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THE PEMBROKESHIRE ELECTIONS OF 1831¹

THE election of a member of parliament for Pembrokeshire in May 1831 was, according to *The Times*, the most bitterly contested in the United Kingdom.² This in itself would make it noteworthy. It was made the subject of an inquiry by a select committee of the house of commons which resulted in a second election in October. Besides, these elections were not only accompanied by disorder during the poll; they led to no less than three challenges to duels, of which two were fought, and the litigation they engendered continued for years. Disorder was endemic in the early nineteenth century, and contested elections provided an opportunity for its outbreak. What is remarkable is that the supporters of reform were as prone to disorder, and even to gross malpractices, as their opponents. This offers an explanation why the change in the political scene in the constituencies after 1832, when the reformers did attain power, was not as marked as it has been represented; electoral habits were not discarded overnight, and there was no abrupt abandonment of old abuses. The two elections must also be among the most fully documented in the pre-reform period.³ Not only is it possible to see, on this account, that influence was still more potent than principle, and that traditional rivalries among the landed gentry outweighed their common economic or class interests; the repercussions of these clashes in the countryside can also be examined, and their effect on the lives of much less eminent people, the frequenters of ale-houses and notorious poachers.

* * *

The member for Pembrokeshire since 1812 was Sir John Owen of Orierton, whose seat lay south of the Haven, some three miles from the town of Pembroke. The Owens, originally of Bodeon in Anglesey, had obtained Orierton in the late sixteenth century through marriage.⁴ The property which they thus acquired gave them pre-eminence in the shire, and the various offices which they held, as high sheriffs and magistrates, together with the patronage and advowsons at their disposal, extended their influence beyond the limits of their estate.

¹ I have to thank Dr. B. G. Charles, of the National Library of Wales, for assistance in preparing this article.

² *The Times*, 24 May 1831. This echoes the statement in *Carmarthen Journal*, 20 May 1831, and is repeated in *Cambrian*, 4 June 1831.

³ In addition to the *Report of the Select Committee on the Pembroke County Election Petition*, 1831 (262), IV, 535-654 (119 pages, folio, referred to below as *Report*), and the accounts in *The Times* and in the local weekly newspapers, there is a mass of material in the Haverfordwest, Williams and Williams MSS., and the Haverfordwest, Eaton Evans and Williams MSS., in the National Library of Wales. There is much material relating to the trial of Samuel Harries (mostly affidavits) in the Public Record Office (K.B. 28/522 and K.B. 1/57, 1/58).

⁴ For the family, see J. R. Phillips, *Memoirs of the Ancient Family of Owen of Orierton* (1886), and Henry Owen, *Old Pembrokeshire Families* (1902).

The grandson of this marriage became a baronet in 1641. The Anglesey property descended to another branch of the family, but it was united to Orierton by the marriage of the second baronet to his distant cousin, the heiress of Bodeon. In addition the Owens owned 8,000 acres of land in Tasmania.¹ The sixth baronet died unmarried in 1809 and left his property not to his second cousin, who succeeded him in the title, but to the son of the seventh baronet's sister, John Lord, then aged 33, who, later in the same year, assumed by royal licence the name and arms of Owen. The new owner of Orierton, a barrister by profession, was a man of undoubted ability.² He now acquired considerable wealth. Most of the North Wales property had been disposed of in 1808 for nearly £100,000,³ and his position in Pembrokeshire was further consolidated by the purchase of the Llanstinan estate.⁴ His property, he claimed, was then completely unencumbered.⁵ He also succeeded his benefactor as member for the Pembroke boroughs (Pembroke, Tenby and Wiston), thereby entering parliament in the same year as Robert Peel, a fact of which he was, on occasion, to remind the future prime minister. Like Peel he considered himself a Tory, but the terms Whig and Tory had little relevance to Pembrokeshire politics. Contested elections were infrequent in the three constituencies of Pembrokeshire, namely the shire, the Pembroke boroughs, and Haverfordwest; yet, in 1812, Owen fought and won not only his own borough seat but also that of the shire. In the latter contest he defeated his neighbour, John Frederick Campbell, the heir to Lord Cawdor, who lived some two miles away at Stackpole, and thereby, as he informed Peel, 'rescued Pembrokeshire from the hands of the Whigs'.⁶ Two months later he was created a baronet. When Lord Milford died in 1823, Peel, now home secretary, proposed to the king that Sir John Owen should succeed Milford as lord-lieutenant, and 'His Majesty at once acquiesced'.⁷ Thereby his precedence in his own shire was publicly recognised.

The other great landowners of Pembrokeshire were Whigs. The chief rivals of Orierton, despite intermarriage, had been the Philippses

¹ In the early nineteenth century this brought them an income of £500 a year; Sir John Owen to Sir Robert Peel, 10 December 1844, Peel papers, B.M. 40,555, f. 250.

² *The Times*, 9 May 1831, speaks of him as the 'tubman of the Exchequer'. The tubman and the postman were the two senior barristers at the court of the Exchequer.

³ Eaton Evans and Williams, 340; 341. Disposal of land in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire to the Rev. Edward Hughes for £93,105.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁵ Owen to Peel, loc. cit.

⁶ Owen to Peel, 5 October 1841, Peel papers, B.M. 40,486, f. 229.

⁷ Peel to Owen, 4 December 1823, Peel papers, B.M. 40,359, f. 145.

of Picton Castle. Their mansion lies some five miles from Haverfordwest. Although this town enjoyed the status of a separate county, it was, in the eighteenth century, little more than a pocket borough of the family. Despite this, Sir John Philipps chose to enter into a contest for the shire in 1761. It is characteristic of the uncertainty in party alignment that Sir John, though opposed to Orielson, was described by his cousin, Horace Walpole, as 'a notorious Jacobite'.¹ When he had unsuccessfully contested Bristol seven years previously, he had been taxed with Jacobitism and with being president of the Society of Sea Serjeants, the Jacobite club of south-west Wales.² His son, Sir Richard Philipps, retained the shire seat in another contest with Orielson in 1765 and again in 1768, but on this occasion he was unseated on petition. In the succeeding election in 1770, Orielson was unopposed. Nevertheless the freeholders of Pembrokeshire petitioned again.³ Their chief objection was to the holding of the election in Pembroke, in the south-western corner of the shire, especially as the town could be conveniently approached only by the ferries across the Haven, and these were all under the control of Orielson. It was on this account that an opposing candidate had not presented himself at the poll.⁴ The Commons rejected the freeholders' petition, which was the last to be heard at the bar of the House.⁵ Sir Richard Philipps was created Lord Milford in the peerage of Ireland in 1776. Ten years later he again won the county seat, and this, despite a contest with Orielson in 1807, he retained for twenty-six years. It was no doubt by arrangement with Lord Cawdor that he stood down in 1812 in favour of John Frederick Campbell. As we have seen, it was on Lord Milford's death in 1823 that Sir John Owen became lord-lieutenant.

Like the Owens, the Campbells had come to Pembrokeshire through marriage with an heiress, thereby acquiring a compact estate, covering most of ten parishes, which bordered on that of Orielson. The son of this marriage had won the shire seat in a costly contest with Orielson in 1727,⁶ and held it for twenty years. Like his relative, the third duke of Argyll, he was a strong supporter of Walpole. It was his grandson, John Campbell, who was elevated to

¹ W. R. Williams, *Parliamentary History of Wales* (1895), p. 157. See *ibid.*, p. 163 (quoting the *Gentleman's Magazine*), for his relationship to Walpole.

² H. M. Vaughan, 'Welsh Jacobitism', in *Transactions of the . . . Cymmrodorion*, 1920-21, (1922), pp. 27-8, has his reply to this accusation.

³ Samuel Heywood, *A Digest of the Law respecting County Elections* (1790).

⁴ He was John Symmons of Llanstinan, and had been secretary of the Society of Sea Serjeants in 1752. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵ After 1770 election petitions were heard by committees of fifteen members. E and A. G. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons* (1909), I, 539-41.

⁶ N.L.W. MSS. 1444 and 6106 D.

the peerage in 1796 as Baron Cawdor. Seven years later Lord Cawdor succeeded to the large estate of the Vaughans of Golden Grove, to whom he was in no way related either by blood or marriage. Thereby he became the greatest landowner in south-west Wales, and it was his son who fought Orierton in the election of 1812. The poll was kept open on this occasion for eleven days, and the expense was so high that Sir John Owen was forced to raise a mortgage on part of his estate.¹ He had entered the contest 'in an evil hour', he said, and this was the beginning of his financial embarrassment.² His opponent succeeded as the second Baron Cawdor in 1821, and in 1827 received an earldom. Sir John Owen wrote with some asperity to Peel of this advancement of his 'old and constant opponent'. He had opposed Cawdor at considerable expense to himself, but the Tories were now rewarding Cawdor 'as if he had been of use to them', and his own difficulties were thereby increased.³ Peel could only reply that he had had no hand in the elevation of Cawdor, and he reminded Sir John that when the lord-lieutenancy had been considered the claims of Cawdor had been set aside in his favour.⁴

The remaining Pembrokeshire peerage, that of Lord Kensington, was created in 1776, the year in which Sir Richard Philipps became Lord Milford. The Edwardeses of Sealyham, near Haverfordwest, had been long established in the shire, but it was a younger son who founded the fortunes of the family by marrying Lady Elizabeth Rich, daughter of the fifth earl of Warwick (who also bore the title of Baron Kensington). Her son inherited the Rich estates (but not the titles) in 1759, on the death of his cousin, the seventh earl, and he was, himself, created Baron Kensington in the peerage of Ireland in 1776.⁵ By arrangement with Lord Milford he represented Haverfordwest for over fifty years, and was succeeded by his son, the second baron, who held the seat until 1818. Lord Kensington acquired property in Pembrokeshire both through inheritance and through purchase, but his large estates were located in England.⁶ When Lord Milford died in 1823 (and Sir John Owen became lord-lieutenant)

¹ Eaton Evans and Williams, 289, a mortgage of £11,000 on Llanstinan in 1814; *ibid.*, 5810, refers to a mortgage in 1819 on land in Martletwy, Llanfair Nant-y-gof, Puncteston, Little Newcastle and Castlebythe, reconveyed in 1824.

