The history of the book trade in Leicester to c1850

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The History of the Book Trade in Leicester to c1850

by

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A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

May 2002

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Abstract

A study of the history of the book trade (printing, bookselling, stationery and publishing) in Leicester, from the medieval beginnings of the trade (parchment making etc.) up to c1850. The development of the book trade is examined in its local, regional and national contexts, including cultural, social and economic aspects, with the aim of contributing to the growing corpus of historical study of the provincial book trade in England, which has developed considerably over the last thirty years. Extensive use has been made of primary source material, not least the Borough Records of Leicester including the registers of freemen and apprentices, newspaper advertisements, extant locally-printed books and other material.

More than three hundred book-trade individuals have been identified. The activities of the leading practitioners are explored, including the stock and services they provided, the economics of their trading activity, their standing in the town (many held civic office), and their interaction within the business community. The impact of the book trade and the printed word in Leicester are discussed, as are other significant aspects of the trade such as the importance of family businesses, the role of women, and the handing on of trade skills from master to apprentice.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, the striking contrast between the conservatism of the old Corporation and the strident radicalism, and religious dissent, of many Leicester people provides a vibrant setting for the activities of booksellers, printers and newspaper publishers. Many of the town’s leading book-trade practitioners were politically radical – an interesting and historically important dimension to the later development of the book trade in Leicester, to a degree seldom found elsewhere.
Acknowledgements

I am pleased to place on record my thanks to a number of people who have provided help in various ways. I am particularly grateful to Professor John Feather for his knowledgeable and stimulating supervision, and to Professor Margaret Evans, who first encouraged me to study for a PhD.

The staff of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland have been consistently helpful. I am especially grateful to Aubrey Stevenson and Mike Raftery for their interest and assistance, and to Adam Goodwin, Carl Harrison and Robin Jenkins for patient help in transcribing the more obscure sections of some of the manuscripts in the Record Office.

I also wish to thank my fellow book-trade historians and others who have provided information and assistance, especially Dr Maureen Bell, Terence Cocks, Walter Cockshaw, Dr Yolanda Courtney, Jim English, Professor Peter Isaac, Jess Jenkins, Joyce Lee, Paul Morgan, Charles Parry, Derek Seaton, William Sessions, Dr Alison Shell, Dr David Stoker and Philip Warren.
Abbreviations

BBTI  British Book Trade Index
BL    British Library
DNB   Dictionary of National Biography
ESTC  English Short Title Catalogue (1473-1800)
ROLLR Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland
STC   Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue
TLAHS Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society
VCH   Victoria County History of Leicestershire
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1.1 Aims

This study investigates the history of the book trade in Leicester from its origins in the Middle Ages up to the middle of the nineteenth century, concentrating on the period from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, when the earliest evidence is found for stationer/booksellers in the town. The term book trade encompasses the range of activities concerned with the manufacture, printing, publishing and distribution of books, newspapers and other printed materials.

The overall aim is to contribute to the historical study of the provincial book trade, which has developed considerably in the last thirty years. In line with recent scholarly studies, this research has gone further than a mere listing of booksellers, printers and other book-trade practitioners to examine in some depth the activities of book trade people, their interaction with one another, and the impact of their businesses on the local community.

1.2 Objectives

The original objectives of this study as set out in my research proposal were:

- to investigate the history of the book trade in Leicester from c1575 to 1850
- to analyse the development of the book trade in Leicester, including economic and social factors
to assess the political and social impact on the people of Leicester of the production and distribution of a growing range of books, newspapers and other printed material.

These original objectives were refined in the light of experience (not least in the extension of the period to be studied)¹ and they were later expressed as a series of key questions:

- how did people obtain books and related material in Leicester at different periods up to c1850?
- why and how did the demand for books and related material develop in the town?
- what was the impact of the printed word on the local community?
- what evidence is there for continuous local book-trade activity?
- to what extent is local book-trade activity typical?
- how did the book trade of Leicester relate to the trade in the rest of the country, in particular to the Midlands region and to London?

1.3 Scope

The reasons for the unusually long period covered by this study should perhaps be explained. Firstly, a long-term study is appropriate for Leicester because of its unusually long history of continuous occupation. Secondly, quite early in the research, it became apparent that the exceptionally well-preserved Borough Records contained evidence of some aspects of the medieval origins of the book trade in the town, and it was decided to extend the study some way back before the original proposed

¹ See below, paragraph 1.3.
starting-date of c1575. The aim of this change was to make use of evidence for book ownership and for the trade of parchment-making and also, importantly, to try to identify some of the conditions which were to enable the mainstream book trade to develop in Leicester from the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

Finally, there is the important factor of the steadily changing nature of the town. Early in the period studied, Leicester was an important ecclesiastical centre, with book-trade skills being practised in one of the country’s leading Augustinian abbeys. By the end of the period, the town was developing into a major centre of printing. During the latter half of the nineteenth century and for most of the twentieth century Leicester was one of the country’s leading printing towns. However, that falls outside the scope of this research, as does the later significance of Leicestershire as one of the centres of the modern private press movement.

Throughout the whole of this long period (and to the present day) Leicester has been a thriving market town, the administrative capital of its county, and a town of regional importance in the East Midlands. Evidence of the slow but relentless development of all of these facets of the town can be traced throughout the period. Leicester has also grown steadily, rather than dramatically, as an industrial town, gradually changing its character from a predominantly agricultural town to a thriving commercial centre.

Given the length of the period under review and the amount of evidence available, this study aims to present a wide-ranging overview of local book trade development, complemented by more detailed treatment, as the evidence permits, of certain periods and themes, including:
• the Reformation period, when the records of St Martin's church provide evidence for the acquisition of books for church use;
• two recusant book pedlars in the early seventeenth century, for whom there is evidence in the Borough Records;
• the town's first newspaper, the Leicester Journal, and its very active printer, John Gregory, for whose business there is detailed evidence, not least in the advertisement columns of the Journal itself; and
• the period of radical politics, from the 1780s to the 1840s, when a large number of book-trade people were politically active — a topic of importance for which there is ample evidence.

The geographical scope of this research was considered at the outset and it was decided to limit the field of study to Leicester itself. Although the book trade of Leicester served residents of the county as well as the town, there were booksellers and printers trading in other locations in Leicestershire, notably Loughborough, Hinckley, Market Harborough and Ashby de la Zouch. This study notes, in order to give as full a picture as possible of the Leicester booksellers, that several of them also ran small shops or market stalls in the county and sometimes further afield. Otherwise, the book-trade in the rest of Leicestershire does not form part of the present study.

Because the history of Leicester’s libraries has been very competently researched by Joyce Lee and the history of the local newspapers is discussed in a published paper by Derek Fraser, it was decided that this study should not aim to research either libraries or newspaper publishing, except for the earlier history of the town’s first newspaper (only briefly discussed in Fraser’s study which began in c1790) and, for the sake of completeness,
referring briefly to circulating libraries as a component of the trading activities of appropriate booksellers.²

1.4 Sources

The historian of the book trade in provincial England needs to make use of a wide range of sources, subject to local availability. Primary source material may include archives of local individuals or businesses but such material tends to be rather sparse especially for the period up to 1850. No book-trade archives have been found for Leicester, nor even account books or files of correspondence, although a handful of letters, receipts and other documents have survived.

There are few national resources relevant to the study of the book trade in a provincial town. The names of the more prominent individuals were checked against the National Register of Archives though with no useful result.³ The most useful national source was the apprenticeship records of the Stationers' Company augmented to some extent by the records of the Inland Revenue.⁴ The Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1557-1775, compiled by H.R. Plomer and others, remain a useful source of information, although many of the entries now need to be updated by the findings of more recent research.⁵

³ The only major archive of a local book-trade person is that of Sir Richard Phillips, held at Reading University Library. Unfortunately it covers Phillips's activity only after his move to London; all his Leicester papers are thought to have been lost in the fire of 1794 (see below, chapter 6).
⁵ The four volumes of 'Plomer', originally published between 1910 and 1932, were reprinted as a single volume, without correction, in 1977 and 1992.
Despite the lack of specific local book-trade archives, a great deal of evidence for the trade, especially for the earlier period, has been traced in the Borough Records. It has often been noted that few English towns have a longer history of continuous occupation than Leicester, and also that none has such extensive and well-preserved administrative records. The Guild Rolls, beginning in 1196, are the earliest surviving records of any English town and 'the oldest series of memoranda now extant made outside the king's court or a monastery'. There are extensive (though by no means complete) published transcripts which form a valuable key to the original documents. The Borough Records include the registers of freemen and apprentices, a most important primary source for this research.

Although the Borough Records form a rich source of evidence for almost all of the period covered by this research (until the reforms effected by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835), some of the other sources that are useful for earlier periods become less detailed as time progresses. Probate inventories, a valuable source of information on some individuals, become much less common after 1700, and eighteenth century inventories are often less detailed than earlier ones. Parish registers and wills have provided useful additional information on some book-trade people.

Much useful evidence of book-trade activity also emerges from the churchwardens' accounts of St Martin's, which was always the principal church within the walls of the old town and is now the Cathedral. The

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7 Records of the Borough of Leicester published in seven volumes between 1899 and 1974. Full details are in the Primary Sources section of the Bibliography.
8 Transcribed in two published volumes, edited by Henry Hartopp, Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1197-1770, including the Apprentices sworn before successive Mayors for certain periods, 1646-1770, and Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1770-1930, including the Apprentices sworn... 1770-1926, (Leicester, 1927 and 1933).
original records are lost but fortunately there are extensive published transcripts edited in 1884 by Thomas North, as well as some very selective extracts given in Nichols' *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester.*

As the seventeenth century progressed, the St Martin's accounts were generally kept in much less detail than formerly and no longer provide much evidence of book and stationery purchases. However, the lack of detailed information for St Martin's for the later part of the seventeenth century is to some extent balanced by the churchwardens' accounts of another of the town's ancient churches, St Mary's (St Mary de Castro, next to the castle). Although the originals are now lost, there are published transcripts beginning in 1652.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, primary source material of considerable importance is found in the town's first newspaper. The *Leicester Journal*—in particular its advertisement columns—is a rich source of detailed data on book-trade activity, not least that of the paper's proprietor, John Gregory. Other local papers commenced later in the century and these too

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9 T. North *The Accounts of the Churchwardens of S. Martin's, Leicester: 1489-1844.* North explains in his preface that he acquired c1860 a large bound volume of the St Martin's churchwardens' accounts from 1544 to 1645. This volume had been used by John Nichols for his selective (and sometimes inaccurate) transcripts but had been in private hands for at least fifty years when North obtained it. North made his transcripts (adding data from later account books and replicating some of Nichols's transcripts of accounts to which he did not have access) and then returned the large bound volume to St Martin's for safe keeping. Sadly, it has since gone astray again, so it is fortunate that its contents are preserved in North's detailed and apparently reliable transcripts. I am very grateful to Terence Cocks, the Archivist of Leicester Cathedral, for information on the loss of the St Martin's accounts.


11 See below, chapter 5. Although the *Journal* commenced in 1753, the British Library file commences with issue number 297 (6 January 1759). ROLLR has a microfilm of the BL file and does not hold any earlier copies of the *Journal.*
are important sources of book-trade data, as are published trade directories, the earliest of which was published in 1784.12

Autobiographical material relevant to the book trade of Leicester is not plentiful. The autobiography of Richard Phillips is of some interest but is known to be quite unreliable, but the Life of Thomas Cooper, the Chartist leader, has illuminated the local political scene in the 1840s and added some interesting detail on his own and others’ book-trade activity.13

The imprints of books printed in the town, or printed elsewhere for Leicester booksellers, together with extant copies of locally-printed items, provide a great deal of useful evidence. While many books, pamphlets and other items printed in Leicester have been examined and catalogue records of many other local titles have been consulted with the aim of extracting information relevant to the history of the book trade in the town, it should be noted that the present study has not attempted to trace or list all locally printed items.

Electronic sources have been an asset, not least the English Short Title Catalogue: 1437-1800 (ESTC, accessed on CD:ROM at the British Library), its predecessor, the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (STC, accessed on CD:ROM at Leicester University Library), the British Book Trade Index (BBTI, kindly provided on CD:ROM by its editor, Professor Peter Isaac), and the

12 Bailey's British Directory, 1784.
13 Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of Sir Richard Phillips... by 'A Citizen of London' [i.e. Phillips himself], (1808); Thomas Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper Written by Himself, (1872, reprinted Leicester, 1971).
on-line catalogues of several libraries, in particular the British Library, the Bodleian Library and Cambridge University Library. 14

Although no extant archives of local book-trade businesses have been traced, some interesting original documentary evidence has been found in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR). Much of this research has been carried out at ROLLR, since its collections include the Borough Records, the local newspapers, published directories, and a selection of locally printed books and pamphlets. A further selection of books and other items printed in Leicester have been examined in the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, and in the local history department of Nottingham City Library.

A number of secondary sources, listed in the bibliography, have provided important background information and interesting comparative data. Especially useful has been John Feather's important study of eighteenth-century developments in the book trade, which has been a constant source of reference. 15

1.5 Methodology

An important part of the first phase (1997) of this study was a literature search, which indicated that the history of the book trade in Leicester had not been researched, though I was already aware that the history of the town's newspapers (from c1790) and its libraries had been thoroughly studied. 16 In the light of this and in discussion with my

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14 I am grateful to Joyce Lee for her printout of an STC search on Leicester, which proved a useful starting-point, and to Dr. David Stoker for a list of Leicester imprints obtained from COPAC and OCLC First Search.


16 See above, note 1.
supervisor, decisions were made on the scope of the present research. In parallel with the literature search, a considerable amount of background reading was carried out, along with planning of the structure of the thesis and an initial investigation of the evidence available at ROLLR and elsewhere.

The second phase (1997/98), which formed the foundation for much of the remaining research, was the compilation of a database of booksellers, printers, stationers, bookbinders, and other individuals and businesses engaged in any aspect of the book trade in Leicester up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The leading practitioners are of course discussed in the following chapters but there are many people listed, especially apprentices, of whom little is known; they are recorded only in the database.

Historians of the provincial book trade face the shared problem of a glaring lack of evidence for the activities of journeymen. An individual, once apprenticed and made free, usually disappears from the official records. Should he or she subsequently set up their own business there may be evidence of other kinds, but a freeman practising as a journeyman, whether working with one master or several, is usually 'invisible' in the documentary sources. A related problem is the lack of evidence for women working alongside their husbands in a book-trade business. Although their married status historically renders them similarly 'invisible', there is a little evidence that some women (perhaps many) were active participants in family businesses. The trading activity of a widow, on the other hand, is usually better documented.16

17 See above, paragraph 1.4.
18 The role of women in the book trade is discussed further in chapter 7.
The compilation of the database resulted primarily from a detailed study of the records of freemen and apprentices. Although the registers have been accurately transcribed in Hartopp's published edition, they are not indexed by trade, necessitating a long period of line-by-line searching at an early stage of this research. Additional data were added as more information was gleaned from other sources, in particular published directories, newspaper advertisements and local imprints. The indexes of ROLLR were quite helpful in tracing certain individuals and documents relating to them. Secondary sources, in particular the Roll of Mayors and Patterson's Radical Leicester, proved very useful at this stage, both in adding to my knowledge of individual book-trade people and also in indicating other primary sources.

In the first year of research more than two hundred individuals and businesses had been identified, and the database now comprises more than three hundred names. The large size of the database precludes its submission as part of this thesis. However, the Leicester data are now accessible within the British Book Trade Index. In addition, following a final edit, a hard copy of the Leicester database will be deposited, along with a copy of this thesis, at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

At the outset of this research it was known that there had been some local book-trade involvement in radical politics. During the second phase of

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19 See above, note 6. See also my article, which includes a selection of Leicester examples: 'Freedom and Apprenticeship Records as a Source for Book Trade History', Book Trade History Group Newsletter, 41 (December 2001), pp. 11-13.
21 The Leicestershire portion of BBTI (including data resulting from this research) has recently formed a pilot Web site in support of an application by the University of Birmingham for research funding to develop BBTI into a Web-based resource. The application was successful and the three-year project commenced in April 2002.
research its full extent became clear and a decision was taken to make this one of the major themes of the present study, since it is such a notable feature of Leicester's book-trade history. The same is true, to a lesser degree, of the other topics (the Reformation, recusant book pedlars, John Gregory and his newspaper) chosen for fuller treatment as detailed evidence emerged during the research. Also forming part of the second phase was some initial comparative work, making use of secondary sources including Margaret Cooper's recently-published study of the Worcester book trade. 22

The importance of newspaper advertisements as a primary source has already been noted and the third phase of this study (late 1998 to early 2000) concentrated on this rich source of information. A system of sampling certain years of specific newspapers was agreed with my supervisor and was subsequently revised in the light of experience. A search of sample years of the two key papers, the Leicester Journal and Leicester Chronicle, covering both advertisements and editorial matter, was complemented by searching sample copies of other papers such as the Leicester Herald and the Leicestershire Mercury. The short run of the important local Chartist paper, the Midland Counties Illuminator, was examined in rather more detail. In addition to items of evidence found as a result of the sampling process, specific items of news and advertisements identified from secondary sources were also examined. 23

Phase three also included the completion of my research on the radical political aspects of the book trade in Leicester (which had commenced in phase two) in preparation for a conference paper — delivered at

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23 Patterson's *Radical Leicester* identified a number of useful items in newspapers, while Joyce Lee's MLS dissertation, *The History and Development of Libraries in Leicester before 1871*, together with some references that she very kindly supplied, led me to several press advertisements which would not have been found by sampling.
Aberystwyth, July 1999 – as well as forming the basis of a large part of chapter 6.

Also carried out largely during phase three was work on probate inventories, wills and other evidence on individuals, searching of the Borough Records and various ecclesiastical records for earlier evidence of book-trade activity. This contributed to the drafting of chapters 3 and 4, as well as to the preparation of a conference paper delivered at Newcastle in July 2000.

The fourth phase of this study (mid-2000 to early 2002) included the completion of the research, including a number of visits to the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library and Nottingham City Library, to examine Leicester-printed items and other evidence not available locally.

Importantly, the fourth phase allowed time for reflection on the results of my research, including the completion of comparative study (concentrating on Nottingham and Worcester) and also for a considerable amount of further contextual reading – in particular in the fields of cultural history and the history of the book – which assisted in drawing some of the broader conclusions set out in chapter 7.

The drafting of chapters proceeded in parallel with my research, commencing with chapter 2 being drafted during phase two. The narrative chapters were largely drafted during phase three and the earlier part of phase four. Phase four also included the drafting of chapter 7, the organizing of illustrations, and some revision of earlier draft chapters.
I have been very fortunate in having opportunities of presenting several conference papers and publishing some of my findings during the course of my research. The publications are listed under my name in the bibliography; conference papers are listed here:

Papers presented to the annual Seminars on the British Book Trade:

- *Some Radical Printers and Booksellers of Leicester: c1790-1850*,
  (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, July 1999),
- *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Leicester*,
  (Newcastle University, July 2000).

Papers presented to meetings of the Book History Postgraduate Network:

- *Thomas Cooper and Leicester's Chartist Press*,
  (University of Birmingham, February 2000);
- *Freedom and Apprenticeship Records as a Source for Book Trade History*,
  (St Bride's Printing Library, London, March 2001);
- *Recusant Book Pedlars in Seventeenth-Century Leicester*,

A paper presented to *Printing History: New Criteria*, the annual conference of the Printing Historical Society:

- *Local and Regional Studies of Printing History: Context and Content*
  (Reading University, January 2002).

A paper presented to *The Versatile Text*, an international postgraduate conference organized by the Book History Postgraduate Network:

- *Radical Communities of Print in England? A theory with some examples*
  (University of Edinburgh, April 2002).
1.6 Structure

Following a chapter (2) in which the local historical background is outlined, the history of the book trade in Leicester is presented in four chronological narrative chapters (3 to 6), the last of which gives some emphasis to the dynamic political situation in which much book-trade activity took place in the later decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. A final chapter (7) attempts to assess the impact of the printed word in Leicester from a number of perspectives and to draw some general conclusions.
CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT: the local background

2.1 The character of Leicester

There are several published histories of Leicester. It is not the purpose of this chapter to replicate or summarise them. The aim is rather to set the scene by identifying and briefly describing those aspects of the history of the town which are of particular relevance to the book trade. In other words, this chapter seeks answers to the question: 'What were the specific factors - demographic, social, political and economic - which enabled Leicester increasingly to support a steadily growing range of book-trade activity up to the middle of the nineteenth century?'

Although chapter 3 explores the medieval origins of the book-trade in Leicester, this study focuses primarily on the early modern and modern period up to circa 1850. From time to time during this lengthy period, there occurred colossal social, economic and political change, both nationally and locally. One major change with far-reaching implications was the considerable growth in the town's population – outlined in Figure 1. It is interesting to compare Leicester's growth with that of other Midland towns, especially in the later part of our period. Leicester and Coventry had the same population in 1801 but by 1851, Leicester was three times the size of Coventry. Also in 1801 Leicester's

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1 It is correct to describe Leicester as a town throughout the period in question. It did not attain city status until 1919.
population was three-fifths of that of Nottingham but by 1851 the proportions had been reversed, while Derby and Northampton had been 'left behind' by 1851.² (By the end of the nineteenth century, Leicester had grown even more dramatically to over 200,000.)

Although Leicester was spared the worst excesses of industrial development, it nevertheless changed dramatically during this period, from a compact county town and market centre, to a large industrial town. In 1789, Leicester could be

³ The population figures used in the chart are drawn from various sources and are intended only as a rough guide.
described as 'still very much a country town, dependent upon its immediate countryside, very local in its outlook, self-contained and self-satisfied.'

Leicester’s central geographical position in its county was an important factor in its development as a market town, as well as facilitating the exercise of its various functions as the county town. Professor Jack Simmons notes that Leicester, ‘standing at the very centre of its county, has dominated it to an extent rarely found elsewhere.’ This must have been a factor in the successful development of all the distributive trades, including bookselling.

Simmons has elsewhere observed that Leicester is ‘central in another sense, even more important, too: central to England itself.’ Medieval Leicester, he suggests, owed something of its greatness to its centrality, while in the age of coaching it lay on an important road from London to the North. With the coming of the railways, Leicester found itself ‘splendidly placed’ in relation to the national rail network.

The role of Leicester as the main market town for the county goes back at least to the early thirteenth century. Its predominance in trade was closely guarded by the Corporation, which opposed in 1699 the establishment of a fair at Market Harborough. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Leicester’s importance as a trade centre continued to grow, attracting trade away from the county’s lesser towns. Alan Everitt has identified six separate
market places in Leicester, the most important of which was the ‘Saturday Market’. This is the present-day Market Place, dominant since the seventeenth century, which ‘held a pre-eminent position as the centre of retail trade in the town, as distinct from trade in corn and livestock.’

Fairs were an important feature of trading in former times. There were two medieval fairs in the town, in May and October. Two more were added in the sixteenth century, one or two in the seventeenth, and no fewer than four new fairs started in the eighteenth century:

By 1800, then, there were at least nine or ten fairs held every year in Leicester, chiefly for livestock, but also for all sorts of merchandise, and of course for amusements too.

It would be surprising if several booksellers and stationers were not selling their wares at some of these fairs; it was not at all unusual for a trader to operate both a shop and one or more market stalls. As we shall see later, there is evidence of one trader, from outside Leicestershire, at the May Fair in 1599 — the un-named ‘bookebynder of Atherston’ [Atherstone, Warwickshire].

The Abbey of St Mary de Pratis (St Mary of the Meadows) lay about half a mile outside the town and was thus physically, as well as perhaps spiritually, rather detached from the daily life of Leicester. Nevertheless, for almost four centuries this house of Augustinian canons interacted with the town in a number of ways, trading in the town’s markets and providing an education for some of the boys of the town. By the end of the thirteenth century,

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9 *Borough Records*, vol. 3, p. 374.
as consumer, producer and middleman seller the abbey was clearly an establishment of great importance in this part of the country.\textsuperscript{10}

Within the Augustinian order, Leicester Abbey – with its notable library – was of considerable importance. It was probably, after Cirencester, the wealthiest Augustinian house in England.\textsuperscript{11} In the fifteenth century in particular, it achieved some eminence as an educational and literary centre. It is important to note that the existence of Leicester Abbey is evidence that book-trade skills existed in the town before the early modern period.

2.2 Early modern Leicester

Leicester was relatively prosperous in Stuart times - at least some of its citizens were:

its richest townsmen were among the wealthiest of any inland town in England...

Quite clearly, Stuart Leicester was a town of substantial wealth, and the basis of much of this wealth was its trade as one of the great market centres of the Midlands.\textsuperscript{12}

The character of Leicester changed considerably as the eighteenth century proceeded. Many of the old, country-town ways disappeared and Leicester began to take on something of the appearance of a modern provincial town. The cattle market, a long-standing feature of the bustling town centre, was moved to the periphery, while the medieval town gates, which had impeded

\textsuperscript{10} Levi Fox, Leicester Abbey: history and description, 1971, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} A. Everitt, ‘Leicester and its Markets’, p. 45.
traffic for many years, were finally removed in 1774. The old walls remained however for some years longer.

The ancient walls of Leicester followed the lines of the present-day Sanvey Gate and Soar Lane in the north, Churchgate and Gallowtree Gate in the east, and Horsefair Street and Millstone Lane in the south.\(^\text{13}\) There was no western wall, as the Soar provided a natural boundary. Gallowtree Gate formed a sort of early ‘bypass’ to the old town, carrying the main route to London just outside the walls, thereby avoiding the gates and other obstructions of the old town. As Gallowtree Gate increased in importance as a trade centre, especially after the town gates were removed, several gaps opened up in the walls to improve access to the Market Place. Some of these remain today as pedestrian alleys.

The commercial centre of the town was now focused on Gallowtree Gate and Coal Hill (the site of the present clock tower) together with Eastgates and the Cheapside end of the Market Place. (This is still the heart of Leicester’s main retailing area.) This had long been an area of importance for trade, in coal, grain and much more besides. One reason for its success was that control of this area was disputed endlessly between the Corporation and the Bishop of Lincoln. The land was part of the large and important parish of St Margaret’s and lay outside the town walls, which meant that it also lay beyond the jurisdiction of the Corporation. Once known as ‘No Man’s Land’, it had been a bustling area of illicit trading and unlicensed ale-houses. In the eighteenth century, several booksellers had premises in this area. Richard Phillips’s shop and library were on the corner of Coal Hill and Gallowtree Gate until they burnt down in 1794.

\(^{13}\) ‘Gate’ as a street name derives from an Anglo-Saxon word for street or way.
As the eighteenth century drew to a close, Leicester was a prosperous trading town and was in a strong position for further growth. Unfortunately, 'growth was taking place in a form which divided the town bitterly,' due to the anachronistic powers of the old Corporation, which had long had 'an entrenched front of Anglican-Tory shopkeepers and small producers,' in contrast to the new traders and industrialists who were predominantly Liberal and Nonconformist.¹⁴

For most of the period under review, up to the reforms of 1835, Leicester was governed by the Corporation - a typical municipal oligarchy. The 'twenty-four' (Aldermen) and the 'forty-eight' (Common Councilmen) were unelected and they appointed justices and other officials from among their own number. A number of book-trade people were members of the Corporation over the years and several were appointed Mayor:

- Francis Ward (bookseller and stationer) 1686
- Thomas Hartshorne (bookseller) 1705
- Simon Martin (bookseller) 1728
- Thomas Martin (Simon's son, bookseller) 1750
- John Gregory (printer of the *Leicester Journal*) 1779
- George Ireland (bookseller and printer) 1821.

Although formally established by Queen Elizabeth's Charter of Incorporation in 1599, the Corporation - 'the Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester' - had in effect come into being over a period of time by the gradual

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merging of the functions of the Portmoot and the Gild Merchant. ‘The Gild, through the Mayor and the twenty-four, who formed its supervising council, framed commercial ordinances, and exercised the power of punishing offenders against the brotherhood’s rules.’ It is the regulatory functions of the Gild, inherited by the Corporation, which are most relevant to a study of trade in the Borough. Especially important are the issues of freedom and apprenticeship.

There were four ways of becoming a freeman of Leicester: 16

- by birth - but the son had to be born after his father was made free
- by a seven-year apprenticeship with a freeman of Leicester 17
- by purchase - a ‘stranger’ (born outside Leicester) could pay a substantial ‘fine’ to be made free 18
- by order of the Assembly or Common Hall - either as an honour or to benefit the town by admitting a tradesman otherwise ineligible (a fine was payable in the latter case).

A freeman was liable to be appointed to the Corporation, or nominated as the Mayor, Chamberlain or other official. If nominated to such positions, he was compelled to serve, although exceptionally a man might be excused office for some reason on payment of a fine. The award of freedom also brought with it certain valuable rights. The freemen’s

  chief commercial privilege was the right to trade, both by wholesale
  and retail, within the borough, and to be free of toll in other protected

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17 The seven-year term was fixed by the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices
18 The ‘fine’ was usually money but in the early years of the system it was sometimes paid in kind, often as a ‘pottle’ (a half-gallon measure) of wine.
towns, and from Elizabeth's reign they were privileged to send their sons
to the Free Grammar School without payment. 19

The Corporation's attempt to control the trade of the Borough was never
totally effective, and by the eighteenth century the system was being challenged.
It seems that some traders had always managed to go about their business
without having been made free, although in 1629, the bookseller John Allen
was fined £2 for trading one month before he was made free. 20 Some trades,
such as the apothecaries in the seventeenth century and the woollen drapers in
the eighteenth, seem to have welcomed freedom as a measure of protection.
Members of other trades could not always be persuaded to take up their
freedom; in 1705 a bargain offer of freedom for £10 was ignored by the many
non-free woolcombers of the town. 21

Although 'the old guard hung on to its retailing and trading privileges as long as
it could,' the new, rapidly developing manufacturing industries were beyond its
sphere of control. 22 One of many reasons for the industrialists' opposition to
the Corporation's stranglehold was that only freemen could vote in
Parliamentary elections. The system was finally challenged, and defeated, by a
high-profile, and exceptionally long, court case in 1749. George Green (alias
Smith), a non-free watchmaker, won his case against the Corporation in the
Court of Common Pleas, after eight years of legal wrangling. It has been
suggested, though never proven, that Green was financed by some of the

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town's Radical hosiers. The local historian, James Thompson, thought that Green should be ranked 'among the champions of freedom of this locality.'\(^{23}\)

After 1749, many people continued to be made free but the Corporation had lost its ancient right to compel traders to be freemen.

Although it had previously been a fairly typical oligarchy, the Corporation of Leicester became in the last years before reform, quite untypical. The freedom was being sold for political ends and there was evidence of bribery and corruption on the part of the members of the Corporation and its town clerk. By the 1820s, it had become 'the most notorious of all corporations,' and 'a symbol for the old corporate system.'\(^{24}\)

The new Corporation came into being on 1 January 1836, with none of the old Corporation's members being elected. The reformed body reflected the religious and political make-up of the Borough much more closely than the old Corporation. The majority of members elected were Liberals and Nonconformists. The first six Mayors of the new-style Corporation were members of the Great Meeting (popularly known as the 'Mayors' Nest'), as was Samuel Stone, the Town Clerk (author of Stone's Justices' Manual).

Other innovations of the 1830s included the establishment of an elected Board of Guardians to supervise provision for the poor, and the introduction of a police force. The reform legislation extended the town's boundaries 'well beyond the urban limits.'\(^{25}\)

\(^{21}\) J. Thompson, *History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 79.
\(^{25}\) R.H. Evans, 'The Local Government of Leicester in the Nineteenth Century', p. 73.
Towards the end of our period, in the years just before the Public Health Act of 1848, Leicester had become a somewhat squalid place. The sixteenth-century conduit, with its outlet in the Market Place, was still the only public water supply, supplemented by local wells which were often contaminated. In many parts of the town there were open ditches for drainage, only half the streets had sewers, and there were no fewer than three thousand cesspits in the town. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that much uncontrolled cheap housing had been knowingly built on wash-land; frequent flooding left pools of filth and outbreaks of fever in its wake. In the light of this state of affairs, it is perhaps not surprising to find that Leicester was one of the most unhealthy towns of England: its annual mortality rate of 30 in every 1,000 was exceeded by only three other great towns.  

Charles Wesley preached several times in Leicester between 1770 and 1790 and a small, rather hard-up, Methodist congregation grew up in the town. A Baptist congregation, which was to become very influential, was also established in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The Nonconformist congregations were rather more active than the established church in building new places of worship for the growing population of Leicester. Education was taken seriously in Leicester from an early date, and the Free Grammar School had a sound reputation. When the Nonconformists founded the Great Meeting in 1708, they soon decided to establish their own school; the boys were given leather breeches, as well as free instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. Alderman Newton’s Church of England school opened in 1785. The boys were
given a small Bible, a Psalter/service book, and a spelling book, along with other necessities including slates and a daily roll of bread.

At the same period, eleven Sunday Schools were established in Leicester and a few Church of England day-schools were opened to Nonconformists. The education of girls took place in such establishments as that of Mary Linwood, the celebrated maker of needlework pictures, who ran a school in Belgrave Gate. There were various local initiatives in the field of adult education. Thomas Cooper, the Chartist leader, set up a school for working men and boys in 1841, with classes on evenings and Sundays in such diverse subjects as literature, the Bible, phrenology and geology.

The success of the provincial book trades depended to a large extent on the patronage of the country gentry. It is therefore appropriate to consider the developing role of Leicester as a place of entertainment, as well as business, for the local gentry. Peter Borsay observes, in his study of the English ‘urban renaissance’ of 1660 to 1770, that many shire towns, including Leicester, ‘enjoyed a burgeoning trade in consumer goods and professional services’. He also notes the high status of both residents and visitors of such towns, and remarks that ‘it is not surprising that shire towns also became focal points for the provision of fashionable culture and leisure after the Restoration.’

2.3 Leisure and entertainment

As roads gradually improved, in the middle years of the eighteenth century, the county gentleman, instead of riding into town, alone or with a

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groom, purely on business, began to bring his family and servants by coach, for a day of shopping and social activities, including theatre, dancing and concerts. The Assembly Rooms and Playhouse on Coal Hill, opened in 1750, were well patronised by the wealthy families of the county. There were tea-rooms, a card room, a dancing room and ladies’ rooms underneath the theatre.

Musical and theatrical entertainment at the Assembly Rooms was limited to the winter and spring months. In the summer, there were balls, concerts, circuses, fireworks and other events to be enjoyed in the Bath Gardens (or Vauxhall Gardens) - a pleasant riverside venue in Bath Lane. Other outdoor venues for entertainment included the Vauxhall Bowling Green in St Peter’s Lane, and the new Cricket Ground in the 1820s, where circuses and other performances took place. The Royal Shakespeare Rooms, in Humberstone Gate, were advertised as ‘a splendid saloon for public balls, routes, assemblies, panoramas, fancy fairs, auctions, &c.’ An adjacent amphitheatre, claiming to be the largest outside London, was opened for theatrical and equestrian events in 1840.28

The gentry usually supported theatrical entertainments. Many performances were put on ‘at the desire of’ a particular gentleman, or of the Leicestershire Hunt or the Militia. However, one group of gentlemen attempted in 1772-73, with some success, to suppress theatrical entertainment in Leicester, in order ‘to remove, as far as possible, all temptations to needless expense, all incentives to dissipation and idleness.’29 On a more positive note, plays were sometimes performed for charitable purposes. There were ‘benefits’ in 1778 for a businessman and his family who had fallen on hard times, in 1796 for the

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Infirmary, and in the following year for widows and orphans of seamen lost in a recent battle.  

Shakespeare’s plays were frequently performed in Leicester, and opera was very popular. A version of King Lear with a happy ending was performed in 1762, and The Beggar’s Opera Reversed (with men playing the women’s parts and vice versa) was performed to enormous acclaim in 1783. The anti-slavery play Inkle and Yarico was very popular in Leicester, a centre of opposition to the slave trade; the play was performed many times between 1790 and 1820.  

By 1805 the Assembly Rooms had been sold and divided into retail units, but a new theatre and assembly rooms had opened in 1800, financed jointly by town and country gentry. The new Assembly Rooms (known for many years as the County Rooms but renamed in recent years as the City Rooms) remain one of Leicester’s most attractive old buildings. The adjacent theatre, although not large, was built in the style of the latest London playhouses, with galleries and boxes. The theatre also housed lectures and concerts, though its acoustics were poor and the need was expressed for a separate concert hall. Madame Tussaud’s waxworks were exhibited in the theatre in 1830. The theatre soon proved too small for Leicester’s needs. It closed down in 1835, to be replaced in the following year by the New Theatre, later known as the Theatre Royal. This was an imposing building in Horsefair Street, with several galleries and tiers of boxes. It was sometimes adapted into an assembly room, with the pit boarded over, for promenade concerts and other functions.  

horse racing in Leicester since 1603 and by the eighteenth century the town’s race course, on what is now Victoria Park, was a great attraction. One incentive for the construction in 1785 of New Walk (originally known as Queen’s Walk, sometimes as Ladies’ Walk) was the improvement of pedestrian access from the town to the race course.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the town’s main inns, such as the Three Cranes and the Three Crowns, as well as the Saracen’s Head coffee-house and various news-rooms, were thriving meeting places where business deals could be done, politics discussed and the latest London newspapers consulted.

The Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society was one of the few places where men could meet together regardless of religious or political affiliations. Papers on many subjects were discussed enthusiastically. A lecture in 1841, on the decline of English poetry, provoked a great debate in the town that lasted for several weeks, which was said to have been at least as heated as the debate on the Corn Laws. ‘Many gentlemen took part in the discussion and displayed an extraordinarily wide range of reading.’ Almost at the end of our period, in 1849, the Literary and Philosophical Society achieved one of its major aims, the establishment of a museum for Leicester, although their aim of founding a free library did not bear fruit until 1871.

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34 G.R. Potts, ‘The Development of New Walk and the King Street Area’, p. 55.
2.4 Finance

In common with most provincial towns, Leicester had no banks until the latter half of the eighteenth century. The Herrick family, of Beaumanor Hall, were an early local example of informal banking practices. Robert Herrick, who ran an ironmonger’s shop in the Market Place, acted as intermediary for the (relatively small-scale) loan business operated by his brothers as a sideline to their goldsmiths’ business in London.36

In the absence of formal banking arrangements, a young man wishing to set up in business could turn to one of several prominent local businessmen who would lend to new business ventures in which they had confidence. An alternative source of finance, so long as the applicant was a freeman, was Sir Thomas White’s charity, founded in 1551, whereby loans could be awarded to young freemen of Leicester and Coventry wishing to set up in business; by 1837, interest-free loans of £100 (in the gift of the Corporation) were available over a nine-year term.37

The growth of the hosiery industry in Leicester, in the early years of the eighteenth century, was greatly assisted by substantial loans by local businessmen, notably John Watts, who also encouraged the local draper, William Bentley, to establish Leicester’s first bank. Bentley was one of several traders who operated informal banking arrangements. His shop in Cheapside was, for some years, the only place in Leicester where paper money could be

36 C.J. Billson, Leicester Memoirs, p. 2.
37 VCH, vol. 4, p. 413.
discounted. At some time, probably in the 1760s or 70s, the drapery business ceased and Bentley’s became Leicester’s first bank.  

In the late eighteenth century, there were still only two banks in Leicester: Bentley’s (by then Bentley Buxton & Co.) and Mansfield’s, established by another local draper, John Mansfield, in the 1770s. Both Bentley Buxton and Mansfield survived the crisis of 1793 which ruined many provincial bankers. Mansfield incidentally was treasurer of the Leicester Permanent Library, and became Mayor in 1793. His lavish mayoral banquet was long remembered locally, but not just for its exotic fare. Unfortunately, the party was so large that hundreds of books were swiftly removed from the Town Library in the Guildhall to make room for the Mayor’s guests. For many years, the removed volumes lay around in great confusion, ‘to the permanent detriment of the collection.’

2.5 Trade and industry

The range of occupations in Leicester, according to the Register of Freemen, was fairly typical of a busy country town.

Leicester emerges clearly as a town with no predominant industry or trade. It is economically a well-mixed community with a wide variety of trades producing consumer goods, and still a market town with a strong agricultural flavour.  

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38 C.J. Billson, Leicester Memoirs, p. 4.
39 Ibid. p. 7.
40 E.A. Jenkins, The Economic and Social History of Leicester, p. 9.
The growth of Leicester was due in part to the success of the hosiery industry, which encouraged rural dwellers to move into the town in considerable numbers. This growth increased when frame-made stockings appeared.

The mechanisation of local industry was not without its problems, being perceived by many workers, perhaps with some justification, as a threat to their livelihood. There were riots in Leicester in 1788 when the mechanised spinning of worsted was first introduced, and there were outbreaks of frame-wrecking when machines began to impact on the knitting industry in 1811-15. The framework knitters (in common with other domestic workers in the Midlands) had a very difficult time in the 1830s and 40s, although their 'troubles were much older than the competition of machinery,' and included 'child-employment, debt, underpayment and overwork.'

Throughout the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, the hosiery industry employed approximately fifty per cent of the local workforce. The largest trade after hosiery was the food and drink industry. The clothing trade was also of growing importance and, not surprisingly for a rapidly growing town, the building trades were also thriving. Boot and shoe manufacture had become an important local industry by the early nineteenth century.

The trades of grocer (originally a dealer in spices and fancy, mainly foreign, goods) and mercer (primarily a dealer in textiles and haberdashery), had never been totally separate and tended, over the years, to combine, usually under the designation of 'mercer'. Grocers and mercers sold a huge range of goods,

sometimes including paper and other stationery items. Ironmongers also sold a wider range of goods than their name implies. The probate inventories of some Leicester ironmongers of the seventeenth century indicate that they sold inter alia parchment, pens, ink-horns, books of gold leaf and artists' colours. Ironmongers also sold a wider range of goods than their name implies. The probate inventories of some Leicester ironmongers of the seventeenth century indicate that they sold inter alia parchment, pens, ink-horns, books of gold leaf and artists' colours. Shopkeeping was always an important area of activity in Leicester but there was a large increase at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the number of apprentices bound to shopkeepers.

2.6 Transport improvements

The roads of Leicestershire, until the early years of the eighteenth century, were no better than those of other rural areas of England, but somehow, 'in spite of the shocking state of the roads, trade improved.' Once the Turnpike Trusts took over the main roads, their condition became a good deal better. The Harborough-Leicester-Loughborough road was turnpiked in 1726, the Leicester-Ashby road in 1753, and the Leicester-Hinckley road in 1754.

The Welford road, formerly the main route from Leicester to London, was turnpiked rather late, in 1765, by which time it had lost the London traffic to the Harborough Turnpike. In Leicester, Gallowtree Gate and Belgrave Gate, now part of the Harborough Turnpike, were properly surfaced, unlike the other

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42 VCH, vol. 4, pp. 81-82.
43 E.A. Jenkins, The Economic and Social History of Leicester, p. 60.
44 E.A. Skillington, The Plain Man's History of Leicester, p. 89.
roads and streets of the town. This had the effect of pulling the centre of Leicester eastwards, and several coaching inns were built in Gallowtree Gate. The Corporation took a keen interest in the improvement of the county’s roads, supporting the turnpike trusts and actually investing money in a number of trunk road schemes, including the important Loughborough to Harborough road, the roads to Uppingham and Coventry, and the Lutterworth and Melton roads which were not turnpiked until 1764.

Despite the Corporation’s investment in the county’s roads, the streets of the Borough itself remained in a poor state. This was, in part, a result of the old arrangements whereby the Corporation was responsible for little more than the area of the old, and still walled, town. However, the great increase in population meant that more and more Leicester people lived in the ‘liberties’ outside the town walls, run (until 1835) by separate parishes. This had long caused problems but the rapid growth of the town necessitated improvements in roads, water supply, sanitation etc, which were difficult to organise while there was no single body to govern Leicester as a whole.

There was a degree of co-operation however. Taking water supply as an example, the parishes appointed well-reeves to look after their wells, but some water was supplied to the Borough by means of a conduit paid for by the Corporation. However, several schemes to light the streets of the town came to nothing, largely because of the Corporation’s lack of power over the extra-mural parishes. The rate of improvement was so slow that ‘Leicester remained

one of the four unimproved boroughs of any size that were left in 1836.\textsuperscript{47}

Some improvements were privately financed. The residents of Gallowtree Gate, perhaps because of their proximity to the principal inns, paid in 1770 for oil street lighting to be installed, an example then followed in other important streets.

Early in the eighteenth century, before the coming of the canal, the horse still played a vital role in trading activities. Grazing rights were consequently of great importance to the tradespeople of Leicester, and this is one of several reasons for vehement opposition to the Corporation’s numerous attempts to enclose the South Field. Enclosure, for many years a thorny topic, was a key issue in several parliamentary elections. The South Field was finally enclosed in 1804, with an amicable settlement in which a sizeable piece of land, Freemen’s Common, was retained for the freemen and their widows, to compensate for their lost grazing rights, and land was allocated to other interested parties, including the Trinity Hospital.

The enclosure of the South Field gave a boost to house-building in the rapidly expanding town. Between 1811 and 1815, stylish housing for the well-to-do had been built in the King Street/Princess Road area, including the attractive (and still surviving) Crescent.\textsuperscript{48} The building of the canal wharf – on the site of the present Leicester College (Abbey Park) Campus – encouraged extensive building in that part of the town, including the construction of the town’s gas works in 1821. Industrial and poor-quality residential development rapidly followed between the wharf and the North Bridge. There was much tightly-

\textsuperscript{47} E.A. Skillington, \textit{The Plain Man’s History of Leicester}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{48} G.R. Potts, ‘The Development of New Walk…’, p. 56.
packed working-class housing in the area of Wharf Street and Rutland Street—all removed in the twentieth century. By the early nineteenth century, the most prestigious housing in the town was in the area of New Walk and King Street, while some wealthier townspeople still lived in the high-class housing of the Newarke and St Martin’s. The beginnings of suburban growth were to be seen at Stoneygate, although its period of greatest growth followed the introduction of a horse-drawn tram service in 1874.

Leicester’s first coaching service seems to have been that of Mr Nedham, landlord of the *Three Cranes*, who began in 1759 to run three coaches a week between Nottingham, Derby and London. The journey to London took a day and a half. The next landlord of the *Three Cranes* improved the journey time to one day with his ‘Flying Machine’ in 1762—the fare to London was £1.5s.0d. and the coach left at 2.00 a.m. By 1776 it was also possible to travel by coach to Manchester in one day, but only by leaving Leicester at 4.00 a.m. Mail coaches started running in 1785; the Post Office was conveniently situated adjacent to the Three Crowns inn.

There were also a growing number of local carriers. In 1831, a local historian noted that

the intercourse with surrounding villages to an average distance of

fifteen miles is maintained by upwards of 230 local carriers. ⁴⁹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there were certainly forty to fifty carriers of coal in Leicestershire, and about a dozen ‘stage wagon’ services to

such places as Birmingham, Peterborough and Nottingham, also to Lincoln, from where they returned laden with fish.\(^{50}\)

By this time, it was apparent that Leicester’s trade would benefit greatly by being connected to the thriving network of inland waterways. The River Soar ‘was in its natural state quite unfitted for navigation by boats of a commercially profitable bulk.’\(^{51}\) In 1778 Loughborough was connected to the Trent by the canalisation of the northern part of the Soar. After a lengthy campaign by the Corporation, businessmen and county gentry, Parliament approved in 1791 a Bill permitting the canalisation of the Soar from Leicester to Loughborough. The necessary works took three years and the new canal was opened early in 1794. It took much heavy traffic off the road, notably bringing in cheap coal from Derbyshire.\(^{52}\) The Leicester to Loughborough road lost a third of its toll income between 1793 and 1795; they did not regain their previous level until 1830.\(^{53}\)

A waterway link to the south was at least as important as joining to the Trent. By 1792, there were discussions about building a canal from Leicester to Market Harborough. The projected scheme was quickly changed, when the advantages were realised of joining with the projected Grand Junction canal, which would give Leicester a connection to London. An Act of 1793 permitted the canalisation of the River Soar from West Bridge to Aylestone, and the construction of a new canal south from that point to join the Nene at

\(^{50}\) A.T. Patterson, *Radical Leicester* p. 13.


\(^{52}\) The price of coal in Leicester fell by 40% when the canal opened — G.A. Chinnery, ‘Eighteenth Century Leicester’, p. 51.

\(^{53}\) P. Russell, *A Leicestershire Road*, pp. 113-4; *VCH*, vol. 4, p. 195.
Northampton and to connect to the Grand Junction. This formed the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Union, later known as the 'Old Union'. Canals were used for the carriage of a wide variety of goods. Pickfords ran a fly-boat service carrying light goods between Birmingham and Leicester, via Warwick, Banbury and Oxford.

Leicester may have been rather late getting its canals, but it was in the forefront of railway development. A means was needed of transporting the coal mined in west Leicestershire quickly and cheaply to Leicester. In 1832, the Leicester and Swannington Railway, built by George Stephenson, was opened and enjoyed the distinction of having the longest tunnel in the country, at Glenfield. The Leicester and Swannington was mainly a freight line for coal, granite and lime, although passengers were also carried. It later formed part of the Midland Railway, which opened a line from Leicester to Derby in 1840. Train travel to London, however, had to wait until 1857.

Thomas Cook, who will be discussed later in his role as printer and publisher, was also a pioneer of the travel industry, starting with a modest trip on the railway from Leicester to Loughborough, for a return fare of one shilling, in 1841. Cook was secretary of the Leicester Temperance Society and this trip, for which a whole train was hired, was arranged for the Society's members.

Jack Simmons has noted that the continuity of Leicester's history has been a key factor in its success compared with other Midland towns; he considers that only Manchester and London are comparable. He suggests that Leicester's motto (granted in 1586) of *Semper Eadem* - 'always the same' - is a good description of the steady evolution of the town, resulting from its continuity of
occupation from Roman times. Simmons regards Leicester as unique in having been an important provincial town in the Middle Ages and having remained so, developing steadily and adapting to change, unlike Winchester, York, and other old towns which remain predominantly medieval in character.54

This chapter has attempted to set the scene by highlighting just some of the conditions which enabled Leicester to support a successful range of book-trade activity during the period in question. The picture which emerges of Leicester’s growing importance as a market town and trade centre, coupled with its importance as a place of entertainment and social activity, is one of a thriving provincial town in which books and other printed matter would play an important part and have considerable influence. Also significant are the religious and political tensions within the town at various periods of its history. The printed word, and those engaged in the book trade, had a key role here too.

CHAPTER 3
THE EMERGING BOOK TRADE:
from the beginnings to c1650

3.1 The origins of the book trade in Leicester

The pinpointing of a date for the commencement of the book trade in a particular town is seldom a straightforward task, and Leicester is no exception. There must have been some literate people in the town, albeit a minority of the population, acquiring and reading books and other written, later printed, matter throughout the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, there seem to be no surviving records of the sources from which they obtained their reading-matter.

However, although there is no record of sustained book-trade activity before the last quarter of the sixteenth century, there is some evidence of the conditions which gave rise to the book trade in Leicester. Evidence of literacy, of education, and of the demand for books and related goods to assist in the governance of the town and in religious affairs, give at least a partial picture of those aspects of life in the town which would encourage men like Godfrey Cowper and John Langford to set themselves up in the book trade in Leicester before 1600.

There is some logic to considering the level of local literacy as one of the key factors in the emerging demand for the written or printed word and for writing materials, though the measurement of literacy is not straightforward. The varied methods by which literacy has been measured can yield
apparently contradictory results, and comparative data must be used with caution. The ability to sign one’s own name is not universally accepted as a valid measure of literacy although, given that reading skills are normally learned before those of writing, some scholars now accept that signing one’s name is a reasonably reliable indicator of a certain level of reading ability, although it tells us nothing about a person’s more general writing skills.

David Cressy’s research indicates that seventeenth-century England was massively illiterate despite an epoch of educational expansion and a barrage of sermons. More than two-thirds of the men and nine-tenths of the women were so illiterate at the time of the civil war that they could not even write their own names. ¹

By this period, most of the nobility and gentry seem to have been literate, but Cressy makes the important point that the majority of ordinary people saw no need to acquire literacy skills, either for business or leisure, enjoying instead ‘a deep-rooted and quite comfortable illiteracy’. ² Gradually yeomen and small tradesmen began to realise the advantages of literacy for business purposes — recording transactions, debts and suchlike — but the process was generally quite slow.

Turning to local evidence for literacy, we find a picture little different from the bleak national scene. Leicestershire yeomen were 33% literate in the 1590s; this had increased to 45% by the 1640s. The county’s husbandmen were 13% literate in the 1590s; this improved to 19% by the 1640s. Local labourers were totally illiterate in the 1590s and only 4% literate by the 1640s. ³ Although these statistics appear low by later standards, they do point

¹ D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, p. 2.
² D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, p. 13.
³ These figures are from K. Wrightson, English Society: 1580-1680, p.190, where comparative data for other areas are also given. Wrightson’s source for the Leicestershire statistics is unpublished material from the files of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.
to a steady if unremarkable increase in literacy levels in Leicestershire during the period before the Civil War.

Evidence of book ownership is a valuable indicator of functional literacy and bears particular relevance to the emergence of the book trade. Again the surviving information is uneven and needs to be used with care. Probate inventories sometimes mention books, though there was no standard method of listing them. Cressy suggests that ‘well-bound volumes and religious works had a greater chance of being listed than popular romances and ephemera,’ while in many instances books, even Bibles, were probably not listed or were recorded only in a phrase such as ‘his books and other lumber’. 4

Although the mention of books in probate inventories can be somewhat haphazard, the percentage of inventories that include books does give a rough comparative indicator. Cressy points out that the proportion increases as the period progresses; he also notes that towns have higher figures than rural areas. He gives figures for the sixteenth century: 17% for Leicestershire, compared with 14% for Bedfordshire and Essex, 22% for Devon and just 1% for Oxfordshire. 5 Books occasionally appear in wills but are seldom listed in full, with only items of particular value or significance being named.

There is evidence for books owned by an exceptionally wealthy Leicester man in 1530/31: William Wyggeston, a very successful Merchant of the Staple, and founder of the Hospital which still bears his name. His inventory mentions, in the Hall, ‘Item xj English books prynted [6s. 8d]’. No further books are noted, except ‘a masse-booke’ among other items in the chapel.

