

William Dawbarn: A Victorian Life

by

W.F. Yeo

Honours B.A., Mathematics, University of Saskatchewan, 1968

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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Dr. M. Grant (Department of History)  
**Supervisor**

Dr. S. Devereaux (Department of History)  
**Departmental Member**

## **Abstract**

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This biographical study accessed genealogical records, wills, probate records, and contemporary newspaper accounts to examine the lives of six generations of the middle-class merchant Dawbarn family of nineteenth-century Wisbech, Cambridgeshire and Liverpool. The purpose was to assess the extent to which the experiences of this Dissenter family, with a focus on third-generation businessman and author William Dawbarn (1819-1881), conform to the well-known story of the rise of the English middle class. The Dawbarns did conform to the commercial and social patterns established by the middle class: sons joined fathers' businesses; religion was central to life; successful businessmen participated in local politics; membership in associations was common; and partible inheritance was the norm when passing wealth to the next generation. All of this was accomplished within a society which placed a high value on conformity. Yet a close reading of William Dawbarn's writing reveals a benevolently eccentric individual.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Dedication .....	vi
Preface.....	1
Introduction.....	5
The Victorian Frame of Mind .....	16
Dawbarn Family Business .....	30
Inter-generational Wealth Transfer.....	53
William Dawbarn’s Social Life Worlds .....	75
Business .....	77
Religion.....	87
Associational.....	96
Political .....	110
Family .....	128
The Eccentric .....	150
Conclusion .....	172
Note on Sources .....	176
Bibliography .....	178
Appendices.....	183
William Dawbarn.....	183
Robert Dawbarn Senior and Sons .....	184
Elmswood Hall.....	185
Dawbarns of Wisbech.....	186
Dawbarn Family Members’ Wealth at Death.....	187

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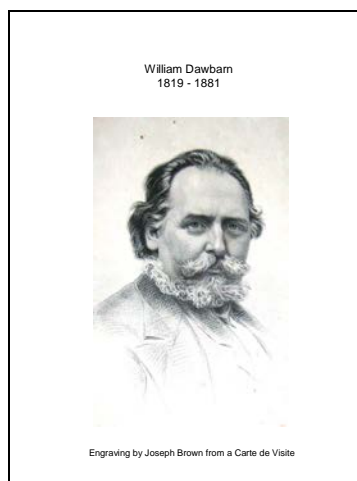
## Dedication

*To my parents, George and Margaret, who instilled in me the attitudes that allowed me to take advantage of the educational opportunities provided me, with the result that I have had experiences in life far beyond anything I could have imagined as a child.*

## Preface

*Biographies – the profounder parts of all are left unwritten and out of sight. The secret history is truly secret and never penned.<sup>1</sup>*

*William Dawbarn*



I have always thought of myself as a conventional individual but with an underlying desire to be unconventional and even eccentric. Perhaps desire is not the correct word; fantasy may be more accurate. Irrespective of any eccentricity I may demonstrate, I have always been attracted to people who have an eccentric bent; not an eccentricity exhibited in odd or whimsical ways, but rather one in which the individual deviates from conventional thinking yet operates within the accepted morality (morality defined in the broad sense) of society. Thus, a chance encounter with the book *The Eccentric Club* (1881) by William Dawbarn (1819-1881) in the British Library caught my attention and ultimately led to my research of six generations of the Dawbarn family of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire and Liverpool.

While waiting for *The Eccentric Club* to be delivered to my reading desk, I quickly established that over the past two hundred years there have been several incarnations of a London Club known as the Eccentric Club. In researching the history of the club I met with Imants von Wenden, the president of the modern-day club, who was aware of Dawbarn's book. Imants and I were excited about the prospect of *The Eccentric Club* being an account of the affairs of the mid-nineteenth club; disappointingly, this has not yet been established. Nevertheless, my interest in William Dawbarn grew with my discovery that he had published two other books, *Essays, Tales, etc., etc* (1872) and *Government, Conduct, and Example* (1871), both available in the British Library.

Dawbarn became even more interesting when a search of genealogical records made clear that the Dawbarn name was rare. Birth records for England and Wales from 1837 to 2005 contain only 338 Dawbarns; all are almost certainly the descendants of William Dawbarn's paternal grandfather, Richard Bunbury Dawbarn (1757-1829) of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Local Wisbech history records report that in the 1790s Richard Bunbury, leader of his Baptist congregation, established the family drapery firm of Dawbarn & Sons which survived five generations in a period when most family firms survived one generation or less. The Dawbarns leveraged their business success into prominence in local government and public affairs throughout much of the nineteenth century. William Dawbarn relocated his large family of eleven children to Liverpool about 1860 where he took over his father-in-law's slate business, which ultimately became Dawbarn & Co., a supplier of a broad range of building materials. Business success in Liverpool again led to involvement in local government and public affairs.



William Dawbarn had married Elizabeth Yelverton in 1843 and each of their children was given the middle name Yelverton. Thus Dawbarns of subsequent generations who have Yelverton as part of their names are undoubtedly descendants of William. As a consequence, I had the good fortune to meet William's great-grandson Simon Yelverton Dawbarn (1923 - ) who provided me with useful material on the Dawbarns.

These factors - the commercial and public prominence of the Wisbech Dawbarns, the rarity of the Dawbarn name, and William Dawbarn's business success in Liverpool, his participation in Liverpool public affairs, and his publications - led me to choose the Dawbarns, with a focus on William Dawbarn, as the basis for this study. At the outset the purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which the experiences of this Dissenter family, and in particular those of third-generation William Dawbarn, conform to the well-known story of the rise of the middle class in the nineteenth century as described by historians such as Harold Perkin, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. But the third factor, William Dawbarn's books, provided an additional opportunity that was not obvious to me at the outset; as I studied Dawbarn's writing in more detail I began to realize I was gaining some insight into his attitudes and beliefs. I came to appreciate E.H. Carr's comment that 'history cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing.'<sup>2</sup> Probate, genealogical and census records, wills, and contemporary newspapers allow us, in William Dawbarn's words, to 'see the house, but not the tenant; . . . [to] see the husk, but taste not the

kernel.’<sup>3</sup> His books allow us to ‘see the tenant . . . and taste the kernel’ although, after more than a century, ‘the secret history is truly secret and never penned.’

William Dawbarn conformed to Victorian middle-class life: he was religious, the head of a large family, successful as an entrepreneur in business, active in local government and public affairs where he advocated liberal utilitarian principles. Yet he maintained, at least in his own mind, his individuality through a benevolent eccentricity; in his own words ‘the beaten track must be avoided, and some other road to success be discovered.’<sup>4</sup> And so I returned to what had caught my attention in the British Library - eccentricity.

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Notes: Preface

<sup>1</sup> William Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club and its Protégé Morton Melville with some of the Notions of its Members* (London and Liverpool: George Philip & Son, 1881).

<sup>2</sup> E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, Second ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 24.

<sup>3</sup> William Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example* (London: Arthur Hall & Co., 1871), 59.

<sup>4</sup> William Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed. (London: Arthur Hall, and Co., 1872), viii.

## Introduction

The historical context of this study is the rise of the English middle-class in the early to mid-Victorian era. As in the case of Leonore Davidoff's and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (2002) 'it is about the ideologies, institutions and practices of the English middle class.'<sup>1</sup> Although covering a slightly later period, this paper explores, as did Davidoff and Hall, these three subjects through study of the actual experiences of men and women of the period. At the centre of the study is the Dawbarn family of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire with a particular focus on third-generation William Dawbarn of Liverpool. This study contributes to a larger body of literature on the Victorian middle class and particularly to the literature covering the experiences of businessmen.

