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THE MAKING OF RADICAL MERTHYR, 1800–1836

'RESOLVED: that all the pews in the Church be made uniform and of the same height as the Iron Masters' pews, except those of Mr. Crawshay, Mr. Forman, Mr. Hill and Mr. Guest.'
Minute-book of the Parish of Merthyr Tydfil, 6 May 1818.

DAVID WILLIAM JAMES, tanner, Unitarian, Radical, and, according to the *Merthyr Guardian* which viewed his political activities with an unfriendly eye, embryonic alderman of the new, corporate, and rotten borough of Merthyr Tydfil, rose to propose a toast at the dinner held at the Castle Inn on 20 December 1832, to celebrate the unopposed return of Josiah John Guest as the town's first parliamentary representative. 'The Iron Trade', he gave his audience, 'and may it regain that state of prosperity which will enable the master to afford such wages as will make those whom he employs valuable customers to the Trade of Merthyr', a sentiment greeted with tremendous cheering, which lasted for some minutes.¹

Mr. James, if a shade optimistic in his vision of a happy symbiotic relationship, had directed attention to the three basic factors whose interaction was shaping the new urban personality of Merthyr Tydfil. It was in the first census of 1801 that Merthyr, with over 7,700 inhabitants, appeared as the most heavily populated parish in Wales, and evidently made its appearance with some abruptness, for it was only in that year that the Glamorgan magistrates took steps to divide the Hundred of Caerphilly, in which the township stood, as a first attempt to deal with the situation.² In each of the three succeeding decades, the number of inhabitants increased by a half, to reach an effective total of some 26,000 on the eve of the Merthyr Riots. The increase in the following ten years was even more remarkable, and made the decade 1831–41 the peak of the first phase of urbanization in South Wales.³ This process, coinciding as it did with the profound changes which accompanied the Reform crisis of 1829–34, created a new community with a peculiar social and political potential. What decided the character of that community was the intricate interplay, economic, political, doctrinal, and personal, between the masters and managers of its great industrial

¹ *Merthyr Guardian*, 29 December 1832.

² See Merthyr Tydfil Parish Minute-book, April and May 1801. The parish minute-books are available at the Central Library, county borough of Merthyr Tydfil, in two volumes, 1799–1833 and 1833–96. They are henceforth referred to as M.T. Minutes.

³ *Census, Enumeration Abstracts, 1801–41*, and see Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959).

enterprises, the multiplying and increasingly complex trading and professional interests in what, as late as 1830, was still called the *Village*, and that army of footloose migrants camped on its topographical and social outskirts whom the early parish records invariably designate *Inhabitants of the Ironworks*.

Until the early twenties, those records bear all the hallmarks of the yeoman amateur. Even though the petty sessions of Caerphilly Upper were held in the township, Merthyr was slow to produce magistrates. The village's equivalent of a squire, William Thomas of the Court estate, did not serve until 1832, and the attitude of the ironmasters varied. No Crawshay served in a public capacity except under some compulsion, and the Penydarren masters, the Formans and Alderman Thompson, were generally absent. Anthony Hill of the Plymouth works, on the other hand, a reserved and respected Tory of the old school, frequently immersed himself in parish business after the Napoleonic War. Josiah John Guest, under whose management Dowlais grew to rival even the giant at Cyfarthfa, became sheriff of Glamorgan in 1819 and entered parliament as member for Honiton six years later, but until the late twenties his attention to parish affairs was almost as episodic as that of his rival William Crawshay.⁴ Generally speaking, the ironmasters, ringing the village with their residences, were no less marginal to parish management.

The parish was left to run itself. The rectory, worth £675 per annum in the thirties, was in the gift of the marquis of Bute, but the incumbent, the marquis's former tutor, G. M. Maber, 'a capital trencherman who could even dispose of a goose', left his cure to a succession of curates named Jones, of varying degrees of zeal.⁵ Its management was entrusted to two churchwardens, one elected annually by vestry meeting, the other a rector's nominee. The parish was divided into five administrative hamlets. Overseers of the poor and surveyors of highways were generally chosen for each, though in time the number of overseers settled at four. Chief constables were appointed by the county magistrates and were served by the usual parish constables, a corrupt and ruffianly gang who were the objects of universal execration.⁶

⁴ See M.T. Minutes, *passim*; Charles Wilkins, *The History of Merthyr Tydfil* (Merthyr, 1867) pp. 329 ff.; *Iron in the Making, Dowlais Iron Company Letters 1782-1860*, ed. M. Elsas (Cardiff, 1960), pp. 224 ff. and introduction; Glamorgan Quarter Sessions, Clerk of the Peace: Return of Magistrates, 4 October 1831 (Glamorgan County Record Office).

⁵ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London, 1833 and 1843) *sub Merthyr Tydfil*; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-91.

⁶ M.T. Minutes, *passim*; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-3, 358-9.

There was a vestry clerk and a shadowy parish clerk who supervised the overseers, and in 1804 the parish was ordering law-books.⁷ Administration in general, however, was amateur to a degree. Records were kept clumsily and infrequently, attendances at vestry meetings averaged between five and nine, and a third of the attesting signatures were by mark. In so far as they can be identified, the men who attended seem to have been local worthies, farmers for the most part. From the first decade of the century, more substantial figures appear, men like William Milburne Davies, chief tradesman of the village and its first post officer, David Williams of Gwaelod-y-Garth House (Merthyr), who ran a bank which collapsed in 1824, and Joseph Coffin, a Unitarian tanner, who was zealous in his attendance. The backbone of the vestry, if it is not anomalous to apply the term to so amorphous a body, were the agents and professional servants of the ironworks.⁸

Their activity was limited. Early records are simply a series of relief payments. In 1805, a good year, the parish was paying £13 15s. 3d. a week in regular relief to twenty-three men and forty-six women, and before the *Luddite* depression of 1811-12, such business virtually monopolized attention.⁹ A small gaol, promptly dubbed the Black Hole, was built for some £60 in 1808-9, twenty small houses were leased as poor houses in 1811, and in the winter of 1814-15 there was a scheme to set forty pauper girls to learn the lace trade in a manufactory.¹⁰ The most important enterprise undertaken in these years was the rebuilding of the church, authorized in 1806, after a series of heavily attended and controversial meetings.¹¹

It was at these meetings that Josiah John Guest first appeared in vestry, and his appearance was symptomatic. Every important decision required the participation of the ironmasters. The road to Cardiff, the canal, the very fabric of much of the town itself, were the masters' creation. However aloof they might be or wished to be, at every crucial moment their will was decisive. In March 1815, for example, William Crawshay chaired a meeting held to petition against the Corn Laws, as he had been instructed to do by his irascible father. It decided to have the parish pay for petition skins and for a crier to 'give notice to the Inhabitants of the Works to

⁷ M.T. Minutes, 22 May 1804.

⁸ Based on M.T. Minutes, 1799-1815, with supplementary information from Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-2 and *passim*; W. Crawshay II to W. Crawshay I, 26 February 1828, in Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 404 (National Library of Wales); *Cambrian*, 3 April 1830.

⁹ M.T. Minutes, 2 May 1805.

¹⁰ M.T. Minutes, 21 July 1808, 3 February 1809, 2 August 1811, 10 January 1815.

¹¹ M.T. Minutes, 5 October 1805, 11 July 1806-20 February 1807; after several heavily-attended meetings, it was decided, by a majority of sixty-three votes, to rebuild the church on the same, rather than on a larger, scale.

come and sign the Petition'. A few months later, in October, a small meeting called by Henry Jones, a draper, and two Unitarians, Richard Jenkins, a farmer from Aber-fan, and William Williams, a clockmaker, determined to petition for a 'Reform in Parliament' and to pay for the skins out of parish funds. In a matter of days, Crawshay, with his brother, George, and Richard Hill of the Plymouth works in attendance, summoned another assembly which briskly declared that the use of parish money for such a purpose was illegal, and quashed the petition.¹²

Political petitions, however, were rare. Generally speaking, the timing and duration of the ironmasters' commitment to parish affairs were determined by the level of the poor rates. 'Should they increase for the next fifty years as they have done during the last fifteen', Crawshay wrote to Colonel Wood in Brecknockshire in 1821, 'the poor will become entitled to, and enjoy, the whole fee simple of the country and also lay such a load upon manufactures as to render competition with other countries impossible . . . Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Merthyr, Leeds, and all other populous manufacturing places will be wholly eaten up by the poor'.¹³ The reaction of the ironmasters to a steep rise in the parish poor rate was almost a conditioned reflex.

The same pattern constantly repeats itself. At every economic crisis between 1811 and 1830, whenever the poor rate rises to the threshold of alarm, the masters step in to take over the town and impose administrative reform. In 1830, when depression coincides with political crisis, ironmasters' intervention becomes continuous and well-nigh permanent, and reform becomes total. It was this quasi-automatic process, coupled with the concurrent growth of the social and political influence of the expanding middle class of the town, which ultimately fused works settlements and village into a new urban community with a distinctive political personality.

The pattern was set by the *Luddite* crisis of 1811 and the brutal post-war depression of 1816. On each occasion, the poor rate rose to an unprecedented level, committees of townsmen failed to cope with the situation, and the ironmasters, led by Crawshay, Guest, and Anthony Hill, intervened to effect administrative reforms, to create new offices, to insist on efficiency in the conduct of parish affairs. It was in these years that Joseph Coffin, the tanner, first appeared as

¹² For this rather amusing display of legalistic flexibility, see M.T. Minutes, 8 March, 3 and 16 October 1815, and W. Crawshay I to W. Crawshay II, 4 June 1814, Crawshay Papers, vol. 1, 216.

