

The Stockbridge Elections

THE borough of Stockbridge, in Hampshire, first returned two members to Parliament in 1563, and was disenfranchised by the Reform Act of 1832. Between these two dates the history of its elections was a stormy one. On one occasion, in 1694, it nearly lost its parliamentary representation altogether, and in 1793 sixty-three named voters were disqualified. The name of Stockbridge became something of a by-word for corruption, and it has often been classed as another 'rotten' borough, represented by men who took not the faintest interest in their constituents.

This is not altogether fair. That the Stockbridge electors, at least between 1680 and 1832, sold their votes is perfectly true. They made no secret of the fact; they got into trouble not because they were more corrupt than other people but rather because they were less discreet.¹ Stockbridge was never in anyone's pocket; it was a borough which required, as the saying went, 'attention and management'.² The conduct of its voters was in some ways deplorable, but they maintained a determined independence and an irrepressible sense of humour. The chronicle of their activities is not an edifying one, but it tells us a good deal about the workings of English local history.

The manor of Stockbridge, which covered most of the borough, was, until 1824, part of the Duchy of Lancaster, and as such dependent upon the Crown. Certain small payments, the 'rents of assize', were payable by tenants of the Duchy living within the borough, and the collection of such rents was normally leased out to a local agent. The amount was small, and a tenant, however obnoxious to the collector, could not be ejected from his house so long as the rent was duly paid. Another small manor in Stockbridge, held until 1536 by the Prior of Mottisfont, was subsequently granted by Henry VIII to William, Lord Sandys of the Vyne, and was held in 1563 by his grandson, another William, who was a minor and a ward of the Crown. Parliamentary enfranchisement of the borough might therefore have been reasonably expected to provide representatives susceptible to the influence either of the Queen herself, as Duke of Lancaster, or of a family which had lately risen in the service of the Crown, whom the Queen delighted to honour.

In fact there is some evidence that at first the Sandys connection and the possession of the 'rents of assize' did play some part in deciding who was to represent the borough in Parliament. Walter Sandys sat in the Parliament of 1563, and in 1597 and 1603 the burgesses returned members of the northern branch of the Sandys family. In 1589 the rents of assize were leased for seventy years to Henry Gifford, who had already sat for Stockbridge in the Parliament of 1572. The Gifford connection proved to be an extremely interesting one. Henry Gifford was the son of Richard Gifford,³ lord of the manor of King's Somborne, by his wife Anne, née Bainbridge, who had inherited her manor of East Tytherley from her kinsman Thomas Bainbridge, one of the two Hampshire men burned for Protestantism in the reign of Mary.⁴ Henry's son Richard represented Stockbridge in every Parliament between 1620 and

1. 'This borough cuts as distinguished a figure in the annals of bribery as any in England; not that it has been more venal than others, but less discreet in the practice of it.' Oldfield, *Representative History*, Vol. III, p. 516.

2. *Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson*, ed. W. T. Laprade, p. 76.

3. *Duchy of Lancaster Pleadings*, C. IV, G. no. 2.

4. *V.C.H. Hants*, vol. II, p. 72.

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1627, and his daughter Catherine married into the Hampshire family of Wallop of Farleigh, and was the mother of Sir Henry Wallop who sat for Stockbridge in 1614⁵ and was senior member for the shire in 1620, 1625, 1627 and 1640. Sir Henry's daughter, another Catherine, married William Heveningham the regicide, who represented Stockbridge in the Long Parliament of 1640, and Catherine's brother, Robert Wallop the regicide, was senior Burgess for Stockbridge in 1658 and 1660.

In general, the Stockbridge representatives between 1563 and 1714 were to a marked extent drawn from the local Hampshire families. Fifty-three members in all were returned, and of these twenty-seven belonged to, or had married into, families which had been settled in Hampshire for at least two generations, while a further ten at least had some link with the county, either by owning land or advowsons, descent from a Hampshire mother or the marriage of a close relative into a family prominent in county affairs. It is worthy of note that with the exception of members of the house of S. John, whose ancestors had held a barony at Farley Chamberlain in the twelfth century,⁶ all the Stockbridge members were sprung from the houses of 'new men' of the Tudor period—people who had thriven in the service of the Crown and prospered by husbandry or trade to the point where they could buy land and establish themselves in the lordship of manors.