Margaret R. Hunt, author of *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680 – 1780* (1996), covered similar ground as Davidoff and Hall, but dealt with an earlier period. Both *Family Fortunes* and *The Middling Sort* emphasize that 'consciousness of class always takes a gendered form'<sup>2</sup> and women supported men in their rise to public prominence. In this study little will be said of women as, in the case of the Dawbarn family, other than birth, death, marriage, and census records, there is little source material available on the lives of the women. This might be as a consequence of the retreat, by the mid-Victorian period, the primary period of this study, by many middle-class women 'to a domesticated life in their suburban villas and gardens.'<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, *Family Fortunes* and *The Middling Sort* provided a great deal of

background material on women's roles which assisted in the interpretation of the men's lives. A third study which provided background and context is Harold Perkin's *The Origin of Modern English Society* (2002), in which Perkin argues that industrialization in Britain was a social revolution as much as a technological or solely economic revolution, in that it entailed 'the rise in the number, size and complexity of human institutions, political and administrative, educational and even religious . . . and the migration of people from old to new communities.'<sup>4</sup> This study will show how William Dawbarn participated in this social revolution in the rapidly growing Liverpool urban environment. We will see that Dawbarn was an amalgam of two of Perkin's middle-class ideals, namely the entrepreneur and the professional, while at the same time maintaining, at least in his mind, his individuality through a benevolent eccentricity.

The nineteenth-century Dawbarns took life seriously, a not-uncommon characteristic of Baptists of the period, especially those who leaned toward hyper-Calvinism. The grand patriarch of the family, Richard Bunbury Dawbarn (1757-1829), William's grandfather, was both a merchant and a preacher, although he may have been a somewhat reluctant preacher. The Upper Hill Street Baptist Chapel in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire made several requests before he agreed to become its pastor in 1804. This was a role which he fulfilled until his death in 1829. William's grandmother, Elizabeth Dawbarn, published a number of books, most of them expressing austere views on religious matters. In the introduction to one of her publications, *Sentiments Selected from Writers of Ancient and Modern Celebrity Concerning Theatrical Amusements* (1805), which covered her views on the theatre, she wrote

that every thing relative to Theatrical Amusements, in their nature, consequences, and effects, was and is, equally and indiscriminately, independent of time, *place*, or circumstance, the object of my disapprobation, displeasure, and disgust.<sup>5</sup>

On the surface the nineteenth-century Dawbarns appear to be rather ordinary middle-class English men and women whose religious beliefs led to an austere life style.

However, a closer look at the family's history sheds further light on the rise to wealth and prominence of successful middle-class Victorian families.

William Dawbarn was an admirer of the writer and clergyman Sydney Smith (1771-1845) who is most well known for being a founder, and the first editor, of the *Edinburgh Review*. Peter Virgin, a biographer of Smith, has described the ideal subject for biography, quoting A.C. Benson:

such men and women, have inspired deep emotions, have loved intensely, have cast a glow upon the lives of a wide circle, have said delicate, sympathetic, perceptive, and suggestive things, have given meaning and joy to life, have radiated interest and charm.

Virgin then added his own qualification: 'although one man or woman necessarily holds centre-stage, it is vital to have a lively supporting cast.'<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of Victorian society and therefore that supporting cast is essential in providing breadth beyond the experience of one individual.

William Dawbarn was not a man of Smith's calibre in terms of his reputation or the writing he left behind but, to some degree, he fulfilled most of the biographer's requirements: he was deeply involved in public life, where he took an interest in improving the living conditions of the working classes; his public pronouncements on sanitary conditions in Liverpool generated critical and sarcastic comment from *The*

*Porcupine* newspaper, famous ‘for unsparing commentaries on local politics and politicians.’<sup>7</sup>; artists and literary people were welcome in his home; he befriended and became the patron of an alcoholic painter of renown whose paintings hang in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool today; he was perceptive in his public lectures and writing on private, business, and public life; he was an active member of his Baptist congregation; and, like the rest of the Dawbarn men, he reportedly had great charm. His supporting cast included the members of his extended family, many of whom were successful businessmen and professionals engaged in public life.

William Dawbarn was not a plodding nineteenth-century business man as depicted by William Hazlitt (whose father, coincidentally, was briefly a pastor in Wisbech in the eighteenth century):

Hazlitt, in one of his clever essays, represents the man of business as a mean sort of person put in a go-cart, yoked to a trade or profession; alleging that all he has to do is, not to go out of the beaten track, but merely to let his affairs take their own course. “The great requisite,” he says, “for the prosperous management of ordinary business is the want of imagination, or of any ideas but those of custom and interest on the narrowest scale.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to Hazlitt’s depiction of the average businessman, Dawbarn was innovative in his approach to business and had a broad range of interests. After he established a cotton thread manufacturing business in Wisbech in the mid-1840s, he wrote of the need to find a novel means of advertising the products of his business: ‘I saw that I must adopt some measures different from those in general use. The beaten track must be avoided, and some other road to success be discovered.’ Dawbarn had determined that to reach the widest possible audience for his products the ‘other road to success’ was to

make this little periodical [*Dawbarn's Family Journal*] do the double duty of enabling me to express my opinion of life, of men, of manners, of books, and nobody knows what, and, at the same time, make it serve my purpose of advertising.<sup>9</sup>

*Dawbarn's Family Journal*, a monthly publication comprised of short stories, poems, advice to the homemaker, and social commentary first appeared in 1849. Some of the material he wrote himself with the more literary material provided by his dear friend Thomas Craddock, who wrote under the pseudonym Thomas Smith. Just months before dying Dawbarn published an autobiographical work, *The Eccentric Club*, which was written in a somewhat nonsensical genre, perhaps inspired by his admiration of Sydney Smith. Peter Virgin wrote that although Sydney Smith 'did not set out to be original. . . . He was nevertheless very innovative. . . . G.K. Chesterton thought that Sydney was the "real originator of Nonsense."' <sup>10</sup>

William Dawbarn died on 26 May 1881, in his sixty-first year, at Elmswood Hall, his fourteen-acre suburban estate which he had purchased in 1867 from the estate of a former mayor of Liverpool. Dawbarn had accumulated a considerable amount of wealth; his net personal worth (excluding real estate) at his death was £47,000 which equates to about £55,000,000 in 2008 if we take his wealth as a proportion of Britain's GDP. He might have been making some effort to emulate the upper classes of society, as Perkin deemed characteristic of the mid-Victorian businessman, by acquiring Elmswood Hall. He clearly wished to leave a legacy; he set out in his will that, upon his death, one or more of his elder sons could take up his business and his widow was to continue living in Elmswood Hall. These wishes were not realized. Financial difficulties beset his last years with the result that neither did his business survive nor did his residence remain in his

family more than a few years following his death. As Dawbarn, like the middle class generally, split his estate equitably amongst his children, it would have been necessary for one of his children to purchase Elmswood Hall if it was to remain in the family beyond his widow's death. Dawbarn's children had not accumulated anywhere near their father's wealth and therefore none of them would have been in a position to purchase and maintain the property. Furthermore, in the later Victorian period there was less interest in gentrification and, with much smaller families, there might have been little incentive to acquire a large property such as Elmswood.

The passing of William Dawbarn can be viewed as a symbolic transition point between the first three generations of Dawbarns, who were primarily middle-class merchants, to future generations of middle-class Dawbarns from which there emerged doctors, lawyers, diplomats, engineers, journalists, authors, and artists. William Dawbarn's three youngest sons graduated from Cambridge: Albert Y. Dawbarn as a mathematician; Robert Y. Dawbarn as a solicitor and artist whose paintings are sold at auction today; and Climenson Y. C. Dawbarn as a barrister, author, and accomplished chess player. Grandson Reginald Y. Dawbarn was a well-known Liverpool medical doctor and another grandson, Christopher Y. Dawbarn, an architect. Nephews and grand-nephews were solicitors, doctors, engineers, architects, journalists, and even an actor (which would likely have caused William's grandmother considerable dismay).