¹³ W. Crawshay II to Col. Wood, 15 May 1821, Crawshay Papers, Box 1, 87.

a parish 'strong man', ruthless in his zeal for retrenchment. It was in these years, too, that the pattern of local political conflict assumed characteristic form. For every reform drive entailed a new valuation of the town, and every new valuation produced a crisis.¹⁴ In 1817, for example, Guest and the parish solicitor, William Meyrick, proposed to bring small cottages worth £6 a year under the rates. Hitherto it had proved physically impossible, or prohibitively expensive, to collect rates from the workman occupiers. Guest proposed to rate the owners. This struck directly at the interests of the town middle class, men like Walter Morgan, the Georgetown solicitor, who claimed it was difficult enough to get even 2 per cent on his investment in such property, or like Iolo Morganwg's son, Taliesin Williams, whose schoolroom was being used as vestry room at this date, and who promptly rallied a parish meeting to veto the proposal and to demand instead a heavier rate on the furnaces of the ironworks.¹⁵

The controversy in 1817 was symptomatic, for a feature of these reform drives, no less significant than the directive rôle of the ironmasters, was the regular re-appearance of a small but influential group of merchants, solicitors, and shopkeepers of the village as executants of the schemes which the masters' initiative produced. Every new spasm of reforming activity marked a stage in the evolution of what Cobbett would have called the Merthyr *shopocracy*. The climax came in 1822. From 1820, the records reflect an increasing insistence on more systematic forms of government. In that year there was a qualitative change in the character of the records themselves, which, quite abruptly, attain a much superior standard of coherence and clarity.¹⁶ The process came to a head in January 1822. On the 11th, forty-seven men, six of whom signed by mark, met under the chairmanship of the 'squire', William Thomas, a crusty Tory, and declared, evidently in response to an agitation, that it was not expedient to appoint a select vestry for the parish. Two weeks later, a 'most numerously attended meeting' resolved, to the contrary, that it was highly expedient to appoint one, and promptly did so. Only one signature was appended, that of the chairman, who had copied out the minutes in his own hand. The chairman was William Crawshay.¹⁷

¹⁴ See M.T. Minutes for 1811-12 and 1815-17, *passim*, and table of poor rates appended.

¹⁵ M.T. Minutes, 20 December 1816, 7 January, 30 October, 2 December 1817; *Merthyr Guardian*, 23 November 1833; Charles Herbert James, *What I Remember about Myself and Old Merthyr* (Merthyr, 1892), pp. 8-13.

¹⁶ See M.T. Minutes, 17 April 1820, where the entry first assumes the form which became permanent, with notice of meeting copied out in full, systematic layout of minutes, and chairman's signature.

¹⁷ M.T. Minutes, 11 and 25 January 1822.

In this contentious manner, the select vestry of Merthyr was born, to serve as virtual government of the town until its supersession by the Board of Guardians in 1836. Henceforth, a parish meeting every April elected two churchwardens, four overseers, and twenty select vestrymen. The creation of the select vestry marked the coming-of-age of the mercantile middle class of the district. The first vestry made automatic provision for the representation of the ironmasters, but after 1823 they ceased to attend, and many of their agents sat as townsmen rather than as works representatives. The social structure of Merthyr was infinitely less complex than that of older centres such as Swansea. Its élite was tiny. For that very reason, however, it carried weight, and from 1823 to the crisis years after 1831, the select vestry was in the pocket of the town *Trade*. A Dowlais miner served in 1825, but he was almost certainly one of those ‘masters of levels’ whom the inhabitants of the village held in high regard even after the riots of 1831, and whose sons sat with the offspring of the propertied and respectable in Taliesin Williams’s school. Select vestrymen were, almost by definition, drapers, grocers, ironmongers, tanners, shopkeepers of all kinds.¹⁸

In view of the massive influx of population and the complete economic transformation of the district, what is striking about this *Village* society is the survival within it of many of the older pre-industrial families of the locality. William Thomas, the squire, for example, prided himself upon being ‘an aborigine of the place’. His father had set up as a maltster, but the son was trained as a surgeon by Davies and Russell, the Cyfarthfa works’ doctors, and continued to practise in the village even after his fortunate marriage. For his wife was Jane Rees of the family of Y Werfa, Aberdare, who inherited the chief estate of the parish, the Court, and installed her husband there as successor to old Samuel Rees, ‘the squire’, who had ridden about the Merthyr and Aberdare valleys, perched on a *car llusg* (sled) with a straw beehive chair, as the first furnaces rose. Notorious for his after-dinner anecdotes, Thomas served as a bluff and racy Tory magistrate and, immensely popular in Merthyr, was virtually a permanent member of the select vestry.¹⁹

Richard Jenkins of Aber-fan, on the other hand, came of yeoman farmers who had been the backbone of the old Dissenting chapel at

¹⁸ The composition of the select vestry from 1822 to 1836 has been analysed, and the results set out in the table appended; see also the list of most frequently elected select vestrymen, and, for background, the analysis of the numerical strength of the more important trades of Merthyr recorded at the Census of 1831. All tables may be found in the appendix to this article.

¹⁹ See Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 112–15, 117–18, 332.

Cwm-glo on Aberdare Mountain, the original Nonconformist nucleus. He was himself a member of Cefn Unitarian cause, a linear descendant of Cwm-glo, and, the embodiment of the oldest Nonconformist tradition of the area, rivalled Thomas in his vestry service.²⁰ There were many others, as family after family left the farm for the furnace.²¹ Ann Nicholas, who married William Williams, a greatly respected Unitarian of Heolgerrig, and became the mother of the future Chartist leader, Morgan Williams, came of rooted local stock, so rooted that her father, a blacksmith at Pant on the Brecon side of the parish, claimed descent from Dafydd Gam!²²

It was, however, the immigrants who predominated. The redoubtable William Meyrick, for example, was the son of a Neath publican. Articled as a boy to Merthyr's solitary attorney, he was parish solicitor by 1805, and made his fortune as attorney to the Crawshays. The Glamorgan Canal Company he dubbed his 'milch cow'. Its quarrels with the Melingriffith works brought him many a fat fee; he is said to have presented a bill for £20,000 on one occasion. With William Crawshay he was on Christian-name terms, and he bought Gwaelod-y-Garth House, for £2,500, from the iron master on his removal to Cyfarthfa Castle. By this time he was a powerful local figure. Portly and commanding, he ranged the shadowy hinterland of Glamorgan politics with 'a cold grey eye'. He helped to secure the return of Guest as a Tory for Honiton, and his wealth and skill commanded respect and even fear, for though William Thomas was a friend, the lawyer was heartily disliked by the generality.²³

No-one disliked him more than the James family. Young Charles Herbert James, *en route* to the parliamentary seat in later years, staged pitched battles with Meyrick in the Glamorgan courts which became a minor local epic. For the James family were the most potent of the immigrants.²⁴ They originated in the Whitchurch area, and Christopher James, patriarch of the clan, who settled in Merthyr as a general merchant, virtually monopolized the wholesale trade of the district in the early years of the century, in company with his

²⁰ T. Lewis, *Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed y Cymer* (Llandysul, 1947), pp. 26-8; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 102 and ff.; M.T. Minutes, *passim*.

²¹ The Thomases of Waun Wyllt are one specimen; see the others listed by Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-33 and *passim*.

²² T. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 148; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-3.

²³ On Meyrick, see W. Crawshay II to W. Crawshay I, 26 February 1828, Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 404; W. Crawshay I to W. Crawshay II, 10 December 1824, 3 March, 22 August, 18 September 1825, in Box 1, 278, 302, 324, 330; W. Crawshay II to T. Pierce, 29 June 1832 and to Jane Tyler, 26 July 1833 in vol. 3, 218, 298; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 163, 333-6.

²⁴ On the James family in general, see *A Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (London, 1959), *sub* Charles Herbert James and Sir William Milburne James, and *D.N.B.* for the latter; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-2; C. H. James, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

father-in-law, David Williams the banker, and William Milburne Davies, who had married Williams's other daughter. Christopher opened a business in draperies, groceries, and wine, built the Bush Hotel, scored a 'fortunate hit' in leasing turnpikes, and became one of the town's wealthiest men. His mill at Treforest supplied much of Merthyr's flour, and when he leased an estate there to Crawshay in 1833, its annual value was put at £500.²⁵ 'His very servants became gentlemen', and on his retirement to Swansea in later life, the burgesses elected him mayor.

A fellow immigrant was his brother, William, who owned the Globe and the Merthyr Swan, and, after the war, another brother, Job, a former naval surgeon. This enterprising and dynamic family was the nucleus of a powerful social interest. William Jones, a draper who owned the town meat market, was a 'cousin'; so was another landowning draper, Henry Jones, who had a gift for verse (of a sort) and was a pillar of Taliesin Williams's Eisteddfod Society. William Howell, the influential keeper of the Patriot, William Perkins, Meyrick's rival solicitor, Richard Jenkins, William Williams Heol-gerrig, the managerial families of Joseph and Kirkhouse, and a whole cluster of associates, kinsmen, and friends made the James connexion a centre of local political influence.²⁶

These men were no hucksters. It was a time when, to use the colourful phrase of a contemporary, 'money was absolute trash', and fortunes could be made overnight. Christopher James's second son, William Milburne James, after graduation from Glasgow, became a Q.C., a Justice, and married the daughter of the bishop of Chichester. His eldest son, David William, opened coal works in the Rhondda and dominated Merthyr politics. The sons and grandsons of William and Job were esquires, M.P.s, and persons of considerable consequence. Nor were they unique. Their friend, Walter Morgan, the Georgetown solicitor, produced a son who practised as a barrister on the South Wales Circuit, moved to Calcutta, and was made secretary to the Legislative Council of India by Dalhousie.²⁷ Edward Lewis Richards, son of the keeper of the Greyhound, and

²⁵ W. Crawshay II to George Thomas, 2 April 1831, to D. James, 15 and 16 July 1831, to Christopher James, 1 November, and W. M. James, 15 November 1833, in Crawshay Papers, vol. 3, 97, 116, 123, 321, 334 (where the calendar reference reads Jones for James), and Christopher James to William Crawshay II, 19 July, Job James to the same, 30 December 1830, in Box 2, 521, 544.

²⁶ On these relationships, see C. H. James, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, *passim*; T. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-8, 143-5, 60-1, 43, 231; M.T. Minutes, *passim*; and many references in the *Merthyr Guardian*, particularly during the general election in December 1834 and January 1835, and the election of the Board of Guardians for the Merthyr Union in November and December 1836.

²⁷ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-3.

another ally, also became a barrister, married into the landed family of Maerdy, and ended his days as chairman of the Flintshire Quarter Sessions.²⁸ These were the men who sent their sons, after Taliesin had finished with them, to Goulstone's in Bristol or the Unitarian schools, as a preliminary to Glasgow University and the Inns of Court. They were, admittedly, the gifted or fortunate few, but they were the leaders of the town middle class and wholly identified with it. In no sense can they be dismissed as the 'gaggle of shopkeepers' so contemned by Edwin Chadwick and the Webbs.