We have no evidence before the Restoration that Stockbridge electors sold their votes, but by 1689 the custom was already well established, and the price of each vote appears to have been in the region of four to six guineas. Occasionally a substantial gift in kind was offered to the community as a whole—Essex Strode presented the borough with a magnificent silver mace in 1681 and George Pitt and Thomas Jervoise gave valuable Communion plate to the Church in 1697⁷—but it is noteworthy that these gifts did not ensure for their donors a long tenure of the coveted seat. Direct, simple payment in cash was the sure way to capture the electorate.

Such payments seem to have been negotiated by the Bailiff, who in this small and largely agricultural borough acted as returning officer. The Bailiff was, and still is, elected annually by the burgesses, and the man chosen seems frequently to have been an innkeeper⁸—a fact which proved very useful when it came to providing rooms in which deliberations could be held as to the best way of forcing up the price of votes. The number of voters varied from time to time but was never very large. Oldfield, writing in 1816, says that 'the right of election is in all the inhabitants paying to church and poor'⁹, which indicates that in his time Stockbridge fell into the category known as 'Scot and lot boroughs'. Earlier qualifications are uncertain. The election of Walter Sandys and William S. John in 1563 was made by 'Richard Belchamber, bailiff, William Poulet, Esquire, Robert Pystor, gentleman, William Skylling, gentleman, Nicholas Thorpe, gentleman, William Webb, Robert Belchamber and John Windover, burgesses of the said borough.'¹⁰ Of these Poulet, Pystor (*alias* Baker), Skylling and Thorpe were members of local landowning families who had secured their rights as burgesses by the purchase of plots of land, but their main interest lay outside Stockbridge. That these eight electors formed a meagre proportion of the inhabitants is shown by the fact that in a plea lodged with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster some thirty years later, it was alleged that there were 'a hundred persons or thereabouts burgesses and inhabitants of the borough of Stockbridge' and it is clear that this number included only the heads of households,

5. Not without opposition from his brother-in-law. *Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. I, p. 477.

6. V.C.H. Hants, Vol. IV, p. 116.

7. The borough of Stockbridge still possesses both these gifts.

8. Oldfield, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 514–5.

9. Oldfield, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 514.

10. Parl. Ret. 1213–1702, p. 403.

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as the petition refers to the difficulty which they had 'to live in any reasonable sort and maintain themselves, their wives and their children'.¹¹ In 1614 the number of voters was 28.¹² By 1689 it had risen considerably, since more than forty voters were induced to sign a paper saying that they supported William Montague, one of two rival candidates, while an unknown number adhered to his opponent William Strode.¹³ In 1790, 101 votes were cast, and in 1793 a bill was introduced to disqualify 63 voters, whose names are recorded, because they had notoriously succumbed to bribes.¹⁴ Oldfield put the number of voters in 1816 at 57.¹⁵ In practice it seems that the Bailiff could do very much as he pleased in the matter of including or excluding voters. True, his actions could be called in question by the House of Commons, but this course would involve a petition and a good deal of expense incurred in the production of witnesses, so that it was unlikely to be taken except by a defeated candidate who had money to burn and was sure of strong backing in the House. It was not until the period between 1689 and 1695 that the irregularity of Stockbridge procedure attracted any wide attention.

In 1689 Oliver S. John, the senior burgess representing Stockbridge, died while Parliament was in session. At a by-election the seat was contested by William Strode, who held the neighbouring manor of King's Somborne in right of his wife, and William Montague, described in the parliamentary returns as 'of Evesham'. Montague was returned by the Bailiff as duly elected, but Strode brought forward a petition against his election, alleging that his supporters had been promised four guineas a vote, and that some, at least, had received payment. Montague retaliated that Strode had offered six guineas a vote. In evidence before a committee of the House 'William Reeves, Thomas Bucknall and John Hall testified that they were at Samuel Hall's, an innkeeper and constable of the town, the day before the election, and that the said Hall then declared that anyone who would vote for Mr. Montague should have four guineas, but (they) could not say by whose authority he offered it, only that before the said offer the generality of voters were inclined to Mr. Strode'. Robinson, Montague's agent, admitted that certain payments had been made, but he explained that that these were not so much bribes as reimbursements of the expenses to which Stockbridge people had been put in quartering James II's soldiers at the time of William of Orange's march from Torbay. The money, he said, was a purely charitable gift, provided by 'some few gentlemen who met together after the election and agreed upon it.' Montague's counsel produced a document, signed by more than forty of the electors, stating that they 'had freely chosen Mr. Montague without any importunity'. The effect of this manifesto was rather spoiled in cross-examination by a burgess named Gosling, who admitted signing the paper, but said that he did not know what was written in it.