4 D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, p. 49.
5 D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, pp. 48, 211-212.
and chapel-chamber. There is no evidence for other books owned by Wyggeston, but it may be significant that the eleven books in the hall are described as being in English and printed, perhaps sufficiently unusual for these books to be mentioned. The inventory of a much less wealthy man, Henry Foster, compiled in 1596, includes one solitary book, a Primer, valued at 2d.

Early examples of books changing hands, whether by way of trade or otherwise, are of interest, indicating that books were considered as tradable or at least exchangeable commodities. In 1458 the following entry appears in the rental records of the Chantry of Corpus Christi:

Rob. Sysson owes [for rent of a tenement in the Swinemarket] 48s. 6d.
of which Will. Blower paid 18s. 10d. for surplices and books sold to
him by the said Rob. Sysson.

This is a tantalisingly isolated reference. No further information on Sysson or Blower has been traced, and it would be unwise to assume from this single record that Sysson was in any sense a bookseller – this could have been a private transaction – though it is in any case significant as apparently the earliest documentary evidence of books being sold in Leicester.

Another isolated sale of a book took place in 1623, when an un-named man sold a Bible to a doctor’s maid for 3s. 6d. When examined by the magistrates, on 31 March 1623, he said that he had found the book in St Mary’s churchyard. This man’s foray into bookselling resulted in his being committed to the House of Correction. A more legitimate way of transferring books from one owner to another was by bequest, one example

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8 *Borough Records*, vol. 2, p.269.
9 *Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 203.
being a will of 1540, whereby Dr Ralph Burrell, vicar of All Saints, bequeathed his Dictionaries to the vicar of St Martin’s and his Bible and Concordance to Sir Robert Fayr.¹⁰

However, what seems to be the earliest documentary evidence of local book ownership – and possibly of books changing hands (albeit feloniously) – emerges from the Borough Records in January 1300, when one Roger Dun, having confessed to ‘many larcenies and robberies’, escaped from custody in Leicester Castle only to be re-apprehended and forced to surrender his chattels, which are listed in the Coroners’ Rolls. Many of the goods, quite likely stolen property, were of some value. Interestingly, four books are listed, including a Latin ‘Cato’ and a Donatus [grammar] valued together at 3d, a Primer at 4d, and another book (‘Summa de diviciis Mazab…’) not valued.¹¹ This unusual piece of evidence should perhaps not be accorded too much significance, not least because the ownership of the books is unclear. Nevertheless it does indicate that manuscript books were to be found in Leicester as early as 1300 and also that books were apparently being used for the purpose of learning Latin.

Little is known of medieval education in Leicester and there is no evidence surviving of school books being owned or obtained. There are scattered references to schools from the thirteenth century onwards. A schoolmaster – ‘Master John who teaches the boys’ – was admitted to the Merchant Guild in 1366/67 but nothing more is known of his activities.¹² There was a school at the Abbey but it ceased when the Abbey was dissolved in 1538.

¹⁰ F.E. Skillington, ‘Enclosed in Clay: a study of Leicester wills’, p. 43. Skillington speculates that the ‘Dictionaries’ may be those printed by Pynson and de Worde, bound together, and that the Bible was possibly Coverdale’s version.
¹¹ Borough Records, vol. 1, pp.363-4. The word ‘Mazab…’ is incomplete, the original record being torn at this point.
¹² Borough Records, vol. 2, p. 143. (‘Magister Johannes qui informat pueros.’)
There was also another school of some kind in the town but little is known of it, and it seems to have closed earlier in the century.

Much of the wealth of the aforementioned William Wyggeston was left as a charitable trust. Thomas Wyggeston, one of the trustees, was instrumental in using part of the fund to establish in 1545 the Free Grammar School. The school was later taken over by the Borough and payments to an usher and under-usher appear regularly in the accounts. The aim of the school was to provide a free education, on sound Protestant lines, for the sons of freemen, though by 1582 other boys were being admitted for a fee.

The demands of the Free Grammar School's intensive curriculum, based primarily on the study of Latin literature, plus some Greek, must surely have led to a demand for school books in Leicester, although there is no firm evidence. The emphasis on Latin indicates the influence of Renaissance ideas on education; Jack Simmons describes the Free School's curriculum as 'the first clear sign of the arrival of the New Learning' in Leicester. The earliest evidence traced of a book being bought for the Free School at the town's expense occurs in the Chamberlains' Account for 1627/28:

*Item payed for a Dixonarie for the free schoole £1*

Books would also have been used in connection with less formal educational ventures. Some evidence of private tuition, at a very modest level, emerges coincidentally from the record of the examination by the Justices of Richard Dickyns the parchment-maker (see below). Charged with Dickyns was one Bartholomew Nidd who, around Shrovetide 1598,

had a boye of the said Dunnes then to teache to learne to reade

Englishe, with who he continued in learmynge abowte a fortnytt

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14 *Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 248.
before... [Dunne later paid Nidd] vid. which before he owght hym for the teachinge of his boye... ¹⁵

Such brief periods of informal tuition — presumably making use of at least one book — may have been more common than this one record (preserved by chance as part of an examination of those suspected of aiding and abetting a jail-break) might suggest. The steadily rising rate of literacy probably means that there were many more instances of ordinary people learning to read. This would suggest somewhat more widespread ownership and use of books in Leicester than the sparse evidence would indicate. Such evidence as there is tends to support the gradual emergence of a more literate community, and conditions in which the various branches of the book trade would eventually flourish.

3.2 Leicester Abbey and Knighton’s Chronicle

Leicester Abbey has already been mentioned. The Abbey’s main significance for this research is that its existence — together with its important library — is important evidence for book-trade skills in Leicester during the medieval period. As in most abbeys and monasteries, the making of books and documents, including copying and binding, took place on the premises. There was a scriptorium at Leicester Abbey but it seems to have produced only administrative records and service books. There is no evidence of manuscript illumination having been carried out at Leicester. Hamilton Thompson, whose 1949 study remains the major account of the Abbey and its work, is inclined to think that there were few [illuminated manuscripts], as none have survived, and that the useful character of the library was more conspicuous than the ornamental. ¹⁶

More recent research supports this view. Theresa Webber observes that fewer than twenty manuscripts are known to have survived from Leicester Abbey, one of the wealthiest and most prominent of Augustinian houses in England.\(^{17}\)

Webber and Watson, in their study of Augustinian libraries, conclude that too few manuscripts survive from Leicester to determine the extent to which there was an active scriptorium at the abbey which produced more than just liturgical books and administrative documents.\(^ {18}\)

Fortunately, the catalogue of the Abbey library survives, in the Bodleian Library, and a number of the books listed have been identified in various collections. M. R. James published a transcript of the catalogue, with an informative introduction, between 1937 and 1941. A substantial part of Webber and Watson’s book is a very useful transcript of the catalogue informed by more recent scholarship.\(^{19}\)

By the standards of its time, the library of Leicester Abbey was both substantial and well-organised, comprising nearly a thousand volumes arranged in broad subject groupings. Unsurprisingly, the collection was strong on Bibles, sermons, theology and philosophy, especially Augustinian and patristic literature. Unusual strengths were law (both canon and civil), astronomy and ‘natural physic’ (medicine). There was a substantial collection of more than eighty volumes on medicine. Also perhaps rather unusual in an English monastic house were eleven books in French, ‘of lighter character’.

The inclusion in the catalogue of grammar books in multiple copies indicates the presence of schoolboys at the Abbey, although an Episcopal visitation of 1440 records that the number of schoolboys had shrunk from 24 or 26 to six, and even they were not instructed in grammar as they should have been.20

There is no evidence of the extent to which the people of Leicester had access to the Abbey or its books, although James describes the collection as a sort of reference-library, available to the members of the house, and very likely to the public also, at least to properly accredited persons.21

Many of the manuscripts seem to have been produced within the Abbey, and Webber notes that the catalogue contains evidence that devotional texts, which generally have a poor survival rate (compared with patristic texts and works of later scholarship) were copied and re-copied at Leicester. She points out that the catalogue also records the kind of humble miscellany manuscripts that often existed as loose quires or volumes bound only in parchment wrappers and which had least chance of survival.22

The catalogue is unusual in the detail it contains of the variety of bindings to be found in the Abbey library. These are described in some detail by James and need not be repeated here. In addition to various good-quality bindings, many books were bound only in bare boards (nudis asseribus). There were ‘a considerable number of paper books; but there is nowhere a statement that any were printed’.23

20 L. Fox, Leicester Abbey, p. 7.
23 M.R. James, Catalogue of the Library of Leicester Abbey, p. 17.
The library included the Abbey’s substantial archives which throw some light on the acquisition and cataloguing of the books. The precentor, William Charyte (or Charite), who later became prior, produced the catalogue in 1492-93, and himself bound at least one book and copied music. He gave a number of books and astronomical instruments to the Abbey and was responsible for buying or otherwise procuring thirty-three volumes for the library. The catalogue contains a section headed ‘Books which William Charyte caused to be written’ (*Libri quos Frater Willm. Charite scribi fecit*). The Abbey’s archive is a mixture of books and scrolls, with some documents existing as both rough copies on paper and fair copies on parchment. The source of the Abbey’s paper and parchment is not recorded.

Monastic libraries typically acquired books by purchase, by in-house copying and by donation. At New Llanthony Abbey there is evidence of some of the younger members attending one of the universities and then giving their books to the library; James assumes that this happened also at Leicester. Webber remarks on the evidence of substantial donations to the library of Leicester Abbey; donors tended to be abbots and canons of the Abbey itself, as well as incumbents from Leicestershire and beyond. Other books were certainly bought in addition to Charyte’s purchases, notably nine volumes on medicine, ‘in themselves a respectable collection’, bought by Abbott William Sadyngton from a Doctor John Bokkedene (or Buckden).

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24 Catalogue folio 139.
25 M.R. James, *Catalogue of the Library of Leicester Abbey*, p.15; T. Webber, ‘Latin Devotional Texts...’, p. 34. (New Llanthony Abbey, or *Llanthony Secunda*, near Gloucester, was the daughter house of Llanthony Abbey in Monmouthshire.)
One of the donors of books was also a chronicler of some importance. Henry Knighton,27 one of the canons of Leicester Abbey, commenced his Chronicle in 1337 and continued it to 1396. The most recent editor and translator of Knighton’s Chronicle, Geoffrey Martin, notes that in order to compile his Chronicle, Knighton required, in addition to his superior’s permission and sufficient time for writing and study:

- a variety of physical and intellectual resources: parchment (not fewer than 120 sheepskins), ink, pens, and works of reference, together with stamina, an enquiring mind, and an ear for news. How he came by most of these necessities is a matter for conjecture.28

Knighton’s source material was wide-ranging and included books in the Abbey library and from elsewhere, and he had made for himself a copy of Higden’s Polychronicon.29

3.3 Lollards and the book trade

Knighton’s religious views were conservative and his Chronicle makes a number of attacks on his contemporaries who professed Lollard beliefs. Lollardy was prominent in Leicestershire – John Wyclif was rector of Lutterworth. Lollardy has some relevance to book-trade history, as it was the creed of a number of the trade’s practitioners. This is unsurprising, given the Lollard view that the scriptures should be published in the vernacular and distributed as widely as possible to ordinary people.

Lollards had of necessity acquired considerable skill in covering their tracks and such evidence as has survived tends to describe interrogations and prosecutions, although there are a number of specific references to the local

27 Or Henry of Knighton.
29 Ibid., p. xxx.
book trade. In 1388, a few years after Lollardy had begun to emerge, there was renewed concern about the production and distribution of Lollard literature, in Leicester as elsewhere, and the King issued letters patent on 23 May 1388 to the Dean of St Mary’s in the Newarke and others to seize any books, tracts, leaflets and pamphlets containing the un-sound doctrine and heresies of Master John Wyclif [and others, and their followers] on information that many such books are frequently compiled and published, written both in English and Latin, and further to make proclamation inhibiting the maintenance of these opinions, or the keeping, writing or selling of these books, under pain of imprisonment and forfeiture, and calling upon all those who had them to give them up.

The following year, Archbishop Courtenay arrived in Leicester on one of his metropolitan visitations of the diocese of Lincoln. He stayed for four days at the Abbey, meeting both Henry Knighton and Philip Repyngdon. (The latter, who was to become abbot in 1393, had himself held Lollard views for a time.) At the Abbey, the Archbishop heard accusations from local clergy and townsmen against a number of alleged Lollards, including Michael Scrivener and William Parchmentmaker, ‘the first of many associated with the book trade to be involved in Lollardy’.

Also accused were a husband and wife, Roger and Alison Dexter, and a blacksmith known as William Smith. Knighton’s Chronicle tells the story of Smith at some length. Of particular interest is that this humble blacksmith had apparently taught himself to read and write and

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30 This was a collegiate church of some importance, which was said to have had a good library, though no records survive. Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, gave several books to the collegiate library in 1436. (J. Nichols, History..., vol. 1., pt. 2., p.331.)
31 J. Crompton, ‘Leicestershire Lollards’, p. 22; H. Knighton, Chronicle, p. 441. (Crompton has ‘books and quires’; Knighton has ‘libros, libellos, cedulas, quaternos’, translated by Martin as ‘books, tracts, leaflets and pamphlets’.)
32 The visitation took place in 1389; Knighton’s dating of this event to 1392 is incorrect. (Hudson, 1985, p.53.)
had written out solemn texts of the Gospels in his own language, and others from St Paul's and other epistles, and works of the doctors of the church which, as he confessed, he had laboured over for eight years, and which he was made to surrender to the archbishop.34

The surrender of Smith's painstakingly made copies might seem to be punishment enough but, together with the Dexters, he was also given the penance of processing round two churches and the market-place, carrying crucifixes and venerating images as they went. The Dexters, who were illiterate, had to recite the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria but Smith, being literate, was also made to read aloud the collect and antiphon for St Catherine's day.35

In 1414, seven citizens of St Martin's parish were arrested, kept for a time in the Marshalsea, and sent to Bishop Repyngdon (as he now was) for 'correction'. Two of these – William Mably, parchment-maker, and William Smith –

sound suspiciously like the same Lollards who had appeared before Archbishop Courtenay in 1389, a remarkable example of the continuity of Lollardy in Leicester from its earliest days.36

By this time, the area between Leicester and Northampton had become an area of fairly intensive Lollard text copying. One copyist was Michael Scrivener, while the ephemeral Lollard texts copied by Thomas Ile of Braybrooke (near Market Harborough) were distributed in Leicestershire by William Smith. Also being copied and distributed were sermons by John Wyclif and, as Anne Hudson observes, it may be significant that two

36 Ibid., p. 30.
manuscripts of this sermon-cycle are in Leicester, one in the Town Library and one in Wyggeston's Hospital.\textsuperscript{37}

\subsection*{3.4 The Borough and the book trade}

As already noted, the Borough Records are a valuable source of information on books and related matters from an early date.\textsuperscript{38} Some interesting information on how the Borough Records were produced and kept emerges from the records themselves. In 1332-33 and again the following year, the Mayor's Accounts record an annual expenditure of 6d for the supply of parchment for the records. In 1368-69 "parchment and ink for the rolls of messengers pertaining to the office of the Mayor" cost 6½d.\textsuperscript{39}

There are many later references to the purchase of parchment, though none gives the name of the supplier.

From an early date the records seem to have been kept with great care and with a commendable understanding of the need to preserve them carefully. In 1332-33 one shilling was spent on the repair, including nails and boards, of 'a chest for keeping and placing the muniments and charters of the community'.\textsuperscript{40} In 1338/39, a leather bag was acquired in which to keep the roll.\textsuperscript{41} A long box for the town's Charter was bought for 3s. 4d. in 1553/54. (This was a fraction of the expense of 'renewyng' -- presumably copying -- the Charter, which cost £9. 4s. 4d.)\textsuperscript{42} There are many more references to boxes, locks, and such like, for the keeping of the records.

\textsuperscript{37} Anne Hudson, \textit{Lollards and their Books}, pp. 183, 189.
\textsuperscript{38} See above, chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{39} Borough Records, vol. 2, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{40} Borough Records, vol. 2 p. 12.
\textsuperscript{41} ROLLR: Mayor's Account 1338/39. (Borough Records, vol. 2, p. 46.)
\textsuperscript{42} ROLLR: Chamberlains' Account 1553/54. (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 79.)
The first reference to the purchase of paper by the Borough seems to be in the Chamberlains’ Account for 1378-79, when 1½d was spent on paper and 4d on parchment, while 1s. 6d. was paid for the making of three charters relating to tenements.\(^{43}\) In 1493/94, the Guild of Corpus Christi, in effect part of the Borough’s administrative structure, recorded the following purchase:

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Item for parchment, pauper and ynke &c for makyng of the count 2s. 6d.
Item for selyng wax ½d.\(^{44}\)
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In 1550/51 occurs the first of many references to the Borough paying for written copies to be made of statutes and other documents:

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to Fraunces Mose for making of tow suplicacions ....
tow bookes of the holl [whole] statutes 26s. 4d.\(^{45}\)
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Three years later, there appears the first of many recorded instances of the Borough incurring the cost of searching, and sometimes copying from, the public records which were at this period held in the Tower of London:

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Mr Heys for the serche in his offyce in the tower about the townes bessenes 5s.\(^{46}\)
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A degree of urgency was attached to the task of making a copy for the Mayor of the new Charter (incorporating the Borough) in 1599/1600, as the following entries testify:

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twoe quere of paper to copie our newe charter and other wrytings for Mr Maior to have...
woodd and coles for a fyer for them that satt upp to copie outhe the
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\(^{44}\) ROLLR: Accounts of Corpus Christi Guild 1493/94. ([Borough Records, vol. 2, p. 343.])

\(^{45}\) ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1550/51 ([Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 67.]) Although these are adjacent entries in the account, the second may not necessarily refer to Mose. ‘Fraunces Mose’ may perhaps have been the same person as ‘Frances More’ who wrote bills for St Martin’s church in 1545/46.

\(^{46}\) ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Account 1553/54. ([Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 79.])
said chartre and wrytings... for there paynes 8s. 4'

In September 1551, a detailed inventory was made of the Town Plate, Books and Armour, ‘to be delyuerd from mayor to mayor for the townes vse...’.

This yields useful information on the nature of the Borough Records at this period:

- one lock[ed] boke...
- iii bokes for the common hall,
- one gret paper boke for a regester,
- tow bokes of thactes of parlyament

So carefully were the records preserved that all have survived: the ‘Locked Book’, the ‘Hall Books’, the ‘Great Paper Book’ (also known as the ‘Register’ or the ‘Town Book of Acts’) and a manuscript collection of statutes. A new record book, of paper, probably the ‘Great Paper Book’ listed in the inventory, was made in 1531/2:

- 4 quere of paper to make a new boke 8d.... a skyn to kyfer [cover]
- ytt withal 4d.... for makyng ye seid boke 3d.

The ‘Great Paper Book’ includes copies of leases of land and other important documents. There is a further description of this book in 1566:

...the towne Booke of Actes is of lardge volum and coueryd with red lether...

The Chamberlains’ Accounts survive in their entirety from 1555/56. After 1589 they were kept both as rough drafts in paper books and as fair copies

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48 ROLLR: Inventory of Town Plate, Books and Armour (20 September 1551). (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 66-67.)
49 Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 66-67, footnotes. The records have been rebound and conserved in recent years.
50 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1531/32. (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 32.)
51 ROLLR: Hall Book II (22 November 1566.) (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 117.)
on parchment rolls.\textsuperscript{52} They contain frequent entries relating to the purchase of parchment and stationery items, which it would be tedious to repeat here. Unfortunately for the purpose of this research, suppliers are not named. Prices seem to vary widely, but are not really comparable as the quantities purchased are rarely stated. The Chamberlains’ Account for 1590/91 records the expenditure of 3s. 4d. on ‘paper and yncke for the wholl yere.’\textsuperscript{53}

\section*{3.5 St Martin’s Church and the Town Library}

The churchwardens’ accounts of St Martin’s church yield some very useful evidence of book-trade activity, including the purchase by the church of various books and stationery goods, though suppliers are not always named. Since the original accounts no longer survive, use must be made of the selective transcripts of John Nichols and the much more detailed ones of Thomas North.\textsuperscript{54}

Although Nichols rarely included the names of suppliers of goods and services to St Martin’s, North’s transcripts give a number of names. However it is not always possible to ascertain whether a named individual is the supplier being paid directly or someone else – a clergyman or churchwarden – receiving reimbursement. Certain entries in the accounts indicate that the churchwardens (and others on occasion) incurred expenditure on behalf of the church and were paid at a later date, although it is not always clear when this is the case.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{52} Borough Records, vol. 3, Introduction, p. lxiv.  \\
\textsuperscript{53} ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Account 1590/91. (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 274.)  \\
\textsuperscript{54} See above, chapter 1.  \\
\textsuperscript{55} One example is found in 1597/98, when John Heyricke, churchwarden, notes; ‘Dewe to mee at the foot of oure accomp [account] 17s. 7d.’ (North, Accounts, p. 141n.)
\end{flushright}
The accounts record many payments to named individuals for the supply of books and related goods. A few of these are known book-trade people, such as John Langford, John Allen and Godfrey Cowper, but many are otherwise unrecorded. Some of those named as supplying books and stationery were possibly general merchants, as their names are also noted as suppliers of various other goods and services to St Martin’s. The database includes all those named in the accounts as being paid for books or related goods, assuming tentatively that they were perhaps commercial suppliers. A number of the more significant transactions are discussed below.

Both parchment and paper, probably bought locally, were used by St Martin’s for various purposes, but a large book in which to keep the records had to be obtained from London at a cost of 4s. 8d. in 1544. Nichols noted that ‘this folio volume contains 773 pages of writing paper, bound in rough calf, with strong brass clasps’. Parchment was bought for 4d. in 1499 for the specific purpose of writing name labels for those representing the twelve apostles for the Whitsuntide procession. By 1545, the name labels were of paper:

It\textsuperscript{th} p\textsuperscript{d} fyrste for paper pynes [pins] & points at whysontyde iiijd.\footnote{58}

The labels were apparently worn on the bonnets of the ‘apostles’.\footnote{59} The fact that the names were written, instead of (or possibly as well as) the saints carrying their traditional symbols, may suggest a certain level of popular literacy.

\footnote{56}{North, \textit{Accounts}, p.9; Nichols, \textit{History}, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 570n. This is the book referred to in North’s preface to his edition of the St Martin’s accounts.}
\footnote{57}{North, \textit{Accounts}, p. 3.}
\footnote{58}{Ibid. p. 14.}
\footnote{59}{T. North, \textit{A Chronicle of the Church of S. Martin in Leicester...}, p70.}
There are fairly frequent records of paper being purchased between the 1540s and the 1590s, though after the end of the sixteenth century, there seem to be no entries relating to the purchase of paper. However, the records become much less detailed as time goes on and it may be the case that inexpensive items such as paper were no longer recorded.

Purchases of parchment however continue to be recorded until the mid-seventeenth century, when it was still in use for the keeping of records, for copies of entries in the church registers and, in 1643/44, for the noting of those ‘that took the vow and covenant’ and of those who gave to a fund for Irish relief. There seems to have been an understanding that important documents should be written on parchment, rather than paper, in the interests of preservation.

Some information of the price of parchment and paper emerges from the St Martin’s accounts, though there is insufficient detail for firm conclusions to be drawn. A single skin or sheet of parchment cost 6d in the seventeenth century; the two skins bought for 11d in 1643/44 may perhaps indicate a discount for quantity. Paper became considerably cheaper than parchment, though quantities are rarely indicated. A quire of paper bought in 1564/65 cost 4d.

Turning to printed books, there is interesting evidence for the acquisition by St Martin’s of some of the key texts of the English Reformation: the Bible in English, the Articles, the various vernacular editions of the Psalms, Processionals, the newly-authorised Services and versions of the Book of Common Prayer. In 1536 injunctions issued in the King’s name by Thomas Cromwell (Keeper of the Privy Seal and vice-regent to Henry VIII) included

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60 North, Accounts, p. 196.
61 Ibid. p. 109.
the requirement that a Bible in both Latin and English be placed in every parish church ‘for every man that will to look and read thereon’.  

New injunctions issued by Cromwell in 1538 instructed incumbents to provide on this side the feast of Easter next coming, one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume, in English, and the same set up in some convenient place within the said church that you have cure of....

The cost of providing the Bible was to be borne jointly by the incumbent and the parish. English translations of the Bible had been available since 1535 but the printing of Coverdale’s ‘Great Bible’ – a more scholarly version intended for display in churches – was delayed, despite Cromwell’s best efforts, until November 1539. It is not clear when St Martin’s obtained its large Bible but it must have been in place by 1548/49, when 5d. was spent on two chains and nails ‘for the bybell’.

In 1543/44 prayers and litanies were published in English, for mandatory use in church processions. The following entry in the St Martin’s accounts for 1545/46 indicates the purchase of two copies:

It[e]m to Wi im Ma[n]by for ij new englyche pr[ro]cessions bought ye last yere vjd.

The new metrical Psalter was first issued (containing nineteen Psalms) in 1547, with a second, enlarged edition becoming available in 1549, which is probably the edition of which St Martin’s bought two copies in 1552/53:

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63 A.G. Dickens and D. Carr (eds.), *The Reformation in England...*, p. 82.
66 Ibid. p. 18.
Archbishop Cranmer re-issued the royal injunctions in July 1547, in the name of King Edward VI. The requirement to display a Bible ‘of the largest volume’ was reiterated and there was a new instruction – to be implemented within twelve months of the forthcoming visitation – for churches also to display the English translation of Erasmus’s Paraphrases of the New Testament. St Martin’s acquired the first of several copies of the Paraphrases in 1548/49. It was supplied by ‘Master Manbe’ [Manby] at the substantial cost of 10s.69

The 1547 injunctions further stipulated: ‘because through lack of preachers in many places...the people continue in ignorance and blindness, all parsons, vicars and curates shall read in their churches, every Sunday, one of the Homilies...set forth...by the King’s authority.’70 The Book of Homilies was first published in 1547, and St Martin’s bought a copy quite promptly, from an unnamed supplier for 1s.71 Another copy was bought in 1563/64, when one was supplied by Robert Wilcockes (otherwise unknown) for 4s. 4d.72

Despite William Manby being paid for two processions (in 1545/46), for the Paraphrases and a service book (in 1549/50, for 4s. 8d.),73 he was probably not a bookseller. His name occurs frequently in the accounts,
indicating that he was paid for a variety of goods (including timber and lead for repairs to the church) and he was churchwarden for the year 1544/45.\textsuperscript{74} It is unclear whether Manby was being reimbursed for expenditure incurred on behalf of the church or whether he was a general merchant and/or jobbing workman.\textsuperscript{75}

A second copy of the \textit{Paraphrases} of Erasmus was bought for 7s. from an unnamed supplier in 1552/3, along with ‘a boke of the new sarvis [service]’ (5s.). In the same year ‘a bocke concernig the rebellys [rebels] wē was rede in ye chyrche’ was bought for 4d from the otherwise unknown Richard Parear.\textsuperscript{76}

Although St Martin’s was a centre of keen Protestantism, it appears that (in common with many parish churches) Leicester’s principal church was sometimes dilatory in obtaining the prescribed books. On several occasions in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and again in 1621/22, mandatory texts – the Injunctions and the Articles – were bought on the occasion of the Bishop’s visitation. In 1568/69, St Martin’s was ‘suspended for Lackynge a Byble’; a new Bible was bought of the Bishop’s Commissary, who levied a fee of 1s. 11d. in addition to the cost (£1. 4s. 0d) of the Bible.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1553/54 St Martin’s bought, of ‘Sir William Burrows’, a Psalter, a ‘Processioner’, a Manual and a ‘Cowcher’ for a total of 6s. 8d., a ‘cowcher’ or ‘coucher’ being a large book, designed to rest (Fr. coucher) on a desk or lectern. The nature of this coucher is not stated, though given that we are

\textsuperscript{74} William Manby should not be confused with Henry Mably (both names variously spelt), another member of St Martin’s who is paid for various goods and services. Mably became churchwarden the year after Manby. (North, \textit{Chronicle}, p80.)

\textsuperscript{75} I have tentatively assumed the latter and have included Manby in the database.

\textsuperscript{76} North, \textit{Accounts}, pp. 39, 45, 61.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. p. 116.
now into the reign of Queen Mary, it was likely to be an altar-book containing the Latin Mass. In the same year an unnamed supplier sold St Martin's another Manual ‘to wed, chrystyn and burye wthall’ for 3s. 4d., while a William Ward (otherwise unknown) supplied a Mass-book and another ‘Cowcher’ for 10s. These books must all have been in Latin, to comply with Queen Mary’s reintroduction of the traditional Catholic services, the old Latin liturgical books presumably having been surrendered to the Bishop in 1550 and ‘rendered unfit for future use’ in accordance with an instruction of Edward VI intended to ensure that only the English services could be used.

‘Sir William Burrows’ is a somewhat enigmatic figure who appears a number of times in the accounts, receiving a regular quarterly fee of 8d. for maintaining the chimes, in addition to various separate payments for the supply of a range of goods. Burrows was paid for other goods as well as books, including leather, lead, nails and packthread, which he used to repair the organ. While this might suggest (as in the case of Manby) that Burrows may have been a tradesman of some kind, the picture is complicated by the fact that ‘Sir William’ [Burrows?] is named in the records as the parish priest of St Martin’s in 1547/48. Burrows also appears in the records of another of Leicester’s churches, when he was hired for one year as officiating minister at St Mary de Castro. In 1545/46, when some of the church plate was sold to the Mayor of Coventry, Burrows was paid 2d. for ‘alterynge and

78 Ibid. p. 67.
80 North, Accounts, p. 33.
81 Transcribed in Nichols, History, vol.1., part 1, p.310. As in the case of Manby, I have tentatively included Burrows in the database.
wrytenge new ageyn’ two bills relating to the sale, previously written (for a fee of 4d.) by Frances More, ‘by cause ye lyked them not.’

After Queen Elizabeth’s accession in 1558, the liturgical pendulum swung back again. The re-emergence of Protestantism is reflected in the purchase by St Martin’s of books appropriate to the new situation, the English books acquired before Mary’s reign probably having been disposed of. In 1559, Elizabeth issued a set of injunctions, based on those of 1547, with some additions. In order to secure their implementation, a nationwide visitation took place and all churchwardens were required to produce inventories of books, vestments, plate, etc. The 1559/60 visitation resulted in the purchase of a number of books by St Martin’s: a Book of Articles, a new Bible and Paraphrases of Erasmus were supplied by the otherwise unknown William Shygelton, while unnamed suppliers provided the Injunction book, a new Service Book, several Psalters, and a processional. The Psalters are likely to have been the third edition in English, containing forty-four Psalms, published in Geneva in 1557.

The later 1560s saw St Martin’s acquiring further prayer books, books of Articles and Injunctions. A book of the Ten Commandments was supplied in 1580/81 by the known bookseller, Godfrey Cowper, who also rebound the Great Bible in 1584/85 for 5s. 4d. Peter Orton (otherwise unknown) supplied the new Catechism in 1588/89. Other important Protestant books, including Bullinger’s Decades and the works of Bishop Jewel, were acquired during the remainder of Elizabeth’s reign and into that of James I.

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82 North, Accounts, p. 15. ‘Frances More’ may perhaps be the same person as ‘Fraunces Mose’ (see above).
84 North, Accounts, p. 88.
85 Ibid. p. 103ff.
86 Ibid. pp. 126, 129.
87 Ibid. p. 134.
Foxe’s *Martyrs* does not appear to be mentioned in the St Martin’s accounts until 1598/99, when a copy was donated by a Mr Barfrey.\(^8\)

The known bookseller and binder John Langford supplied books, and repaired and bound them, for St Martin’s church. There is an early example of ‘part-exchange’ in 1597/98 when Langford allowed 6s. for the old Bible against the cost of a new one at 16s.\(^9\) The year after Langford’s death in 1633, his widow supplied a Book of Common Prayer to St Martin’s for 9s.\(^9\)

The accounts for 1594/95 record the payment of 5s. to John Langford ‘for bayndding [binding] of seven bookes’.\(^9\) The books were those mentioned in the previous year:

> Also receaved 7 bookes that were chaynedd in the Church and
geven by Symon Craftes.\(^9\)

This is an early reference to the Town Library, situated at first in St Martin’s church, and intended primarily ‘for the help and benefit of ministers and scholars’ although the townsmen were permitted free access.\(^9\) It is clear from the above entry, and others, that at least some of the books in the library were chained. In the same year as they paid Langford to bind some books, the churchwardens also paid 14d. to Christopher Nedham\(^9\) for ‘one cheyne and stapiles for the bookes’. In 1626 they paid 6d. specifically for chains for Foxe’s *Martyrs* and another book.\(^9\)

\(^8\) Ibid. p. 141.
\(^9\) Ibid. p. 137, 138.
\(^9\) Ibid. p. 187.
\(^9\) Ibid. p. 140.
\(^9\) Ibid. p. 137.
\(^9\) Nedham (or Needham – variously spelt) did various odd jobs for the church.
The Town Library was founded in 1587 and there is a reference to the expenditure of 2s. 6d. on two planks and two shelves 'in the library,' in the St Martin's accounts for that year. The exact location within the church of the library in its early days is not certain but in 1593/94 it was situated in the belfry, as the accounts show 16d. being paid for 'whytinge the library within y° bell free'. More significantly, this entry provides early evidence of the Borough's interest, the whitewashing being carried out by order of 'Mr. Maior and other magistrates'. (St Martin's had long been the 'civic' church of the Borough, having special links with the Mayor including his annual inspection of the church accounts.)

Leicester's Town Library is rightly regarded as one of the first public libraries in England. Thomas Kelly states that Norwich alone was earlier, though only by one year. While the library at Norwich remained under church control, the Leicester library was run jointly by St Martin's church and the Borough until 1632, when the latter took sole charge. The library moved the following year to improved accommodation in the Guildhall.

The general history of the Town Library is well documented in a number of sources so is not replicated here. However, the library's connection with the local book trade (insofar as it can be gleaned from the documentary evidence) is of relevance to this research and reference will be made as appropriate to pertinent aspects of the library's history.

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96 Ibid. p. 132.
97 Ibid. p. 136.
The establishment of the Town Library can be seen as a response by the town’s early Puritans to build up a much needed collection of books, primarily on the scriptures. An important role was played by Henry 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, a member of the powerful local Hastings family and a person whose influence on the cultural and religious life of Leicester in the latter sixteenth century is more marked than that of anyone else. Motivated by a desire to improve the standard of the town’s preachers, he donated a suitable collection of books to St Martin’s.100

The Earl’s books formed the nucleus of the Town Library and he encouraged others to make donations of books or money to the library. There is ample evidence that many, probably most, of the books added to the library were donations. Donors included Bishop John Williams, ‘one of the great booklovers of the time’, other clergymen and gentry of Leicestershire, the Mayor of Leicester and the Master of Wyggeston’s Hospital.101 One generous donor, Thomas Hayne, gave more than six hundred volumes.102 Not all acquisitions were donations. It is recorded that books for the Town Library were bought from London: in September 1628 the Mayor and Aldermen agreed to give £5 to John Angell, who was both the Town Lecturer (Puritan preacher) and Keeper of the Town Library, for the cost of a visit to London for the purposes of obtaining the Bishop’s licence for the weekly lecture (sermon) and buying books for the library.103

Documentary evidence from Leicester’s other churches relevant to book-trade history in this period is extremely sparse. Nichols transcribes a very small number of entries from the accounts of St Mary de Castro. In 1512, St Mary’s had its ‘silver Gospel book’ rebound and backed with leather for the

100 J. Lee, The History and Development of Libraries in Leicester before 1871, p. 16.
101 Deedes and Stocks, The Old Town Hall Library of Leicester, p. xiii.
103 Deedes and Stocks, The Old Town Hall Library of Leicester, p. ix.
sum of 4d. which was paid to the Dean. Two entries in the St Margaret’s churchwardens’ accounts show the purchase of a ‘Manwell’ [Manual] for 3s. in 1554, and two Antiphonals for 2s. in the following year.104

3.6 Parchment and paper

Having examined some of the background to the establishment of the book trade in Leicester, we now turn to the evidence for the local beginnings of the various branches of the trade. Before dealing with the mainstream early book-trade – stationery, bookselling, bookbinding – we consider the related and much older trade of parchment-making.

Parchment-making may well have been established in Leicester for some time before the earliest documentary evidence of the trade appears in the rolls of the Merchant Guild. The first of the rolls commenced in 1196, and the earliest relevant entry is that of Gervase the Parchmentmaker (‘Geruasius Parcheminer’105) on 1 June 1199.106 Nothing more is known of Gervase, though the Guild Roll tells us a little more about other early parchment-makers. In 1219, Richard, the prior’s son, (‘Ric. percaminer gener prioris’) entered the Guild107, and in the following year a Lincoln man was admitted: ‘Alan, percheminer de Lincoln’.108

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104 J. Nichols, History, vol. 1, part 2, p. 310 (St Mary’s), 360 (St Margaret’s). For the latter, Nichols relies on transcripts made by a Mr Peck in 1729.
105 ‘Parcheminer’ and ‘percaminer’ (and their variants) clearly denote parchment-makers. The term ‘parmenter’ (and its variants), occasionally interpreted as parchment-maker, more likely denotes a tailor, clothier or worker in leather. (M. Bateson: Introduction to Borough Records, vol. 1., p. 16, n.10.) I have followed Bateson’s interpretation.
106 ROLLR: Merchant Guild Roll, 1 June 1199. (Borough Records, vol. 1, p. 17.)
107 Ibid. 1219. (p. 24)
108 Ibid. 1220. (p. 25)
Robert of Lincoln and his fellow townsman Alan (presumably a different Alan) entered the Guild in 1227.\textsuperscript{109} There are several further mentions in the Borough Records of Robert the Parchmentmaker. If they all refer to the same man, he seems to have become a well-established tradesman, and an interesting picture begins to emerge of one of Leicester's thirteenth-century book-trade people. Robert the Parchmentmaker is next recorded in 1252/53, where he is listed as living at the East Gate, and seems to be contributing three shillings in pontage (bridge maintenance tax) and gavelpence (another local tax): 'De Rob. Parcamenario .iii.\textsuperscript{110} Two sons of Robert the Parchmentmaker entered the Guild: Richard the Courteous (whose trade is not given) in 1257 and William the Parchmentmaker in 1260: 'Will. le Parcheminerg fil. Roberti parcheminerg'.\textsuperscript{111}

Some information on occupations may be gleaned from the records of local taxation. The names of three parchment-makers appear in five tallage rolls between 1269 and 1271.\textsuperscript{112} Simon paid a total of 2s., William [Robert's son?] 3s. 6d., but Robert paid the much larger sum of £1. 8s. 0d., indicative of a man of some substance. This is perhaps borne out by references to Robert's land. By 1270/71, Richard seems to have inherited a plot of land owned by his father in Parchment-makers' Lane ('le Parcheminergate'). This reference comes from a document owned by Wyggeston's Hospital, which actually records the transfer of the freehold of another plot adjoining 'that of Richard son of Robert le Parcheminerg'.\textsuperscript{113}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 20 October 1227 (p. 30.): 'Rob. de Lincoln parcheminerg, Alanus de Lincoln parcheminerg.'
\textsuperscript{110} Loan for the Redemption of Pontage and Gavelpence 1252/53. (Borough Records, vol. 1. p. 44)
\textsuperscript{111} ROLLR: Merchant Guild Roll, 7 February 1257, 5 February 1260. (Borough Records, vol. 1, pp. 73, 88.)
\textsuperscript{112} ROLLR: Tallage Rolls, 1269-1271. (Borough Records, vol.1., p. 128-145.)
\end{flushright}
A second reference to Robert's land occurs in the Guild Roll for 12 September 1303, where a property in Parchment-makers' Lane ('in vico parcamenorum') is described as being adjacent to 'the land which was Robert the Parchmentmaker's'.\textsuperscript{114} According to the earlier record, the land had been transferred to Robert's son Richard over thirty years previously. The fact that this piece of land was still known by the name of Robert the Parchmentmaker may give some indication of his standing in the town.

Two other early parchment-makers are mentioned in the Guild Rolls: Walter Parchmentmaker ('Walt. Parcheminer') was involved in a plea of debt in 1347, and John of Merston ('Joh. de Merston parcheminer') was admitted to the Guild in 1380.\textsuperscript{115}

Some men followed both of the related trades of fellmonger and parchment-maker, though the register of freemen of the Borough lists a large number of admissions of fellmongers who are not known to have made parchment. It is not surprising that Leicester, still primarily an agricultural town during this period, supported many dealers in animal skins. Between 1600 and 1660, twenty-eight fellmongers are recorded in the Register of Freemen, of whom seventeen were sons of fellmongers and only three were 'strangers'. Fellmongers have not been examined as part of this research except for those specifically described also as parchment-makers.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, great concern arose about an influx of fellmongers from outside the town. The Borough Records begin in 1594 to contain evidence of a long and bitter struggle to exclude from trade

\textsuperscript{114} ROLLR: Merchant Guild Roll, 12 September 1303. (Borough Records, vol. 1., p. 288.)
\textsuperscript{115} ROLLR: Pleas of Leicester Fair, 1347. (Borough Records, vol. 2., p. 72); Merchant Guild Roll, 1380 (vol. 2, p. 196.)
fellmongers and glovers from other towns.\textsuperscript{116} The Fellmongers and Glovers Guild is an early example of a craft guild in Leicester, the only one remotely connected to the book trade.\textsuperscript{117} The Merchant Guild strove long and hard to protect its power by resisting the establishment of craft or occupational guilds. Nevertheless, they `gradually struggled into existence'.\textsuperscript{118}

\textbf{Richard Dickyns}, made free in 1593/94, is listed in the Register of Freemen solely as a parchment-maker. He appears in the Borough Records a second time in 1598, when he was imprisoned on a charge of flatt felonye for helpinge, eadinge or consentinge to the breakinge of [the] gaol, and lettinge oute of [the] prisoners then therein beinge etc.\textsuperscript{119}

Nothing further is heard of Dickyns and it is not known whether his business survived his imprisonment. In 1623/24 \textbf{Edward Robinson} was made free, the last parchment-maker freed before the Civil War, and his son Charles was apprenticed to him from Martinmas (11 November) 1645.

As noted above, the earliest evidence for the purchase of paper by the Borough dates from 1378, at which time paper would have been imported, and therefore relatively expensive, and was not widely used. Paper was not manufactured locally until production began at Cossington Mill in the 1650s, which is outside the scope of this chapter. However, a letter of 1612 is evidence that one Leicestershire businessman, Robert Heyrick, had a

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, p. xlv; \textit{Borough Records}, vol. 2., p. xxxviii-xl.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} The rules of the Guild (1606) are reproduced in J. Thompson, \textit{The History of Leicester from the Time of the Romans to the End of the Seventeenth Century}, p. 464.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Hartopp – Introduction to the Register of Freemen, p.xliii
  \item \textsuperscript{119} ROLLR: Examinations before the Justices (Hall Papers II, no. 498) 15 June 1598. (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 342.)
\end{itemize}
financial interest in the papermaking industry on Cannock Chase, Staffordshire.\textsuperscript{120}

The \textit{Victoria County History} states that the probate inventory of Richard Hilton, a mercer who died in 1574, indicates that he dealt in a wide range of goods, including paper.\textsuperscript{121} This would have been of some importance, as the first recorded instance of paper-selling in Leicester. However, my reading of Hilton’s inventory does not support the \textit{VCH’s} conclusion.\textsuperscript{122} There is no doubt that Hilton was a mercer who ran a small but wide-ranging business, selling a variety of goods, mostly textiles, haberdashery wares and spices, but his inventory lists only one ream of ‘bron [brown?] paper’ together with pack-thread. This surely suggests that Hilton’s paper was wrapping-paper rather than something he sold.

\textbf{3.7 \textit{The first stationer/booksellers}}

The earliest definite reference traced to a specialised book-trade practitioner in Leicester is the record of \textbf{Godfrey Cowper} (or Cooper) being admitted to freedom in 1577/78, in the trade of ‘stasyon’ (one of several early forms of ‘stationer’).\textsuperscript{123} (\textbf{Figure 2.}) ‘Stationer’ was originally used to designate one who traded from a shop in a fixed location – as opposed to a market-stall holder, a pedlar or a chapman – but the term was used imprecisely and could encompass a range of trading activities,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{120} Letter of Robert Heyrick to his brother, 8 June 1612, transcribed J. Nichols, \textit{History}, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 625. Heyrick’s brother was the partner of John Spilman, goldsmith to Queen Elizabeth, who held a royal monopoly on papermaking. (M. Plant, \textit{The English Book Trade}, p. 194.)
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{VCH} vol.4, p. 80
\textsuperscript{122} ROLLR: Probate Inventory of Richard Hilton 1574. (I am grateful to Robin Jenkins, Keeper of Archives, for giving a second opinion which confirms my reading.)
\textsuperscript{123} ROLLR: Hall Book II; Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, vol. 1, p. 82.}
frequently including bookselling and/or bookbinding. It is also on record that ironmongers often sold a much wider range of goods than their name implies. In some cases they were purveyors of book-trade goods including parchment, pens, ink, inkhorns, artists’ colours and books of gold leaf. 124.

Although made free as a stationer, Godfrey Cowper certainly practised the trade of bookbinder. However, the account of Cowper in the Victoria County History is rather misleading. It is stated that:

Thomas Green, the London carrier, used to fetch down books that he delivered to Godfrey Cowper the bookbinder. Presumably Cowper sold some books ready bound… 125

However, the facts of the matter are that there is only one recorded instance of Green (actually a Leicester man) delivering books to Cowper, in 1584, rather than the regular deliveries implied by the VCH. The books delivered were in fact nonconformist tracts, which brought both Green and Cowper

124 VCH, vol. 4, p.81.
125 Ibid. p. 82.
to the attention of the authorities. The case is fully described in Thompson's *History of Leicester*. In summary, Green claimed that he had been given a basket in London to be taken to Leicester for collection by an unidentified person. After some time, when the basket had not been claimed, Green opened it and, seeing that it contained books, took them to Cowper to see if they were meant for him. Cowper realised what they were and apparently had the good sense to leave them alone. Green, however, was sent to London to be examined by Sir Francis Walsingham, the Secretary of State; his fate is not known. What is on record is that the Borough incurred a cost of £1. 5s. 1d. in

sendinge upp to the Counsell [Privy Council] certen pamflits or printed papers that Grene the carrier brought from London, not knowinge for whom... wherein was much troble and attendance first at the Courte, then being at Grenewitch, and afterwardes before the Lorde Mayor of the Cittye of London.

Godfrey Cowper seems to have been blameless in this affair. The only other evidence traced of Cowper’s business activities is in the St Martin’s churchwardens’ accounts: as noted above, he sold a book of *The Ten Commandments* to the church in 1580/81, and rebound the Great Bible in 1585/86. A Godfrey Cowper, possibly the stationer, is listed at the same period as one of the town’s constables.

Another stationer, **John Langford** (occasionally Lanckford), was admitted to freedom – as ‘stasion’ – in 1591/92. He was a local man, the first son of Roger Langford. John Langford also traded as a bookbinder: as noted above, he was paid five shillings in 1595 to bind seven books for the Town

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125 J. Thompson, *The History of Leicester from the Time of the Romans to the End of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 269-270.
127 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Account, 1583/84. (*Borough Records*, vol. 3, p. 206.)
Library. John Langford died in 1633, leaving goods and chattels worth only £20.5s, which included the stock of his shop valued at £13.6s.8d. His probate inventory is of some interest, not least because of its inclusion of bookbinding equipment. His shop contents are listed as:

- Wares amounting to £13. 6s 8d
- Two working presses, one sewing (?) press with other tools 6s.
- One old horse (?) £1. 6s. 8d
- Other implements not specified 2s. 6d.¹²⁰

It would appear that Langford’s business was of a relatively modest scale. However, his inventory indicates that he was probably still trading when he died. If he was indeed trading continuously between 1591/92 and his death in 1633, the longevity of his business is a very notable feature of the local book trade. As noted above, the St Martin’s churchwardens’ accounts record a single book bought from Mrs Langford after her husband’s death:

Pd for a Comon Prayer booke to goody [Goodwife] Langford 9s.¹³¹

This transaction took place at some time during 1634/35, which is evidence that Langford’s widow was selling books at least a year after his death. However, it cannot be ascertained whether she continued to run the business or was simply selling off the stock of her husband’s shop as opportunities arose. In either event, this is the earliest local evidence of a woman being involved in the book trade.

It would appear that another stationer, John Allen (sometimes Alleyn, Allyn or Allin), was the first bookseller in Leicester to become fairly wealthy. Not a native of Leicester, he began trading in the town in July 1629. He soon fell

¹²⁰ ROLLR: Probate Inventory 1633/72.
¹³¹ North, Accounts, p. 187
foul of the Borough’s regulation of trade: the Chamberlains’ Accounts for 1628-29 record that he was fined £2 for ‘keeping a shop and using his trade one month before he was made free’. He was granted his freedom on 21 August 1629; as a ‘stranger’ he was required to pay an admission fee (‘fine’) of £13.6s.8d. Allen’s relationship with the Borough must subsequently have improved: the Chamberlains’ Accounts for 1635-36 indicate that they began to buy books from him:

Item pd to John Allen for a booke of Assize of Bread vjd. [6d.] and for Daltons Justice of Peace viijs. [8s.] and another booke concerning the resolucions of the Judges xvjd. [16d.] in toto ixs. xd. [9s. 10d.] 133

However, in the same year, the Borough also bought books from London:

Item paid then for certain bookes vizt. Pulton’s abridgment of the Statute xxxvij. [37s.] Pulton De pare Rege etc. viijs. vjd. [8s. 6d.] Bacons Elements of the lawe xvijd. [18d.] and two other little bookes the one the use of the lawe and the Starr Chamber cases xvjd. [16d.] a paper booke ijr. [2s.] and a box to putt them in and their carriadge downe from London iijs. id. [3s. 1d.] in toto. iiji. x. vd. [£2. 10s. 5d.] 134

There must have been a reason for buying these books from London rather than using Allen’s services. Perhaps these law books were selected in person from the shelves of a larger bookshop, possibly even a specialist in legal books, in preference to being ordered through Allen from a catalogue or advertisement.

Although there is no extant catalogue or list of Allen’s stock of books, it is very fortunate that his Probate Inventory survives. 135 This important

132 Borough Records vol. 4, p252
133 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts, 1635-36; Borough Records vol. 4, p.290-1. (This and the following are adjacent entries in the original roll.)
134 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts, 1635-36; Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 290-1. (The arithmetic is incorrect in the original record.)
document (Figure 3) is of some significance for book-trade history. Although the books are valued in total and not itemised, the stock and equipment mentioned in the shop give some useful clues about the nature and scale of Allen’s business at the time of his death.

The record of his burial at St Martin’s church, on 6 October 1638, describes him as ‘bookbynder’, though in the probate inventory he is ‘bookseller’. Allen undoubtedly traded as both binder and bookseller but the fact that he left an apparently large stock of bound books, valued at the sizeable sum of £124.13s.8d., suggests that bookselling was the major part of his trade. However, the inventory also includes unbound books in quires, together with turkey leather and pasteboard, to a value of £33.8s.11d. This is also quite a large sum and may indicate that the apparently considerable number of ‘books in quires’ were books that Allen was going to bind for sale in his shop as ready-bound books, though some (surely not all) may have been bespoke binding jobs for customers.

The picture that emerges from John Allen’s inventory is one of a thriving and quite large-scale (by contemporary provincial standards) book-shop and binding business. Allen died a moderately wealthy man and may justifiably be deemed Leicester’s first successful book-trade practitioner.

Allen was important enough to have a book printed for him (although it is dated 1639, the year after Allen died): The Groanes of the Spirit, or the Triall of the Truth of Prayer, by George Foxle. The imprint reads:

Oxford, printed by Leonard Lichfield & are to be sold by Iohn Allen in Lecester. An. Dom. 1639.136

135 ROLLR: Probate Inventory 1638/290
An inventory of the goods and chattels of John Allen of the Borough of Leicester, the bookseller, taken and appraised this tenth day of October 1638 by John Angell confrater of the new hospital in Leicester and Thomas Horne, chief schoolmaster of the said Borough, and John Angell jnr, gent of the said Borough viz:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In primis books in the shoppe bound</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item paper, ink, inkhorns and parchment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item black boxes [P], pictures, mapps, mouth glue(^{137}) and wax</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item shelves, presses and other things in the shop</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item the binding of 19 books in leather</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item books in the chamber in quires, paste board and turkey leather</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 tables and frames, one tray [P], 1 round table, 6 chairs, 10 stools, one cupboard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item pewter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item brass</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item one trundle-bed(^{138}) and bedding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item fire-iron, cupboards, tongs, fire-shovell, pott hookes, smoothing-iron and two spits</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item one drinking pot, one voyder(^{139}) one grater and one boiling-plate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item linens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item wooden vessels</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item wood and coals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item hay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item earthen vessels and three cushions[P]</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item the deceased wearing apparel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item his working tools</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item things unseen and forgott</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item his purse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

besides his debts what they are or amount unto be uncertain that as yet could not be truly valued but the administrators do protest not to use any delay in the obtaining of them to be praised and adding them to this inventory

Figure 3 Transcript of John Allen's Probate Inventory, 1638

\(^{137}\) 'Glue (originally a preparation of isinglass) to be used by moistening with the tongue.' (Shorter OED)

\(^{138}\) = truckle-bed: a low bed, running on castors, which pushes under a larger bed (see Shorter OED).

\(^{139}\) 'Voyder' (or 'voider') has several meanings, perhaps the most likely here being a basket or tray for clearing a table (see Shorter OED).
The volume comprises 228 duodecimo pages. Falconer Madan notes that this work was ‘published both at Leicester and Bristol’ and that the author may perhaps be a preacher called Foxley who was active in London in 1648/49.\textsuperscript{140} No other extant book seems to have been printed for a Leicester bookseller until 1689, when a book was printed for Francis Ward.