From 1828, when the curate's name was dropped from the committee lists, the James family and their associates began to appear with increasing regularity on the select vestry, but it was the simultaneous onset of economic and political crisis which installed them in power. On this occasion, the response of the ironmasters was more considered. For the first time they addressed themselves seriously to the problem of order on the northern rim of the coalfield, and in June 1829 their bill for the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate passed into law. The parishes of Merthyr, Aberdare, and Gelli-gaer were grouped into a unit, the magistrate to receive a salary of £600, half of it raised by a levy on the forty-four furnaces of the three places, half by rate on the inhabitants of Merthyr. For the first time, the new regional units which had taken shape on the coalfield were given juridical recognition, and Merthyr itself acquired an effective police court. The only other effective tribunal in the town at this date was the Court of Requests, a court for the recovery of small debts which had been set up in 1809 and which was managed by commissioners drawn from the shopkeeping groups. For their new stipendiary, the ironmasters chose John Bruce Bruce of Duffryn, Aberdare, brother to the dean of Llandaff and a leader of Glamorgan Toryism.²⁹

In the meantime, however, industrial depression was having its grim and familiar effect. By 1831, the poor rate had rocketed to the unprecedented figure of eight shillings.³⁰ Furnaces were blown out, houses and inns fell vacant, rates were in arrear, distress was wide-

²⁸ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 253; see also the son of Petherick, the Penydarren agent, who became H.M. Consul in the Sudan, and the son of W. D. Jenkins, the grocer, who became an ecclesiastical historian at Jesus College, Oxford, 'Apostle' to the railmen and saw service overseas before returning home to die as vicar of Aberdare—Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-5, 294; *Bywgraffiadur and D.W.B.*, *sub* John David Jenkins.

²⁹ *Acts of Parliament concerning Wales, 1714-1901*, ed. T. I. Jeffreys Jones (Cardiff, 1959), nos. 1639, 1641; M.T. Minutes, 15 October 1829; W. Crawshay I to W. Crawshay II, 19 June 1828 and 19 February 1829, in *Crawshay Papers*, Box 2, 399, 437; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 330; *Bywgraffiadur and D.W.B.*, *sub* Henry Austin Bruce.

³⁰ See table of poor rates at end.

spread, and there were multiplying complaints against the harshness of the constables and the Court of Requests. By the spring of 1830, the parish was £660 in the red, and behind the terse formulae of parish minutes, one senses a mounting desperation. In January 1830, William Crawshay entered angrily upon the scene, calling meeting after meeting, writing out minutes in his own hand, in a vain effort to solve the insoluble, and the climax came in March 1831, when, in an obviously co-ordinated series of resolutions moved by Anthony Hill and supported by D. W. James and Henry Jones, a parish meeting demanded a total reform of local administration. A standing reform committee was set up, consisting of the ironmasters, the overseers, William Thomas the Court, D. W. James, and Henry Jones. Its first report, presented on 25 March, called for the appointment of an examining accountant and the creation of new offices, and set out in the utmost detail the duties of parish officials and the procedure to be followed in all fields of administration. It was, in short, an attempt to write a new parish constitution, sponsored primarily by Crawshay and the group led by the James family.³¹

At the same meeting, the ironmasters re-entered the select vestry, where they were to remain until its end, and works representation on the vestry increased sharply. There was a parallel increase in the strength of the James connexion. The new overseers in 1831, who were to serve on the reform committee, were Christopher James, Richard Jenkins, and two men closely associated with them, Henry Charles the grocer and William Teague, Radical keeper of the Dowlais Swan. The net effect of the crisis, in short, was to install in local power the ironmasters and their men, Crawshay in particular, and a group of leading townsmen who shared a distinctive social and political outlook. For there was one feature common to those townsmen. Of the effective governors of Merthyr chosen in March 1831, from a third to a half were either Unitarians themselves or close associates and kinsmen of Unitarians. Among village representatives, the proportion was nearly two-thirds. On the standing committee, the real force in parish life, every man, apart from the ironmasters and William Thomas, was a Unitarian or a Unitarian's kinsman. Three were members of the James family.³²

What made this conjuncture peculiarly significant was the fact that the crisis of these years was as much political as economic. Such political tradition as the village possessed was Radical. 'All our

³¹ Based on M.T. Minutes for 1830 and 1831 in general and the record of 25 March 1831 in particular.

³² See tables on composition of select vestry and frequency of vestry service at end.

Parishioners are Presbyterians professing themselves Arminian', wrote the gloomy incumbent in 1771, claiming that only a dozen families at most were Anglican.³³ This may have been excessively pessimistic, but certainly the Church in Merthyr was crippled even before the tide of immigrants came flooding in. In 1828, Crawshay, in an acid reply to an appeal for aid from the bishop of Llandaff, could say 'that in proportion to its extent, no place is more amply supplied with the means (of divine worship) or the means more used. The General inclination of the population in Divine Worship is away from the Parish Church and during my attendance there, I never once saw it full or nearly so'.³⁴ Between 1792, at which time Anglicans were already a minority in the parish, and 1836, no fewer than twenty-three Dissenting meeting places in Merthyr and Dowlais were registered with the bishop's court alone.³⁵

The original nucleus at Cwm-glo on Aberdare Mountain, which had a tradition whose longevity at least could rival that of Llanfaches, broke up in the mid-eighteenth century, the Arminians passing to new Unitarian chapels at Aberdare and Cefn Coed, the Calvinists to the town centre at Ynys-gau, to suffer a further Arminian secession in 1812, when Christopher James licensed a schoolroom as a meeting house for the dissidents.³⁶ With the inflow from West Wales, the orthodox Dissenting causes grew rapidly in strength. Their early days were confused and sometimes bitter, the Baptists in particular multiplying by parthenogenesis, but the drive was irresistible. David Saunders *yr Ail*, 'Dafydd Glan Teifi', for the Baptists, and Samuel Evans for the Independents, both of them friends of the Jameses, built Seion and Soar, respectively, into strongholds of their sects. In the raw atmosphere of Merthyr, numbers must have fluctuated. 'If he lets down his hand, Amalek prevails', his biographer said of Samuel Evans. But by 1839, 2,000 children of the Dissenting Sunday Schools could parade through the town, to be addressed by six pastors, and, no doubt, proportions were at least what they were at the census of 1851, when Baptists, Independents, and, a little way behind, Calvinistic Methodists, towered over all.³⁷

³³ Llandaff Diocesan Records LL/QA/4 (National Library of Wales).

³⁴ W. Crawshay II to Bishop of Llandaff, 20 October 1828, in Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 429.

³⁵ H. D. Emanuel, 'Dissent in the Counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth', *National Library of Wales Journal*, viii (1954), 416; ix (1955), 18-20.

³⁶ No attempt is made here to tackle the problem of the growth of Nonconformity in the area, which requires extended treatment. For a general view, and for the evidence upon which the text is based, see *Crefydd a Gweriniaeth yn Hanes yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Aberdâr, 1751-1951*, gol. D. Jacob Dafis (Llandysul, 1951); T. Lewis, *op. cit.*; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-10, 172-4, 221-37, 272-80; H. D. Emanuel, *op. cit.*; *Bywgraffiadur* and *D.W.B.* for individuals cited by name.

³⁷ *Merthyr Guardian*, 25 May 1839; H. Mann, *Religious Census of Great Britain, 1851* (London, 1854), p. 125.

Most striking, however, is the strength of Unitarianism, in terms not so much of number (Cefn and Aberdare had only fifty members each around 1830) as of influence. A Unitarian chapel was opened at Twynyrodyn, in the heart of the town itself, in 1821, and all three centres were served by remarkable men. Edward Ifan was minister at Aberdare from 1772 to 1796; there were two great schoolmasters in the Castell Hywel tradition, Owen Evans at Cefn and Dr. David Rees, the first pastor, at Twynyrodyn. The latter's successor, who took the cause in 1825, was the celebrated Radical, David John, while throughout the formative years from 1811 to 1833, the minister at Aberdare, and a frequent preacher in Merthyr, was none other than the old Radical, Thomas Evans, Glyn Cothi, himself.³⁸

Their congregations were notable for quality. The James family were Unitarians with the exception of the Wesleyan William, and his son, Charles Herbert, joined the cause. It was from John James, Gellionnen, that William Milburne James got his first learning. But, indeed, to read the register of Unitarians is to read a list of town notables. William Williams Heolgerrig, Taliesin Williams, Joseph Oakey, a half-pay master in the Navy and a prominent parishioner, Coffin, Williams the clockmaker, Mathew Wayne, the Cyfarthfa manager, Richard Jenkins—it is a roster of the men who made and shaped the town. Even Mary Aberteifi, Josiah Guest's nurse, was a member at Cefn.³⁹ In their persons, and even in their physical location, for they were concentrated in Heolgerrig and Georgetown on the Aberdare side of the town, they testified to the continuity of the district's oldest tradition, perhaps the only tradition in Merthyr's communal life which survived the coming of the new society.⁴⁰ It was a tradition, however, which had undergone a significant mutation in the late eighteenth century. For, by this time, whoever pronounced himself Unitarian pronounced himself Radical.

These men were the backbone of the Cyfarthfa Philosophical Society of 1807, whose sixty members subscribed a guinea each to buy astronomical instruments, and who liked their sciences applied

³⁸ On these pastors, see *Bywgraffiadur, D.W.B., Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Aberdâr*, T. Lewis, op. cit., Wilkins, op. cit., *passim*; on Edward Ifan, see R. T. Jenkins, *Bardd a'i Gefndir* (Cardiff, 1949).

³⁹ See the trustees of Cefn chapel listed in T. Lewis, op. cit., pp. 217-21, the list of members in 1827, including Mary Aberteifi, on pp. 26-8, and other identifications of Merthyr Unitarians on pp. 43, 50, 51, 148, 231; another valuable source for identification purposes is the polemic written during the 1835 election and signed 'The Ghost of the late Rev. Thomas Evans, Aberdare', in *Merthyr Guardian*, 13 December 1834; Llandaff Diocesan Records LL/CC/G, 2050 a-n; Wilkins, op. cit., *passim*.