² Owen to Sir James Graham, 27 August 1841, Peel papers, B.M. 40,486, f. 227, and Owen to Peel, 10 December 1844, 40,555, f. 250.

³ *Id.*, 9 September 1827, B.M. 40,394, f. 225, and 23 January 1828, 40,395, f. 92.

⁴ Peel to Owen, 1 February 1828, B.M. 40,395, f. 95.

⁵ He, also, was a member of the Jacobite Society of Sea Serjeants. W. R. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁶ He owned land in Llanfyrnach in the hundred of Cilgerran; Eaton Evans and Williams, 5348. He purchased property from his cousin, William Tucker Edwardes of Sealyham, in 1830; Francis Green, 'The Edwardes of Sealyham', in *West Wales Historical Records*, VIII (1919-20), 204. For Kensington estates see also Lucas collection, 39-45 (N.L.W.).

the Picton Castle estates, like those of Orielton, passed to a kinsman. He was Richard Grant, but he assumed the name of Philipps, and in turn became member for Haverfordwest in 1826, at the age of twenty-five. He was made a baronet in 1828, and later on became Baron Milford of the second creation.

One more Pembrokeshire heiress needs to be mentioned. Catherine Barlow of Colby (near Haverfordwest) brought to her husband, Sir William Hamilton, an estate said to have been worth £8,000 a year.¹ He is chiefly remembered because of his second wife, Emma, Nelson's mistress, but his wealth came from his first marriage. His sister had married Francis Greville, first earl of Warwick (of a new creation), and her son, Charles Francis Greville, succeeded in 1803 to a life interest in the Pembrokeshire estate, to develop which he had already obtained an act of parliament for the foundation of the new town of Milford. When he died, six years later, his interests passed to his brother, Robert Fulke Greville, equerry to George III, who had married Louisa, countess of Mansfield, *suo jure*, and in turn in 1824 to their son, also named Robert Fulke Greville, who was to dissipate much of the estate in the Pembrokeshire elections of 1831.

* * *

As a crisis approached in the agitation for parliamentary reform several meetings for this purpose were held in south-west Wales, the chief centre being the town of Carmarthen. But public opinion in the region still remained relatively uncertain. The Swansea *Cambrian*, the oldest weekly newspaper in Wales, can hardly be said to have had any party allegiance before 1831, although it gave general support to the cause of reform. The *Carmarthen Journal*, on the other hand, had become in the twenties the avowed organ of the Tories. It was not until January 1832 that the *Carmarthen Welshman* appeared in opposition to it. The position was similar in respect of the Welsh periodicals which circulated in the area. Nonconformity was continuing to spread, and with it an agitation for the removal of religious disabilities. The monthly *Seren Gomer*, published in Swansea, was vaguely liberal in its politics; it complained much of the indifference which prevailed. The short-lived *Efanglydd* (of Llandovery) was more radical, but was founded only in 1830. It was not until after the passing of the Reform Act that those periodicals appeared which provided for the political education of Nonconformity in south-west Wales. Reform agitation, therefore, as well

¹ J. F. Rees, *The Story of Milford* (1954), p. 21.

as the opposition to it, still remained within the framework of the Whig and Tory parties. The individuals who were prominent in this agitation were often professional men, such as the Carmarthen attorneys, George Thomas, one of the founders of the *Welshman*, and Hugh Williams, the future Chartist.

Lord John Russell introduced his Reform Bill on 1 March 1831; its second reading was carried, on 23 March, by a majority of one vote in what was regarded as the largest House in living memory. Of the twenty-seven Welsh members, fifteen voted for reform and twelve against, among the latter being Sir John Owen, his son, Colonel Hugh Owen Owen, who had represented the Pembroke boroughs since 1826, as well as George Rice Trevor, the member for Carmarthenshire and heir to Lord Dynevor, and John Jones, who was a persistent opponent of the Cawdor interest in the borough of Carmarthen.¹ In consequence a reform meeting was held on 5 April in Haverfordwest, at which the chief speaker was Lord Kensington, when a petition to the king in favour of reform was adopted and entrusted to Lord Cawdor and to Sir Richard Philipps, the member for Haverfordwest.² Sir John Owen professed to be grieved that the petition had not been entrusted to him. He issued an address in which he claimed that his mind was unprejudiced on the question of reform but admitted that he was opposed to the Bill. He complained that the organizers of the petition had not informed him of their opinions until after the division, and implied that he would be prepared to uphold in parliament the views of his constituents.³ Some days later the Government was defeated in committee and the king dissolved parliament on 23 April. Sir John Owen had again voted against the Government. Yet he issued a second address in which he repeated that he was an advocate of real reform but not of a Bill which falsely assumed that character.⁴ He had now learnt that his seat was to be contested and he hurried down from London to his distant constituency, arriving in Haverfordwest at 3 a.m. on 27 April. Within twenty-four hours, in response to public opinion, as he said, he pledged himself to support reform.⁵

The decision to oppose Sir John Owen was taken in London, evidently at the instigation of Lord Kensington,⁶ and the choice fell on Robert Fulke Greville, then aged thirty and a captain in the

¹ *Hansard*, 3rd series, III, cols. 806–18, 23 March 1831.

² *Carmarthen Journal*, 8 April 1831; *The Times*, 3 June 1831.

³ Address dated 9 April; in full in *Carmarthen Journal*, 15 April 1831.

⁴ Address dated 27 April; in full, *ibid.*, 6 May 1831.

⁵ *The Times*, 3 June 1831.

⁶ *Carmarthen Journal*, 4 May 1832.

35th Foot. It was a strange selection, for his cousin, Sir Charles Greville (member for the borough of Warwick as nominee of his brother, the third earl of Warwick), had consistently opposed reform.¹ Wise after the event, Kensington later claimed that he had warned Greville that it might cost him £5,000,² but it is evident that he encouraged him, and his heir became chairman of Greville's committee. This was Captain William Edwardes of the Royal Navy, also aged thirty, Greville immediately issued an address expressing his deep conviction of the need for reform.³ His London agents wrote to retain the services of the solicitors of the neighbourhood,⁴ and he warned Sir Richard Philipps of his imminent arrival at Picton Castle, accompanied by Captain Edwardes, so that they could enter Haverfordwest in state.⁵ Sir Richard, who was some four or five months younger than the two captains, was being returned unopposed for his pocket borough. Thereby the cause of democracy in Pembrokeshire was entrusted to the cousin of the earl of Warwick (and son of the countess of Mansfield), supported by the heir to Lord Kensington and by the future Lord Milford. They began their canvass with great enthusiasm. In an effort to avoid a contest, Sir John Owen issued yet another address,⁶ and also arranged for some of his supporters to approach Lord Kensington with a promise to support reform 'in all its stages', if Greville withdrew. Kensington saw Greville at Cardigan and told him that he could now get out with credit if he wished to do so, as the cost would be high, but Greville affirmed that he would go to the poll even if it cost him £20,000.⁷

His opponents made much of Sir John Owen's change of front. He had voted consistently against reform—against a measure which would have given representation to the larger towns, against the second reading of the Bill and now again in committee.⁸ They could regard the change only as a desire to retain his seat at all costs. Yet his attitude was not unlike that of Peel three years previously over Catholic Emancipation, for Peel had thought it folly to maintain consistency in changed circumstances. Sir John's public life, according to *The Times*, was itself no mean argument for reform. He had been so lax in his attendance in parliament that on one occasion the speaker had sent the serjeant-at-arms after him to Pembrokeshire.

¹ *The Times*, 12 April 1831.

² Eaton Evans and Williams, 5459.

³ Address dated 26 April; in full in *Carmarthen Journal*, 29 April 1831.

⁴ Eaton Evans and Williams, 11430.

⁵ Williams and Williams, 19483.

⁶ Address dated 5 May; N.L.W. MS., 6099 E.

⁷ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5459.

⁸ *Carmarthen Journal*, 19 April 1831; *The Times*, 28 April, 2 May, 3 June 1831.