In writing the story of William Dawbarn and his family I have taken a thematic approach. This is advisable in that it will allow for a broad-based consideration of the



extent to which the Dawbarn family conforms to what most of the recent literature says about the rise of the nineteenth-century middle class.

The first theme is the Dawbarn family business. The family business started by R.B. Dawbarn in the 1790s provided the wealth and reputation for generations of Dawbarns to lead good lives: gaining success in their own businesses; educating their children; participating in civic affairs; and making possible leisure time to pursue other interests, such as William did in study and writing. In addition to the insights provided by Davidoff and Hall, those of Stana Nenadic, “The Small Family Firm in Victorian Britain” (1993), were important in understanding the dynamics of family businesses.

The second theme is the manner in which wealth was transferred between generations. As this study straddled six generations of Dawbarns it was important to understand the transference of family wealth from generation to generation. The principle source of insight into this process was provided by R.J. Morris in his *Men, Women, and Property in England, 1780-1870* (2005), which helped greatly in interpreting the Dawbarn wills. Assessing where the Dawbarns’s wealth placed them in society was aided by W.D. Rubenstein’s *Men of Property* (1981) and *Capitalism, Culture, and Decline in Britain, 1750-1990* (1993).

The third theme is a grouping which I have labelled social life-worlds. In modern societies people participate in a range of separate, but overlapping, social groups. This *plurality of life-worlds* is described by Peter l. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner in their book *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (1973).

The first of these life-worlds is that of business. An understanding of nineteenth-century business and entrepreneurship was provided by John F. Wilson's *British Business History, 1720-1994* (1995) and P.L. Payne's *British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century* (1988). An aid in understanding how Victorians viewed the men in the world of business was gleaned from Samuel Smiles's *Character* (1905) and *Self-Help* (1908).

The second life-world is religion which was central to Victorian life. The Dawbarns were Baptists and took an active part in church life. The history of the Baptists in England was gleaned from J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994), James E. Tull, *Shapers of Baptist Thought* (1972), and A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (1947).

The third life-world involved participation in societies of all sorts; William Dawbarn was President of the Y.M.C.A., President of the Liverpool Trade Protection Society, a member of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, attended meetings of the British Association, and was the President of the Liverpool Early Closing Association. Davidoff and Hall, and Hunt provide a good overview of the importance of associations of all kinds from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century. One of the organizations to which William Dawbarn was dedicated was the Y.M.C.A. Clyde Binfield's *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.* (1973) provides an account of the Y.M.C.A. and its development through the nineteenth century.

The fourth life-world is political life. Two generations of Wisbech Dawbarns were very much a part of Wisbech civic affairs; they were Justices of the Peace, mayors, members of the town council and guardian boards. William Dawbarn was active in the

civic affairs of Liverpool. K.B. Smellie in his *History of Local Government* (1968) provides a good overview of the development of local government following the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act. Francois Vigier, *Change and Apathy: Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution* (1970), provides more detail on the transition of Liverpool local government following the 1835 Act. Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (1979) and *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (1976), provides more depth for a number of midlands cities, including Liverpool, during the period in which William Dawbarn was a Liverpool town councillor.

The fifth life-world is family, the refuge for the business man at the end of a long day in the market place. In addition to Davidoff and Hall, John Tosh in his book *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999) provided insights into Victorian family life.

The final life-world is a look at the intimate relationships William Dawbarn formed outside his family, business, and public life. Dawbarn was a great admirer of his near-contemporary Sydney Smith. Biographical information on Smith was provided by his daughter, Lady Holland, in her *A Memoir of the Rev. Sydney Smith* (1855), and the biographies of Hesketh Pearson, *Smith of Smiths* (1937), and Peter Virgin, *Sydney Smith* (1994).

At this point we will have a good understanding of William Dawbarn's and his supporting cast's private and public lives in Victorian England; but what of the inner man? Dawbarn himself recognized the difficulty of identifying the individual below the surface: 'companions are around us, but they do not know our mental occupation; they

see the house, but not the tenant; they see the husk, but taste not the kernel.’<sup>11</sup> On the surface, middle-class Victorians seemed to be “much of a muchness” as Victorian society imposed a rigid code of social conduct. We shall see that William Dawbarn fit the patterns of the middle-class entrepreneur and professional as described by Perkin and others. However, historians’ efforts to describe an age by developing categories of behaviours tend to result in the loss of individual identity. Yet Victorian society made space for men to express their individuality through a mask of eccentricity. We will take a close look at *The Eccentric Club* to explore the ways in which William Dawbarn saw himself as being “off centre” rather than just “much of a muchness.” Insights into the nature of Englishmen’s attitudes toward liberty, independence, and eccentricity were provided by Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850* (2000), Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (1994), and Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: a Cultural History 1740-1830* (1987). Thoughts on the impact of modernity on identity were provided by John Keekes, *Moral Tradition and Individuality* (1989), and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The making of the Modern Identity* (1989). Contemporaries of William Dawbarn, in whose writing there are clear parallels with Dawbarn’s writing include Samuel Smiles, author of *Character and Self-Help* and Thomas Carlyle, who wrote *Sartor Resartus* (1837).

William Dawbarn lived a good life; he did what he wanted to do, achieving much as an entrepreneur and pushing rational, utilitarian approaches in public life, all the while embracing the norms and values of Victorian society. Although he died relatively young, Samuel Smiles would have considered that Dawbarn had lived a productive life:

length of *years* is no proper test of length of *life*. A man's life is to be measured by what he does in it, and what he feels in it. The more useful work the man does, and the more he thinks and feels, the more he really lives. The idle useless man, no matter to what extent his life may be prolonged, merely vegetates.<sup>12</sup>

An overarching theme of this study is the ideology of Victorian society, particularly that of the middle class. Walter E. Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870* (1957) provided a useful structure for interpreting the writing of William Dawbarn. Before looking at the details of William Dawbarn's life we set the stage by first exploring the "Victorian frame of mind": the ideas, attitudes, and values of Victorian middle and upper class society. This will assist us in delving into the 'profounder parts' of Dawbarn's life.

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Notes: Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Revised Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes, Revised Edition*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes, Revised Edition*, xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Dawbarn, *Sentiments Selected from Writers of Ancient and Modern Celebrity Concerning Theatrical Amusements*, (Wisbech: John White, 1805), Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Virgin, *Sydney Smith* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), ix, x.

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray, 1908), 310.

<sup>9</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., viii.

<sup>10</sup> Virgin, *Sydney Smith*, 126.

<sup>11</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 59.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Character* (London: John Murray, 1905), 105.

## The Victorian Frame of Mind

*I have explored those general ideas and attitudes about life which a Victorian of the middle or upper classes would have breathed in with the air – the main grounds of hope and uneasiness which he felt, the modes of thought and behaviour he followed, often spontaneously, the standards of value he held – in a word, the frame of mind in which he was living and thinking.<sup>1</sup>*

Walter E. Houghton

Census records, birth, death and marriage records, and newspaper accounts provide information about William Dawbarn's accomplishments in his life of sixty-one years. Yet, what were the values, beliefs, and emotions that guided him through life? Walter E. Houghton, in his *The Victorian Frame of Mind; 1830–1870*, turned to literature to discover the primary influences on the Victorian middle and upper class mind, in the belief that 'we can do this fully and precisely only through what the mind expresses.' Houghton considered literature broadly; he included 'letters and diaries, history, sermons, and social criticism, as well as poetry and fiction'.<sup>2</sup> Dawbarn, although not a literary artist, took the time to 'express his mind' through a number of publications; we will interpret some of Dawbarn's published thoughts within Houghton's framework to gain insight into how his view of the world determined his actions.