The Committee held that both elections were void, and the Bailiff, together with Robinson and two others, was put into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms for giving and taking bribes. Montague was disabled by vote of the House from standing for re-election during the life of the Parliament, but Strode escaped, by a margin of three votes, from a like fate, and a month later he was contesting the seat against Thomas Neale, to whom the Duchy of Lancaster had just granted the rents of assize. Neale was returned, but in January 1690 a petition was presented to the House 'showing that William Strode, Esquire . . . did employ divers persons to threaten some men that unless they would give him their votes it would cost them £200, and

11. Duchy of Lancaster Pleadings. (Not checked.)

12. J.H.C., Vol. I, p. 477.

13. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 286-7.

14. *Ibid.*, Vol. XLVIII, p. 427.

15. Oldfield, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

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that he would indict others . . . of crimes for which they had already suffered the censure of this hon. House'. Strode was obviously making use of his knowledge of local affairs to substitute threats for bribery.

The general election of 1690 freed the irrepressible Montague from disqualification, and he immediately offered himself for re-election. He was returned, with Richard Whitehead as his colleague, but died soon afterwards. The vacant seat was contested by Thomas Jervoise and Antony Rowe. Jervoise was returned, but Rowe sent up a petition stating 'that he was duly elected for the said borough of Stockbridge, yet the Bailiff of the said borough hath unduly returned Thomas Jervoise, though he hath not so many qualified voices as the petitioner, in that several of them were obtained by threats in practices'. This petition was afterwards withdrawn.

In 1693 Richard Whitehead died, and the candidates for the vacant seat were Antony Rowe and Henry Dawley. Rowe was returned, as the result, in the words of Dawley's petition, 'of extravagant gifts and bribes'. By this time the House was thoroughly exasperated by Stockbridge affairs, and on December 20 it resolved 'that the said election for the said borough of Stockbridge is a corrupt and void election. That a bill be brought in for disabling the said borough to send burgesses to serve in Parliament for the future'. News of this bill caused considerable alarm and despondency among the Stockbridge electors, who saw a considerable proportion of their income slipping out of their grasp. They hastily sent up two petitions 'praying . . . that the ancient frame and constitution of the said borough in sending members to Parliament may not be altered' and promising 'in all difficult cases to consult the gentlemen of the country thereabouts'. They did not promise to eschew bribery, but took their stand on the ancient right of their borough to be represented, and indicated that they would in future be more discreet. It would have seemed to them unreasonable that they should become incorruptible, for the traffic in seats was perfectly well understood in Parliament, and most of the members had taken some part in it.

The bill for disenfranchisement did, however, go forward and reached the committee stage. There it foundered, since there was no agreement as to where the two seats should be re-allotted. Romsey petitioned for them but was rejected in favour of Basingstoke, which regarded them as a tiresome and expensive luxury. A suggestion that two additional seats should be granted to the county was rejected as an awkward precedent. Stockbridge was finally left to enjoy her elections for another 138 years.

Enjoy them she did. Throughout the eighteenth century her parliamentary representatives, drawn increasingly from all over the country and no longer representing the old Hampshire interest, paid heavily, in some cases as much as £3,000 a seat, for their elections. The money went to the candidate's agent, who deducted expenses and distributed the rest among the voters. It was found profitable to send the Bailiff, or some other discreet persons, as far away as London to interview prospective candidates who sounded promising, for the voters were determined to compete in the open market. John Robinson, writing in 1784, classed Stockbridge among the 'open boroughs' which might be secured by 'attention and management'¹⁶—in other words by judicious nursing of the constituency and adequate bribery of the electors—as opposed to 'pocket boroughs' which were at the disposal of some powerful patron or 'influence boroughs' where the King, the ministry in power or some local landowner could sway the votes. Payment for votes was regarded almost as a regular source of income, and in

16. Minutes of the Evidence taken before the Select Committee, 1793, p. 17.

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1716 the threat of a Septennial Act was regarded as a serious attack upon the standard of living:

