperous box club upended because new members from the "Constitutional Society" had corrupted it. One member, Dott, (a lawyer) takes over the management of the meetings, casts doubt on the trustees of the box club's funds, complains about the tavern's landlord, and fills the meetings with cronies who rattle on about "the knavery and the rapacity of the great, the burthens that fall upon the poor, the vast profits of masters, and the lowness of journeymen's wages." Dott is made secretary. The box is broken open and used to support a strike. "Our Club, though more numerous, was now neither so sociable or useful as it had been formerly; our money, which the old Members had horded with so much care against a rainy day, was hourly decreasing." Things only go downhill when Dott brings in Paine's *Rights of Man* and decrees that the Club should become a *Convention*: the Members should become *Delegates*; their old informal democracy became wrapped in *Republican Tribunals*. Their words become airy—"Liberty and Equality, Arisocrates and Democrates, and twenty other hard words which I never heard of before," while their living standards crash: they pawn their clothes to pay for drink, their children go to the workhouse, and their wives leave them. Here the fear was not just that the mechanics were wasting their time talking politics, as it was before: the fear was clubs they would overturn the proper order.[76]

Loyalists used club government, too. As early as 1790, the Manchester Church and King Club was founded, and many loosely affiliated Church and King clubs followed, opposed to the Whigs and dissent and only later to political reform. One of the key loyal associations Association for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers founded in November 1792. It was founded and managed by government placemen, particularly the propagandist John Reeve. The group was quickly popular, within months inspiring perhaps 2000 allied bodies, coordinating loosely through the central society in London. E.P. Thompson dismissed these loyalist societies as what we would call today 'astroturfing' or fake grassroots activity.[77] But subsequent research has taken seriously popular support for loyalism in general and for loyalist, Reevite, and Church and King Clubs in particular. What is certain is that the masses of men who made up these clubs' membership did *act*. They beat up radicals in the street, disrupted their meetings, distributed their own tracts and broadsheets, and tried to prosecute radicals for sedition. Joseph Priestley's house, library, and papers were destroyed in the 'Priestley' Riots and he himself barely escaped. While Thomas Hardy was imprisoned in the Tower of London a mob attacked his house, and chased out his heavily pregnant wife, who subsequently

[75] Aspinall, 34–35.
[76] Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (London, England), *Liberty and Property Preserved against Republicans and Levellers*, pt. V.
[77] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 82.

suffered a stillbirth and died. Thomas Walker's house and the Manchester Herald's Officers were attacked, and only saved by Walker firing his gun over the heads of the mob.

If *all* associations were suspect, if the tools of association were more seditious the more powerful they became, then what to do with the loyalist associations which used club-ocracy to fight club-ocracy? Scholars have pointed out the bind the loyal associations were in. At once, they used the new powerful tools of associational culture, but they did so purportedly to defend an old traditional order that was threatened by the new kind of politics made possible by the spread of those very tools.[78] This Loyalist hypocrisy was not missed out on by contemporaries. The Society for Preserving Liberty And Property Against Republicans and Levellers looked like its enemies: like the LCS and others, it had no charter, and like the LCS, it called for people to form similar organizations throughout the country, like the LCS, it proposed itself as a hub for the correspondence of the loyalist movement, and like the LCS, they worked in secret, and even under pseudonym, so as to hide their activities. One writer, in January 1793, under the headline ,"CLUB GOVERNMENT," critiqued the spread of Church and King and Reevite associations by turning their own language against them. The loyalist groups were "in imitation of France, though in a different way, a government by clubs." Like the French clubs, loyalist associations were certain to bring about "parochial espionage and neighborly persecution."[79] Their powerful coordination would lead to more aggressive taxation of the poor, and more men pressed into military service.

The reactionary clubs acknowledged this hypocrisy. Club government was indeed "irregular," admitted Reeve's Association. "Such distinct and unharmonized centers have the effect of intercepting and drawing around themselves some of that force, and confidence of the people, which should pass on to their only true center, the constituted Executive and Legislative Authorities of the State." Voluntary associations would, in this reading, always be a little like the change ringers discussed in Chapter Four—they would be pluralistic, diverse, and exclusive, and so be unable to represent the unity of the nation. Why then should the Loyalist Associations wield the weapons of club government? Because "when such an irregularity has been once permitted, and the balance of the system seems to be affected by it, the equilibrium perhaps cannot be more naturally restored, than by placing a counterpoise of the same sort on the other side."[80] What the loyalists were arguing for, in practice, was not that club government should be completely forbidden, but rather that its full powers could only be legitimately used by those groups that supported the current order, or with certain kinds of oversight like those placed over the Friendly Societies. The pluralism that club government made possible was dangerous. Meetings like those at Lewes where Lord Sheffield spoke were carefully obsequious to those in power were innocuous because they sought to return the "system" back to its regular uncorrupted harmony, because they tried to speak in a single voice.

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[78] Kevin Gilmartin, ed., "In the Theater of Counterrevolution: Loyalist Association and Vernacular Address," in *Writing against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790–1832*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511484223.002.
[79] Morning Chronicle (London, England), Thursday, January 3, 1793; Issue 7358. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. 1/3/1793 Gale Document Number Z2000793141
[80] Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (London, England), *Liberty and Property Preserved against Republicans and Levellers*, 8.

Club-Ocracy Retreats

What has been less well understood was how different organizations came to respond to this new environment, where they faced repression from the state—and perhaps more worryingly, vigilante repression from their fellow tavern goers and club men. The responses when seen in aggregate amounted to a major and underappreciated change in this civil society—a retreat from the political and the economic, and a formation of a clearly defined and somewhat curtailed 'public' sphere.

One response, particularly at the height of tension, was for the club to speak in a bald, loyalist bluster. The documents of public bodies in the 1790s are filled with such boilerplate talk of loyalty to the crown and to the government. At a meeting of the Archers of Kilwinning, the group,

> Resolved, that, in the present situation of public affairs, it is the duty of every well-wisher of his Country to stand forward in the most unequivocal and decided manner in support of the Constitution of Great Britain as established in the King, Lords and Commons, in opposition to that spirit of disloyalty and disaffection manifested in the proceedings of certain Societies in this Country.

They likely paid for this resolution to be printed in a newspaper.[81] The pages of any club minute book or local newspaper from the time were filled with similar loyal resolutions. The Bolton Cotton Weavers mentioned above, whose JP were so certain they threatened harm, went out of their way in public pronouncements to pledge their allegiance to the current order. "Should the clarion ever sound 'To arms! England is in danger!'—we know what is our duty, and what our interest; and not only ours, but the duty and interest of every individual, to rally round Government and strike the daring foe prostrate at our feet."[82] Many clubs purged themselves of radical content. To survive, the Freemasons discarded their old political neutrality, cosmopolitanism, and radicalism. Instead, they quickly and consciously became loyal, nationalist, and conservative. Whereas before, Freemasons had been careful to avoid all politics in the lodge, including the expression of patriotic sentiments, in 1793 the Modern Grand Lodge of England set aside these reservations to dedicate their loyalty to the king.[83]

Another response was silence, both in the club room and in the public sphere. Certain ways of speaking had always been taboo in the club because they brought up outside distinctions that could threaten the club's amity. After the 1790s, increasingly added to these lists of forbidden subjects was not just the fury of party politics, but criticism of the government in particular. The Humane Society of Tin Plate Workers meeting in Ormskirk near Liverpool, a trade club that because of its legal problems was especially concerned with propriety, lumped together criticism of the government with other kinds of bad speech in 1811: no member was to use "obscene or ill language, or speak disrespectfully of the government or otherwise misconduct himself (during Club hours) [or else] they pay 2 p."[84]

Another solution was to strategically make only *certain* communications public—to continue to participate in the public sphere, but only through a filter. This tack was taken by debating societies, the Literary and Philosophical Societies, the improvement societies, and other learned groups that

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[81] BL Add MS 6317

[82] Aspinall, *The Early English Trade Unions*, 22.