A comparison of John Allen with other local tradesmen and with book-trade people elsewhere is possible, though comparative data, especially from probate inventories, need to be interpreted with care. Compared with other known provincial book-trade inventories from the seventeenth century, Allen’s stock of books (£124. 13s. 8d.) is more valuable than most. Known inventories that list stock valued more highly are those of Thomas Gilbert (Norwich, 1603): £166. 3s. 4d., John Foster (York, 1616): £144. 16s. 4d. and John Brooke (Coventry, 1679): £147. 3s. 10d. Most known stocks are valued at less than £100, much less in many cases.\textsuperscript{141}

It is also interesting to compare Allen’s probate inventory with those of three Leicester men in a different trade, that of woollen draper.\textsuperscript{142} William Gillot was an unusually wealthy man, who served as Mayor in 1571/72, and died in 1580, leaving goods and chattels valued at £467. 10s. 0d. and with £140 owing to him. At the other end of the scale, Thomas Bennett was worth only £3. 9s. 6d. in 1648. William Chamberlin, a retired woollen draper, died in 1649 leaving goods worth almost £148. If these (admittedly limited) figures are compared with the total value of Allen’s inventory (£191. 6s. 7d.) he measures up quite respectably.

\textsuperscript{140} F. Madan, \textit{Oxford Books}, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{141} J. Barnard and M. Bell, \textit{The Early Seventeenth-Century York Book Trade and John Foster’s Inventory of 1616}, pp. 37-41. I am grateful to Dr Maureen Bell for providing additional data, and to Dr David Stoker for supplying the inventory figure for Thomas Gilbert.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{VCH}, vol. 4., p. 79-80.
John Allen may perhaps be the same person as the John Allen, son of Richard Allen of Knighton, Leicestershire, listed in the apprenticeship records of the Stationers’ Company of London. This John Allen was bound for a seven-year term to Francis Constable on 6 August 1623, and freed (as Richard Allen) on 4 October 1630.143 (Knighton, now a suburb of Leicester, was a separate village until 1892, whose residents would have been treated as ‘strangers’ in the Borough.)

During the early modern period a number of men not native to Leicester came to the town to set up in the book trade. In addition to John Allen, other early ‘strangers’ were Edward Rudde, made free as ‘stawsion’ [stationer] in 1590/91, Edward Robinson, parchment-maker, who paid a stranger’s fine of £5 to be made free in 1623/24, and another stationer, William Ball, who was fined 5 marks [£3.6s.8d.] on 10 July 1639.

The origins of these three ‘strangers’ are not known for certain, but Ball may possibly be one of two men of that name mentioned in the records of the Stationers’ Company. A William Ball - son of the late William, a Leicester yeoman – was bound for a seven-year term to Thomas Johnson, a member of the Stationers’ Company, on 20 December 1627. He was freed on 19 January 1635. The Stationers’ Company records also list a William Ball as the master of four apprentices – two from Leicestershire families – bound between October 1626 and March 1638.144 While the overlap of dates rules out the possibility of these two being one and the same person, either of them – given the dates and their Leicestershire connections – might perhaps have been the William Ball freed in Leicester in 1639.

144 McKenzie, Stationers’ Company Apprentices 1605-1640, pp. 37, 88.
It is significant that several book-trade men who had served their time as apprentices, and perhaps practised as journeymen, in London or elsewhere, then chose Leicester as a suitable place to establish themselves. While they may have had any one of several reasons for choosing Leicester – including family connections – it may be that Leicester was regarded at the time as a town ripe for book-trade development.

The Borough’s attitude to ‘strangers’ depended on various factors, including the person’s trade. Strangers were usually required to pay an admission fine to gain their freedom. Unlike those entitled to ‘automatic’ freedom: *i.e.* a ‘freeborn’\(^\text{145}\) son of a Leicester freeman, or one who had served his seven-year apprenticeship under a freeman of the Borough, a ‘stranger’ or ‘foreigner’ was usually required to pay an admission fine. However, the fine could be waived if it was considered that the tradesman concerned would bring some particular benefit to the town, such as the practice of a new trade or the introduction of improved methods in an existing trade.

As this provision seems to have been used very sparingly it would be unwise to read too much into the fact that these book-trade practitioners seeking to set up in business in Leicester were required to pay the stranger’s fine. While this might indicate that the book trade was not under-represented in the Borough, or that it was not considered at all ‘new-fangled’, it could equally be the case that the authorities simply welcomed the additional revenue gained from strangers’ fines. The level of fine charged was not at all consistent. John Allen’s fine of £13. 6s. 8d is unusually high, possibly influenced by his recent punishment for trading before gaining his freedom.

\(^{145}\) Born after the date of his father’s admission to freedom.
In common with other retail trades, by no means all book-trade practitioners were formally established. There were large numbers of itinerant traders, selling various goods including books, mostly of a very popular nature. It is likely that at least some branches of the book trade were practised at the local fairs. The only documentary evidence for such trade emerges from the record of a meeting in October 1599 of the Common Hall, about tolls and related matters:

William Okes saythe that ye bookebynder of Atherston told hym yat vpon Maye Daye last, he payd for his standinge in Leicester (to ye officers of the fayor) iid. and they would have had more.\textsuperscript{146}

In addition to being the earliest evidence of any kind of book-trade activity at a Leicester fair, this is also significant as the earliest record of an out-county book-trade person plying their trade in Leicester. If Langford was trading in Leicester as a bookbinder at this period, which seems likely, it is interesting to learn that a binder from Atherstone (Warwickshire) found it worth his while to undertake the journey to Leicester.\textsuperscript{147}

With two very interesting exceptions, no evidence has been found of chapmen or pedlars selling books or related wares in Leicester. The trading activities of itinerants, by its very nature, is unlikely to be well-recorded, with documentary evidence surviving principally in cases of a trader being apprehended and questioned. Another factor may be that, given the Borough’s well-known zealous approach to both vagabondage and trade protection, seasoned itinerants perhaps steered clear of Leicester, preferring to ply their trade in the relative safety of the surrounding villages.

\textsuperscript{146} ROLLR: Hall Papers II, no. 632b. 16 October 1599. (Borough Records, vol. 3, p. 374.)

\textsuperscript{147} I am grateful to Paul Morgan for his observation that the Atherstone binder was probably visiting Leicester as part of a seasonal working tour rather than travelling only to the Leicester fair, a return trip of nearly forty miles from his home town. (Conversation with Paul Morgan, July 2000.)
Sometimes, pedlars or chapmen dealt in cheap religious books – 'small, godly books' as Margaret Spufford describes them. She notes that the popular religious market was large enough to be worth publishing for, and that the 'sheer volume of religious print written in English is surprising, and seems, with ballads, at least to equal almanacs and prognostications in popularity'.¹⁴⁸ Much popular religious printed material, and certainly most surviving religious chapbooks (in collections such as that of Samuel Pepys, which forms the basis of Spufford's study) was of a strongly Puritan nature.

3.8 Pedlars of recusant literature

In the early seventeenth century, literature for the suppressed English Catholic community had to be distributed and circulated in secret, a trade better suited to itinerant traders than to established booksellers. There seem however to be few recorded instances of pedlars selling literature to the recusant community. Given the underground nature of the trade in recusant literature and devotional articles, it is likely that evidence survives only in those cases when a vendor was actually caught. It is of some interest, therefore, that the only itinerant book-trade pedlars of any kind so far identified operating in Leicester came to the attention of the Borough authorities specifically because they traded in Catholic books and devotional articles.¹⁴⁹

The first evidence of a recusant pedlar in Leicester is found early in the reign of James I. In late November 1604 the Mayor, Thomas Chettle, while 'makinge an extraordinary search... for leude [lewd], suspected or disordered persons' [i.e. Catholics!] chanced upon Richard Crosland, a

stranger to the town, in an alehouse and apprehended him on suspicion of being ‘some spie or Lewde fellowe’. When Crosland was taken before the Mayor and other justices for examination, he was found to be in possession of ‘dyvers papisticall books, Picktures Crusyfixes Jett Rings and Currall beads’ and when questioned he admitted to being a Catholic. Found in Crosland’s possession were four books: ‘A memoriall of A Christian Lief’, ‘The Contempt of the world’ and two ‘manualls of prayers’, plus eighteen gilded pictures and sixteen printed pictures.

Unfortunately the surviving manuscript record of the examination of Crosland is in poor condition and partly illegible, though certain important details are clear. Crosland confessed to having obtained his books and pictures from a London-based merchant, Edward Cavell. When asked where Cavell lived, Crosland said that he ‘laye some tyme in one place and some tyme [another] but most Commonlye, with the Spanyshe ymbasseters…’

Asked to describe his supplier, Crosland observed that Cavell was ‘a Lustie blacke man’ of about forty years of age. Also involved – whether in London or Leicester is unclear – was another man called Skyner [Skinner?]. Crosland said that

he meant to have leafte all the said books and picktures with.... Skyner howsse whoe is a papist further this examyneth saythe he is a papist hym[self].

Upon his admission of being a Catholic, Crosland was requested to take the oath of supremacy but he refused. Asked whether he had attended church yesterday, he ‘saythe noe, neyther was at any Churche this [two] yeres’.

Crosland was held in jail while the Mayor brought the case to the attention of both the Borough Recorder, Sir Augustine Nicolls, and the Lord

150 ROLLR: Hall Papers III, 704.
151 Ibid.
Lieutenant, the Earl of Huntingdon, supplying the latter with a list of Crosland’s books and other wares. The Mayor asked the Recorder whether he wished to raise the case with Lord Anderson\textsuperscript{152} or with ‘the Lords of the Councell’ [the Privy Council].\textsuperscript{153} Nicolls’ decision is not known but it may have been he who advised referring the matter to the Earl of Huntingdon.

The Earl wrote a letter, apparently to the Privy Council, asking whether they wished to deal with the matter or have Crosland held in jail in Leicester until the next Assizes.\textsuperscript{154} According to the Earl’s letter, Crosland, had about him divers books and pictures of sondrye fashin which he was travellinge abroad the Countyes here about to disperse to recusants as he affirmeth.\textsuperscript{155}

Although the outcome of this case is not noted in the Borough Records, there are two entries in the Chamberlains’ accounts relating to costs incurred. The cost of horses and other expenses for three men (the Mayor, with one of the two Chamberlains, Nicholas Gilliott, and a Mr Chase) when they spent two and a half days acquainting the Earl with ‘Crosland the Recusante his books and pictures’, amounted to 13s. 4d. The visit to the Earl was, as usual, an occasion for a gift:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Item} given by Mr Mayor to the Earl of Huntingdon when he went to his honor with the papists Books, for five quarts of Sacke and for the bottells vijs.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{152} Sir Edmund Anderson, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, a zealous interrogator of Catholics and Puritans alike – ‘notorious by his harsh bearing towards the prisoners’ – who had conducted a ‘brutal interrogation’ of John Udall concerning the ‘Martin Marprelate’ tracts. (DNB)

\textsuperscript{153} ROLLR: Hall Papers III, 582. It is clear from the original manuscript that the letter is addressed to Nicolls, at an address (mostly illegible) in London, though the addressee is not mentioned in the published Borough Records, from which it could be inferred that the letter was addressed to the Earl of Huntingdon, since he immediately became involved in the Crosland case and was sent a list of the pedlar’s books etc. (ROLLR: Hall Papers III, 587.)

\textsuperscript{154} The document (ROLLR: Hall Papers III, 588), which is unsigned but apparently in Huntingdon’s own hand, could be either a copy of a letter or an unsent draft.

\textsuperscript{155} ROLLR: Hall Papers III, 704.
The Catholic literature found in Crosland's possession is of considerable interest. Two of the books are English translations of Spanish devotional texts of some importance, which may confirm the connection between Crosland's supplier, Cavell, and the Spanish Embassy. The first title listed was an important work by Luis de Granada - A Memorial of a Christian Life. The second book, The Contempt of the World and the Vanities Thereof, was an English translation of a work by Diego de Estella, who wrote 'with unusual power and persuasive beauty, appealing to all Christians, for he held that all are called to the life of contemplation'. In addition to being an exceptionally popular work of Catholic spirituality, it was also published in a 'reformed' edition for English Protestants in 1608.

The two manuals of prayers are more difficult to identify, since a number of books are known to have similar titles. The most likely contender is perhaps A Manual of Praiers, gathered out of many famous and good authors, as well auncients as of the time present. Distributed according to the daies of the Weeke..., printed at Calice [Calais(?)] 1599.

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156 Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 32.
157 (1504-1588), an influential Dominican, some of whose works were printed by Plantin.
158 First published 1565. The British Library holds various editions in English, Latin, French and Spanish. The Bodleian has an English edition of 1688. Pollard & Redgrave list four editions between 1586 and 1625, all (ostensibly) published in France, though some English editions with a 'Rouen' imprint may have been printed in London.
159 First published 1562. An English edition (in the British Library) with the possibly spurious imprint 'Douai, 1584'. Various other editions in the British Library; one as late as 1835. An English edition of 1622 (translated by George Cotton) in the Bodleian. Four editions listed by Pollard & Redgrave: the earliest is undated (pre-1586), the latest 1622.
160 (1524-1578), a Franciscan, nephew of St Francis Xavier.
161 New Catholic Encyclopedia (USA, 1967) vol. 4, p. 862.
162 A methode unto mortification, called heretofore the Contempt of the World... edited by T. Rogers (Chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft) and published by John Windet, London, 1608. (British Library Catalogue)
163 This edition is listed (as are several later editions) in the British Library Catalogue. The Bodleian has A Manual of prayers distributed according to the daies of the weeke... published in England in 1604. However, the title is too general to enable a precise identification to be made. (There is also the Protestant A Manual of Prayers or the Prymer in Englishe of 1539.)
It is unfortunate that the outcome of the Crosland case is not known. The letter from the Earl of Huntingdon points to two possible ways of proceeding: the Privy Council or the next Assizes. However, there seems to be no record of Crosland in the Privy Council papers and the relevant Assize records are lost. The Borough authorities appear to have been very assiduous in tracking down this recusant pedlar, but seem not to have been sure how to proceed once he had freely admitted to the nature of his trade.

The Earl of Huntingdon had been present in the House of Lords six months earlier during at least one reading of a Bill ‘for Reformation of divers Abuses in bringing into this Land, printing, buying and selling of seditious, Popish, vain and lascivious Books.’ On 12 May, the House decided that the Bill was ‘not thought meet to be proceeded in...’ and a replacement Bill was ordered to be drawn up, with the advice of the Bishops of London, Winchester and Lincoln – the diocese of the last-named then including Leicester. So it would seem that the Earl – and the Bishop, if he were involved – would have been aware of the current climate of uncertainty over how to deal with the threat of an influx of ‘Papist’ literature. The revised Bill, ‘much disputed and pressed...’, was finally – in July 1604 – ‘rejected, without one Yea’. The House of Commons Journal appends the telling note: ‘Weariness and Want of Time.’

The issue of imported Catholic literature does not seem to have come before Parliament again for another ten years: in 1614 a Bill ‘concerning the

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164 Information from the Public Record Office, November 2000.
printing and binding of books brought from beyond the Seas' was again unsuccessful. The indecisiveness of Parliament – and that of the King\textsuperscript{169} – may go some way towards explaining the Earl of Huntingdon's uncertainty over how to deal with this particular recusant. It is likely that Crosland was originally suspected of being a priest, which would have been of much greater concern to the authorities than a pedlar of books and devotional items.

Further evidence is found for the local distribution of Catholic literature in November 1616, when the King's chaplain, Richard Jefferey, travelling through Leicester on his way from London to York, wrote to Sir Ralph Winwood, Secretary of State, about a woman imprisoned in the town 'for recusancie'.\textsuperscript{170} Jefferey had visited the woman in prison and found her ingenious and pregnant, yet soe capricious and confident, ... of and humble spirite readie tongue, and rife head, ... trained, traded and traveled... under the style and habite of a pilgryme passing as a foote post frome place to place attended with A mayde servant carryinge messages tokens petitions booke letters pictures medales Crusifixes reliques etc to dispose...\textsuperscript{171}

After their discussion, she 'is reconcyled unto our Church comes to divine service and preachinge [and] hath taken the Oath of Supremacie ...' Nevertheless, the old woman was held in prison for further examination, though Jefferey noted that the local magistrates had undertaken to maintain her 'comfortable and charitablie'\textsuperscript{172} Her release from prison and the waiving of her fees were apparently under consideration the following April, when the Recorder wrote to the Mayor, expressing concern that she might,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{169} The attitude of James I to recusants fluctuated considerably throughout his reign. In 1604 (the year before the Gunpowder Plot) the King – unlike most of his courtiers and members of parliament – was still fairly relaxed in his attitude to lay Catholics, although missionary priests were persecuted with some vigour.
\item \textsuperscript{170} ROLLR: Hall Papers VI, 99.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
through her poverty, relapse into her former ways. He wondered whether a
place might be found for her in the town’s hospital, so that she might not
‘through want desire ayd of her old acquaintance…’.173

Nothing more is known of this female pedlar or her maidservant, or of the
books she had in her possession, though we do learn her name, from an
entry in the Chamberlains’ Accounts for 1616-17:

*Item* paid to Robert Ericke post Master for his charge and horss-hier being
sent with letters to the Councell from one Mr Jeffereye a preacher concerninge
one wydowe Stanley an olde recusant, and nowe a convert xxx.174

These two examples of recusant pedlars seem to be quite unusual.175 The
evidence for the existence of Richard Crosland and Widow Stanley survives
only because of a combination of factors: (a) they were questioned by the
authorities in a town where Catholics were pursued with particular
enthusiasm in the early seventeenth century, (b) Leicester’s borough records
are unusually complete and well-preserved, and (c) given Leicester’s
situation on one of the main routes between London and the north, it may
perhaps have been something of a focal-point for itinerant traders.

Catholicism at this period was not strong in urban areas. One historian
notes that ‘the towns contained very little working-class Catholicism’.176
Leicestershire was not a particularly strong Catholic area, though there were
a few prominent recusant gentry families. The same writer observes that, in
Leicestershire as in several other counties, Catholic gentry were ‘very thin on

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173 ROLLR: Hall Papers VI, 148.
174 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1616-17. (Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 172.)
175 I am grateful to Dr Alison Shell of Durham University for her advice on the trade in
Catholic books. I have recently published a note enquiring whether these pedlars are
known elsewhere: ‘Divers Papistical Books… a preliminary note on pedlars of recusant
176 J.C.H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: the Catholic recusants in England from reformation to
emancipation*, p. 163.
the ground'. If this is the case, the surviving documentary evidence for the presence of two recusant pedlars of books and devotional items in the town in the reign of James I is a particularly fortunate, and fascinating, survival.

3.9 Leicester and the London book trade

Despite the growth of the book trade in Leicester and other provincial towns at this period, London remained by far the most important centre for all branches of the book trade. As we have seen, books were sometimes bought from London, even at times when there were booksellers trading in Leicester. Although a significant number of young men from Leicester and Leicestershire chose to enter the book-trade at this period, most of them went to the metropolis to serve their apprenticeships. There are a number of possible reasons for this: local opportunities were probably few and far between, some may have had family ties or other links to a London master, or perhaps working in London was thought to offer more promising prospects than an apprenticeship with a provincial tradesman.

The records of the Stationers' Company list a total of sixty-nine apprentices from Leicestershire families bound between 1605 and 1640, the earliest period covered by D. F. Mackenzie's published analysis. There was a steady increase during the period, as the following summary table\textsuperscript{178} indicates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Binding</th>
<th>No. of Leicestershire apprentices bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1605-1609</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610-1614</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615-1619</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid. p. 142.
\textsuperscript{178} Data extracted from D.F. McKenzie (ed.), \textit{Stationers' Company Apprentices 1605-1640}.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1620-1624</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625-1629</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630-1634</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635-1640</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This gives a total of 65 'non-printing' apprentices. In addition, 4 printing apprentices were bound between 1635 and 1640, giving a grand total of 69.

Some interesting facts relevant to Leicestershire emerge from the Stationers' Company records. William Hall, a yeoman of North Kilworth, was unusual in having four sons bound as apprentices to masters of the Company between 1618 and 1640. One of the Hall sons, Thomas, freed on 4 September 1626, may be the Thomas Hall listed as master of four apprentices, in which case the John Hall bound to him on 2 April 1627 and freed on 5 May 1634 was his brother. 179

It is also interesting to note that two London masters, Anthony Vincent and John Armestone, took apprentices solely from Leicestershire. This may simply be a coincidence or it may perhaps indicate some local family or business connection with the county. Vincent had two apprentices: Joseph Horton of Mowsley (bound June 1632) and Henry Huffen of Wigston (October 1638). Armestone had three: William Arme [a relative?] of Bagworth (September 1616), Richard Hackett of Braunstone (August 1609) and Thomas Hunt of Burbage (June 1617). 180

The picture of the early book trade in Leicester that emerges from extant records is almost certainly incomplete. As we have seen, some records have been lost, others give less than full details. However, the picture that emerges, albeit incomplete, is one of considerable and quite varied activity. The conditions in the town in the last quarter of the sixteenth century seem

180 Ibid., pp. 35, 130.
to have encouraged the establishment of book-trade businesses on a scale appropriate to the town's size. Of particular note is the evidence for John Allen, who was undoubtedly a bookseller and binder of some substance. Allen died a moderately wealthy man and may be singled out with some justification as the most successful — by a considerable margin — of Leicester's early book-trade practitioners.
CHAPTER 4

THE DEVELOPING BOOK TRADE:
c1650 to 1740

4.1 Evidence of book-trade development

The developing book trade in Leicester, as in other comparable provincial towns, gathered momentum during the latter half of the seventeenth century and expanded considerably during the eighteenth. There are growing signs of continuity and stability in the book trade after 1650 and by the turn of the century there is ample evidence for a number of well-established businesses encompassing a range of skills. The eighteenth century was a period of far-reaching change in the book trade, nationally and locally, and most provincial towns of any importance had both a printer and a newspaper by the middle years of the century. Printing reached Leicester in about 1740 and the town’s first newspaper was established in 1753. This chapter examines the developing range of book-trade activity in Leicester up to the eve of the introduction of printing.

There is clear evidence of both an increasing scale and a developing range of local book-trade activity up to 1740 – including the first (albeit sparse) evidence of books being sold by auction – and it is possible to identify a considerable number of practitioners from the Borough Records, especially the registers of freemen and apprentices. These records constitute the key primary source for this as for earlier periods, although one can never be certain that all individual traders have been identified. Despite the best efforts of the Mayor and his ‘brethren’ to maintain firm control of trade
within the Borough, there is evidence that a certain amount of trading managed to bypass the strict freedom and apprenticeship system. The Borough Records also continue throughout this period to yield evidence of book and stationery purchases, as well as background information on those book-trade people who held office in the Borough. The Town Library continued to develop and there is evidence of some its books being acquired and bound.

It has been noted that churchwarden’s accounts are less detailed for this period than formerly, also that probate inventories are less common (and those that do exist for this period often lack the informative detail of those of earlier times.¹ For the last thirty or forty years of the eighteenth century, valuable complementary primary sources are to be found, in particular newspaper advertisements (from 1753) and local trade directories (from 1784). Until such additional sources of evidence become available, it is often difficult or impossible to identify in detail the trading activities of, and items stocked by, individual booksellers and stationers.

In summary, there is rather less evidence for the first half of the eighteenth century than for the previous century or so, and what evidence there is tends to lack detail. Nevertheless, despite some shortcomings in the quality and quantity of contemporary evidence, it is possible to go some way towards constructing a picture of the book trade in Leicester between the middle of the seventeenth century and the coming of printing around 1740.

During this formative period, the book trade began to take on – in certain important respects at least – something of its modern shape. The increase in book production and in the demand for the printed word necessitated the

¹ See above, chapter 1.
exploration of new ways of overcoming the problems of nationwide book
distribution, including the important development of the wholesale book
trade. Political upheavals had inevitably created a demand for news and
political literature at various levels, and this period saw the publication not
only of the earliest newspapers but also of a huge range of pamphlets,
popular ballads and broadsheets.

National developments in the book trade tended to result in a decline in the
power and status of the Stationers' Company and the erosion of its trade
monopolies. The lapse of the Printing Act in 1695 paved the way for further
radical developments in the London trade but 'the seeds of change were
germinating even while the Act was still in force'.² In the provincial book
trade major innovations were imminent but here too it is possible to detect a
significant degree of change already taking shape. In Leicester there are clear
signs of the emergence of some elements of the modern book trade.

The most obvious and perhaps the most significant innovation is a greater
degree of continuity in the trade. In the latter half of the seventeenth
century there is evidence of book-trade skills being passed on from father to
son, and from master to apprentice, leading sometimes to the establishment
of businesses spanning several generations. The handing down of trade skills
and the beginnings of family businesses both point to the growing stability
of the book trade in Leicester. Another feature of this period is diversity in
the book trade, with evidence for the sale by stationer-booksellers of a wide
variety of goods, by no means all of them book-related, not least proprietary
medicines.

Also apparent from the evidence for the late seventeenth century is the wealth and position of the more successful book-trade practitioners. The estate of John Allen – who was worth the comfortable sum of £191 at his death in 1638 – pales into insignificance beside that of Francis Ward, the first of Leicester's several book-trade Mayors, who died in 1691 with an inventory value of £1,337. Wealth and civic office often went hand in hand, and it is notable that the booksellers Francis Ward, Thomas Hartshorne and Stephen Lincoln all rose to the high office of Mayor or Chamberlain of the Borough.

This is also a time when we find further evidence, albeit not too plentiful, of the role of women in the book trade. Two booksellers' widows are known to have traded, at least briefly, after their husbands' deaths. This may suggest that these women had already been involved in their husbands' businesses during their lifetimes.

4.2 Early book-trade practitioners

The latter decades of the seventeenth century are dominated by the three booksellers already mentioned – Stephen Lincoln, Francis Ward and Thomas Hartshorne – and by another bookseller, William Atkins (sometimes Atkin), who connects Lincoln and Hartshorne: he was apprentice to the former and master of the latter – an early example of the transmission of book-trade skills through the formal system of apprenticeship and freedom. Another type of continuity is exemplified by Francis Ward, whose family continued to trade as booksellers in Leicester into the mid-eighteenth century.
The career of **Stephen Lincoln** (sometimes Lincolne or Lyncolne; forename sometimes spelt Steven) seems to have been of some importance, though it is not extensively documented. The earliest evidence of Lincoln is found in two entries in the St Martin’s Churchwardens’ Accounts for 1640/41 and 1641/42:

- Pd to Stephen Lincoln for binding of two books called Julian and Horden 10s
- Pd Stephen Lincoln for mending the service booke 1s. 6d. 

By 1656/57 Lincoln had risen to the office of Chamberlain of the Borough and in the same year he was paid to supply several books to the Free Grammar School. At a meeting of the Common Hall on 18 February 1656/57 it was agreed that:


This seems to be the second of only two recorded instances of the Borough buying books for the Free Grammar School, a single dictionary having been purchased in 1627/28. Equally interesting is Lincoln’s work for the Town Library. The Chamberlains’ Accounts for 1667/68 record the payment of £1. 0s. 0d.:

- to Mr Lincolne for bynding of severall books being the guift of Sir Thomas Doleman.

From the next entry in the Accounts we learn that Doleman had given eight books to the Town Library: a man is paid two shillings for fetching eight bookes from Enderby which Sir Thomas Doleman gave to the Library.

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4 *Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 601.
5 ROLLR: Hall Papers XIV, 321. (*Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 438.)
6 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1667/68. (*Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 518.)
The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Mary's record that in 1664 Lincoln bound the church Bible for nine shillings and supplied a Prayer Book and a book of Canons for 6s. 6d. 8

Lincoln remained prominent in Borough affairs: his name is one of those listed as present at two meetings of the Common Hall – i.e. the remodelled, post-Restoration, Corporation – on 23 November 1660 and 13 October 1662. In addition to his civic offices, he was a churchwarden at St Martin’s in 1660. 9 The last reference to Stephen Lincoln in the Borough Records, occurs in 1667/68 when he is listed as one of the Stewards of Fairs. 10

Lincoln died in 1674. When his apprentice, William Atkins, was made free in that year, Lincoln was described as ‘late of Leicester, stationer, deceased’. 11 The approximate date of his death is confirmed by what seems to be an incomplete probate inventory. Dated 8 September 1674, it is witnessed by his apprentice, William Atkins, and refers to his widow Elizabeth. It is a very small piece of paper, almost certainly an addendum to a larger inventory, now lost. No total value is indicated, nor is there any record of the stock of his shop. All that can be gleaned of relevance to his trade is:

severall old bookes £2. 10s. 0d.
in desperate debts £16. 0s. 0d. 12

There are two pieces of evidence relating to Elizabeth Lincoln, Stephen's wife. Interestingly, she was already trading in her own name during her

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7 Ibid.
11 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1., p. 158.
12 ROLLR: PR/1/75/95
husband’s lifetime, as the Chamberlains’ Accounts for 1671/72 contain the following entry:

*Item* paid to Mrs Elizabeth Lincolne for newes bookes and other things
this yeare — as appeares by bill £3. 17s. 0d. 13

Mrs Lincoln is also recorded as trading as a bookseller and dealer in pills in 1675, her address being given as the Saturday Market. This piece of evidence — an advertisement in M. Bromfield’s *A Brief Discovery of the True Causes, Symptoms and Effects of...Scurvy* (London, 1675) — indicates that Mrs Lincoln also had a shop ‘next the Crown Inn’ in Loughborough. 14 This is of some importance as the earliest local evidence of a bookseller trading at more than one location.

Stephen Lincoln is an early example of a bookseller passing on his skills. In addition to having an apprentice, William Atkins, who would in turn become master of Thomas Hartshorne, Lincoln is probably the first Leicester bookseller to have a son apprenticed to the book trade in London. On 14 April 1656, ‘Stephen Lincolne [son of] Stephen [of the] Borrough of Leicester, bookseller’ was bound to Edward Dod, a member of the Stationers’ Company. 15 Nothing further is known of the younger Stephen and no freedom date is entered in the Stationers’ Company records, possibly indicating that he did not complete his seven-year term.

The Ward family and their apprentices were a major force in Leicester’s book trade for many years. They were already an established business family of some standing in Leicester before becoming involved in the book trade in the mid-seventeenth century. Alderman William Ward, the eldest son of a

13 *Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 534.
14 Wing B4884J. I am grateful to Charles Parry for his help in tracing this advertisement.
mercer (also called William) was himself a prominent mercer, whose fourth son, Francis, born in 1635, seems to have been the first member of the family to enter the book trade.

Francis Ward, like Stephen Lincoln, became a man of considerable standing in Leicester, with a long record of public service. He seems to have become a Councilman in about 1664, and he was elected one of the Borough’s two Chamberlains in 1668/69 and was elected to the office of Coroner in 1684, when he was also sworn in as a Justice of the Peace. He was still a JP in 1690, the year of his death, and was made an Alderman in or before 1689. Francis’s father and grandfather had both been Mayor, and Francis himself held that office in 1686. Francis was made free on 3 August 1657 and on 18 February 1656/7 he married Abigail, the daughter of John Clay, a brewer who became Mayor in 1659.

Francis Ward’s close involvement with the Borough authorities may have made him a natural choice as their principal supplier of books and newspapers. In 1666 he sold to the Borough for one shilling ‘his Maiesties declaracion about the fire at London and a Gazett’. In the following year, Ward was paid £3. 17s. 0d. for supplying ‘bookes and newes this yeare’. In 1688 the Borough spent £2. 8s. 8d. with Ward for ‘newes and other things

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17 Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 562, 569. (The two Chamberlains, in effect Treasurers, and two Coroners were elected annually.)
18 Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 521, 539.
20 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 141. No trade is indicated.
22 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1665-66. (Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 510.)
23 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1667-68. (Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 518.)
this yeare…’ 24 He also supplied in the same year, for fifteen shillings, ‘a Collection of the Statutes bound up made in the time of King William and Queene’ 25 The reference to the Statutes being ‘bound up’ does not necessarily indicate that he bound them himself; in fact there is no evidence of Ward’s ever having traded as a bookbinder. His probate inventory does not list any binding tools or materials, nor does it specify whether the books in the shop were bound.

The Borough Records include a letter written in 1663 by the Mayor (probably to the Earl of Huntingdon), giving an account of two packets of republican literature received in Leicester from an unidentified supplier in London, ‘the one packet directed to one of our Stationers the other to the other’. 26 The Mayor records that the booksellers (the letter refers to the two men as ‘stationers’ and ‘booksellers’) had reported these parcels of illegal literature to him, whereupon he ‘seazed the booke into my hands upon my owne observation of the times…’ being well aware of those who ‘print such booke as may disturb the peace both of Church and State…’. 27 The letter requests advice on how to dispose of the books. This is a useful piece of evidence not only for the (apparently unsolicited) circulation of republican literature but also for the presence of just two stationers – presumably Stephen Lincoln and Francis Ward – in Leicester in 1663.

Francis Ward lived and traded in premises on the north side of the Saturday Market. His probate inventory is of great interest. 28 It paints a picture of a wealthy tradesman who lived comfortably in a substantial house which comprised, in addition to the shop, a parlour, hall, kitchen, cellar, best

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24 Ibid.
25 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1688. (Borough Records, vol. 6, p. 44.)
26 ROLLR: Hall Papers XV, No. 471. (Borough Records, vol. 4, p. 488.)
27 Ibid.
28 ROLLR: PR/1/95/44.
chamber, red chamber, blue chamber, entry chamber, two high chambers, and a garden. The house was well furnished, with virginals in one room, £7-worth of silver (a tankard, salts and spoons), and linen to the value of £9. 15s. 0d.. With a large home of this quality, ‘purse and apparel’ worth £167. 0s. 0d., and a total inventory value of £1,337. 8s. 5d., it is clear that Francis Ward was a businessman of substance.

It seems unlikely that Ward’s bookselling business was the sole source of his wealth. He was owed a great deal of money when he died in 1691, which may suggest that he had business interests beyond the book trade. The inventory lists:

- Debts in mortgages and bonds £492. 0s. 0d.
- Good debts £299. 12s. 11d.
- Desperate debts £52. 14s. 6d.

Whatever Ward’s other interests may have been, his probate inventory provides evidence that his bookselling business was substantial. The stock of his shop was valued at a total of £219. 0s. 10d., comprising books worth £190. 0s. 4d. and stationery and other goods worth £29. 0s. 6d. This seems to be the highest value of stock, by a considerable margin, of any published inventory of a seventeenth-century provincial bookseller.

It is worth comparing Ward’s stock (books and stationery goods) with that of John Allen. Allowing for moderate inflation between Allen’s death in 1638 and Ward’s in 1691, Ward’s stock, valued at £219. 0s. 10d., has perhaps only a slightly higher real value than Allen’s, worth £170. 7s. 7d., although comparisons between probate inventories should not be pushed

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29 He may have been a money-lender, as was the bookseller Jonathan Gleed of Norwich, who became a full-time auctioneer in 1763. David A. Stoker, A History of the Norwich Book Trades from 1560 to 1760 (1976), pp. 88, 288.

30 ‘Books’ includes pictures and maps.
However, it would appear that, in broad terms at least, the book-trade businesses of these two men were of comparable size, so the wide difference between Allen’s total inventory value of £191.6s.7d. and Ward’s of £1,337.8s.5d. – and the difference in lifestyle apparent from their inventories – perhaps confirms the likelihood of Ward’s having had more diverse business interests.

Ward’s inventory is rather more informative than Allen’s about the type of books stocked, although unfortunately a large proportion is not categorised:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the shop, bookes in folio, quarto, octavo and duodecimo etc.</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibles, plain and gilt, common prayer bookes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testaments, psalters and grammars</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornbookes and primers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary pictures, small bookes, ballads, broadsides, mapps and engraved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pictures</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the earliest specific evidence for school-books being sold in Leicester, although they probably formed an important part of the stock of earlier booksellers. Ward’s stationery and other goods are also listed in broad categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56 reams of paper several sorts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperbookes [various sizes], 3 reams of bonds</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parchment and vellum, money bags, quills and oiled cloth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns 20s., pills, spirits and elixir</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectacles and cases..., inkhorns, wax, black boxes &amp;c.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 Moderate inflation is assumed between 1638 and 1691 because the ‘deep depression that continued for half a century’ (triggered by a sharp downturn in wool and textile sales in the 1620s) was followed by several decades of economic equilibrium. David Hackett Fischer, The Great Wave: price revolutions and the rhythm of history (New York, 1996), pp. 96ff.
As well as giving a useful indication of the sorts of stationery goods being stocked in the late seventeenth century, Ward’s inventory is also evidence for the sale by a bookseller of patent medicines, which was so often a lucrative part of a book-trade business. An advertising pamphlet of 1685 lists Ward among a number of booksellers and stationers selling a proprietary medicine alleged to cure scurvy. This is not the earliest such reference for Leicester: as noted above, Elizabeth Lincoln sold pills in 1675.

There is evidence that Ward, like Allen, was important enough to have had a book printed for him. A sermon preached by Thomas Sawbridge on 25 July 1689, bears the imprint:

London: Printed by T.B. for Francis Ward, Bookseller in Leicester, and are to be sold by R. Taylor in London. 1689.

On 31 March 1691, Francis Ward was buried at St Martin’s church, where he had been baptised on 21 May 1635, and where he had served a term as churchwarden. His will does not yield much information of relevance, though it confirms that he owned a building in the Saturday Market. John Ward is named as the eldest son and heir, to whose care were committed Francis’s five younger children. A younger son of Ward was apprenticed, a few years after his father’s death, in the London book trade: William Ward was bound to Thomas Bennett, a member of the Stationers’ Company, on 7

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33 Taken from the British Library copy (shelfmark: 226.i.12.(13.). E.A. Clough, A Short-Title Catalogue, Arranged Geographically..., p. 86, gives slightly different imprint details, with the initials C.B. instead of T.B.
35 ROLLR wills, 1691, folio 34.
March 1698, and was made free on 4 June 1705. It is possible that he was the William Ward who traded in Nottingham from 1710 to 1754.

John Ward, as we have seen, was named in the will of his father, Francis, as the eldest son and heir. John may already have been active in the business, as he was made free as a bookseller on 6 May 1690, the year before his father died. It seems that John inherited the substantial business established by Francis and continued to develop it. John Ward’s father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all served a term as Mayor of Leicester. John did not become Mayor but he may have been the John Ward who is mentioned a number of times in the Borough Records: as a Councilman in 1692, Chamberlain in 1697, Alderman in 1700, Steward of Fairs in 1701, and Coroner in 1702.

There is not a great deal of evidence of his trading activity, although it is clear that the business was large enough in John’s time to support three apprentices simultaneously. There is also evidence that John Ward continued his father’s practice of selling proprietary medicines. He is listed in an advertising broadsheet of c1705 as a vendor of Stoughton’s ‘Elixir Magnum Stomachicum, or the great cordial elixir for the stomach’. Otherwise, little is known of the type of books and other goods sold by John Ward.

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The earliest of several imprints in which Ward’s name appears is found in 1708, although Plomer lists him as a bookseller in Leicester only from 1711-1719, noting that he sold a sermon (preached at the funeral of the Duke of Rutland) in 1710/11, ‘in company with William Ward, bookseller in Nottingham, perhaps his father or brother...’

![Diagram of the Ward Family and their Apprentices]

Figure 4 The Ward Family and their Apprentices

Plomer’s suggestion raises a whole set of questions about who is related to whom in the Ward family. (The chart in Figure 4 shows the links between members of the Ward family and their apprentices.) We know that John’s father was Francis but there remains the possibility that John and William were brothers. As noted in the previous section, John did have a younger brother called William, who was apprenticed in London in 1698 and freed on 4 June 1705. In the same year, the first reference is found to William Ward, bookseller in Nottingham, where he seems to have traded until 1738.

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41 COPAC lists *Episcopal Authority...*, a sermon, printed in London in 1708, for Ward and others, and other titles in 1710 and 1712. (I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for these references.)


and was one of the town's earliest printers. If it could be proved conclusively that the London apprentice and the Nottingham bookseller were the same person, it would be an important early example of a book-trade family connection at regional level in the East Midlands. The fact that two sons of William Ward of Nottingham, George and William, were both made free as booksellers in Leicester, rather than Nottingham, (George in 1754 and William in 1748) increases the likelihood that the Nottingham William was the second son of Francis.

The freedom entry for George Cheselden Ward, on 22 October 1754, notes that he was the son of William, 'late of Nottingham, bookseller, deceased'. It needs to be noted that the term 'late of' is used inconsistently in the records of freedom and apprenticeship, sometimes indicating that a trader has left the town, sometimes that he has died, sometimes both. Therefore, this style of entry does not necessarily imply that William had ceased to trade in Nottingham before his death, even though the entry contains both terms 'late of' and 'deceased'.

It seems highly likely that George Cheselden Ward, freed in Leicester in 1754 (and of whom no further Leicester evidence has been found), and George Chiseldon (or Chiselden) Ward, who traded in Nottingham from 1736 (until, apparently, his death in 1798), are one and the same. This conclusion does however beg the question of why a trader apparently established in Nottingham for eighteen years should suddenly be made free in Leicester. One possible explanation is that members of the Ward family

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44 Clarke, *Early Nottingham Printers*, pp. 41, 61, states that William Ward 'appears to have started a printing-press in Nottingham some short time previous to 1717...'. Printing had arrived in Nottingham in 1710: see below, chapter 7. Clarke also lists a Robert Ward in Nottingham in 1723, though it is not certain that he was a member of the same family.
traded simultaneously in both Nottingham and Leicester (which is suggested by the available evidence) and that George took up his freedom in Leicester after his father's death. Since William's brother John was already dead, George possibly became the head of the family business — in both Nottingham and Leicester — in or around 1754.

There is further confusion over the Ward family: Plomer refers in his volume for 1726-1775 to a J. W. Ward 'still publishing' in 1745' in Nottingham. The entry cross-refers to Plomer's previous volume (1668-1725) but in fact leads nowhere. Plomer's source is a list of provincial booksellers published in *Notes and Queries* in 1906. This list, compiled from the imprints of more than 2000 pamphlets, does indeed include a J. Ward (not J.W.) in Nottingham in 1745. It is not clear who this person was, and it is not possible to check the original imprint as the pamphlets are not identified.47 Nothing further is known of the younger William. He does not seem to be the same person as William Ward of Hinckley, the schoolmaster and bookseller who became the town's first printer. John Nichols's family tree of the Wards of Hinckley does not indicate any connection with the Ward family of Leicester.48

William Ward of Nottingham had an apprentice, George Brice, the son of George, 'gent.', of Kirkby Mallory, Leicestershire. For some reason, Brice was both bound and made free in Leicester, although his master (and he himself, perhaps only briefly) traded in Nottingham. This would suggest that William Ward, although trading in Nottingham, remained a freeman of Leicester, which adds weight to the suggested link between the Nottingham and Leicester members of the Ward family. Brice was apprenticed on 2

February 1721, and obtained his freedom, as a stationer, on 27 September 1731.\textsuperscript{49}

There is evidence that George Brice was trading as a bookseller in Nottingham in 1727, though by 1739 his name is found in a Leicester imprint:

\begin{quote}
Thomas DAVYE

An additional supplement to a certain discourse of the new covenant, published in the year 1723, by T. Davy. Wherein is further shewed, what that covenant is, ... By the same hand.

[Leicester]: Printed for the author and sold by George Brice, in Leicester; and other booksellers, 1739.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Since there is a possibility that this book was printed in Leicester, though not necessarily by George Brice (who is not known to have been a printer), it is discussed further in the next chapter.

Little more is known of Brice's career, though Plomer lists him as a bookseller and publisher, 1744-46. Plomer's evidence for describing Brice as a publisher is a single title, a sermon preached by the Rev. Richard Arnald, rector of Thurcaston.\textsuperscript{51} This title is mentioned below, as it was published jointly with Thomas Martin (and also Brice's former master, William Ward of Nottingham).

John Ward is recorded as the master of three apprentices: Thomas Wightman and Matthew Unwin, both freed in 1727, and Isaac Newby, bound in 1723 and freed in August 1732, by which time John Ward is listed as being 'late of Leicester' and also deceased.\textsuperscript{52} Matthew Unwin became a

\textsuperscript{49} Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 389, 251.
\textsuperscript{50} Clarke, Early Nottingham Printers, p. 61. Bodleian on-line Catalogue. ESTC: t193133.
\textsuperscript{51} Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 4, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{52} Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 247, 395, 252, 248.
bookseller of some importance in the period under review, but since he is of major significance as (almost certainly) Leicester's first printer, he is discussed in the next chapter.

Although we have some interesting evidence for Matthew Unwin's career, there is only sparse evidence for the trading activities of John Ward's other two apprentices. There is no surviving local record of the binding of Thomas Wightman, though he is recorded as being made free on 20 August 1727. However, there is a record in the Inland Revenue registers of Thomas Wightman being apprenticed to John Ward of Leicester in 1714, a premium of £12 being paid by his mother, Elizabeth, a widow of Sutton Cheney, Leicestershire. If this was the same Thomas Wightman, his thirteen-year apprenticeship was an abnormally long one, unless he worked as a journeyman before being freed. It seems likely that he is the bookseller described in the following 1725 advertisement in the Stamford Mercury: (The advertisement is in any case of interest for its detailed list of the items sold by Thomas Wightman.)

Thomas Wightman, Bookseller from Grantham in Lincolnshire keeps Shop every Tuesday at Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, where he sells all kinds of Bibles, Common-prayers, Testaments, psalters, all School-Books, Gentlemen's Books both Antient and Modern; all Stationer's Ware, as fine Writing-paper, Gilt and Plain; all sorts of Paper-Books, Pocket-Books, Shop-Books, &c. Paper-Hanging of all sorts, Ink, Wax, Quills, Writing-Slates, and Wood Ink-Stands, &c. Daffy's Elixir, Stoughton's Elixir, Stampt-Bonds, Parchments and paper. Gentlemen by sending their Orders may be furnished With any of the above-mention'd at the lowest Rates. He also binds in Sheep and [C]alves, Leather, Gilds and Letters if desired. NB The shop is over-against Mrs Palmer's Apothecary.

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55 Stamford Mercury, 27 May 1725. (I am very grateful to Jim English for this reference.)
Plomer lists Thomas Wightman trading in Grantham in 1726.\textsuperscript{56} It would be rather unusual for Ward’s apprentice to be trading in Grantham and Melton Mowbray two years before being made free in Leicester, though it would perhaps explain his apparently very lengthy apprenticeship.

Another Thomas Weightman (sic) is recorded as being freed in Leicester in 1754, and he is described as the eldest son of Thomas of Grantham, bookseller. Nothing further is known of this Thomas beyond the record of his freedom on 18 April 1754.\textsuperscript{57} Whether this man’s father was the Thomas Wightman who had been John Ward’s apprentice cannot be ascertained. There was still a Wightman trading in Leicester in 1777: an advertisement in the \textit{Leicester Journal} notes that particulars of an inn for sale may be obtained from Mr Wightman’s in the Market Place.\textsuperscript{58} All that can be said for certain is that there was a connection between the booksellers named Wightman (or Weightman) who traded in Leicester and Grantham (and Melton Mowbray).\textsuperscript{59} This is of some interest as evidence of widening business networks at regional level in the early eighteenth century.

Very little is known of the career of John Ward’s other apprentice Isaac Newby. He was the son of Isaac of Ab Kettleby in north Leicestershire, was apprenticed to John Ward on 5 January 1723 and obtained his freedom in Leicester, as a bookseller, on 5 August 1732.\textsuperscript{60} Newby’s eldest son, John, was made free, also as a bookseller, on 16 April 1754.\textsuperscript{61} While John’s trade

\textsuperscript{56} Plomer, \textit{Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers...}, vol. 4, p. 262.
\textsuperscript{57} Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, vol. 1, p. 247.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 25 October 1777.
\textsuperscript{59} I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for pointing out the 1755 imprint of \textit{Melpomene, or the Songster’s Merry Companion....} (see also chapter 6 below in connection with John Ireland the elder) which mentions ‘Mr Witeman book-seller in Grantham’. (COPAC)
\textsuperscript{60} Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, vol. 1. p. 395, 252.
\textsuperscript{61} Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, vol. 1. p. 306.
might suggest the existence of a Newby family book-trade business, no further details have been traced of either Isaac or John Newby.

Having considered the activities of the members of the Ward family and their various apprentices, we need to return to the time of Francis, the founder of the Ward family business. In 1688, when the Borough paid Francis Ward £2. 8s. 8d. for ‘newes and other things’, they also spent £1. 17s. 11d. on ‘gazetts this yeare and other newes...’ with another bookseller, Thomas Hartshorne. Although Hartshorne would later hold various offices, including that of Mayor, he was at this time a recently-established tradesman, having been free for only about two years. It is interesting to see the Borough authorities giving business to the younger bookseller as well as to one of their own number.

Before examining Hartshorne’s career, we need to consider his master, William Atkins, whose career has to be pieced together from rather fragmentary evidence. What is known for certain is that Atkins was Stephen Lincoln’s apprentice, that he was freed on 28 September 1674, took Thomas Hartshorne as his apprentice, and died in 1686. Atkins was presumably an established tradesman when he engaged his apprentice, perhaps around 1679, though there is no record of Hartshorne’s binding. Plomer lists Atkins as active in 1684:

In that year, he sold a sermon preached by the Rev. John Newton, then vicar of St Martin’s, Leicester, on the occasion of the execution of certain criminals at the recent assizes.

There is a record of a William Atkins being sworn in as a member of the Corporation in December 1684 but this may not be the same man.

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62 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1667-68. (Borough Records, vol. 6, p. 44.)
63 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1., p. 158, 170. There is no entry for Atkins’s binding.
64 Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 3, p. 10.
By the time Hartshorne was made free, in 1686, Atkins is described as 'late of Leicester'. As already noted, this phrase is used inconsistently, and may indicate that a tradesman has moved away from the town or that he has died. With regard to Atkins, the latter is the case: his probate inventory confirms his death in 1686. Some useful information on Atkins emerges from his inventory. With a total value of £411.11s. 0d. it suggests that Atkins was a substantial tradesman. His estate included the leases of two houses valued at a hundred pounds, and his 'purse and apparel' were valued at fifteen pounds. Based on the information contained in his inventory, Atkins lived in a modestly comfortable house; he owned inter alia a silver tankard valued at £4. In relation to his trading activities, the inventory records:

In ye Shope Books and Cheases [? chests] shealves & other things £154. 10s. 0d.

One of the most important facts gleaned from Atkins's inventory is that he ran a second shop:

In ye Shope at Loughboro Books and Shealves £10. 0s. 0d.

This valuation suggests that the Loughborough shop was quite a small outlet with a limited stock. It may perhaps have been the same shop as that recorded as Elizabeth Lincoln's in 1675, though there is no evidence of this. William Atkins is significant as a bookseller in his own right, as a link in the master/apprentice 'chain' of Lincoln-Atkins-Hartshorne, and as another early example of trading in two locations.

**Thomas Hartshorne** was born in 1665 and died, aged 42, in 1708. Like his father, Alderman Thomas (a maltster and miller), and his uncle Robert (Mayor in 1673), Thomas held high office in the Borough, becoming a

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65 *Borough Records*, vol. 4, p. 562.
Councilman in 1689, an Alderman and Steward of Fairs in 1698, Coroner the following year, and Mayor in 1705. He was also churchwarden of St Martin’s in 1696. Having served his apprenticeship with Atkins, Hartshorne was made free as a bookseller on 26 September 1686. He was certainly trading as a bookseller in 1688 when, as noted above, he supplied gazettes and newspapers to the Borough.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no other evidence of his personal involvement in the book trade. Indeed Hartshorne has been cited as an example of a prominent businessman changing trades by giving up bookselling to take up farming:

> It was not unusual for members of other trades to have considerable interests in agriculture. The Mayor in 1705, Thomas Hartshorne, although a bookseller, seems to have abandoned his trade in favour of the following of a country gentleman. His inventory made on 22 September 1708 contains no mention of books...

It seems more likely that Hartshorne actually combined agriculture with the book trade. Rather than giving up bookselling he may have diversified into agriculture, a common practice at the time among moderately wealthy tradesmen. Having examined Hartshorne’s probate inventory and will, I can confirm that neither contains any indication of book-trade involvement. Land features prominently in the will, while the inventory (with a sum total of £496.16s. 4d.) includes a variety of agricultural equipment plus crops worth £200 and livestock (121 sheep, 10 horses, 2 yearlings, 3 cows) to a

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70 ROLLR: Chamberlains’ Accounts 1667-68. (*Borough Records*, vol. 6, p. 44)
71 W.A. Jenkins, *The Economic and Social History of Leicester*, pp. 51-52. A broadly similar statement appears in *VCH* vol. 4, p. 186.
72 *VCH* (same page) gives several other examples.
value of £67. Whether this is sufficient evidence for describing Hartshorne as a ‘country gentleman’ is a moot point.

The Borough Records refer to many transactions concerning land, in the name of ‘Thomas Hartshorne’ and ‘Thomas Hartshorne Senior’ and there are later records of land ‘late in the possession of Thomas Hartshorne’. It is impossible to ascertain which, if any, of these refer to the former bookseller, as Hartshorne is a moderately common Leicestershire surname. The lack of clear evidence relating to Hartshorne makes it difficult to assess his book-trade career. It may be that he abandoned bookselling quite early: there is no record of his supplying books to the Borough after 1688 and he may have turned to agriculture before he rose to high office in the town. However, it is by no means certain that he did give up bookselling, as his widow and at least two of his sons were involved in the book trade after his death. The absence of book-trade evidence in Thomas’s will and probate inventory may suggest that by the time he died he had been concentrating on his agricultural interests, leaving other members of the family to run the bookshop. There is a single reference to Mrs. Hartshorne as a ‘publisher’. She had a book printed for her in 1719, which must cast doubt on the assertion that her late husband had given up the book trade some years before he died. The book printed for Mrs Hartshorne was:

John PROUDMAN
The certainty, reasonableness and equity of a future general judgment.
A sermon preach’d at Leicester... March 19th 1718-19...
Nottingham: printed by William Ayscough for Mrs. Hartshorn in Leicester and sold by Mr. Battley, London. 

ROLLR: PR/I/115/1 (inventory); will (1708) of Thomas Hartshorne. 
Borough Records, vol. 6, passim.
ESTC: t192444. The book was an octavo of 24 pages.
There is no specific evidence of Thomas Hartshorne's eldest son. His second son, Robert, was freed on 7 August 1717, though unfortunately no trade is specified. Robert is listed as the ‘second son of Mr. Thomas Hartshorne, late of Leicester’. 76 Robert may have been a bookseller but this is uncertain. However, ten years later, on 9 August 1727, his younger brother, Thomas, was made free, with his father's (and by implication his own) trade being specified as bookseller. 77 The entry refers to his father as ‘Thomas of Leicester, bookseller, deceased,’ which suggests that he was remembered primarily as a bookseller, rather than as a farmer or a gentleman. This perhaps adds weight to the likelihood of Robert’s trade also being bookseller.