Houghton argues that the Victorian mind was a complex mixture of attitudes which he places in categories: emotional (optimism and anxiety), intellectual (critical spirit, anti-intellectualism, dogmatism, and rigidity), and moral (commercial spirit, worship of force, earnestness, enthusiasm, hero worship, love, and hypocrisy). There is evidence of all these attitudes being present in Dawbarn's life, but earnestness stands out

above all others in both his writing and his life's work. Intellectual earnestness 'is to have or to seek to have genuine beliefs about the most fundamental questions of life' while moral earnestness, which most characterizes Dawbarn's approach to life,

is to recognize that human existence is not a short interval between birth and death in which one fingers as many guineas as possible . . . but a spiritual pilgrimage from here to eternity in which he is called upon to struggle with all his power against the forces of evil, in his own soul and society.<sup>3</sup>

The promoters of moral earnestness held that leading a moral life depended on 'the arduous struggle to master the passions and compel the will to a life of duty'<sup>4</sup> which is an apt description of William Dawbarn's primary attitude about life. Yet he also held a complex mixture of attitudes, some of which were contradictory.

Houghton's book demonstrates that 'the Victorian mind did not have any preconceived scheme of consistency; he enables one to understand of that era . . . how the most sentient of intelligences can simultaneously hold essentially contradictory conceptions.'<sup>5</sup> Thus moral earnestness stands in contradiction to the ethic of enthusiasm which

assumes that human nature is good; that the organ of virtue is the sensibility rather than the conscience; and that the moral life depends, not on the arduous struggle to master the passions and compel the will to a life of duty, but on the vitality of the noble emotions, inspiring the delighted service of a high ideal.<sup>6</sup>

The noble emotions of love, admiration, and hope - 'love in the sense of pity for human beings suffering under misfortune, admiration for what is good and gracious in human nature, and, hence, hope for the human situation' - could express themselves in the moral ideal of benevolence.<sup>7</sup> Dawbarn was a benevolent man who took an active interest in the welfare of the working class and those who experienced misfortune in life, as exemplified

by his patronage of an alcoholic Liverpool painter. He also wrote extensively about benevolence in *The Eccentric Club*.

Houghton acknowledged that characterizing the Victorian mind through interpreting artists could be misleading; the artist's views might only represent those of his own social circle. Houghton argued that, while this is clear at times, there is much evidence to the contrary. Quoting extensively from Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and *Past and Present* (1843) he points out that almost every one of Carlyle's central ideas, 'however stripped of their "fiery poetic emphasis," could be found in the plain prose of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*.'<sup>8</sup> Similarly, many of Smiles's ideas are to be found in Dawbarn's even plainer prose. Were the ideas of Carlyle, Smiles, and Dawbarn restricted to members of their respective social circles, which were almost certainly different? Alternatively, did their ideas influence the general population, at least those of the upper and middle classes, or, were they simply reporting on ideas commonly held by the general population? All of the above is almost certainly the case. Undoubtedly, some of Dawbarn's ideas came from the artistic community. Although he does not ever cite Carlyle and Smiles, he does reference a number of other writers of the day including Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), William Cobbett (1763-1835), John Foster (1770-1843), and William Hone (1780-1842). On the other hand, Dawbarn's thinking must also have been influenced by the Dissenter, merchant, middle-class family environment of his upbringing.



Dawbarn's publishing career began in the late 1840s with the monthly *Dawbarn's Family Journal*. Its purpose was to advertise the products of his cotton-winding business in Wisbech. In the introduction to *Essays, Tales, etc., etc.* (a compilation of material from *Dawbarn's Family Journal*), first published in 1861, he wrote:

I bethought myself of a journal – why not have my own journal? Why not, said I, start my own organ – blow my own trumpet, - as the age seems to expect it, and make this little periodical do the double duty of enabling me to express my opinion of life, of men, of manners, of books, and nobody knows what, and, at the same time, make it serve my purpose of advertising those productions, which for the first time had been attempted in that agricultural county.<sup>9</sup>

He also published *Government, Conduct, and Example* in 1861 and *The Eccentric Club* in 1881. From these three publications we gain some insight into Dawbarn's 'frame of mind'. Unsurprisingly, we encounter a Victorian frame of mind but, for a middle-class merchant, a somewhat eccentric mind which we will explore in more detail later. For now, we should note that he valued both the centric and the eccentric: 'Every man has something to do if he will do it. . . . Eccentric people have their work to do in the world as well as the "centric". Every man has a mission.'<sup>10</sup> This belief in mission was central to Dawbarn's way of thinking, as it was to the broader Victorian middle and upper classes, as expressed by John Henry Newman (1801–1890) who wrote that 'every one who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work.'<sup>11</sup>

The words 'mission' and 'work' are closely, critically, linked. A Christian's duty was to work and, by working at the right thing, he would be rewarded by Providence with happiness: 'the gods, says the poet, have placed labour and toil on the way leading to the

Elysian fields.’<sup>12</sup> However, even if a man was not religious, other than outwardly as required by Victorian middle-class society, industrial society required the same dedication to work:

the arraignment of idleness, the value of work for the development of the individual, and the sense of a mission both to serve society in one’s particular calling and to further the larger destinies of the human race, were almost as much the ideals of business as Protestantism.<sup>13</sup>

Leisure time, if not properly utilized, could lead to idleness with the resultant harm to both business and the individual. When Dawbarn had leisure time he was not idle: ‘Leisure, as every one knows, is so much a negative state of existence, as often to make people fall into mischief. Mine, to be rendered as harmless as possible, ran into reading and writing.’<sup>14</sup> For Dawbarn, leisure time, which came as a result of success in business, combined with the reputation earned through success in business, led to more work with the acceptance of ‘public trusts which . . . are to be found in connexion with Town Councils and Savings Banks, Boards of Guardians and Assessed Taxes, Boards of Health and Turnpike Trusts.’<sup>15</sup> Having succeeded at his particular calling, business, he turned to the improvement of his community. In all undertakings time was the most precious commodity: ‘it is the very disposition and use of the busy minutes of the day that really complete or mar the purpose of life. Any man who cannot make a minute do a minute’s works, is not up to the mark.’<sup>16</sup> We are not to waste time as ‘we know the end of life comes quickly; we want, therefore, to be up and doing.’<sup>17</sup> Early rising was a cardinal quality for Dawbarn; men who had gained eminence did not ‘waste their hours in

bed.’<sup>18</sup> Working, having a mission, making productive use of leisure time, and not wasting a minute of the day was living life in earnest.