[83] Cited in Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 130 for the Freemasons adoption of a loyalist pose more generally, see 130-161.

[84] Liverpool Records Office 331 Tin 1/1

allowed some degree of free discussion behind closed doors. These societies could also authorize communications, such as minutes, speeches, and resolutions to be published in the public sphere, either by taking advertisements in periodicals, or by publishing transactions directly—but these, importantly, first needed the authorization of the club itself.

Or they could, like the Chambers of Commerce, completely retreat from what we might call the public sphere, and to the extent that they sought to influence policy content themselves with clandestine lobbying protected by the secrecy of the club. In the 1790s, Chambers in the principal manufacturing towns began to coordinate again to lobby the privy council—but they did so in private, where just a decade earlier they had eagerly published their resolutions in all the newspapers.[85]

Many radical clubs went underground. These groups ran the gamut from benefit clubs with some subdued political ambitions, to trade unions, to groups that did want to violently upend the current order like the United Irish. The 'Luddite' machine breaking that began in Nottinghamshire in 1811 and spread to the West Riding of Yorkshire, then to the Manchester area and the Midlands used many of the features of secret societies, particularly oaths, but it is not clear if they also used a federated structure or whether the local divisions were largely independent from one another.[86] Radicalism may have been kept alive in London through informal tavern clubs, which were limited in number, quite drunken, and notably did not engage in correspondence with other groups. The related Spencean Societies were, notably, modeled on the *free and easy society*, where members met in small numbers without paperwork "singing their rights and instructing each other in their songs." After Thomas Spence's death in 1814, Thomas Evans created a somewhat more formal society with rules, offices, and a federated structure, and later, attempted to cast the clubs in the guise of a dissenting sect to defend them from state interference.[87] Nevertheless, the tavern Spencean societies were a far cry from the potential of civil society nationally just twenty years earlier. They could only survive because of their combination of clandestine meeting, and because this meant that they were quite limited in action. The other option was to try as much as possible to use tools and spaces that could not be repressed. A key option was the shift to outdoor meetings. There was always great practical difficulty and often some cost involved in getting rooms large enough to fit big meetings. Many clubs survived in radical pubs, some which had been houses of call for a trade, which were unlicensed, out of the way, obscure, or otherwise defended themselves from government suspicion.[88] As early as 1795, large outdoor meetings were being held, like one in Copenhagen Fields in October, which attracted at least 100,000 people.

Fears of repression were uneven. The clubs of masters, MPs, authorities, and other powerful people, did not have to fear repression. They were never suspected of clubbing together to overturn the state, thus they could conduct their conspiracies against the public without interference. Also, because of the power of their individual members, they had no great need to assemble masses of people and coordinate them across great distances by means of club paperwork. The repression did little to stifle what we might think of as pressure groups or subscriber democracies, that could get a powerful or influential patron to authorize their activities—because these had a different relationship with the local

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[85] Manchester Archives GB127.M8/2
[86] Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia?*, 38.
[87] Iain McCalman, "Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795-1838," *The English Historical Review* 102, no. 403 (1987): 309–33. P 312-3
[88] McCalman, 14.

meeting that meant that they were never in any great danger of the mischievous spirit of association. They were always top-down rather than bottom-up organizations: their face-to-face meetings rarely if ever had an effect on the larger goals and management of the societies. This made them easier to control. The everyday members were employed in their ways to raise money, raise awareness (to use a modern phrase), and go door to door in support of their cause. But the cause was to come from the top down; the everyday members had no practical power, even if they had formal power, to change the course of the body itself.

Conclusion

Over the same decades that we see the articulation of modern politics in the American and French Revolutions and the conservative reaction against these revolutions, there was another revolution, this chapter has argued, that was much more quotidian: a revolution of paperwork that was only half-completed. The political revolutions were driven perhaps by the *savants*: the great thinkers, the revolutionaries, and the men of action who wrote treatises and constitutions and led armies across mountain ranges. But this second revolution was driven by the innumerable *fabricants* who toiled at the everyday government of their organizations, and whose achievements were much smaller: a series of successful meetings, a certain sum of money subscribed to print a book, a correspondence maintained with the club of another town, a well-attended annual dinner. From 1760 to 1790, administrative tools spread that made these activities easier and more straightforward. Importantly, they also allowed for people to join these efforts together across distances. Those tools increased the power and scope of voluntary group activity—the activities that were pursued outside of the state and outside of the necessity of economic life. This in turn led to new kinds of action being undertaken by these voluntary groups. Contemporaries recognized the potential in this new form of social organization, and its proper uses became contested. What we saw previously as mainly a party struggle, or a class struggle, was in fact more: it was a struggle over the uses, limits, and legitimacy of the new forms of coordinated mass activity. At the moment of articulation of political democracy, the tools of organizational democracy—everyday democracy—were barricaded. They were not lost completely, and they would remain essential to what became modern politics, but they would be heavily suspect.

There would be a sphere of politics, and then a sphere of civil society, and although these realms in many cases overlapped, they generally communicated only in one direction: politics should shape civil society, and civil society would be a tool of politics. The irony was that "club-ocracy" was not so easily defeated, even if it was to be hobbled. Clubs, associations, pressure groups, and so on would only grow in importance over the next century. By the 1790s, and certainly by the 1800s, clubs were considered indispensable to any group seeking to be thought of as respectable. Over the next few decades people imagined that clubs of schoolteachers, tin-plate workers, and supporters of Pitt himself would spring up in every locality of any importance, and communicate with one another for mutual improvement and amity. Parliamentary politics, as Seth Thévoz has shown, was increasingly done *in* London gentlemen's clubs. 19 out of every 20 MPs was a member of a London gentlemen's club. But politics was not—importantly—done *by* clubs.

Conclusion

The 18th Century saw a great expansion in the use of corporate forms to organize different domains: not just capitalist firms buoyed by the steam engine, or a fiscal-military state puffed up with taxes and war; but as this dissertation has shown, *clubs*, filled with men who were looking for everyday belonging. In clubs, corporate paperwork was not merely an efficient way of administering an organization. It was also a profound emotional, bodily experience. The muscular bonding of ordered eating and drinking "united to divide" (as one etymology of the word *club* has it),[1] combining brothers against outsiders—especially women.

Because clubs were relatively easy to establish, they were responsive to changing demand for leisure activities and thus evolved into a great number of specialized niches. This dissertation described how clubs took the traditional practice of competitive church bell ringing and adapted it into something new that was neither music nor sport: *change ringing*. Competition pushed ringers to conspicuously emphasize the features that distinguished them: complexity, endurance, and accuracy. The result: a highly specialized pastime, with performances lasting days, appealing to a niche of accurate middle-classed men. Through such competitive development of specialized, niche voluntary organizations in different domains arose the pluralistic civil society of the 18th century. But this civil society was also fractured, parochial, and at times willfully obscure.

Britain's pluralistic civil society grew more powerful as trans-local organizations came to have a wider scope of action than the tavern clubs of the 17th Century. After the 1770s, they could gather huge subscriptions for national causes, produce reams of petitions, or spread the revolutionary works of Tom Paine up and down the country. At the same time as the reach and power of civil society was growing, its ability to claim to represent a united public was becoming more tenuous. It seemed that *any* group of men from change ringers to journeymen bakers could assemble the tools of the corporation and claim to speak for the public at large. In the 1790s the growing tide of political reform in Britain, and the excesses of the French Revolution, provoked a political conflict about the uncertain status of civil society. The result was that the boundaries of civil society were solidified as a space outside of politics and economics alike.