It seems likely that one or more of Hartshorne's sons continued to run the bookshop with Mrs Hartshorne. The eldest son may have been the John Hartshorne to whom there is a single reference in the Borough Records in 1714 when a vote was taken on whether Simon Martin or John Hartshorne should supply the Mayor's newspapers. Further evidence of the continuance of the business after the death of Thomas is to be found in Plomer's note of a Hartshorne (no forename given) subscribing to Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, also in 1714. 78 Plomer also lists a Hartshorne (again without a forename) trading in Leicester until 1735 but his source for this date is not noted. 79

As we have seen, the book trade in Leicester in the latter half of the seventeenth century was dominated by a few important individuals. There is little evidence of other activity. The St Mary's accounts mention a payment

76 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 213. ('Mr.' seems to be used in the Freedom and Apprenticeship Records to denote a member of the Corporation.)
77 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 245.
78 Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 3, p. 149.
79 Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 4, p. 118.
to a John Frear for two proclamations in 1664, and to an Emmanuel Manton for 'a booke' in 1667, but they are otherwise unknown and may have been church officials of some kind.\textsuperscript{80} One supplier of various books was definitely a church official: William Billings (or Billing) was the Apparitor, and there are several records of his supplying prayer books, proclamations etc. to St Mary’s in this period. A number of entries record payments for books to the Apparitor, by his title rather than his name.\textsuperscript{81}

As noted earlier, the evidence for the history of the book trade in this period is somewhat patchy and probably incomplete. Nevertheless, as far as can be ascertained from the surviving evidence, the trade seems to have been in quite a healthy state by the end of the seventeenth century. From 1657 onwards, there is evidence that the town supported two substantial bookselling/stationery businesses: Lincoln and Ward to 1674, Ward and Atkins to 1686, and Ward (father and son) and the Hartshorne family up to and beyond the turn of the century. The master-apprentice and father-son relationships, together with the involvement of women, point to the emergence of a soundly-established trade. Other evidence contributing to the picture of a thriving book trade are the earliest known local example of a dual-site business and the wide range of books, stationery and other goods on sale in Leicester. The wealth and status of the main participants suggest that, by 1700, the book trade was recognised as a respectable and increasingly lucrative line of business.

The beginning of the new century saw the emergence of another of Leicester’s important book-trade families, the Martins. In 1701 Simon Martin (sometimes Marten) arrived in Leicester and married Anne, the daughter of Alderman Thomas Ayre, a butcher and grazier who was to

\textsuperscript{80} Abney, \textit{Vestry Book and Accounts}, p. 24, 39.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. \textit{passim}.
become Mayor in 1704. Simon Martin would himself rise to high office in the Borough, becoming a Common Councilman in September 1702, one of the two Chamberlains in 1715, a Steward of Fairs in 1721, an Alderman from 1721 to 1743, Coroner in 1724, Bailiff in 1727 and Mayor in 1728. He was a Justice of the Peace from 1728 to 1732. \^82

Simon Martin came originally from Lichfield, where he was baptised on 4 March 1676/7. He was apprenticed in his home town to the bookseller Michael Johnson, father of the celebrated Samuel, and it is recorded that he lived with the Johnsons at both Sadler Row and Market Street and the future Dr Johnson 'doubtless worked with him for a time'. \^83 Having left Lichfield, Simon Martin traded in Ashby de la Zouch, before moving to Leicester in 1701. The exact nature of Simon's business in Ashby is not known; there may have been some connection with Michael Johnson's established practice of trading there on market days. On 16 September 1702 he was freed in Leicester, as a stationer, paying a stranger's fine of £20. \^84

Plomer records Simon Martin as the publisher of two books, both printed in London: *Cure of Self-conceit*, a sermon preached by the Reverend Samuel Carte at Leicester (1705) and *A Faithful Account of the Lamentable State of a young Man, and his immediate recovery... at Cropston in Leicestershire*, (1706). Martin is the only provincial bookseller named in the imprint of the Carte sermon:

London, Printed by W. Sayes for Simon Martin in Leicester,
R. Clavel and J. Holland in St. Paul's church-yard, and M. Hotham
at the Black Boy upon London-Bridge. \^85

\^83 'Leicester Bookselling Mayors', p. 3; Hartopp, Mayors, p.140
\^84 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 193.
\^85 Information supplied by the Bodleian Library.

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Plomer also notes that in 1714 Martin was one of the subscribers to Walker’s *Sufferings of the Clergy*, and suggests that he was still trading in 1737.\(^{86}\) Plomer’s evidence for the latter date is the Rev. R. Arnald’s *Sermon preached at the Visitation held at St. Martin’s Church in Leicester, April 22, 1737.*\(^{87}\)

Although Simon Martin is occasionally described as a printer, no evidence has been found. He is mentioned as a bookseller in a number of imprints between 1705 and 1736 and, in addition to the two books, already mentioned, published in London in 1705 and 1706, Martin was involved in the publication of at least three more books: Edward Bernard’s *Private Devotion and a Brief Explication of the Ten Commandments*, (3rd edition, Oxford, 1707), John Greene’s *A New-Year’s Gift to Youth...,* (London, 1713), and Henry Felton’s *A Discourse Concerning the Universality and Order of the Resurrection...,* (London, 1733).\(^{88}\)

Some evidence of Simon Martin’s trading activities is to be found in the Borough Records. In 1710/11 he supplied paper and stationery for the use of the Town Clerk, whose annual allowance of ten shillings for ‘Penns Ink wax paper & parchment for the Towns use’ had just been confirmed (having been increased from 6s. 8d. to 10s. in 1700.) The Common Hall meeting on 9 February 1710/11 examined Simon Martin’s bill and agreed that it was fair and just And that the whole quantities of Paper etc. were delivered to the Town Clarke or his Agent.\(^{89}\)

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\(^{86}\) Plomer, *Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers...*, vol. 3, p. 199; vol. 4, p. 164.

\(^{87}\) British Library shelfmark: 693.e.20.(15). The imprint reads: ‘Cambridge, Printed for W. Thurlbourn, and Sold by Messrs. Ward and Ayscough Booksellers in Nottingham, Mr. Martin at Leicester, and T. Payne near the Chapter House in St. Paul’s Church Yard, London. MDCCXXXVII.’

\(^{88}\) These titles are listed in COPAC and I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for drawing them to my attention.

\(^{89}\) Borough Records, vol. 5, p. 33, 62.
In 1714, the Common Hall took a vote on whether Simon Martin or John Hartshorne should supply newspapers for the Mayor. The voting was twenty-two for Martin, none for Hartshorne, so it was ordered

that Mr. Martin shall send for the News Papers for Mr. Mayor for the remainder of the yeare.90

The newspapers referred to were probably London papers, since no local paper had yet been established in Leicester. However, the *Stamford Mercury* and the Nottingham *Weekly Courant* were already in existence and may have circulated in Leicester.91 The Corporation placed advertisements in newspapers in 1725/26, to give notice of fairs and markets.92 The papers are not named but may have been those published in Stamford or Nottingham (which by then had a second paper, the *New Mercury*) or the *Northampton Mercury* (established in 1720), and possibly in the London papers.

There is an interesting example of two local booksellers working together in 1729, when the Common Hall ordered:

That Mr. Marten and Mr. Ward have the use of the Town Hall for the sale of Books etc. by Auction (sic.) making good all damages that shall or may happen during the time of sale.93

This must refer to a sale run jointly by Simon Martin and John Ward, who are otherwise not known to have been connected. It is of importance as the earliest evidence traced for a book auction being held in Leicester.

90 *Borough Records*, vol. 5, p. 69.
92 *Borough Records*, vol. 5, p. 104.
93 *Borough Records*, vol. 5, p. 113-4.
One source indicates that Simon Martin had two other shops, in 1720, in Loughborough and Hinckley, and also that he apparently kept the White Horse Inn on Gallowtree Gate. 94 No further evidence of Simon Martin's career has been found. He died in 1744 and was buried at St Margaret's church (where he had been married) on 4 March 1744. 95

Simon's eldest son, John Martin, followed his father into the book trade although on Simon's death the business passed to a younger son, Thomas. John Martin was apprenticed in London, on 4 September 1721, to the stationer George Bourne, of Snow Hill, a member of the Stationers' Company. The Company's register records John Martin's freedom, on 3 December 1728. 96 It is unclear what then happened to him. A little earlier in the same year, on 8 October, he had been made free in Leicester, as a bookseller, by patrimony as the 'eldest freeborn son of Simon (Mr. Mayor)'. 97 However, upon Simon Martin's death, in 1744, the bookselling business passed to John's younger brother, Thomas, and there is no further trace of John Martin, in either Leicester or London, which perhaps indicates that he had died or entered a different trade.

Thomas Martin was born in early 1702, probably in Ashby de la Zouch, where he was baptised on 13 April. 98 His father had been trading in Leicester since the previous year but may possibly still have lived in Ashby for a time. Thomas Martin was made free in Leicester, as a bookseller, on 9 August 1727 (over a year ahead of his elder brother John). 99 Thomas Martin

94 From Cyprian Blagden's brief manuscript notes on the book trade in Leicestershire (in the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library); the source is given as A.L. Reade, *Johnsonian Gleanings*, vol. 4, p. 121.
95 St Margaret's Parish Records, quoted Hartopp, *Mayors*, p.140.
97 Hartopp, *Fremen*, vol. 1, p. 249.
99 Hartopp, *Fremen*, vol. 1, p.245, 249. Both were freed as Marten.
followed in his father's footsteps in civic office, becoming a Common Councilman on 13 May 1730, an Alderman on 18 July 1746, Chamberlain in 1739, Steward of Fairs in 1746, Coroner in 1747, Bailiff in 1749, and Mayor in 1750. He was a JP from 1750-54.100

There is little evidence of Thomas Martin's trading activity, other than the books he published (listed by Plomer), one of which, published in 1746 in association with George Brice, has been mentioned above:

Richard ARNALD,

The Parable of the Cedar and Thistle, exemplified in the great victory of Culloden. A sermon preached ... October 9, 1746. Being the day appointed ... for a general thanksgiving for the Suppression of the Late Rebellion. pp. 28.
London: Printed, and sold by J. and P. Knapton in Ludgate-Street; S. Birt in Ave-Mary Lane; W. Thurlbourn in Cambridge; T. Martin and G. Brice in Leicester; and W. Ward, and G. Aynscough in Nottingham, MDCCXLVI.101

Thomas Martin is mentioned in the imprints of two other sermons printed in London:

Rev. Chas. STOKES, Rector of Knaptoft,

Diligence and Courage now Requisite in a Magistrate, a sermon preached in St. Mary's Church, Stamford, on October 4th, 1750.102

Rev. J. ANCELL

National Virtue, the Condition of National Happiness, a sermon preached in the parish church of Monk's Kirby, co. Warwick, February 11th, 1757.103

100 Borough Records, vol. 5, p. 520, 523, 526, 528, 532, 536, 544.
101 British Library 225.i.2.(21.)
102 British Library: 225.i.6.(12). Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 4, p. 164.
No further details of Thomas Martin's career have been traced. He lived to the age of 62 and was buried in St Martin's church on 22 March 1764. He had been twice married, having three sons and four daughters by his second marriage. No probate inventories have been traced for any of the Martin family. Other book-trade people with the surname Martin are to be found in Leicester in the early nineteenth century, but there is no evident connection with the Martins discussed above.

The number of young men from Leicestershire being apprenticed to the London book trade continued to grow during the latter half of the seventeenth century, a total of 83 being bound to Stationers' Company members between 1641 and 1700. Eighteen of these were from the Borough of Leicester; as already noted, two of them were the sons of the town's booksellers, Stephen Lincoln and Francis Ward. After 1700, the number declined sharply. Only seven apprentices from Leicestershire were bound in London between 1701 and 1740, and only twelve between 1741 and 1800. This decline probably reflects the fact that, by the early eighteenth century, the book trade was well-established in Leicester, with a number of masters taking on apprentices, thus reducing the need for a young man to go to London to enter the trade.

4.3 Parchment and paper

The long-established trade of parchment-making continued throughout this period. As in the mainstream book trade, here too may be seen clear signs of continuity and the handing-on of trade skills from father to son and from master to apprentice. There is evidence for two important

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104 'Leicester Bookselling Mayors', p.3.
105 McKenzie, Stationers' Company Apprentices 1641-1700, passim.
106 McKenzie, Stationers' Company Apprentices 1701-1800, passim.
‘dynasties’ of parchment-makers in Leicester prior to the coming of printing: the Robinsons and the Denshires. Members of these families and their apprentices are set out on the charts appended as Figures 5 and 6.

Charles Robinson, fellmonger and parchment-maker, has already been mentioned; he was apprenticed to his father Edward on 11 November 1645 and died in 1663. The total value of his probate inventory (£2. 4s. 0d.) suggests a low level of business, but Edward did have an apprentice, Anthony Groce, freed on 9 October 1663, who traded as a fellmonger and

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108 ROLLR: PR/1/63/7.
parchment-maker, along with his eldest son George, freed in 1689. George Groce then traded until about 1723 and had three apprentices: Thomas Gulston (freed 1702), William Brookes (freed 1712) and Joseph Peters, whose father, James, was also a parchment-maker. Peters was apprenticed in 1718, was turned over to Anthony Groce (the father of his original master, George Groce, who had presumably died) in 1723, and was freed in 1727.

Gulston and Peters were both followed into the parchment-making trade by their sons. Joseph Gulston was made free in 1727, and three of the sons of Joseph Peters, Augustine, William and Joseph II, were freed in 1754 (Augustine and William) and 1767 (Joseph). These tradesmen can all be traced back to Edward Robinson, who came to Leicester as a 'stranger', becoming a freeman in 1623/24. The longevity of this family/group of parchment-makers indicates a considerable degree of stability in the trade and provides clear evidence of skills being passed on through several generations.

Another important family of parchment-makers was founded by William Denshire (sometimes Dentshire or Densheir). He had no fewer than seven apprentices, including two sons, bound to him between 1680 and 1721, though (rather oddly) he himself does not appear to have been made free until 1685/86. In addition to the apprentices shown on the chart, Denshire had an apprentice, Timothy Turner, bound in 1721, who may have run away from his master, a very rare occurrence in the book trade, at least

112 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, pp. 247, 300, 310, 332.
One apprentice of William Denshire (the elder) appears from the records to have had an unusually long apprenticeship. Edward Billing, who came to Leicester from Newark, was apparently bound to Denshire in 1680 but not freed until 1705. His son, William, followed his father’s trade, though by the time William was made free, in 1734, his father had already died. As the chart indicates, several of Denshire’s other apprentices handed on their skills to a son or apprentice. Three generations of the Gamble family, all named William, traded as parchment-makers between 1721 and 1789 or later.

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The Robinson and Denshire 'dynasties' dominated parchment-making in Leicester for several generations, though others also practised the trade. Several of these businesses (together with a number who were fellmongers but apparently not parchment-makers) formed a cluster in Braunstone Gate, a little way from the town centre.

It is interesting to note the background of some of the young men entering the parchment-making trade. Although fathers' occupations are not always given in apprenticeship and freedom records, it is possible to discern a general tendency for apprentice parchment-makers and fellmongers to come from a background within the trade itself, or from agriculture, butchery, tanning and other animal-related occupations.

The parchment-making trade seems to have reached something of a peak in Leicester in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Thereafter it began to decline, though it survived until the mid-nineteenth century. There are some signs that the trade of fellmonger, always closely linked to that of parchment-maker, declined first. More tradesmen began to be described as 'parchment-maker' as time went on, rather than simply 'fellmonger' or 'fellmonger and parchment-maker'. This trend is discernible to some extent in the Robinson and Denshire charts, where the usual description of each tradesman is noted. However, it must be remembered that this research includes primarily those fellmongers known also to have been parchment-makers, though the charts do include the two families' sons or apprentices described solely as fellmongers. This may tend to exaggerate the gradual dominance of the parchment-making side of the trade, and in any case trade designations (as with 'stationer' and 'bookseller') were often used rather loosely. However, there does seem to have been a definite steady dominance
of ‘parchment-maker’ over ‘fellmonger’ before both trades went into long-term decline in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The reduced market for parchment resulted primarily from the greater use, and falling cost, of paper. Although paper manufacture in England dates back to the 1490s, there is no evidence for the trade in Leicestershire before the seventeenth century. Cossington Mill, about five miles from Leicester, dates back to at least 1248, and the present building (now a restaurant) dates from the early seventeenth century. In 1477 the mill was used for both corn-milling and cloth-fulling, though fulling had ceased by the middle of the seventeenth century. From 1549 until some point in the seventeenth century, the mill was owned by the Babingtons, a prominent local family. A Babington marriage settlement, said to date from c1634, refers to ‘the corn mill with appurtenances, the paper mills with their appurtenances’. Paper was manufactured at Cossington for about two hundred years.

Thomas Everard, a yeoman and miller of nearby Rothley, is recorded as the lessee of both corn and paper mills at Cossington in 1657. Between 1689 and 1706 there is some documentary evidence of rags being delivered by wagon to the mill for papermaking. In 1699 there were four paper-millers at Cossington:

| Pd. Ye 4 paper millers for 3 weeks | £1. 15s. 0d. |

From 1705 to 1710 (possibly longer) Thomas Steer was the miller. There is a record of his selling paper in 1705:


Ye paper miller Tho. Steers for 30 pounds of Eales 7s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. for a ream of paper. 11s. 0d.\textsuperscript{123}

In 1710, Samuel Steer, 'son of Thomas Steer, paper millner' was apprenticed in London.\textsuperscript{124} The Ratcliffe family were tenants of the mill for at least two generations. John Ratcliffe, of 'the paper mill', was buried in 1743.\textsuperscript{125} John's widow, Mary Ratcliffe was lessee of the mill from 1754.\textsuperscript{126} Robert Ratcliffe, probably John's son, was described as a paper-maker in 1771, when his son was apprenticed to a baker in Leicester.\textsuperscript{127}

There is evidence that the engines, presses and other equipment were offered for sale in 1793, with enquiries being directed to a Mr Kirk.\textsuperscript{128} The mill was perhaps re-equipped at this time, since paper apparently continued to be manufactured at Cossington Mill up to the 1820s, although there appears to be no later documentary evidence.\textsuperscript{129} Paper manufacture had ended by 1827, when Peter Hancock took over the mill but it is thought to have ceased only shortly before that date; the mill is said to have been known locally as the Paper Mill for many more years.\textsuperscript{130} No details have been traced of the type or quality of paper made, or whether it was sold or used in Leicester.

This chapter has outlined developments in the book trade in Leicester over a period of almost a century — a period of considerable growth and

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} D. Sharpe, Cossington Old Mill.
\textsuperscript{126} Skillington, 'Post-Medieval Cossington', pp. 39-40.
\textsuperscript{127} Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 2, p. 435.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
consolidation. Nevertheless, the town lagged behind a number of comparable provincial market towns in that it still had neither a printer nor a newspaper, though both would be in place before the middle of the century.
CHAPTER 5
PRINTING REACHES LEICESTER: THE TRADE FROM 1740 TO 1770

5.1 Dating the coming of printing to Leicester

It is, in fact, more difficult than some persons may be willing to believe, to ascertain with exactness the time when the Art of Printing was first introduced into the towns and villages of our own country....

So wrote Dr. Cotton, in his *Typographical Gazetteer*, published in the mid-nineteenth century. It has certainly proved difficult to 'ascertain with exactness' the date when printing first reached Leicester. The earliest definite evidence found places the date — a key one for local book-trade history — at 1739 or 1740. This chapter attempts to unravel the story of the introduction of printing to Leicester, and also to trace the subsequent history of the local book trade up to 1770.

An article on the history of the local book trade, published in the 1890s in *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, makes much of the fact that the first printing press to be seen in Leicester (though it did not actually print there) was that of Robert Barker, printer to King Charles I, which may have passed through the town in 1639. The State Papers record that the King, who was heading north to deal with the Scots, commanded that a press be

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sent with all speed for the purpose of printing proclamations to the Scots and orders to the army and the court. It is shortly afterwards recorded that ‘a printer with all his trinkets’ had been brought overland to Newcastle, where the press was first used for the printing of a sermon recently preached before the King by the Bishop of Durham.

There is no certainty that the King’s press actually passed through Leicester, so the description of the stir it might have caused in the town is somewhat fanciful:

and when, with its remarkable load, the vehicle arrived in Leicester, what a commotion there would be among the inhabitants! Not the least interested of the spectators would be the booksellers....

The workings of the King’s press in Newcastle in 1639 are described in more detail by W.H. Allnutt and by William Sessions, though neither refers to the press passing through Leicester. The story is a fascinating one but, even if the King’s press did travel via Leicester, it bears little relevance to local book trade history and is mentioned here merely for its curiosity value.

As already noted, Simon Martin (active 1701-1744) is sometimes described as a printer, although no evidence for his personal involvement in printing has been traced. Two secondary sources, both of which seem otherwise quite reliable, describe Simon Martin as both printer and bookseller. The confusion may have arisen simply from the arbitrary use by Martin’s contemporaries of the terms ‘bookseller’ and ‘printer’. Perhaps more likely is that, since Martin was involved in a certain amount of publishing, he was assumed to have been a printer. However, as we have seen, the books which

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5 Hartopp, Mayors, p. 140; ‘Leicester Bookselling Mayors’, p. 3.
Simon Martin had a hand in publishing were printed in London and Cambridge. While this may suggest that Martin was not a printer of books, it still leaves open the theoretical possibility that he was a jobbing printer. However, several facts suggest that he was not a printer at all.

Martin had been apprenticed to Michael Johnson in Lichfield, who is known to have been a bookseller but not a printer. Simon himself was made free as a stationer, but it is also worth noting that contemporary references to his son, Thomas, who succeeded to Simon's business, describe him only as a bookseller. Furthermore, Simon Martin is not mentioned by John Nichols, who generally took an interest in such matters as who was a town's earliest printer, and who had a particular antiquarian concern with Leicestershire as the author of the monumental *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*. The Borough Records, which make a number of references to Simon Martin, provide ample evidence that he was a supplier of books, newspapers and stationery, but make no mention of printing.

Two other seemingly false starts in the quest for Leicester's first printer are to be found in 1710 and 1724. John Power's *Typographical Gazetteer* of 1870 – which uses and augments information contained in Dr. Cotton's earlier *Typographical Gazetteer* (quoted at the head of this chapter) – is known for 'its many and manifest inaccuracies'. Nevertheless it is an early attempt at listing the first known dates of printing in English provincial towns. Power, apparently quoting Cotton, gives 1710 as the date of the first printing known in Leicester. Unfortunately, sources are not given for the dates in the *Gazetteer*, and no evidence for printing in Leicester as early as 1710 has been traced.

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In 1724 Samuel Negus compiled *A compleat and private List of all the Printing-houses*... Although Negus was most concerned with the printers of London and Westminster, and in particular their political allegiances, his list does include the ‘several Corporation towns in England’. Negus mentions one printing-house in Leicester, but unfortunately it is not identified. Since there is no other evidence of printing in Leicester before 1740, it may be that Negus based his information on a report that a Leicester bookseller – i.e. Simon Martin – had published some books. Allnutt notes in his survey of English provincial presses that Negus referred to a single printing-house in Leicester in 1724 (and also, in the same year, one in each of Chichester, Doncaster and Winchester), though ‘I know of no specimen from any of them so early’.

The earliest imprint traced for a pamphlet which may perhaps have been printed in Leicester has been mentioned in chapter 4 as evidence that George Brice was trading as a bookseller in Leicester in 1739:

Thomas DAVYE

An additional supplement to a certain discourse of the new covenant, published in the year 1723, by T. Davy. Wherein is further shewed, what that covenant is, ... By the same hand.

[Leicester]: Printed for the author and sold by George Brice, in Leicester; and other booksellers, 1739.

It is just possible, if unlikely, that this 24-page pamphlet was printed in Leicester. Both the Bodleian Library on-line Catalogue and the English Short-Title Catalogue give the imprint as shown above, i.e. with the place of publication given as ‘[Leicester]’. Although the author apparently financed

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7 Negus’s list is reproduced in J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. 1, p. 288.
9 Bodleian on-line Catalogue. (ESTC: t193133.)
the printing of his own pamphlet, George Brice (as the author's agent and
distributor) may perhaps be regarded as its 'publisher' — although the term
was not used in its modern sense at this period — in which case it would
follow that the place of publication was Leicester. However, there is no
evidence that this item was locally printed, and the wording of the imprint
does not necessarily imply that Brice was its printer. Apart from this
somewhat dubious reference, Brice is known only to have traded as a
bookseller. No other evidence has been found to suggest that he might have
been a printer.

5.2 Leicester's first printer

Ignoring the foregoing possibilities, for which no reliable
supporting evidence has been found, the first printer in Leicester for whom
there is definite evidence is Matthew Unwin, who has already been
mentioned as one of John Ward's three apprentices. Before considering
what is known of Unwin's career, it is appropriate to set out the evidence
for his work as a printer in Leicester.

The most important evidence comes, in fact, from Unwin's own hand. His
1743 catalogue (which is considered more fully below) contains the
following advertisement:

Matthew Unwin, Printer and Bookseller, over-against the Angel Inn, in
Leicester. Binds Books in the neatest manner, either in Morocco, Turky,
Calves-Leather, or cheap Bindings, by a compleat Workman from London;
and performs Printing of Books, Bills, Certificates, Receipts, &c, very neat,
at reasonable rates.10

This proves that Unwin was carrying out quite a variety of printing in 1743,
and therefore seems to be the earliest evidence for printing in Leicester.

The remainder of the advertisement contains references to his owning printing materials, and having established his business in 1739:

N.B. The said M. Unwin wou'd take an Apprentice, if he could meet with a sober industrious Youth, and one that would be willing to buy the Stock and Materials when out of his time. Or he will sell to any young Bookseller or Printer, all his Stock of Books, Stationary Ware and Printing Materials (immediately or at any time before next Spring) either for ready Money or Annuity for his Life; whose ill State of Health retards the Pleasure of Business and he having no proper Assistant, prevents him from going to drink the Waters or using such Methods as may conduce to his Recovery.

The Value will be about 200l. [£200] all which, and more, has been gained since 1739, he having paid all his debts.¹¹

This would suggest that 1739 was the year in which Unwin set up the business described in the advertisement, i.e. including printing. In any event, he must have started printing at some point between 1739 and 1743.

The nature and location of Unwin's trade between being made free in 1727 and establishing his business 'over against the Angel Inn' in 1739 is unclear. It is not even certain that he was trading in Leicester during that period. Since a degree of uncertainty surrounds the activities of Matthew Unwin, the evidence for his trading activities will be surveyed chronologically, in an attempt to outline his career.

The earliest reference to Matthew Unwin is Plomer's record of a printer trading in Birmingham in 1716-17. Plomer assumes that this is the same person as the Matthew Unwin trading in both Loughborough and Ashby de la Zouch in 1728, and in Leicester in 1741.¹² It is not known who Unwin's father was, or where he came from, so the possibility must be allowed that

¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 3, p. 296; vol. 4, p. 249.
the Birmingham printer was the father of the Leicestershire man. Plomer’s suggestion that they might be one person is possibly correct, although it seems unlikely that a printer already established in one town would become an apprentice elsewhere a few years later.¹³

The Matthew Unwin who printed in Birmingham seems to have been that town’s first printer. Joseph Hill, in his history of Birmingham’s book trade, refers to two books printed by Unwin in early 1717:

... it may reasonably be assumed that in Matthew Unwin, the publisher of these two books, we have the first Birmingham printer, one at least capable of producing work of any importance.¹⁴

Hill deduces (merely from its poorer quality of printing) that the earlier of these two books is a sermon preached on 30 January 1717, on the martyrdom of King Charles I, by ‘J.B., a Divine of the Church of England’, commenting that

... it appears to have been printed immediately, and bears evidence of haste and want of experience, bad paper, ink and workmanship.

He expresses surprise that the other book printed by Unwin is in fact the same man’s work:

... it is difficult to believe that the two productions, devoid of internal evidence of similarity in type, ink, paper, or composition, were the work of the same printer, and that too within the space of a few weeks, were it not that the title pages of both are explicit – “printed by Matthew Unwin”....¹⁵

Unwin was possibly born in 1700, which would mean that he would have been only seventeen at the time these two items were printed.¹⁶ While he

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¹⁵ Ibid. p. 36-37.
might conceivably have been their printer, it seems unlikely, and perhaps adds weight to the likelihood that the Birmingham printer was the father of the Leicester man.\textsuperscript{17}

The earliest trace of Matthew Unwin in Leicester is his freedom on 20 August 1727.\textsuperscript{18} The date of his binding to John Ward is not recorded, but is likely to have been around 1720. There is no evidence that Unwin, once freed, traded in Leicester before the date he himself gives of 1739. Plomer states that an advertisement in the \textit{Stamford Mercury} in 1728 records Matthew Unwin trading as a bookseller and publisher in Loughborough and Ashby de la Zouch, offering for sale a work entitled \textit{Dialogues Between Two Young Ladies}.\textsuperscript{19} Unwin is mentioned in at least two further advertisements in the \textit{Stamford Mercury} in 1728 and 1729, in addition to the one noted by Plomer. The earlier of the two does not give a location for Unwin but does confirm his involvement in publishing:

\begin{quote}
This Day is Published. An Historical Narration of the Whole Bible. In Two Parts... by J. Hammond D.D. Printed for R. Ware at the Bible and Sun in Amen Corner near Pater-noster-Row London, and M. Unwin; and sold by William Thompson, Bookseller in Stamford. Price 4s. 6d.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

The second advertisement, four months later, indicates that Unwin was trading in several locations:

\begin{quote}
Mr David Briers (with whom I made contact through the Unwin family forum: http://genforum.genealogy.com/unwin/) is researching the history of the Unwin family, to whom he is related. I am very grateful to him for information on the Unwins, though I have not traced any documentary evidence to confirm his statement that Matthew Unwin was born in 1700. He was freed in 1727, which might make 1700 a little early, though not impossible, as his year of birth.

\textsuperscript{17} Hill (p. 37) assumes that a Mrs. Unwin listed in the 1728 rate book as living near St. Martin's church was Matthew's widow, as she was the only person of that surname in Birmingham. He also mentions a Susannah Unwin married at St. Martin's in 1721.

\textsuperscript{18} Hartopp, \textit{Freemen}, vol. 1, p. 247. (He was made free as Matthew Unwyn.)

\textsuperscript{19} Plomer, \textit{Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers...}, vol. 4, p. 249.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Stamford Mercury}, 3 October 1728.
\end{quote}
This Day is Publish'd. A Companion for Gentlemen and Ladies: Or, A Delightful Recreation for City and Country... Printed and Sold at Stamford in Lincolnshire; Sold also by M. Unwin Bookseller in Loughborough, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Derby, and Mr Carlton in Gainsborough... Price Three-Pence. 21

The earliest known item printed by Matthew Unwin — and thus the earliest extant item printed in Leicester — is a single folio sheet, now in the British Library. (Figure 7) Printed on both sides, the sheet comprises, on the recto:

The last dying speech and genuine confession of John Flawn..., and on the verso:

An Account of tht [sic] Tryal, Condemnation of John Flawn, Late of Sheepshead [Shepshed] in the County of Leicester: Before the Lord Chief Baron Probyn at the Castle of Leicester, July 30 1741, for willfully Forging, Executing, Counterfeiting and Proving, the last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Grey of Kegworth in the County aforesaid.

The final paragraph of the confession reads:

This Genuine Confession is only Printed by M. Unwin, in Leicester, and no other Person has any Right or Property to Print the same. 22

The date of Flawn’s execution is given as:

Saturday the 15th of August 1741, about 6 o’Clock in the Evening. 23

Although 1741 is not, strictly speaking, given as the publication date (the British Library catalogue cautiously encloses the date in square brackets), it is highly likely that an item of such topical interest as an execution broadside would have been published within a short time of the events it described. It

21 *Stamford Mercury*, 23 January 1729. I am very grateful to Jim English for supplying transcripts of these two advertisements.

22 British Library: 1891.d.1(15). I am very grateful to Mr. Charles Flawn (with whom I made contact through the Flawn family genealogy forum on the Internet, accessed via www.familytreemaker.com) for his interest in his ancestor’s execution broadside, of which he was previously unaware, and for obtaining a copy for me.

23 Ibid.
Figure 7  Execution broadside printed by Matthew Unwin 1741 (verso)

(Reproduced by permission of the British Library)
therefore seems fairly safe to assume that Unwin printed this sheet, in Leicester, in the latter part of 1741.

The Flawn broadside is fairly typical of its kind. The quality of printing is at best average and there are several typographical errors. It gives a brief account of the trial, consisting mainly of a statement from the key witness, Thomas Vincent, a schoolmaster of Anstey, who claimed that Flawn had forced him to draw up a will (a service he often performed) for his recently deceased aunt. A note on Flawn’s character is appended. He was an innkeeper, and

was always reckoned a very dangerous man, keeping a very disorderly House, entertaining bad Company Continually, and is strongly suspected by every body to be Accessary to the Murder of Mr. Warner, who was killed in Garendon Park [i.e. Garendon Park, near Loughborough] about 10 Years ago...  

The verso comprises Flawn’s confession (in which he claims that the schoolmaster suggested the forgery), together with a commentary on morality and the Last Judgement, and a brief note to the effect that Flawn, having ‘desired to receive the Holy Sacrament...’ died in a suitably penitential manner.  

This broadside is assumed by Plomer, using Allnutt as his source, to be the earliest known item printed in Leicester. The evidence of Unwin’s

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Plomer, Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 3, p. 296; vol. 4, p. 249. Allnutt, ‘English Provincial Presses’, pt. 3, p. 303. ESTC lists one earlier work, an anonymous 1715 publication, as possibly being printed in Leicester: A True State of the Proceedings of the Leicestershire Election, begun on the first day of Feb. 1714. (ESTC: t051931.) ESTC gives the place of printing as ‘[Leicester?]’, presumably inferred solely from the subject-matter of the book. This is the only item listed in ESTC as being printed in Leicester earlier than
catalogue, that he set up his business in Leicester in 1739, and of the likely date of printing of the Flawn sheet in 1741, leads me to suggest a tentative date for the coming of printing to Leicester of a year either side of 1740.  

Further evidence for Unwin is found in 1742/43, when the Borough Records note that the Common Hall held on 4 February:

Ordered that Mathew Unwin Bookseller have the use of the Town Hall for an Auction [sic] makeing good any damage that may happen thereby.  

This is a valuable piece of evidence for Unwin’s trading activity and is also of importance as only the second record of a book auction being held in Leicester, the first, as already noted, having been organised jointly by Simon Martin and John Ward in 1729.

The next evidence, chronologically speaking, is the 1743 catalogue already mentioned:

A catalogue of books. In divinity, history, law, physick, mathematicks, poetry, classicks, &c. Being 2 Small Libraries, the one of a young Clergyman, lately deceased; and the other of a Gentleman...  

This catalogue (Figure 8) is an important survival, which provides more detail than any other single source about Matthew Unwin and his book-trade activities. There is a single copy in the British Library, comprising thirty-eight duodecimo pages. The copy is imperfect, lacking pages 5 to 8. It is printed reasonably competently, using a moderately large typeface on paper of average quality. Books for sale are numbered in several sequences.

The Flawn sheet of 1741. However, for the reasons outlined earlier in this Chapter, it is most unlikely that printing had reached Leicester as early as 1715.

27 In the introduction of printing, Nottingham was ahead of Leicester by almost thirty years, several printers being established there before 1740. W. J. Clarke, Early Nottingham Printers and Printing, pp. 41-42.


and somewhat inconsistently, even making allowance for the missing pages. Each page lists approximately twenty-five books, categorised by size; a wide range of prices is indicated. The titles on offer cover a very broad selection of subjects, to an even larger extent than is suggested by the catalogue’s title. Unwin’s catalogue (when complete) is estimated to have offered for sale in excess of nine hundred books.
It is not known why Matthew Unwin held this sale in a Nottingham inn rather than Leicester or whether he was acting in partnership with another bookseller. Whatever the reason, it does seem to confirm the already noted book-trade connection between Nottingham and Leicester, the rival regional capitals of the East Midlands. As we have seen, the Ward family were probably still trading in both towns at this period.

One gets the impression, although the 1743 catalogue appears to be the only extant Unwin catalogue, that he was perhaps experienced in selling (and/or buying) books by auction. The precise detail set out in catalogue, such as the starting-time of the sale, the viewing arrangements and eight-day period of sale, may be indicative of a bookseller skilled in this method of selling. Unwin's possible experience of selling by auction, and his assumption that some of the books would be sold by commission to buyers not present at the sale, are borne out by a carefully-worded statement in the catalogue about the condition of the books on offer:

N.B. Most of the Books in this Catalogue are as clean as new; exceeding well bound; and many of them gilt and letter'd; if otherwise, the Condition, with the Imperfections, is express'd in the Catalogue, that Gentleman at a distance, may send Commissions and not be deceiv'd.30

The advertisements which Unwin included in his catalogue provide some interesting information about the range of services that he offered. The range of his printing and binding services has already been noted. The catalogue contains a separate advertisement for stationery:

The Best Shining Jappan Ink at 3d a Bottle, and the best common black ink, which never changes Yellow, at 6d a Pint. Sold by M. Unwin, Bookseller in Leicester; who sells all sorts of Dutch Writing Paper, from

30 Ibid.
4 pence halfpenny a Quire to 12d, cut or uncut, and all sorts of Stationary Ware very Reasonably. 31

Matthew Unwin’s business seems, from his own descriptions, to have been wide-ranging. If his valuation of two hundred pounds is accurate, it was also reasonably lucrative, although it seems to have been quite modest in scale. Unwin’s reference, in the 1743 catalogue, to ‘having no proper assistant...’ suggests that it was a one-person business. 32

To his advertisement (see above) seeking either an apprentice or a buyer for his business, Unwin adds:

Note: He has a very handsome House and Shop, situate in the most public Street, out of the Liberty of the Freedom of the Town, and Business encreases daily. 33

The outcome of Unwin’s advertisement is unknown; no record has been found of his taking an apprentice and he apparently did not sell his business. Evidence of his trading in 1745 is found in prints of two views of the Market Place, reproduced in a local history book in 1881. One of these is reproduced as Figure 9 – it bears this inscription:

Publish’d Ap. 9th 1745 by T. Bakewell against Birchen Lane in Cornhill and sold by M. Unwin in Leicester. 34

There is no further trading evidence for Unwin after 1745, although his will indicates that he was trading up to the time of his death. 35 He died in March

31 Ibid. p. 38.
32 Ibid. verso of title-page.
33 Ibid.
34 R. Read, Modern Leicester, opp. pp. 6, 15. The original prints do not seem to have survived, though there is another version on a loose sheet in ROLLR.
1750 and was buried in St Martin’s church.\(^{36}\) In his will, made on 20 July 1749, Unwin leaves virtually everything, including his stock of books and printing materials, to his wife Elizabeth who is named as sole executrix. No record has been found of Elizabeth Unwin’s trading activity after her husband’s death.\(^{37}\)

Matthew Unwin is significant in book trade history on two counts: as Leicester’s first printer and as an early example of a bookseller/printer trading in a number of locations within a region. To summarise, Unwin is recorded as trading in the following locations in the East Midlands:

Loughborough (1728 to 1729)

Ashby de la Zouch (1728 to 1729)

Derby (1729)

\(^{35}\) ROLLR: PR/T/1750/200.

\(^{36}\) ROLLR: DE 1564/14(6).

\(^{37}\) ROLLR: PR/T/1750/200. He also left small bequests to his daughter and nephews.
Leicester (1739 to 1745).

These are in addition to both his period of printing in Birmingham in 1716/17 (if this was indeed the same man) and his apprenticeship in Leicester with John Ward, probably from c1720 until his freedom in 1727. It is possible that Unwin’s activity in several of these sites was short-lived, and some of them – other than Leicester and (perhaps) Birmingham – may have been occasional stalls rather than shops. To the above locations may be added Unwin’s trade contacts – though almost nothing is known of them – with Nottingham (the 1743 sale) and with booksellers in Stamford and Gainsborough. Matthew Unwin seems to have been the earliest Leicester-based book-trade person to have been active over such a wide region.

The date when Matthew Unwin ceased trading is not known. There is evidence (in his catalogue advertisement) that he was not enjoying the best of health in 1743 and was hoping to be able to retire from trade in the near future. Bakewell’s prints of the Market Place suggest that Unwin was still in business in 1745, so he possibly terminated his business at some time between 1745 and his death in 1750. That would mean that there was almost certainly a break in printing in Leicester, possibly of several years’ duration. John Gregory did not begin trading until 1753, and no other printer is known in the town at this period. Gregory seems not have styled himself ‘printer’ before November 1755, and it was in this year that he is known to have printed his first book. However, once Gregory had established his substantial business, and commenced printing his own newspaper, printing had arrived for good in Leicester.
5.3 A major book-trade figure and Leicester's first newspaper

John Gregory is a figure of such importance in the history of the book trade in Leicester that the remainder of this chapter is largely devoted to him and his business. The second printer to practise in Leicester, Gregory seems to have been the first (if we ignore Unwin's sale catalogues) to print books in the town, as well as founding its first newspaper. Gregory operated on a much larger scale than Matthew Unwin and had no fewer than twelve apprentices bound to him at various times. Although a successful printer and bookseller, Gregory is chiefly remembered as the publisher of the Leicester Journal.38 In addition to its significance as the town's first newspaper, the Journal is an invaluable primary source of data on book-trade history, its advertisements providing detailed information on Gregory's wide-ranging activities as bookseller, bookbinder, printer and publisher.

In common with most of Leicester's leading book-trade practitioners, Gregory was not a local man. John Nichols gives a pedigree of the Gregory family which tells us that John Gregory came from an old Derbyshire family, who were long-established landowners in the Ashover area.39 John was born in 1727 and probably came to Leicester in 1752, where he was made free, on 26 May, as a 'stranger' with no trade specified.40 He had two sons and one daughter, and his elder son, also John, took over his father's business when he died in 1789.

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38 In the interests of brevity, Gregory's newspaper is referred to throughout as the Leicester Journal or simply the Journal, although it was entitled the Leicester and Nottingham Journal between November 1755 and February 1787.

39 J. Nichols, History, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 587-8. All the following detail on the Gregory family is derived from the pedigree in Nichols.

40 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 1, p. 287.
John Gregory seems not to have been overtly political, though he must surely have been a Tory, judging by the political stance of the *Journal*, his membership of the Corporation, his appointment as a Justice of the Peace and his election as an Alderman. He first became a Common Councilman in 1760, was elected a Chamberlain in 1765 and became Mayor in 1779. Gregory seems to have devoted himself zealously to the interests of the Borough and was instrumental in the foundation of the Leicester Infirmary, of which he became Treasurer. When he died, aged 62, at the Adelphi in London, on 22 March 1789, he was engaged on the town’s business. His monument in St Martin’s church records that he was in London in the prosecution of a public good, the navigation and commerce of the Town of Leicester.

He was buried in St Martin’s on 26 March 1789; his widow, Frances, died in 1795, aged 71.

Although there is ample evidence that John Gregory ran a wide-ranging book-trade business, the weekly publication of the *Journal* seems always to have been its backbone. The newspaper probably produced the bulk of Gregory’s income, though there is no firm evidence to this effect. It is not known whether Gregory came to Leicester with the express intention of founding a newspaper, though the fact that he commenced publishing the *Journal* within twelve months of arriving in the town may suggest that this was the case. It would have been apparent to a shrewd businessman like Gregory that Leicester was lagging behind other comparable towns in not having its own newspaper by the middle of the eighteenth century. He perhaps identified this as a significant business opportunity, setting up in

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42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
Leicester with the aim of providing the town with its first newspaper. Successful newspapers had been running in a number of towns, such as Norwich, Worcester and Newcastle, since the early years of the century, and by 1750 a number of provincial towns less important than Leicester had their own newspapers. Several Midlands towns already had papers: Nottingham since 1712 (two during the 1730s), Stamford (1713), Northampton (1720), Derby (1732), Coventry and Birmingham (both 1741).44

The *Leicester Journal* is such an important part of Gregory's business that it needs to be considered here although, as already explained, newspaper publishing does not feature to any great extent in this research.45 In common with other newspapers of the period, the *Leicester Journal* was a weekly paper; there would not be a daily paper in the town until the *Leicester Daily Post* commenced in 1872. In the nineteenth century, James Thompson, the local historian, himself a newspaper publisher, described the town's first newspaper as one of a wide range of 'improvements' which benefited Leicester in the middle years of the previous century. He notes the huge growth in population (it had doubled in fifty years from 4,500 to more than 9,000) and observes that

the place was rapidly emerging from the dullness and slowness of the small market town to a state more important...46

He then gives examples of early eighteenth-century improvements in the town:

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44 These dates are taken from R.M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, Appendix B (chronological chart).
45 Largely because of the existence of Fraser's article on the press in Leicester. However, Fraser mentions the early years of the *Journal* only in outline, since he is mainly concerned with the local press between c1790 and 1850.
46 J. Thompson, *The History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 82.
It had established a kind of fire brigade, erected a new exchange and new assembly rooms, attempted to procure a lighting and watching act, and was promoting the formation of turnpike roads; it next encouraged Mr. John Gregory to commence a weekly newspaper. On May 12, 1753, he accordingly issued No. I of the *Leicester Journal*...47

The significance of the word 'encouraged' in this passage is uncertain. There is no evidence that the Corporation formally requested Gregory to publish a newspaper or that there was any financial involvement on the Borough's part.48 Indeed this seems an unlikely scenario, given that the *Journal*, although in most respects pro-Corporation, could on occasion be very critical of the town's governing body. It is perhaps more likely that Thompson is using 'encouraged' in the sense sometimes found in eighteenth-century advertisements and notices, in the sense that a tradesman is 'encouraged' by the custom that he receives from local people. It is feasible, of course, although Gregory did not join the Corporation until several years after starting the *Journal*, that some of the Borough's leading citizens informally suggested to him that a newspaper would benefit the town.

Although copies of the *Journal* from its earliest years no longer survive, it is fortunate that James Thompson had access to the earlier issues.49 The first issue (12 May 1753) he describes as 'containing just four advertisements, and price only twopence'. The *Journal*, in common with most early newspapers, claimed to be politically neutral but in reality usually took a pro-Tory line. Thompson describes the *Journal* as an average provincial newspaper.

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47 Ibid.
48 This was the case at Bristol in 1695. (Feather, *Provincial Book Trade*, p. 2.)
49 The British Library file commences with issue number 297, 6 January 1759. ROLLR has a microfilm of the BL file and does not hold any earlier copies of the *Journal*.
containing mostly London news and using rather ‘quaint’ language. Interestingly, Thompson goes on to give a sensible, and quite modern-sounding, historian’s view of the importance of the Journal as an early provincial newspaper:

It helped, however, to bring to light some of the smaller incidents happening in the town and neighbourhood, which would be considered beneath what is called ‘the dignity of history’.50

Thompson also notes that early in 1766, the Journal began to print frequent appeals, from Dr Watts of Medbourne, for the establishment of a Leicester Infirmary, a cause dear to the heart of John Gregory.51

A typical issue of the Journal (15 February 1777) carries on its front page international and national news (‘Sunday’s and Monday’s Posts’) and very detailed reports on a criminal trial and a parliamentary debate. Page 2 is largely devoted to more news (‘Wednesday’s and Thursday’s Posts’) including the progress of the American War of Independence (with a detailed report on an Address to Congress). Local items commence on page 2 with information on the theatre in Leicester; there is also a (national) list of bankrupts. Pages 3 and 4 are devoted to advertisements: for local theatres, job vacancies, cockfighting, military volunteers, coaching services, auctions, etc. Page 4 consists almost entirely of advertisements placed by Gregory himself, for books, magazines, patent medicines, etc. A selection of these advertisements is discussed below as evidence of Gregory’s trading activity. Advertising in the Journal must have been an important source of income for Gregory as well as a prominent means of promoting his own business.

51 Ibid. p. 127.
A notable feature of the Journal from time to time is its attempt to clarify news stories by the publication of diagrams and maps. Early in 1777, for instance, two issues include maps with explanatory illustrations and notes: one of General Clinton’s Rhode Island expedition and one of the Quebec campaign. Cranfield notes that, although there had been experiments with maps and illustrations in some provincial papers as early as the 1720s, ‘the technical problems involved were formidable’ and illustrations were very uncommon before 1739. Because the specialised skills were rarely available in the provinces, illustrations were often copied from the London papers, though even this would have required some skill in making woodcuts. There is no evidence to clarify Gregory’s practice; he perhaps copied from the London papers.

Issue number 132 of the Journal (8 November 1755) carries the following notice:

John Gregory of Leicester, and Samuel Cresswell of Nottingham,
Printers: Take this Method of acquainting the Public that by the Advice of their Friends, they have lately enter’d into Partnership in the Mystery of Printing, and that they are determined to publish this Weekly Paper early every Saturday Morning, at their respective Shops in Leicester and Nottingham...

From that issue onwards, the paper was entitled The Leicester and Nottingham Journal, though it usually carried little Nottingham news. Nottingham already

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52 Leicester Journal, 25 January 1777, 8 February 1777.
54 Quoted: Wiles, Freshet Advertiser, p. 432.
had its own well-established newspaper, the *Weekly Courant*, which had commenced in 1712.\(^{55}\) In the first issue of the *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, the joint proprietors printed an attack on the *Courant* and its editor, George Ayscough, comparing him with the dog in the fable who would

> neither eat Hay himself nor suffer the Ox to taste it; or in other Words refuses to furnish the Publick with a good News-Paper, and yet cannot bear others shou'd...\(^{56}\)

The partnership between Gregory and Cresswell\(^{57}\) continued until 1769, when Cresswell withdrew, although the paper continued to be called *The Leicester and Nottingham Journal* until 1787.\(^{58}\) In reality, it had always been a Leicester paper, carrying little Nottingham news or advertising. The issue dated 3 February 1787 reverts to the original title of the *Leicester Journal* and has a redesigned masthead.\(^{59}\)

There is evidence that the *Leicester Journal* already circulated in Nottingham before the partnership between John Gregory and Samuel Cresswell was set up. In September 1753, Cresswell was summoned before the Nottingham magistrates for selling the *Leicester Journal*. The cause of offence was that the *Journal* was vigorously opposed to the Jewish Naturalisation Bill; its stance on the Bill was deemed by the magistrates to be opposition to the Government.

The case was reported in the *London Evening Post* and was repeated, in slightly altered form, in the *Gloucester Journal*. It is worth quoting as it throws some

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\(^{55}\) Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, Appendix B.

\(^{56}\) *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, 8 November 1755, quoted Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p. 28.

\(^{57}\) Various spellings are known: Creswell, Creswel, and Cresswell.

\(^{58}\) D. Fraser, ‘Press in Leicester’, p. 53.

\(^{59}\) *Leicester Journal*, 3 February 1787.
light on the Journal's editorial policy and is also a rare instance of local Justices concerning themselves with a newspaper's views on a national political issue. It is also a good example of the common practice of a story being copied by a provincial newspaper from a London paper, with minimal alteration. The editor of the Gloucester Journal lifted the story from the London Evening Post, but added the headline (an early example) and made greater use of italics than the original text:

Somewhat to be LAUGHED at.

We hear, by a Letter from Nottingham, dated the 13th Instant, that Mr. Creswel a Bookseller there, was, the Day before, summoned to appear before the worthy Magistrates of that Corporation, and rebuked for selling the Leicester Journal, in which, they say, are very Severe Reflections on the Ministry for promoting the late Jewish Naturalization-bill, greatly tending to create Fears and Jealousies in his Majesty's good Subjects, and to promote Sedition and Rebellion, by persuading the People they were in Danger of losing their Liberties: When offering to defend himself, he was threatened to be sent to Gaol, unless he found securities for his good Behaviour. At last, however, he was discharged, on consideration that he sold no more of those Papers reflecting on the Jews, who are now to be incorporated amongst us, as they are a good Sort of People, and meet with great Encouragement from the above very worthy Magistrates...⁶⁰

This report is a useful piece of evidence that the Leicester Journal circulated in Nottingham, even before a partnership existed between Gregory and Cresswell. Without this kind of independent evidence, it can be difficult to

⁶⁰ Quoted, Wiles, Freshest Advices, p. 58-9, where it is given primarily as an early example of a headline. The original report from the London Evening Post is quoted, Cranfield, Provincial Newspaper, p. 146.
ascertain the circulation areas of individual papers. Their claims to wide circulation may often have been exaggerated in order to attract advertising. In the early part of the eighteenth century, when there were few provincial newspapers, they probably circulated over wider areas than later when there was more competition, though the number of copies distributed far afield may have been relatively small. Cranfield remarks on how the circulation of one early provincial paper, the *Northampton Mercury* (founded in 1720), declined in this way:

> It reached its peak about 1740, but then was challenged by the *Cambridge Journal, the Coventry Mercury, the Oxford Journal* and the *Leicester Journal.*

Other newspapers certainly circulated in Leicester, both before and after Gregory established the *Journal.* There is evidence, for example, that in 1762 the *Cambridge Chronicle* was being distributed, by newsmen, to Leicester and other Midlands and East Anglian towns as well as much further afield, by the ‘Caxton Post’ to York, Newcastle and Carlisle.

Leicester people wishing to read the news had an alternative source of supply: they could subscribe to the London papers. In 1777 the *Journal* carried an advertisement for a Mr. A. Norman ‘at Mr. Leece’s’ in Sweeting’s Alley, Cornhill. He could supply a range of newspapers to subscribers, for example the *Daily Advertiser* at £3.18s.0d. per annum on credit (£3.5s.0d. for ready money), the *Westminster Gazette* at £1.16s.0d. (£1.10s.0d.), weekly papers at 18s. 0d. (15s.0d.), even the *Courier de l’Europe* at £2.15s.0d.

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63 *Leicester Journal,* 15 February 1777.
The distribution of newspapers over a wide geographical area was facilitated by the use of agents in a number of towns. Evidence for this practice survives in a 1770 copy of the *Leicester and Nottingham Journal* in the collection of Nottingham City Library. Along the bottom of all four pages of this copy of the paper, an agent has added closely-written notes to Gregory. Such evidence is so rare that it is worth quoting in detail. Some of the notes refer to the placing of advertisements and errors in charging for them, while others throw light on Gregory’s distribution system.