For years patronage in Church and State in the shire had passed through his hands as if it were a vested right, and his family was said to be receiving £3,000 a year of public money in Church preferment and in other ways. His most recent action was to obtain the living of Tenby for an active partisan.¹ This produced three printed addresses to Sir John from 'a dissenting minister from Tenby'.² The Dissenters could have been expected to support reform on ideological grounds, and no doubt some of them did,³ but the minister's series of pointed questions to Sir John were concerned only with his gross abuse of patronage. Other printed addresses appeared both in his support,⁴ and in support of Greville. Among the latter was one from Samuel Harries, the squire of Trevaccoon, near St. David's, who was to provide a startling epilogue to the election. It must have been a lively production, but, unfortunately, it does not seem to have survived.⁵

* * *

There was intense excitement as nomination day approached, for there had been no contested election in any one of the three constituencies of Pembrokeshire since 1812. This excitement was increased by events in the neighbouring borough of Carmarthen. There, John Jones's opposition to reform had made him so unpopular that rioting broke out immediately the poll was opened on 29 April. It became so severe that the sheriff was compelled to make a return on the following day that he was unable to execute the writ, and troops were summoned from Brecon.⁶ In addition the weather was unexpectedly hot⁷ and tempers rose not a little on that account. Haverfordwest had been chosen as the venue for the Pembrokeshire election, and it had the undoubted merit of a central location, although it was far enough for the electors of Cilgerran in the north-east of the shire and Castlemartin in the south-west.⁸ Since it was a county in itself, however, the hustings were erected in the suburb of Prendergast,

¹ *The Times*, 9 May and, especially, 3 June 1831, a lengthy article reproduced in full in *Carmarthen Journal*, 11 June 1831.

² Eaton Evans and Williams, 4973-4-5.

³ A member of one of Greville's local committees (for Cilgerran and Kemes) was the celebrated Baptist minister, John Herring, *Carmarthen Journal*, 13 May 1831.

⁴ 'An old freeholder', N.L.W., MS. 6099 E.

⁵ Samuel Harries's address, dated 28 April 1831, is mentioned in N.L.W., MS. 6099 E. He was a distant relative of Lord Kensington; Williams and Williams, 19490.

⁶ See Glyn Roberts, 'Political Affairs from 1536 to 1900', in Sir J. E. Lloyd (ed.), *A History of Carmarthenshire* (1939), II, 67-8; also H.O. 41/10, 43/40, 52/16. (H.O. 52/21 relates to the Carmarthen election of 1832.)

⁷ *Report*, pp. 44, 110.

⁸ Elections had been held at Pembroke in 1695, 1727, 1741, 1770, and 1807; Heywood, *op. cit.*, and Eaton Evans and Williams, 5480.

which was then outside the borough.¹ The nominations were made at the town hall on Monday, 9 May.² The sheriff, who presided, was Morgan Jones of Cilwendeg, near Boncath, in the north-eastern corner of the shire.³ By a strange chance he was the nominee of Sir John Owen. The three persons who had been named by the judges of assize in the usual manner had all withdrawn, and the Privy Council had directed Sir John, as lord-lieutenant, to designate a sheriff. He had applied to Morgan Jones, 'a gentleman of large fortune', who, unhappily for himself, had consented.⁴ On a show of hands at the town hall, Greville apparently had a majority,⁵ but this was only by-play, and a poll was demanded.

Booths had been erected on the election field (at the expense of the candidates⁶), one for each of the seven hundreds of Pembrokeshire, namely Cilgerran, Kemes, Dewslan, Roose, Dungleddy, Narberth and Castlemartin. The sheriff proved to be a broken reed; whether involuntarily or by design he developed gout early in the proceedings and stayed at home. The direction of the election therefore fell to the under-sheriff, a Cardigan solicitor named Lewis Evans, whose duty it was to go around the booths at eight o'clock each morning to open the poll and again in the evening to close it. In view of the recrimination which followed it is remarkable that one of his nephews, William Evans, was Greville's chief agent, and another, James Evans, a Carmarthen barrister, was chosen as assessor. The candidates were jointly responsible for the erection of a booth for the assessor and for his fee, as well as for the payment of a guinea a day, up to fifteen days, to the commissioner for oaths and to the poll clerks. There their statutory obligations ceased; any further joint expenditure must be by agreement. They had agreed on an assessor; whether they did so with regard to the seven sub-sheriffs who presided at each booth was later disputed—certainly these were chosen from a list submitted by Sir John Owen. The field was teeming with lawyers. Both candidates retained counsel, John Evans, K.C., for Greville, and, for

¹ Prendergast is on the way out of Haverfordwest towards Cardigan. The election field was at Cartlett, at its southern extremity. It was included in the borough of Haverfordwest by 2 & 3 William IV, ch. 64. Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary*, 1833, *sub* Prendergast. The field belonged to Major Arthur Bowen; Williams and Williams, 19480.

² Sir John Owen was nominated by George Bowen of Llwyn-gwair and John Hill Harries of Priskilly; Greville by Sir Richard Philipps of Picton Castle and J. H. Allen of Cresselly, *Carmarthen Journal*, 13 May 1831. Allen (whose brother had married a niece of Sir Samuel Romilly) had been named as a prospective candidate for the Pembroke boroughs, as opponent to Colonel Hugh Owen Owen; *Cambrian*, 30 April 1831.

³ *Report*, p. 66, errs in saying that Cilwendeg was a quarter of a mile from Haverfordwest.

⁴ *The Times*, 18 September 1831. One of the three originally nominated was John Mirehouse.

⁵ *Report*, p. 46; Eaton Evans and Williams, 5387, 12475.

⁶ Heywood, *op. cit.*, p. 11; Eaton Evans and Williams, 5163. (This is a valuable statement by counsel, W. H. Maule, later baron of the Exchequer and justice of the Court of Common Pleas, on the law relating to election expenses.)

Sir John Owen, John Mirehouse, a considerable landowner in the neighbourhood of Orierton and common serjeant to the City of London.¹ Each side had its manager at every booth, in addition to assistant managers, check clerks, messengers, and the like. Greville alone retained no less than twenty-one attorneys,² and some of these had to be drawn from Carmarthen, Cardigan and Aberystwyth, as Sir John had forestalled him locally. Prominent among them were the Carmarthen reformers, George Thomas and Hugh Williams. The procedure in every booth was for each side to poll a known supporter in turn. These would be examined and cross-examined by the managers. Frequently there would be a hundred or more persons in a booth at the same time, so that the noise was distracting and the heat oppressive. When there was disagreement, the case was referred to the assessor's booth, and there learned counsel took up the argument. Mirehouse became so exhausted by the pressure of work and the heat that he was forced to send to Carmarthen for John Jones to come and assist him.

Meanwhile there was intense activity throughout the shire. Branch committees were established in the hundreds to canvass voters and arrange for their transport to Haverfordwest.³ These had sometimes to be mustered in the early hours of the morning.⁴ The smaller landowners were canvassed for their 'interest', and some attempts were made to seduce possible waverers. Thomas Meyrick of Bush wrote indignantly that someone was soliciting votes for Greville among those of his tenants who worked in the new dockyard; he wished this 'interference' to stop forthwith.⁵ The local committees made careful inquiries into the validity of their opponents' freehold, and passed on the information to Haverfordwest.⁶ Lord Cawdor seems to have taken no part personally in the election, but his agent was active, especially in searching out Pembrokeshire freeholders in the Carmarthen neighbourhood.⁷ For residence within the shire was no longer a necessary qualification.⁸ An ironworker travelled from Blaenavon

¹ For the Mirehouses of Brownslade see Francis Jones, 'Some Farmers of Bygone Pembrokeshire', in *Transactions of the . . . Cymmrodorion* for sessions 1943 and 1944 (1946), pp. 136-40. The common serjeant's father was a notable agriculturist. See also Burke's *Landed Gentry*, various editions.

² Eaton Evans and Williams, 5002.

³ *Carmarthen Journal*, 13 May 1831.

⁴ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5348.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11424.

⁶ Numerous letters in this collection.

⁷ *Ibid.* He was R. B. Williams, whose interference in the 1837 election in Carmarthenshire (when his employer had changed sides) caused a debate in the House of Commons. See my *Rebecca Riots* (1955), pp. 31-2.