In the 19th Century, clubs continued to grow, they continued to diversify, and they continued to be ambiguous spaces of civil society, but this study must end in the early 1800s due to practical limitations. The difficulty of studying 18th Century clubs is that evidence for their activities is scattered in a variety of low-quality sources. The dissertation overcame the problem of sources through using a Digital Census method to comprehensively enumerate instances of club activity. The methodological problems are much greater for the 19th Century, when there were more clubs, more printed sources, and more people. A search of the entire Burney Collection of 18th Century Newspapers returns 40,870 articles including the word *club* from 1642 to 1804. The number dramatically increases in the 19th Century: in the British Library newspaper collection in the year 1880 alone there are 41,901 articles containing the word club. (See Figures 1 and 2) Gaining a systematic overview of clubs in the 19th Century requires the use of other methods beyond the scope of the current study.

[1] Timbs, *Club Life of London*, 2.

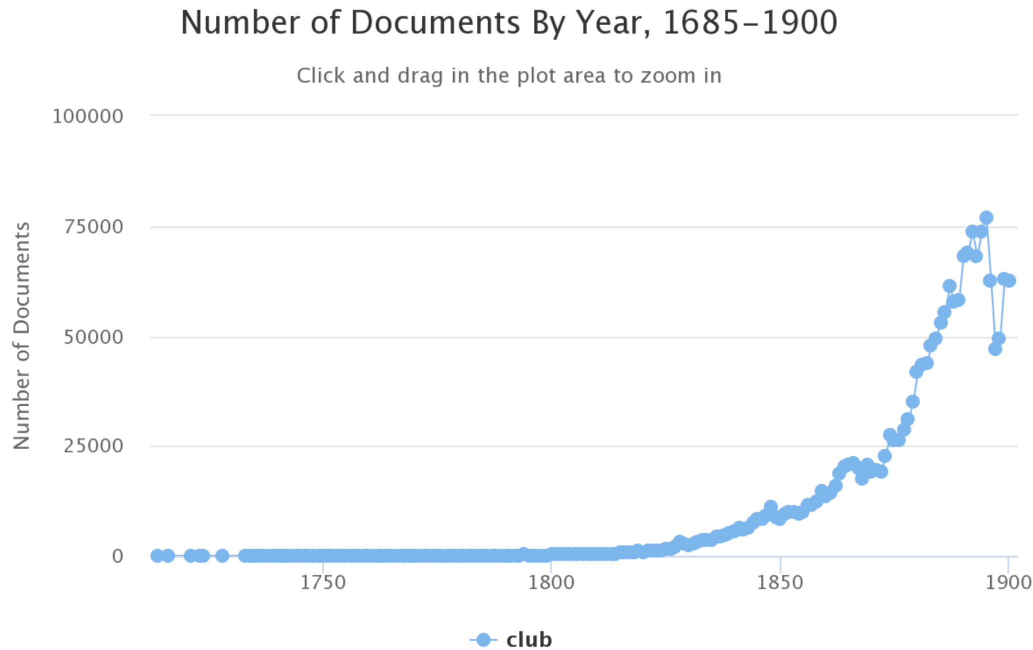

Figure 12 Number of documents containing the word club. From British Library Newspapers Term Frequency Tool accessed May 4th 2021

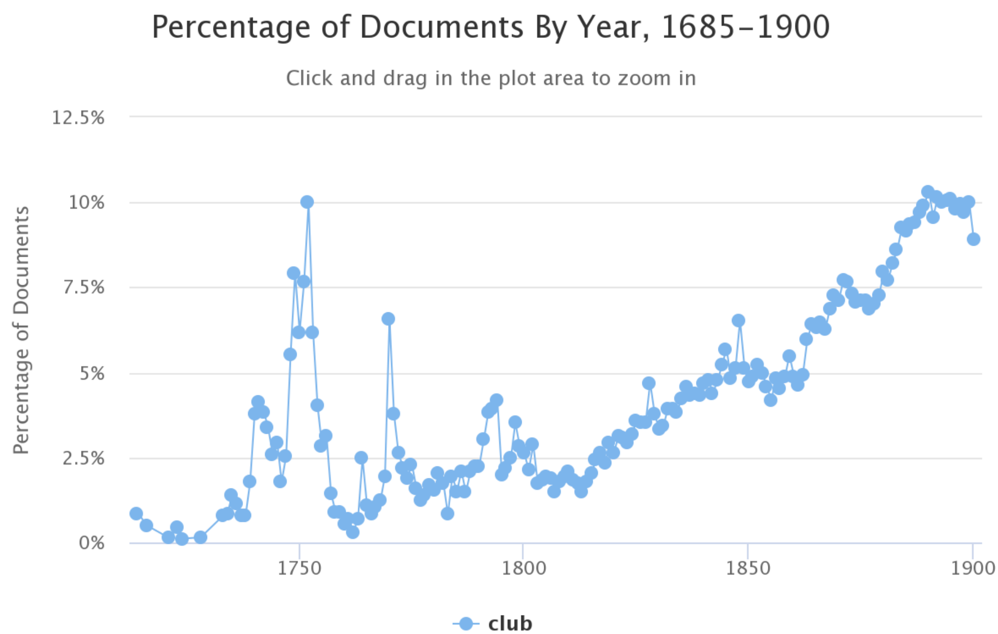

Figure 13. Percentage of documents containing the word club. From British Library Newspapers Term Frequency Tool accessed May 4th 2021. Note that the spoke around 1750 is due to a low sample size of only around 200 sources for each year: the Digital Census was based on the much more complete Burney Collection.

Here I will give a tentative survey of what happened to clubs after 1800 pulled from secondary sources. The broad picture: growth. Clubs would only increase in number, become more embedded in everyday

life, and become more important to how people and institutions navigated a growing mass industrial society.

Disinterested Civil Society

A direct result of the struggles of the 1790s was the creation of a space of civil society as distinct from political and economic life. Restrictions on speech within the club room remained common. The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, for example allowed the discussion of any topic except for "Religion, the Practical Branch of Physick, and British Politics."[2] But many clubs would take on a much broader sense of neutrality: the club's public, corporate activity must also be set apart from political, religious and economic questions. The best example comes from the development of statistical societies, voluntary associations that arose in the 1830s to gather and publicize data about society. Statistical societies were very careful to insist that they thought of themselves as politically neutral. The motto of the London Statistical Society remains *aliis exterendum*—"to be threshed out by others."[3] The Manchester Statistical Society said that its goal was the discussion of "political and social economy… to the total exclusion of party politics."[4] The corporate activity of civil society could generate the raw data, but the job of "threshing it out" so to speak would be left to other actors.

The sphere of civil society excluded economic self-interest as well. There continued a great suspicion of combinations of working people, which were always thought illegitimate because they were organized primarily to raise up members at the expense of outsiders. But the avoidance of self-interest extended to sometimes exclude anything related to business from the club room. The Reform Club, for instance, barred members from using the club as a business address, or to as a place to conduct business from, and even barred members collecting for charity within the club room.[5]

But there was a great deal of ambiguity about what constituted the proper neutral action of civil society. Party politics were out, but there were other kinds of public issue that could be included if the groups maintained they were doing it out of public-spiritedness. The numerous mass pressure groups that arose in the 19th Century worked because they wanted to change something other than 'politics'—they dealt with "political and social economy," or the slave trade, or with the problem of drunkenness, or with the repeal of the Corn Law. It seems that the dividing line between what was acceptable and what was unacceptable was private interest, including the interest of party, and of political representation. Corporations could act in civil society when they did so out of motives of disinterested public interest only.