The agent is not identified but was probably Mr Saunders, who traded in Derby and Ashbourne. He complains (not, it seems, for the first time) about an incorrect invoice:

> Mr. Gregory, Sir... I must again earnestly caution ag[ains]t the carelessness of your Servants. I rec’d 45 stamped Papers & only one blank. I wish you would direct that M’. Bladon’s [Gregory’s agent in Uttoxeter] Papers be always sent open with mine as it is less trouble to me to take account of them so [than] when separately packed. P[lease] to observe this.

He also refers to the practice of subscriptions being collected by agents:

> You will not advise me about unsettled Customers. Why will you not?
> I rec’d an Additional Subscriber yesterday at Ashborne & promise of another soon so that my Quarterly Customers are now increas’d to 25. You must charge me for 26 instead of 25 Papers yesterday, by which you see I have 3 remaining, the present one and two others...

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64 *Leicester Journal*, 28 July 1770. Copy in Nottingham Local History Library. (The extensive manuscript notes are not quoted in full. The originals are anyway partially lost where the edge of the paper has crumbled away.)
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
The distribution of papers through a network of agents in distant places must often have been as troublesome, to both parties, as this piece of evidence suggests. Another of the marginal notes suggests that meetings between Gregory and his agents were infrequent:

> We agreed to meet at Loughboro' the beginning of August which is near, if you have any intention to do so pray signify it in your next.⁶⁷

Yet another of the notes in this issue of the *Journal* indicates that agents also passed on complaints and comments from other book-trade people:

> Mr. Roome has intimated that the Price of Arnold's Psalms which is 4s. only in the Cat. shd be 4:6... Please inform your Brethren of this and alter the list accordingly....⁶⁸

In a more positive vein, the agent adds:

> It is with singular pleasure that I transmit to you the following short Advertisement for which I have rec'd 3' 6" and [ask] you to put it in the most conspicuous place of your next paper – To be sold, a Tobacco-Engine, A Press, A Good Iron Screw, A Flattening Mill, and Thirty Two Boxes, all in Good Condition...⁶⁹

In another issue of the *Journal* in 1770, Gregory requests that advertisements should reach the printing office by 4 p.m. on Fridays, and adds that those from Nottingham, Derby, Sheffield or towns further north may be given to his agents or ‘put into the Post Office’ by Thursday will be inserted in that Saturday’s paper.⁷⁰ This is useful evidence of Gregory’s advertising practice and suggests quite a speedy performance. The same issue indicates that he

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⁶⁷ Ibid.
⁶⁸ Ibid. Francis Roome was a bookseller in Derby.
⁶⁹ Ibid.
⁷⁰ *Leicester Journal*, 3 March 1770.
was attempting to expand the paper's circulation northwards – he aims to appoint agents and attract advertising from the Sheffield area, where the *Journal* already sells 'several Hundreds' of copies.\(^{71}\)

The area of the *Journal*'s claimed circulation is indicated in a typical issue from 1787. Advertisements etc. would be taken in by the agents listed, who would also deliver the paper. Several Leicestershire agents are listed: in Loughborough, Ashby, Market Harborough, Hinckley and Lutterworth. Individuals further afield are also listed: in Nottingham (two), Derby (two), Sheffield, Rotherham, Bakewell, Chesterfield, Mansfield, Wirksworth, Tideswell, Ashbourne, Uttoxeter and Burton. Advertisements etc. were also received by the printers of the other country papers and by the news-men who distribute this paper. Also in London at Peel's, London, and Chapter Coffee Houses, and by Mr. Tyler, Warwick Court, St Paul's Churchyard.\(^{72}\)

The same issue also noted that

> Every Saturday a Newsman sets out from the Printing Office in Leicester for Hinckley, Nuneaton and Atherstone, where this paper is delivered early on that day.\(^{73}\)

The Leicestershire agents seem to have been a mixture of established booksellers, whose names appear fairly consistently, and other individuals – perhaps other types of shopkeeper – where there is rather less continuity.

As already mentioned, there is no certainty that Gregory printed the *Journal* himself until 1758: the issue for 7 January that year is the first to carry

\(^{71}\) Ibid.

\(^{72}\) *Leicester Journal*, 10 February 1787.

\(^{73}\) Ibid.
Gregory's imprint: 'Printed by J. Gregory in the Market-Place, Leicester'. Prior to that issue, the imprint read: 'Printed for J. Gregory, Bookseller, in Leicester; and S. Cresswell, Bookseller, in Nottingham'. It is not known who printed the Journal before Gregory. According to Allnutt:

The Leicester Journal, started by John Gregory, May 12, 1753, is said to have been then printed in London.

This is not attributed to any particular source and no evidence to support Allnutt's suggestion of a London printer for the Journal has been found.

Gregory printed a number of books - a dozen or so are extant - though his printing capacity must largely have been taken up with the weekly production of the Journal, plus some jobbing work. He certainly advertised himself as a printer. The imprint of the Journal usually included words such as 'printing in general executed with neatness and precision'. Gregory also offered a binding service, advertising in 1763:

At J. Gregory's bookseller in Leicester is constantly kept a bookbinder, a very good workman where gentlemen may have any business of that kind done completely and expeditiously.

The earliest book known to have been printed by Gregory, an anonymous work of some forty octavo pages entitled Faction Unmask'd..., dates from 1755. Since this appears to be the earliest extant book printed in Leicester, it merits brief consideration. There is a copy in the Bodleian Library, the full title and imprint are:

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74 Wiles, Freshest Advices, p. 432.
76 This example: Leicester Journal, 3 February 1787.
77 Leicester Journal, 1 January 1763. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)
78 ESTC: t186068.
Faction unmask'd, with remarks; as Publish'd in the Year 1737.

To which is annex'd, a Short but True Narrative Of several Circumstances relating to the Late Election of Members of Parliament, for the Borough of Leicester, in the year M.DCC.LIV. With Observations.

Leicester, Printed and Sold by John Gregory, in the Market Place, M.DCC.LV. Price, Six-Pence. 79

The reference in the title: 'as publish'd in the year 1737' relates to a book printed by Francis Howgrave at Stamford:

Faction unmask'd. As in several news papers of late, the Corporation of Leicester hath been grossly abused, and matters of fact most shamefully and maliciously misrepresented,... the members of that Corporation cannot but think it proper to lay before the publick,

... some remarks upon the whole, ... 89

Gregory's Faction Unmask'd of 1755 is an octavo volume of forty pages in all. Pages 1 to 32 are reasonably well printed but the remainder ('Observations') is of a noticeably poorer quality, printed in a smaller typeface and quite pale in parts.

The other books known to have been printed by John Gregory largely comprise the standard fare of the eighteenth-century provincial printer, including poll-books, plus sermons and essays by local authors. He also printed a booklet for the Leicester Agricultural Society and two publications for the Leicester Infirmary. Gregory also printed:

A narrative of the trial of John Croxford, Benjamin Deacon, and Richard Butlin, for the murder of a travelling pedlar; at the house

79 Bodleian Library: Vet.A.5.e4385.
80 Bodleian Library on-line Catalogue. Publication date given as [1738].
of the late Thomas Seamark, in Catslo-Grounds, in the parish of
Guilsborough, in the county of Northampton; in the year [1764].

The imprint of this last item is of some interest in naming other booksellers in the region:

Leicester: printed by John Gregory; and sold by Mr. Lacey and Mrs. Pasham, in Northampton; Mr. Cooke, at Uppingham, and in Oakham; Mr. Harrod and Mrs. Ratten, in Market-Harbro', and Mr. Burbage, in Nottingham, [1764].

In common with a number of provincial printers, Gregory printed the libretti of several of Handel's oratorios, probably in connection with local performances: Messiah (in 1760?), Esther and Judas Maccabaeus (both in 1761), and Jephtha (in 1774). He also printed at least one school-book, advertising in the Journal in 1777 a new edition of Reading made Completely Easy..... by Jeremiah Williams of London. Priced at 6d., this was the 32nd edition, 'with great addition and adorned with several new Cuts'.

Gregory's printing appears to have been of a fairly good standard, judging by a copy of a book he printed c1780: an anonymous work entitled Matter for Meditation, morning and evening, or Christianity – in her primitive, pure and heavenly robes. (Figure 10) A typical devotional work of its day, this is a 72-page octavo book, no longer in its original binding. It is undated, though the British Librarycatalogues its copy with the date [1780?].

81 ESTC: t170900. George Burbage of Nottingham also had a shop every market-day in Loughborough: Leicester Journal, 22 April 1769.
82 ESTC. The Bodleian Library contains a number of provincial editions of Handel's oratorios, often printed for specific local performances.
83 Leicester Journal, 1 November 1777.
84 ROLLR: L094 Local Imprints boxes.
MATTER FOR MEDITATION
Morning and Evening;
OR,
CHRISTIANITY
IN HER
PRIMITIVE, PURE,
AND
HEAVENLY ROBES.

Meditate upon these Things, give thyself wholly to them:
And the Lord give thee Understanding in all Things,
1 Tim. iv. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 7.

LEICESTER:
Printed by JOHN GREGORY.

Figure 10  Title page – John Gregory [c1780]
(Reproduced by permission of ROLLR)

Gregory also printed his own book-sale catalogues, of which three have survived:

A catalogue of the genuine and curious library; of the late Reverend Mr. John
Jackson... (1764).85

A catalogue of books, now selling at the prices printed, at the shop of J.
Gregory... (1779).86

85 ESTC: t164114. Munby Collection, Cambridge University Library. (Munby d.5).
A catalogue of the library of the late Dr Richard Bentley, Rector of Nailstone... (1786). 87

The first of these relates to a sale advertised by Gregory in 1764 of ‘the genuine and curious library of the late Rev. Mr. John Jackson, Master of Wigston’s Hospital, Leicester’. 88 Jackson’s library was an interesting collection of scholarly books of quality, including

many beautiful Copies of Books Printed by Aldus, Elzevir, Stephens,

Colinaeus, and others, the best and most eminent printers. 89

The catalogue of the Jackson sale did indeed list several examples of European fine printing as well as dozens of volumes in Latin and Greek. The catalogue itself is quite well printed with decoration on some pages. A number of Jackson’s books were priced at several pounds each, although the sale also included cheaper items. 90 It took a long time to dispose of Jackson’s books, as Gregory advertised, three years later, a three-month sale of books, ‘mainly the library of the late Rev. Mr. Jackson, Master of Wigston’s Hospital’. 91 It is quite possible that Jackson’s library also formed part of another 1764 sale: a ‘large sale of books sold by auction’ — a reference in this advertisement to the ‘tenth night’s sale’ suggests that Gregory conducted the auction into the evenings. 92

The second of the extant catalogues (Figure 11), printed in 1779, of which there is a copy in the British Library, is of particular interest in that its title-page bears a manuscript note:

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88 Leicester Journal, 28 April 1764.
89 Gregory, Catalogue... (1764), title-page.
90 Ibid. passim.
91 Leicester Journal, 30 May 1767.
92 Leicester Journal, 17 November 1764.
July 6, 79. These were the Books of my poor old Friend, John Simmons.93

The words 'of John Simmons' are also added, in the same hand (which I assume to be Gregory's own), after 'Books' in the title. The catalogue comprises fifty-six octavo pages, printed in a competent, if unremarkable, manner on paper of moderate quality. A total of 2,070 books are listed for

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Figure 11 Sale Catalogue – John Gregory 1779

(Reproduced by permission of the British Library)

93 Gregory, Catalogue... (1779), title-page.
sale. They are arranged by size (4½ pages of folios, 3½ pages of quartos, and 37 pages of octavos). Prices cover a wide range, for example:

Grant's dissertation on Popish Persecution, 1s. 0d.
Hammond on the Psalms, 2s. 0d.
Willoughby on Birds, £2. 0s. 0d.

The latest of Gregory's surviving catalogues provides detailed evidence of his sale of a very scholarly library which had been the property of Dr. Richard Bentley, a local clergyman and a Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. The sale took place at the Exchange in Leicester on five days in early December 1786. The Bentley sale catalogue, a competently printed book of thirty-seven octavo pages (which was priced at 3d. 'to be allowed in any purchase of books'), gives detailed evidence of Gregory's highly-organised method of selling. For example, the first of his list of six detailed 'Conditions' reads:

Two hundred and fifty lots, or upwards, will be sold each day; viz: 50 lots in the Divinity Class (from page 3.) – 50 lots in the Classics, (from page 12) – 50 in Miscellanies, (from page 21.), 50 in French (from page 25) – and the residue, History, and Dictionaries. Folios, Quartos, Octavos and Twelves in proportion. – And if any book is put up, and no bidding, in that case it is to be carried to the next lot and sold therewith, – so that the whole may be disposed of.

The other conditions are in a similar vein, suggesting that John Gregory was an experienced and very disciplined seller of books by auction. A letter from Gregory, relating to his 1786 catalogue, has survived, though it is rather damaged and, despite some conservation, remains incomplete. It may be a

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94 Gregory, Catalogue... (1786), title-page.
95 Ibid. p. [2].
draft or a copy, and it is not clear to whom it is addressed, although it seems to be another bookseller. It refers to a Mr Sharman, who 'appears[?] only as a gentleman and a stranger to me...'. The letter continues:

Have sent you only 2 Catalogues but 40 more shall be sent you

tomorrow by some opportunity.... With compliments to Mr. Sharman,
your obedient servant, John Gregory – Leicester. November 21, 1786.96

There is evidence, from Gregory's own advertisements, of other book auctions that he organised, although the catalogues are not extant. He advertised, in the *Leicester Journal* on 26 May 1787:

On Tuesday next will be published a Catalogue of the Library of the late

William Burleton Esq., Recorder of Leicester, which for convenience of sale

is removed (by permission of the Mayor) to the Exchange in Leicester, and

will be sold by Auction in the afternoon of Thursday the 31st of this inst. May.97

The advertisement adds some useful detail about the practical arrangements for the sale – a rare insight into Gregory's trading practice. On this occasion he seemed anxious to avoid a protracted period of sale like the Jackson sale in 1764:

To begin exactly at three o'clock, to whatever company shall attend.

To be viewed on Wednesday the 30th, and on the sale day in the morning.

Catalogues to be had of Mr. Gregory in Leicester. The whole will be sold

in one afternoon – and for any lot where no separate bidding can be

obtained, the book or books will be thrown into a large lot, and sold together.

96 ROLLR: DE2852/24
97 *Leicester Journal*, 26 May 1787. William Burleton, appointed Recorder of the Borough in 1766, is remembered primarily for having encouraged two successive Mayors to refuse the traditional mark of submission to the Dukes of Lancaster – the sloping of the town mace upon entering Castle View – as a symbol of the Borough's claim to jurisdiction over the castle precincts. (*Borough Records*, vol. 5, p. 518; *VCH*, vol. 4., p. 130.)
Commissions are taken in and will be executed by Mr. Gregory.\textsuperscript{98}

An adjacent advertisement indicates that Mr. Burleton’s furniture and effects are also to be sold by auction. Gregory does not seem to be involved in any way with that sale, not even being named as a supplier of catalogues.\textsuperscript{99}

Gregory sold another library, that of the late Rev. Mr. Davenport, Master of Leicester Grammar School, by catalogue, in 1769, to be sold for the benefit of Davenport’s sons.\textsuperscript{100}

Although John Gregory's book-printing or 'publishing' activities were not extensive, even by contemporary standards, he is significant as the first Leicester man to have printed a number of substantial books. In particular, Gregory’s association with one important local author is worth examining. John Throsby (1740-1803), remembered primarily as the author of three works on Leicestershire history and topography, was undoubtedly a talented topographical artist, albeit in a somewhat romanticised manner. As a historian he was not without his critics and there are undoubtedly some inaccuracies in his writings, though much of his historical research was used by John Nichols in the compilation of *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, published in 1815. John Throsby was a man of many parts and a brief, though very informative, outline of his career has recently been published.\textsuperscript{101}

A former woolcomber, Throsby was appointed parish clerk of St Martin’s in 1770, a post which he held until he died. His work as parish clerk seems to have provided him with sufficient financial security and spare time to pursue

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} *Leicester Journal*, 18 March 1769. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)

\textsuperscript{101} J. Jenkins, 'John Throsby — A man of strong natural genius'.

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his historical research in earnest. He began to publish some of his writings, describing his research as ‘my hobby horse on which I have ridden for years’.\textsuperscript{102} His first publication of substance, which appeared in six volumes in 1777/78, was \textit{The Memoirs of the Town and County of Leicester}.

The \textit{Memoirs} were not, in fact, Throsby’s first published work. Earlier in 1777, he had anonymously published \textit{A Warning against Fanaticism}. This was announced in the \textit{Journal} for 24 August 1777. It was to be published the following Saturday, priced at 6d. The work was described as ‘an attempt to manifest religion, the companion of a cheerful heart...’. It was described in the advertisement as being printed for the author and sold by John Gregory.\textsuperscript{103} This may identify Gregory as the book’s ‘publisher’ but it leaves open the question of whether or not he actually printed this volume. On the following Saturday it was advertised as being published ‘this afternoon’.\textsuperscript{104}

The authorship of the anonymous work did not remain a secret for long. In the following week’s issue of the \textit{Journal} there is a notice from Throsby disclosing that he was the author of \textit{A Warning against Fanaticism}.\textsuperscript{105} This may suggest that the work had been well received and that Throsby wished his new-found status as an author to be more widely known. It is perhaps no coincidence that his announcement appears alongside an advertisement that Gregory is proposing to publish, by subscription, Throsby’s \textit{The Memoirs of the Town and County of Leicester}. The advertisement gives further details of the proposed publication and indicates that a copy of the proposal and specimens are obtainable from Gregory.\textsuperscript{106} In the following week’s \textit{Journal},

\textsuperscript{102} Quoted Jenkins, ‘John Throsby’, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 24 August 1777.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 30 August 1777.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 6 September 1777.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
the Memoirs were announced again, this time unequivocally as ‘by John Throsby, author of the Warning against Fanaticism’.107

Within the space of a few weeks, there was another advertisement for the Memoirs, this time urging booksellers to place their orders quickly:

As it is not intended to print more copies than there is likely to be a sale for, the author will esteem it a favor, if the booksellers will send their orders before the first day of December next....108

The wording of this announcement and the book’s imprint, indicate that the work was published at Throsby’s expense, no mean achievement for one in his relatively modest circumstances. The imprint reads:

Published for the author; and sold by S. Crowder in London;
and by J. Gregory, in Leicester. 1777.109

Stanley Crowder was a member of the Stationers’ Company, trading in Paternoster Row.110 This is his only known business venture with Gregory. A list of subscribers to the Memoirs was posted in the Journal on 25 December 1777. Further subscriptions could be placed with the author or ‘with all the booksellers in Leicester and vicinity’.111 Two other Leicester printers, John Brown and John Ireland, printed other works written by Throsby.

Throsby himself seems to have traded for a time as a stationer and bookseller (and as a hatter), according to an advertisement in the Journal in 1765:

107 Leicester Journal, 13 September 1777.
108 Leicester Journal, 1 November 1777.
110 McKenzie, Stationer’s Company Apprentices, 1701-1800, p. 95.
111 Leicester Journal, 25 December 1777.
Now selling at the shop of John Throsby, stationer and hatter, opposite the White Swan in the Market-Place, Leicester, a collection of very valuable books... including the library of the late Rev. Thomas Heath of Shepshed.¹¹²

Little else is known of Throsby’s book-trade activity, although his business may well have lasted until his death in 1803. Throsby published his own Select Views in Leicestershire in 1789.¹¹³ His son, also John, born in 1775, was a printer and bookseller, trading in Leicester between (at least) 1794 and 1808. He advertised books for sale in 1793 – Lackington’s catalogue of 120,000 volumes – and others in the following year.¹¹⁴ The younger John Throsby had two apprentices: Abraham Abbott, the son of a local tailor, bound in 1794, and Henry Webb of Rugby, bound in 1808.¹¹⁵ Abbott was apprenticed to ‘John Throsby, ye elder, and John Throsby, ye younger, printers’, which is the only indication found that the elder Throsby may have practised as a printer.¹¹⁶

John Gregory was involved in the publication of the second edition of another important work on Leicestershire, William Burton’s The Description of Leicestershire, containing matters of antiquity, history, armoury and genealogy, published in 1777. The first edition had been printed in London but the second edition, ‘enlarged and corrected’, was published by a group of booksellers. The imprint reads:

Lynn: printed and sold by W. Whittingham; R. Baldwin, Pater-noster Row;

¹¹² Leicester Journal, 14 December 1765. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)
¹¹³ I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for this reference from COPAC.
¹¹⁴ Leicester Journal, 20 June 1794, 21 May 1795. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)
¹¹⁶ I am very grateful to Jess Jenkins, author of the recent survey of Throsby’s career, for several helpful and informative conversations. She is not aware of any evidence of his being a printer.
This seems to have been Gregory’s first publishing venture with a group of predominately London booksellers. The list of subscribers printed in the book includes Gregory (four copies) and Ward of Hinckley. Gregory announced the forthcoming new edition of Burton’s book in the *Journal* on 25 January 1777. From this notice we learn that the book was to be edited by its printer, Whittingham, of Lynn, Norfolk, and that Gregory was taking subscriptions. It was to be printed in a single folio volume, on good quality paper, in a ‘new sort of types’, with maps, engravings etc. The book, in an edition limited to three hundred copies, would cost one guinea (to be paid on delivery) and would be sewed in blue paper.

It was advertised again on 8 March 1777, when it was announced that twenty-five copies would be available on ‘superfine’ paper. Several further advertisements appeared in the *Journal*. Although copies were due to reach subscribers on 17 September, they were apparently delayed, according to a notice in the *Journal* on 11 October. Only a fortnight later, Gregory placed a reminder in the *Journal* that ‘a few copies’ of Burton’s book were still available at two guineas, sewed; these were presumably the ‘superfine’ copies.

In the same year, Gregory was involved in the strange affair of the abortive attempt to publish a new, centenary, edition of Thoroton’s *The History and

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117 W. Burton, *Description of Leicestershire...*, (2nd edn., 1777) title page.
119 Ibid.
120 *Leicester Journal*, 8 March 1777.
121 E.g. *Leicester Journal*, 6 September 1777.
122 *Leicester Journal*, 11 October 1777.
Antiquities of Nottinghamshire. On 8 November, Gregory announced in the *Journal* that, in association with Whittingham of Lynn and Cresswell of Nottingham, he proposed to print this work, by subscription, in a new type designed by Caslon; gentlemen were invited to submit information and plates for inclusion.  

However, three weeks later, the *Journal* carried two large advertisements, side by side, describing at length two rival proposed editions of Thoroton. One of these was proposed by Cresswell, in association not with Whittingham but with George Burbage, another Nottingham printer, with whom he worked from 1775 to 1781. Subscriptions were invited for this 'cheap' (two-guinea) edition, to be printed on 'excellent' paper in a pica type designed by Caslon. Subscriptions were being taken in London and throughout the Midlands, the only Leicester bookseller listed being Ireland.

In the adjacent advertisement, Whittingham also proposed a two-guinea edition of Thoroton's *History*. Combining obsequiousness and acrimony in roughly equal measure, Whittingham observes at length how he had announced his edition a few weeks previously and had sent copies of the announcement to Cresswell and Burbage at Nottingham 'for insertion in their paper'. However,

These very honourable Gentlemen suppressed the Advertisement and at the same time by way of opposition published Proposals of their own for printing the said History at a lower price...

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124 *Leicester Journal*, 8 November 1777.  
125 *Leicester Journal*, 29 November 1777.  
126 BBTI, record no. 3741.  
127 The Irelands are discussed in chapter 6.  
128 By this time Cresswell had withdrawn from his partnership in the *Journal* with Gregory.  
129 *Leicester Journal*, 29 November 1777.
There are at least another six column-inches in the same vein. The oddest thing about the whole affair is that both advertisements are headed ‘FOR TWO GUINEAS ONLY’, suggesting that Whittingham, realising that he was now in competition, may have decided to lower the price of his edition. When, a month later, Cresswell and Burbage again advertised their proposed edition in the *Journal*, Ireland was still the only Leicester bookseller taking subscriptions.¹³⁰ In the same issue Gregory published a long notice stating that Cresswell and Burbage ‘must have been misinformed’ about his intentions: ‘Mr. Gregory never has been generally or individually called upon’ to publish a new edition of Thoroton, and is in any case ‘too well aware of the difficulty of such an undertaking, and too diffident of himself to engage in it’.¹³¹

It is interesting that John Gregory’s name, although prominent in the original announcement, is nowhere to be seen in either of the later rival advertisements. He then claimed, despite having printed the original announcement, that he had never intended to publish a new edition. In fact, Gregory’s part in the affair is unclear. Although he originally proposed to publish the Thoroton work in association with both Whittingham and Cresswell, they ended up on opposite sides and Gregory had apparently withdrawn from the venture, not even, it seems, taking subscriptions for either edition. He would, of course, have benefited from the dispute to the extent of receiving payment for advertisements from both parties. In any event, both proposals came to nothing, although Whittingham issued just a few copies of the first instalment in 1781. Eventually, in 1796, a new edition had been published in three volumes by none other than John Throsby, who under each town and village:

¹³⁰ *Leicester Journal*, 27 December 1777.
¹³¹ Ibid.
reprinted Thoroton's text verbatim, then added his own contemporary comments under a separate heading.\textsuperscript{132}

The very large number of advertisements in the Journal placed by Gregory for his own goods and services has already been mentioned. Several new books were advertised in most issues of his newspaper. A small selection is listed here, in order to give a flavour of the kind of books advertised (and presumably sold\textsuperscript{133}) by Gregory, who was probably a fairly typical provincial bookseller of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

\textit{The Complete London Jester or Wit's Companion}\textsuperscript{134}

\textit{Owen's Book of Roads} (companion to \textit{Owen's Book of Fairs})\textsuperscript{135}

\textit{The Universal Family Bible}\textsuperscript{136}

\textit{The Cheats of London Exposed} (by the author of \textit{The London Spy})\textsuperscript{137}

\textit{An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume Esq.}\textsuperscript{138}

\textit{A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland} (plus vignettes and remarks on Dr. Johnson's tour)\textsuperscript{139}

\textit{The Compleat Vermin Killer}\textsuperscript{140}

\textit{The Complete English Cook, or Prudent Housewife}, by Catherine Brooks\textsuperscript{141}

\textit{Family Testament and Scholar's Assistant}, by Rev. Joseph Brown\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{132} Adrian Henstock, 'Nottinghamshire Historical Writing, 1677-1997', p. 7.

\textsuperscript{133} Many of these advertisements specify that the book may be obtained from Gregory, sometimes in addition to other named booksellers. Where he is not named, I have assumed that he would have been able to supply the book in question, either from his stock or to order.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 18 January 1777.

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 15 February 1777.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 12 April 1777.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 26 April 1777.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 3 May 1777.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 21 June 1777.

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 25 October 1777.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 1 November 1777.
A New System of Husbandry

Practical Measuring (of timber, stone, glass, etc.)

Boyer's Royal Dictionary [printed for no fewer than thirty-two booksellers, including Cadell and Rivington]

Works of Dr. Johnson, volumes 12 and 13 (also available, the complete 13-volume set)

The Tonsor: a poetical epistle to Sir Richard Upright...

A Charge and Sermon delivered at the Ordination of Rev. Mr. John Deacon...

Part-publication was a very popular method of publishing at this period, for material of all kinds, ranging from classical authors and religious works, through various educational subjects, to popular and entertaining publications. Gregory advertised a number of part-publications, including:

The Works of Flavius Josephus (in 70 parts, 6d. each)

A New and Complete System of Geography (in weekly parts)

by Charles T. Middleton. (A set of prints was issued, gratis, with issue number 1.)

Mrs. Griffiths' Collection of Novels (in twelve monthly duodecimo volumes, with engravings: 2s. 6d. in blue paper, 3s. bound.)

God's Revenge against Murder and Adultery: thirty tragical histories by Rev. Philip Batterson (in weekly parts, including two engravings, 6d.)

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143 Leicester Journal, 15 November 1777.
144 Ibid.
145 Leicester Journal, 29 November 1777.
146 Leicester Journal, 31 March 1787.
147 Leicester Journal, 7 April 1787.
148 Leicester Journal, 5 May 1787.
149 Leicester Journal, 1 February and 18 October 1777.
150 Leicester Journal, 1 March 1777.
151 Leicester Journal, 10 May 1777.
Maps of various kinds, for example a one-shilling coloured map of North America, could be bought from Gregory and also ‘may be had of the newsmen who deliver this paper’. Closer to home, subscriptions to a map of Leicestershire (to be published by J. Sewell of Cornhill, and four other London booksellers) were being taken by Gregory in 1777. Specimens of the map could be inspected at Gregory’s shop, and later advertisements appended lists of current subscribers.

Printed music seems to have been a popular part of Gregory’s stock. For example, *Parochial Music: a collection of divine music*, was advertised in 1777; it was to be published by a music shop in Derby and was ‘now engraved ready’ although it would not be printed until a hundred subscriptions had been received. The publisher may perhaps have been Francis Roome of Derby, who advertised in the *Journal*, ten years later, a subscription proposal for eight anthems ‘to be ready by Michaelmas’ (10s. 6d. by subscription, otherwise 13s.). Subscriptions could be placed with Roome or with the author, Samuel Webbe, in London; on this occasion it is not stated that Gregory was taking subscriptions, though this may be implicit. Subscriptions to *Songs and Cantatas* by John King (a Derbyshire organist)

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152 *Leicester Journal*, 1 November 1777.
154 *Leicester Journal*, 17 March 1778.
155 *Leicester Journal*, 15 February 1777.
156 *Leicester Journal*, 22 February 1777, 8 March 1777, 24 August 1777.
157 *Leicester Journal*, 8 February 1777.
could be placed with Gregory, Morgan of Lichfield, two Derby booksellers, or with the author in Ashbourne. The same advertisement offered a printed lesson on the harpsichord and the music for a minuet.¹⁵⁹

The pre-Christmas boost in the market for book sales is not a recent innovation; seasonal publications formed an important part of Gregory’s stock. For example, the issues of the Leicester Journal for November and December 1777 carry a considerably increased amount of advertising for newly-published books, including calendars and almanacs of various kinds, such as:

*The British Ladies’ Pocket Memorandum Book 1778*¹⁶⁰

*Harrison’s Pocket Journal for 1778*¹⁶¹

*Kearsly’s Pocket Ledger for 1778*¹⁶²

Another interesting example is: *Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Leicestershire Sheet Almanack for the year 1778*, published by T. Carnan of St Paul’s Churchyard, ‘who dispossessed the Stationers’ Company of the exclusive privilege of printing Almanacks which they had unjustly monopolized 170 years’.¹⁶³ Thomas Carnan had for many years printed almanacs in defiance of the Stationers’ Company monopoly. In 1773 he mounted the ‘final assault’ in this long struggle. Although the Stationers’ Company prosecuted Carnan, their attempt to defend the monopoly on almanac printing was unsuccessful. Carnan’s legal victory contributed to a ‘feeling that the mid-1770s were the end of an era in the formerly ordered world of London publishing.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ *Leicester Journal*, 15 March 1777.
¹⁶⁰ *Leicester Journal*, 8 November 1777.
¹⁶¹ Ibid.
¹⁶² *Leicester Journal*, 1 November 1777.
¹⁶³ *Leicester Journal*, 15 November 1777.
Periodicals of many kinds were popular during the eighteenth century and many new titles were published as the century progressed. Like most provincial booksellers, John Gregory supplied a range of periodicals and used his newspaper to announce new and forthcoming titles. A few examples will serve to indicate the range of periodicals advertised by Gregory:

- The Gentlemen and Ladies Museum
- English Magazine, or Monthly Register
- Young Gentleman's Magazine
- Lady's Magazine
- Town and Country Magazine
- New Town and Country Magazine ('very new' – a whole column advertisement)
- Universal Geographical Magazine
- The European Magazine (including the 'Bengal Calendar' for 1787)

Lottery magazines were popular at the time and Gregory advertised several, including Johnson's Lottery Magazine. One large advertisement in the Journal in 1777 offered:

- The Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine, or Lottery Museum
- The Lady's Elegant and Complete Lottery Pocket Book
- Wing's Lottery Sheet Almanack

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166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 *Leicester Journal*, 8 February 1777.
169 Ibid.
170 *Leicester Journal*, 3 February 1787.
171 Ibid.
172 *Leicester Journal*, 26 May 1787.
Lottery Cook, or English housewife’s best friend.

Perhaps the main attraction was that:

With each of the above publications is given gratis a share of a state lottery ticket by which 768 chances are given for every prize in the current lottery.¹⁷⁴

Details of other types of financial opportunity could be obtained from Gregory from time to time, such as a security on the Hinckley Turnpike Road, at £190 (at 4½% interest).¹⁷⁵

It is surprising to note, from some of Gregory’s advertisements, that promotional gimmicks were already in use in the eighteenth century. For example, on 1 March 1777, two ‘special offers’ were advertised in the Journal: a new periodical, A la Mode, or Fashionable Miscellany, offered gratis an ‘elegant copper-plate on double crown folio’, worth 5s. 6d., while a whole set of free prints were given with the first issue of A New and Complete System of Geography, by Charles T. Middleton.¹⁷⁶ Later in the same year, the chance to win prizes of up to £200 was offered with a Description of the Thirteen [American] Colonies.¹⁷⁷

The theatre was very popular in Leicester in the eighteenth century and this is reflected in the periodicals advertised by Gregory, including several which printed a complete play in each issue, such as the Theatrical Magazine.¹⁷⁸ Issue number 50 of the New English Theatre included a play entitled ‘The City Wives’ Confederacy’ as well as a portrait of Garrick and other engravings, all

¹⁷⁴ Leicester Journal, 1 November 1777.
¹⁷⁵ Leicester Journal, 8 February 1777.
¹⁷⁶ Leicester Journal, 1 March 1777.
¹⁷⁷ Leicester Journal, 6 September 1777.
¹⁷⁸ Leicester Journal, 25 January 1777.
for sixpence. Gregory was apparently quite willing to make money from selling theatrical periodicals, although he disapproved of such 'frivolities' – the Journal was severely critical of 'theatricals' and recommended, as an alternative to the vulgar habit of theatregoing, a fencing master for men and a dancing master for ladies.

In common with many booksellers, Gregory also sold (and may have printed) theatre tickets. Theatrical performances were advertised frequently in the Journal and Gregory was often named as a supplier of tickets. For example, in January 1777, advertisements for performances at 'The Theatre' (probably Mr Bass's Assembly Rooms on Coal Hill, which were occasionally adapted for short seasons of use as a theatre) indicate that tickets could be obtained from Gregory, as well as from the principal inns, a Mr Whitley, and from Mrs Chamberlain, a basket-maker. Later in the year, Gregory was selling tickets for a popular entertainment at the Assembly Rooms and for several performances by the Leicester Company of Comedians under the management of a Mrs Fisher. The latter, commencing with the popular comedy The Provoked Husband, or A Journey to London, were advertised in September and November and took place at Leicester's newly-opened riverside theatre in Vauxhall Gardens (or Bath Gardens). A note on the new theatre, written by Mrs Fisher, was published alongside the advertisement in the Journal on 6 September:

the New Theatre at the Bath Assembly Room will be open on

Monday, 8th September next to entertain the ladies and gentlemen

of this place with some select performances... no pains or expence

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179 Leicester Journal, 19 July 1777.
182 Leicester Journal, 18 and 25 January 1777.
183 Leicester Journal, 12 July 1777, 6 September 1777, 15 November 1777.
has been spared to make the Theatre commodious.\textsuperscript{184}

Musical entertainments were also popular and Gregory often sold tickets for concerts in Leicester – for example an Annual Grand Concert and Ball in 1769, and a series of Subscription Concerts in 1787\textsuperscript{185} – as well as in the county, such as the Ashby de la Zouch Music Meeting in 1777. The latter, which lasted a day and a half, included several concerts and a ball; there were performances of the oratorio \textit{Judas Maccabaeus} and the masque \textit{Aris and Galatea}.\textsuperscript{186} William Hanbury (the celebrated rector of Church Langton in Leicestershire) organised ‘an oratorio season for the Nobility and Gentry’, to take place in St Martin’s church, Leicester, over three days in June 1762. Tickets for this prestigious event were obtainable from the Three Cranes Inn or from John Gregory.\textsuperscript{187} Gregory also sold tickets on more than one occasion for Mr Frudd’s Balls at the New Assembly Rooms.\textsuperscript{188}

Gregory also advertised other kinds of entertainment, including cockfighting. In May 1777, the \textit{Journal} carried an advertisement from a gentleman, who was planning to ‘fight a main of cocks’ – although he wished not to be named,

\begin{quote}
 any real gentleman, on application to Mr. Gregory the printer will be informed who the person is.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

This suggests that Gregory was trusted to appraise those applying for details of the cockfight.

\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 1 July 1769, 5 May 1787.  
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 2 August 1777.  
\textsuperscript{188} For example, \textit{Leicester Journal}, 4 December 1773, 19 April 1777.  
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 10 May 1777.
It was very rare, in the eighteenth century, for a provincial bookseller to sell just books and stationery goods, and the typical bookshop offered a very wide range of goods for sale. It is fortunate, in the case of Leicester, that John Gregory made such extensive use of his newspaper to advertise his goods and services in considerable detail. The pages of the *Leicester Journal* abound with Gregory's own advertisements, not only for books and periodicals, but also for a huge range of patent medicines and other goods. It is likely that the other booksellers of the town engaged in a similar range of business activity to that of John Gregory – as we shall see, the others did advertise from time to time – but overall there is very much less evidence for their stock and services than there is for Gregory's. Since Gregory is the only local bookseller whose business activity is so fully documented, a selection of his goods and services is outlined here not only as evidence for his business but also as an indication of the range of a typical provincial bookseller's activity.

Patent medicines were an important part of many booksellers' stock, and an enormous range was available, many of them making exaggerated claims for their efficacy. Gregory's advertisements indicate some of the medicines on offer. Mr Norton's (also known as Maredant's) Drops claimed to be

effectual in entirely eradicating ...leprosy, scurvy, old sores and ulcers, the evil, fistulas, piles, pimpled faces, ...inflammation of the eyes, bilious cholic, St. Anthony's fire, scurbutic gout and rheumatism and every other disorder arising from a foulness of blood....

They were sold by Mr Norton, a surgeon, of Golden Square, London, and by John Gregory in Leicester and a number of other named booksellers.190

190 *Leicester Journal*, 18 January 1777.
Gregory also sold Arquebusade Water—‘for the treatment of gun-shot wounds, fractures, knife-wounds, ...etc.’\textsuperscript{191}

A few medicines were sold by Gregory both wholesale and retail, such as Vandour’s Nervous Pills.\textsuperscript{192} He was also an appointed wholesale supplier of Dr Walker’s ‘Jesuit Drops’ and ‘Specific Purging Remedy’. The advertisement carried an assurance from Dr Walker that Gregory would supply his medicines on the same terms as any warehouse in London.\textsuperscript{193}

A number of ‘Dr James’s’ medicines were available from Gregory. These are of interest for having been owned by John Newbery, the very successful bookseller and publisher. Newbery pioneered the publication of books for children, both school-books and more entertaining volumes (such as the \textit{Little Pretty Pocket Book}) several of which included accounts of amazing cures wrought by ‘Dr. James’s Fever Powder’.\textsuperscript{194} Newbery’s famous \textit{Little Goody Two-Shoes} is the story of an orphan-girl whose father happened to have succumbed to a violent fever ‘in a place where Dr. James’s Fever Powder was not to be had’.\textsuperscript{195}

John Newbery had died in 1767, but advertisements in the \textit{Journal} in 1777 indicate that Gregory was still selling Dr James’s Powder, now supplied by John’s son, Francis Newbery, of 65 St Paul’s Churchyard.\textsuperscript{196} Gregory sold other medicines from Newbery’s extensive range, including Dr James’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[191] Ibid.
\item[192] \textit{Leicester Journal}, 25 January 1777.
\item[193] \textit{Leicester Journal}, 28 June 1777.
\item[195] Quoted, M.F. Thwaite, \textit{From Primer to Pleasure}, p. 50.
\item[196] \textit{Leicester Journal}, 3 May 1777, 24 August 1777.
\end{footnotes}
Analeptic Pills and Cordial Cephalic Snuff (for complaints of the head and eyes); he is named as one of several agents in Leicestershire, the others being Twells of Ashby de la Zouch, Harrod and Ratten, both of Market Harborough. Also supplied by Newbery and obtainable from Gregory was ‘Roe’s English Coffee’ – made from herbs and ‘very beneficial’ when taken instead of foreign coffee.

The combined trade of bookseller and patent medicine vendor was occasionally quite fortuitous: in the case of the popular ‘Beaume de Vie’, Gregory could supply not only the medicine itself but also, for 6d., ‘a narrative of many extraordinary and well-attested cures wrought by the Beaume de Vie’. ‘Beaume de Vie’ was owned by another London bookseller, Thomas Becket of the Strand.

Other medicines sold by Gregory included:

- Glass’s Magnesia
- Dr Henry’s Chemical Nervous Medicine
- Essence of Pearl and Pearl Dentifrice
- Grant’s Chymical Drops (for coughs, colds and asthma)
- Pectoral Lozenges of Tolu (for coughs and hoarseness)
- Mr Spilsbury’s Antiscorbutic Drops

197 Leicester Journal, 27 September 1777.
198 Leicester Journal, 1 November 1777, 28 April 1787.
199 Leicester Journal, 25 January 1777.
201 Leicester Journal, 8 March 1777.
202 Leicester Journal, 15 March 1777.
203 Leicester Journal, 5 April 1777.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
Pullin's Antiscorbutic Pills

Pullin's Purging Pills (to be taken in Spring and Fall)

Swinfen's Electuary (for treating stones etc.)

Ormskirk Medicine (for mad-dog bites)

Adams's Solvent (for stones)

Hill's Pectoral Balsam of Honey

Elixir of Bardana

Lettuce-Juice – 'entirely answers the purpose of Opium without its dangerous Effects'

Molineux's Smelling Medicine – ‘for the cure of the scurvy, itch, pimpled faces, scal'd hands, films in children, and all cutaneous eruptions (by smelling)

Spediman's Stomach Pills

Pullin's Female Pills – 'a sovereign cure for the green sickness'

Mr Hamilton’s Tincture – for toothache

Jackson's Tincture for the Rheumatism, Gravel, Stone, Cholic or Griping of the Bowels

Spirits of Scurvy-Grass (Golden or Plain)

Improved Daffy's Elixir

207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Leicester Journal, 12 April 1777.
211 Leicester Journal, 26 April 1777.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Leicester Journal, 31 May 1777, 14 June 1777.
217 Leicester Journal, 7 June 1777.
218 Leicester Journal, 28 June 1777.
219 Leicester Journal, 9 August 1777.
220 Ibid.
Velno's Vegetable Syrup — for venereal cases, scurvy etc. ('contains no mercury') 222
Butler's Unguent for the Feet 223
Jackson's Patent Ointment for the Itch 224
Tasteless Ague and Fever Drops 225
Family Restorative — for the eyes etc. 226
Oriental Vegetable Cordial 227
Hayman's Drops 228

From time to time, in addition to the separate advertisements for various pills and potions, Gregory would publish in the Journal a long list of medicines obtainable from his shop 229 An advertisement for 'Bott's Corn Salve' is interesting because it records that this remedy, 'new-invented' by George Bott of Nottingham, is recommended in a letter from Gregory's former partner, the printer Samuel Cresswell, and his wife Rebecca. 230

In addition to patent medicines, Gregory sold a variety of household goods, including boot blacking, in traditional liquid form and various proprietary forms, such as 'Siejah's China Blacking Balls' ('for preventing the wet entering the leather') and 'Bailey's Patent Blacking Cakes' both at 6d. 231

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221 Ibid.
222 Leicester Journal, 27 September 1777.
223 Leicester Journal, 18 October 1777.
224 Leicester Journal, 25 October 1777.
225 Leicester Journal, 17 February 1787.
226 Ibid.
227 Leicester Journal, 17 March 1787.
228 Leicester Journal, 14 April 1787.
229 Examples: Leicester Journal, 3 February 1787, 5 May 1787, 26 May 1787.
230 Leicester Journal, 21 June 1777.
231 Leicester Journal, 1 February 1777, 26 May 1787.
That it was not uncommon for booksellers to sell such products is confirmed by an advertisement for ‘Cakes for making shining blacking for boots and shoes’ obtainable not only from Gregory but from other booksellers in Leicestershire: Ella in Loughborough, Mrs Ratten in Harborough, Beadsmore in Ashby de la Zouch, Mrs Pool in Hinckley, and Clementson in Melton Mowbray. Gregory also sold Helft’s Powder, ‘for taking out Iron Moulds, without injuring the finest linen’.

Agricultural products, such as Tar Oil for sheep (at 1s. 6d. per quart bottle) could be bought from Gregory and ‘may be sent by the newsmen to any part of the County of Leicester’. Brogniart’s Vegetable Powder (a type of fertilizer) could be bought from Covent Garden or, more conveniently, from Gregory. Some of these products could be obtained wholesale, as well as retail, from Gregory, such as Poultey’s Paste for the destruction of rats, mice and other vermin.

Stationery, which one might expect to form an important part of a bookseller’s stock, in fact features infrequently in Gregory’s advertisements. For example, in 1769, he advertised that he intended
to sell in the future all kinds of stamp paper, parchment &c. Also the Licences upon exactly the same terms as the stamp office.

Another example is found within a composite advertisement for various goods sold by Gregory in 1787, including sixpenny Patent Ink Cakes and black, red and white lead pencils, also at 6d. each.

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232 Leicester Journal, 7 June 1777.
233 Leicester Journal, 1 July 1769.
234 Leicester Journal, 24 August 1777.
235 Leicester Journal, 7 April 1787.
236 Leicester Journal, 6 September 1777.
237 Leicester Journal, 7 October 1769. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)
Turning from the goods that Gregory sold to the services he provided, we again find a considerable range advertised in the *Journal*. Employment advertising – situations vacant and wanted – was carried in most issues of the paper. A major difference from modern recruitment advertising is that the employer's name and address were seldom disclosed. Instead, Gregory usually acted as an intermediary, providing further details of vacancies or putting prospective applicants in touch with advertisers. It would be interesting to know how Gregory charged for employment advertising – whether a basic charge was made for placing an advertisement with an additional charge being made when he acted as an agent or intermediary, or whether a composite charge was made. However, no evidence has been found to throw any light on this.

Neither is it clear whether Gregory exercised some kind of initial vetting of enquirers on behalf of advertisers. If advertisers were unwilling to disclose their names in the columns of the *Journal* it hardly seems likely that they would have permitted Gregory to give their name to any casual enquirer at the printing office without his exercising some degree of judgement as to whether they were suitable. The majority of employment advertisements in the *Journal*, including all of the examples in the following list, direct enquirers to Gregory for further details. It is not known whether he kept a supply of printed details of vacancies or merely gave enquirers a contact name. One advertisement, for a person to work in a hosiery warehouse, instructed that sealed applications be submitted via Gregory.\(^{239}\)

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\(^{238}\) *Leicester Journal*, 26 May 1787.  
\(^{239}\) *Leicester Journal*, 7 June 1777.
The following brief selection of vacancies suggests the range of employment advertising in the *Journal*:

Apprentices for a grocer, a cabinet-maker, an apothecary, and a linen and woollen draper.

Journeyman druggist

Journeyman dyer

Journeywoman milliner

Curate for two chapels

‘A genteel servant’ (to look after hunters and wait at table)

Ostler at an inn (must be single and of good character)

‘Unmarried man of good character’ (to manage a small farm and drive a chaise occasionally)

Postilion (to take care of three or four horses)

Servant (includes working with horses)

Cook ‘for a capital inn’

Woman for dairy and farmhouse work

Gamekeeper.

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240 *Leicester Journal*, 1 March 1777.
241 *Leicester Journal*, 3 August 1771.
242 *Leicester Journal*, 1 March 1777.
243 *Leicester Journal*, 16 August 1777.
244 *Leicester Journal*, 7 June 1777.
245 *Leicester Journal*, 12 July 1777.
246 *Leicester Journal*, 2 November 1771.
247 *Leicester Journal*, 5 April 1777.
248 *Leicester Journal*, 2 August 1777.
249 *Leicester Journal*, 22 April 1769.
251 *Leicester Journal*, 3 August 1771.
252 *Leicester Journal*, 26 May 1787.
253 *Leicester Journal*, 16 August 1777.
254 *Leicester Journal*, 31 March 1787.
255 *Leicester Journal*, 27 September 1777.
Advertisements placed by people seeking work were fewer in number than those for vacancies, although many issues of the Journal carried several, not least for curacies wanted.\footnote{Examples: \textit{Leicester Journal}, 5 April 1777, 28 June 1777. \textit{Leicester Journal}, 1 March 1777. \textit{Leicester Journal}, 24 August 1777. \textit{Leicester Journal}, 7 April 1787. \textit{Leicester Journal}, 21 June 1777. \textit{Leicester Journal}, 15 November 1777. There is a similar type of advertisement for the Marines in the \textit{Leicester Journal}, 6 December 1777.} One young man, advertising somewhat optimistically for 'a curacy or two', preferably with a house, asked for offers to be sent to Gregory's printing office, addressed to 'A. B'.\footnote{Leicester Journal, 1 March 1777.} Another advertisement for work wanted was placed by a young man 'bred a grocer', of whom details could be obtained from Gregory,\footnote{Leicester Journal, 24 August 1777.} while an enterprising youth of fifteen advertised for a master 'in any creditable business' though, having some knowledge of Latin, he preferred a surgeon or an apothecary.\footnote{Leicester Journal, 7 April 1787.} Not all apprentices and employees were quite so keen, and notices concerning runaways appear sometimes in the Journal, such as an advertisement about a runaway labourer, which gives a detailed description of the man and indicates that

\begin{quote}
whoever gives notice of him to the Printer of this paper, so that he may be convicted and brought to justice, shall be handsomely rewarded.\footnote{Leicester Journal, 7 April 1787.}
\end{quote}

Military recruitment advertising was carried by the Journal from time to time, for example:

\begin{quote}
Wanted: a sightly young fellow to serve in a marching regiment of foot, now in England – Twelve guineas will be given to any young man approved of for this service, and one guinea will be given exclusive to any person bringing such a man to the printer of this paper.\footnote{Leicester Journal, 21 June 1777.}
\end{quote}

Again it is not clear whether Gregory vetted potential recruits and paid those introducing them. This seems a little unlikely but Gregory must at the very
least have been involved in some paperwork in connection with recruiting, if no more than keeping a record of each applicant and his introducer to pass on to the regiment.

Whatever Gregory's role may have been as an agent in any way for advertisers, he must at least have gained a decent income from the considerable amount of employment advertising placed in the Journal. Another man, Mr. W. Cart, operated an employment agency or 'Register Office', advertising from time to time in the Journal with a composite advertisement, usually in a fancy border, listing a number of jobs of which many, though by no means all, were in domestic service.262 One of Cart's advertisements includes the following warning to potential applicants for the post of

a cook-maid in a family where the master caters, the mistress directs

and the cook must carry out her own business or quit the premises.263

Advertisements for real estate appeared from time to time in the Journal though much less frequently than those relating to employment. Sometimes Gregory was named as a source of further details of property for sale or to let: for example, two houses in the High Street to be sold in 1769, a 'neat Genteel House at Scraptoft' for sale in 1770, and a part-house, with garden, in Belgrave Gate, available to rent in 1777.264 When the freehold of an estate in Ashby Folville, Leicestershire, was advertised, Gregory was one of several people from whom details could be obtained.265

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262 Examples: Leicester Journal, 13 and 27 September 1777.
263 Leicester Journal, 13 September 1777.
264 Leicester Journal, 1 July 1769, 3 March 1770, 28 June 1777.
265 Leicester Journal, 7 June 1777.
Commercial property was advertised occasionally, such as the Turk's Head Inn, on Coal Hill, and an apothecary’s house and shop, complete with fixtures, for both of which details were available from Gregory. Standing crops were occasionally for sale, for example approximately ten acres of turnips were advertised in 1777, with enquiries again directed to Gregory.

Other miscellaneous advertising appeared in the Journal, including occasional charitable appeals. In 1777, Gregory seems to have taken a personal interest in the case of the child of a poor woman who had died shortly after a caesarean; although the child (appropriately named Julius Caesar) was healthy, funds were needed for his care:

The child is placed under a careful nurse and the donations of the charitable will be received by the printer of this paper for his use, who will also see that they are properly applied... Many thanks are due for subscriptions already received, particularly to a lady who was so kind as to send a guinea.

The appeal was quite successful, as two months later Gregory placed a notice in the Journal that 6½ guineas had been subscribed; further donations could still be sent to him or to a Mrs. Watts. On another occasion, Gregory inserted the following notice in the Journal:

One guinea, sent to the printer by a gentleman was last week laid out in beef, and distributed among the prisoners.

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266 Leicester Journal, 16 August 1777, 5 May 1787.
267 Leicester Journal, 8 November 1777.
269 Leicester Journal, 27 December 1777.
270 Leicester Journal, 17 February 1787.

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‘Lost and found’ advertisements were sometimes to be seen in the columns of the Journal, such as a lost £20 banknote: ‘whoever brings it to the printer of this paper shall receive two guineas reward’.  

Gregory was even prepared to take in a lost dog: anyone finding a white pointer, answering to the name of Sancho, would receive a reward of five shillings upon delivering him to the printing office.

Another service was discreetly advertised in 1787: Gregory could supply, in connection with the delicate matter of ‘concealed pregnancy’, the address of J. White, a London surgeon and ‘man-midwife’ whose services were ‘worthy the perusal of ladies whose situation requires a temporary retirement’. The advertisement discloses that White was located in St Paul’s Churchyard (better known as a centre of bookselling!) though his exact address, printed, was only obtainable from Gregory upon payment of a shilling.

As the above selection of examples has indicated, the advertisements which Gregory placed in the Journal form a rich source of evidence for the goods and services he supplied and other endeavours with which he was associated. They are also valuable evidence of Gregory’s involvement with his fellow book-trade practitioners, both locally and further afield. Several advertisements relate to ventures in which Gregory participated in cooperation with other booksellers in Leicester, or elsewhere in the East Midlands, and occasionally in London.