For Dawbarn, life’s pilgrimage entailed the fulfilment of a hierarchy of duties to carry out ‘the object in life we propose’. The first duty was the self-government of what Dawbarn called Private Life or Private Culture. This duty was placed first as ‘out of it grow the most subtle of our passions, and the most determinate of our actions.’<sup>19</sup> Self-restraint was good for the individual, for society as a whole, and for the country:

the perfection of government is no doubt seen in the wise execution of laws, but it is no less seen in suitable and discreet education. Self-restraint is of all restraint the cheapest to the community and the best for the individual. Happy shall we be, as a people, as long as we train up our children to understand that their first duty is self-government, as enjoined by Holy Writ and the laws of their country.<sup>20</sup>

Did Dawbarn derive the idea that self-control, or self-restraint, or self-government had both a personal and a social benefit from writers such as Samuel Smiles, or were Smiles and Dawbarn reflecting an attitude extant in Victorian society? Regardless, in this sense he embodied the types of values espoused by Smiles in *Self-Help*, thus suggesting that he subscribed to the same views as the leading self-help author of his own day. The first chapter of *Self-Help* is titled ‘Self-Help – National and Individual’ and opens with ‘Heaven helps those who help themselves . . . The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength.’<sup>21</sup>

With his character developed, a man was then in a position to carry out his other duties, which Dawbarn observed were arranged in a ‘very methodical order.’<sup>22</sup> This idea

of a cosmic order following universal laws was adopted by Dawbarn and his fellow Victorians who had ‘answered so confidently in the affirmative’ to John Stuart Mill’s question: ‘are the actions of human beings, like all other natural events, subject to invariable laws?’<sup>23</sup> Thus, following private culture, a man’s second duty was to his family; after first ensuring the maintenance of a good social position as a result of business talent ‘there are demanded of us physical and moral research, in order to learn what conditions are most suitable for an active, happy, healthy household.’<sup>24</sup> “Public Duty” followed personal and family duties: ‘every man’s dwelling must be somewhere. Cooperation with others will be constantly needed. Each member of society is continually called on to help in parochial, municipal and sanitary matters.’<sup>25</sup> The fourth duty was to country which required an Englishman to study its history ‘since the history of his country enters into almost every national duty he is called on to perform.’<sup>26</sup> The final duty was to the world: ‘international law, mercantile energy, and missionary efforts, are parts of duty that are sure to demand our consideration in one form or another.’<sup>27</sup>

Invoking the “Argument from Design”, Dawbarn likened man to a machine ‘turned out by the divine contriver, exquisitely finished and fitted for certain ends of being.’<sup>28</sup> A man’s first challenge was to identify his particular talents and find that work for which he was particularly suited. These were the tools by which to achieve those ‘certain ends of being.’ Thomas Carlyle, in his poetical language, recognized this challenge in *Sartor Resartus*:

To each is given a certain inward Talent, a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability. But the hardest problem were ever this first: To find by study of

yourself, and of the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward Capability specially is.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, even should a man discover his particular talent, Dawbarn saw that the former was at continual risk of falling short of achieving his mission in the eyes of God: 'I feel that the man who knows his heart best, knows how short he comes of that standard of perfection which is the measurement of the Christian.'<sup>30</sup> Fortunately, unlike a machine created by another man, God provided man with the wherewithal to regulate and repair himself:

the regulation of part to part, piece to piece, is intrusted to himself; repairs are permitted to be done under his own inspection; renewals [sic] of power and speed are directed and accelerated by his knowledge; and the renovations undertaken under his own auspices, are often the blessed means which secure him from deterioration and final destruction.<sup>31</sup>

For Dawbarn, inspection and repairs were to be carried out with the guidance of 'those cardinal qualities which Christians of all sects and parties . . . recognize as qualities that it behoves their creed to teach.'<sup>32</sup>

Dawbarn often referred to God and Christianity, but without reference to doctrine. Rather, his religious orientation was of an ethical and prudential nature which Margaret Hunt has noted was the common orientation of the religious societies of the period.<sup>33</sup> The cardinal qualities Dawbarn admired included a good temper, temperance in all things (as 'eating, drinking, and smoking, are dangerous in excess, but so is intemperance in study and in business. Prudence must regulate all these things'),<sup>34</sup> a humble value of oneself ('not to treat at any time with disrespect the humblest of their fellow creatures'),<sup>35</sup> maintaining good company (including what one reads as 'the character of his general

reading is a good index of his thoughts’),<sup>36</sup> truthfulness, sincerity, and honesty. Also, of crucial importance was the avoidance of youthful sinning which, ‘if it be a sin of sensuality, frequently produces the one unhealed, unsound part in their moral system’ which can, even after repentance, lead to future uncertainty.<sup>37</sup> If a young man wished ‘to advance in wisdom, station, or wealth, securely, it must be by much self-discipline’ and he had to be a life-long learner: ‘you must be the schoolmaster to yourself, when the time of an external schoolmaster or usher comes to an end.’<sup>38</sup> Finally, to be a success one had to work hard: if anyone ‘fancies he is a genius, and can make progress without labour, he is much mistaken. . . . our great men, when little men, worked.’<sup>39</sup> Samuel Smiles agreed: ‘men of the most distinguished genius have invariably been found the most indefatigable workers.’<sup>40</sup>

Houghton wrote that ‘except for “God”, the most popular word in the Victorian vocabulary must have been “work”.’<sup>41</sup> For William Dawbarn work was at the heart of all life’s duties: one worked at self-improvement, one worked to provide for a family and raise one’s social status, one worked at creating a suitable family life, one worked at contributing to one’s community, one worked at supporting the nation and the world. This constant attention to work may have been a contributing factor to Dawbarn’s early death. Certainly living the last twenty years of his life in the unhealthy confines of Liverpool would not have improved his health. The Manchester Statistical Society reported in 1837 that the average age of death in nearby Manchester for professional persons and gentry was 38 years, while in rural Rutland the average age of death was 52 years.<sup>42</sup> His longer-lived father, who died at age eighty-eight, and his brother Robert,

who died at age ninety, lived their entire lives in the small town of Wisbech located in an agricultural district. Yet perhaps a more significant factor in Dawbarn's early death was an underlying anxiety prevalent in Victorian society.

The drive to work was partially fuelled by this underlying anxiety. For the middle-class businessman, with little protection from limited liability for partnerships with a small number of partners, the cycle of boom and bust and the ever-present threat of bankruptcy could lead to severe mental strains. In his introduction to *The Eccentric Club* Dawbarn wrote:

this book was written in the middle of the nights when I could not sleep. The year 1879 has been amongst the worst, of the last two or three, perhaps of the last thirty or forty years, to me and many others engaged in mercantile affairs. . . . Social and family anxieties of more than ordinary magnitude have accompanied these business anxieties. I found I had no alternative, if I wished to keep my mind healthy and cheerful, but to write.

Anxiety led to more work, writing in this case, as a means of distraction from that anxiety; 'for the Victorians intense activity was both a rational method of attacking the anxieties of the time, and an irrational method of escaping them. . . . The record of exhaustion and collapse . . . is extensive.'<sup>43</sup> The pace of William Dawbarn's life might have contributed to his death. However, William Lecky observed in 1899 that, although overwork was often cited as a cause of the breakdown in health, 'most of what is attributed to this cause is probably rather due to anxiety than to work.'<sup>44</sup> Perhaps Dawbarn's death was due to an onset of illness and a breakdown as a consequence of anxiety. His death was unexpected; as reported by the *Liverpool Mercury* in an obituary

on 27 May 1881 Dawbarn ‘was at business on Wednesday, but getting home in the evening he complained of being ill . . . the cause of death was heart disease.’

One consequence of a breakdown could be a re-evaluation of the direction one’s life is taking, or has taken. After a life of adhering to the ethic of earnestness with devotion to conscientious self-control and self-improvement he appears to have turned to reflecting on the role the ethic of enthusiasm played in a good life. Dawbarn’s character was not devoid of noble emotions, but these sentiments might have developed later in life, after he had distanced himself from his Calvinistic upbringing in Wisbech. In the last year of his life he might have considered whether these emotions should have consumed more of his time and energy. In his book *The Eccentric Club* Dawbarn appears as the character Mr. Banward (clearly an anagram of Dawbarn) who is introduced to the club membership by club President Thomas Smith, Dawbarn’s close friend Thomas Craddock in real life, with these words: ‘you pushed your business, and worked like a slave, for what I then told you, was for money, and for the love of being seen.’<sup>45</sup> *The Eccentric Club* was devoted almost exclusively to the ethic of enthusiasm and the noble emotions.