Amalgamation and Administration

Another continuing trend was the growth of larger, less participatory organizations, many of them organized in complex federated structures. The history of Friendly Societies provides a good example of the process of amalgamation. Before the Friendly Societies Act in 1793, most if not all benefit clubs were small, local, and independent of one another. After 1793 there was a tendency towards much larger groups. The largest and most clearly documented were the Oddfellows, but all across the field small organizations were replaced by larger groups. By 1848, the trend in associational life was clear. "While all the small bodies are decaying or sinking into neglect," observed the Lord's Select

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[2] Makepeace, *Science and Technology in Manchester*, 15.
[3] Victor L. Hilts, "Aliis Exterendum, or, the Origins of the Statistical Society of London," *Isis* 69, no. 1 (1978): 21–43.
[4] Quoted in T. S. Ashton, *Economic and Social Investigations in Manchester, 1833-1933;a Centenary History of the Manchester Statistical Society,* (London, 1934), 13, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3824754.
[5] George Woodbridge, *The Reform Club, 1836-1978: A History from the Club's Records* (London: Published by Members of the Reform Club in association with Clearwater Pub. Co., New York, 1978), 131–32.

Committee about Friendly Societies, the larger affiliated bodies "are growing rapidly in strength, and extending their branches into every part of the kingdom."[6] The tendency towards amalgamation and rationalization ran throughout the associational world in the 19th Century. Independent charities were coordinated through the Charity Organization Society, founded in 1869. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers was founded in 1891 as a similar body for change ringers. This came with a pressure to clarify the function of the group—to focus on its "primary" purpose and reform away all its distractions. With Friendly Societies, insurance provision was to be its main goal. All the rest that Friendly Societies did—their drinking, their regalia, their marches—was to be reformed.

The expansion of these large groups was accompanied by a growing professionalization. In the 19th century it became possible for a man to be employed entirely in what would later be called the "voluntary sector." The National Chartism Association employed seven full time employees. Proprietary gentlemen's clubs had legions of paid staff. The Reform Club employed a salaried librarian along with cooks and servants.[7] The British Association for the Promotion of Temperance hired F. R. Lees as an editor and secretary in 1838; by 1840 he was a professional promoter of not only temperance, but of Chartism and the cooperative movement.[8] This professionalization changed the self-governing nature of the club. Most members never participated in decision making, never contributed anything more than the subscription fee used to pay the staff who did the actual work of association. The club was no longer a place to make interested ties, but a means to an end. In 1861 at their quarterly meeting of the Rochdale Pioneers, the voluntary organization that established the model of the cooperative store, it was agreed that "the common bond" of the group was "self-interest" not community feeling.[9]

Mass Politics

The political controversy discussed in the last chapter did not end with the Combination Acts, or with the Luddites, or with the Spenceans drinking in their low taverns. It continued, perfecting in the process a new model of radical mass mobilization. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, political reformers continued with mass campaigns gathering mass petitions and assembling mass out-of-door meetings. Notoriously in August 1819 a huge outdoor meeting of over 60,000 people who had gathered to see the radical speaker Henry Hunt was charged by cavalry, and 18 people died in what would be called the Peterloo massacre. The government, to tamp down on future radical meetings, passed the Six Acts calculated to rob reformers of the ability to meet in groups of more than 50 people, train with weapons, or have a public meeting dealing with "church or state matters."

The strength of the mass-meeting model that arose to skirt these laws can be seen in the growth of Chartism. After the publication of the People's Charter in 1838, in 1840 a central body called the National Charter Association was formed that was a further elaboration of the old federated committee model used by the London Corresponding Society. The Chartists also backed this up with the threat of violence. Chartist groups were observed making pikes, purchasing guns and bayonets, and engaging in organized military drills.[10] They relied on the tools that were outlined in Chapter Five to make trans-local clubs: they had their own regular publications, kept up correspondence networks, had committees, and used a federated structure. Chartist publications were filled with organizational

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[6] P. H. J. H. Gosden, *Self-Help; Voluntary Associations in 19th Century Britain* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974), 39.
[7] Woodbridge, *The Reform Club, 1836-1978*, 102.
[8] M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787-1886*, Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories 2 (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177.
[9] Gosden, *Self-Help; Voluntary Associations in 19th Century Britain*, 184.
[10] Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists* (London: Temple Smith, 1984), 206–17.

advice: meetings should not be held in taverns, members should be sober and attend meetings punctually, libraries should be assembled, women and children should be educated to the movement's purpose.[11] Organizations like the Chartists embodied the fears of men like Lord Sheffield and John Reeve: an organized, federated society that used its great force of people to advocate for social change—with the threat of violence in the background.

Clubs became essential for high politics as well. London gentlemen's clubs became key social and tactical sites for MPs, as Seth Thévoz's work has shown.[12] Elite men outside of politics found great meaning in their club membership: *Who's Who* listed an aristocratic man's club membership alongside his pedigree and achievements.[13] In the United States their example was followed by countless Country Clubs and City Clubs.[14] Gentlemen's clubs in India became essential institutions in imperial social life, especially because many colonial functionaries were either single, or otherwise separated from their families, and so had great need of the ersatz domesticity of the club.[15] Gentlemen's clubs may be the most influential inheritance of 18th Century clubs worldwide, because they have come to structure the lives of the contemporary global elite.[16]

Pluralism

Finally, clubs continued to expand into innumerable different specializations and niches. There were associations for installing water fountains,[17] associations for encouraging the wearing of woolen clothing, associations to for socialist cyclists and hikers.[18] We can see this perhaps most clearly in the diversification of sport. The 18th Century had seen a small number of sports organized on a national or regional basis: cricket, curling, golf, and perhaps change ringing. The 19th Century saw the development of a number of forms of organized football, including football (called in America *association* football, shortened to soccer), and rugby union.

The marketplace of clubs started to open up to women on a much wider scale as well. The earliest club founded by David Doughan and Peter Gordon was the Worcestershire Ladies Club, established in 1861 to provide a place of safe rest and relaxation for country women in town to shop. Similar clubs were formed from Liverpool, to Edinburgh, to Leeds. Ladies' clubs were similar in function to gentlemen's clubs, in that both provided the safe comforts of domesticity for people who might lack them. Women's clubs as a field grew after the 1870s, and came to be widely noticed by the press around the 1890s. They were as varied as men's clubs. The Alexandra Club was open only to ladies who could attend the Queen's Drawing rooms. They were, at times, centers of feminist activity, like the Pioneer Club. They structured pastimes, like the Ladies Dramatic Club and the Ladies' Rifle Club.[19]

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[11] "Address and Rules of the Working Men's Association," in *The Chartists* (London: Temple Smith, 1984), 52.
[12] Seth Alexander Thévoz, *Club Government: How the Early Victorian World Was Ruledfrom London Clubs*, International Library of Colonial History 25 (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).
[13] Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, 39.
[14] Diana Elizabeth Kendall, *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 20–41.
[15] Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India"; Cohen, *In the Club*.
[16] Kendall, *Members Only*, 168–74.
[17] Philip Davies, *Troughs & Drinking Fountains: Fountains of Life*, Chatto Curiosities of the British Street (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989).
[18] David Prynn, "The Clarion Clubs, Rambling and the Holiday Associations in Britain since the 1890s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 2 (April 1, 1976): 65–77, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947601100204.
[19] Doughan and Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain*, 43–62.

What Can 18th Century Clubs Tell Us Today?

Twenty years ago, Peter Clark ended his book on clubs on a note of reserved optimism.[20] In 2000, Britain still seemed like it had a distinctive dense network of voluntary association, even if it was not clear that these clubs were particularly helpful in easing the problems of contemporary liberal-democratic capitalism. Today, the scene appears far more pessimistic. In America in 2021, especially after the year of pandemic quarantine, it feels as if the public world has been hollowed out.