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271 Leicester Journal, 1 November 1777.  
272 Leicester Journal, 6 September 1777.  
273 Leicester Journal, 17 February 1787.
The Nottingham bookseller, Samuel Tupman, advertised his sale catalogue in the *Journal* in 1777. Copies were available gratis from Tupman's shop in Long Row, Nottingham, or from Gregory and other booksellers who would also forward commissions to Tupman. Similar arrangements were made by Samuel Cresswell, who published a catalogue of several libraries to be sold by auction in Nottingham in the same year: the *Journal* carried an advertisement giving brief details of the sale arrangements and giving a long list of booksellers acting as Cresswell's agents, including Gregory and Ireland in Leicester, who could not only supply catalogues for one penny but also 'will forward commissions to the place of trade'. Later in the same year Cresswell printed the eleventh edition of *An Easy Spelling Book for Children* by Thomas Smith. An advertisement in the *Journal* indicated that the book was being sold by Gregory and Ireland, by an otherwise unrecorded Leicester woman, Mrs. Horseley, and by other booksellers in Leicestershire and beyond.

Gregory was also named as selling *A Candid and Friendly Reply to Mr. Dan Taylor's Dissertation on Singing in the Worship of God...*, by Gilbert Boyce, printed and sold by W. Nicholson of Wisbech, J. Proud, also of Wisbech, J. Nicholson of Cambridge, and two London booksellers. In these instances, Gregory was one of several booksellers involved. However in 1787 he is named in an advertisement as the only seller of *The Gardener's Pocket Kalendar* by Richard Weston, other than its printer, George Burbage.

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274 *Leicester Journal*, 2 August 1777.
275 *Leicester Journal*, 17 May 1777.
276 *Leicester Journal*, 13 September 1777.
277 *Leicester Journal*, 3 February 1787.
278 Weston was a prolific local author and two other forthcoming titles are announced in the same advertisement. Nichols notes twenty books and several articles written by Weston, mostly about horticultural and botanical subjects. J. Nichols, *History*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 509-510.
of Nottingham. The employment advertising in the Journal was usual confined to Leicestershire, but Job Bradley, a bookseller in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, placed an advertisement in 1777 on behalf of a man seeking a curacy. Applications for details (post-paid) were to be sent directly to Bradley.

These few examples gleaned from the columns of the Journal provide evidence of considerable book-trade activity at regional level and beyond. Gregory's trade links with other booksellers locally and further afield appear comparable with those of contemporary tradesmen of similar standing, indicating that Leicester's major book-trade practitioners were, in that respect at least, typical of the book trade as a whole. Evidence of trade links with London booksellers includes the auction sale of John Jackson's books for which catalogues could be obtained in London, from Mr Field in Paternoster Row or Mr Blythe in Cornhill.

It is difficult to determine with any accuracy the scale of Gregory's business in comparison with his contemporaries. There is evidence that twelve apprentices were bound to Gregory at various times, which suggests a sizeable business. Before discussing the apprentices briefly, it is worth

279 Leicester Journal, 17 March 1787.
280 Leicester Journal, 28 June 1777.
281 Leicester Journal, 28 April 1764. The two London booksellers were probably Francis Blyth and Thomas Field, both members of the Stationers' Company. Plomer (Dictionaries of Printers and Booksellers..., vol. 3, p. 28) lists Francis Blyth (fl. 1766-88), printer, bookseller and publisher, sometime of 87 Cornhill, although BBTI (entry no. 32574) gives his trade dates as 1760-64. Plomer (ibid.) lists Thomas Field (fl. 1755?-1775?), bookseller and publisher 'for the Nonconformists', at the corner of Paternoster Row and Cheapside. BBTI (entry no. 53724) expands his trade dates to 1746-94 and adds that he was a music publisher. McKenzie (Stationers' Company Apprentices, vol. 3, pp. 39, 125) lists Francis Blyth in Cornhill (though not until 1767) and Thomas Field in Cheapside (trading 1756-61).
noting that, from time to time, Gregory advertised in the Journal for both apprentices and journeymen. For example, in 1760 he required a journeyman printer, and in 1765 he was seeking an apprentice and a journeyman bookbinder.\textsuperscript{282}

Gregory's apprentices are listed in Figure 12. Unfortunately, for most of them we have only a date of binding and there is no evidence that they completed their apprenticeships. All that can be said concerning the size and

\textbf{Figure 12  John Gregory's Apprentices}\textsuperscript{283}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Son of</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Freed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis Hodson</td>
<td>Nathaniel (innholder), of Burton-on-Trent</td>
<td>29 Sep 1754</td>
<td>18 Sep 1762\textsuperscript{284}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Wilshaw</td>
<td>William, of Ipstones, Staffs.</td>
<td>1 Jan 1759</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Miller</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25 Mar 1759</td>
<td>9 Mar 1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Byard</td>
<td>Henry (scrivener), of Burton-on-Trent</td>
<td>25 Mar 1765</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Bradley</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 May 1765\textsuperscript{285}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Taylor</td>
<td>James (labourer), of Tilton-on-the-Hill, [Leics.]</td>
<td>1 May 1772\textsuperscript{286}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Gregory\textsuperscript{287}</td>
<td>William (glazier), late of Chesterfield</td>
<td>29 Sep 1773</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Clarke</td>
<td>Isabella (widow), of Mansfield, Notts.</td>
<td>29 Sep 1775</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Pickover</td>
<td>Jeremiah (shepherd), of Waltham [Leics.]</td>
<td>25 Mar 1781</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Burdett</td>
<td>William (gent.) of Gilmorton, [Leics.]</td>
<td>1 Jan 1782\textsuperscript{288}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Clementson</td>
<td>Edward (ironmonger) of Melton Mowbray</td>
<td>14 Jan 1783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William N Jones</td>
<td>Rev. Richard, late curate of Tamworth, Staffs</td>
<td>6 Jan 1789</td>
<td>19 Jun 1826\textsuperscript{289}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{282} Leicester Journal, 16 February 1760, 20 April 1765.

\textsuperscript{283} Source for all data in this table: Hartopp, Freemen: transcripts of apprenticeship and freedom records (in date order).

\textsuperscript{284} Trades in Cambridge from 1762, and becomes publisher of the Cambridge Chronicle.

\textsuperscript{285} Payment of £20 recorded.

\textsuperscript{286} Record states: 'to age 21'.

\textsuperscript{287} Probably a relative, as Gregory had family in Derbyshire, though neither William nor his father is listed in Nichols' pedigree of the Gregory family.

\textsuperscript{288} Apprenticed to John Gregory Snr. and John Gregory Jnr.

\textsuperscript{289} This would be an unusually long apprenticeship. It may be that there are two men, perhaps father and son. The Freedom entry describes Jones as 'of London'.
continuity of Gregory's business is that, if all his apprentices did complete the usual seven-year term, then he would have employed two apprentices simultaneously during virtually the whole of his period of trading. However, given that many apprenticeships did not run to their full term, there can be no certainty that this was the case. It is always interesting to note the family background of apprentices in the book trade, and the table lists the occupation of each apprentice's father in all but two cases. Gregory's apprentices came from a wide range of backgrounds. Only one, John Byard, came from a background slightly connected with the book trade – his father was a scrivener. They all originated in the Midlands, especially Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire.

There is evidence that one of Gregory's apprentices, Francis Hodson, went on to make a name for himself in the book trade. Upon being made free, in 1762, Hodson went to Cambridge, where he seems to have traded as a printer until his death in 1812, at the age of 73, when his son took over his business. Hodson is best remembered as the publisher of the Cambridge Chronicle. Other members of the Hodson family were active in the book trade in Cambridge and in London, and three of them were, for some reason, made free in Leicester. James Hodson was apprenticed to his brother Francis, in Cambridge in 1768; he is possibly the Dr. James Hodson made free in Leicester in 1792.

The foregoing discussion of John Gregory indicates that he was a businessman of considerable standing in the town, confirmed by his

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position as an Alderman and sometime Mayor. Gregory dominated the book
trade in Leicester from the mid-eighteenth century until the 1770s, when
competitors, especially George Ireland and John Brown, established
important bookselling and printing businesses. That period is discussed in
chapter 6.

John Gregory died in 1789 and the business passed to his elder son. There is
ample evidence that Gregory ran a wide-ranging and successful book-trade
business, the largest that Leicester had seen up to that point in time. His
prominent role in the affairs of the Borough and his various charitable
activities, not least his tireless work for the Leicester Infirmary, suggest that
he was a man of considerable ability and good character. John Nichols
wrote of Gregory:

His behaviour through life, as a tradesman, husband, father, and as a
magistrate, he discharged with such openness of heart and upright
conduct, that his loss will be long felt and regretted by a large circle
of friends and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{291}

6.1 Politics and print

Although this chapter continues to outline, roughly chronologically, the history of the developing book trade in Leicester, it has a different emphasis from the preceding three chapters and focuses on the political views and activities of the trade's practitioners. The political life of Leicester – which had long tended towards two separate, and frequently antagonistic, factions – became extremely polarised during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In such a town as 'Radical Leicester' (an epithet which tends to obscure the town's sizeable, and powerful, Tory faction) it was difficult not to take sides, and major book-trade people were to be found on both sides of the political divide.

Although a few important book-trade figures were members of the Corporation (a sure sign, before the 1835 reforms, of a Tory), the majority of them at this period held radical political views, some to a rather extreme degree. Though a number of provincial towns had a known radical bookseller or printer (sometimes the proprietor or printer of a radical newspaper), there does not seem to have been the same scale and depth of radical political activity on the part of book-trade people elsewhere as there was in Leicester – a feature which adds a fascinating dimension to the history of the local book trade at this period.
This chapter begins with an attempt to give something of the flavour of local political situation during this tumultuous period, together with a little of the national background. Book-trade people and their activities are then discussed, beginning with those of a Tory persuasion, followed by those whose political views are unknown. The remainder of the chapter deals with those book-trade people at the radical end of the political spectrum.

The 1770s and 1780s are an interesting period in Leicester's history. The political divide was beginning perceptibly to widen and it is possible to detect a rapidly increasing polarisation between the Corporation Tories (with their traditional supporters, not least members of the Established Church) and the rising class of Whig/Liberal business and professional men (mostly Dissenters, plus a few 'Church-Whigs'). At the same time as men of position and influence in the town were beginning to nail their political colours to one or other mast, a few of the powerless multitude of working people were finding the courage to articulate their grievances and were starting to seek out kindred spirits with whom to associate.

Concurrently, fear of the threatened mechanisation of traditional hosiery and related industries, the backbone of Leicester's economy, led many of the town's working men to take the law into their own hands. The domestic or 'putting-out' system of hosiery manufacture, although notoriously ill-paid, did at least mean that work had been available to a huge number of Leicester people. Working men and women were acutely aware of the problems of unemployment and social upheaval caused elsewhere by the introduction of new machinery and the growth of factories, and they reacted accordingly. A new type of stocking frame was broken up by workers in 1773, and there was a serious riot in 1787, when one local entrepreneur attempted to mechanise worsted-spinning. His machine was destroyed, the
houses of two other manufacturers were damaged and the Mayor, while attempting to read the Riot Act, was hit on the head by a stone, an injury which proved fatal.¹

The old way of describing society as comprising orders or ranks — with its implicit acceptance that everyone’s position was pre-ordained — gave way gradually after 1780 to the language of class. By the time of the Chartists, terms like ‘middle class’ and ‘working class’ were an established part of a vocabulary

which recognised social conflict centred on the clash of interests which arose from the distribution of wealth, income and power.²

The consciousness of social class and the dawning realisation that inequality was not God-given led inevitably to the first real stirrings of middle-class radicalism in the 1780s, although its roots go back thirty or forty years. Working-class radicalism was not far behind and certainly found its voice over the next half-century.

Initially, in Leicester as elsewhere, there existed nothing that could be described as a cohesive radical movement, and the middle class (with a few worthy exceptions) remained ignorant of, or indifferent to, the plight of local working people. Previously, working-class grievances had not been articulated with any clarity and only rarely were they spoken or written about publicly. This began to change during the last twenty years of the eighteenth century. Events in France, however badly reported or misunderstood, inevitably alerted British working people to the real (no longer merely theoretical) possibility of direct political action.

¹ A.T. Patterson, Radical Leicester, p. 41. J. Simmons, Leicester: the Ancient Borough, p. 133.
The early 1790s represent a major watershed in British political history, with the ruling classes, rightly or wrongly, regarding developments in France with growing alarm. Many seriously believed a revolution in England, most likely supported by a French invasion, to be imminent. The Government, perhaps over-reacting to the 'Jacobin' threat, introduced a battery of repressive legislation, including the suspension of Habeas Corpus.

The political scene in London and the provinces remained fluid, as the Government and the radical activists both reacted to rapidly changing developments at home and abroad. In Leicester, the Corporation assumed that 'Jacobins' were responsible for violence during the 1790 elections. Rioters threw the Borough Records into the street and attacked the Assembly Rooms, destroying a music library and damaging musical instruments.³

There was more unrest in 1792, when food riots were swiftly put down by the authorities.⁴ In the same year, the local Revolution Club (formed in 1784 to celebrate the 1688 revolution and to advocate moderate reform) closed down, having been deserted by both the Whig aristocracy and the higher gentry of Leicestershire (the 'Rutland faction').⁵ Reacting in panic to the plight of the landed elite in France, they sought to protect their position by joining forces with the Tories in an attempt to preserve the status quo. Their action was actually beneficial to Leicester's radical movement:

The withdrawal of the greater part of its aristocratic support meant that it now had to stand on its own feet. It was now at liberty to grow out of the sterile whiggery of the propertied aristocrats, interested chiefly in their own electoral influence, into the more constructive radicalism of the

³ Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp. 66-67.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Most of the lesser gentry of the county had always been staunchly Tory, strongly opposed to the Duke of Rutland and his erstwhile Whig supporters.
Bentham school. A clear and swift sign of this new-found independence and determination was the establishment of a new Constitutional Society for Promoting an Equal Representation of the People in Parliament. In the process of finding its own feet, the radical movement encouraged the emergence of new leaders, for the most part prominent members of the dissenting chapels, especially the Great Meeting. It also created a seemingly insatiable thirst for ever more radical speakers and literature, which led to a political polarisation within the local press.

Throughout the 1790s, the Government was genuinely fearful for the safety of the realm, not only on account of the French Revolution and its aftermath but also because of seething discontent in Ireland which erupted into rebellion in 1798. Fear in high places led on several occasions to harsh measures being taken, not only against those who spoke or wrote anything which might be construed as revolutionary but also against those who printed or distributed books, pamphlets or newspapers of a radical nature.

A royal proclamation in May 1792, against ‘criminal and seditious writings’, described by Halévy as ‘the Government’s declaration of war upon the journalists’, was more than that – it was also a declaration of war on all who produced or distributed radical literature. The tightening screw of legislation prohibited, in 1795, incitement in speech or writing to hatred or contempt of the King or Government, while the anonymous publication of newspapers was made illegal in 1798. An Act of 1799 not only suppressed seditious societies but also

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7 Not to be confused with the defunct, Tory, Constitutional Society.
imposed a system of registration upon the printers of books and newspapers, also upon the owners and even the makers of presses and type."

In the often turbulent political setting of Leicester, such measures meant that book trade people of a radical persuasion were closely watched by the authorities. At times, they ran the almost daily risk of prosecution for carrying out what they probably regarded as a normal part of their business.

The more extreme radicals were regarded (indeed a number openly described themselves) as 'revolutionaries', but much English radical activity, especially in the rapidly growing industrial towns of the Midlands and the North, tended to focus on more domestic issues. A priority for many political activists was the campaign for parliamentary reform, which was to result eventually in the Reform Act of 1832. In Leicester, the reform campaign was a hard-fought struggle, characterised not only by much bitterness but also by sporadic violent unrest. Religious dissent and radical politics - inextricably woven together in the consciences of many local people - both had a strong foothold in the town, giving Leicester its well-deserved reputation as a major centre of English radical activity.

It is perhaps not surprising that, in this vibrant political setting, a significant number of local book-trade people professed radical views and used their position, and their skills, to promote various brands of radical politics. Leicester's book trade practitioners held a variety of religious and political beliefs - a few were members of the Corporation and rose to high office in the governance of the Borough. However, it does appear that, at this period, most of Leicester's book-trade practitioners were of a radical persuasion, some of them perhaps attracted into the book trade as a powerful means of promoting their political opinions. Of course, not all who worked in the

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9 Ibid. The Acts were: 36 Geo. III, cap. 7.; 38 Geo. III, cap. 78.; 39 Geo. III, cap. 79.
book trade were radicals, and the political views of a few book-trade practitioners cannot now be ascertained.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, John Gregory died in 1789 and his business, including the *Leicester Journal*, passed to his elder son, also John. As soon as the younger John took over the *Journal*, it became much more overtly Tory than it had been under his father's ownership. This may have reflected the younger man's politics, though this was a time of increasing polarisation in the provincial press. Radical papers began to emerge in the 1790s, which tended to push moderately Tory papers, like the *Leicester Journal*, further into a more extreme brand of Tory politics. It was the radical papers which took the lead in introducing a new type of journalism: pioneered by Benjamin Flower in his *Cambridge Intelligencer*:

> From the outset, by using the editorial, he sought to instruct public opinion on the major issues of his day... [showing] that he had outgrown the 'scissors and paste' tradition and the earlier dependence on the London newspapers.  

Tory papers like the *Journal* gradually adopted the editorial. John Price (brother-in-law of John Gregory) became a partner in 1803 and sole proprietor when Gregory died in 1806. The *Journal* became yet more politically extreme under Price's control:

> From 1807, the editorial in the 'Leicester' column, where a strong Tory point of view was expressed, became the central feature of the newspaper.  

Other changes in the *Journal* in Price's time included a change of name to *The Leicester Journal and Midland Counties Advertiser*, presumably in the hope of increasing circulation and attracting more advertising. After Price's death in 1831, the *Journal* was taken over by John's son and daughter, Charles

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11 D. Fraser, 'The Press in Leicester c1790-1850', p. 53.
12 VCH, vol. 4, p. 190; W.A. Jenkins, *The Economic and Social History of Leicester*, p. 120.
Henry Thaddeus Price and Caroline Elfrida Price, who soon took into partnership Benjamin Jackson and Benjamin Payne, both leading Tories and members of the Corporation.  

The whole range of John Gregory's business continued during the time of his son John, who traded as printer, bookseller and stationer as well as newspaper proprietor. After the death of the younger John Gregory, although it is certain that Price took over the Journal, it seems likely that he did not take over the bookselling and stationery part of the business. Published business directories only ever describe Price (or Price & Son) as printers and newspaper publishers. The latest evidence found for Gregory are two directory entries, both from 1794, and a single imprint dated 1798, which may suggest that the Gregory family bookselling and stationery business ceased to function after the younger John's death, or perhaps that it changed hands.  

The elder John Gregory had a younger son, Joseph, who was vicar of St Martin's and All Saints, Leicester. Joseph's son, Thomas Vowe Gregory, is known to have been a printer, though it is not clear whether he set up on his own or succeeded, in any sense, to part of the family printing business, minus the Journal, when Joseph's brother, the younger John, died without issue in 1806. Fanny Gregory, only daughter of the elder John, married John Price, who became editor of the Leicester Journal. Joseph Gregory (who died in 1802) had a younger son, John Vowe Gregory, who was apprenticed...
as a printer, to his uncle, John Gregory, on 16 March 1803, with effect from the following 30 September. His age (13 years and 9 months) was precisely recorded at the time of his binding, and a note was appended that £30 charity money had been allowed by the Sons of the Clergy. Nothing further is known of John Vowe Gregory and there is no record of his being freed; he perhaps worked with his brother Thomas.

6.2 A major book-trade family

Another of Leicester’s most important book-trade dynasties, the Irelands, emerged during the early part of the period under review. Confusingly, not only three generations but also two separate branches of the Ireland family were active in the book trade in Leicester. Figure 13 is a ‘family tree’ of the Irelands, which may help to clarify their relationships, while Figure 14 charts the family’s business connections and their apprentices.

The elder John Ireland (the son of a woolcomber) traded as ‘bookseller, bookbinder and printer’. It is not known exactly when he commenced trading but he is almost certainly the Mr Ireland mentioned in the imprint of Melpomene, or the Songster’s Merry Companion, in 1755.

He was certainly in business before 1760, because in that year the Leicester Journal carried this announcement:

John Ireland, Printer and Bookseller in Leicester, is removed from the

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19 I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for drawing this imprint to my attention. The book was printed by William East at Waltham, Leicestershire, and sold by Mr Rogers in Stamford and Mr Witeman [Wightman] in Grantham, Mr Ireland in Leicester, Mr Clementson in Melton Mowbray and Mr Joseph Scott in Nottingham. (COPAC).
Little detailed evidence has been found for John Ireland's business, though some information is to be found in newspaper advertisements. For example, in the year before his death, he advertised that (in common with John Gregory) he was selling a periodical called The New London Jester, while 'Ireland's printing office' is advertised as a source of tickets for a series of performances by the Leicester Company of Comedians at the New Vauxhall

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**Figure 13  Family chart of the Irelands**

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20 *Leicestershire Journal*, 6 September 1760. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.)
Theatre. 21 At the same time, John Ireland advertised that he was taking subscriptions to the new edition of Thoroton's *The History and Antiquities of Nottinghamshire.* 22

The elder John Ireland had two nephews, John Ireland (the younger) and George Ireland (the elder) bound to him as apprentices, and they both followed their uncle into the book trade, though they established two separate businesses. John Ireland died in 1776 and his will is an important piece of evidence not only for John himself but also for other members of the family. 23

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21 *Leicester Journal*, 27 December 1777, 8 November 1777.
22 *Leicester Journal*, 27 December 1777. (See above, chapter 5, for a discussion of the proposed edition of Thoroton.)
John Ireland’s will, describing him as a stationer, leaves a number of specific bequests to family members: a bedstead and bedding to his wife Elizabeth, ten pounds to his niece Ann (the daughter of his brother George, not Ann Ireland the bookseller/printer), and an allowance to his two nephews, George (son of his brother Joseph) and John (son of his brother George). A house and certain other properties were left in trust to two Aldermen of the Borough to be rented out in order to provide a regular income for Elizabeth. All of John Ireland’s goods, chattels, money and stock in trade were (implicitly) left to his widow, as the will provides that, on the death of Elizabeth, they shall pass to his nephew George (who is also named as sole executor). In the event of George dying without lawful issue, everything was to go to the other nephew, John. (The probable outcome of these provisions is discussed later in the present chapter.)

Following John Ireland’s death in 1776, his business was run for a time by his widow, Elizabeth Ireland with her nephew the younger John Ireland. Unusually, although John Ireland had been apprenticed to his uncle, on 30 June 1762, he was made free by patrimony, as the eldest son of George, woolcomber, on 19 August 1767.24 The only book-trade evidence traced for Elizabeth Ireland is the following advertisement from 1778:

Elizabeth and John Ireland, widow and nephew of the late John Ireland,
Printer, bookseller, binder ... have opened a shop next door to Mr. Nutt,
Grocer in Gallowtree Gate where they intend carrying on the above
mentioned business.25

Since the elder John Ireland’s will stipulated that his stock in trade (and other goods) were to pass to his nephew George, it seems that John Ireland

23 ROLLR: PR/T/1776/112.
25 Leicester Journal, 17 October 1778.

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had not anticipated that his widow would trade with their other nephew, the younger John Ireland. It is not clear how long Elizabeth Ireland traded in partnership with her nephew, but a lengthy advertisement placed by John Ireland in 1786 suggests that by then he was trading alone (and in new premises):

John Ireland, Printer, bookseller & binder Wishes to inform his friends & the public in general that (according to the will of his uncle, Mr. John Ireland) he has entered upon the well accustomed shop opposite the Conduit in the Market Place; where he intends carrying on the printing, Bookselling & stationary business in all their various branches... He returns his sincere thanks to his numerous friends for their favours at his late shop in Gallowtree-gate, and humbly hopes he shall experience a continuance of them in his new situation. N.B. All kinds of account books rul'd and bound to order on the shortest notices.26

In fact, Elizabeth Ireland had probably died recently, giving her nephew John a claim on Ann Ireland's premises. (This is discussed later in the present chapter.)

In 1790, John Ireland established a circulating library, in direct competition with that run by the other branch of the Ireland family.27 He announced his venture, somewhat grandly, as the 'Leicester Circulating Library', which was intended for 'readers of every description' and aimed to comprehend every branch of British literature... in selecting which the greatest care will be taken to avoid such as may tend to injure the heart or

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26 Leicester Journal, 7 October 1786.
27 Discussed later in the present chapter. As explained in the Introduction, the history of libraries in Leicester has not formed part of this research, as it has already been very ably described in an unpublished MLS dissertation by Joyce Lee, who has also recently published a concise account in her From Chains to Freedom. Where a bookseller also ran a circulating library, it is mentioned briefly here, in order to indicate the full range of the business.
affect the morals. 28

This ambitious announcement notwithstanding, there seems to be no further trace of John Ireland's library. 29

The politics of the younger John Ireland are uncertain, though there are some indications that he may have been a radical. He was certainly the printer, for a short time in 1792/93, of a radical paper, the *Leicester Chronicle* (the first of two papers of that name). While this in itself is not necessarily indicative of the printer's politics, assuming he was first and foremost a businessman and would have been prepared to print a paper of any political inclination, he was possibly already associated with an important radical circle which had formed around the bookseller Thomas Combe (discussed later in this chapter).

In common with John Gregory, the younger John Ireland, for the short time he was printing the *Leicester Chronicle*, made good use of the paper to advertise his own goods and services. Just two examples will serve to indicate the range of his activity. On 20 April 1792, Ireland published a school-book, priced 6d.: *First Lessons of Spelling and Reading, adapted to the capacities of children*. He announced the book in a lengthy advertisement which adds some useful information about other aspects of his business:

> This publication is printed on good paper, with conspicuous [sic.] types, and obviates the general complaint that school books being imperfectly and often unintelligibly printed, on inspection it will be found worth the attention of the school master and mistress.

Printed by John Ireland, nr. the Conduit, Leicester, where the public may meet with a variety of other school books and every article in the bookselling and stationary lines on the lowest terms. Printing in all its various branches perform'd with accuracy and despatch.

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28 *Leicester Journal*, 7 October 1786.
Money given for libraries and parcels of books and binding executed in the best manner.

An apprentice wanted.  

John Ireland advertised again for an apprentice two months later. On the same occasion he announced that he had an important radical publication for sale: three letters of Thomas Paine (author of The Rights of Man) which had just been published at 6d.31 There is no way of knowing if Ireland's willingness to stock such a controversial publication was merely a business decision, based on his knowledge of likely local demand, and probably influenced by the fact that the advertisement appeared in an avowedly radical newspaper, or whether it reflects his own political outlook.

From the same advertisement we learn that, rather less controversially, Ireland sold Lady Hill's Pectoral Balsam of Honey 'for coughs, colds, sore throats, asthmas and consumptions'.32 This issue of the Chronicle provides further evidence for the books and periodicals stocked in Ireland's shop, especially at the luridly popular end of the spectrum, in a detailed announcement for the new Neugate Calendar, subtitled The Malefactor's Bloody Register, to be published in fifty parts, and containing 'the lives, trials, executions, dying speeches &c of malefactors from 1700 to the present'. This London publication, 'sold by the printer of this paper', was illustrated with copper plates, including in the first issue 'an exact representation of the execution of malefactors on the new scaffold and gallows opposite Newgate, and a sailor being flogged to death.'33

30 Leicester Chronicle, 20 April 1792.
31 Leicester Chronicle, 29 June 1792.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
The ESTC records five other books printed by the younger John Ireland. Four of these titles are chapbooks:

- The famous and renowned history of Hero and Leander... [1780?].
- A pleasant and delightful dialogue between honest John and loving Kate... [1790?] and Part 2: An excellent dialogue.... [1790?].
- Simple Simon's Misfortunes, &c. [1800?].

These seem to be the only extant chapbooks known to have been printed in Leicester. They are typical of the genre, being cheaply produced in 24-page duodecimo format. Although chapbooks were often illustrated with crude (and sometimes barely relevant) woodcuts, these examples of Ireland's output have no illustrations, with the exception of the title-page of Simple Simon's Misfortunes – reproduced as Figure 15.

One of the chapbooks contains 'A Catalogue of Histories Printed and Sold, Wholesale or Retail, by John Ireland in Leicester'. (Figure 16)

The other book listed by ESTC as being printed by John Ireland is a more substantial work, comprising 56 octavo pages (including a plate):

- Thomas ROBINSON (Vicar of St. Mary's, Leicester)
  An historical narrative of that renowned place of antiquity, the Jewry Wall, in Leicester. 1793.

One book is listed in ESTC as being printed for John Ireland, though the printer is not named:

- Memoirs of the late contested election for the county of Leicestershire....
  By a Freeholder of Leicestershire [i.e. Ralph Heathcote].
  Leicester: Printed for John Ireland, 1775. 96pp. 8vo.

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34 ESTC: t067851. BL: 11621.b.4 (5).
35 ESTC: t042466. BL: 11621.e.10 (19) and (11).
36 ESTC: t048282. BL: ROX.III.406.
37 Hero and Leander, p. [2].
38 ESTC: t100104.
39 ESTC: t128122.
Another piece of evidence relating to the younger John Ireland is a solitary surviving account for the publication in the *Chronicle*, between December 1792 and February 1793, of a number of letters and notices relating to the proposed Ashby de la Zouch Canal. The manuscript bill, dated 1793, for the not inconsiderable sum of £16. 7s. 6d., is receipted by John Ireland.\(^\text{40}\)

\(^{40}\) ROLLR: 5 D 43.
John Ireland the younger died on 17 April, 1810, at the age of 63. His will is very brief and leaves everything to his wife Mary, of whom nothing further is known. Unfortunately there is no trace of what happened to John Ireland’s business after his death. John Nichols described John Ireland as ‘a man strictly independent in his principles, of great probity and much respected’. 

41 ROLLR: PR/T/1810/107.
Turning to the other branch of the Ireland family, George Ireland (the elder) had been apprenticed to his uncle, the elder John Ireland, on 20 June 1765, and made free on 8 November 1773. During his relatively short life George Ireland became a bookseller and printer of some importance and is of particular note for having established Leicester's first circulating library, which seems first to have been advertised in October 1778. Although not large to begin with, George Ireland's library consisted of a respectable two thousand books by the end of 1782. Other evidence for the business activity of the elder George Ireland includes an advertisement in 1777 for five books, including Comenius's *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, a school book of Latin and English nomenclature. Shortly before he died, George advertised that he sold prints.

Whatever rivalry may have existed between the separate Ireland businesses, there was at least one occasion when they co-operated. In 1781, George Ireland (the elder) and John Ireland (the younger) jointly published an execution broadsheet:

>The Last Dying Words and Confession of John Donnellan, Esq.
>Who was Executed at Warwick, on Monday the 2d. of April, 1781.

At the foot of the sheet is the following announcement:

>On Tuesday the 3d. of April, will be Publish'd the Tryal at Large, to be had of Mess. G. and J. Ireland in the Market-Place, & Gallow-tree-Gate. Price Three-pence.

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44 *Leicester Journal*, 17 October 1778.
45 *Leicester Journal*, 23 November 1782.
46 *Leicester Journal*, 29 November 1777.
47 *Leicester Journal*, 7 January 1786.
48 ESTC record: t154587. There is a copy in the John Johnson collection (Box: 'Crime I') at the Bodleian Library. (Donnellan had been convicted of the murder by poisoning of his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton.)
49 Ibid.

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Figure 17  Printed by George Ireland (the elder) 1783
(Reproduced by permission of ROLLR)

Several books printed by the elder George Ireland are extant. There is one volume, printed in 1783, in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland:

Instructions intended under forms of devotion for general use.
Leicester, printed by George Ireland. M,DCC,LXXXIII.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} ROLLR, L094: Local imprints boxes.
This is a octavo volume of 208 pages (not in its original binding) of an apparently anonymous devotional work. It is quite competently printed although several pages are rather pale. \textit{(Figure 17)}

Another surviving work printed by George Ireland in the same year is:

\begin{quote}
A Rational Defence of Scripture Mysteries; attempted in a discourse on the doctrine of the Trinity, by the Reverend John Walker, A.B., late of Emmanuel-College, Cambridge.
Leicester: printed by George Ireland; and sold by T. and W. Lowndes, Booksellers, London, 1783. \textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Two years earlier, George Ireland had printed another book (the largest of his surviving works) in co-operation with T. Lowndes and others:

\begin{quote}
Ecclesiastes, in three parts. A new translation with a paraphrase...
[b]y Stephen Greenaway, with a portrait.
Leicester: printed by George Ireland, and sold by him; J. Fletcher, in Oxford; J. Nicholson, in Cambridge; and T. Lowndes, London. [1781]. \textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

When the elder George Ireland died, aged only 34, in 1786, an editorial in the \textit{Leicester Journal} paid tribute to his integrity:

\begin{quote}
He was a very honest industrious man, and left a wife and two children to lament their irreparable loss. \textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

The survival of his business, and the security of his wife and family, seem to have been uppermost in the mind of George Ireland as he approached the end of his life. His will, made shortly before his death, sets out detailed provisions to ensure a sound future for both the business and the family. \textsuperscript{54}

George Ireland's will makes clear his intention of passing the business on

\textsuperscript{51} ESTC: n048448. (Two copies known.)
\textsuperscript{52} ESTC: t140149. (Several copies known. The three parts are separately paginated; the total number of pages is just over 500.)
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Leicester Journal}, 13 May 1786.
\textsuperscript{54} ROLLR: PR/T/1786/94.
initially to his wife. Leaving all his household goods and chattels, and his stock in trade, to his wife, George Ireland states unequivocally:

And my mind and will is that my said Wife do carry on my several businesses of Bookseller Bookbinder and Printer during the minority of my son George Ireland (whom I would have brought up to my said businesses) the better to enable my said Wife in the meantime to maintain and support herself and Family...  

Ann Ireland, perhaps already an active participant in the business, was clearly regarded by her husband as more than a mere ‘caretaker’ during their son’s minority, since his will further specifies that, when their son comes of age, he and his mother are to enter into partnership:

and jointly carry on for their material benefit... my said several businesses during their joint lives if my said Wife shall so long continue my Widow.  

In taking charge of the business, Ann Ireland also took over George’s only known apprentice, Samuel Adams – son of the Loughborough bookseller, William Adams – who was bound to George Ireland on 3 May 1782. He must have been turned over to Ann Ireland following the death of her husband, as the record of his freedom, on 12 June 1790, notes that he had been the apprentice of ‘George Ireland, late of Leicester, bookseller, and afterwards with his widow’.  

Ann Ireland placed the following announcement in the Leicester Journal on 20 May 1786:

Ann Ireland widow of George Ireland, bookseller, printer, bookbinder and

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55 Ibid.  
56 Further detailed provisions cover the possibility of Ann Ireland’s remarriage before her son reached twenty-one. George Ireland also left some money to his mother and to his daughter, both named Elizabeth.  
57 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 2, p. 461. (The apprentice was also one of the witnesses to his master’s will.)  
printseller, takes the Liberty of informing the friends of her late Husband and the public in general, that the Business in its several branches, will be carried on by her as usual - a continuance of their favours will be thankfully acknowledged. 59

Within six months of this announcement, Ann Ireland was forced to move to another shop:

Ann Ireland (widow of the late Geo. Ireland) Printer, Bookseller, Binder and Printseller, Begs leave to inform her Friends and the Public, that being under the necessity of leaving her former situation, has now removed to the house, late Mr. Cooper's, Apothecary, opposite the Assembly-Room... where the several Businesses above-mentioned will be carried on, and all favours thankfully acknowledged.... 60

The reason for Ann Ireland's move is indicated in an announcement by the younger John Ireland a week earlier, that:

(according to the will of his uncle, Mr. John Ireland) he has entered upon the well accustomed shop opposite the Conduit in the Market Place... 61

John Ireland, presumably following the recent death of his aunt, Elizabeth Ireland (the widow of the elder John Ireland), now had a claim on the premises in the Market Place in which Ann Ireland was trading (and probably also living), forcing her to move elsewhere. As already noted, the will of the elder John Ireland had stipulated that, upon the death of his widow, Elizabeth, his goods, money and stock in trade would go to his nephew George. However, it seems likely (though the exact date of

59 *Leicester Journal*, 20 May 1786. (I have followed Ann Ireland's usual spelling of her Christian name, though 'Anne' is sometimes found.)

60 *Leicester Journal*, 14 October 1786. The advertisement also mentions that the circulating library now contains two thousand volumes and that catalogues of the library are available.

61 *Leicester Journal*, 7 October 1786.
Elizabeth Ireland’s death is not documented) that George Ireland predeceased his aunt by a short time.

The most likely explanation of what happened is that one of the properties left in trust for Elizabeth Ireland was the building occupied by George Ireland which, upon his aunt’s death, passed into the ownership of the younger John Ireland. Ann Ireland’s enforced move to new premises – ideally situated across from the Assembly Rooms, a magnet for the county gentry and wealthier townsfolk – may have been a blessing in disguise, since this was probably a better, more fashionable location for her bookshop, printing office and circulating library. The bookselling and printing sides of the business seem to have been very successful in their new location as was the circulating library, which had grown by 1800 to three thousand volumes. 62 Ann Ireland’s new shop must have been opposite the old Assembly Rooms in Coal Hill, as the new Assembly Rooms in Hotel Street were not built until 1792-1800.

The business, already apparently quite successful under the elder George Ireland, appears to have developed further during the period when it was run by his widow and later by Ann and George Ireland in partnership. The evidence, although not abundant, does seem to indicate a thriving business. It is impossible now to ascertain who was the driving force behind the business, though there are indications that it was Ann Ireland, who seems to have run a successful business, as a bookseller and circulating librarian, and also as a competent printer. During the next few years, Ann Ireland’s advertisements indicate a fashionable range of goods for sale – including music, musical instruments, fine art prints, theatre tickets, new periodicals

62 Leicester Journal, 20 October 1797.
‘direct from London’ – in addition to the standard fare of new and second-hand books, school books, stationery, and patent medicines.63

The bookselling and printing side of the business run by George Ireland and his family seems to have been on a par with that of John Gregory and his successors, with the important exception that George Ireland did not publish a newspaper. Some advertisements refer to both businesses: the following example dates from 1796:

Books are now opened at Mr. Gregory’s and Mrs. Ireland’s for help for French ladies and children stranded in this country.64

Other examples include two advertisements from 1797 for books obtainable from several local booksellers: ‘to be had of Mr. Gregory, Mrs. Ireland and Son, and Mr. Brown in Leicester’ and ‘Mr. Gregory’s, Anne Ireland’s and the Crown Coffee House.’65

There are also several interesting advertisements in the local newspapers for booksellers stocking the products of William Lane’s Minerva Press, such as these two examples (both dating from 1793) from the Leicester Herald and the Leicester Journal. The former, in which Lane seeks further business from country booksellers, mentions his ‘cheap and liberal terms of supply’, appends an annotated list of the ‘new novels of the season’ and notes that Minerva Press books are already available in Leicester from Gregory, Ann Ireland, John Ireland, Brown and Phillips, and others in the county. The second lists the Leicester booksellers Richard Phillips, John Ireland, Ann

63 Examples: Leicester Journal, 24 September 1790, 4 October 1793, 30 December 1796, 27 October 1797.
64 Leicester Journal, 30 December 1796.
65 Leicester Journal, 20 and 27 October 1797.
Some years earlier, William Lane had placed an advertisement in the *Leicester Journal* aimed at booksellers and other traders wishing to take up the fashionable business of a circulating library. Lane announced that he:

> begging to inform any person, either in town or country, desirous of commencing a CIRCULATING LIBRARY, that he has always ready bound several thousand volumes in history, voyages, novels, plays &c. suitable for that purpose, and that he will be happy in instructing them in the manner of keeping a reading library...

There is some evidence for Ann Ireland's business during the time when she was trading alone (by which is meant the period when she ran the business before handing over to her son George). A very important piece of evidence for Ann Ireland is a single surviving book-sale catalogue, dating from 1789 and now in the Munby Collection at Cambridge University Library:

> A catalogue of Books, containing a great variety in most languages, arts and sciences; which will begin to be sold (for ready money) at the prices printed in the Catalogue; on Friday, July 17th, 1789, at the shop of Ann Ireland, Bookseller and Printer, opposite the Assembly Room, Leicester, (who gives full value for any library or parcel of books). Catalogues may be had of the Neighbouring Booksellers, and of Mr. Crowder, Pater-Noster-Row, London.

John Nichols records that Ann Ireland 'was sister to the Rev. William Bickerstaffe, whose Library she sold by marked Catalogue'. There is no

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66 *Leicester Journal*, 25 October 1793; *Leicester Herald*, 2 November 1793. The *Herald* was the paper run by Richard Phillips (discussed later in the present chapter) who was then in prison.

67 *Leicester Journal*, 6 December 1788. Lane advertised extensively in provincial newspapers and an identically-worded advertisement is to be found as early as 1784. Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press: 1790-1820*, p. 120.

68 Ann Ireland, *A Catalogue of Books...* (Leicester, 1789), title-page. (Cambridge University Library: Munby Collection, d.136/2.)
indication that this sole survival is the catalogue of her brother’s books. An
advertisement in the 1789 catalogue provides such useful detailed evidence
of the stock of Ann Ireland’s shop that it is quoted in full:

At the Place of Sale may be had, Bibles and Common Prayer Books,
in Morocco or other Bindings. Account Books and Ledgers of all
Sorts, Rul’d or Plain, and Bound to any Pattern or Order. Stationary
ware of all kinds. A Capital Collection of Maps and Prints. Magazines,
Reviews, and all other periodical publications. Blank Warrants and
Precedents for Coroners, High-Constables, Justices Clerks &c. &c.
Music, Rul’d Music Paper, Harpsichord lessons, new songs, with every
Article in the Musical Line. Letter Cases, Morocco, Spanish and Common
Leather, with Straps or Clasps.
Schoolmasters, and Country Shopkeepers, may be supplied with School
books of all sorts – as also with Copy and Account Books, Quills, Pens,
Black and Red Ink, Writing Paper of the best Quality &c. &c. On the
Lowest Terms. Printing in General, executed with Neatness & Dispatch –
And Books bound in a Neat and Firm Manner, or in Elegant Bindings,
on Reasonable Terms. 69

Other notices in the catalogue announce that a second part of Ann Ireland’s
catalogue for 1789 is to be published in November, ‘consisting of a Capital
Collection in most Languages, Arts and Sciences’, and that a catalogue of
her circulating library has recently been published, ‘Consisting of upwards of
Two Thousand Volumes In History, Novels, Plays, &c. &c.’ 70

The catalogue, presumably printed by Ann Ireland herself, is a competent if
unremarkable piece of work. It consists of 102 octavo pages, listing 2,402
books, arranged by size and then by language/subject. A number of works
in Latin, Greek and French are included. Dr. Johnson’s edition of certain

69 J. Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, vol. 3, p.160. (Nichols identifies Ann, incorrectly, as the
widow of John Ireland.)
70 Ibid. p. [1].
71 Ibid. p. [102], p. [2].
poets is listed, ‘new and sewed in marble paper’ at 2s. 6d. each. The most expensive book (one of only a few new books listed) appears to be one priced at eighteen shillings, while at the other end of the range there is a selection of odd volumes and miscellaneous titles at sixpence each; most books seem to be priced between ninepence and five shillings. The condition of many volumes is noted in terms such as ‘very neat’, ‘fair’ and similar, while a few are described frankly as ‘not quite perfect’, ‘wants a cover’, ‘bad condition’ and suchlike.

There is some additional evidence for Ann Ireland’s business in newspaper advertisements, such as this one from 1788:

Wanted immediately — a Journeyman Bookbinder — apply to
Mrs. Ireland, Bookseller opposite the Assembly Room, Leicester.\(^2^2\)

Ann Ireland is known to have printed a number of books, including an important Baptist text written by the celebrated local Baptist minister — ‘a saintly missionary and a notable oriental scholar’ — William Carey (1761-1834):\(^2^3\)

An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens. In which the religious state of the different nations of the world, the success of former undertakings, and the practicability of further undertakings, are considered.

Leicester: Printed and Sold by Ann Ireland, and the other Booksellers in Leicester; J. Johnson, St. Paul’s Church yard; T. Knott, Lombard Street; R. Dilly, in the Poultry, London; and Smith at Sheffield, 1792. Price Is. 6d..\(^2^4\)

This book, comprising 87 octavo pages, is nicely printed with tasteful decoration and includes a number of tables. The high status of this work in

\(^{22}\) Leicester Journal, 25 October 1788.

\(^{23}\) C. Ellis, History in Leicester, p. 101; D.N.B., vol. 9, p. 77.


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Baptist circles is indicated by the fact that the Baptist Missionary Society (of which Carey was founder) has published it in various modern editions as well as, on several occasions between 1891 and 1991 (including the anniversary of Carey’s death in 1934), reproducing a number of facsimile editions of the original printed by Ann Ireland.  

Ann Ireland also printed Edward Pyke’s *Hymn and Songs in Praise of Jesus Christ*, an octavo volume of 136 pages, probably printed in the first five years of the nineteenth century. This is the latest extant book printed by Ann Ireland, but it is not clear exactly when — or indeed if — she withdrew from the business, leaving the younger George to run it. The name ‘Ireland and Son’ (i.e. Ann and George) seems to have been used between 1791 and 1811, although references to ‘Ann(e) Ireland’ and ‘Mrs Ireland’ are also found during the same period. In any case, the designation ‘Ireland and Son’ could well have survived beyond Ann Ireland’s withdrawal from the business.

If George Ireland did take over the business from his mother, which is probable but not certain, it was perhaps around 1810-1812. George had been made free on 13 August 1795, at the age of about 22. He became a prominent citizen of Leicester, being made a Councilman in 1802, Chamberlain in 1805, and Mayor in 1821. He had been baptised at St Margaret’s church on 25 July 1773 and married, to Priscilla Elizabeth Miller.

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75 British Library and Bodleian Library on-line Catalogues.
76 ESTC: t092096. British Library on-line Catalogue. (Shelfmark: 3441.p.35.(1.).) The book is undated, and its date of publication is given as ‘1800?’ in ESTC, and as ‘c1805’ in the BL catalogue.
77 Including a number of entries in published directories, e.g.: Universal Directories, 1791 to 1794, Weston’s Directory 1794, Holden’s Directories 1805 to 1811, also in newspaper advertisements such as *Leicester Journal*, 2 September 1796.
78 Hartopp, *Freemen*, vol. 2, p. 70.
on 24 April 1798. George Ireland lived in Belgrave Gate, and was possibly the first local book-trade person to have a residence separate from his place of business.

Given the wide-ranging book-trade activity of both of the younger George Ireland's parents, it is rather surprising to find so little evidence for his business — no extant book or other item that he printed has been traced. However, there are records of two apprentices being bound to him, the more significant one being John Fowler, apprenticed on 14 October 1799, and freed on 28 April 1812, who became a book-trade figure of some importance. (He is discussed later in the present chapter.)

The other apprentice, John Summerfield Stanhope, bound on 7 March 1803, left the book trade and was made free as a schoolmaster. Stanhope was still described, when freed, as Ireland's apprentice despite his change of trade, which suggests that his master may have practised also as a schoolmaster, though there is no independent evidence to this effect. George Ireland was described in both binding entries as a printer and bookbinder (and in 1799 also as a bookseller).

On two consecutive days in June 1826 (six months before he died), George Ireland was described in the freedom records as both a printer and a hosier, so it seems that he had — perhaps a few years earlier — taken up the hosiery trade in addition to the book trade. He died on 23 December 1826 and

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80 Ibid.
83 On 19 June 1826, the freedom entry for William Baxter, warehouseman, records that he was apprenticed to 'George Ireland, hosier, who was first son of George, printer'. The following day, John Summerfield Stanhope, apprentice of 'George Ireland, printer, who was first son of George', was made free as a schoolmaster. Four days earlier, Nelson
was buried at St Martin's. Since he was only 53 when he died, and had probably been kept busy with civic duties, the possibility has to be allowed that Ann Ireland continued her active involvement in the family business for some years into the new century.

Unfortunately, Ann Ireland's dates of birth and death have not been traced but, given that her son was born in 1773, she was perhaps born around 1750, in which case she would have been in her mid-thirties when she was widowed. If she was still alive when her son died, Ann Ireland might have been well into her seventies, so it is perhaps unlikely that she would still have been trading. It also has to be said that no firmly-dated trading evidence for Ann has been found later than the Carey book which she printed in 1792. No record has been found of what happened to the business run by this side of the family after the death of the younger George Ireland.

The foregoing account of both branches of the Ireland family indicates their considerable contribution to the development of the book trade in Leicester in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The family's impact on the growth of printing in the town is demonstrated quantitatively by the fact that a single printer, the elder John Ireland, was succeeded by his two nephews George and John, who both practised as printers, each with their own separate business of some importance. The Ireland family is particularly notable for the contribution of Ann Ireland, by far the most important woman in the history of the book trade in Leicester.

Orson was freed as a printer; he had been the apprentice of John Fowler 'who was apprentice to Alderman George Ireland'. Hartopp, _Freemen_, vol. 2, pp. 242, 251, 254.

**Hartopp, _Mayors_, p. 188.**

85 The dating of the Pyke book to 1800 or 1805, as already noted, is estimated by cataloguers.
No evidence has been found for the fate of the two Ireland businesses. However, George Ireland’s business was (through a master-apprentice relationship) the forerunner of another local book-trade business of some significance, that of the Fowler family. John Fowler was an important figure in Leicester’s book trade. He was made free on 28 April 1812, following a long apprenticeship to the younger George Ireland. Fowler had been bound to Ireland on 14 October 1799; his father was a farmer and grazier in Rutland. Fowler appears many times over the years in directories of Leicester, trading as printer, bookseller, machine ruler, and circulating librarian.  

The location of the Fowler family’s various business activities is difficult to determine, as they seem to have occupied a number of premises in the town centre. In 1814 John Fowler advertised his circulating library, bookselling, printing and binding services in Gallowtree Gate ‘near the Three Crowns’. John Fowler is known to have traded in Cank Street from 1828 to 1829, and in St Martin’s from 1831. His eldest son, John Smith Fowler, seems to have taken over the St Martin’s premises when he was made free on 23 February 1846. The elder John Fowler was again listed in Gallowtree Gate ‘near the Three Crowns’ in 1843, and in the same year Fowler’s library was apparently located in St Martin’s, when it was described as one of Leicester’s principal circulating libraries. In 1839 Fowler was selling tickets (and may have printed tickets and playbills) for the Theatre Royal. He had a number of apprentices at different times, and his three sons all became printers. His

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88 Entries in various directories including: Combe’s 1827, Pigot’s 1828/29, 1831, 1835, 1840, Cook’s 1842.
89 Leicester Journal, 11 February 1814.
90 Cook’s Guide to Leicester, 1843.
91 H. and R. Leacroft, The Theatre in Leicestershire, p53, reproduces a Theatre Royal playbill which states that tickets are obtainable from ‘Mr. Fowler’s Printing Office, St. Martin’s’.
grandsons (John Smith Fowler's sons) also worked in the book trade, as a stationer and a bookseller in the 1880s.

6.3 An important Tory book-trade family

Another of Leicester's outstanding book-trade dynasties, the Brown family, emerged during this period. The Browns were described, many years later, as the family

who had at the sign of the Bible and Crown in Leicester Market Place tended to give dignity to the calling of bookseller and printer. 92

The Browns were a well-to-do family of hosiers and wool merchants of some standing in the town, claiming family connections to both Sir Isaac Newton and Thomas Babington Macaulay. 93 There are a number of indications that the Brown family's politics were consistently Tory.

The story begins with John Brown, who was born in 1755 on the site of the house and shop in the Market Place, which his grandson was to build in 1839/40, and which would be known as the sign of the 'Bible and Crown'. John was married to Mary Garle who came from a wealthy Leicester family. 94 Having been apprenticed to a Nottingham printer, he began trading in Leicester in 1776, although he was not made free until 1782. 95

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94 'A Bookish Family', p. 129.
95 *Raithby Lawrence: 1776-1876, 1876-1976*. (Leicester, 1976), p. 24. Brown was freed by patrimony, as the second son of Thomas, hosier. Hartopp, *Freemen*, vol. 2, p. 16. Details of Brown's Nottingham apprenticeship and the name of his master cannot be traced. John Walton, *A Survey of the Printing Trade and Related Occupations in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to 1900*, (1968), p.42, lists John Brown trading as a stationer in Nottingham 1777-1790 (and as a printer/bookseller in Leicester 1803-1820) though no source is given for these dates. Walton's date of 1803 is incorrect as Brown was printing in Leicester in 1791, but it is possible that he was in Nottingham until the previous year.
Brown was printing by 1791, in which year he began printing John Throsby’s major work:

The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester,
 Attempted by John Throsby.
 Leicestershire: Printed by J. Brown for the author. M, DCC, XCI.