'Sad melancholy every visage wears;
'What! no election come in seven long years? . . .
'Our streets no more with tides of ale shall float,
'Nor cobblers feast six years upon a vote'.¹⁷

A local tradition, preserved by Oldfield, tells that one of the liveliest of Stockbridge's representatives diversified the serious business of buying and selling with a little ingenious bribery of his own. Sir Richard Steele 'carried his election against a powerful opposition by the merry expedient of sticking a large apple full of guineas, and declaring that it should be the prize of that man whose wife should first be brought to bed after that day nine months. This, we are told, procured him the interest of the women, who are said to commemorate Sir Richard's Bounty to this day, and once made a strenuous effort to procure a standing order that no man should ever be received as candidate who did not offer himself on the same terms'.¹⁸

The last great fight of the eighteenth century involving the Borough of Stockbridge was caused by the general election of 1790, and we are fortunate in possessing a full record in the minutes of a select committee of the House, ordered to be printed on February 22, 1793.¹⁹ The candidates who stood for election were John Cator and Major John Scott, against Joseph Foster Barham and George Porter. None of them, apparently, had any hereditary connection with Stockbridge or indeed with Hampshire, through Barham, who had made his money with the East India Company, subsequently established himself in county society by buying from the Duchy of Lancaster the manor of Stockbridge, and settling down to a fairly regular parliamentary connection with the place.

The election was held in circumstances of some difficulty for the borough. William Newman, the Bailiff, should have acted as returning officer, but his title was questioned by the Duchy of Lancaster, which before the end of 1792 obtained a judgment in the Court of King's Bench declaring his appointment void. Cator and Scott (or rather Cator, for Scott sat back and allowed Cator and his supporters to do all the work) therefore persuaded John Churcher, the retired Bailiff, to act as returning officer. Churcher was under the thumb of the redoubtable John Bucket, landlord of The King's Head Inn,²⁰ at whose house the voters met, and he returned Cator and Scott with 78 votes as against 23. Barham and Porter thereupon petitioned the House of Commons, that the election be declared invalid for three reasons—because Churcher, being retired, had no power to act as returning officer; because Cator was guilty of gross and flagrant bribery, and because there existed a secret arrangement between Cator and Scott who, on payment of a large sum of money was to be established in safe possession of a seat. A group of voters, presumably those who had supported Barham and Porter, sent up a supporting petition. Both petitions were referred to a select committee.

17. John Gay, *Epistle to the Right Honourable the Earl of Burlington*. (Collected Poems, ed. J. Underhill, Vol. I, p. 188.)

18. Oldfield, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 515.

19. I have a copy of these minutes, printed for the House of Commons and now somewhat rare. They occupy a folio volume of 66 pages. They are my authority for the description of the events concerning the election of Cator and Scott.

20. Bucket's delightful epitaph survives in Stockbridge churchyard. I cannot resist quoting the last four lines:

'Then rise, immortal Bucket, rise
'And claim thy station in the skies,
'Twixt Amphora and Pisces shine
'Still guarding Stockbridge with thy sign.'

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The evidence as to bribery was drawn mostly from Stockbridge voters. Their memory for detail proved to be vague in the extreme, which is perhaps not surprising since most of them had accepted bribes and one of them, John Dixon, had recently stood in the pillory for perjury. They adopted, as far as they could, the prudent course of 'lying low and saying nothing'. It was, however, established that at some time before the election Christopher Bishop, the constable, had met Cator in London, and that on his return he had reported an understanding by which Cator had offered to pay seventy guineas a vote. The electors, seeking confirmation of this extremely tempting offer, sent up two burgesses, William Cozier and Thomas Horner, to London to see Cator and his attorney Jackson. When it came to giving evidence to the Committee, both Cozier and Horner admitted only the vaguest recollection of what was said in London, but they returned to Stockbridge sufficiently well primed to report their progress to a packed meeting of voters at the Red Lion. Christopher Bishop provided the beer, which seems to have been of a strength worthy of the occasion. There was a great deal of talk—'the whole room was in a roar'—but no witness could recall precisely what was said. Indeed some of them declared, probably with a good deal of truth, that 'they could not remember anything after the hogshead was tapped'. It was, however, generally admitted that Cozier and Horner reported that they were 'very well satisfied with Mr. Cator', and Bishop was sent up to London to pursue negotiations. What happened at this meeting was equally vague. On Bishop's return an attempt was made to push up the price of a vote from seventy to eighty guineas, 'some of the voters thought that eight was better than seven', but Cator declined to play. He probably thought he could command a safe majority at seventy guineas—as indeed he could—and he had a reasonable dislike of wasting money. He went out of his way to reassure the electors, who were a little suspicious of Bishop, by meeting Horner at the Wheatsheaf Inn at Popham Beacon, and after some private conversation riding on with him to Stockbridge. Horner never divulged the terms offered at the Wheatsheaf, but he clearly approved of them,—'he did not like to speak, but said that he thought that *it* would do very well.'