Yet in another respect, the public world is more vibrant than ever—it has just moved away from the club room and onto the computer screen. Social media platforms like Nextdoor, MeetUp and especially Facebook allow people to make groups with much greater reach than ever before. Social media groups, like clubs before them, have altered the way that individuals have related to collectives. Almost every major political event of recent decades, from the "color" revolutions, to QAnon, to the Black Lives Matter protests, have used social media both as a key tool of organization, and as a space for activism. The consequences extend far beyond politics. The new social media ecosystem has led to the development of innumerable cultural niches, from fandoms built around cartoons, to communities for the sufferers of rare diseases. These organizations are so successful in part because they ask for so little from their supporters: members no longer must attend meetings, learn rules, or pay membership dues. The baseline member only needs to follow and to share particular content—and then they can be called upon for extraordinary support in particular instances. Because of their vast variety, people can be members of incredibly targeted, niche groups. I personally belong to over a dozen Facebook groups and subreddits, from informal professional associations for my graduate student cohort to political organizations. They make only passive demands on me, when Facebook or Reddit decides to show me one of their posts in my newsfeed.

The power of these new digital associations is balanced by their weakness in satisfying the human need to *belong*. At the same time, my generation is experiencing a 'crisis of friendship' as people move more frequently and have to spend more of their waking lives at work. We have a need for institutions that can help provide belonging. The example of clubs can tell us why the strong civil society of social media has not led to an increase in belonging and solidarity.

18th Century civil society rose not because it did *good*, but because it *felt* good. All of the vaunted things civil society is supposed to do—increase trust, help economic development, lead to pluralistic politics—only happens because the activities that constitute civil society are enjoyable in and of themselves. People don't wake up in the morning and want to congregate themselves into a Tocquevillian association because doing so will lead to abstract social benefits. They do so because they enjoy going to the bowling alley, and seeing their friends, drinking together, and doing the ordered physical rituals they have done for years. To deal with the crisis of civil society today, the 18th century gives two lessons. First: civil society must be organized and self-governing. It must have rules that let strangers come together and trust one another. Secondly: civil society must also be pleasurable. It needs rituals of amity and belonging that can turn strangers into brothers.

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[20] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 480.

Methodological Appendix: The Digital Census—A New Old Way To Narrate Slow Historical Changes

This chapter has been an experiment to see how we can use a Digital Census to describe long-term changes in everyday social practices. The conceit is that by 'just counting' our sources systematically, we can chart a middle-way between traditional humanistic methods of 'close reading', Digital Humanities methods of 'distant reading', and social scientific interest in robust data. Close reading approaches are powerful, but they're limited by an individual scholar's attention and time. Distant reading approaches can access millions of books that range over hundreds of years, but they don't themselves record meaning, but rather patterns in data. Social scientific standards of robustness cannot often be translated to historical data which are on the whole dramatically incomplete and biased. The Digital Census leverages the scale of Digital Humanities approaches, while retaining the context and local knowledge of humanistic scholars. The scholar still reads—but she reads only a small portion of each text relating to the activity in question. The scholar uses computers and statistics to crunch the data—but the meaning remains something the scholar has attributed to the data herself. The scholar merely enumerates what she sees—but this aggregates to a powerful new scale of viewing historical activity. This is powerful especially for narrating changes in everyday cultural practices, which usually change too slowly for first-person accounts to capture.

This section will provide a fuller account of the method involved in the work. First it will look at the historiography of census methods in the social sciences and in history. Although scholars have frequently compiled censuses of historical material, the affordances of available online primary source material and powerful database software mean that today we can do more than ever before—an opportunity which has been so far underused. It then proposes a method for how this to be done, by combining methods of search, content analysis, relational databases, and data visualization. The section then describes the method in this work: its database design, data cleaning, data coding, data analysis and data visualization methods.

Historiography: 'Just Counting' Methods

The field of Digital Humanities has over its short lifetime continually promised revolutionary new methods. But the prospect of revolution, as Cameron Blevins has pointed out, has proved to always just be over the horizon.[1] Against this trend of technological boosterism, this section will argue that computers can help scholars leverage older, less revolutionary methods in new ways. Particularly useful are the 'just counting' or census methods.

There is a long history of 'just counting' or census methods in history and the social sciences. Famously, Claude Levi-Strauss broke down the structural elements of myth onto index cards that he dreamed would one day be analyzed by vaguely expensive "IBM equipment, etc" to find hidden and profound patterns in the cultural structure of humankind.[2] Social historians in the 1960s and 70s collected, collated and analyzed large amounts of otherwise mute demographic and economic evidence with

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[1] Cameron Blevins, "Digital History's Perpetual Future Tense," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, 2016, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/4555da10-0561-42c1-9e34-112f0695f523.
[2] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955): 428–44, https://doi.org/10.2307/536768; Aleksandra Kil, "Excavating Infrastructure in the Analog Humanities' Lab: An Analysis of Claude Lévi-Strauss's Laboratoire d'anthropologie Sociale," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 14 (2020), http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/14/3/000468/000468.html.

computers in order to illuminate the lives of the common people who more traditional sources ignored.[3] That project was criticized for its overly lofty goals, its positivist focus only on those things that could be counted, the laborious and time-consuming task of data collection, and its frequent failures[4]—but the results of this project provided the bedrock for much historical work afterwards. After census methods fell out of favor in the discipline of history, the project of trying to conduct rigorous censuses of historical material was taken up in particular by historical sociologists. Charles Tilly, for example, constructed a census of riots and other such 'contentious gatherings', eventually cataloguing over 8000.[5] The growing availability of fully-searchable electronic primary source archives made this kind of work much easier. Hans Joachim Voth looked through verbatim reports in the online fully-searchable Old Bailey archive to determine patterns of time use by people during the Industrial Revolution, aided by sophisticated statistical sampling.[6] A decade ago, Róbert Péter used databases of British newspaper archives to identify news articles referencing masonic activities.[7] *Just counting* methods have been adopted by self-conscious Digital Humanities projects, like the Digital Yoknapatawpha project, based on a collaborative content analysis of William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha works.[8] There is precedent for 'just counting' methods within the study of clubs and societies. In the 1990s, Antonia Taddei assembled a quantitative census of elite 19th century clubs by counting clubs in contemporary almanacs.[9] In 2000, Peter Clark organized his observations of British clubs in a database project similar to the one in this study (the data on which this were based are now sadly lost.)[10] Writing about 19th century American federated voluntary associations, Theda Skocpol used a similar method.[11] Most recently, Seth Thévoz in his work on 19th century clubs used many census methods, including a census of British MP's club memberships, amongst other quantitative analyses.[12]

Although the methods themselves are relatively old, it is particularly fortuitous today to conduct 'just counting' projects.[13] Today we have large online sources of historical material, easily accessible