⁸ The franchise was restricted to resident freeholders by 8 Henry VI c. 7, but this was abolished by 14 George III c. 58; T. E. Tomlins, *Law Dictionary* (1820), *sub* Parliament; J. J. S. Wharton, *Law Lexicon* (1925), p. 316.

in Monmouthshire to vote for Greville, and asked to be reimbursed for his coach fare (£2 14s. 0d.) and loss of wages (2s. 6d. a day).¹ Another supporter offered to come from Ilfracombe,² and there was a proposal to muster the Pembrokeshire voters in London and bring them down.³ Transport was a difficulty even within the shire, but all kinds of conveyances were used, Greville's Milford voters coming to Haverfordwest by barge.⁴

A study of the poll books and the check books confirms that the voting was determined almost exclusively by the influence of the landowning gentry. In fact, it would be possible to construct a topography of their estates out of the poll books themselves. The influence of Orielson and its satellites was supreme in the hundred of Castlemartin (despite the Cawdor estates in that area), as well as in the hundreds of Narberth and Cilgerran. In the hundred of Roose, Greville could call upon his supporters in the new town of Milford. His interest predominated also in Dewslan. Kemes, which had much the largest number of voters, was more equally divided, and so was Dungleddy.⁵ That theoretical considerations counted little can be illustrated by one example. The mother church of the Baptists of south-west Wales was Rhydwylym, and the overwhelming majority of those living in the neighbourhood were its members. Later in the century these would certainly have voted in opposition to a Tory candidate. Yet, in this election, of the fifty-four voters in the neighbouring parish of Llan-y-cefn, forty (including one of the church's two pastors⁶) supported Sir John Owen. The explanation is simple: most of the parish formed part of the Llanstinan estate, then owned by Sir John Owen's son, the member for the Pembroke boroughs.⁷

The property qualification of voters needed, therefore, to be meticulously scrutinized. The basic qualification was a freehold yielding a profit of forty shillings a year free of all charges. A prospective voter could be required to take an oath that he possessed freehold of that amount.⁸ But a freehold need not necessarily be in land; it could be an office, and parish clerks voted on the freehold franchise.⁹ Assessment for the land tax could be used as a test of

¹ Eaton Evans and Williams, 4632.

² *Ibid.*, 11426.

³ *Ibid.*, 11471.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5026, says they came in 'a large boat drawn upon sledges'.

⁵ The voting is given in *Report*, p. 88.

⁶ The great-grandfather of the present writer. The meeting house lies just outside the parish, on the Carmarthenshire bank of the River Cleddau.

⁷ Eaton Evans and Williams, 4551, 4594, 9863.

⁸ 7 & 8 William III c. 25; Tomlins, loc. cit.

⁹ Heywood, loc. cit.

freehold,¹ but, since 1798, the land tax could be redeemed.² This had normally been done in freeholds which had arisen out of enclosures.³ Matters were thereby complicated, and prospective voters could be required to take an oath if their names did not figure in an assessment.⁴ A far greater complication arose from claims based on leasehold. An indeterminate leasehold qualified for the franchise, but a lease for ninety-nine years, or any other term, determinable upon a life or lives, did not; nor did a lease for a life or lives held by copy of a court roll.⁵ It is noteworthy that, in this election, 77 per cent of the voters qualified on the basis of leasehold. It is also noteworthy that the majority of freeholders voted for Owen, and the majority of leaseholders for Greville.⁶ The creation of fictitious leases was a commonplace at elections, and the most startling instance on this occasion concerned Sir John Owen's neighbour and the chairman of his committee, that is, John Mirehouse, the common serjeant to the City of London. The occupiers on Mirehouse's estate were nearly all tenants-at-will. During 1829, however, his agent had gone around the estate offering them indeterminate leases, but only on parts of their farms, and, even so, not on their own lives but all on the life of one John White, an old man of about eighty years of age. There was no pretence that this involved any change in their rents; on the contrary, they might suffer economically, for as tenants-at-will they must receive notice to quit, but not as leaseholders, if old White died. Besides they only received verbal promises of leases; these were put into writing when the election was imminent, the latest of them, in fact, a week before the opening of the poll, and, even so, the documents were retained by Mirehouse. The 'Whiters' attracted much attention, and, in the inquiry that followed, Mirehouse justified himself by saying: 'I chose to dispose of my property in any way I pleased for the purpose of furthering my political views'.⁷ A great many leases were not put into writing at all. If, as frequently happened, farms had cottages on them, these were regarded as separate leaseholds, although it is difficult to see how they qualified under the forty-shilling rule. Houses with gardens

¹ The land tax assessment of 1830 for Pembrokeshire is complete in Eaton Evans and Williams, 5466-76, except for the hundred of Dungleddy.

² Wharton, loc. cit. The land tax was established in 1689 (1 William and Mary c. 3) to supersede all former methods of taxation. The Land Tax Perpetuation Act of 1798, modified in 1802 and 1813, provided for its redemption, calculated on thirty years' purchase.

³ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁴ Eaton Evans and Williams, 4551.

⁵ Ibid., 5400. Leases for terms of years were not in use when the franchise was determined by 8 Henry VI c. 7, and copyholders were little better than villeins; Tomlins, loc. cit.

⁶ Report, p. 88.

⁷ *The Times*, 3 June 1831; Report, p. 81; Eaton Evans and Williams, 5393, 5447.

in the towns and villages were in the same category. The standard of education of freeholders and leaseholders alike was low; when thirty-five of Greville's voters submitted a petition during the election asking for an extension of the polling hours, no less than twenty of them could not sign their names.¹

* * *

The poll opened at eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, 10 May. For the first two or three days voting was brisk, and was largely confined to independent freeholders. Difficulties arose immediately the leaseholders presented themselves. It was amply proved in the inquiry which followed that at least some of the sub-sheriffs, presiding at the booths, were partisans of the Tory candidate. Two, if not three, of them had been retained by Sir John before accepting their posts, and of these one was heard to say in respect of a voter: 'It is our turn now'. Another was a clerk in the office of an attorney who was, himself, one of Sir John's managers. As Sir John had the lead in the early days, his supporters sought every means to delay the poll, hoping that Greville's voters from distant parishes, anxious as they must be to take advantage of the glorious weather to attend to their farms, would grow tired of waiting day after day in Haverfordwest. Leaseholders would be minutely questioned by the agents, for half an hour or more, especially those with promissory (or 'parole') leases, and when the agents failed to agree, the sub-sheriff would take another half-hour in preparing the case for the assessor. All the 'White' leaseholders were 'cased' without exception, and so were Greville's Milford supporters, over forty of them in all. The assessor, although he was the brother of Greville's chief agent, was a partisan of his opponent. He insisted on discussing individual cases at length although he had reached decisions which could be used as precedents. Greville wrote to the high sheriff as early as the third day to complain of delay and obstruction. Sir John Owen, on the other hand, asserted that delaying tactics were first adopted by Greville's agents in the Castlemartin booth, where Sir John had the lead. Greville then wrote formally to the high sheriff asking that the poll should be kept open for two hours above the minimum of seven, and that a second assessor be appointed at the mutual expense of the candidates. For one day, the poll was opened for nine hours, but, at Sir John Owen's remonstrance, the under-sheriff reverted to the minimum.

As the poll entered its second week, obstruction became more outrageous. The bribery oath was administered in several instances to

¹ *Report*, p. 49.

respectable men. Many were asked if they were excise officers, or held any other Government post, when everyone knew they did not. Worse still, frivolous questions were asked, partly in jest but with the intent of causing delay: 'Are you the pope of Rome?'; 'Are you one of the cardinals?'; 'Are you the prime minister?'; 'Are you the lord chancellor?'; 'Are you a peer of the realm?'; as well as 'Are you a pauper?' and even 'Are you an idiot?' The sub-sheriffs did not try to restrain the agents from wasting time, and the assessor claimed that he had no authority to intervene. Altercations in the booths therefore became increasingly violent.¹

Conditions had also become tumultuous in the streets of Haverfordwest which were packed with Orange (Tory) partisans and their Blue (Whig) opponents. Sir John's headquarters were at the Castle Hotel and Greville's at the Mariners. They were the only 'tolerable' inns in the town; there were a great number of others, and all had laid in a remarkable stock of provisions. Landlords eagerly solicited the patronage of the two sides, and both candidates 'opened' inns for their supporters. Sir John, who was experienced in these matters, confined himself to a few inns, and from the start adopted a system of tickets, thereby giving offence to some voters.² Greville was much more lavish. The rumour had spread that he had deposited £30,000 with Messrs. Morris, the Carmarthen bankers, to meet the cost of the election.³ The innkeepers were jubilant, for no less than thirty-one houses were 'opened' for Greville. They received their instructions from a member of Greville's committee, Major Arthur Bowen, of Great Hook in the parish of Ambleston, a regular army officer on half-pay who owned considerable property in the neighbourhood, including houses and inns in Prendergast itself.⁴ His impulsiveness in taking on this duty was to cost him dear. He placed stewards in the inns to take over all their ale, spirits, and provisions.⁵ But there was so much extravagance and waste that, after two days, the Blues copied their opponents and set up a ticket system.⁶ Voters, nominally after they had polled, were sent to an inn where one of Greville's agents⁷ directed them where to get refreshment. The system quickly broke down. Voters wished to go to the inn of their choice. They

¹ For these paragraphs see *Report, passim*, and fuller details in Eaton Evans and Williams MSS., especially 5389, 5391, 5392. Similar tactics had been adopted in the celebrated 1802 election in Carmarthenshire.

² Williams and Williams, 19486.

³ *Ibid.*, 19481.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19479, 19481.

⁵ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5459.

⁶ Williams and Williams, 19481, 19483.

⁷ He was, in fact, the steward of Lord Lisburne, the Cardiganshire landowner.

objected to being sent backwards and forwards. They demanded refreshment for their wives as well as for themselves. It was difficult enough to keep them together for days on end while they waited their turn, and arrangements had to be made for their lodgings. They threatened to go home unless they could get meals without tickets. And so everyone got refreshment in the Blue inns, including some Orange supporters,¹ and the detailed accounts kept by the stewards grew at an alarming rate. Never had there been so much turmoil in Haverfordwest.