Houghton wrote that the Victorians’s concept of noble emotions derived ‘from the Rousseauistic faith in the goodness of human nature and the spontaneous flowering of the moral sentiments, as long as they were uncorrupted by the “evil” influences of civilization and unrestrained by authoritarian discipline.’<sup>46</sup> This sentiment is evident in Dawbarn’s *The Eccentric Club* as he described the manner in which the club’s young secretary Morton Melville, identified as ‘the Club’s Protégé’, was raised and educated;



They found in Morton a stray foundling, or nearly so, brought up by one of the oldest and most respected members, who in one of his eccentric moments picked up the little chap, and popped him into his family apartments at once and brought him up to man's estate. He interfered little with the child's tastes, let him have his way of amusing himself. In his earliest years he never scolded him, but let him and his house-keeper settle matters between themselves.<sup>47</sup>

Cloistered within the environment of the Eccentric Club, Abraham Seaton, with the support of the other members of the club, raised Morton in a manner that allowed the natural good within the boy to emerge. To be eligible for membership in the club one had to possess a certain kind of eccentricity; it 'should be free from all malevolent feeling',<sup>48</sup> so free from malevolent feeling that it was the sort of eccentricity 'which did good turns for bad ones – overlooked the faults of the vicious, forgave the unchaste, clad the naked, fed the little ragamuffins, and gave them a start in life.'<sup>49</sup> This environment must have been far different from that in which William Dawbarn was raised. Yet, Dawbarn developed a benevolent character, or at least he saw himself in that light as he had the club president introduce Banward (Dawbarn) with these words:

There were few specimens of the genuine eccentric man more worth the study of the society than the actions of this gentleman, for of all the eccentricities that he possessed, which proceeding, no doubt, from benevolent motives, he had combined with them an abundance of good temper. . . . Successful in business, chimerical in his notions, Quixotic in his actions, admiring talents and genius, he became a joining link, by philanthropic feelings, in bringing into harmony much that would be otherwise separate, and unnoticed, and useless in society.<sup>50</sup>

We shall see that this self-evaluation had some basis in fact.

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Notes: The Victorian Frame of Mind

<sup>1</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 220, 221.

<sup>4</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 220, 264.

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- <sup>5</sup> Perry Miller, "The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870 by Walter E. Houghton", in *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Sep., 1957), 407-409.
- <sup>6</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 264.
- <sup>7</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 265.
- <sup>8</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, xvi.
- <sup>9</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., viii.
- <sup>10</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 141.
- <sup>11</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 244.
- <sup>12</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help*, 33.
- <sup>13</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 247, 248.
- <sup>14</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, Introduction.
- <sup>15</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, Introduction.
- <sup>16</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 82.
- <sup>17</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>18</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 81.
- <sup>19</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 59.
- <sup>20</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 57.
- <sup>21</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help*, 113.
- <sup>22</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>23</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 33.
- <sup>24</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>25</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 78.
- <sup>26</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 80.
- <sup>27</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 80.
- <sup>28</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 58.
- <sup>29</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1837), 109.
- <sup>30</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 61.
- <sup>31</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 59.
- <sup>32</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 62.
- <sup>33</sup> Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 104.
- <sup>34</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 63.
- <sup>35</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 65.
- <sup>36</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 67.
- <sup>37</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 69.

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- <sup>38</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 70.
- <sup>39</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 72.
- <sup>40</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help*, 113.
- <sup>41</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 242.
- <sup>42</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 171.
- <sup>43</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 262.
- <sup>44</sup> William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *The Map of Life*. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 309.
- <sup>45</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 178.
- <sup>46</sup> Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 267.
- <sup>47</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 6.
- <sup>48</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 5.
- <sup>49</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 5.
- <sup>50</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 176.

## Dawbarn Family Business

*Family firms occupy a unique position in the historiography of British business, and, more than at any other time, the Victorian age is commonly represented as the age of the family firm.<sup>1</sup>*

*Stana Nenadic*

*The economic advantages of a large family or an interlocking connection of families were of course still substantial. Within the business it guaranteed capital, perhaps useful business contacts, and above all reliable managers.<sup>2</sup>*

*E.J. Hobsbawm*

The family business, central to Victorian middle-class economic activity, went beyond economics: ‘the aim of *the establishment* . . . was, above all, to maintain the family, educate children, provide for dependents and live a religious life.’<sup>3</sup> The term *establishment* was ‘used to connote the combined enterprise and family household.’<sup>4</sup> For an establishment to be seen as successful it required that its owners not only achieved business success but also domestic success. The reputation of the proprietor was all important in the market place and the basis for that reputation included his ability to provide for a family and oversee a disciplined Christian household.<sup>5</sup> A successful establishment also provided the credibility and the free time for the proprietor, or proprietors, to engage in public affairs or pursue other interests. Conversely, engaging in civic affairs was good for business; a healthy, successful, growing community would provide more, and more affluent, customers and trading partners, thus expanding business and reducing risk.

Although Victorians viewed the family firm as the ideal model for business, there were few single family ownership firms which survived across multiple generations. Most family firms survived only a few years, or possibly the working life of one generation.<sup>6,7</sup> Family businesses, particularly those that survived multiple generations, almost always involved partnerships; sons, sons-in-law, brothers, cousins, and occasionally non-family members were involved. Keeping the business within the family had the advantage of reducing risk, forming larger pools of capital, and providing apprenticeship opportunities for children who then could take permanent positions in the business or establish their own firms. Partners were almost exclusively men although there were exceptions, usually only out of necessity; for example, when the male head of the household died with children who were still minors the widow might be asked to operate the family business until the eldest son was able to take over.

Business was a decidedly male occupation and running one's own business meant independence which had political connotations. Independence was closely linked with the 'early nineteenth-century concept of "manhood". . . . [and] . . . Manhood was to become a central part of claims to legitimate middle-class leadership.'<sup>8</sup> For middle-class Victorian males to be recognized as adult men 'they must provide a livelihood which made possible a domestic establishment where they and their dependents could live a rational and morally sanctioned life.'<sup>9</sup>

In an age in which trust in the market place was limited, the family firm allowed for larger pools of capital to be formed than would otherwise be possible for most members of the middle class to amass. To begin with, members of the middle class had

much less capital than the landed class and, even when one generation built a successful business and amassed some capital, the tendency to practice partible inheritance rather than primogeniture greatly reduced the opportunity to increase that capital base over multiple generations. This continual dilution of capital with each generation, which made the establishment of a dynasty virtually unattainable, was a disadvantage of the practice of partible inheritance. Under the system of primogeniture large capital pools, whether in land or in more liquid forms, enabled the establishment of dynasties, while providing incomes for all family members. Under partible inheritance all sons of each succeeding generation could not be free from work.<sup>10</sup> Yet this might not have been seen as a negative by members of the middle class. Many members of the middle class, deeply suspicious of landed wealth and the privileges held by land owners, had little desire to become part of that group. Secondly, middle-class male identity was tightly bound to independence and making one's own way; work was laudable.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, 'commerce and industry were identified with equitable inheritance. Blackstone was writing his law for a commercial society "whose welfare depends upon the number of moderate fortunes engaged in the extension of trade"'.<sup>12</sup> Equitable inheritance encouraged children 'to work and take the risks of profit seeking in the commercial and manufacturing economy',<sup>13</sup> if they were to achieve the financial success of their parents.