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[3] See e.g. Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); E. A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, Studies in Social and Demographic History (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981).
[4] See e.g. Carla Hesse, "The New Empiricism," *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 201–7, https://doi.org/10.1191/1478003804cs0011oa.
[5] Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (London: Routledge, 2016).
[6] Voth, "Time and Work in Eighteenth-Century London."
[7] Róbert Péter, "“Researching (British Digital) Press Archives with New Quantitative Methods"," *Hungarian Journal for English and American Studies* 17 (January 1, 2011): 283–300.
[8] Johannes Burgers, "Familial Places in Jim Crow Spaces: Kinship, Demography, and the Color Line in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County," *Journal of Cultural Analytics* 1, no. 1 (2020), https://culturalanalytics.org/article/14112-familial-places-in-jim-crow-spaces-kinship-demography-and-the-color-line-in-william-faulkner-s-yoknapatawpha-county.
[9] Antonia Taddei, *London Clubs in the Late Nineteeth Century* (Nuffield College, 1999).
[10] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800*, 128.
[11] Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*.
[12] Seth Alexander Thévoz, *Club Government: How the Early Victorian World Was Ruledfrom London Clubs*, International Library of Colonial History 25 (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).
[13] It is surprising, then, that 'just counting' methods have not been given more prominent attention in the explosion of Digital Humanities methods over the past decade. We have only limited space to consider why. The most celebrated Digital Humanities methods are text analysis, network analysis, and geospatial methods. All promise relatively easy out-of-the-box solutions that early-stage practitioners can experiment with in the space of a single workshop or undergraduate course. All have results that are visually arresting, like the network graph that has become the de facto symbol of technologically-influenced social science. Furthermore, they are all to varying degrees require particular kinds of transferrable technological expertise. 'Just counting' methods, on the contrary, take a long time to produce results, rely on relatively unsophisticated technological interventions, and teach few transferrable skills. They are thus not particularly

computing power, ubiquitous databases, and straightforward data visualization tools. British history is particularly poised for 'just counting projects.' The comparatively early thriving print culture, well-documented archives, and national digitization projects have made British history since 1700 better digitized than perhaps any other historiography.

There is significant opportunity in particular to use *just counting* methods to look at changes in everyday social practices. We understand that everyday practices like eating, sleeping, walking, and play have histories. But to understand that change we rely on reading first-person accounts of behavior that we understand are not completely representative. When changes in everyday life are too slow for our sources to themselves notice, we have to understand change by stringing together examples that we hope are relatively representative of everyday culture as a whole. The method leads us to describe cultural changes as a series of disjunctions, breaks and revolutions, because often our observers only remark on everyday practices when they've noticed change. Changes that were, in fact, steady and slow may be described as dramatic and sudden. Census approaches can count instances of everyday practices in sources, and thus observe slower changes to culture over time, seeing neither continuity nor revolution, but subtle change.

What is it?

There are four elements to the Digital Census: *search*, *content analysis*, *database design*, and *data visualization*.

Search

The Digital Census conducts rigorous searches of a phenomenon in a given domain. The goal—although it is not possible in practice—is to gather every piece of evidence in a given archive that illuminates our subject of interest.

Of all digital humanities methods, it is search that has made the deepest and widest impact on everyday scholarly practice, and it is search that has received the least amount of critical attention. Almost every single scholar working today, even those who claim to be utterly computer illiterate, rely on computer-aided search to go about their work. The growing power of computer-aided search has made it much easier to find primary and secondary sources, and to navigate to relevant portions within these sources.[14] Although these search methods have become commonplace, it is not clear that our access to more sources has changed our work for the better or worse. As Tim Hitchcock pointed out nearly a decade ago, our practices of scholarly rigor have not yet adapted to this new world of powerful but largely corporate-controlled internet searches.[15] Neither have we developed methods to engage with these new riches in new ways. Jo Guldi argued for a "critical engagement" with primary source archives, an iterative process of refining, thesis-making, argumentation, and repeated searches that itself is a form of argument.[16] (Notably, this iterative search process in some ways goes against current scientific

good advertisements for Digital Humanities as a method, nor do they promise undergraduate and graduate students that by doing these methods they can learn 'tech' skills that can make their humanities degrees provide a greater return on investment. They are, in other words, a little too commonplace to serve as standard bearers for a revolutionary new field, and too time consuming to be a good fit for a one week intensive technological workshop.

[14] Michael Hancher, "Re: Search and Close Reading," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 12*, 2016, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/1bb926b5-130e-42e6-8f1b-03401917883e.

[15] Tim Hitchcock, "Confronting the Digital: Or How Academic History Writing Lost the Plot," *Cultural and Social History* 10, no. 1 (2013): 9–23, https://doi.org/10.2752/147800413X13515292098070.

[16] Jo Guldi, "Critical Search: A Procedure for Guided Reading in Large-Scale Textual Corpora," *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, December 20, 2018, 11028, https://doi.org/10.22148/16.030.

best practice: what Guldi calls an "ambling" over an archive for useful patterns could be seen as cherry-picking or "data dredging."[17]) Other scholars are to building best practices of searching primary source archives transparently and effectively.[18]

With these reservations in mind, there are two methods by which to attempt a comprehensive census. First, the researcher can *browse* an entire archive, collection, or sources. Second, the researcher can use search tools to *query* the archive for a list of relevant results. There are limitations to both approaches. Keyword searches are less accurate because of the relatively high error rates of machine-readable text (particularly with historical print). Keyword searches also tend to produce quite 'noisy' search results, which leave the researcher to have to sift through many irrelevant sources until she finds the results that match the phenomenon she is looking for. Because keyword searches look only for words, not the actual phenomenon represented by these words, they can also recapitulate operator bias, by bringing up only entries relevant to our preexisting assumptions. Adding more search terms or engaging in 'critical search' can correct for this, but doing so dramatically increases the time it takes to conduct each search. Even the time-consuming method of browsing is imperfect. It will often rely on metadata—titles, subject headings, and other information—added by archivists, librarians and other data curators that can be incomplete, erroneous, or biased. There is also a profound selection bias as to which archives are digitized, and within these archives which texts are digitized. Early digitization efforts tackled low-hanging fruit, which were frequently the product of nationalistic or otherwise biased 19th century archival projects.[19] Online archives may recapitulate these biases: large online corpuses like HathiTrust have been shown to have a bias towards male writers and to shorter texts.[20] There is a risk that looking through mountains of targeted search results will provide us with evidence, but that the evidence will be so biased as to present an unacceptably blinkered view of history.

Content Analysis

The observations collected through this census are systematically recorded through a method called *content analysis*. Broadly speaking, content analysis turns qualitative data—texts, images, books—into quantitative data.[21] It does this through the researcher 'tagging' texts or parts of texts with particular codes. These tags can then be counted. By turning the uncountable countable, content analysis can go some way to correcting for the flaws of the early cliometric researchers, who were charged with studying only those things that they could easily count and leaving aside everything else.

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17 A comedic example of data dredging is the website tylervigen.com/spurious-correlations which finds examples of highly correlated events, like the number of films Nicholas Cage starred in each year, and the number of people drowned by falling in a swimming pool.

18 Hieke Huistra and Bram Mellink, "Phrasing History: Selecting Sources in Digital Repositories," *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 49, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 220–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2016.1205964.

19 Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They CastThe Transnational and the Text-Searchable," *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 377–402, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.2.377.

20 foxglove, "An experiment in counting the books," Billet, *Foxglove* (blog), 2020, https://foxglove.hypotheses.org/614; Allen Riddell and Troy J. Bassett, *What Library Digitization Leaves Out: Predicting the Availability of Digital Surrogates of English Novels*, 2020, https://arxiv.org/abs/2009.00513v1.

21 Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002); Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2004).

It bears underlining here that the practice of coding is itself an argument, a claim made about the extent to which a given text or part of a text corresponds with a set of categories. Often, this argument is made opaquely, buried in each individual act of coding. Furthermore, content analysis projects need to be done for the sake of some particular problem: one cannot code the whole world, only a part of it. Consequently, coding is a subjective, not an objective activity. This is both the benefit and the drawback. It allows a skilled scholar to bring her background knowledge to bear when she is adducing the meaning of a particular text—something a computer program cannot (yet) do—but it also means that the act of coding is highly dependent on the judgement of the individual coder. Content analysis methods in sociology attempt to bring more objectivity to this process by establishing firm definitions of codes in *codebooks* and by generating *intercoder reliability scores* that measure the amount to which different coders agree and disagree in their coding practices. This allows for collaboration between multiple coders, but may not be as feasible in historical content analysis where the interpretation of the underlying texts requires specialized historical knowledge.