The uproar in the booths continued. When John Jones arrived from Carmarthen to assist Mirehouse he was spat upon by George Thomas, the Carmarthen attorney who was agent for Greville at the Narberth booth. Evidence differed as to whether Thomas's aim had been good, and John Jones admitted that he had threatened to get a pistol to defend himself. Nevertheless he had Thomas arrested for assault² and brought before Mirehouse, who remanded him on bail. The case came on at the Pembrokeshire assizes in July, but on Thomas's request it was transferred to the Carmarthen spring assizes,³ where he was fined £5.⁴ More reprehensible than this assault was Thomas's accusation against a Carmarthenshire magistrate and deputy-lieutenant, J. E. Saunders, who registered his vote for Sir John Owen. Thomas called him a scoundrel and a liar, and accused him of being a 'trading justice' making £300 a year out of his office. Saunders took no action on this occasion, but in the October of the following year he had Thomas arrested on a charge of riot in the town of Carmarthen and kept him in gaol for thirteen days.⁵ Thomas repeated his outrageous accusation during the Carmarthen election in December 1832. Saunders then had him prosecuted for libel, but he was discharged on paying costs.⁶ He was also found not guilty of riot.⁷ Thereupon he prosecuted Saunders for false imprisonment. This trial was transferred to the Gloucester assizes, where the verdict was given for the defendant.⁸ Thomas then appeared in person before the court of King's Bench, *in banco*, to get the verdict set aside, and the litigation seemed likely to continue indefinitely.⁹

¹ Williams and Williams, 19483.

² Eaton Evans and Williams, 5435, the warrant for his arrest signed by Mirehouse.

³ *Carmarthen Journal*, 29 July, 5 August, 1831.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1832 (in great detail); *Cambrian*, 24 March, 31 March, 4 May, 1832.

⁵ *Carmarthen Journal*, 16 November 1832.

⁶ *The Times*, 1 February 1833; K.B. 1/58, 1833, Hilary, 3 William IV, affidavits.

⁷ *Welshman*, 8 February 1833 (three columns); K.B. 1/58, 1833, Easter, 3 William IV, affidavits.

⁸ *Carmarthen Journal*, 11 April 1834 (seven columns).

⁹ *The Times*, 22 April 1834; *Carmarthen Journal*, 25 April 1834.

The poll at Haverfordwest was kept open for the maximum of fifteen days, but then was abruptly closed at 3 p.m. on Thursday, 26 May. This sudden end took Greville's supporters by surprise. Voters were actually waiting their turn at the Narberth booth, and there the opposing attorneys almost came to blows.¹ Others were scattered over the field and were hastily assembled. There followed a scene of violence for which each side blamed the other. Sir John Owen maintained that men had been brought from Milford to overawe his supporters;² what seems more credible is that it was an Orange mob, mostly colliers in Sir John's employment, who rushed the field.³ There was one fatality: 'a fine young woman', according to *The Times*, 'fell down and died of fright'.⁴ The under-sheriff declared Sir John Owen returned with a majority of ninety-nine (Sir John Owen 1,949, R. F. Greville, 1,850).⁵ The electorate had swollen by almost a thousand votes above the figure in 1812.⁶ It was noteworthy that, if the hundred of Castlemartin were omitted, Greville would have won, but Sir John's majority in his own neighbourhood was sufficient to carry the day.⁷ Moreover, in addition to some forty supporters of Greville who had not reached their turn, there were still 283 of Greville's voters and 79 of Sir John's awaiting the decision of the assessor.⁸ A lengthy argument by Greville's counsel ensued. He proved that of the 'cases' settled by the assessor, only 10 per cent had been rejected by him. Assuming that this ratio was maintained, and the remainder were added to the poll, then Greville should have been returned.⁹ Not unexpectedly the assessor refused to accept this argument. Thereupon Greville wrote in protest to the sheriff, and so did nineteen freeholders, the first name on their list being that of Samuel Harries, the squire of Trevaccoon.¹⁰

* * *

Greville lost no time. On the very next day he issued an address expressing his intention to petition against the result,¹¹ and a meeting

¹ *Cambrian*, 28 May 1831 (the blows were denied in the next issue); *The Times*, 31 May 1831.

² *Carmarthen Journal*, 27 May, 3 June 1831.

³ *Cambrian*, 28 May 1831; *The Times*, 30 May 1831.

⁴ *The Times*, loc. cit.

⁵ *Report*, p. 88, gives the majority as 100.

⁶ The electorate was 2,297 in 1807, 2,873 in 1812, 3,799 in May 1831; N.L.W. MS. 6106 D.

⁷ *Carmarthen Journal*, 3 June 1831.

⁸ These are the figures given in Greville's petition. There was much argument as to how they were arrived at, and there is surprising discrepancy in the figures given in other sources. (*Report*, p. 54—Greville 248, Owen 165; *ibid.*, p. 60—Greville 144, Owen 86; *ibid.*, p. 109—Greville 265, Owen 171; *The Times*, 30 May—Greville 312, Owen 175; Greville's address in *Carm. Journal*, 3 June—Greville 366, Owen 171.)

⁹ *The Times*, 30 May 1831.

¹⁰ *Report*, p. 50.

¹¹ Address dated 27 May 1831, in full in *Carmarthen Journal*, 3 June. He issued a second address, 6 June 1831, in full in *ibid.*, 17 June.

for this purpose was immediately called at the Town Hall, Haverfordwest.¹ To petition parliament was an expensive undertaking, and a primary purpose of the meeting was to raise funds. Captain William Edwardes started the list with a subscription of £300; several contributed £100, among them being Greville's mother, the countess of Mansfield, and Samuel Harries of Trevaccoon. Well over £1,000 was collected in a few days.² District committees were set up to collect signatures and subscriptions. It was emphasized that the number of signatories was more important than the amounts they contributed, and several gave no more than sixpence, one, at least, contributing only a penny.³ These committees searched out information to discredit votes registered for Sir John Owen, and enumerated those who were unable to vote for Greville or who had been unnecessarily 'cased'.⁴ But the central committee soon abandoned any intention to demand a scrutiny of all votes, for the cost of bringing nearly four thousand voters to London would be prohibitive, and parliament would hardly sit long enough.⁵ The committee therefore decided to base its appeal on the partiality and irregularities of the sub-sheriffs and the assessor. It realized that it would be necessary to associate Sir John Owen with these irregularities, for misdemeanours on the part of the sheriff and his assistants could be punished without invalidating the election.⁶ At length the petition was ready, and was submitted to parliament on 4 July. It rehearsed in detail the charges of unfitness and partiality on the part of the sub-sheriffs, of their connivance at the delaying tactics of Sir John Owen's managers, and of the incompetence of the assessor. It gave prominence to the leaseholds based on the life of old White, and to the number of Greville's supporters who had been unable to register their votes. It ended by asking parliament either to declare Greville elected or to issue a writ for a new election.⁷ Consideration of the petition was postponed three times in the course of the summer, on the representations of Sir John Owen,⁸ who may have thought that parliament would be dissolved before it came to

¹ Eaton Evans and Williams, 4593; the minute book of the committee.

² *Ibid.*, 5089, 5458.

³ *Ibid.*, 5047-55, 11990.

⁴ Sir John Owen, in the meantime, listed eight hundred doubtful votes registered for Greville, according to *Carmarthen Journal*, 29 July 1831.

⁵ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5174, 5415. A thousand or more voters were taken to London for the petition which followed the 1802 Carmarthenshire election.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5389-91.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5387, 12475; *Commons Journal*, LXXXVI (part 2), 1831, 608-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 633, 688, 744; Eaton Evans and Williams, 11494, 11504. Owen claimed that he had insufficient time to examine the list of electors who had polled for Greville; *Hansard*, 3rd series, IV, 966-7, 8 July 1831.

be considered. In the meantime excitement continued in south-west Wales, for, in August, a second election was held in Carmarthen. John Jones was returned, but he was seriously injured in the disturbances which followed.¹

* * *

The parliamentary committee, when it came to be appointed, consisted of a chairman, Sir Robert Price, the member for Herefordshire, and ten other members.² Without a single exception they had voted for the second reading of the new Reform Bill on 6 July, so that complete impartiality on their part was perhaps not to be expected.³ They met on 16 September, and sat for five days, the report of their proceedings amounting to 119 folio pages. W. H. Maule, the future baron of the Exchequer, represented Greville. He cross-examined the under-sheriff very closely on the way in which the sub-sheriffs had been chosen, and the assessor on the delays which had taken place. He called as witnesses Captain Edwardes, Greville's chairman, and William Evans, his principal manager, as well as a number of others, including George Thomas and Hugh Williams. But his main achievement was his prolonged cross-examination of John Mirehouse. Mirehouse should have acted as Sir John Owen's counsel; he was unable to do so for domestic reasons, and appeared as a witness. He was firm, even militant, in giving evidence, yet was evidently rattled by Maule's raillery, for the problem of the leases on the life of old White was examined at great length. Two sub-sheriffs and some four others were called for Sir John Owen; their evidence, however, was feeble in comparison with that of Greville's witnesses. The committee immediately reported to the House on 23 September that they found the conduct of the high sheriff 'strongly marked by a culpable neglect', that of the under-sheriff and some of the sub-sheriffs lacking in impartiality, and that of the assessor inefficient. The House therefore declared the election void and issued a writ for a new election.⁴ A motion to supersede the sheriff, or to postpone the

¹ *Carmarthen Journal*, 26 August 1831.