⁴⁰ This concentration was also noted by Mr. T. Lewis, op. cit., p. 148; the same area was the locale of the Cyfarthfa Philosophical Society, the Freemasons, and the heart of Merthyr Chartism; here, also, was the storm-centre of the Merthyr Riots—a remarkable topographical continuity in Radical tradition.

no less than pure, reading Tom Paine and Voltaire, and listening to Tomos Glyn Cothi in secret places on Aberdare Mountain at the height of the wartime reaction. When Taliesin ab Iolo reached Merthyr, he found them very hot for Napoleon. The devout, suspecting them of atheism, had their own bootnails set in a *T.P.* so as to trample the infidel Paine underfoot.⁴¹ Even the Welsh cultural revival which marked Merthyr in the twenties, when Taliesin's *eisteddfodau* were flourishing, owed much to them. Taliesin himself was one of the fraternity; his father won a prize at Cefn in 1816, and a fellow member at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was William Howell of the Patriot, where the first *eisteddfod* was held. These convivial gatherings were themselves hotbeds of controversy, with the most advanced ideas circulating freely.⁴² For these men were distinctive in matters great and small. When Jones of Baptist Ebenezer was being hooted for trying to introduce song into chapel, Cefn had its own string band.⁴³

Their attitude was not uniform. How could it be? 'They do love to be dissenters', as one curate sadly remarked.⁴⁴ Most of them were fairly orthodox middle-class Radicals, like David William James, believers in the ballot and universal suffrage, and opponents of the Corn Laws, but stout spokesmen for the lower middle class and chilly towards parish expenditure and trade unions.⁴⁵ On their right flank hovered Taliesin Williams, with a tortured and idiosyncratic ideology of his own, a pained but candid friend of the Anglican Church, an admirer of Josiah Guest, and an advocate of the abolition of primogeniture and the restoration of *cyfran*.⁴⁶ On their left was a newer breed, David John the pastor, whose fiery sermons were causing scandals as early as 1830, and William Williams's able son, Morgan, dubbed the 'Young Mountain Solomon' by his enemies (for his mathematics), a friend and tutor to workmen lower down the social scale than Taliesin's masters of levels.⁴⁷

⁴¹ See Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-8, and the reminiscence by Taliesin Williams in the *Merthyr Guardian*, 3 January 1835.

⁴² Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 310 ff.; T. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 43; C. H. James, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.; Taliesin apparently put his boys to copying the Iolo MSS!

⁴³ Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 173; T. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁴ Quoted by W. W. Price, 'Y Cefndir', in *Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Aberdâr*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁵ Conclusion based on an analysis of their speeches during the election campaign reported in the *Merthyr Guardian*, *Hereford Times*, and *Cambrian* during December 1834 and January 1835.

⁴⁶ On Taliesin, see *Bywgraffiadur* and *D.W.B.*; C. H. James, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-13.

⁴⁷ On David John and Morgan Williams, see *Bywgraffiadur* and *D.W.B.*; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 288, 307-9; David Williams, 'Chartism in Wales', *Chartist Studies*, ed. A. Briggs (London, 1959), pp. 220-48. John was also a mathematician; for Morgan Williams's nickname, see *Merthyr Guardian*, 13 and 20 December 1834.

One issue that united them all was hostility to the truck system, which had gained ground rapidly during the depression, particularly at Dowlais and Penydarren. Here, ideals and interest coincided, and during these very months when the crisis was carrying them to a local power, shared with Crawshay, on the parish vestry, the campaign against truck was shaping a similar alliance in a broader field. The occasion was the introduction of an anti-truck bill into the Commons by E. J. Littleton, a Staffordshire member. While Josiah Guest and Alderman Thompson cheered on Hume in his defence of the truckmasters in general and of Dowlais in particular, two of the Merthyr Radicals' young men then resident in London, William Milburne James at Lincoln's Inn and Edward Lewis Richards at Gray's, gave Littleton their professional assistance, and Job James, a great admirer of Cobbett and the only Merthyr surgeon unconnected with the works at that date, supplied him with medical evidence. A violent press campaign raged through 1830, with E. L. Richards making veiled attacks on Guest in the *Cambrian*, Job James and his friends engaging in scurrilous dispute with the Merthyr 'truck-doctors', and Christopher James, junior, the surgeon's son, denouncing the Dowlais master as an enemy of the working man. As climax, a Merthyr meeting, chaired by William James and held in the parish church with the curate's consent, on 13 November, denounced the truck system and sponsored a petition to parliament which collected over 5,000 signatures in a matter of days.⁴⁸

The petition echoed, almost word for word, the sentiments of William Crawshay, who was bitter in his denunciation of Guest's 'unfair competition'. The Crawshays took great pride in not being truckmasters. Whenever the son verged perilously near truck in depressions, his father, unorthodox enough to see no harm in trade unions, pulled him up sharply. Anthony Hill also opposed truck, but he lacked Crawshay's capital and staying power, and it was Cyfarthfa which made all the running in support of Littleton's bill.⁴⁹ As early as March 1830, Crawshay and Hill got up petitions from their workmen, and in December, when the bill was carried, the petitions of the ironmasters, the workmen, and the tradespeople

⁴⁸ On the campaign, see *Cambrian*, 20, 27 March, 1 May, 19 June, 18, 25 September, 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 October, 20, 27 November, 4, 18, 25 December 1830; 1, 22, 29 January, 5, 12, 19 February 1831, for reports and, in particular, exchanges between correspondents. Pseudonyms were used with remarkable carelessness, *E* being obviously Richards, and *A.B.C.* being George Russell, the Cyfarthfa surgeon. See also *Cambrian*, 28 January 1832, and *Merthyr Guardian*, 24 January 1835 (reference back to Christopher James's attack on Guest); the truck meeting is reported in the *Cambrian*, 27 November 1830.

⁴⁹ See W. Crawshay I to W. Crawshay II, 7 September 1831, 6 December 1831, 13, 23 May 1832; and W. Routh to W. Crawshay II, 13 December 1830, Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 587, 588, 620, 622, and 539.

were presented together. Not until the autumn of 1831 did the bill pass, and William Routh, the Crawshay representative in London, while gloating over Guest's discomfiture, repeatedly stressed the need for sustained action to enforce its provisions. As if in response, a town meeting, chaired by Christopher James in January 1832, established a *Society for the Abolition of the Truck System* in Merthyr, and raised over £200, to finance prosecutions, that same night.⁵⁰

This alliance, conscious or fortuitous, between Crawshay and the middle-class Radicals, already operative in the truck campaign and parish administration, had a wider significance. For the truck campaign was simply one of a series. At about the same time, a petition against the Corn Laws attracted over 9,000 signatures, and on 23 December, within a few days of the Newport reform meeting, first in the area, the Merthyr Radicals called a meeting to the Bush to prepare a petition for parliamentary reform.⁵¹ Eight hundred people turned up, 'and never more respectable', according to one observer. The Bush could not hold them, and the organizers asked the churchwarden, W. D. Jenkins, an Anglican, for permission to use the parish church. He refused, but his fellow churchwarden, Coffin the Unitarian, 'saw no harm' in the idea. The church was open, since the cleaners were in for Christmas, and the crowd poured in, brushing aside the clerk who tried to stop them. The Chief Constable took the chair, and the speakers were Christopher James, Henry Jones, William Perkins the solicitor, E. J. Hutchins, the nephew of Josiah Guest, Dr. Rees, the former Unitarian minister, David John, the current pastor, and Samuel Evans, Independent minister of Soar. The petition they drafted called for the dismissal of placemen from the Commons, annual parliaments, the abolition of rotten boroughs, the representation of large towns and populous districts, the ballot, and the extension of the franchise to all who contributed, directly or indirectly, to national or local taxation. This was the petition which Croker was to take as text for a sermon in the Commons on the Whig deception of their Radical supporters in the Reform Bill. The sense of the meeting was virtually unanimous, but its conduct caused a scandal. Henry Jones, it appears, had intended to speak on the need for reform in Church as well as State, but in deference to the locale of the meeting decided not to. No such scruples deterred David John. He burst into a fiery denunciation of bishops who starved their clergy, proclaimed that the poor were

⁵⁰ W. Routh to W. Crawshay II, loc. cit.; *Cambrian*, 20 March, 25 December 1830, 28 January 1832.

⁵¹ *Cambrian*, 20 November, 4 December 1830.

living on carrion, and indulged in revolutionary exhortation, to loud cheers and the stamping of feet. This gave great offence, even to reformers. Walter Morgan left the meeting in protest; Oakey, William Jones, and Perkins's own partner were incensed. The divergence in attitude among Radicals, so visible in the days of the Chartists, was marked from the beginning.

To good Anglicans, however, all reformers were becoming intolerable. There were cries of desecration, and protests went to the *Cambrian* and to the bishop at Llandaff. The dean of Llandaff wrote to his brother, the police magistrate, and seriously considered taking action in the Consistory Court against both Coffin and David John, the latter for 'brawling', but after sounding legal opinion in London, and in fear that a failure would strengthen the 'Socinians' still further, contented himself with an apology from Coffin in the public prints.⁵²

It was about this time that a Political Union was formed in Merthyr. Nothing is known of this body except the fact of its existence. In the aftermath of the Merthyr riots in the following summer, government reports spoke of professional men who had introduced the union among colliers and miners and had come bitterly to regret it. At that time, William Perkins, who proved remarkably sympathetic to the rioters, even at the height of the panic, when his fellow parishioners were calling for cannon to be used against the workmen, was acting as a channel of communication between the marquis of Bute and the more 'responsible' section of the working population. A few weeks later, at the climax of the struggle against the newly-formed trade unions, E. L. Richards was making a similar appeal to Guest to enrol masters of levels as special constables. Both these men had some kind of contact with the workpeople denied to their fellows. It was the Political Union which sponsored the circulation of working-class and Radical newspapers in the area. Cobbett's *Twopenny Trash* reached an average monthly circulation of a hundred; Job James, such an admirer of the Radical, was a bookseller. There can scarcely be any doubt that it was the James group and their friends who were the backbone of the union. In all probability, it

⁵² The fullest account of this meeting is provided by the Llandaff Diocesan Records, LL/CC/G, 2050 a-n. I am grateful to Mr. Walter Morgan of the National Library of Wales for drawing my attention to this source, and for his assistance in all fields of the enquiry. See also *Seren Gomer*, Chwefror 1831; *Cambrian*, 1 January 1831; *Hansard*, 3rd series, ii, 206; and on Croker's use of the Merthyr petition, *Cambrian*, 12 March 1831 and *Annual Register*, 1831, p. 60; protests and Coffin's apology appear in the *Cambrian*, 15, 22 January, 5 March 1831.