There were only two witnesses who gave direct evidence as to what Bishop had said. The first, John Geary, a fisherman, gave the following account of a conversation: 'I asked Mr. Bishop whether everything was safe or not, and what was to be: he told me the town would be done better than ever it was before. I asked in what shape; he told me there was 70 guineas deposited in a person's hands for every man in the town, and they that were not Mr. Cator's friends there was was the same for them if they had a mind to come; and they that did not come, the money was to be distributed among Mr. Cator's friends . . . I told Mr. Bishop I hoped he would not deceive us; he told me he would have his head cut off if he did—that's the whole'. The second witness, John Russell, a grocer, said 'I heard in a conversation that 70 was the price. Bishop said it was safe—that was sufficient for me. I heard Mr. Bishop say so at some meeting—which, I can't say—he said so to two or three people discoursing, not at dinner but at hogshead of beer.' Apart from the evidence of Geary and Russell there was general agreement on the fact that for some time before the election any of Cator's supporters could, through Bishop's intervention, get credit for all the meat, groceries or coal that he might require.

During all this time, while Cator and his supporters were working hard to secure the seats, Scott remained firmly in the background, simply agreeing to pay Cator for his trouble. The evidence for this agreement was supplied by a man named Francis Philips, who reported to the Select Committee the following account of a conversation which he had with Scott in the lobby of the Haymarket Theatre, soon after the election had taken place: '(Major Scott) complained that he understood that there was to be a petition to be presented, or had been,

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against him on the score of bribery, and disclaimed at any time being guilty of any act of bribery, unless it might be imputed to him the giving of a few guineas to the women that attended him at the time of his being chaired; that he entirely steered clear of the conduct of the election, leaving the whole of the business to his colleague Mr. Cator, to whom he was to give £4,000 for a quiet seat. Had he any idea of having so much trouble, he would have come in for the borough of Looe, rather than (have) connected himself with Mr. Cator, whom he found was so very obnoxious to many people.'

On February 22, 1793, the Select Committee reported to the House as follows:

'That John Cator and John Scott esquires were not duly elected.

'That Joseph Foster Barham and George Porter esquires were duly elected and ought to be returned . . .

'That it appears to this committee that there was the most notorious bribery and corruption at the last election of members to serve in this present Parliament.

'That it is the opinion of this committee that the said bribery and corruption require the most serious consideration of Parliament.'²¹

The findings were accepted, and on March 20 a bill was introduced 'for preventing bribery and corruption in the election of members to serve in Parliament for the borough of Stockbridge'. If this bill had been passed (it was not) it would have had the effect of disqualifying sixty-three named voters. Christopher Bishop, John Bucket, William Cozier and Thomas Horner were, rather surprisingly, excepted from the list.²²

There seems no reason to suppose that Cator and Scott were unusually iniquitous. Compared with the ten thousand pounds offered in 1774 by Simon Luttrell for the two seats their bribery was on a reasonable, almost a modest, scale. They were, however, both indiscreet and unlucky. They and their supporters talked too much, and they were opposed by determined, rich men who were prepared to raise the issue in Parliament and who could afford to pay the incidental expenses.