² The members, in addition to Sir Robert Price (Herefordshire), were Ralph Etwall (Andover), Charles Tyrell (Suffolk), John Hodson (Newcastle upon Tyne), Walter Blackney (Carlow County), Sir Richard Musgrave (Waterford County), J. P. B. Chichester (Barnstaple), Dominick Brown (Mayo County), Arthur Atherly (Southampton), Robert Ferguson (Dysart), Sir Francis Blake (Berwick); *Commons Journal*, *ut supra*, p. 844, for names.

³ *Hansard*, 3rd series, IV, cols. 907-14, 6 July 1831. It is true that Sir John Owen had also voted for the second reading.

⁴ *Commons Journal*, pp. 863, 865, 866; *The Times*, 17, 18, 24 September 1831.

election until a new sheriff was in office, was defeated, for there had been no case of the removal of a sheriff since the Revolution.¹

* * *

Sir John Owen had shown that he had learnt his lesson, for he and his son voted for the new Reform Bill on its second reading in July.² The Bill was, however, rejected by the Lords on 8 October, a week before the second election took place in Pembrokeshire. Both candidates had by this time issued addresses, Greville naturally making the most of the committee's report and Sir John seeking to interpret his reverse as due to the breach of a technicality.³ Greville's friends came to his support with a new subscription list (Sir Richard Philipps contributing £200 and the irrepressible Samuel Harries £50), and the October election seems to have cost him nothing.⁴ The sheriff opened the election at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 13 October,⁵ and polling began at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.⁶ The candidates had agreed on Mr. Serjeant Russell as the assessor, but Greville had been careful this time to seek counsel's opinion on the limits of his financial obligations.⁷ A careful scrutiny was made of the lists of voters on both sides in the previous election for the purpose of canvassing.⁸ There was keen anticipation of a ruling by the assessor on promissory leases. This was not given until Wednesday, 19 October, when Russell ruled that these were admissible provided the leaseholders had made an outlay of £30 on their farms.⁹ It did not prove difficult to get leaseholders to say that they had done so, for apparently they were not put on oath, but the more blatant malpractices seem to have been avoided, for Sir John Owen's votes fell by 418, and Greville's by 427.¹⁰ Thereby the poll was scarcely more than that of 1812. On the ninth day (Saturday, 22 October) Greville conceded victory to Sir John, who was returned with a majority of 108 votes (Sir John Owen 1,531, Greville 1,423).¹¹ The enormous expense of the two elections and of the petition had thus been wasted, except that Sir John Owen had been converted into a reformer.

¹ *Hansard*, 3rd series, VII, cols. 523–4, 23 September 1831, and cols. 599–602, 26 September 1831. The decision in disputed elections, as long as these were tried by a committee of the house, was obviously reached on political grounds. In 1868 the determination of election petitions was transferred to judges of the High Court. The matter is now governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1949.

² *Carmarthen Journal*, 22 July 1831.

³ *Ibid.*, 30 September, 7 October, 1831.

⁴ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5107, 5121; Williams and Williams, 19483.

⁵ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5268.

⁶ *Carmarthen Journal*, 14 October 1831.

⁷ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5763 (W. H. Maule's opinion, dated 30 September 1831).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12991–13001.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5139–40, 12991; *The Times*, 24 October 1831.

¹⁰ N.L.W., MS. 6106 D.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.; *The Times*, 25 October 1831; *Carmarthen Journal*, 28 October 1831.

There had been far less turmoil in Haverfordwest than during the May election. The strictest economy was practised in respect of refreshment.¹ Besides, in contrast with the glorious weeks in May, the weather was miserably wet.² But the bitterness of the leading figures made up for the lessening in popular excitement. On the fifth day Greville was challenged to a duel by a Pembrokeshire squire (a Mr. Lewis of Clynfiew), but withdrew the offending remarks he had made.³ Two days later William Edwardes Tucker of Sealyham was challenged by one Gilbert Harries of Llanwnwas. Tucker was closely related to Lord Kensington, and only two years previously had been high sheriff.⁴ Tucker and Harries fired their shots, but neither of them was hurt, and Tucker apologized to his opponent both on the field and in the assessor's booth.⁵ On the last day of the poll, Greville himself challenged John Jones, the member for Carmarthen. Great efforts were made to stop the duel, but both men eluded the magistrates and met at Tavernspite on the Carmarthenshire border. There Greville missed his target, and John Jones fired his pistol into the air but refused to apologize.⁶

* * *

The aftermath of the two elections drew almost as much attention as the contests themselves. The time had now come for the settlement of the enormous bills which had accumulated. Greville's committee met immediately after the poll, and the chairman, Captain Edwardes, expressed a hope that an arrangement could be made, but Greville replied, with some warmth: 'That is a business of my own'.⁷ His professional men had to be paid, together with their clerks, tally-men and messengers. Their accounts are impossible to unravel, but the sum involved certainly exceeded £2,500. A year later they were still not paid, and some were threatening legal action.⁸ Of more interest was the sheriff's bill. He claimed for the assessors' fees (which were substantial), for the fees of the under-sheriff, the sub-sheriffs, poll clerks, commissioners for oaths, messengers and doorkeepers, as well as for the cost of the erection of booths, all these in respect of both elections, and demanded payment of half the amounts from

¹ *The Times*, 18 October 1831.

² *Ibid.*, 25 October 1831.

³ *Carmarthen Journal*, 21 October 1831.

⁴ He was born William Tucker Edwardes, but assumed the name of William Edwardes Tucker, and then again reverted to his original name. It was he who had sold property in Pembrokeshire worth £11,000 to Lord Kensington in 1830. (*West Wales Historical Records*, VIII (1919-20), 204, as above.)

⁵ *Carmarthen Journal*, 21 October 1831.

⁶ *The Times*, 25 October 1831; *Cambrian*, 29 October 1831.

⁷ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5459.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5035, 5037, 5038, 5041, 5042.

Greville.¹ But here Greville had wisely obtained counsel's opinion, as we have seen. So, when the sheriff brought an action against him at the Pembrokeshire spring assizes of 1832, the judge ruled that the candidates had agreed only on the choice of an assessor and that there was no contract in respect of the other charges. The sheriff thus found himself saddled with the remainder of Greville's half of the expense involved in holding the elections.²

These sums were trivial in comparison with the bills now presented by the innkeepers of Haverfordwest. They submitted claims for well over £15,000, and this only in respect of meal tickets, drinks, coach hire, lodging, and the like. The entertainment of Greville's professional men and their entourage, for example, is not included in this sum.³ Claims also came from inns outside Haverfordwest, as far afield as Pembroke, Milford, St. David's, and Fishguard, amounting to about £150.⁴ These sums were no doubt excessive, but they were minutely documented and had been accepted each day both by Greville's stewards at the various inns and by his entertainment committee. It is true, also, that most, if not all, of these houses had solicited Greville's authorization to 'open' for him. Nevertheless they had supplied the provisions in good faith. They now found themselves involved in the intricacies of the law relating to entertainment at parliamentary elections.

Few barristers, or even judges, were familiar with this branch of the law, and the Pembrokeshire elections are therefore of interest in so far as they provide valuable interpretations of it in the form of counsels' opinions. The so-called 'Treating Act'⁵ was passed in 1696.

¹ *Ibid.*, 5052 (total for May election, £1,434 10s. 4d.); 5107 (total for October election £874 2s. 9d.).

² *Welshman*, 27 July 1832; *Carmarthen Journal*, 27 July 1832. The action would seem to have been in respect only of the first election.

³ Apollo £987 7s. 11½d., Butchers Arms £175 8s. 6d., Bell £519 16s. 0d., Bunch of Grapes £205 5s. 9d., Black Horse £712 17s. 6d., Bridge End £378 3s. 9d., Cat and Bagpipes £262 13s. 6d., Commercial £752 0s. 6d., Coach and Horses £408 2s. 6d., Dolphin £561 7s. 4d., Falcon £385 10s. 1d., Mrs. Francis £303 10s. 5d., Fishguard Arms £583 12s. 0d., George £504 1s. 0d., King's Arms £689 4s. 6d., Kensington Arms £343 5s. 9d., Mariners £442 13s. 9d., Milford Arms £810 11s. 0d., Mail Coach £863 2s. 6d., New Inn £650 18s. 3d., Plough and Harrow £308 3s. 0d., Plume of Feathers £148 15s. 6d., Pembroke Arms £96 12s. 10d., Royal William £624 10s. 11d., Royal Exchange £817 15s. 6d., Swan £474 16s. 9d., St. David's Arms £255 0s. 3d., Tuns £947 14s. 10½d., Union £551 2s. 9d., Vine £345 7s. 2d., Wellington £513 6s. 4d. This list, based on Eaton Evans and Williams, 4953, is not complete. See also *ibid.*, 4635-4914. The total of tickets issued (calculated on basis of *ibid.*, 4598) was 6,886, the largest number being issued in respect of the Mail Coach, the Royal William, the Bridge End, the Wellington, the New Inn, the King's Arms, in that order.