was now that Morgan Williams, at the age of twenty-two, served his political apprenticeship.⁵³

Once more, these men found an ally in William Crawshay. The ironmaster's opinions on political issues, like his opinions on most matters, were highly individual. When he spoke at county meetings in Cardiff or Cowbridge, his conservative predilections were on display. He was wary on the abolition of slavery, and, more surprising perhaps, an opponent of free trade and a defender of the Corn Laws—'He that knocks down corn, knocks down iron'. On the other hand, he was a strong supporter of the Reform Bill, detested tithes, and advocated universal suffrage, a side of his character most apparent in his speeches in Merthyr. And the whole was coloured by what one correspondent called his 'piquancy', a violent turn of speech which had him loudly proclaiming his readiness to die in the streets, fighting for the Reform Bill. He carried his workmen with him, helped them to draft a petition to the Commons. It was Crawshay above all who gave the middle-class Radicals their mass support on the spot.⁵⁴

The agitation redoubled with the publication of the bill in March 1831. On 9 March, the James brothers, Taliesin Williams, E. L. Richards, and E. J. Hutchins called a meeting to express approval of the bill, even though it fell far short of their desires, and to prepare a petition for Guest to submit. A private census of the town was begun, probably to collect evidence in support of Merthyr's claim to a parliamentary seat, and on 8 April a more representative meeting, attended not only by the Radicals but by the ironmasters, Bruce and William Thomas, decided to bring Merthyr to the notice of the Whigs. A deputation waited on the government, but though Alderman Thompson derived some comfort from the remarks of Althorp, his optimism was unjustified. Ministers, who had decided to retain the Welsh contributory borough system, saw no reason to give Merthyr separate treatment.⁵⁵

This disappointment, however, was lost in the general excitement of the struggle. With the forcing of a general election, excitement

⁵³ On the Union, see Evan Thomas to marquis of Bute, 16 June 1831; Col. Brotherton to Lord FitzRoy Somerset, 14, 20 June 1831; W. Perkins to Bute, 1 August 1831, in H.O. 52/16 (P.R.O.); E. L. Richards to J. J. Guest, 12 November 1831, *Iron in the Making*, p. 218; C. H. James, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-7.

⁵⁴ For his opinions, see his speeches in the *Cambrian*, 14 July, 22, 29 December 1832; his letter in the *Merthyr Guardian*, 20 December 1834; and his pamphlet, 'The late Riots at Merthyr Tydfil', 23 June 1831 (County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, Cyfarthfa Museum, Box 4, PP227).

⁵⁵ *Cambrian*, 12, 19 March, 23 April 1831; *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 26 March, 2 April 1831; W. Thompson to W. Crawshay II, 19 April 1831, Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 569.

mounted to fever pitch. During the campaign, in which Nonconformist voices were heard more loudly than ever before, the Merthyr Radicals kept up the pressure. On 27 April, at the Bush, Christopher James and his son, David William, Perkins, and Taliesin ab Iolo harangued a large meeting. It was incumbent upon Merthyr, as principal town of the Principality, to take the lead in rescuing the land from thralldom and misery, and they pledged themselves to support the Glamorgan members who had voted for the bill, and to carry to the poll in the shires of Glamorgan, Carmarthen and Brecon every voter of like mind. Col. Wood, the Brecon member who had voted for Gascoyne's 'spoiling' amendment, was denounced as 'a snake in the grass', a rather unfair attack on a consistent friend of Merthyr.⁵⁶ But passions were getting out of hand. Crawshay heartily seconded the proposal to interfere in the Brecon election, and his men took to the streets. Cyfarthfa and Hirwaun miners paraded day after day, burning effigies and shouting slogans. They stoned the houses of the Tories, William Thomas and James Stephens, and as the election campaign reached its climax, public order in the distressed and excited community broke down. In May, J. B. Bruce was unable to execute police edicts; prisoners were released by main force. And as the election closed, miners and colliers broke away from the tutelage of the Political Union and began to hold monster meetings of their own. The arrival of delegates from the Owenite miners' trade union of Lancashire, coming through with funds collected in Ruabon and North Wales, coinciding as it did with the heavily attended Waun Fair, was the last straw. The *Inhabitants of the Ironworks* entered violently upon the scene, and masters, shopkeepers, Unitarians and Anglicans alike, were engulfed in the Merthyr Riots.⁵⁷

Bands of angry men, led by their better-off fellows, scoured the town under Reform banners, raiding over a hundred houses, seizing goods which had been confiscated from the destitute by the Court of Requests and restoring them to their owners in a crude attempt at rough natural justice. The prime targets were the *shopocracy* and its debtors' court, the chief victim was Joseph Coffin; a general confiscation of the shopkeepers was mooted. With the arrival of troops and the killing outside the Castle Inn, even moderates were infuriated, and armed insurrection broke out, suppressed only after guerilla battles with the military. Dic Penderyn, the only rioter to

⁵⁶ *Cambrian*, 30 April 1831.

⁵⁷ Evan Thomas to Bute, loc. cit.; Notes relative to the Colliers' Union Society in the parish of Ruabon, 29 June 1831, in H.O. 52/16.

be executed, was promptly invested with martyrdom, and the Lancashire union spread over the coalfield, to be extinguished in the winter only after the most bitterly fought lock-out at Dowlais and Plymouth works.⁵⁸

In these circumstances, with the town under military occupation, and all who were not workmen huddled together in constant fear for months at a time, reform, both national and parochial, went into eclipse. Parish meetings were not resumed until November, when a police officer, found by Melbourne, was appointed at a salary of £80. Their only other act this year was the gruesome one of appointing a Board of Health to face the oncoming cholera. When a meeting was called to discuss the reform proposals of the examining accountant in December, the irrepressible Coffin was the only person to appear.⁵⁹

Recovery came in the spring, with the final debates on the Reform Bill. The riots had thrust Merthyr upon public notice, and in the debate on the enfranchisement of Gateshead, in August 1831, the Tories had seized upon its exclusion from the bill as a weapon against the Whigs, so effectively indeed, that *Seren Gomer* denounced the whole Merthyr agitation as a Tory trick. But the government was immovable. In March 1832, however, the debate was resumed, with the same contenders and, to all practical purposes, the same speeches, when on 14 March, in a sudden and not easily explained change of front, Lord John Russell announced that Merthyr was after all to have a member, at the expense of Monmouthshire.⁶⁰ Within two days of the announcement, a meeting at Merthyr unanimously selected Josiah John Guest as their prospective representative.⁶¹

The nomination of Guest was by no means the foregone conclusion some historians seem to assume.⁶² Relations between the ironmaster and the Radicals had not always been easy. Around 1820

⁵⁸ There is as yet no adequate analysis of this crisis; for a general view, see H.O. 52/16; *Cambrian*, June-December 1831; D. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-4, *John Frost* (Cardiff, 1939), pp. 115-16, *Modern Wales* (London, 1950), pp. 233-4, *Bywgraffiadur* and *D.W.B.*, *sub* Lewis and Richard Lewis; *The New Newgate Calendar*, ed. Lord Birket (London, 1960), pp. 196-204; and my 'The Merthyr Riots: settling the account', *National Library of Wales Journal*, xi (1959), 124-41.

⁵⁹ M.T. Minutes, 18, 23 November, 7 December 1831; Lord FitzRoy Somerset to George Lamb, 5 November 1831, H.O. 50/14.

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, 3rd series, iv, 86, 87, 204-6, 274, 397-400, 660-69, 828-9, 840-72, v, 1134-47, x, 1124-54, xi, 206-33, 406-12; *Seren Gomer*, Medi 1831; *Cambrian*, 10, 17 March 1832.

⁶¹ *Cambrian*, 24, 31 March 1832.

⁶² For example, N. Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel* (London, 1953), pp. 199-200; for an excellent survey of South Wales politics at this period, see Islwyn W. R. David, 'Political and Electioneering Activity in South-East Wales, 1820-52', M.A. (Wales), typescript thesis, 1960; from whom I differ somewhat in emphasis and approach, in so far as Merthyr politics are concerned.

he had threatened the Unitarians with legal penalties for their use of the vestry room as a meeting place; the truck campaign of 1830 had often been directed against himself in a personal manner.⁶³ Despite the Wesleyan tradition of the family, Guest was an Anglican, allegedly for business reasons, and as member for Honiton he had been a moderate Tory. He had voted for the Reform Bill, it is true, but it was Crawshay who had been the ally of the Radicals, and his local power was every whit as great as Guest's—indeed, at this time, it was probably greater. In the aftermath of the riots, however, under attack from the press, the master of Cyfarthfa had hurled abuse at the Court of Requests, and he was heavily involved in the irritating task of prising some compensation for the victims of the riots out of an unsympathetic War Office. He quarrelled violently with his father, and his works were losing money. Relations with his fellow townsmen became strained. In any case, there is no evidence that Crawshay ever had designs on the seat.⁶⁴

With Guest, it was otherwise. He lost his seat at Honiton in consequence of his vote for the Reform Bill, and offered himself as a second member to Glamorgan county in May 1831, an offer which he withdrew in October when the bill was rejected.⁶⁵ His nephew Hutchins, moreover, supported the town campaign from its beginning in December 1830, and it was in the same period that E. L. Richards's scarcely veiled attacks on Guest in the *Cambrian* came to an end, with oblique hints at a 'reformation of character' on the part of hitherto misguided men. At the time of the Merthyr deputation to the government in April 1831, Alderman Thompson warned Crawshay—'Guest is upon the alert and I have no doubt he will start for the County'. Thompson believed that Guest had an understanding with Bute (an echo of charges made in the twenties) and wanted the other three ironmasters to combine against him.⁶⁶ At this time, among the Glamorgan élite, there was widespread suspicion of Guest's motives.

In fact, the most striking feature of Guest's political opinions was their flexibility. By this time he had become an orthodox, if slightly Whiggish, liberal. At his election for Merthyr in December 1832, he

⁶³ See letter in *Merthyr Guardian*, 13 December 1834, and *Cambrian*, 1830, *passim*.

⁶⁴ On Crawshay at this time, see my 'The Merthyr Riots: settling the account', *National Library of Wales Journal*, xi (1959), 135-7; on Guest, Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-5; *Iron in the Making*, pp. 221 ff.; *Merthyr Guardian*, November 1832-December 1833, *passim*.