From 1793 to 1822 the Stockbridge seats were occupied by Barham and Porter or by their nominees. Barham was the leading man in this alliance. When in 1806 William Windham, Secretary of State for War, wrote to Lord Grenville about the despatch of a ship to China and the appointment of her Captain, he pressed Grenville to engage a Captain Layman 'at the private request of Mr. Barham himself, who is an independent man supporting (the) government with two seats.'²³ Although he never lived in Stockbridge, Barham took some pains to cultivate his interests there. He acquired the right to collect rents of assize, and by 1822 he owned at least eighty houses in the High Street where he had built a handsome Town Hall at his own expense. The hold which he thus had over the borough was stronger than that of any previous member of parliament, but it did not amount to absolute patronage. The Stockbridge people had a long tradition of stormy independence and they continued, whatever people might say of them at Westminster, to regard their votes as marketable commodities. True, they ran some risk of being turned out of their houses if it were known that they had voted against Barham, but this did not seriously worry them. In 1816 they still expected to get £60 for a vote, and Barham's agent found that if the money were not paid it was impossible to collect the rents.²⁴ Stockbridge seats could be reckoned safe, but only at a price, and they made a considerable hole in Barham's pocket. After the election of 1820 he was in financial difficulties which he relieved by selling the seat to Lord Grosvenor, the sale taking the form of a

21. J.H.C. XLVIII, p. 258.

22. J.H.C., Vol. XLVIII, p. 427.

23. H.M.C., Fortescue VIII, p. 481.

24. 'The price, we understand, is still sixty pounds a man.' See Oldfield, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 516.

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transfer of the rents of assize and of 72 out of the 80 houses which Barham owned. The two parties were not, politically, in sympathy, but the treachery implied by the sale, which scandalised the authors of *The Unreformed House of Commons*,²⁵ does not seem to have worried Barham at all. His friend George Porter was Grosvenor's stepfather and could act as intermediary, and in any case the lines of cleavage between parliamentary parties were not yet hard and fast. Besides, as Barham's later conduct showed, he had no objection to selling a seat and subsequently enjoying it. The process took a little time, but it was not really difficult.

In 1822 Barham applied for the Chiltern Hundreds and was succeeded by Edward Smith Stanley, one of the rising young men in the Grosvenor connection. At the elections of 1826 and 1830 Grosvenor's nominees were returned. Meanwhile, in 1824, Barham's fortunes, no longer subjected to the strain of paying for votes, had recovered sufficiently to allow him to buy, from the Duchy of Lancaster, the manor of Stockbridge with the right to hold its annual court, at which the Bailiff was elected. Since Barham's steward now summoned the court and nominated the jury, and since the jury elected the Bailiff, who acted also as returning officer, the acquisition of the manor represented a very substantial gain for Barham. At every court between 1824 and 1829 presentments were made of 'all legal inhabitants of the borough' and the number rose steadily until there were 148.²⁶ At the same time, new houses, tightly packed together, were built on all the plots of land within the borough which Barham had retained. He died before he could regain the seat, but in 1831 his son, John Foster Barham, was returned in company with Sir Stratford Canning, who was not averse from buying a seat and had, in fact, paid Barham a thousand pounds for this one.

In the summer of 1832 the Reform Act became law and Stockbridge, along with 55 other boroughs stigmatized as 'rotten', lost its representatives in Parliament. Life in the borough became a good deal less interesting when the periodic excitement over elections came to an end, and the inhabitants were considerably poorer.

It would be wrong to assume, as historians are sometimes tempted to do, that in such boroughs as Stockbridge the electors were peculiarly devoid of conscience and the candidates especially distinguished by corruption and lack of scruple. In actual fact, Stockbridge representatives in Parliament were a very fair cross-section of an institution which, with all its demerits, had played so significant a part in English history. Its members accepted, without much demur, the fact that the acquisition of a seat was impossible without a certain amount of 'attention and management'—if they could not exert personal or family pressure, they had to pay handsomely for benefits received. The system was ignoble but the results it produced were not wholly bad. A practical desire to advance yourself by sitting in Parliament, together with a certain sense of responsibility towards the people who have helped you to achieve your position, and a positive enjoyment of the practices of politics for its own sake, may be rather prosaic reasons for entering the service of one's country, but they often produced reasonably good results. Stockbridge burgesses certainly sold their votes, and did remarkably well out of the transaction, but the members whom they returned to Parliament, taken as a whole, have left a creditable, and at times even a distinguished, record to posterity. Among Stockbridge's carpet-baggers Richard Steele certainly enlivened politics, even if his methods were not always discreet, and two distinguished statesmen of the nineteenth century, Lord Derby and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, entered the political field by way of this borough. Electoral methods were crude, but the results were not wholly unsatisfactory.

25. E. and A. G. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons*, Vol. I, p. 361.

26. Court Rolls of Stockbridge, pp. 2, 7, 15-16, 21-2, 27-8, 33-4.