⁴ Milford Haven—Nelson £60 12s. 11½d.; Fishguard—Peter Davies £20 19s. 2d.; Solva—Ship £13 6s. 10d., Harris £3 19s. 6d.; St. David's—Commercial £9 3s. 9d.; Pembroke—Dragon £7 7s. 9d.; Robeston Wathan—Coach and Horses £3 0s. 6d.; Prendergast—Barley Mow £4 15s. 0d.; unlocated—Benjamin Lewis £9 10s. 0d., Rising Sun (Mr. James) £4 15s. 0d., Mr. Jenkins £4 15s. 0d., Star £2 7s. 6d., Michael Lloyd £2 7s. 6d.

⁵ 7 & 8 William III c. 4.

It provided (1) that no person thenceforward seeking to be elected a member of parliament should, after the issue of the writ, either himself, or through anyone acting on his behalf, give money, meat, drink, entertainment or provision to anyone in order to be elected, or promise to supply such refreshment, and (2) that the election of anyone contravening this law should be considered invalid. As Greville had been unsuccessful, the second provision did not apply. There was nothing in the Act to say that innkeepers supplying the prohibited entertainment should be incapable of recovering the amounts charged, but this was the interpretation given by judges in several cases—that such claims were ‘bottomed in a *malum prohibitum*’¹ and therefore could not be upheld. The Act, therefore, which had proved useless in stopping revelry and drunkenness at elections, did allow political adventurers such as Greville to evade payment of their debts. There was, however, room for argument: were third parties liable if they had given the instructions to the innkeepers (it was admitted that Greville had personally issued no directions), and did the law prohibit the supplying of refreshments to an elector after he had polled? Greville had immediately taken legal advice and decided to disown responsibility.² The innkeepers, faced with certain ruin, had no alternative but to sue.

The most noteworthy case was that of Mrs. Sarah Williams, licensee of Greville’s headquarters, the Mariners. She presented a bill for £1,878 covering all expenses, including provision for Greville’s professional gentlemen, and sued Greville for that amount. It included an item of £443 described as ‘eating for voters’, and another for drink supplied, amounting to £982. This particular item covered an astonishing quantity of drink: 42½ barrels of beer, 67 gallons of brandy, 59 gallons of rum, 1,068 bottles of port, and 780 bottles of sherry, as well as other more exotic drinks, all consumed in two weeks.³ Admittedly the weather had been uncommonly hot. Greville paid £600 into court to cover legitimate expenses, but before the case eventually came for trial at the Brecon summer assizes of 1833 (to which it had been transferred) he fled the country. Mr. Justice Bosanquet immediately ruled that the £443 for voters’ eating was not recoverable in law; neither was such part of the £982 drink bill as related to electors. The total sum, moreover, was pruned to £1,682.

¹ Eyre, C. J., Court of Common Pleas, Easter 1798, relating to an election in the borough of Ipswich.

² Greville to Sarah Williams, from Milford, 6 March 1832, in Williams and Williams, 19483.

³ Pembrokeshire men do not seem to have been fond of whisky, for they consumed only two gallons of it at the Mariners.

The jury was sympathetic to the landlady, for Greville had obviously seen all this refreshment being consumed day after day at the Mariners. They professed themselves unable to distinguish between drink supplied to voters and to Greville's friends and professional men. They found for the plaintiff for the total amount of £1,239. The solicitor-general thereupon moved that the verdict be set aside as contrary to the judge's direction, and the case was argued before the court of King's Bench in November, though still without reaching a decision.¹

Greville's action threw the innkeepers into consternation. Their only recourse now was to sue members of his committee and others who, they claimed, had acted for him, and the obvious man was Major Arthur Bowen, who had busied himself with opening the inns. Bowen denied all responsibility; he argued that such expenses were a debt of honour on the part of the candidate.² He proceeded to Boulogne to see Greville, but, although he found Mrs. Greville there, her husband was conveniently away in his yacht at sea.³ In Bowen's absence, the landlords of the Swan⁴ and the Black Horse⁵ sued him at the Pembrokeshire spring assizes of 1833.⁶ They were at pains to prove that some refreshment had been supplied to electors after they had voted, so that the Treating Act might not apply. Mr. Justice Patteson, in summing up, warned the jury that they must be satisfied that the goods had been supplied on the credit of the defendant, individually and by name. The jury found for the plaintiff in both cases, the actual amounts to be decided by an assessor. At the same assizes the landlord of the Plough sued R. J. Ackland (another member of Greville's committee) and the landlord of the Union sued Sir Richard Philipps and Captain Edwardes, both with the same result.⁷ This greatly encouraged other innkeepers. So, at the summer assizes, the landlord of the Commercial sued two local yeomen who had outvied even Major Bowen, for when, after the second day of the election, he had instituted the ticket system, they had said: 'Damn Major Bowen. He is like an old woman doing more harm than good to the cause'. They now found themselves saddled with a bill for £750.⁸ In the meantime Bowen had sold his commission

¹ Williams and Williams, 19483; *Welshman*, 2 August, 8 November, 1833; *Cambrian*, 3 August, 9 November 1833; *The Times*, 6 November 1833.

² Bowen's memorandum, 30 October 1832, in Eaton Evans and Williams, 4633.

³ Arthur Bowen to James Scowcroft, 11 December 1832, from Boulogne sur Mer, in *ibid.*, 4623.

⁴ Williams and Williams, 19481; *Carmarthen Journal*, 15 March 1833.

⁵ Williams and Williams, 19486.

⁶ As also did a steward (who had been placed in one of the inns) for his wages; *ibid.*, 19479.

⁷ *Carmarthen Journal*, 15 March 1833.

⁸ The men were James Higgon and George Roch. The amount was subject to arbitration; Williams and Williams, 19484; *Welshman*, 23 July 1833; *Cambrian*, 27 July 1833.

in the army and had gone to live in Upper Canada, but he still had property in Pembrokeshire, and at the spring assizes of 1834, the landlord of the Wellington successfully sued him.¹ Yet at the summer assizes of that year, possibly because the severe judge, Baron Parke, was on circuit, three actions brought against Greville's associates all failed.²

It may be that other actions were settled out of court.³ For Lord Kensington and other Pembrokeshire gentry had decided to raise a fund to pay off the innkeepers and had collected at least £2,300.⁴ Yet, as late as 1837, the Cambrian Hotel, Solva, was still suing Lord Lisburne's agent, whose job it had been to direct the electors to the various inns.⁵ And in May 1838 the gentry themselves sought Sir William Follett's opinion as to whether they could recover from Greville the sums they had expended both in paying the publicans and in meeting the heavy costs of both plaintiffs and defendants in the actions in which they had been involved, but Follett's reply was not encouraging.⁶ Meanwhile, Sir John Owen had long since discharged all his bills.⁷

* * *

The heritage of bitterness and hatred left by the elections is further illustrated by the singular conduct and experiences of Samuel Harries of Trevaccoon, a rural idyll worthy of *Cavalleria Rusticana*.⁸ The

¹ Williams and Williams, 19480; *Carmarthen Journal*, 21 March 1834; *Cambrian*, 22 March 1834. The original claim was for £513, awarded £300. (Bowen seems to have spent the remainder of his life in Brantford, near Hamilton, Ontario.)

² Dolphin Inn versus C. B. Allen of Rikeston, *Welshman*, 25 July 1834; *Cambrian*, 2 August 1834 (Allen had acted on occasion as chairman of Greville's committee); Fishguard Arms versus Thomas Harries of Cefnendre, loc. cit.; Bridge End (or New Put Up) versus John Williams of Trearched (who sought to prove that it was a house of ill-fame), Williams and Williams, 19482; *Cambrian Journal*, 1 August 1834.

³ Eaton Evans and Williams, 4953.

⁴ N.L.W., Lucas MS. 172; *Carmarthen Journal*, 4 May 1832, stated that Lord Kensington with the assistance of Lord Braybrooke had decided to settle these accounts.

⁵ Williams and Williams, 19485.

⁶ Eaton Evans and Williams, 5459. Follett's opinion is dated 17 May 1838. Not satisfied with this the gentry sought the opinion of Mr. Meynott, who though 'shaken' by Follett's opinion was inclined to urge them to sue; opinion dated 22 June 1838, 3 Fig Tree Court, Temple.

⁷ *Carmarthen Journal*, 4 May 1832. An unsuccessful action was brought against one of his supporters, also named Bowen, by a Cardigan innkeeper, at the Pembrokeshire summer assizes, 1834, *ibid.*, 1 August 1834. *Welshman*, 27 December 1844, prints a bill for £115 from 'a publican of Haverfordwest now living' which had been submitted to Sir John Owen 'at one of the contested elections for County Pembroke'. Unless this was the election of 1812, which is unlikely, it must have been the election of 1831. The bill contains the unusual item: 'To shaving dressing and cropping the heads of 42 freeholders for Sir John at 13d. for everyone of them £2 5s. 4d.'