⁶⁵ *Cambrian*, 14 May, 25 June, 22 October 1831.

⁶⁶ W. Thompson to W. Crawshay II, 19 April 1831, Crawshay Papers, Box 2, 569; *Cambrian*, 20 November 1830 (letter from E) and 1 January 1831; see also Diary of Lewis Weston Dillwyn, ii, *passim* (N.L.W.).

pronounced himself in favour of free trade, against Corn Laws, slave trade, and monopoly. He wanted a commutation of tithes, a reform of the Church, and was opposed to the 'taxes on knowledge'. This last sentiment earned the plaudits of his audience, but in fact Guest, at this time, was much less Radical than his supporters. At the dinner which followed it was Crawshay, appropriately enough, who chivvied him, with a certain glee, on universal suffrage and the ballot. Guest unequivocally rejected the former as 'universal ruin', a *bon mot* received in silence. He thought the ballot a change which ought not to be made if freedom of election could be attained without it. If it could not, however, and here his audience broke into tremendous cheering, he would vote for it.⁶⁷

This was the key. Guest pronounced himself prepared to listen to argument on controversial issues dear to his local supporters. The Merthyr Radicals hoped, and their hope was justified, that, given propitious circumstances, Guest would respond to the opinion of his electors. It was this, coupled with his power, his popularity, and his good record at Dowlais, which ensured his acceptance by the men who were the heart and soul of his local organization. His integrity, as D. W. James put it, 'was a satisfactory substitute for any pledge that might otherwise have been desired'. Very different was their attitude to L. W. Dillwyn, when, under Crawshay's patronage, he came to canvass for county votes in November. D. W. James and Walter Morgan, on behalf of the Political Union, badgered him mercilessly on the ballot and universal suffrage, and finally decided to support him only as a lesser evil, against an 'acknowledged conservative'.⁶⁸ His replies had been unsatisfactory, but no more so than Guest's. Over Dillwyn, however, they could never hope to exercise any measure of control. In Merthyr, on the other hand, with a new electorate, essentially shopkeeper-publican in character and only 500 strong, they could expect their opinion to carry weight with the member.⁶⁹ Guest's election in December was simply a festival of new-found civic pride, but his possession of the seat rested on an implicit compact. His relationship with the Radicals was delicate and to a certain extent probationary.

Within two years it had been forged into an alliance. For if some Radicals were uneasy over Guest, the Tories were disconcerted. He was regarded as a traitor and a turncoat, a wealthy and irresponsible

⁶⁷ *Cambrian*, 22 December 1832.

⁶⁸ *Cambrian*, 31 November 1832.

⁶⁹ On the character of the electorate, see Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 366 ff., and the survey quoted in Islwyn David, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

arriviste prepared to betray the social order from base and ambitious motives. They regarded him with that scorn and fear which men of their mind reserved for those among the wealthy and privileged who aspired to be tribunes of the people. ‘The Duke of Orleans’, warned the *Merthyr Guardian* in December 1834, ‘had domains worth even Dowlais twenty times told’, and it linked Guest with Essex, Pym, Hampden, and Cromwell as unwitting exponents of destructive principles, ‘weak, well-intentioned men . . . popularity hunters’, who unleashed the predatory passions of the *Destructives* who lurked in their shadow.⁷⁰ The *Guardian* itself was born of Tory alarm. Even in 1832 there were mutterings against Guest’s unopposed return. A Georgetown man was warning Dowlais House of a scheme to run a candidate in July; rumours reached even *The Times*, and Meyrick’s name was mentioned. But they lacked the local power. The only counterpoise to Dowlais was Cyfarthfa, and Crawshay supported Guest’s election, albeit in a quizzical and sceptical manner, for he had no love for ‘that paltry fellow’, his rival. The Tories turned to the moulding of opinion and, in November, founded the *Guardian*, Merthyr’s first newspaper, as a mouthpiece for Bruce and the conservatives, with the occult support of the marquis of Bute. Under the editorship of William Mallalieu, it was splenetically Tory and did not retain, in Merthyr itself, much of the goodwill which attended its inception. For, after a quiet beginning, it opened a press war against the vaguely liberal *Cambrian* in 1833 and moved, with increasing rapidity, to a position of vituperative hostility to Guest.⁷¹

For the *Guardian* had little doubt as to the identity of the *Destructives* who were creeping into power in the shadow of Dowlais. Unitarianism was a conspicuous omission from its periodic listing of the creeds worthy of respect, and in December 1834 it made its point with a brutal directness—‘It appears that Merthyr is neither more nor less than a rotten borough appertaining to Schedule A, the patronage of which is vested in the Jameses’.⁷² The one theme which finds constant re-iteration in the paper throughout 1833 and 1834 is fear of the municipal corporation. With its elevation into a parliamentary borough which embraced Aberdare and Cefn, Merthyr acquired civic pride. Scheme after scheme was mooted to equip the town with institutions proper to its new status, gas light, a direct railway to London, factories, a new branch mail—and the publica-

⁷⁰ *Merthyr Guardian*, 13 December 1834.

⁷¹ *Iron in the Making*, p. 227; *Times*, 2 July 1832; R. D. Rees, ‘Glamorgan Newspapers under the Stamp Acts’, *Morgannwg*, iii (1959), 72–6; for a vintage *Guardian* editorial, see the issue of 17 January 1835.

⁷² *Merthyr Guardian*, 6 December 1834.

tion of the municipal corporations bill was received by the Radicals with acclamation. A town meeting in November 1833 loudly endorsed Guest's promise to work for incorporation. The Tories were horror-stricken, the *Guardian* waxed sarcastic at the expense of *Lord Mayor James* and *ab Iolo*, his *Poet Laureate*, and as soon as the bill was suspended in 1834, William Thomas and Meyrick came forward with a scheme for the building of a town hall and market, evidently as a counter. The projected town hall came to nothing, but a joint stock company was formed to build a market, and schemes for a savings bank and a gasworks (realised in 1836) were launched. The *Guardian's* pride, however, was severely jolted by Guest's re-iterated assertion during these meetings that Merthyr would be incorporated 'within a year, whether we like it or not'.⁷³

Throughout these negotiations, the James family and their friends, while thoroughly in accord with the decisions taken, functioned primarily as outspoken defenders of middle-class interests. They were no less zealous in the confused vestry meetings of the same period. For the reorganization launched with such éclat in 1831 had run into the usual difficulties, and by 1832 the parish was in debt to the tune of £1,675. The police officer was abruptly dismissed, but an attempt to increase the rate assessment on the ironworks led to a head-on collision with the masters, the wholesale dismissal of parish officers, and, ultimately, to an agreement to submit to a valuation prepared by an outside agency.⁷⁴ Messrs. Bayledon and Fosbrook of London presented their new valuation to the parish in November 1833. It more than quadrupled the yield of the rates, but had two controversial features. Firstly, it proposed to rate the coal, limestone, and equipment of the ironworks, which sent Crawshay into a temper and brought the threat of a test case before the King's Bench. Secondly, it brought cottages worth less than £6 a year under the rates. They comprised £13,900 of a total housing valuation of £25,000; if the rates were not levied from them, and it was agreed that it was hopeless to try to get them from the workman occupiers, the ironmasters would be paying two-thirds of the rate levy. Their solution was the old one—a bill to rate the owners rather than the occupiers. The response was no less familiar, a blank negative.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Merthyr Guardian*, 17, 24 August, 7 September, 9 November 1833, 25 October, 1, 8, 15 November 1834.

⁷⁴ M.T. Minutes, 1832 and 1833, are almost entirely given over to these problems; for the parish budget in 1833, see the table appended, derived from the unusually detailed accounts included in the minutes for this year.

⁷⁵ M.T. Minutes, 21 November 1833, and the vivid account in *Merthyr Guardian*, 23 November 1833.

Crawshay, enraged, called a meeting to petition for a bill in February 1834. Walter Morgan and Henry Jones, free with assertions that the ironmasters had never paid their fair share of the rates, had it postponed to March, when the James family and their supporters turned up *en masse* and crushed the proposed petition, amid scenes of the utmost confusion, with the rival parties retiring to separate rooms to avoid physical conflict.⁷⁶ In the following month, the parish, led by D. W. James, Coffin, and their friends, voted to rate the machinery of the Glamorgan Canal Company, despite opposition from their solicitor, Meyrick, and a report that £677 of the small cottage rates could not be collected. By October the ironworks were taking their appeal against the rating of coal before the King's Bench.⁷⁷ In this atmosphere, the cordiality which had previously characterized the relationship between Crawshay and the James connexion rapidly evaporated. The Cyfarthfa ironmaster began to look with more favour on their opponents.

Their opposition had intensified. Locally, the threat of a Unitarian corporation hung over their heads, a threat made the more dreadful by the behaviour of the fraternity's more extreme members. For early in 1834 Morgan Williams threw himself into the Owenite trade union movement and actually launched a short-lived bilingual newspaper in Merthyr, *Y Gweithiwr (The Workman)*, which preached the Grand National Consolidated and eulogized the Tolpuddle Martyrs.⁷⁸ Set against the background of the growing assertiveness of the extremists and the growing strength of the James family, Guest's parliamentary record of votes against the Corn Laws and in favour of the 'spoliation' of the Irish Church assumed an ominous significance. This time, however, the Tories could hope to secure powerful local backing. They approached Crawshay, but he would not stand. His attorney, however, was willing, and the ironmaster committed Cyfarthfa to his support. In November 1834, as soon as news of the dissolution of parliament was received, William Meyrick came forward as a defender of the Church Establishment.⁷⁹

The election which followed was the most ferocious Guest ever had to fight, and its significance as a stage in the evolution of South Wales Radicalism can hardly be overstressed.⁸⁰ It was a savage, bitter, vituperative business, a head-on clash between industrial

⁷⁶ M.T. Minutes, 3 March 1834.

⁷⁷ M.T. Minutes, April-October 1834, *passim*.

⁷⁸ Copy of number 4 in H.O. 52/25, 1 May 1834.

⁷⁹ *Merthyr Guardian*, 6, 13 December 1834.