The principle source of wealth of the Dawbarn family stemmed from the family business of Dawbarn & Sons located in Market Place in Wisbech. The family business founded by R.B. Dawbarn in the 1790s was one of a few Victorian multi-generation family businesses and it was the basis for other Dawbarn family firms which fell into the

much larger category of one generation or less businesses. Richard Bunbury Dawbarn might have established this business with money that would have come into his hands as the result of his marriage in 1782 to Elizabeth Saltonstall ‘of Alford in Lincs – a lady of substance.’<sup>14</sup> Oscar Dawbarn (1882-1945), a great-great grandson of Richard Bunbury and a Dawbarn family historian, wrote that Elizabeth was ‘the only surviving member of the Family who were descended from Samuel Saltonstall, the elder brother of the famous Lord Mayor of London (Lord Mayor 1597/98)’<sup>15</sup> and so it would seem she was from a well-off family. Margaret Hunt writes that in the eighteenth century

marriage was, for all ranks, the main means of transferring property, occupational status, personal contacts, money, tools, livestock, and women across generations and kin groups. Among the commercial classes one of the most important of these transfers came in the form of the portion or dowry. For many young men their wives’ dowries would constitute the most important infusion of capital they would ever receive.<sup>16</sup>

In the late eighteenth century the mean age of marriage in England was 26.4 years.

Richard Bunbury, married in the month following his twenty-fifth birthday, was relatively young and we can reasonably assume that he benefited financially from his marriage.

By the 1790s R.B. Dawbarn was a partner with Isaac Jecks in the drapery and grocery business of Jecks and Dawbarn<sup>17</sup> which later became Dawbarn & Sons. R.B. must have retired from business by the time of his death in 1829 at the age of seventy-two as his will makes no reference to his business and he identifies himself as a gentleman. By the early nineteenth century the term gentleman was used by those who had retired from business and lived on an independent income. The business must have

been successful as he was able to bequeath six thousand pounds in cash plus various pieces of real estate to family members.

*Pigot's Cambridgeshire Directory* of 1823-24 listed Dawbarn & Sons as suppliers of coal, corn, and seed, a Grocer & Tea dealer, and a Linen & Woollen Draper. By 1839 it had added Hatters and Silk Merchants to the services of the firm. By 1850 *Slater's Directory* identified the lines of business as Grocers and Tea Dealers, Hatters, Linen & Woollen Drapers, Silk Merchants, suppliers of Salt, Sack, Wool, and Seed, Ship Owners, Wool Merchants, and Manufacturers of Hall's Wisbech Cotton. The Dawbarns had developed into general merchants rather than focusing on one line of business, which undoubtedly had helped them survive the ups and downs of commercial life.

The 1851 *Cambridgeshire Directory* described Dawbarn & Sons as being one of the more extensive businesses in Wisbech.<sup>18</sup> Following a tour of the premises, the authors of the directory wrote that the firm

is the most extensive, and general house of business in the county, and from the business-like, and perhaps peculiar style in which it is conducted, we might pronounce it, for the district, a "model" establishment.

This business employed 150 people (at this time Wisbech's population was about 10,000), had an annual return of £95,000, annually received about 8,000 letters and handled 104,000 transactions. This was a significant business, although not in the league of the head of the drapery trade at the time, Samuel Morley, whose business employed 8,000 people.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the Dawbarn business was substantial, especially for the small town of Wisbech. To put the Dawbarn family business into a twenty-first century perspective, using Dawbarn & Sons turnover as a proportion of GDP as a basis of



comparison, the 1851 Dawbarn business's annual turnover of £95,000 translates into an annual turnover in 2008 of £228,000,000.

Dawbarn & Sons had operated throughout the nineteenth century and there remains today a business of the same name in Wisbech, although the current business does not seem to be directly connected to the nineteenth-century business, nor are there any Dawbarns associated with the current company. However, Oscar Dawbarn 'found the business premises bought by Richard Bunbury in 1792 [were] sold by me in 1920'<sup>20</sup> and so it might have survived for a full five generations in much the same form.

Dawbarn & Sons diversified into a number of other lines of business, but at the core of the nineteenth-century Dawbarn family's wealth and success was the grocery and drapery business. All four of Richard Bunbury's sons were grocers and drapers. In the third generation, eight of fourteen Dawbarn men were grocers or drapers or both; a ninth, William Dawbarn, apprenticed as a draper but then became a timber and slate merchant; a tenth was a leather merchant. Of the remaining four of the third generation one was a lawyer, one a soldier of minor rank, and the occupations of the final two are unknown, although at least one apprenticed as a draper. By the fourth generation, in which twenty-six Dawbarn men have been identified, the family's wealth combined with wider educational opportunities for Dissenters had positioned nine Dawbarn men to become professionals: three lawyers, two engineers, one mathematician, one doctor, one journalist, and one actor. Nevertheless, almost half the fourth generation Dawbarn men whose occupations have been identified remained merchants; eight were grocers and drapers, three were in the building trades (the sons of William Dawbarn), and one was a

leather merchant. Not only were R.B.'s sons grocers and drapers, but two of his daughters were also married to men in the same trade in Wisbech, namely John Dowson, the husband of Mary, and John Cripps, the husband of Elizabeth.<sup>21</sup>

Drapery was apparently a trade to which Dissenters were drawn:

The student of nineteenth-century Nonconformity cannot fail to be impressed at the number of drapers prominent on the membership rolls, and at the way they prospered. . . . Drapery became an escape route for aspiring young Dissenters whom means or intellect or luck debarred from the more usual opening in the ministry or even the professions.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps this drew R.B. Dawbarn into the trade. While he did become the pastor of the Upper Hill Street Chapel, he did not develop a reputation as an inspiring preacher nor is there any evidence that he left behind any intellectual property with respect to doctrine. A number of authors, including two of his grandchildren, wrote about the exploits of the Reverend Samuel Fisher, R.B.'s predecessor, and the Reverend Robert Reynoldson, R.B.'s successor, but R.B. is only mentioned in passing. Both Fisher and Reynoldson were principally preachers while R.B. seems to have been first a merchant and secondly a preacher. It was more typical for drapers to be recruited as deacons.<sup>23</sup> The drapery trade was arduous, exciting, and fiercely competitive; this was a good training ground for the role of deacon in the church, a role which a number of Dawbarns undertook.

An issue for all family firms was generating enough business to support multiple families. The more sons, the more families to support, and R.B. had four sons. If a firm was to survive multiple generations it was necessary for one or more sons to join the business and take the lead role when the previous generation had left the business either through retirement or death. Thus Richard (1786–1826), the second son, and Robert

(1799–1888), the youngest, remained with the family firm in Wisbech throughout their working lives. However, if there were more sons than could be accommodated in the business a common strategy was to set the older sons up in their own businesses after an apprenticeship in the father's business. A son might become a partner in his father's firm before venturing out on his own. R.B. Dawbarn's eldest son Thomas (1785–1863) and his third son John (1789–1848) struck out on their own; Thomas went to London, although he later returned to Wisbech to join the family firm, and John settled in Liverpool.

Another solution was for a son to make a beneficial marriage whereby he would become a partner in his father-in-law's business. R.B.'s grandson William Dawbarn, who began with the family firm in Wisbech, benefited from his marriage to Elizabeth Yelverton when he entered his father-in-law's slate business in Liverpool which ultimately became William Dawbarn & Co. A beneficial marriage could also provide a large enough dowry allowing a man to establish his own business. As noted above, R.B. may have taken this course himself and he might have provided the same opportunity for his two sons-in-law, John Dowson and John Cripps; Dowson was a grocer and tea dealer and Cripps a grocer, tea dealer, and draper, both in Wisbech. We will now follow the four branches of the Dawbarn family through successive generations where we will see these strategies repeatedly applied.