⁸ The documentation for this episode is immense, and it has not been thought necessary to particularize. The main sources are Francis Green, 'Harries of Cryglas and Trevaccoon', in *West Wales Historical Records*, VIII (1919-20), 117-41 (for the family); Williams and Williams, 19479-90 (some 174 deeds and documents, including enormous briefs); P.R.O., K.B. 1/57 and 1/58 (some forty affidavits); *Cambrian*, 20 January, 11 August, 1832; *Carmarthen Journal*, 20 January, 11 May, 1 June, 3 August, 1832; *Welshman*, 3 August 1832, 10 May 1833; *The Times*, 17 January 1832, 3 May 1833.

narration might give the impression that Harries was a bull-frog squire and bucolic magistrate of little intelligence, yet he was an alumnus of Jesus College, Oxford, and had even proceeded to his M.A. degree, and his two younger sons were also Oxford graduates. When he supported Greville so ardently he was seventy-one years of age. Originally intended for the Church he had entered the army, but had settled in Pembrokeshire when he succeeded to the estate on the death of his elder brother. His passion was fox-hunting—he kept his own pack of hounds, and his *bêtes noires* were poachers. He was undoubtedly an eccentric with an ungovernable temper. He had even published a pamphlet to disparage his father¹ and, if one can believe a statement which became the subject of a libel action (the facts were not disputed), he had quarrelled with everyone, was separated from his wife, and had turned his sons out of doors. He was singularly vain. In 1816 he had thought it would be pleasant if his neighbours should present him with a piece of plate to mark his thirtieth year as a magistrate. He therefore bought the plate and had it suitably inscribed. He then asked a friend to solicit subscriptions, but the sum collected was trifling and Harries was left to bear the cost.

Before the May election, Harries canvassed a neighbour for his vote for Greville. This person did not vote himself, but his son, David Harries, a notorious ne'er-do-well and poacher who had twice been to prison, once for assaulting a constable and once for insolvency, voted for Sir John Owen on the specious grounds of a promissory leasehold from his father. Samuel Harries was infuriated; he told the boy's mother that he would 'get him yet'. Information was brought to him that David Harries had been seen in pursuit of game without a licence. David Harries knew the informant (whose goods had been distrained upon by his father) and allegedly assaulted him in an inn in Trevine. He was arrested for assault and brought to Trevaccoon before Samuel Harries, who did his utmost to dissuade his sureties from going bail for him. David Harries then appeared at Mathry, on 30 November, before the commissioners of taxes, to answer the charges against him of contravening the game laws. He had taken the precaution, beforehand, of seeking the advice of John Hill Harries of Priskilly, another magistrate who acted as a tax commissioner. It was John Hill Harries who had been Sir John Owen's nominator at the May election. Samuel Harries poured torrents of abuse on David Harries at the Mathry meeting but failed to get his fellow commissioners to convict him. David Harries's

¹ He referred to it to a cousin as 'the sick goddess of virginity'.

demeanour was no doubt insolent, so Samuel Harries afterwards issued a warrant against him for insulting him in the execution of his duty, and, as he had no sureties, had him conveyed to Haverfordwest gaol. There he stayed over Christmas, from 3 December to 4 January 1832, yet, when he was brought before quarter sessions, no one appeared to prefer a charge against him and he was dismissed. With utter folly, Samuel Harries had him arrested again and brought to Trevaccoon to appear before himself and William Tucker Edwardes of Sealyham on the original game charges. As he produced his acquittal notices, these were dropped, but he was now charged with uttering a threat to shoot Samuel Harries, and Edwardes bound him over to appear before the next assizes. Even so, Samuel Harries neglected to institute proceedings.

His political opponents were quick to take advantage of his folly. While David Harries was still in gaol they contacted Sir John Owen in London, and the opinion was sought of no less eminent a counsel than John Campbell, the future lord chancellor. He advised that an application be made to the court of King's Bench for a criminal information against Samuel Harries. This was granted, and the trial fixed for the Brecon summer assizes of 1832 (for it would have been difficult to get an impartial jury in Pembrokeshire). There Maule, who had appeared for Greville before the select committee, was brought down from the Oxford circuit (at a fee of a hundred guineas) to lead for the prosecution. David Harries had become a mere cipher in the proceedings. Samuel Harries's counsel¹ made much of the fact that the massive briefs and enormous fees were not the concern of the insolvent ne'er-do-well—that the prosecution was a political one. Mr. Justice Alderson in his summing up said that this was not a matter for the jury, and they found Samuel Harries guilty of illegally and corruptly committing David Harries to Haverfordwest gaol. He was ordered to appear in person before the King's Bench to receive sentence. Numerous affidavits were now produced with a view to mitigation of the sentence, notably from Lord Cawdor, and the piece of plate dated 1816 was even cited as evidence of his excellent work as a magistrate. Efforts were made to save him from further personal humiliation, but the affidavits as to his health were conflicting. So he was forced to set out from Trevaccoon on his *via dolorosa* the day after Christmas. He did not get further than Bath. New affidavits were there produced of his physical exhaustion, and, at

¹ He was John Evans, K.C., Greville's counsel during the election; the attorney was George Thomas of Carmarthen.

last, while the fees were mounting up, Mr. Justice Littledale pronounced sentence in his absence on 2 May 1833. Had he been a young man, the judge said, he would have sent him to prison; he now fined him £500. It was, he added, a matter for the lord chancellor whether Harries should be removed from the commission of the peace, but Harries forestalled this by resigning that office.

This was still not the end of the affair. Two years later John Hill Harries, in sending a business letter to one of his friends, felt moved to refer to 'that poor old restless spirit the major', and certainly wrote about him at some length. It took three generations, he said, to make a gentleman, and he dilated upon Samuel Harries's life of petty turbulence and upon the story of the piece of plate. With Samuel Harries so much on his mind, the writer had the incredible ineptitude to address the letter to Samuel Harries himself. He first knew that it had gone astray when he found that Samuel Harries had brought an action for libel against him. This was tried at the Pembrokeshire spring assizes of 1836. The contents of the letter had not been made public and as the defendant apologized the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. Yet at the following summer assizes Samuel Harries won a distinct victory over his opponents, though this time he sponsored the cases of two poachers. John Hill Harries had convicted two Mathry parishioners for poaching in the days before Christmas. He imposed a fine, and allowed them a few days to pay, with the alternative of a month in Haverfordwest gaol. The two men consulted Samuel Harries, and he had the acuteness to see that, although they had been properly convicted under an Act of 1830, this Act had, only a few weeks previously, been modified by an Act of 1835, although only in the form in which the conviction was phrased. He therefore advised them to refuse to pay, and they, in their turn, spent Christmas in gaol, where one of them was placed on the treadmill. Samuel Harries then employed an attorney to enable them to sue John Hill Harries for false imprisonment. Lord Denman on circuit confessed that the change in the law had escaped him. Yet he awarded damages of £15 to one of the poachers, and £28 to the other who had been on the treadmill. This may have given the old man some satisfaction in the remaining two years of his life. He died at Trevaccoon on 5 April 1838.

* * *

It was a long time before Greville dared to show his face in Pembrokeshire. He fought in the Carlist war in Spain in 1835 and then seems to have lived in France. Yet he returned to Milford in

1852 or 1853, and resided at Castle Hall, to which he made extensive additions. He was soon deep in ambitious schemes for the development of the Haven, with the consequence that he had to mortgage his estate, and he was sold out of Castle Hall in 1862. He died in Milford on 12 September 1867.¹ Sir John Owen fared little better. In 1838, he and his son, Colonel Hugh Owen Owen, raised a mortgage of no less than £64,000 on their property.² Yet both men had to stay away from Pembrokeshire to avoid their creditors.³ Sir John surrendered the county seat in 1841 to Lord Emlyn, son of his old opponent, the earl of Cawdor, and transferred to his own son's seat in the boroughs, which he retained unopposed until his death. This retrenchment was not enough, and in 1842 the household furniture and plate of Orielson were advertised for sale.⁴ Sir John kept writing to Sir Robert Peel in ever greater distress, and in ever humbler terms, but met with little response.⁵ In 1856 the Llanstinan estate of Colonel Hugh Owen Owen, then some 3,200 acres, was sold,⁶ and, in the next year, this was followed by the sale of Orielson (some 5,800 acres).⁷ Four years later Sir John Owen died, on 6 February 1861. Colonel Hugh Owen succeeded him as member for the Pembroke boroughs, but was defeated in 1868, and did not stand again. The might of Orielson, which had dominated the political and economic life of Pembrokeshire for well over two centuries, was at an end.

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¹ J. F. Rees, *op. cit.*, 51-9.

² Eaton Evans and Williams, 5810.

³ *Welshman*, 2 September 1842.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 June, 5 August, 1842.

⁵ B.M., Peel papers, 40486, ff. 227, 229; 40516, f. 110; 40518, f. 39; 40524, ff. 317, 319; 40544, f. 276; 40547, ff. 122, 126; 40555, f. 250; 40557, f. 396; 40570, ff. 325, 327; 40589, f. 368.

⁶ Eaton Evans and Williams, 9863.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9864. For Sir John Owen's later years, when he lived at Paynton, co. Gloucester, away from his Pembrokeshire creditors, see Orielson estate documents, parcel 24 (N.L.W.).