⁸⁰ The election is well covered by *Merthyr Guardian*, *Cambrian*, *Monmouthshire Merlin*, *Hereford Times* for December 1834-January 1835; Wilkins, *op. cit.*; *The Diaries of Lady Charlotte Guest*, ed. the earl of Bessborough (London, 1950).

giants, for Thompson and Hill backed Crawshay in his attempt to unseat Dowlais. The tiny shopkeeping electorate of 502, much of it already pledged to Guest, splintered under the pressure of the Cyfarthfa machine. A former bankrupt, the grocer Adam Newell, seized the opportunity to organize a group which offered its votes for sale at £10-£50 a time.⁸¹ The threat of a trade boycott was the favourite weapon on both sides. In mid-campaign, Guest calculated that his estimated majority had shrunk to ten, and from that moment, his campaign became more stridently Radical and Nonconformist. Thomas Revel Guest, his Wesleyan brother, a minister manqué, was pressed into service; more significantly, so was Morgan Williams, who became the ironmaster's most active canvasser. The key to the election, in fact, were the non-voters, for what ultimately carried the day was a mass-meeting of workmen on Aberdare Mountain, organized by Morgan Williams and the Rev. John Jones, the Unitarian minister of Aberdare, where Nonconformist ministers from Socinians to Baptists exhorted in relays and secured a major defection of Cyfarthfa men to Guest.⁸² With mass opinion mobilized, and with the threat of a Cyfarthfa boycott diminished, the Tory candidate rapidly lost ground. What liberals insisted was a 'natural' Radical majority reasserted itself, and Meyrick withdrew.

The victory was important. Even more significant was the manner in which it had been won. Guest, to hold his ten-pound voters, found himself utterly dependent on the Radicals, and on those workmen whom Morgan Williams could bring into play. At the election celebrations, D. W. James publicly acknowledged their debt to the non-voters, and promises to work for universal suffrage were endorsed by mass acclamation.⁸³ The election itself, largely by the Tories' own choosing, had resolved itself into a straightforward battle between Anglican and Dissenter. The consequence was a sharp polarization of opinion in Merthyr. From this date forward, at every meeting called to levy a church rate, one of the Jameses or a friend would rally a majority to vote it down. Twelve attempts in three years were utter failures. The parishioners even refused to pay for gaslight in the church or to maintain the organist. The former mild and neutral relationship yielded to bitter hostility, and controversies which were to echo all over Wales became burning issues in Merthyr as early as 1835.⁸⁴

⁸¹ On Newell's bankruptcy, see *Cambrian*, 3 April 1830.

⁸² *Merthyr Guardian*, 13 December 1834, 24 January 1835; *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 13 December 1834; for an insight into T. R. Guest, see *Iron in the Making*, p. 61.

⁸³ See the detailed accounts of the victory speeches in *Hereford Times*, 10, 17 January 1835.

⁸⁴ M.T. Minutes, 1835-38, *passim*; see, for example, the meeting of 30 June 1837.

Locally, too, the election led to a breakdown in the social amenities. As soon as it was over, the vestry began to hound Meyrick and William Thomas for their arrears of rates, and hastened to clear off a debt of £250 which it owed to the solicitor. In March 1835, the ironmasters advertised a bill, in the name of the parish, to rate the owners of small cottages. Christopher James, Henry Jones, Capt. Oakey, and E. L. Richards organized against it, and compelled the parish officers to withdraw their names. The quarrel raged throughout the year. The bill was dropped, but in the autumn another was introduced, in the name of the masters, who retained Meyrick as their solicitor. The response was instantaneous. At a meeting attended by 120 people, and marshalled by the Radicals, the parish pledged itself to oppose the bill with all the means in its power, and dismissed Meyrick from its service. William Perkins replaced him. More, they went over to the attack. They organized opposition to the renewal of the police magistrate's act and tried to eject J. B. Bruce. In the following year, a group of tradesmen launched a newspaper in opposition to the *Guardian*, which, with local cancellations multiplying, was already beginning to sound like the organ of a besieged garrison.⁸⁵

This bitter intransigence continued to the very end. In November 1836, the parish was virtually wound up as an organ of local government by the election of a Board of Guardians, under the new Poor Law, to manage the Merthyr Union, whose jurisdiction extended over nine parishes, including the townships of Aberdare and Cefn. The elections, in Merthyr at least, were conducted in an atmosphere of partisan ferocity, with Meyrick accusing the Dowlais managers of manipulating electors' lists and falsifying the results. His annoyance was understandable. Guest's men and the Radicals almost swept the board. At the head of the poll, with 617 votes, stood Richard Jenkins, the Unitarian farmer and vestryman of long standing. Third was D. W. James with 542 votes, fourth his cousin, William Jones, with 526. Thomas Evans, one of the Dowlais managers, and William Purnell, of Dowlais and a Radical, joined them. Second at the poll was the highly respected Methodist agent of Penydarren, Benjamin Martin; Rowland Hopkins, a Guest supporter, and Thomas Shepherd of Cyfarthfa made up the total of eight. They were reinforced by Unitarians from Cefn and a Dowlais Company master miner from Llanfabon. E. J. Hutchins acted as chairman, D. W.

⁸⁵ M.T. Minutes, 9, 19 March, 9 April, 28 May, 10, 24 December 1835; Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 357; R. D. Rees, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-8.

James as his deputy. Job James became the Board's surgeon in Merthyr.⁸⁶

After thirty years of growth which transformed a sketchily-organized parish into an industrial town, what was, in effect, the government of that town passed into the hands of men who were the political extremists of Nonconformist Radicalism or the zealous supporters of a parliamentary candidate dependent upon Radical opinion. For the Guest of 1835 and 1837 was a very different Guest from the man who stood for Honiton or even the man who stood for Merthyr in 1832. In these early days, before his tenure of the seat had grown into a tradition, the deciding factor was Tory opposition. Whenever a Conservative candidate appeared, the opinion of the ten-pound voters, mobilized by a coherent Radical group, and overshadowed by a working population, important sectors of which acted in concert with the more advanced members of that group, could compel the sitting member to move steadily leftward. By the end of the 1835 campaign, Guest had become an advocate of the ballot, the abolition of church rates, and the admission of Dissenters to universities. Another contest in 1837, this time against J. B. Bruce, with Crawshay performing a reverse somersault, produced a similar result.⁸⁷ Guest became zealous for the ballot and a sharp critic of the Poor Law, for which he had voted. At each election he became an advocate of policies he had earlier either opposed or ignored. Within the space of a few years, the moderate Tory of Honiton and the moderate Whig-liberal of 1832 had become a spokesman for militant Dissent. This is the social reality which is masked by the ironmaster's long twenty-year tenure of the parliamentary seat. The town he represented, the largest town in Wales, had been captured by Radicalism, and by Radicalism of a peculiarly sharp Nonconformist flavour. Those historians who follow contemporary Conservatives in dismissing Merthyr Tydfil as a new pocket borough have overlooked the extent to which Guest, to quote the inimitable *Merthyr Guardian*, was a prisoner of his Host.

GWYN A. WILLIAMS.

Aberystwyth.

⁸⁶ See the *Merthyr Guardian*, 5, 12, 19, 26 November, 3 December 1836.

⁸⁷ On his shift, see *Merthyr Guardian*, 20 December 1834 and 10 January 1835; on his later parliamentary conduct, see Islwyn David, *op. cit.*, pp. 190, 191, 199-200.

COMPOSITION OF THE MERTHYR SELECT VESTRY, 1822-36

Masters	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	4	5	5	5
Agents	1	3	7	5	4	3	3	7	5	6	7	7	5	5	2	2
Professional Men	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Merchants ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Shopkeepers ..	3	3	0	2	2	2	4	0	2	0	2	3	2	5	5	
Grocers	1	1	1	3	3	6	4	3	2	5	0	1	1	2	3	
Drapers	1	2	1	2	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	
Ironmongers ..	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	
Tanners	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	
Chandlers ..	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Nailers	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	
Innkeepers ..	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	2	
Curriers	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Saddlers	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Carpenters ..	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Shoemakers ..	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Miners	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Farmers	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	
Unknown	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Column totals indicate the number of select vestrymen elected at every election, viz. in January 1822, April 1822, and in March or April of 1823, 1824, 1825, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836.

Sources: M.T. Minutes, under March or April of the appropriate year. No vestry was elected in 1826. Individuals may be identified from other entries in M.T. Minutes and from the *Merthyr Guardian* and the *Cambrian*, advertisements, marriage notices, and obituaries in particular.

SELECT VESTRYMEN: FREQUENCY OF SERVICE

1822-36: TOTAL NUMBER OF VESTRIES: 15.

- Elected to:
12. William Thomas, Court.
Abraham Jones, nailer.*
 9. Henry Jones, draper.*
 8. Joseph Coffin, tanner.*
Richard Jenkins, farmer.*
William Jones, grocer and draper.*
Benjamin Martin, agent, Penydarren.
 7. D. W. James, tanner.*
Thomas Burnell, Chandler.
Abraham Davies, farmer.
John Petherick, agent, Penydarren.
John Lewis, agent, Cyfarthfa.
 6. Henry Charles, grocer.*
Joseph Oakey, half-pay naval captain.*

1828-35: TOTAL NUMBER OF VESTRIES: 8.

- Elected to:
8. Benjamin Martin, agent, Penydarren.
 7. Joseph Coffin, tanner.*
D. W. James, tanner.*
Abraham Jones, nailer.*
 6. William Thomas, Court.
Joseph Oakey, captain.*
 5. William Crawshay, ironmaster.
Anthony Hill, ironmaster.
John Lewis, agent, Cyfarthfa.
 4. Christopher James, merchant.*
W. D. Jenkins, grocer.
E. J. Hutchins, ironmaster.
George Kirkhouse, agent, Dowlais.*
 3. Richard Jenkins, farmer.*
Henry Jones, draper.*

* indicates Unitarian or kinsman/close associate of Unitarian.

THE TRADING POPULATION OF MERTHYR TYDFIL IN 1831
CENSUS OF 1831

Total population of the town	22,083
Total number of males over 20 years of age classified as	
(i) Capitalists, bankers, professional and educated men	143
(ii) Engaged in retail trade and handicrafts	1,270
Total number of males over 20 years of age in the more important trades:	
Cobblers	222
Blacksmiths	182
Carpenters	162
Builders	151
Publicans, Brewers	111
Village Shopkeepers	82
Tailors	68
Butchers	39
Carters	23
Tea Dealers	18
Linen-drapers	16
Tanners	13
Booksellers	12
Curriers	11
Chandlers	5
Grocers	2
Glaziers	11
Clothiers	10
Saddlers	9
Clockmakers	8
Coopers	7
Hatters, Hosiers	6
Chemists, Druggists	5

Census of 1831: Enumeration Abstract.