Databases

The results of the search and the content analysis of these search results are then recorded in a database. Here we are aided by the development of ubiquitous and powerful database technologies. There is a long history of using databases as the ultimate product of historical work.[22] An important concept is that of a *relational* database. This is a particular database architecture in which multiple tables are related to each other by shared *keys*. What this allows us to do is to record often disparate kinds of information from different sources in flexible, emergent ways, and use powerful querying languages to analyze these data. More philosophically, a relational database does not just record discrete pieces of information, but a series of relationships between those pieces of data. Database design is crucial here. Plotting out the different tables and how they relate to one another is not a value-neutral exercise, but a claim about how the researcher believes that particular kinds of information are related to one another, which kinds of evidence to record and which to ignore.[23] The benefit for the Digital Census in particular is that relational databases allow us to conduct a number of different content analysis strategies depending on the source material. These can then be connected with metadata, like dates, observers, archives and so on. These can also be linked to other databases. Finally, these relational databases can be easily used in data analysis and visualization programs.

The infrastructural and technical hurdles of designing and building relational databases are lower now than ever before. Databases are central to much of the architecture of the modern information economy and so there are a plethora of computer programs made specifically for designing, populating and querying them, including Microsoft Access, the cloud-based AirTable, and the open-source LibreOffice Base. Even modest Microsoft Excel can be used to create a relational database, as was

[22] See Manuel Perez-Garcia, "Consumption of Chinese Goods in Southwestern Europe: A Multi-Relational Database and the Vicarious Consumption Theory as Alternative Model to the Industrious Revolution (Eighteenth Century)," *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 52, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 15–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2018.1523695 for a historiography of database usage.
[23] See
http://digitalhumanities.org:3030/companion/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&doc.view=print&chunk.id=ss1-3-3&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0#:~:text=Humanists%20have%20used%20relational%20databases,text%20archives%2C%20and%20multimedia%20works.&text=A%20database%2C%20as%20we%20have,insert%20mechanisms%20of%20the%20system.

done in this project.[24] Advances in user experience design mean that relational database programs are far more user friendly, and many no longer require specialized technical knowledge. Additionally, the advances in computing power over the past two decades mean that the database work that once required the expensive rental of computer time can now be done by anyone sitting on a couch with their laptop. These are an improvement on the *ad hoc* way many historians use databases in their own research practices. I have frequently seen my colleagues record their archival research in Excel, Google Sheets, or some other spreadsheet program, without understanding the best practices of database design. With proper database design, these observations can be made much more transparent and more useful with only a modicum of additional effort.

Data Visualization

One of the benefits of a relational database is that it can produce a wide variety of outputs: lists of entries that match a particular query, data tables, or even collations of data from different tables. One of the most powerful ways data can be presented is through the creation of data visualizations. Data visualizations are a central part of the current information economy. Accordingly, there is a rich ecosystem of programming languages, software, and trainings pertaining to them.

In history, data visualization is particularly useful for analyzing and narrating long-term change. Long-term change may be difficult to glean from first-hand accounts or analyses because the change may happen too slowly for an individual to record or notice. In this project, the number of clubs grew so slowly that John Aubrey in 1659 could not have imagined that by 1800 London would be so filled with clubs there would be whole neighborhoods of the West End devoted to them. By collating observations at scale, we can gain a longer view than our informants, and also produce a more rigorous way of analyzing long term changes. Once the data are assembled and visualized, the researcher can see the data in a rich context, not just as individual scraps of evidence. Data visualization can also help rhetorically, in how we narrate our stories of change. Narrating long term changes through stringing together representative historical observation too often results in pages of relatively unenlightening descriptive paragraphs. What level of detail should be included? How to describe change that is not unidirectional? How to illustrate long-term changes that were beyond the perception of our sources because they simply took too long? Data visualizations help solve these problems, because through them readers can process both granular changes and the big picture much faster than they would otherwise through verbal description.

One problem is that the rhetoric of graphs, maps, and charts often is treated as an uncritical statement of empirical fact. Joanna Drucker has called data visualization an "intellectual Trojan horse" that smuggles in the "realist" assumptions of the hardest social sciences. This, she argues, undermines the embattled humanistic project, by collapsing the important distance between the observer and the observed.[25] The rhetoric of data visualizations evokes a certain assessment of an independently-existing reality that does not necessarily fit with the emphasis humanists make about knowledge-as-

[24] For more on the history and powers of Excel, see Packy McCormick, "Excel Never Dies," accessed March 18, 2021, https://www.notboring.co/p/excel-never-dies.

[25] Drucker's critique may overstate how practitioners in the hardest social sciences read quantitative data and the data visualizations that are based on them. Indeed, they are trained to be immensely critical of both research design and quantitative results. Humanists tend not be trained in quantitative reasoning, and so may be unfamiliar with how to critically engage with data visualizations, and so instead treat them as uncritical statements of fact.

interpretation.[26] On the other hand, data visualizations work because they reduce complicated phenomena into a discrete number of vectors that the author thinks are important, which can then be portrayed in an easily-digestible figure—a useful tool in explaining complicated change over time! Humanistic data visualization practices can balance this need for parsimony against the rhetorical need to communicate the constructed nature of the data being visualized. One way to allow for this balance is to allow for interactivity in the data visualizations, as was done in this project.[27] Rather than showing a single perspective of the data, the scholar instead produces tools that allow the reader to look at the data in the ways that they wish. The author then is more of a curator of the data, a guide to an interpretable and messy thing, rather than a presenter of cold and empirical fact. Another method looks beyond the lifecycle of the monograph itself, and present the data underlying the work as in their own way a work in progress, amendable and addable by additional scholars.

Method in this work

In the following section, I describe the particularities of the method used in this dissertation.

Database Design

The database is a relational database. Each archival observation was given its own "Observation ID." Here I recorded the information that an independent researcher might need to find each observation: the *source* (a book, archive, or newspaper) and its *location*, (call number, issue, webpage, or page number). This table also records evocative quotes, when available. Each distinct club also has its own club ID.[28] Information about these clubs is recorded in a number of different tables, connected by these numeric IDs. In every table, information is associated with a particular Observation ID so that each observation can be traced back to its original source. One table records information about the club's identity. It records the club's names, its parent organizations (if any), and the various results from content analysis work. Another table records the clubs' demographics. This includes the location, the number of people in the club, the meeting periodicity, the meeting place, the professions of members, the perceived social class of the members, and the fees charged both per meeting and on entrance. I designed this table to be able to track these changes over time, but my data were not granular enough to permit adding the temporal element at this stage. Another table records the club lifecycle—each club's birth and death dates (when available.) Additional tables 'clean' location data. Not every observation, of course, provided all possible data.

I recorded these data in Microsoft Excel. There have been criticisms of using Excel in database design, particularly after the use of Excel recently led to a widespread error in recording the number of people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.[29] The preference is for a tool that is made specifically for

[26] Johanna Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 005, no. 1 (March 10, 2011).

[27] Stéfan Sinclair, Stan Ruecker, and Milena Radzikowska, "Information Visualization for Humanities Scholars," in *Literary Studies in the Digital Age*, MLA Commons, 2013, https://dlsanthology.mla.hcommons.org/information-visualization-for-humanities-scholars/.

[28] See below for a discussion of how these clubs were cleaned in cases where a club went by different names, or where different clubs were recorded as similar names.

[29] Alex Hern, "Covid: How Excel May Have Caused Loss of 16,000 Test Results in England," *The Guardian*, 2020, sec. Politics, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/oct/05/how-excel-may-have-caused-loss-of-16000-covid-tests-in-england.

relational databases, like Microsoft Access, or OpenOffice's database tool. However, due to the limited resources of this project I have opted to use Excel due to its ubiquity, ease of use, and low cost.