As can be seen from surviving copies of Throsby (see Figure 18), Brown’s printing was of a high quality:

The character of Mr. Browne’s work as a printer being very similar in style and excellence to that of the famous Baskerville of Birmingham. 96

Brown’s grandson, John Garle Brown II, was said to have recalled with pride in his old age that the early portion of Throsby’s History and Antiquities, which had been printed at their press, had been said to resemble in a marked degree the work of the famous Baskerville. 97

It is correct to say that only ‘the early portion’ of Throsby’s book was printed by Brown. The printer, having received no payment from the author, declined to print the remainder of the work. 98 Nevertheless, given that this was apparently Brown’s first book-printing job, it was quite a remarkable achievement:

For a young man who had only recently started in business on his own, this was, by any standards, a daunting task. It was a volume of some 434 pages... generously illustrated from wood and steel engravings. 99

A recent study of Throsby’s career makes the important point that Throsby was the first to publish a full history of Leicester, bringing together other antiquarian manuscript sources with the fruit of his own research. 100

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97 In Memoriam Thomas Spencer, p. 6.
99 Raithby Lawrence, p. 21.
One other book printed by John Brown has been examined:

A Collection of Psalms and Hymns from various authors chiefly designed for the use of public worship. 4th edition, 1795.
Leicester. Printed and sold by J. Brown. 101

101 ROLLR: L094, Local Imprints boxes. ESTC lists the fifth edition (1797): t123130.
This is a competently printed book of more than three hundred duodecimo pages. Another book printed by Brown in the same year is listed in ESTC: a twenty-page address to the Loyal Leicestershire Voluntary Infantry.102 There are records of three apprentices being bound to John Brown, the most notable being George Calladine, a soldier’s son, bound on 18 April 1786 and freed on 26 May 1796.103 Calladine went on to trade in his own right as a bookseller, bookbinder and stationer; no detailed evidence for his business has been found, but his name appears in various trade directories between 1805 and 1831.104

John Brown, usually described as a bookseller and printer, sometimes added that he was a copperplate printer, for example in an advertisement for an apprentice in 1793, which states that he ‘Executes both Letter Press and Copper Plate printing...’ and also in Weston’s Directory for 1794.105 Other evidence for John Brown includes a newspaper advertisement dating from 1779, which usefully indicates the range of his book-stock even at this early date:

J. Brown, printer, bookseller, binder, stationer... has opened a shop in Swine Market Leicester, selling books in all languages, Faculties, arts and sciences... Divinity, Law, Physic, Surgery, Music, Poetry, Mathematics, History, memoirs, Voyages, Travels, Miscellanies, Novels, Romances, &c. &c....106

Another advertisement in 1812 indicates that Brown also sold Bish’s lottery tickets.107 There is also a little surviving documentary evidence (though it does not reveal any detail about his trading activities) including a document

102 ESTC: t099740
103 Hartopp, Freemen, vol. 2, pp. 469, 73.
104 Directories: Holden’s 1805/11, Combe’s 1827, Pigot’s 1828/29, 1831.
105 Leicester Journal, 10 January 1793. (I am grateful to Joyce Lee for this reference.) Weston’s Directory, 1794.
106 Leicester Journal, 19 June 1779. (The Swine Market is the present-day High Street.)
107 Leicester Chronicle, 3 October 1812.
relating to a transaction concerning a property in Soar Lane, in which ‘John Brown of Leicester, stationer’ was involved, and a Land Tax certificate, dated 30 March 1799: a printed proforma with manuscript details inserted of the payment by ‘John Brown of the said Borough, printer’ of 18s. 8d. tax ‘upon his messuage or tenement with the appurtenances... in his own occupation’.

John Brown’s eldest son, John Garle Brown I, succeeded him in 1815. He had been apprenticed to his father on 1 January 1798 and freed on 8 May 1807. His younger brother, William Brown, freed as a bookseller on 11 February 1814, is otherwise unrecorded, though he perhaps worked in the family business. As already mentioned, the ‘Bible and Crown’ premises were built in 1839/40 for John Garle Brown I. He was married to Sophia Reynolds, whose family were substantial local property-owners. He was the printer of a periodical called the Leicester Conservative Standard. With its motto ‘Church, King and Constitution’, this is an interesting example of a Tory journal being printed in ‘Radical Leicester’ and we learn from its pages that John Garle Brown was one of the two honorary secretaries of the Leicester Conservative Society.

Two books printed in Leicester by John Garle Brown I – but published by two London booksellers – have been examined: a volume of several separate sermons by H. F. Tollemache, published in 1836 and 1837,

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108 ROLLR: DE 3115/16; MISC. 946/1.
112 ROLLR: L094, Local Imprints boxes: Volumes 1 (1835) and 2 (1836). The Standard was printed by Brown in Leicester but published in London by Roake and Varty in the Strand and R. Groombridge in Paternoster Row.
113 The imprints of the sermons vary but all name Seeley of Fleet Street and Whittaker of Ave Maria Lane, together with various provincial booksellers; all are ‘printed and sold by’ Brown. The imprint of Midsummer Days names only Whittaker, Seeley and Brown, the last-named also being identified as the book’s printer.
commencing with *The Chambers of Imagery...*, and an anonymous book of poetry, *Midsummer Days in Italy and other poems*, (1838). The printing carried out by John Garle Brown I - and indeed by the various members of the Brown family - is generally of a very good standard.

Ten apprentices were bound to John Garle Brown I between 1813 and 1837; several of them were bound to him before he took over the family business (*i.e.* after he himself was made free in 1807). Only two of his apprentices are recorded as having been freed. (While this may indicate that most did not complete their term, it does need to be borne in mind that the freedom and apprenticeship system was beginning to break down during this period.)

Only one of Brown's apprentices, William Hextall, is known to have traded in his own right in the book trade. Hextall, the son of a Leicestershire farmer, was apprenticed to Brown on 5 October 1813. Although he was not made free until 21 June 1826, he had probably not served the whole of this long period with Brown, as his freedom record describes him as 'of London'. Hextall later traded in Leicester as a bookseller and printer; he is listed in directories in between 1827 and 1830. However, by 1835 he is listed as trading not in Leicester but in Ashby de la Zouch.

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114 ROLLR: L094, Local Imprints boxes.
117 Directories: Combe's 1827; Pigot's 1828/29 and 1830. Pigot's Directory 1835. Hextall's trade in 1835 is unclear, as he is listed under the heading of 'booksellers, stationers, printers and librarians'.

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The elder son of John Garle Brown I, John Garle Brown II, was made free on 16 July 1838 and succeeded his father in the same year.\(^ {119}\) He ran the business for only a few years but is notable for having printed and published jointly with his brother a beautiful edition in sm. 4to of Owen Feltham's *Resolves, Divine, Moral and Political*, a work of singular power and excellence which has passed through many editions published by many printers...\(^ {120}\)

The title-page of Felltham's *Resolves* is reproduced as *Figure 19*. The younger brother of John Garle Brown II was Thomas Chapman Browne (note the new and apparently fashionable spelling of 'Browne'). Freed on 20 July 1840, Thomas was left as sole proprietor of the family business when his elder brother, John Garle Brown II, retired in 1841.\(^ {121}\) There are indications that the range of the business expanded in Thomas's time. He is described in an 1849 directory as:

- Bookseller, Printer, Stationer, Binder, Music Seller, Photographic Portrait Establishment, Circulating Library, Newsagent, and Agents to the Freemasons' General Life Assurance Company, Agriculturalists' Cattle Insurance Company and County Hail Storm Insurance Company.\(^ {122}\)

Thomas Chapman Browne had one notable apprentice, Thomas Spencer, who with his brother John would set up an important book-trade business, also in the Market Place, but not until 1853 which is beyond the scope of this research.\(^ {123}\) The Spencers' uncle, who has not been identified, is said to have been a printer of radical political literature, having

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\(^ {120}\) 'A Bookish Family', p. 128. There are two copies of the work by Felltham (sic) in ROLLR: L094 Local Imprints boxes. Dated 1840 and 1842, both are printed in Leicester by J.G and T.C. Brown.


\(^ {122}\) Hagar's Directory 1849.

\(^ {123}\) *In Memoriam Thomas Spencer*, p. 9.
set up a miniature printing press, type and wood engraving tools, for the purpose of printing illustrated leaflets, satires and cartoons.\footnote{In Memoriam John Spencer, an extract from ‘Spencer’s Leicester Almanack, 1893’. (ROLLR: Pamphlet volume 9.) p. 2.}

While Thomas Spencer was learning his trade under Thomas Chapman Browne, his brother John, having served as the apprentice of Samuel Sharpe, bookseller of Stamford, worked in London for Simpkin, Marshall...
and Co., and also in Brighton and Manchester, before returning to Leicester to join his brother in establishing their new business. Thomas and John were both freed, in Leicester, on the same day: 17 February 1854.

The Brown family business, under Thomas’s management, takes us beyond 1850, the terminal date for this study, though it is worth noting that the increased range of activity led Thomas to move, between 1864 and 1870, to larger premises at 39 Market Place. He took with him the name ‘The Bible

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125 Ibid.
and Crown’ thus keeping alive the family’s established ‘sign’. The old ‘Bible
and Crown’ sign still survives and is in storage at Leicester City Museums.
The very substantial stone sign, in two separate parts, showing traces of blue
and gold paint, was originally built into the brickwork over the door of the
Browns’ shop. The sign can be seen in situ over the door of the shop in
Figure 20 and in its present state in Figure 21. The Bible measures 29 x
18.5 x 5.5 inches, and the crown is 18.5 inches in diameter and 14 inches
high. It seems highly likely that the Browns’ sign, the ‘Bible and Crown’,
was deliberately chosen to indicate the family’s Tory political persuasion.

![Figure 21 The ‘Bible & Crown’ sign today](Reproduced by permission of Leicester City Museums)

It is pleasing to be able to record that one (the only one, to the best of my
knowledge) of Leicester’s old book-trade businesses is still in existence. In
June 1876, the Brown family business – and the sign of the ‘Bible and

128 I am indebted to Dr Yolanda Courtney of Leicester City Museums for her assistance
in locating and photographing the ‘Bible and Crown’ sign, and for arranging for me to
inspect it in July 2000.
129 The name ‘Bible and Crown’ was also used by John Newbery, before his move to
London, for his premises in Reading. (M. F. Thwaite, From Primer to Pleasure, p. 40.)
Crown – were acquired by Henry Cadney Raithby and Joseph Charles Lawrence. Within ten years, Raithby and Lawrence were trading solely as printers, having moved out of the 'Bible and Crown'. They adopted the name of the De Montfort Press in the late 1880s, when they also began to print the journal, the British Printer. Raithby Lawrence were, and remain, printers of some standing, and are still trading in Leicester.130

Another book-trade figure of this period was James Drake, notable as the only law bookseller and stationer recorded in the Register of Freemen. Although listed as ‘of Birmingham’, his father was the second son of a victualler from Great Bowden, Leicestershire. Drake was made free in Leicester on 10 June 1826; no further evidence for his trading activities has been found.131 There are very few paper merchants recorded in the Register of Freemen. The earliest was John David Jackson, made free as a ‘stranger’ on 27 September 1813.132 Nothing more is known of Jackson’s activities.

6.4 Book-trade radicals

The first, and the most flamboyant, of Leicester’s book-trade radicals was Richard Phillips, an eccentric, larger-than-life pioneer of radicalism, who in 1790 decided to deploy his considerable energy and business skills in the book trade. He had arrived in Leicester in 1788, at first owning a small commercial academy, then a hosier’s shop, but in the Summer of 1790 Phillips gave up his hosiery business and began to sell books, stationery, music, prints and patent medicines. He soon added a printing press and a circulating library. It was said of Phillips that he had an ‘absorbing desire to act as “guide, philosopher and friend” to the public at large, if they would

130 The foregoing information, together with the later history of the firm, is to be found in Raithby Lawrence.
but buy from him all they required for the equipment of their minds and the
doctoring of their bodies'.

Phillips made no secret of his very radical opinions and his shop was well-
stocked with 'advanced democratic literature of the revolutionary epoch'.
In 1792 he established the town's first radical newspaper, the Leicester Herald.
He also founded the 'Adelphi' Society, ostensibly for philosophical and
scientific study but which soon turned to radical politics. This brought
Phillips to the attention of the Corporation, which had
allowed itself to become alarmed at the thought of a few intellectuals
reading "left" literature, and welcomed the proclamation of 1792 against
seditious publications.

Like many booksellers in Leicester and elsewhere, Phillips stocked the
radical works of Tom Paine, but in 1793, a paid informer bought from
Phillips a copy of The Rights of Man. He was convicted of selling seditious
literature and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. However, the
resourceful Phillips continued to conduct correspondence and even edited
the Herald while he was in prison. Also in 1793, the Adelphi Society was
forced to disband when the Corporation expressed its concern over their
experiments with electricity, thought to be at least as dangerous as their
politics.

Shortly after Phillips's release from prison in 1794, there was a disastrous
fire, which completely destroyed his business: his shop, printing office and
circulating library were all burnt down. His enemies thought that Phillips

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137 J. Thompson, The History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century, p212.
had started the fire deliberately. However, the fact that the fire had started in his neighbour’s premises, which were also destroyed, suggests that the fire was accidental, a view supported by the prompt and full settlement of his insurance claim.

After the fire, Phillips resumed business for a time in temporary premises, opposite the ‘Star’ in Belgrave Gate, where he announced that he was planning to open ‘a modern and respectable circulating library’ in addition to bookselling, printing, stationery and bookbinding as before. Little came of his plans to redevelop his Leicester business, and by the Summer of 1796 Phillips had moved to London and was trading in St Paul’s Churchyard.

Before leaving Leicester, however, Phillips must have re-established his business to some extent as, on his departure, it was taken over by John Nixon, for whom little evidence has been found, though it is known that his wide-ranging business comprised a well-stocked circulating library, a bookshop, printing shop and bindery. Nixon also sold stationery, patent medicines, coffee, tea and cocoa, as well as music and musical instruments. In 1799, Thomas Combe (who is discussed below) would take over from Nixon, thus acquiring a business with which he had once been in competition.

The later career of the remarkable Richard Phillips is beyond the scope of this study but, briefly, he became a prolific publisher, mostly of school books, many of which were written under a variety of pseudonyms by Phillips himself or by authors such as another former radical, the Reverend

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139 *Leicester Journal*, 27 January 1797.
140 *Leicester Journal*, 14 June 1799.
Jeremiah Joyce.\textsuperscript{141} Phillips was Sheriff of London in 1807 and was knighted the following year by King George III. Richard Phillips is a fascinating character. He was a strict vegetarian - a very eccentric habit in those days. He was described as 'earnest-minded, energetic, and warm-hearted - his friends, and even his servants, loved him with an affection as intense as the hatred of his enemies, and he had many of both'.\textsuperscript{142} The Dictionary of National Biography gives a fair assessment of Phillips's achievement:

\begin{quote}
His chief importance was as a purveyor of cheap miscellaneous literature designed for popular instruction, and as the legitimate predecessor of the brothers Chambers and of Charles Knight.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

Richard Phillips was not overly modest. He wrote of himself that:

\begin{quote}
politics appeared as profitable an article as he could deal in; and with that alacrity which has ever distinguished the acts of able men, he established the newspaper called The Leicester Herald.\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

Not surprisingly, the newspaper publishing business attracted a number of prominent radicals. Richard Phillips's \textit{Herald} was for a short time one of two radical newspapers in the town. The radical circle informally led by Combe was rather suspicious of a proposal by the 'young upstart' Phillips to publish a radical newspaper, so Combe approached John Ireland about printing a radical paper:

\begin{quote}
[Combe] had joined with Ireland, a printer, and a few of those whom Phillips had originally consulted [about publishing a radical newspaper], to prepare secretly a paper to be called the \textit{Leicester Chronicle}.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{141} Information from a paper on Jeremiah Joyce presented by Dr. John Issitt to the Textbook Colloquium, London, 19 May 2001.

\textsuperscript{142} F.S. Herne, \textit{An Old Leicester Bookseller}, p3

\textsuperscript{143} Dictionary of National Biography, XLV, 210.


\textsuperscript{145} Patterson, \textit{Radical Leicester}, p. 68.
Thus it was that, from 1792 to 1793, the *Leicester Chronicle* (the first of two radical papers to be called by that name) was published and edited by Thomas Combe and printed by John Ireland, while the *Leicester Herald* was edited and printed by Richard Phillips.\(^{146}\)

The Government continued to put pressure on ‘seditious’ newspapers, and in any case it is perhaps doubtful whether even Leicester could have supported two radical papers for long. The *Chronicle* ceased publication when threatened with prosecution in February 1793.\(^{147}\)

**Thomas Combe** was a noted figure in the life of the town. In addition to his activities as newspaper proprietor and editor, bookseller, printer and circulating librarian, he was a popular speaker – ‘an oracle on literary subjects’ – who also taught reading and grammar at the Misses Simpsons’ Boarding Academy for Young Ladies.\(^{148}\) It is not known when he started trading, though he was certainly in business before he commenced the *Chronicle* in 1792. He traded from at least two different shops, in Hotel Street (c1805) and Gallowtree Gate (c1827).

It is interesting to find a bookseller and circulating librarian located, for a time, in a fashionable location close to the new Assembly Rooms. (Ann Ireland traded opposite the old Assembly Rooms – see above.) The new Assembly Rooms and adjacent theatre, in Hotel Street, opened in 1800. John Nichols commented on how the ‘Hotel’\(^{149}\) united

under the same roof every convenience for the gratification of taste, and the

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\(^{146}\) There was a later, Tory, newspaper called the *Leicester Herald*. For more detail on the rival radical papers, see: D. Fraser, ‘The Press in Leicester’, pp. 59-60, and Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp. 67-73.

\(^{147}\) D. Fraser, ‘The Press in Leicester’, p. 59.

\(^{148}\) *Leicester Journal*, 20 January 1792

\(^{149}\) The Assembly Rooms, originally planned as a hotel (from which the street takes its name) were sometimes known as ‘the Hotel’ but never functioned as such.
amusement of the mind, a coffee-room handsomely furnished, and supplied
with all the London papers, affords the gentlemen of the town and country, as
well as the stranger, to whom its door is open, an agreeable and commodious
resort; while on the opposite side a spacious bookseller's shop, under the
management of Mr. Combe, the very intelligent as well as attentive proprietor,
furnishes the literary enquirer with a series of all the new publications. 150

Combe's printing was of a high standard and he printed several books for
important London booksellers including Cadell, Rivington and Hatchard.
These included volumes of sermons and an Anglican devotional work:

Corpus Christi - devotions selected from the works of the Older Divines...
Combe, Printer, Leicester. 151

This duodecimo volume of eighty-four pages is attractively printed, with an
engraved frontispiece and some use of red print. (Figure 22). Equally well
printed is a volume of the works of Thomas à Kempis that Combe and Son
seem to have published themselves in 1827, which must be one of the few
locally-printed books to be mostly in Latin. 152 By this time, Combe and his
son Thomas were in partnership, trading as Combe and Son in Gallowtree
Gate.

**Thomas Combe II** (1797-1872) is remembered primarily for his very
distinguished career as printer to the University of Oxford. Having worked
with his father in Leicester for at least ten years, he left the town in 1837 and
found both celebrity and fortune at the Clarendon Press, becoming wealthy
enough to commission and own several Pre-Raphaelite paintings as well as
being an important benefactor to the church in Oxford. 153

151 ROLLR: L094 Local Imprints boxes. The volume is undated.
152 Ibid.
153 *DNB* (CD-ROM)
To return to the elder Thomas Combe, a notice of a meeting published in his own paper, the first *Leicester Chronicle*, indicates that he was secretary to the Leicester Infirmary. Other evidence for Combe is to be found in advertisements in the second *Leicester Chronicle*, including several for tickets for Subscription Concerts at the Assembly Rooms. In 1812, tickets cost one guinea for six Thursday nights including a Ball; tickets were ‘transferable to ladies’. Combe also sold tickets for an exhibition of work by Mary Linwood, the celebrated local maker of needlework pictures, the proceeds of which were for the benefit of the Infirmary.

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154 *Leicester Chronicle*, 20 April 1792.
155 *Leicester Chronicle*, 23 March 1811, 1 February 1812, 7 November 1812.
156 *Leicester Chronicle*, 5 and 12 September 1812.
There is some evidence for books sold by Combe, including a nonconformist sermon (printed for Combe together with a bookseller in Nottingham and one in London), an agricultural work, for which he was taking subscriptions, and printed speeches, costing one shilling, from the second annual meeting of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society. In 1812, Combe opened a shop in Loughborough, where he sold books and stationery and ran a branch of his circulating library. Combe also published *The Leicester Directory* (now a valuable source for local historians) in 1826.

There is an interesting piece of evidence on both Thomas Combes inserted in the ROLLR copy of the *Corpus Christi* book mentioned above. It is a transcript of a letter written to a Mr. R. B. Prosser, on 28 April 1888, by Edward J. Vaughan, son of the vicar of St Martin's, to whom *Corpus Christi* is dedicated. Vaughan speaks of

> my venerable old friend, Thomas Combe of Leicester, the father of the late and very able Printer to the University of Oxford, the founder of St. Barnabas' Church, &c, &c. Mr. Thomas Combe the elder was a very valued? parishioner of my father, at St. Martin's....

The manuscript gives details of later, enlarged editions of *Corpus Christi*, at least one of which, the third edition of 1843, was printed in Leicester, for Hamilton Adams, by Combe's successor (and former partner) J.S. Crossley.

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158 *Leicester Chronicle*, 6 June 1812.

159 Copy in ROLLR Directories Collection. (1827 seems to have been the only year of publication.)

160 Transcript of letter, E.J. Vaughan to R.B. Prosser, 28 April 1888. Inserted in *Corpus Christi* volume, in ROLLR Local Imprints boxes.

161 Ibid.
Crossley seems to have joined Combe in about 1840. However, there is little
evidence to indicate that Crossley took an active part in the Combe and
Crossley business. This would not be surprising if the suggestion that he
combined his book-trade involvement with a very distinguished career in
canal and railway engineering is correct. He is said to have been the same J.
S. Crossley who, having been one of the two leading engineers of the
Leicester Navigation and the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Union
Canal, went on to become Chief Engineer of the Midland Railway
Company, retiring in 1875 when he had completed the Settle and Carlisle
Line. 162

In the time of Combe and Crossley, the firm were booksellers to both
Rugby and Harrow schools, and ran branch shops in both locations.
Crossley was later joined by Samuel Clarke, who visited the Harrow and
Rugby branches regularly by coach.163 Later in the century, Combe and
Crossley moved to larger premises in Gallowtree Gate, facing the Clock
Tower. 164 The firm survived into the twentieth century, having ceased
trading (as Clarke and Satchell) in the 1980s.

To return to the radical newspapers, the second Leicester Chronicle ran from
1810 to 1864, owned at first by a committee of radicals, then by Thomas
Thompson, later joined by his son James who became a distinguished local

162 One Hundred and Fifty Years of Bookselling: Clarke and Satchell Ltd. (Leicester, [1949]), p.1,
states unequivocally that Combe's partner was the well-known engineer, although I have
found no evidence to support this. J. S. Crossley the engineer (1812-1879) was a
Leicestershire man, and there are many references to him in the literature of canal and
railway history, though none refers to his book-trade involvement; e.g. J. Simmons and G.
Biddle (eds.), The Oxford Companion to British Railway History: from 1603 to the 1990s; John
Marshall, A Biographical Dictionary of Railway Engineers, p. 70. Crossley's will (photocopy in
ROLLR: P38/1/1-11) makes no reference to the book trade.
163 One Hundred and Fifty Years of Bookselling, p. 1. The Rugby branch is listed in BBT1:
entries under Combe (nos. 5284 and 1834).
164 The building still stands and, because it was later acquired by Thomas Cook, is well-
known for its pictorial frieze depicting Cook's excursions.
historian. The Thompsons each edited the paper for many years, but its editor and printer from 1812 to 1813 was George Bown, a prominent radical book-trade figure, who has the distinction of being mentioned in E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* as an example of unusual continuity in radical political activity:

> Few [provincial] centres can boast a record as long as that of George Bown of Leicester, who was Secretary of its Constitutional Society in 1792, was arrested in 1794, and who was still writing as an advocate of ‘physical force’ Chartism in 1848.\(^{165}\)

Bown’s half-century and more of activity spanned the early radicalism of the time of the French Revolution through to the years of Chartism in the 1840s. He was a member of Richard Phillips’s Adelphi Society in 1792, and was also secretary of the Leicester Constitutional Society for Promoting an Equal Representation of the People in Parliament, one of a number of radical organisations forced to close down in the face of Government pressure.

Undeterred, Bown began to organise informal meetings in a public house on Monday evenings. James Thompson noted that members of the society addressed each other as ‘citizen’ and had to declare their revolutionary principles as a sort of password to gain admittance.\(^{166}\) When Bown was heard praising the French revolutionaries, the landlord decided that things had gone too far and informed the authorities. Bown was arrested and charged, though unsuccessfully, with organising seditious meetings.

During his time as editor of the *Leicester Chronicle*, Bown was also very active as a bookseller and printer. Like John Nixon, he seems to have maintained


\(^{166}\) J. Thompson, *The History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century*, p212.
his connection with Richard Phillips after the latter's move to London. The Chronicle carried frequent advertisements for books published by Phillips. Bown also sold journals, both scholarly and popular, including the new *Medical Journal*. Bown's *Chronicle* often carried advertisements for the publications of Andrew Wilson, the pioneer – with the Earl of Stanhope – of stereotype printing. Bown could supply a printed address on the subject of stereotyping and a catalogue of Wilson’s publications. He recommended his readers to visit Wilson’s printing shop in Camden Town to observe for themselves the process of stereotyping.

On 18 January, 1812, Bown used the *Chronicle* to raise money for the support of a Mr White, about whose case – concerning the liberty of the press – there had been a recent meeting in London. There was an encouraging, and swift, response: the *Chronicle* repeated the appeal on 8 February and reported that £10.3s.0d. had already been donated.

Like most booksellers of the day, Bown engaged in other activities. He was an agent for Swift’s Lottery tickets, he sold theatre tickets (one example being Mrs Garrick’s Benefit in December 1812), and he sold catalogues for an auction of fine paintings held in Leicester by Mr Hester of Bowling Green Street – the sale included works by Rembrandt, Claude and other masters. On a more mundane note, Bown sold Warren’s Original Liquid Blacking, for the preservation of leather.

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167 *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 January 1812.
169 *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 January 1812.
170 Possibly Henry White, editor of the *Independent Whig*, though his paper was only moderately radical. (E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 661, 684, 741.)
171 *Leicester Chronicle*, 1 February, 8 August, 5 December 1812.
Bown sometimes tinged his political comments with a sardonic sense of humour. Advertising the Poll Book of the recent election in 1812, he commented:

It has already been observed that many, very many, actual paupers have voted, and no less than five persons, long mouldering in their graves, have been personated, and grace the majorities of Mr Smith and Mr Babington.\(^\text{172}\)

In the same week, Bown advertised another venture, his forthcoming classes for young ladies, expressing (for the time) quite enlightened views about women and their education:

It is not now considered sufficient, that the acquisitions of the softer sex should be confined to the duties of household management, with some superficial, perhaps frivolous accompaniments. To the lighter decorations of drawing, music, dancing &c., it is become necessary to add, the solid, yet not less delightful endowments of science and literature...

To which end Bown offered classes called 'Institutes of Science and Literature' together with training in composition and elocution to enable young ladies confidently to converse in society about their newly acquired knowledge.\(^\text{173}\)

By 1848, the elderly George Bown remained an active radical and was using the power of the printed word in the Chartist cause. In between these dates, Bown's political activity and commitment seem never to have flagged. Pamphlets and other political literature, written in his old age, bear witness to Bown's still very radical views. In Physical Force (1848), he observed:

Drawing fast to the close of a long and eventful life... the only bequest I have to bestow [is] that of a long-cherished and deep-rooted hatred, and a resolute

\(^{172}\) Leicester Chronicle, 17 October 1812.

\(^{173}\) Ibid.
Although still advocating the use of violence as a last resort, Bown now argued (to a large extent reflecting local public opinion) that the two Chartist factions, 'physical force' and 'moral force', could only achieve results if they were united, and he added a note of caution about armed insurrection:

...while I urge the right and duty to possess arms, I by no means counsel their use.  

Another very radical printer in Leicester was John Pares, who has the distinction of having been arrested three times on account of his politics. In 1798, while he was taken to London for questioning, his house was searched and his papers seized in the hope of finding evidence of treason. Apparently none was found, as Pares was released after being held for a fortnight. He was less fortunate in 1802 when he was convicted at Leicester Quarter Sessions of publishing 'a song of seditious tendency', for which he was imprisoned for twelve months.

John Pares was one of the leaders of the Leicester Hampden Club, founded in 1816, a time when Hampden Clubs were expanding rapidly in the provinces, enabling radicals to meet together for political debate and readings. The Corporation regarded the Leicester Hampden Club (perhaps with good reason) as a hot-bed of revolutionary activity and the Town Clerk paid a spy to infiltrate their meetings. This led to Pares narrowly escaping

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174 G. Bown, Physical Force: an address to all classes of reformers... (Leicester, 1848), p. 16. (ROLLR: Pamphlet volume 57).
176 Not to be confused with another John Pares, a prominent Leicester banker
177 Patterson, p97.
178 Leicester Journal, 16 July 1802.
prosecution in 1816 for publishing two seditious pamphlets which had been read out at a meeting of the Club.\textsuperscript{179}

The following year, the Town Clerk reported Pares to the Home Office as ‘a dangerous fellow’ who would be ‘better out of the way.’\textsuperscript{180} This was a time of further repressive legislation - Habeas Corpus was again suspended - and many Leicester radicals were arrested. Pares was charged with publishing a ‘seditious, blasphemous, and malicious libel’.\textsuperscript{181} Although Pares was acquitted, he was almost ruined by the expense of the case.\textsuperscript{182}

One extant item, an execution broadsheet, known to have been printed by Pares is now in the British Library:

\begin{quote}
The last dying words, behaviour and confession of D.T. Myers, who was executed... for an unnatural crime. (The last dying words, behaviour and confession of J. Tomlinson, and P. Cook, who were executed... 1812, for a Burglary.)

Pares: Leicester, [1812].\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Isaac Cockshaw} and his sons Isaac and Albert were important figures in the Leicester book trade. Isaac Cockshaw senior, an engraver and drawing master, opened a circulating library in 1800.\textsuperscript{184} After he died in 1818, the library was carried on by his son Isaac. His other son, Albert, opened a second library in 1824 and later added a reading room, where the London morning papers could be read the same evening. The Cockshaws were a prominent radical family. Isaac (the father) - described as ‘the doughty

\textsuperscript{179} Patterson, p109.
\textsuperscript{180} Patterson, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{181} The offending work was an extract from Volney’s \textit{The Ruins of Empires}, entitled ‘A Dialogue between the Privileged Class and the People’.
\textsuperscript{182} Patterson, p118.
\textsuperscript{183} British Library: 1889.d.3.(214.)
\textsuperscript{184} I am very grateful to Mr Walter Cockshaw for information on his family’s history.
radical printer and engraver" - printed radical pamphlets and election addresses, and Albert was well known for his extremely radical views.

Isaac Cockshaw (senior) initially ran his business from premises in St Nicholas Street. In 1792 he advertised a very wide range of goods and services:

- engraving in its various branches: cards, bills of parcels, bankers' checks and bills, door plates, message cards etc. Cyphers, coats of arms, crests and every other ornament on plate. Gravestones, plain and ornamented...
- Water-colours, camel-hair pencils, paper and other articles used in drawing.

By 1812 he was established in Highcross Street, where he also ran a School for Drawing. Isaac (senior) died on 17 October 1818. His will leaves to his wife Peggy "all my printing presses and materials belonging thereto" together with all his stock in trade and his household goods.

Isaac's sons, Albert and Isaac (junior) ran two separate but seemingly complementary businesses. In Combe's Directory of Leicester for 1826, there are two large advertisements for the two brothers' businesses. Albert Cockshaw, based in the High Street, ran a 'Fancy Repository and Stationery Warehouse' offering a general stock of books, stationery, maps, prints, drawing materials, paper, pencils, pens and penknives. He also bound books 'in the best manner' and carried out letterpress printing 'in its various departments'. He ran a 'General Subscription Library' and also offered a circulating portfolio of drawings.

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185 VCH, v4, p138.
186 Leicester Chronicle, 20 April 1792.
187 Leicester Chronicle, 21 March 1812.
188 ROLLR: PR/T/1818/47.
189 Combe's Directory, 1826.
His brother Isaac concentrated on printing, for a wide range of applications, from his printing office, near the *Three Crowns*. He printed *inter alia* 'hand-bills, address cards, bar-bills, circulars etc...window bills printed in colours and mounted...account books... invoice heads, cards, name plates....' and much more. He carried out bookbinding 'neatly executed, in Russia, Morocco, calf, or sheep leather to any pattern'. Also on offer were velvet painting and patterns for needlework.

Interestingly, he also advertised 'Wood cuts and stamps for marking hose etc.' and 'Hose stamped at the shortest notice.' These services are rather unusual, though perhaps not surprising in a town whose major industry at the time was hosiery. My enquiries into this aspect of the work of Isaac Cockshaw Junior indicate that printing was quite common on both socks and stockings. It was usually the manufacturer's name, batch number and such, rather than decoration. Printing was normally confined to the thicker parts of the hose: the heel, toe, or top of the leg. These densely-knitted parts would be 'finished' - with some sort of glazing or stiffening agent - which enabled them to take print. Apparently any printed information is usually visible only on new stock, as it wore off very quickly once the hose were in use. Sometimes a printed paper tag would also be attached, with batch details etc.\(^{191}\)

The passing of the Reform Act in 1832 was an important watershed in English history. Although many working-class people would soon come to feel that they had been betrayed by the middle-class reformers, the Act of 1832 was nevertheless a huge step forward and was celebrated with enthusiasm. The *Leicester Chronicle* reported on a great procession to celebrate

\(^{190}\) Ibid.

\(^{191}\) I am indebted for this information to Philip Warren of Leicestershire County Museums, a specialist in costume history.
the passing of the Reform Act. The centre of attention was a portable printing press, fitted up in a colourful cart bearing the mottoes 'Liberty', 'Education' and 'Reform'. People flocked to see what it was - it was soon understood to be the mighty engine - the warrior whose name was 'Legion' - which had taken so prominent a part and performed such deeds of strength in the great conflict of Truth and Justice with Error and Oppression.192

As we have seen, the production and distribution of the printed word had been crucial to the advancement of the cause of reform in Leicester. Here, as elsewhere, radical activity was refocused, rather than ended, when the Reform Act was passed in 1832. A measure of parliamentary reform may have been achieved - though not enough to satisfy many hard-line radicals - but attention now turned to the redress of other longstanding grievances, including dissatisfaction with local government.

The Corporation, which had governed Leicester since Tudor times, bore the brunt of agitation against the old regime. There were good reasons for this. The Corporation was not only undemocratic, as it always had been, it was also blatantly corrupt; in fact, Leicester had become 'a national symbol for corporate corruption'.193

In 1833 the Commissioners arrived in Leicester to begin their investigation of the Corporation. At about the same time, the Corporation prosecuted Thomas Thompson, the Chronicle editor, and Albert Cockshaw for printing and distributing a pamphlet alleging maladministration of justice and misuse of public funds. The case was dismissed, but only on a legal technicality.194

192 Leicester Chronicle, 25 August 1832.
193 D. Fraser, Power and Authority in the Victorian City, p123.
194 Leicester Corporation Hall Book, 24 March 1834; Patterson p199.
In 1836 yet another radical newspaper - the *Leicestershire Mercury* - was established. Albert Cockshaw was both proprietor and printer for its first four years. The *Mercury* in Cockshaw's time was notoriously radical. It was sympathetic to Chartism, and also supported the disestablishment of the Church of England - a cause dear to the hearts of many of Leicester's nonconformists.

Nonconformists had long played a leading part in Leicester's radical politics. Originally the Unitarians had been in the forefront of local religious and political dissent but by this time the Baptists had taken the lead. In particular, three Baptists were openly expressing extremely radical views. One of these was Albert Cockshaw. Another was the Reverend J.P. Mursell, who had a very strong influence over the Mercury during Cockshaw's time; in fact Mursell was thought to be editor in all but name. The third was another important book trade person, who was also a Baptist minister, the Reverend Joseph Foulkes Winks.

Winks was a very active printer, bookseller and publisher - 'a fiery little gamecock of a man who was always thirsting for a fight in the name of justice and liberty'.\(^{195}\) He moved to Leicester from Loughborough in 1830 and quickly immersed himself in the town's radical politics. He became a leading light of the Leicester and Leicestershire Political Union, which campaigned *inter alia* against newspaper duty, the dreaded 'taxes on knowledge'. Winks became a thorn in the Corporation's side, speaking in public about their abuse of charitable funds and the partiality of the magistrates.\(^{196}\) Many Nonconformists at this time refused on principle to pay Church Rates and this became a major issue in Leicester. On one

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\(^{195}\) Patterson, p188.

\(^{196}\) E.g. *Leicester Chronicle*, 30 March 1833.
occasion, when Winks refused to pay, eleven reams of his paper were seized and sold.\textsuperscript{197}

Winks was certainly energetic - in addition to his duties as a Baptist minister and his work as one of Leicester’s leading printers, he was also the publisher for the General Baptist Union and personally edited no less than five monthly magazines.\textsuperscript{198} Winks was a leading radical who campaigned vigorously not only for parliamentary and municipal reform but also for many other causes.

One cause that Winks is reputed to have won single-handedly, was the ending of the practice of gibbeting - the public exhibition of the bodies of executed murderers. A rather bizarre book trade link is that Winks’s campaign focused on the notorious case of James Cook, a Leicester bookbinder who murdered a commercial traveller in 1832. The case caught the public imagination, partly because Cook dismembered his victim’s body and tried to burn it (to the consternation of his neighbours!), and partly because of his dramatic confession and repentance shortly before his execution.\textsuperscript{199} As a result of Winks’s crusade, Cook seems to have been the last person gibbeted in England.\textsuperscript{200}

\section*{6.5 Chartism and after}

Joseph Winks had been brought up in Gainsborough, where he set up a mutual improvement society. Although it closed down when Winks left

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{197} Patterson, p250.
\item \textsuperscript{198} F.M W. Harrison, \textit{It All Began Here: the Story of the East Midland Baptist Association}, p. 54.
\item \textsuperscript{199} A number of books, pamphlets and articles about the case have been published, both at the time and more recently, e.g.: C.J. Williams, \textit{Cook the Murderer, or the Leicester Tragedy...}, Derby, [1832?]; [Anonymous], \textit{Sentence, Confession and Execution of James Cook for the Murder of Mr. Paas at Leicester...}, Manchester, 1832.; Frances Docker, \textit{John Paas \\& James Cook: provincial bookbinding in the Eighteen Thirties}, Loughborough, [1979].
\item \textsuperscript{200} Carley 1823-1973, p8; M. Tanner, \textit{Crime and Murder in Victorian Leicester}, p11.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Gainsborough, the society had left a lasting impression on one of its members, a seventeen year-old who had helped Winks run a Sunday school teaching poor adults to read.201

His name was Thomas Cooper, and he was to become one of the leaders of the Chartist movement, and would also write a detailed autobiography - giving us a unique insight not only into Leicester's radical politics but also its book trade. When Thomas Cooper arrived in Leicester in 1840, to take up a job as a journalist with the Leicestershire Mercury, he was delighted to be reacquainted with his old friend Joseph Winks. Cooper's autobiography records several conversations with Winks, one of which took place when Cooper was planning to leave Leicester to look for another job. He had begun openly to advocate Chartism and had written articles for the Chartist penny weekly paper, The Midland Counties Illuminator, edited by the veteran radical George Bown. This was not to the liking of Collier - the new manager of the Mercury, which had become more moderate - and Cooper was told to leave. A Chartist deputation asked Cooper to stay in Leicester as paid editor of the Illuminator, because Bown wanted to give it up. `Have nothing to do with them, Tom,' said Winks, 'you cannot depend on 'em. You'll not get the thirty shillings a week they have promised you.'202

Cooper admits in his autobiography that he ignored his old friend's advice, though he knew he was right about the thirty shillings. After being paid in full for the first week but only half the second week, Cooper claims to have taken over the Illuminator, including its debts. However, the details of his involvement, and its timing, are not clear. A study by R. Barnes in 1959

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201 T. Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper Written by Himself, p. 46.
202 Ibid.
concluded that Cooper did not take over the *Illuminator* until a later date, although he certainly became editor with the first issue of the new series.  

Cooper arranged with Albert Cockshaw to print the *Illuminator* on larger and better quality paper, which worked well until, out of the blue, Cockshaw told Cooper that he could no longer print the paper, although he was 'not at liberty to tell the reason'. Cooper assumed that the town council was trying to put an end to his paper. Albert Cockshaw, despite his very radical politics, was printer to the council, which - since the reforms of 1835 - was dominated by moderate Whig/Liberals opposed to those with more radical views than theirs. Barnes doubts the council’s involvement and suggests that Cockshaw had been happy to print the *Illuminator* — even tolerating a small debt - while it was owned by a committee of radicals but, as soon as Cooper became sole proprietor, Cockshaw was unwilling ‘to let the hot-headed and unbusinesslike Cooper enlarge a debt he would most likely not be able to pay.’

In his autobiography, Cooper implies that he took over full responsibility for the *Illuminator* with the first issue of the new series in February 1841. He mentions that there was an existing small debt for paper (not for printing) which he agreed to take on. He also borrowed £20 from an unnamed friend to finance the new arrangement with Cockshaw. We cannot be sure if Cooper’s recollection of the take-over is accurate, or whether the council really was behind the printer’s decision. Cockshaw was an astute businessman and may indeed have been worried about Cooper’s management of the *Illuminator*. Cooper admits in his autobiography that he did owe Cockshaw ‘a few pounds’ but he did not believe that this was the

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204 Ibid. p69.
reason for the printer’s decision. Cooper was certain that the Whigs on the
council wanted to ruin him and his paper. 205

Barnes is correct in pointing out that, although Cooper became editor of the
new series with issue number 1 (13 February 1841), he is not named as
proprietor until issue number 15 (22 May 1841). Issues 1 to 14 were
published by the bookseller John Seal on behalf of a managing committee.
The British Library file of the Midland Counties Illuminator concludes with
issue number 16 (29 May 1841). 206 If this file comprises the only issues that
were published, which is probably the case, then there were only two issues
under Cooper’s sole ownership, which would tend to support Barnes’s view.

However, it is worth noting that Barnes comments only on Cooper’s
autobiography, published in 1872, and does not make reference to Cooper’s
much earlier account of his involvement with the Illuminator in a published
letter written in 1855. There he claims that his agreement to the deputation’s
request to take over the Illuminator sprang from the ‘purest and most
devoted self-sacrifice for the poor and oppressed,’ and he explains that
the little paper would have stopped because they could no longer
raise funds to carry it on; but they gave it into my hands entirely,
and I borrowed and begged money to carry it on. 207

Cooper does not mention that Feargus O’Connor, founder of the Northern
Star, also made a donation to the Illuminator at about this time. 208 In his
letter of 1855 Cooper states unequivocally that, as the 1841 general election
approached, the Whigs put an end to the Illuminator by intimidating its

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205 Cooper, Life., p.151.
206 There is a microfilm copy of the British Library file in ROLL.R.
207 The letter forms an Appendix to the 2nd edition of R. G. Gammage’s History of the
Chartist Movement: 1837-1854.
208 J. Epstein, The Lion of Freedom, p. 80.
printer. Whatever his reason, Albert Cockshaw refused – probably in June 1841 - to print further issues of the *Illuminator*. No other printer was willing to print Cooper’s paper, except Thomas Warwick, a Tory-voting small printer. His meagre facilities fell far short of Cockshaw’s standard, so Cooper decided to terminate the *Illuminator* and replace it with a more modest paper. As he explains in the 1855 letter, the new halfpenny paper was ‘a tiny light compared with the *Illuminator*’ (which had cost 1½d), so he called it the *Chartist Rushlight*.

No surviving copies have been traced of the *Rushlight* or its successor, the *Extinguisher*, so named because of a humorous incident at an election meeting, when some Liberals fixed a large tin extinguisher to a pole and tried to lower it over Cooper’s head to symbolise the extinguishing of the *Chartist Rushlight*. Cooper responded in characteristic style by re-naming the *Rushlight* as the *Extinguisher*, to show, as he said, that he would not be ‘put out’.209 Cooper also briefly published two other Chartist papers, the *Pioneer* and the *Commonwealthsman* for which Feargus O’Connor wrote a special series of letters in 1842.210

Although most of these titles were cheaply produced and very short-lived, Cooper’s main contribution to the Chartist press, the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, is rightly recognised by historians as a provincial Chartist paper of some importance. Cooper undoubtedly exercised a strong and imaginative editorial role, which is of more lasting significance than the unresolved question of the extent to which he was technically the paper’s proprietor.

210 A single copy of the *Commonwealthsman* (18 June 1842) in the Home Office files at the Public Record Office (HO 45/260) seems to be the only surviving copy. J. Epstein, *Lion of Freedom*, p. 80.
The *Illuminator* aimed to cover a wide geographical area and was sold in various parts of the Midlands. The Three Counties Chartist Association (for Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire), formed in 1839, ‘had resolved to start a Chartist journal for the East Midlands based upon co-operative share holding’. The following year the Association became the Charter Association for the Midlands Counties (affiliated to the National Charter Association). Their plans for a regional newspaper materialised when Cooper published the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, although the Association’s part in running the paper is not clear.\(^{211}\)

Despite carrying no actual news, to avoid paying stamp duty, the *Illuminator* included items of interest to Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Northamptonshire, although the emphasis was on Leicestershire.\(^{212}\) Its contents were of general Chartist interest, often lifted from other periodicals, a common practice at the time. Frequent themes include temperance, the rights of women, and the ‘treachery’ of the middle classes. Letters from readers and from ‘correspondents’ like James Sweet\(^{213}\), the Nottingham agent for the *Illuminator*, feature regularly and there were repeated appeals for contributions of money, tea, sugar etc. to relieve the plight of some Chartists imprisoned in Oakham Castle. Book reviews and poetry were published, alongside political editorials (presumably written by Cooper), and there were what we would now call ‘features’ on historical topics such as the Civil War, famous parliamentarians, and the Peterloo Massacre. By the standards of the day, the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, under Cooper’s guidance, was an interesting and well-produced paper.


\(^{212}\) Leicester for the most part, although Loughborough was also a centre of Chartist activity.

\(^{213}\) James Sweet (bookseller, newsagent, stationer, toy dealer and hairdresser), one of Nottingham’s most active and unrelenting Chartists. See: John Walton, *A Survey of the Printing Trade... of Nottingham...* (1968), p. 163.
Poetry was very prominent in Chartist circles. Cooper himself was a prolific poet and a constructive critic of others’ efforts. The Leicester poet, John Henry Bramwich was encouraged by Cooper to write a number of Chartist poems and hymns of which the most famous is ‘Britannia’s sons, though slaves ye be...’, which was very popular at Chartist meetings and funerals. A number of letters from Cooper to another local Chartist poet, William Jones, have survived and are evidence of Cooper’s support and encouragement to his fellow poets.

Cooper opened a newspaper office in the High Street, which soon became a shop, selling the *Northern Star* and other radical newspapers and pamphlets. The little shop became a popular meeting place for working men and, when Cooper was evicted, he managed to lease better premises in Churchgate, with two large coffee rooms also used for meetings. He also began to sell bread, although by 1842 he was giving it away or selling it on credit because of the slump in the hosiery industry, a time of terrible poverty, which horrified Cooper. He had to close down an adult school he had been running, and was saddened by the attitude of a few of the men who said, ‘What the hell do we care about reading if we can get nought to eat?’

Cooper was elected secretary of the Leicester Chartists, but before long they followed the national trend and split into two factions, advocating ‘physical force’ and ‘moral force’ Chartism. He became leader of the more militant group, who called themselves the ‘Shakespearean Chartists’. They were so

215 ROLLR: DE 2964. (Cooper discusses the contribution of Bramwich and Jones in Chapter 16 of his autobiography.)
216 The building still stands, next door to the Churchgate Tavern.
218 J F C Harrison, ‘Chartism in Leicester,’ p. 144.
named because they met in the Shakespeare Rooms but it was a nicely appropriate name for a group led by Thomas Cooper, who had learned to read at the age of three. As a young man `he read everything he could lay his hands on; and his memory was remarkable.' He lectured passionately on literature, science and many other topics and could quote huge tracts of Shakespeare and other writers without difficulty.

Thomas Cooper's support for the use of force got him into trouble with the law in 1842. While he was travelling through Staffordshire, on the way to a Chartist convention in Manchester, his name was linked with an uprising in the Potteries, where there had been scenes of great violence and arson. From the book trade angle, it is interesting to note that, when Cooper was questioned in Burslem, he was asked why he described himself as a commercial traveller when he was really a Chartist lecturer. This was his reply:

I have not told a lie, for I am a commercial traveller, and I have been collecting accounts and taking orders for stationery that I sell, and a periodical that I publish, in Leicester.'

Cooper was allowed to return to Leicester but before long was arrested again and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. After his release, he returned not to Leicester but to London, where he had briefly worked as a young man in journalism and bookselling. He achieved in his later years some success as an author and lecturer. Cooper's time in prison made him much less militant and he finally broke with the Chartist movement in 1846. He turned from politics to religion – a simplistic, almost fundamentalist, type of Christianity – and spent some years as an itinerant preacher

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220 Cooper, *Life*, passim.
222 Ibid. Chapter XII.
unaffiliated to any denomination. Cooper decided to become a Baptist during a visit to Leicester in 1859, and was baptised on Whit Sunday by none other than his old friend Joseph Winks.²²³

It is an interesting coincidence that Joseph Winks had also baptised the young Thomas Cook, back in 1826, when they both lived in Melbourne, in Derbyshire, where Winks was Baptist minister and had his first printing press. When Winks moved his press to Loughborough, Cook was briefly apprenticed to him. Thomas Cook’s abiding fame rests on his outstanding innovations in the travel industry, and his life is well documented.²²⁴

As a boy, Cook had helped his mother, who had been widowed when Thomas was four, in her little shop in Melbourne. Cook’s early career included a period of apprenticeship to his uncle, a wood-turner, and some time as a travelling evangelist, before he moved to Loughborough to work for Winks.

Cook moved to Market Harborough in 1832, where he married, resumed the trade of wood-turning and took up the cause of temperance. His next venture into the book trade was in 1840, when he began to publish temperance tracts. By 1841, he had moved to Leicester and was established as a bookseller and printer, trading at first as the Midland Temperance Press. Cook was a tireless campaigner for temperance, and published various tracts and magazines devoted to temperance and other causes that he favoured. In the early 1840s, for example, he launched the penny monthly *Anti-Smoker*

²²³ Ibid. p. 380.
²²⁴ A good general biography is: Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 years of popular tourism*, (1991), while Leicester’s links with Cook are ably surveyed in: Derek Seaton, *The Local Legacy of Thomas Cook*, (Leicester, 1996). I am most grateful to Derek Seaton for information on Cook and Winks, and for alerting me to sources of Baptist history which I might otherwise have missed.
and Progressive Temperance Reformer. He campaigned vigorously against poverty and published in 1846 *The Cheap Bread Herald*. Later, during a period of great poverty in Leicester in the 1850s, Cook would provide potatoes for the poor and organise soup kitchens.225

One of Cook’s lasting contributions as a printer and publisher was his production of a number of guides and directories (variously titled) to Leicester during the 1840s. He seems (from the imprints in his directories) to have moved from King Street to Granby Street and Campbell Street in the mid-1840s. Cook’s directories and guides are still valuable as historical sources.

Thomas Cook worked successfully for some years as an important printer and publisher in Leicester. However, his famous pioneering railway trip to a temperance rally in Loughborough in 1841 would lead eventually to a change of career. Excursions further afield led ultimately to the establishment of a large international travel business which became so successful that Cook gave up his book trade activities in 1854.

An advertisement issued by Thomas Cook in 1843 indicates the wide range of his book-trade activities. From his premises at 1 King Street, Cook offered printing (both book and jobbing work) and bookbinding services, as well as a register of servants. He was proposing to offer a similar register for private lodging and boarding houses. He also carried a varied stock of books and periodicals, supplemented by weekly parcels from London. In the same advertisement, dated 30 January 1843, Cook expressed his intention of developing the stationery side of his business, and he also required an

225 *Thomas Cook and his Family*, p. 2.
'active, intelligent, well-educated youth, as an apprentice to the printing business.' 226

Although Cook held radical political views, much of his energy was devoted to the cause of temperance and his forays into political action were relatively rare, although he and Winks were both present at a great Chartist meeting, attended by 3000 people, in Leicester in 1848.227 This was shortly before the so-called 'Bastille' riots in Leicester. The local workhouse, nicknamed the 'Bastille', was the focus of opposition to the new Poor Law, culminating in three days of serious rioting in May 1848. Cook joined a committee which was set up to gather evidence against the actions of the police and specials during the riots.228 But Cook usually kept his distance from the Chartists; he was a moderate radical who deplored the 'physical force' Chartism advocated by Thomas Cooper and George Bown.

Another book-trade Chartist was John Seal, who ran a small newsagency and bookselling business. He and his brother Richard were prominent 'moral force' Chartists and leading lights of the Leicester Working Men's Association. John Seal's rather stirring advertisements announced to 'the friends and admirers of cheap political knowledge' that he sold newspapers and pamphlets 'advocating the just rights of the wealth-producing millions and opposing the aggrandisement of the non-producing few.' 229

Historians have sometimes remarked on the difficulty of identifying a tradition of radicalism in this country. There seems to have been no cohesive, or continuous, radical movement. But one important study of the years 1760-1848 concludes:

227 Leicester Chronicle, 8 April 1848.
228 Leicester Chronicle, 10 June 1848.
229 Leicestershire Mercury, 31 December 1836.
Nevertheless the tradition of native British radicalism is real enough, with links forged by men who survived to join successive organisations, and by a literature which ensured the transmission of ideas and the accumulation of a body of radical thinking which each generation could savour and to which it could add new insights.  

Literature really was the lifeblood of radical politics. Between 1790 and the middle of the nineteenth century, a significant number of prominent book-trade people in Leicester held to their radical principles, often risking their personal liberty. By producing and distributing the printed word, they made a crucial contribution to the unity and continuity of the long struggle for democracy in ‘Radical Leicester’.

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CHAPTER 7

THE IMPACT OF THE PRINTED WORD IN LEICESTER

7.1 The significance of print

Book consumption can serve only as a crude indicator of tastes and values among the reading public, and it may appear impertinent to talk about ‘consuming’ books in the first place. But the purchase of a book is a significant act, when considered culturally as well as economically.¹

The context of Robert Darnton’s remark is a study of the degree to which the Enlightenment had penetrated into French society in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and of the extent of the contribution of the printed word (in particular the *Encyclopédie*) to that process, but what he says about the ‘consumption’ of books, and about the significance, in cultural and economic terms, of purchasing a book, have a much broader relevance.

Darnton’s comments are a reminder that the history of the book is most fruitfully studied from a number of different angles, an approach which is at once stimulating and challenging. While it opens up many avenues of exploration whereby the acquisition and use of books may better be understood, and enables a more rounded picture to be formulated of the ‘life’ of books in society, it is also prone to evaporating into an unfocused theoretical discourse which fails to remain ‘earthed’ in the actuality of how

books (and other printed matter) played a part in the way people lived: working, learning, socialising, worshipping, and passing their leisure hours.