MERTHYR TYDFIL:
PARISH BUDGET, 21 FEBRUARY 1833 TO 24 JANUARY 1834

	Feb. 1833			May 1833			July 1833			Jan. 1834		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
RECEIPTS.												
Cash in hand	311	5	1									
Treasurer				135	0	0	70	0	0			
Cashier				10	0	0	10	0	0			
Arrears of Rates	250	0	0				260	0	0	150	0	0
Removals Accounts										20	0	0
From W. Crawshay & Son				300	0	0	200	0	0			
Ironmasters' Levy	750	0	0									
Rate at 3/6 in £	1,010	12	6	1,018	11	9	1,018	0	0			
Rate at 1/9 in £ (new valuation)										2,623	6	9
ESTIMATE OUTLAY												
Poor Relief	1,250	0	0	600	0	0	1,105	0	0	1,105	0	0
Solicitor	90	0	0	160	0	0	160	0	0	170	0	0
Surgeon	150	0	0	30	0	0	25	0	0	25	0	0
Vestry Clerk	25	0	0	25	0	0	25	0	0	25	0	0
Assistant Overseer							55	0	0	52	0	0
Assistant Collector										30	0	0
Accounts Clerk	20	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	0	20	0	0
Stipendiary Magistrate				150	0	0				120	0	0
Rents Owning	25	0	0	35	0	0	20	0	0	50	0	0
County Rate	90	0	0	182	0	0	160	0	0	180	0	0
Appeals on Removals				20	0	0				30	0	0
Stationery	15	0	0	10	0	0	20	0	0	10	0	0
Dowlais Company Bank (Parish Bank)	131	6	0							85	5	6
Cost of New Valuation										477	0	0
Surveyors' Expenses				180	0	0						
Dowlais Company Account	270	0	0									
Sundries	20	0	0							30	0	0

Receipts. February 1833: Ironmasters' Levy was a special arrangement made during controversy over valuation. January 1834: the rates arrears were those considered available, after many considered hopeless had been expunged from the books.

Estimates. Poor relief, 31 May, for six weeks only; from 25 July, estimate of £85 per week for thirteen weeks per quarter. Some estimates cover more than one quarter. All accounts and estimates were prepared quarterly. Balances expected on the four quarters were, respectively: £235 11s. 7d; £61 11s. 9d.; £33 (these seem to be round-sum estimates of receipts also); £413 1s. 3d. Total receipts ran at £2,321 17s. 7d.; £1,463 11s. 9d.; £1,558; £2,793 6s. 9d.

Source. M.T. Minutes, under the appropriate date.

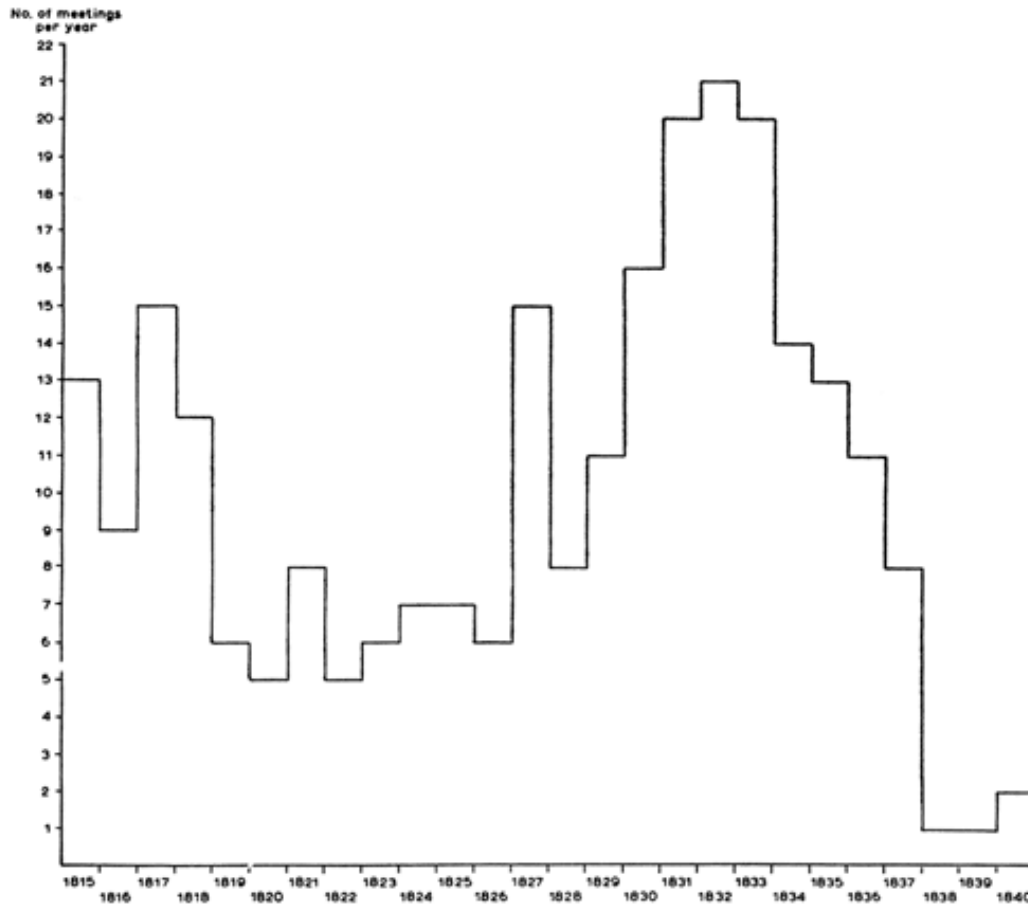


Fig. 1. Frequency of parish meetings, parish of Merthyr Tydfil, 1815–1840

FREQUENCY OF PARISH MEETINGS, 1815–1840

Number of parish meetings recorded annually in the parish minute-book. The Board of Guardians, under the Poor Law Amendment Act, was elected in November 1836

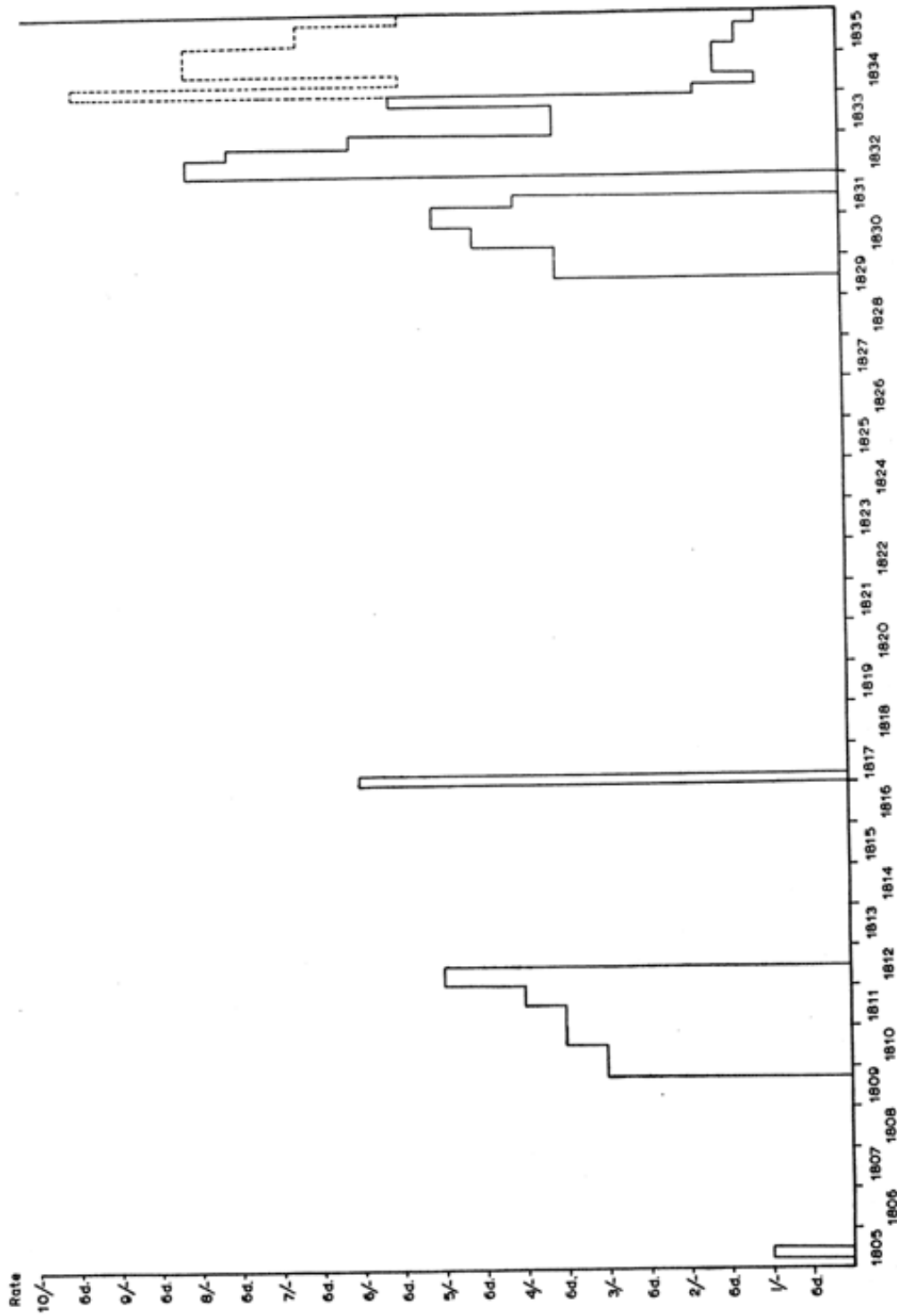


Fig. 2. Poor Rates, parish of Merthyr Tydfil

POOR RATES: 1805-1835

As recorded in parish minute-book: fixed quarterly on 15 January, 15 April, 15 July, 15 October: expressed in shillings in the pound. From first quarter 1834, new valuation came into operation. Equivalent under the old valuation indicated by broken line.