Data Cleaning

There were a number of processes that I undertook to 'clean' the data. First, there is a danger that the same club is mentioned in different archives, in which case its activity would be double counted. To correct for this, I linked entries for clubs when they went under various different names. I also linked Masonic lodges by their warrant number, which may undercount masonic lodges because sometimes warrants were reused. Another method of data cleaning was attempting to find secondary validation for clubs in published books, to confirm dates of operation, location, and activities. This was not possible for all clubs, of course. I also cleaned location data, linking historical locations with modern-day analogues and adding in another field giving the modern unitary authority, allowing for a county-level analysis.

Coding

One of the most fraught steps of this process was the development of a coding system to categorize the wide variety of different clubs captured by my search. I did this in three phases. First, I undertook an open-ended coding strategy, whereby I recorded the club's activity (where available). Although it is best practice to develop a code-book before coding begins, in the case of historical data I believe open-ended coding to be more effective as the search process digs up sometimes anomalous or surprising data that cannot be categorized through a pre-built code-book. Open-ended coding, although more time-consuming, allows for these anomalous discoveries to be incorporated into the coding scheme.

After the initial open-ended coding was completed, I developed a set of seven designations that categorized most of the activities clubs engaged in in the sample, and then coded each club as one or more of these designations, if possible. Four of these are dialectical opposites. Interest clubs are those that are organized around a pre-existing commonality. Clubs based around an *activity* were organized around a common *purpose*, whether it be ringing church bells, doing scientific experiments, or discussing antiquities. There is of course some fuzziness between these categories. In interest clubs, the common factor that brought the group together was marked prior to the club: the members of a club of Scotsmen are no less Scotsmen for failing to attend their annual St. Andrews Day feast. In activity clubs, on the contrary, the common factor that brought the group together was based entirely on voluntary activity, especially that which was organized by the club itself: a change ringer was only a change ringer if they belonged to a change ringing society, practiced change ringing, and performed change ringing peals. *Benefit* clubs are organizations that seek to provide for members or to change their lives: *reform* clubs are those that seek to provide for non-members or to change their lives. I created three more types for clubs that fit somewhat awkwardly or incompletely in these categories. *Religious* clubs, which have been left out of previous studies of clubs, were split out. *Secret* clubs, like the masons and pseudo-masonic societies, were split because their activities, purposes, and administration were quite distinct from other clubs; also because due to the through documentation of masonic societies, they were quite voluminous. Finally, I distinguished some clubs as merely *convivial*, which denotes a club for which we have no ability to place in any of the other categories. Finally, I developed a series of more granular sub-codes, by which I grouped the clubs more specifically within

these categories. This typology was constrained by the available evidence, which ranged from very detailed, as is the case for well-known clubs with dense historiographies and much available primary source material, to a great deal of clubs where all we have are their names and the barest outlines of their activities.

Data Analysis

In the data visualizations included in this chapter, I count the number of clubs active each year. I then make a number of different queries of the data, splitting these mainly by type, but also by geography.

To display these queries, I used the data visualization program, Tableau. There are a number of advantages and drawbacks to using Tableau. Tableau is a powerful, enterprise data visualization tool that allows the production of interactive data visualizations. Because of its wide use in business, it has an active support community. However, since Tableau is a constantly-updating, enterprise software, there is a risk that output will not be sustainable over the long term, as updates can in principal break old analyses. More fundamentally, because the data visualizations are made with software not directly controlled by the researcher or eventual publisher, long-term sustainability might be undermined. Secondly, Tableau requires a high annual fee to use, out of reach of most independent scholars and most universities—I was able to use it only because of a generous student program. For the monograph, ideally, I will develop my own data visualization tool, but this remains outside of my current resources and technical capacities. However, Tableau remains a good starting point for exploratory data analysis for Digital Census methods, particularly when the investigators have limited technical skills. They can focus on understanding the data, rather than figuring out how to code how to visualize the data.

Using Tableau allowed me to create a large number of interactive data visualizations displaying a number of analyses of the data. Most of these show a time series graph that simply presents the number of clubs in the sample active each year. For a number of these, particularly those in this chapter, the data are normalized by population from national population estimates. I additionally assembled city-level population weights for 1650, 1700, 1750 and 1800.[30] In this way, clubs active when Britain had a smaller population are weighted more than clubs active when Britain had a larger population.

Tableau also allowed me to produce geographic analyses of the data. I was helped in this by pre-packaged county-level shapefiles available in Tableau. Unfortunately, British counties have changed borders a number of times over the centuries, and the shapefiles in Tableau are based off of contemporary unitary authorities rather than historical counties. For each location in the sample, I recorded the contemporary geographical designation, in order to enable use of Tableau's built-in shapefiles. Additionally, I made use of Tableau's city-level data to display the city-level analyses. A large number of historical cities in my sample are not recorded in this, however, and so I added the geographic coordinates manually.

Data Visualization And Uncertainty

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[30] Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500-1800*, (London: Routledge, 1984).

I have some concern that quantitative descriptions of historical activity—particularly when they are described in data visualizations—will inevitably be read an uncritical attempt to represent some kind of actual historical reality that is impossible for historians to recover. The visualizations literally show, not the number of clubs in Britain, but the number of clubs counted in a very specific sampling plan with a relatively limited number of sources, done under particular labor constraints. This produces a serious undercount of clubs, and this undercount, as has been discussed above, is biased in both known and unknown ways.

Digital Humanities projects have been wary to replicate the crude positivism of the previous generation of computer-aided history. Digital tools today tend not to promise an open window into the past, but they are rather perspectival, limited in their own way. At the same time, Digital History, as Cameron Blevins argued, is too reluctant to engage with *argument making* because it spends so much time wringing its hands about not being positivist.[31] We are left with a dilemma. How to use quantitative rhetorical techniques that people trained in the humanities usually read as being positivistic or empiricist, while qualifying their fallibility? And, after we have apologized for our fallibility, how do we then have our data make claims about *the* past, or about *a* past?

I have sought to signal this uncertainty in a number of ways. First, in a number of cases I have made the data visualizations interactive, allowing the user to explore the database themselves, which may undermine the authority of the text itself. Secondly, I leave the data 'messy.' Frequently, historical data visualizations are smoothed out, usually by producing a 'moving average' in which each point on the graph is actually the average of two or more points. This is done because historical data are usually quite jagged, with high peaks and valleys that are both unsightly and frustrate the readers' attention, as they often do not build to any kind of clear narrative. This practice is so ubiquitous that the default setting of the much-used Google Ngram viewer (a popular tool that shows data visualizations of words and phrases in the Google Books corpus) is set with a moving average of three years. However, these rolling averages have a number of drawbacks. First, they present a false confidence in the data. The lines of unsmoothed data give us more of a sense of the noisy confusion of trying to piece together a 21st century quantitative data visualization out of the incomplete and contradictory detritus of the past. Finally, presenting rolling averages smooths out the role of particular events and make historical progress look particularly even and teleological. In some cases, historical data are noisy because history itself is messy, full of false starts, might-have-beens, and backtracks. Rolling averages by definition present everything as a slow inevitable structural change, and obviate the chance of revolutionary disruptions, or radical uncertainty, or lack of direction. I have overcome this problem in two ways. First, I present my data annually, which preserves the noisy nature of the data. When they are too noisy to present this way, I present the data by decades rather than by smoothing out the data by making rolling averages. Although this flattens out particular annual events, it does so in a way that communicates the incompleteness of the visualization to the reader.

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[31] Cameron Blevins, "The Perpetual Sunrise of Methodology," January 5, 2015, http://www.cameronblevins.org/posts/perpetual-sunrise-methodology/.

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