As John Feather warned, some years ago, the history of the book must not neglect the 'inky reality of the printing house'. The study of the book as an artefact, which has been designed, manufactured and distributed, forms an essential part of the history of the book, even though greater prominence is often given to other stages in the existence of that same book: its authorship, editing, censorship (sometimes), finance and marketing, as well as its acquisition, storage and display by its owner, its use (which potentially encompasses a huge variety of activity) and the 'reception' of the text it contains.

If we recognise the book as an artefact per se, we further need to consider it an artefact that (potentially at least) possesses significance — cultural, intellectual, social, economic, religious, political. This search for the significance of the book is important but it does need to be complemented by careful study of its manufacture and distribution. Most historians of the book now accept that the object of their study exists as both text and artefact. They also, rightly, seek evidence of the lives and personalities of the people who interact with the book — its author, publisher, printer, binder, seller, reader and others — to flesh out what are sometimes seen as the dry bones of traditional bibliography:

As much as bibliography... can tell us about the making, selling and collecting of books, and as vital as it is for that reason, it is constrained by its inability, except in rare instances, to humanize the study of book history. By this I mean showing how stories about books are also stories about authors, readers and members of the book trade, seen as flesh-and-blood individuals.

with their own interests, aspirations, motives, strengths, and weaknesses.¹

Referring to the foregoing comments of Richard Sher, Peter Isaac has recently observed:

Until fairly recently many, perhaps most, book-trade studies, provincial and metropolitan, were, in a sense, extensions of analytical bibliography, dealing with the book as a physical object. But books are more than objects; they are written by people, produced by people, distributed by people, bought by people, and possibly read by people.⁴

The narrative chapters of the present study have been approached in the same spirit. As far as the evidence permits (even where it exists it can be somewhat opaque in this regard), I have tried to identify something of the personalities of book-trade practitioners. This has proved easier in relation to those who were politically motivated. For instance Richard Phillips and Thomas Cooper, both larger-than-life characters, have left us an abundance of autobiographical material, and comments on them written by some of their contemporaries also survive – both types of evidence needing of course to be used with caution. But other people too have left their more modest mark on book-trade history and I have tried wherever possible to record any evidence found for the ‘human face of the book trade’ in Leicester.

Evidence for the lives of those who produced and distributed books may not be abundant but evidence of the lives of those who bought and read them is even more scarce. Nevertheless, the ‘history of audiences’ forms an essential component of the history of the book:

Where the old book history studied what people read and whether they

could read and the new book history studies how they read, neither has really explored mass intellectual responses to reading.\(^5\)

Little direct evidence has been found of what people in Leicester actually read or how reading affected their lives. There is a certain amount of evidence relating to reading societies and books clubs, one of which (attached, as early examples often were, to a religious group) existed locally as early as 1723.\(^6\) During the latter half of the eighteenth century there were at least two book clubs in Leicester, the Blue Bell Society and the Leicestershire Book Society.\(^7\) Interesting though such information may be, it does not really amount to hard evidence of what was actually being read, nor of its impact.

Members of book clubs, almost invariably middle-class males, were not representative of local society. It is essential that the study of what people read and how they responded to their reading-matter takes a broadly-based view, a point well made by Jonathan Rose:

> Whereas reception histories have generally traced the responses of professional intellectuals (literary and social critics, academics, clergymen), audience histories would focus on the common reader — defined as any reader who did not read books for a living.\(^8\)

In any case, lest the study of reading and its impact — whether 'reception history' or 'the history of audiences' — be deemed peripheral to the history

\(^5\) J. Rose, ‘Rereading the English Common Reader: a preface to the history of audiences’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 53, no. 1, (1992), p. 48. In the same article, Rose comments, rightly, that little work has been done in this area since the pioneering work of Richard Altick in the 1950s. Rose has explored the 'history of audiences' more fully in his recent book, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (New Haven, 2001).

\(^6\) The Leicester and Wigston Magna Meeting; see Joyce Lee, ‘From Chains to Freedom’, p. 129-30.

\(^7\) These have not been researched as part of the present study as they are dealt with in Joyce Lee’s dissertation of 1982.

\(^8\) Rose, ‘Rereading the English Common Reader’, p. 51.
of the book trade, it should perhaps be emphasised that book-trade historians should always make constructive use of any evidence they find of readers and reading, even though this may not be the primary objective of their endeavours. The history of the book, by its very nature, must never become a field of study in which specialisation (in for example book-trade history) is allowed to lead to compartmentalisation.

The present chapter aims briefly to outline the impact of books and other printed material in Leicester up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The preceding four chapters have given a narrative account of the history of the book trade in Leicester; although various observations have been incorporated into that narrative, it remains primarily descriptive. This chapter reflects on that narrative history in an attempt to assess the meaning and significance of the trade in books in Leicester.

The next two sections use a cultural historical framework to address the impact of print, bearing in mind Robert Darnton's observation that 'the history of the book' might (albeit less succinctly) be called 'the social and cultural history of communication by print'. It is worth adding that cultural history, at least as much as the history of the book, is a field of study in which a rich diversity reigns:

It has been customary recently, in collections of essays about the 'new cultural history,' to celebrate the diversity of approaches... Analogous diversity may be found in... 'the history of the book'.

The introduction to one collection of essays is very positive about such diversity:

Historians working in the cultural mode should not be discouraged by theoretical diversity, for we are just entering a remarkable new phase when the other human sciences (including especially literary studies but also anthropology and sociology) are discovering us anew.\textsuperscript{11}

In the twelve years since those words were written, the history of the book has been enriched by cultural historical approaches, especially those making imaginative use of sociological and anthropological insights – in addition to an established and obvious connection with literary studies. Two cultural historical approaches which are especially helpful are the ‘urban renaissance’ and ‘popular culture’. Although such terms tend to mean different things to different people (and neither of these is without its critics), they do provide a useful structure for a study of the impact of print.

Before considering the impact of print in Leicester in the light of, in turn, the ‘urban renaissance’ and ‘popular culture’, it is worth pointing out that these terms are not used (here at any rate) to mean ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. Only confusion can arise from trying to sort all culture and all audiences into two bins: ‘high culture’ and social elites are tossed together into one category, while all culture that is not ‘high’ is labelled ‘popular’ and is assumed to have a mass audience.\textsuperscript{12}

7.2 Print and the ‘urban renaissance’

The concept of an ‘urban renaissance’ in England was formulated by Peter Borsay in the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{13} With its emphasis on cultural change in


\textsuperscript{12} Rose, ‘Rereading the English Common Reader’, p. 57-8.

\textsuperscript{13} P. Borsay, ‘The English Urban Renaissance: the development of provincial urban culture, c1680-c1760’, \textit{Social History}, vol. 2 (1977), reprinted in \textit{The Eighteenth Century Town: a reader in English urban history}, edited by P. Borsay, pp. 159-187. (References are from the
provincial towns, the concept is particularly appropriate as a framework for the history of the impact of print. The printed word was at the forefront of the urban renaissance in many ways, most of which may be identified in Leicester. As Borsay notes, booksellers and printers, along with others practising 'luxury' trades, played an important part in provincial cultural developments:

Some of the new luxury trades cannot be classified in terms of the traditional economy. Perhaps the most important of these are the ones associated with literature and the press.  

Newspapers, bookshops and circulating libraries formed important elements in turning the town into an agent for disseminating news and culture across provincial England.

Although Leicester was a few years behind some comparable towns, John Gregory made a great contribution to the cultural life of the town when he started the Journal in 1753. A number of circulating libraries were to be found in late eighteenth-century Leicester, beginning with the one founded by George Ireland in 1778.

Ann Ireland’s move to a shop opposite the Assembly Rooms placed her business in a very fashionable location. Her bookshop (where she also sold musical instruments and fine art prints), printing office and circulating library seem to have been very successful, in part perhaps because of their proximity to an important focal point for the gentry. The description by John Nichols of the Assembly Rooms complex indicates not only the range

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15 Ibid.
16 See above, chapter 5.
17 See above, chapter 6.
18 See above, chapter 6.
of facilities provided but also the importance of book-trade elements: the London papers, Thomas Combe’s bookshop (and circulating library).

The urban renaissance can be identified not only in highly visible improvements in architecture and urban landscaping (such as, in Leicester, the laying out of the New Walk and the building of the Assembly Rooms) but also in an unprecedented degree of cultural and social change. Other improvements included philanthropic ventures, such as the Leicester Infirmary, to which John Gregory made such a notable contribution.¹³

Peter Borsay makes the important point that cultural change is largely about different kinds of space:

Because the town was a meeting place and transit point, it provided contact with ‘geographical space’; because it published and sold books, and housed institutions like the theatre, it offered access to ‘intellectual space’. But, above all, the town was increasingly the focus of ‘social space’, the space that separates individuals by status.²⁰

The theatre might perhaps be regarded as occupying both ‘intellectual’ and ‘social’ space; it was certainly consistently well-supported by various levels of society in Leicester.²¹ A number of the town’s printers were involved in various ways. John Gregory, although disapproving of such pastimes, nevertheless carried a good deal of theatre advertising in the Journal.²²

The advertisement columns of the local newspapers are in fact a good guide to the wide variety of entertainments available in the town: inter alia balls.

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¹⁹ See above, chapter 5.
²¹ H. and R. Leacroft, The Theatre in Leicestershire: a history of entertainment in the county from the 15th century to the 1960s. (Leicester, 1986.)
²² See above, chapter 5.
concerts and cockfighting. Horse-racing was a very fashionable pursuit in many provincial towns, including Leicester, where the newspapers carried racing news and the Borough provided money towards the prizes.

Printing in connection with musical and theatrical entertainments was carried out by several of the town's printers. John Gregory and other booksellers sold theatre tickets and also stocked plays and theatrical magazines. John Fowler also sold tickets and probably printed playbills. John Gregory even printed the libretti of several of Handel's oratorios, almost certainly for local performances. Printed music was becoming popular for amateur and professional performance; a number of booksellers stocked music, including John Gregory, Ann Ireland and Thomas Chapman Browne. John Valentine, a member of an eminent local musical family, was a composer, concert promoter and violinist as well as a specialist music-seller; he is listed in an imprint of c1764, while an M Valentine, music-seller in Cheapside, is listed in a directory in 1794.

Music was an important part of the activities at the Assembly Rooms; a music library and instruments were destroyed in rioting in 1790. Lectures were a popular form of both entertainment and self-improvement at various

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23 See above, chapter 5.
25 See above, chapters 5 and 6.
26 See above, chapter 6.
27 See above, chapter 5.
28 See above, chapters 5 and 6.
29 I am grateful to Dr David Stoker for drawing my attention to the imprint of *The Epithalamium in the Tragedy of Isabella*... written by Valentine and printed for him, in London, in [1764?] according to the Bodleian Library catalogue. M Valentine is listed in the *Universal Directory* for 1794. For further information on the Valentine family see Max Wade-Matthews, *Musical Leicester*, pp. 5, 14-15.
30 See above, chapter 6.
social levels and it is interesting to find prominent book-trade people, such
as Thomas Combe, in demand as speakers. 31

An interest in local antiquities and topography was shared by many
members of the gentry. This was not a new phenomenon in the eighteenth
century; in fact it dates back to the early Stuart period, when 'gentlemen-
scholars', benefiting from educational improvements, began to study their
locality and, importantly, to relate local interests to wider, national,
concerns. 32 However, it was during the urban renaissance that a striking
number of important local history works were published. In Leicestershire
we find the works of John Nichols and John Throsby. 33 One of the books
printed by John Ireland was a historical account of the Jewry Wall, one of
Leicester's Roman antiquities. 34

Periodicals of many kinds helped to fill the leisure hours of an increasing
number of people. Booksellers like John Gregory stocked a wide range of
periodical titles, with an emphasis on those which would appeal to the lady
or gentleman. 35 Art was popular too, and there is evidence of a fine art sale
in Leicester. 36 Isaac Cockshaw taught drawing, and he and other booksellers
sold artists' materials; Albert Cockshaw hired out a portfolio of drawings. 37
Gardening became a fashionable pursuit and booksellers stocked periodicals
and books on gardening, including those written by the local author Richard
Weston. 38

31 See above, chapter 6.
33 See above, chapters 5 and 6.
34 See above, chapter 6.
35 See above, chapter 5.
36 See above, chapter 6.
37 See above, chapter 6.
38 See above, chapter 5.
In summary, the printed word, in Leicester as in other provincial towns, played an essential part in the urban renaissance. Of course, that renaissance would never have happened if people – or at least some people – had not begun to have a degree of surplus wealth:

Assemblies, books and newspapers are not essential to keep alive; palladian facades and piped water supplies might provide shelter and water but they are not essential in obtaining them. This suggests that the urban renaissance was built upon the 'surplus wealth' content of personal expenditure. Borsay suggests that there is evidence for surplus wealth not only among the gentry but also among the rapidly growing 'middling sort', not least the increasing numbers of prosperous tradesmen and craftsmen, whose wealth was often derived from the growing demand for leisure and luxury.

The more successful printers and booksellers are surely to be counted among their number.

7.3 Print and popular culture

The history of popular culture is a relatively recent discipline, taking over in part from the older style of social history, and somewhat beset by controversies over terminology. Literature and literacy have, quite rightly, formed an important part of the study of popular culture, and there is a logic to considering book trade history in the same context. It is, however,

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40 Ibid. p. 172.
over-simplistic to imply a dichotomy between literate (= ‘high’) and oral (= ‘low’) culture. Where in such an oversimplified structure do we place, for example, printed versions of popular ballads, or Chartist poetry and other working-class writing? As Jonathan Barry has observed, a distinction between the literary ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ is unhelpful in cultural history.\

Popular culture in early modern England was increasingly committed to print, which is not to say that the oral tradition declined at the same rate. Street literature: ballads, chapbooks and broadsides all appealed to a wide audience of the literate and partly-literate. Chapbooks were, by their subject-matter and their cheapness, aimed at the popular market. The only locally-printed chapbooks traced are those of the younger John Ireland. There are several local examples of execution broadsides, beginning with the John Flawn example printed by Matthew Unwin in 1741. Other examples were printed by John Gregory in 1764, by the Irelands in 1781, and by John Pares in 1812. In a similar vein, we find sensational publications like the Newgate Calendar on sale in Leicester, while almanacks and yearbooks seems to have been popular at various social levels.

Markets and fairs are traditionally studied as part of popular culture, but there is only a little evidence of book-trade activity at local fairs – the single reference to a bookbinder trading at the May Fair in 1599. Markets and fairs brought country people into the town, to exchange not only goods and services but news and information:

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44 See above, chapter 6.
45 See above, chapter 5.
46 See above, chapters 5 and 6.
47 See above, chapter 5.
48 See above, chapter 3.
Important amidst the attractions of towns of all sizes was access to news and
information. That was often related to the role of the market. Exchange of goods
was matched by exchange of news. Newspapers and journals were classic
urban currency.\(^49\)

This urban forum for news and information, traditionally a predominantly
oral exchange, became more dependent on printed sources as literacy
increased and access to print improved during the latter part of the
eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. By 1841, Leicester’s ‘great
poetry debate’ demonstrated how well-read many of the town’s gentlemen
were, but an interest in poetry was not confined to the wealthier or better-
educated classes.\(^50\) The flowering of poetry in Chartist circles has only
recently become the subject of scholarly interest.\(^51\) The quality of radical
creative writing is often better than might be expected and is evidence of a
perhaps surprising penetration of literacy skills into the working classes.
Local Chartist poets included Thomas Cooper, John Henry Bramwich and
William Jones.\(^52\)

Whether the temperance movement formed part of a genuinely ‘popular’
culture may be debatable; it was perhaps more likely to have been perceived
as middle-class meddling. Nevertheless, some book-trade people, most

\(^{49}\) P.J. Corfield, ‘Small Towns, Large Implications: social and cultural roles of small towns
in eighteenth-century England and Wales,’ British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 10

\(^{50}\) See above, chapter 2.

\(^{51}\) I attended in March 2001, at Liverpool John Moores University, the inaugural meeting
of a study group on radical (especially Chartist) poetry. Little has been published in the
field as yet, but see: Anne Janowitz, Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition, (Cambridge,
1998); Brian Maidment, The Poorhouse Fugitives: self-taught poets and poetry in Victorian Britain,
(Manchester, 1987); and Timothy Randall, ‘Chartist Poetry and Song’, The Chartist Legacy,
edited by Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts, (Woodbridge, 1999).

\(^{52}\) See above, chapter 6.
notably in Leicester, Thomas Cook, were very energetic in the cause, publishing temperance magazines and tracts.  

7.4 Print and politics

Chapter 6 has discussed politics and the book trade in Leicester after 1770, but it is worth noting that access to political information and opinion in books and other printed media, can be traced back to the hundred years or so before the Civil War, a period when the provincial gentry were gaining in status and in confidence. Their interest in, and access to, the printed word—especially newspapers but books too—increased their awareness of national political issues and therefore, as some historians argue, played a part in the events that led to the Civil War. Printed material was available in most parts of the country. The purchase of books presented no real difficulties, even for men tucked away in the fastnesses of rural England: by 1640, the materials for 'book learning' could be procured readily enough.  

However, Government restrictions limited the type and amount of news available in the provinces:

Certainly by the 1620s, and quite probably several decades earlier, a gentleman resident in the countryside, well away from London, had no need to feel cut off from the latest ordinary printed materials, but he might well have felt isolated from news of the capital and the world.  

In any case, the importance of news should perhaps not be over-estimated: News... contributed to a process of political polarization in the early seventeenth century. ... However, the effects of news should not be

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33 See above, chapter 6.
exaggerated. While it undoubtedly helped to shape public opinion, the link between this opinion and political action was by no means straightforward.  

Of course, the ability to read – in particular to read with intelligence and understanding – was a prerequisite if the printed word was to have more than a superficial impact. Educational developments had, at least among most of the gentry, laid the ground:

> A common educational pattern produced a common language of intellectual discourse, and, thus, a common gentry culture.  

Not that informed debate was confined to the gentry:

> Another notable development was the increase in the distribution of news to the ‘middling sort’ and the lower orders. The effects of this are difficult to measure, but it is at least clear... that the literate yeomen, who comprised the bulk of county freeholders, were now capable of discussing national politics with considerable sophistication.  

The important point is that access to an increasing range of printed information encouraged a growing political awareness; this in turn resulted in a significant increase in national consciousness:

> In county after county concern for local interests gradually shaded into concern for the good of the nation as a whole...  

In the light of the political upheavals that were on the horizon, the printed word, together with educational developments, can be seen to have made a

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57 Holmes, 'The County Community in Stuart Historiography', p. 60.
58 Ibid. p. 89.
59 Anthony Fletcher, 'National and Local Awareness in the County Communities', *Before the English Civil War*, edited by Howard Tomlinson (Basingstoke, 1983), p. 174.
crucial contribution to changes in political awareness in the early seventeenth century.

Unauthorised political literature was circulating in Leicester in 1663, when two packets of republican books were brought to the Mayor's attention. It is perhaps not surprising to find that the earliest known book printed in Leicester was a political one. *Faction Unmask'd*, printed by John Gregory in 1755, dealt with a controversy surrounding an election.

In the eighteenth century, as John Feather notes, the developing provincial book trade played a key role in making new political ideas accessible way beyond the confines of the metropolis, leading to 'an unprecedented degree of political awareness in the provinces'. This supports Donald Read's observation, in his pioneering study of English provincialism, that the emergence of the term 'public opinion' in the 1760s was indicative of 'a new continuity of extra-parliamentary influence in politics' largely arising from easier access to the printed word in the provinces.

Feather also makes the important point that many of these new ideas were radical ideas, to such an extent that

> The radicalisation of the provincial press at the end of the [eighteenth] century... was the first expression of revolt.

Chapter 6 has dealt at some length with radical political literature produced and distributed in Leicester, and it is not intended to reconsider it all here. It may, of course, be the case that radical book-trade activity, in common with

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61 See above, chapter 4.
62 See above, chapter 5.
other expressions of radicalism, is better documented than mainstream
political action, simply by virtue of its being perceived as 'different' and
therefore historically interesting. It needs to be remembered that 'Radical
Leicester', although attracting many prominent radical book-trade people –
notably Richard Phillips, George Bown, John Pares, Joseph Winks and
Thomas Cooper – was also home to those of a Tory persuasion, such as the
Brown family, as well as to some who are not known to have been active
supporters of any political persuasion.65

### 7.5 Print and religion

Religion, like politics, has been dealt with to a large extent in the
narrative, especially in chapter 3, where Leicester Abbey (and Knighton's
Chronicle) and the Lollards are discussed.66 The records of St Martin's
church were examined and evidence was found of book and stationery
purchases.67 Of particular interest is the evidence of literature being
acquired during the Reformation and of a temporary return to Latin
liturgical books in Queen Mary's reign.68

As Jonathan Barry has pointed out, the cultural shift of the Reformation
began to break down the divide between literate culture and oral tradition:

- medieval Catholicism, which relied so heavily on rituals and images to
  convey its messages, was challenged by a new religion of the 'Word'.
- Thus, for many Protestants a religious as well as a cultural choice was
  involved in entering the culture of print...69

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65 See above, chapter 6.
66 See above, chapter 3.
67 See above, chapter 3.
68 See above, chapter 3.
69 Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture', p. 70.
Although the evidence of the St Martin’s accounts shows a number of key Protestant works, such as Bullinger’s *Decades*, Bishop Jewel’s works and Foxe’s *Martyrs*, being acquired for the church, no evidence of their purchase by individuals has been found.\(^{70}\) Evidence for the Town Library, largely a collection of Puritan literature, at least in its early years, has been found in the St Martin’s accounts and elsewhere.\(^{71}\)

For much of its history, Leicester has been home to religious minorities of various persuasions. In the pre-printing era, the written word was of great importance in the cause of Lollardy and evidence of local Lollard activity has been considered.\(^{72}\) The coming of printing revolutionised such activity and there is evidence of nonconformist tracts being sent to Leicester in 1584, when the bookseller Godfrey Cowper referred them to the authorities.\(^{73}\) The Borough Records, a source of much useful data on the book trade, provide evidence for two pedlars of Catholic literature in the seventeenth century. This is of great interest not only because it is important evidence of how the recusant community obtained its books but also because evidence of pedlars of any kind of literature is hard to come by.\(^{74}\)

Religious works were among the first books to be printed in Leicester, and as early as 1746 the Leicester booksellers Thomas Martin and George Brice were involved in the publication of a sermon.\(^{75}\) A number of local printers were involved in the printing of sermons, in particular John Gregory, John Garle Brown and Thomas Combe. Both Brown and Combe printed sermons for publication in London, and Combe also published at least one

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\(^{70}\) See above, chapter 3.  
\(^{71}\) See above, chapter 3.  
\(^{72}\) See above, chapter 3.  
\(^{73}\) See above, chapter 3.  
\(^{74}\) See above, chapter 3.  
\(^{75}\) See above, chapter 4.
nonconformist sermon. Devotional works of various kinds were printed by several Leicester printers, including John Gregory, George Ireland and John Brown. Leicester was an important centre for the printing of Baptist literature. Ann Ireland printed William Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians* in 1792 and several journals were later edited and printed by Joseph Winks, who was the publisher to the General Baptist Union. The elder Thomas Combe was also involved in the publication of nonconformist works. As chapter 6 has shown, many Unitarians, and later Baptists, were very active in radical politics in Leicester, including several book-trade figures, notably Albert Cockshaw and Joseph Winks.

### 7.6 Print and the local economy

Printing must have played an important part in local economic development, though much business printing (bills, receipts, posters, labels and suchlike) is by its very nature ephemeral. Evidence is scarce, though it is known that Isaac Cockshaw printed cheques, bills, address cards, account books, coloured window bills, etc. It is also interesting to note the very specialised printing service that he provided for local hosiers. Several booksellers advertised that they supplied commercial stationery, account books, ledgers etc., an early example being Ann Ireland in 1789.
Ann Ireland stands out in Leicester’s economic history as a bookseller, printer and circulating librarian of considerable importance, demonstrating that it was not impossible for a widow to trade with great success in her own right. Book-trade historians need to remain alert to the evidence for women traders—no easy task since the status of married women tended to render them ‘invisible’ as far as business activity was concerned, although Mary Prior’s study of women in the urban economy suggests that they were actually allowed to play a greater part in business in the early modern period than in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prior also explains that, although a man’s work might be clearly defined, whatever else had to be done to keep the home fires burning was his wife’s duty. If he became ill and could do less and less, then she must do more and more, supervising the apprentices, seeing the orders were fulfilled; or even by some employment, like taking in washing, she must supplement a failing business.

Retailing on a modest scale, which could be mixed with domestic duties, was a trade in which women had traditionally been relatively free to engage. When it became more specialised in the eighteenth century, it created some new opportunities, although there were still restrictions:

Small-scale retailing could be run successfully as a part-time or occasional business, to fit in with the family and household. But the increasing restriction of small-scale retailing reduced the level of women’s participation.

Little is known about most of Leicester’s women book-trade practitioners, beginning with Langford’s widow in 1634, but what evidence there is


86 Ibid. p. 95.

suggests that they were actively involved in their husband's businesses.\textsuperscript{88} Elizabeth Lincoln traded in her own name on at least one occasion during her husband's lifetime; Mrs Hartshorne even had a book printed for her.\textsuperscript{89} There is little evidence for Elizabeth Ireland, though her husband's will indicates that he expected her to take over his business in addition to receiving a regular income from his property.\textsuperscript{90} There is considerably more evidence for Ann Ireland, whose husband's will made specific provision for her to run the business in partnership with her son after he had come of age. This unusual arrangement surely suggests that she had been immersed in her husband's day-to-day business during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{91}

From 1753, one of the main contributions of printing to the local economy was the local newspaper press. Providing a powerful new means of reaching unprecedented numbers of people, not just in Leicester but further afield, the \textit{Leicester Journal}, and later other papers, must have contributed to the success of local businesses, though evidence is lacking. Revenue from advertising would have formed an important part of the income of John Gregory and other newspaper proprietors.

In addition to advertising goods and services for sale, the columns of the local newspapers were an important source of information for employers seeking workers and for individuals looking for jobs; the printer's key role in handling applications and enquiries has been noted.\textsuperscript{92} Local newspapers, including the \textit{Journal}, also contained advertisements for real estate, including commercial properties.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{88} See above, chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{89} See above, chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{90} See above, chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{91} See above, chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{92} See above, chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{93} See above, chapter 5.
Transport improvements, especially (in the period covered by this study) the turnpiking of roads and the building of canals, were crucial to the economic success of Leicester as of other provincial market towns. John Gregory's personal involvement with the town's navigation projects has been noted. John Ireland published advertisements in the *Chronicle* about the proposed Ashby de la Zouch Canal, while John Gregory sold securities on the Hinckley Turnpike Road.94 Some book-trade practitioners were also involved in other business ventures. In the late seventeenth century, evidence was found of two prominent booksellers, Francis Ward and Thomas Hartshorne, apparently gaining additional income from diverse business interests.95 Much later, and in somewhat different circumstances, Thomas Cooper, accused in 1842 of being a Chartist lecturer, described himself (accurately, up to a point, though he was also a Chartist activist!) as a commercial traveller, taking orders in Staffordshire for stationery and a periodical that he published in Leicester.96 The most notable local example of a book-trade person making a great success of another line of business is Thomas Cook. Although apparently a perfectly competent printer/bookseller, Cook's first ventures into organising rail excursions in 1841, would lead him in 1854 to concentrate solely on the travel business.97 Some of Leicester's earlier book-trade practitioners became quite wealthy, notably John Allen and Francis Ward.98

93 See above, chapter 5.
94 See above, chapters 5 and 6.
95 See above, chapter 4.
96 See above, chapter 6.
97 See above, chapter 6.
98 See above, chapters 3 and 4.
7.7 Print, literacy and education

Early modern England was not... an oral society. But neither was it a fully literate one. Although many people could read and write, many others could not: and although documents and books played an increasing role in social life they by no means monopolized the means of communication and record. Indeed it is the interaction between contrasting forms of culture, literate and illiterate, oral and written, which gives this period its particular fascination.

The gradual change from oral culture to literate/print culture certainly holds a particular fascination for the historian of the book. The steady increase in literacy, together with improvements in education, mark a significant cultural shift in history, but it did not happen overnight. The emergence of a print culture in this country, and probably in Europe as a whole, was evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

This is not to gainsay the persuasive arguments of Elizabeth Eisenstein.

Some of the 'features of print culture' which she describes can be traced in provincial England. However, Eisenstein's inspirational but sometimes sweeping views benefit from being tempered by those of Adrian Johns. By examining the book trade and its internal relationships in greater depth than Eisenstein, he argues that far from being a coherent and revolutionary agent of change, the printed book in early modern Europe was an unstable and malleable medium susceptible to a wide range of influences from far beyond its own sphere.

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The print revolution may have been somewhat less coherent than Eisenstein suggests, but there can be no doubt that the printing press was a powerful agent of change. Signs of its impact in Leicester point to an uneven, almost leisurely, birth of print culture but once it had taken hold the impact of the printed word was undoubtedly 'revolutionary' by any definition.

Interestingly, Eisenstein discusses in a later essay the term 'revolution' in relation to the spread of printing:

> What has happened to the term revolution may be taken as an indication of the kinds of problems that are produced by the cumulative effects of print. For the term has itself been overloaded – made to bear the burden of three distinctively different models of change: circular movement, abrupt rupture, continuous development. Given the workings of print culture, any attempt to limit usage at this point is not only unlikely to succeed, but is also likely to be counterproductive...

She also points to the use of the phrase *The Long Revolution* by Raymond Williams, as the title of his seminal study of the spread of literacy, and indicates that she intends 'revolution', as applied to printing, to imply a similar, long-term though far-reaching change. In addition to clarifying Eisenstein's terminology, this helpfully brings us back to the key question of literacy and its spread, without which a printing revolution, however defined, would have been impossible.

Education is an obvious area in which the printed word has potentially a huge impact, and evidence has been found of books being used in Leicester in connection with both formal and informal education. Long before the age of printing, in 1300, there is a chance piece of evidence of Latin grammar

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105 Literacy and its measurement are discussed in chapter 3.
books in Leicester, while in 1440 there was a complaint that grammar was no longer being properly taught at the Abbey school; in 1598 a local boy was informally being taught to read English. Evidence has been found of books being bought for school use from as early as 1627/28.

Several booksellers, beginning in the late seventeenth century with Francis Ward, included school books in their stock, and John Ireland published a school book in 1792. Book-trade practitioners were sometimes personally involved in education, especially that of adults. Thomas Cooper organised classes for working men and boys, and George Bown, professing fairly enlightened views on the education of women, provided classes for young ladies.

7.8 Continuity of book-trade activity

The documentary evidence surviving from the medieval period is insufficient in both quantity and detail to support any assertions about continuity of the earliest local book-trade activity. The first documentary evidence of the parchment-making branch of the book trade in Leicester dates from 1199, and it is impossible to ascertain how much earlier this activity had been practised locally, although the evidence does suggest that it was continuous throughout much of the thirteenth century. The name of Parchment Lane may suggest a well-established parchment-making trade in that vicinity. Although the trade of parchment-making was certainly

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106 See above, chapter 3.
107 See above, chapters 2, 3 and 4.
108 See above, chapters 4 and 6.
109 See above, chapter 6.
110 See above, chapter 3.
111 Also known as Via Parcamenorum or Parchment-makers' Lane.
112 The source of the Borough's parchment purchases is not recorded. Early purchases of paper are likewise not linked to a particular merchant and may not have been local.
practised locally in the early modern period and right through to at least the middle years of the nineteenth century, there is insufficient evidence to prove absolute continuity before the mid-seventeenth century.113

Mainstream book-trade activities — stationery, bookselling and bookbinding — were certainly established in Leicester by the late 1570s, the most important single piece of evidence being the record of Godfrey Cowper's freedom in 1577/78.114 He is known still to have been trading in 1584 but this is the last record of him, and there is no evidence of any book-trade activity between the latter date and 1590/91, when Edward Rudde was made free as a stationer. Since nothing more is known of Rudde, it is possible that there was a brief gap in activity until John Langford began his apparently long career in 1591/92. If Langford then traded continuously until his death in 1633, which seems likely, the longevity of his business is a very notable feature of the local book trade.

Langford's trading period overlaps with that of John Allen, who probably traded continuously between setting up in 1629 and his death in 1638. There is no evidence of book-trade activity immediately following Allen's death in 1638, though a book printed for him was published in 1639 and William Ball was made free as a stationer in the same year. Since nothing further is known about Ball, this leaves another possible gap in the mainstream book trade between 1639 and 1657, the year when Francis Ward set up his business as stationer and bookseller. After 1657 there is evidence for unbroken book-trade activity in Leicester up to the present day.

113 The possible gaps are quite brief. Richard Dickyns seems to have traded from 1593/94 until he was imprisoned in 1598. There is no evidence for parchment-making between 1598 and 1623/24 when Edward Robinson began trading; his son Charles was apprenticed to him in 1645; Charles in turn had an apprentice freed in 1663.
114 See above, chapter 4.
In summary, the relatively short periods for which there is no firm evidence of continuity, for both mainstream book-trade activity (1584 to 1591/92, and 1639 to 1657) and for parchment-making (1598 to 1623/24), indicate a reasonably well-established range of book-trade activity in Leicester throughout most of the period covered by this research.

7.9 How typical was Leicester?

There is now a considerable corpus of historical work on the English provincial book trade, though it varies quite widely in its approach and of course in the scale and quality of the available evidence for different localities. Although comparisons, in other than the broadest of terms, can be somewhat inaccurate and misleading, an attempt has been made to assess the development of the book trade in Leicester against other provincial towns. In particular, Nottingham and Worcester were examined to enable some conclusions to be drawn about the typicality of developments in Leicester. Since the book trade history of both towns has been quite thoroughly researched and published, a comparative exercise, based largely on secondary sources, has been carried out.\(^{115}\)

Nottingham and Worcester were chosen for comparison with Leicester for a number of reasons. The three towns are situated in the Midlands, at roughly the same distance from London. They are all ancient market towns with sizeable agricultural hinterlands, and are also historic county towns, exercising judicial and administrative roles. None of the three was ever in the first rank of provincial towns (Norwich, Bristol, Newcastle, etc.) in terms of population or economic importance, although Worcester was the eighth largest English town in 1167. The three were roughly comparable in economic terms: after the largest regional centres,

seven other regional centres of an agricultural district were supported by industry either within the town or in the hinterland. These were Canterbury, Ipswich with its shipbuilding and fishing, Leicester, Nottingham, Salisbury, Worcester and Shrewsbury.

Worcester remained the largest of the three until the latter half of the eighteenth century, when it was overtaken by both Nottingham and Leicester. In the 1670s for example, Worcester had a population of about 8,500, Nottingham 5,500, and Leicester 4,600. Nottingham and Leicester were of roughly comparable size, although Nottingham experienced an earlier period of rapid growth: by 1801 the population of Nottingham had reached 28,861, while Leicester's was 16,953. By 1851, however, the two were much closer, with Nottingham at 58,419 and Leicester at 60,642.

116 Between 100 and 130 miles 'as the crow flies'.
117 Angus McInnes, The English Town, 1660-1760, (1980), p. 6. (Nottingham and Leicester were 21st and 22nd respectively.)
118 Christopher Chalklin, The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: a Study of the Building Process 1740-1820, (1974), p. 9. (The only other Midlands town in this group, Shrewsbury, was not chosen for comparison, since its book-trade history is unique because of its trade with Wales including Welsh language printing.)
Aspects of the 'English Urban Renaissance' can be identified in all three towns and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, each had its population of resident gentry as well as attracting the rural gentry of its county. Both groups formed a substantial customer base for book-trade businesses, as did the rising middle class. As county towns, Leicester, Nottingham and Worcester were focal points for the gentry attending the assizes and quarter sessions. Worcester, alone of the three, also had the benefit of a cathedral, with its considerable cultural as well as religious significance. For booksellers and printers, the cathedral clergy and their families formed an important group of educated customers, not only as book-buyers but also, in some cases, as authors.120

Nottingham is of particular interest on account of its unique position as Leicester's rival as regional capital of the East Midlands. In book-trade terms, both towns seem to have been quite active, although several aspects of the trade, notably the arrival of printing and newspaper publishing, occurred earlier in Nottingham. The close book-trade links between the two towns have already been noted, in particular the various members of the Ward family and the partnership of John Gregory and Samuel Cresswell.121

As in Leicester, some branches of the book trade were already established in Nottingham before the end of the sixteenth century, although the earliest recorded practitioners were two bookbinders: John Eltycke (fl. 1575) and Robert Wilkinson (fl. 1588).122 In 1588, Wilkinson repaired one of the Borough of Nottingham's record books.123 Unlike Leicester, which had four

120 Leicester did not have its own cathedral between the Danish invasions of the ninth century and the re-establishment of a Diocese of Leicester in 1926.
121 See above, chapters 4 and 5.
122 Walton, Survey of the Printing Trade..., p. 1. (Eltycke was also known as Harley.)
123 I am grateful to Dr. Maureen Bell for this reference, from the Nottingham Borough Records, vol. 5, p. 217.
booksellers or stationers before 1600, the earliest recorded in Nottingham are Thomas Woolley (fl. 1606) and his son John Woolley (fl. 1634). Another early bookseller was Samuel Richards, trading from 1669 to 1703; Hannah Richards (trading 1703-1704), presumably his widow, is the first female book-trade practitioner known in Nottingham.

The earliest evidence of trading in more than a single location is found in the 1690s, when Gervas Sulley, a stationer, was trading in Nottingham and Normanton, and John Mortlock, a bookseller, was trading in Nottingham and Newark. This is rather later than Elizabeth Lincoln, recorded as trading in both Leicester and Loughborough in 1675.

Printing arrived in Nottingham thirty years ahead of Leicester, in 1710, when both William Ayscough and John Collyer set up printing offices, Ayscough probably being the first. In his first two years Ayscough printed at least two broadsides and a book-sale catalogue for a Sheffield bookseller. He also printed a 36-page book in 1710: Remarks on the Several Paragraphs of the Bishop of Salisbury’s Speech...

In 1719 Ayscough printed a book for the Leicester bookseller, Mrs Hartshorn. He and Collyer are also significant as the founders of the town’s first two newspapers. As the early issues of Ayscough’s Weekly Courant and Collyer’s Nottingham Post no longer survive, it cannot be ascertained which was first, though they seem to have commenced at about the same time.
The activities of the Ward family, who seem to have traded in both Leicester and Nottingham, have already been discussed. Some of the earliest books printed in Nottingham were the work of William Ward, who is known to have printed three books in 1717, including *A Practical and Grammatical Introduction to the Latin Tongue*, by Sir Thomas Parkyns, the imprint of which indicates that the book was sold by booksellers in London, Derby and York, as well as by John Ward in Leicester.

The relationships within the Ward family are not greatly clarified by the published studies of the Nottingham book trade, although such evidence as there is, including this imprint, does tend to support the likelihood of the Wards of Leicester and Nottingham being the same family, trading with a degree of flexibility between the two towns. Walton’s study indicates that William Ward of Nottingham is recorded variously as stationer (1705-1710), bookseller and printer (1717-54) and as vendor of the *Derby Mercury* (1732). Ward had died by 1754; it is not clear what then happened to his business, though it may have been run by his son, also William. By 1770 the business had been acquired by the important Nottingham printer and bookseller Samuel Tupman.

An interesting point of comparison between Leicester and Nottingham is chapbook printing. As already noted, chapbooks are known to have been printed by just one Leicester printer, John Ireland the younger, but in the case of Nottingham, there is rather more evidence for the printing of

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132 See above, chapter 4.
133 Creswell, Collections..., p. 16.
134 Walton, *Survey of the Printing Trade...*, p. 3.
135 See above, chapter 4. Henry Hartopp (ed.), *Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1197-1770, including the Apprentices sworn..., 1646-1770*, (Leicester, 1927), p. 318; Walton, *Survey of the Printing Trade...*, p. 3, also lists William Ward trading as a bookseller in 1774; since the elder William had died by 1754 this is probably a reference to his son.
chapbooks. Cropper's study indicates that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, two of Nottingham's three printers, Burbage and Sutton, were producing chapbooks. However, Clarke adds that Nottingham's earliest known chapbook, *Robin Hood's Garland*, was printed by Creswell some time before 1775. It is priced at threepence and contains 64pp., including 27 cuts.

Burbage printed an edition of the same story in 1792 and Sutton also published an edition in 1794 (see below). In comparison with Ireland's output, Burbage's are extensively illustrated. Cropper was aware of eleven surviving chapbooks printed by Burbage and twenty by Sutton, but Clarke notes that a number of chapbooks printed by both Burbage and Sutton have come to light since Cropper's time. The earliest known chapbook printed by Sutton was his edition of *Robin Hood's Garland*, published in three eight-page parts in 1794.

One example of a Sutton chapbook, *Rhyming Dick and the Strolling Player...*, bears the imprint: 'Nottingham. Printed by C. Sutton, for the Flying Stationers.' This is a reference to the itinerant pedlars - known variously as 'flying', 'running' and 'walking' stationers - who sold chapbooks and other cheap popular printed matter such as execution broadsides. While nothing is known of Leicester's chapbook pedlars, there is some interesting information on those of Nottingham, including Peter Conroy, known as 'the last of the old flying stationers'. A great deal more is known about David

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137 See above, chapter 6.
138 Cropper, *Nottinghamshire Printed Chapbooks*, p. 8. (Tupman is the printer named as not printing chapbooks.)
139 Clarke, *Early Nottingham Printers...*, p. 56.
141 A copy of this chapbook is inserted in one of the copies of Cropper's *Nottinghamshire Printed Chapbooks* held by the Nottingham Central Library.
142 Clarke, *Early Nottingham Printers...*, p. 47.
143 Cropper, *Nottinghamshire Printed Chapbooks*, p. 7
Love (1750-1827) who wrote an informative autobiography which was published in two forms: as a chapbook (printed in Newcastle, undated) and as a more substantial book, including some poetry, printed in Nottingham (and running to five editions between 1823 and 1825) by Sutton and Son.\

Sutton the chapbook printer – who was himself said to have started as a ‘walking stationer’ – was also the publisher of the *Nottingham Review*, a radical newspaper which commenced in 1808. Nottingham’s radical press bears comparison with that of Leicester. Both towns had an early radical paper: the *Leicester Herald* (1792-95) and the very short-lived *Nottingham Gazette* (1780).

Turning to Worcester, we find considerable similarities and a few key differences. The most striking difference is that there was a printer in Worcester as early as the middle of the sixteenth century. John Oswen arrived in Worcester from Ipswich probably in late 1548; in January 1549 he was granted a seven-year royal privilege for the printing of service books for distribution to Wales and the Marches. Having printed about twenty books, Oswen left Worcester in 1553; well-known as a printer of Protestant books, he seems to have ceased printing on the accession of Queen Mary and probably left the country.

There was then a long gap in printing in Worcester until 1709, when the London-trained Stephen Bryan set up his press and also commenced the

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144 Michael Harris, ‘A Few Shillings for Small Books’, *passim.*
145 Ibid., p. 104 (note 17).
146 Derek Fraser, *The Nottingham Press: 1800-1850,* pp. 54-60.
147 See Derek Fraser’s two articles: ‘The Nottingham Press: 1800-1850,’ and ‘The Press in Leicester c1790-1861’. The radical *Nottingham Gazette* is not to be confused with a later, ultra-Tory, paper of the same name.
Worcester Post-Man, the town's first newspaper. Thus Worcester, like Nottingham, was about thirty years ahead of Leicester in terms of the arrival of printing in the eighteenth century. Leicester had an even longer wait for its first newspaper: it was not until 1753 that John Gregory commenced the *Leicester Journal*, more than forty years behind Nottingham and Worcester.

The overall picture that emerges from Margaret Cooper's study of the Worcester book-trade in the eighteenth century is one broadly comparable in scale and range to that of Nottingham and Leicester. In the earlier period Worcester, in common with both of the other towns, supported a number of book-trade businesses – more than ten booksellers are known to have traded in the seventeenth century, although only one individual is known in the sixteenth century: Alexander Kitson, a stationer recorded in 1571. Francis Ash, bookseller and bookbinder, trading in the 1640s, was rather unusual in openly selling Catholic books.

When Stephen Bryan set up his newspaper in Worcester in 1709, his activities had a considerable impact on the town's book trade:

> The arrival of Bryan stimulated the book trade in three basic ways. He provided some booksellers with another string to their bow. He developed a distribution system which delivered not only newspapers but books and other stock to customers wherever they lived, and which in turn played an important part in stimulating the reading habit. He also offered London publishers the chance to insert advertisements which could only have prompted interest and enquiries of local booksellers...

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150 See above, chapter 5.
151 Plomer, *Dictionary...*, vol. 1, p. 166; BBTI record no. 12876.
This is a very similar picture to John Gregory's activities in Leicester, though it happened more than four decades earlier in Worcester.¹⁵⁴

The comparable scale of the book trade in Worcester and Leicester is indicated by the almost identical number of known apprentices in the eighteenth century: twenty-eight for Worcester, twenty-nine for Leicester.¹⁵⁵ However, there is a significant difference in terms of the distance from which apprentices were attracted to the two towns. Cooper notes that 'only four apprentices moved to Worcester to train, none from any great distance'.¹⁵⁶ This contrasts markedly with eighteenth-century Leicester, where no fewer than twenty of the twenty-nine known apprentices originated outside the town, including four from Staffordshire, two from Lincolnshire and one each from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire and Buckinghamshire. Almost all of Worcester's book-trade apprentices were bound to local masters and most came from families within the trade – evidence, in Cooper's words, of 'the close-knit nature of the city's book trade...'.¹⁵⁷ There is evidence of considerable involvement of women in the trade, apparently rather more so than in Leicester.¹⁵⁸

Like Leicester and Nottingham, Worcester was home to several outstanding book-trade individuals, notably Harvey Berrow, who took over the Worcester Post-Man and turned it into Berrow's Worcester Journal, the longest-surviving

¹⁵⁵ Cooper, Worcester Book Trade, p. 12-13; Henry Hartopp (ed.), Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1197-1770, including the Apprentices sworn..., 1646-1770, (Leicester, 1927), and Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1770-1930, including the Apprentices sworn..., 1770-1926, (Leicester, 1933), passim. (These figures relate only to the mainstream book trades; parchment-makers etc. are excluded.)
¹⁵⁶ Cooper, Worcester Book Trade, p. 12.
¹⁵⁷ Cooper, Worcester Book Trade, p. 13. (Paradoxically, very few Worcester book-trade apprentices were freed by patrimony.)
English provincial newspaper. John Mountfort (freed 1686, died 1716), was an important bookseller (selling especially religious titles and school books) whose surviving correspondence and other papers contain valuable evidence about his stock, services and customers. Mountfort’s business, which passed to his son and grandson, was very successful and survived for more than seventy years; the family became quite prosperous and owned several properties.

Another key figure in the Worcester trade was Samuel Gamidge, who began trading as a bookseller in the 1750s and became a prolific chapbook publisher. At least a hundred and twenty chapbooks published in Worcester are known; many of them were printed for Gamidge. He also traded on market-days in Bromsgrove and Tewkesbury and built up an extensive network of trade links in and beyond Worcestershire. Although Gamidge was in financial difficulties when he died in 1777, his widow managed to keep the business going for another twenty years.

The importance of Worcester cathedral to the book trade has already been noted. The printing and publishing of sermons was a key feature of the local trade, perhaps to a rather greater extent than in Leicester, although many sermons were printed there too. In common with Leicester, though on a smaller scale, Worcester also had a population of dissenters and several Baptist pamphlets were printed in the town in the 1760s and 70s.

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It is interesting to note that Margaret Cooper's conclusion to her study of the eighteenth-century Worcester book trade is remarkably similar to mine in relation to Leicester. She observes that, although there is now much evidence for an expanding provincial book trade,

in Worcester, growth was steady rather than dramatic, consolidation and continuity its key features.¹⁶³

As in the case of Leicester, Worcester would have to wait until the nineteenth century for a period of rapid expansion.

Although individual aspects of the book trade, such as those outlined above, may be used as points of comparison, it is more difficult to assess the overall picture, at any given time, in terms of the scale and nature of the book trade in different towns. Although evidence of individual traders, and categories of book-trade activity – such as chapbook printing – may be compared, it is much more difficult to establish the number and size of businesses operating at any given time. Although there are records of individuals apprenticed and freed, it is often not known whether they went on to trade as journeymen, and if so where, or whether they left the book trade altogether. Evidence of an individual setting up in business is quite rare.

However, despite these difficulties, it is possible to attempt a 'broad-brush' comparison of the book trade in Leicester, Nottingham and Worcester. Before the seventeenth century, the evidence is patchy and probably incomplete, although there are indications of activity in all three towns prior to 1700: Leicester certainly having four bookseller/stationers, Nottingham two bookbinders (which seems a little unlikely unless there were some bookselling activity, although there is no evidence of the latter trade), and

¹⁶³ Cooper, Worcester Book Trade, p. 40.
just one stationer (and one printer) recorded for sixteenth-century Worcester.

In the seventeenth century, the evidence suggests that the mainstream book trade in Leicester was on a rather more modest scale than in the other two towns. Known booksellers or stationers are: six in Leicester, twelve in Nottingham and eleven (plus two bookbinders) in Worcester.¹⁶⁴

Comparing the three towns for the eighteenth century, the most striking feature is the apparently broad similarity in the scale of the book trade. The number of known individuals (including apprentices) engaged in the mainstream book trade were: 52 in Leicester, 61 in Nottingham and 59 in Worcester. These broadly similar totals mask a very interesting difference: the figure for Nottingham comprises 26 printers in addition to 28 bookseller/stationers (2 of whom were also printers) and 7 bookbinders.

This is a marked contrast with Leicester and Worcester, where virtually all printing was carried out by booksellers or stationers, Leicester having just one specialist printer (and no specialist binder) and Worcester two. These simple figures may not be conclusive but the difference in the Nottingham figure is so great as to suggest at least the tentative conclusion that the book trade in that town became specialised considerably earlier than it did in either Leicester or Worcester.¹⁶⁵

Apart from this significant difference, the scale of the book trade in the eighteenth century was broadly similar in the three towns, with Leicester perhaps developing a little more slowly than Nottingham and Worcester. In

¹⁶⁴ Figures from BBTI.
¹⁶⁵ The figures used for comparison in the eighteenth century are drawn from the published works already cited and from BBTI. The Nottingham hypothesis perhaps merits further research.
any event it is clear that all three towns provided both residents and visitors with easy access to a number of book-trade businesses, offering them a steadily increasing range of stock and services.

7.10 Conclusion

As noted at the outset, the objectives of this study were slightly refined in the light of experience gained during the early stages of the research. The objectives were then redesigned as the following series of key questions:

- how did people obtain books and related material in Leicester at different periods up to c1850?
- why and how did the demand for books and related material develop in the town?
- what was the impact of the printed word on the local community?
- what evidence is there for continuous local book-trade activity?
- to what extent is local book-trade activity typical?
- how did the book trade of Leicester relate to the trade in the rest of the country, in particular to the Midlands region and to London?

This study set out to provide answers to these questions in a broadly narrative account, highlighting several important features of local book-trade development. It has proved possible, despite some unevenness in the available evidence, to offer at least partial answers. In fact, the formulation of answers to these questions enables the statement of a number of broad hypotheses:

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166 See above, chapter 1.
that books were to be found in Leicester in the Middle Ages
that books could be acquired locally from the late sixteenth century
that there is evidence of continuous book-trade activity in Leicester from 1657 to the present day
that books and other items were printed in Leicester from c. 1740
that the book trade developed in Leicester at broadly the same pace as in other middle-ranking English market towns, although printing and newspaper publishing arrived somewhat later than in some comparable towns
that Leicester was well connected with the book trade in the metropolis, the Midlands region and further afield.

It is important to add that none of the findings of the present study conflicts with John Feather's conclusions about book-trade development across the country in the eighteenth century. Feather rightly emphasises the pioneering role of the book trade in terms of nationwide distribution:

> While most goods were still consumed in the locality of their production, the book trade historically dealt in products manufactured in bulk and distributed widely.

This development was greatly enhanced by the provincial newspaper proprietors who, as Feather notes, came to dominate the provincial book trade in the eighteenth century. This was certainly the case in Leicester, as in Nottingham and Worcester. The newspaper proprietors developed their networks of newsmen into an efficient distribution method for newspapers, books and other printed items, and in many cases also for stationery, patent

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medicines and household goods. Feather makes the important point that the
newsmen were ‘the final link in the chain between writer and reader’. 169

By the end of the eighteenth century, the residents of Leicestershire (and of
Nottinghamshire and Worcestershire) enjoyed unprecedented access to the
printed word through booksellers and stationers in the county towns – and
increasingly also in the smaller rural market towns – as well as through the
local networks of newsmen. Their choice of reading matter was now easier
and better informed than ever before through greatly improved awareness,
largely by means of newspaper advertising, of what was being published in
London and in the provinces

The evidence for the history of the book trade in Leicester is probably
rather better documented than for many other towns. The Borough
Records, ecclesiastical records and other primary sources yield an abundance
of data to illuminate the history of the trade. The evidence suggests that, up
to perhaps the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in book-trade terms, as
in many other ways, Leicester developed steadily at its own somewhat
relaxed pace, more often following than leading. The town was quite late in
getting its first printer and its first newspaper. Nevertheless, in broad terms,
the scale and nature of the book trade in Leicester – and its continuity after
1657 – may be judged to have been appropriate to its size and importance as
a middle-ranking market town.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the town and its book trade
changed quite dramatically. During the latter part of the period studied, not
least in the growing turmoil of radical politics and religious dissent, Leicester
became less typical of provincial towns. In such matters, the printed word

169 Feather, Provincial Book Trade, p. 124.
and the book trade undoubtedly reflected – and helped to shape – the sometimes restless nature of the town as it lived through times of great change. Perhaps the town’s ancient motto *Semper Eadem* – always the same – was no longer the most appropriate description for either the town of Leicester or its book trade.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note 1 Place of publication is London, unless otherwise indicated.
Note 2 TL AHS = Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.
Note 3 ROLLR = Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
Note 4 Books and other items mentioned in the text which are of interest solely because they were printed or published in Leicester are not listed. Booksellers' catalogues are not listed, neither are newspapers.

PRIMARY SOURCES (MANUSCRIPT)

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