R.B.'s third son John was the most independent of the four sons and his family business does not appear to have been entangled with the businesses of his father or brothers. John established his business in Liverpool and must have been there no later than 1813 as in the 1841 Census his son Robert Ellison, who was born in Liverpool, was

twenty-nine years old and still living with his father in Liverpool. In the 19 March 1824 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* the firm of Dawbarn and Barnett, Woollen Drapers and Clothiers of 18 Byrom Street, Liverpool ‘beg to inform their Friends and the Public, that J. Dawbarn has just returned from the London and West of England markets, and offer for inspection Cloths, Cassimeres and Waistcoatings of the first quality.’ To impress upon their ‘Friends and the Public’ that they offered only the highest quality product they had employed in the cutting department a foreman who was recently employed in a Jermyn St. firm in St. James, London. The 1825 Liverpool Street Directory lists John Dawbarn’s residence as 17 Byrom Street, immediately adjacent to his business at number 18. By 1834 John had shed his partner Barnett and the firm was now Dawbarn & Son. He had as his partner either his eldest son Robert Ellison or his second son Seacome Ellison.<sup>24</sup> By 1841 John had four family members working with him: namely his sons Robert and Seacome as drapers and his daughters Harriett and Cordelia as milliners.<sup>25</sup> This is the only case where Dawbarn women have been identified as having worked outside the home. John announced his retirement at the age of fifty-two in the 16 July 1841 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* and encouraged his clients to continue to support his son Seacome and his new partner Joseph Davis, now proprietors of the firm Dawbarn and Davis.

Although John Dawbarn does not appear to have had any business dealings with the Dawbarns back in Wisbech there is an interesting connection between his family and that of his brother Richard. Richard’s second son, also named Richard (1814-1881), married successively two of John’s daughters, Mary<sup>26</sup> and Harriett<sup>27</sup>. Richard, the

younger, and his siblings must have had much more difficult childhoods than their cousins of the third-generation Dawbarns. Richard's parents, Richard and Mary, died in 1826 and 1829 respectively, leaving a young family. At their mother's death in 1829 there were seven children, with the eldest child aged nineteen and the youngest, Henry, just ten. In between were sons Richard, aged fifteen and the Thomas, aged eighteen.

The premature death of a business man with a young family could lead to complications with respect to control of his business or his share in a business. In an effort to reduce the risks for his family, Richard, the elder, at the age of thirty-nine, just two months before his death, had made his last will and testament. His instructions were that, upon his death, his desire was that his eldest son Thomas should take over his share of the business partnership with his brother Robert Dawbarn. Should Thomas not be interested, or if the trustees deemed him unsuitable, then one of his younger sons was to be given that option. If the eldest son living at the time of Richard's death should be underage then he willed that his wife Mary should run his share of the business until the eldest living son was of age. If she should die while the sons were underage then the trustees were to run his share of the business until the eldest son was of age. Mary did, in fact, die when all the sons were underage.

Thomas was never to fulfill his father's wishes; he chose a different path from other Dawbarns. Ann Lys, a sixth generation descendent of Richard Bunbury, reported in the *50<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of The Wisbech Society* (1989) that Richard Bunbury had written, just over a year after his son Richard's death, that 'my grandson Thomas Dawbarn became very untoward and unruly and enlisted into ye 51 Regiment at Liverpool March

6<sup>th</sup> 1827.’<sup>28</sup> We will see later that Thomas and his family must have had a difficult and uncertain existence as both R.B. and Thomas’s sister Elizabeth provided for Thomas and his family in their wills. Following Mary’s death in 1829 it would have been another six years before her second son Richard attained the age of twenty-one. It seems unlikely the trustees would have continued to run Richard’s share of the business for that period of time when any capital in the business could have been used for maintaining the seven orphans. The premature death of Richard and Mary leaving seven orphans and a vacancy in Dawbarn & Sons might have prompted the return to Wisbech of eldest son Thomas of the second generation Dawbarns and the uncle of the orphans.

Thomas returned from London, to which he had relocated before March 1810 as his eldest child Richard Bunbury was born in London on 21 March 1810. The *London Gazette* reported on 17 February 1816 the bankruptcy of the linen drapers L.Saltonstall, M. Agate, and T. Dawbarn ‘late of Fleet Street’. Saltonstall was surely a relative of Thomas Dawbarn from his grandmother’s side of the family. Thomas remained in London until at least the latter part of 1825 as his sixth child Lucretia was born in London on 8 July of that year. Sometime thereafter, and no later than 1832 when a letter to the editor from Tycho Wing, agent to the Duke of Bedford, in the 4 December 1832 issue of the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper refers to Mr. Thomas Dawbarn of Wisbech, he returned to Wisbech and joined his brother Robert in Dawbarn & Sons. Thomas made a success of his return to Wisbech; in 1837 he was ‘Mayor of Wisbech during the Coronation year of Queen Victoria, also Alderman, and for some time the Chairman of the board of Guardians.’<sup>29</sup> His second son George (1821–1899) apprenticed in the firm as

a grocer and draper, eventually becoming a partner, and one of Wisbech's most prominent citizens, serving as an alderman and J.P.

We have now looked at the families of the three eldest of the four sons of Richard Bunbury Dawbarn who between them had seven sons and fourteen daughters. The fourth, and youngest son Robert, produced seven sons and just three daughters and it was from this family's third, fourth, and fifth generations that the professional Dawbarns emerged. Robert was a partner in Dawbarn & Sons no later than 1825 when he was just twenty-five years of age. Following the death of his brother and partner Richard, it appears that Robert's brother Thomas became his new partner; in their father's will of 1829 the testator gave and devised

to my two sons Robert Dawbarn and Thomas Dawbarn all those my . . . or dwellinghouses with the shops garden and outhouses thereto belonging situate in Wisbech Saint Peters aforesaid the . . . Market now in the occupation of them my said sons Robert and Thomas Dawbarn.

At his death, Robert had a financial worth fifty percent greater than that of any other Dawbarn identified. This financial success might have been a consequence of Robert being the youngest (ten years younger than the third brother John) and therefore in a position to benefit fully from the expansion of the economy following the Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore, as a consequence of having his family in the second quarter of the century, his descendents were educated in a period when Dissenters had wider opportunities in the professions and therefore many moved beyond mercantile careers.

Robert Dawbarn's seventh and youngest son Charles (1833-1915) apprenticed as a draper at the age of seventeen while living still living with his father at home at the time

of the 1851 Census. However, in the late 1850s he left the drapery trade forever when he emigrated to America where, in 1859, he married Mary Elizabeth MacKay Mead, a widow and the daughter of Dr. Hugh Mackay. This union produced two children Robert Hugh MacKay (1860–1915), who was to become a well known surgeon in America,<sup>30</sup> and Cornelia who married, and subsequently divorced, Harry Thurston Peck, Professor of Latin at Columbia University.<sup>31</sup>

The sixth son, Richard Bunbury (1831-1897), lived with his brother Charles in the paternal home in 1851 and was apprenticed as a grocer. By 1861 he was married, occupied as a grocer and draper, and lived at 4 Crescent in Wisbech just two doors away from his cousin George. In 1871 he was still occupied as a grocer and draper but had moved to 5 Crescent, immediately next door to his cousin George. In 1881 his occupation was warehouseman and by 1891 he was 'living on his own means', still at 5 Crescent.<sup>32</sup> Gardiner's *History of Wisbech and Neighbourhood* (1898) has him 'for some years associated with his father, in the firm of Dawbarn & Sons.' Yet Gardiner's biographical note focused on Richard Bunbury's literary and artistic attainments:

He was the author of the brief sketch of Wisbech in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and his literary and artistic attainments and wide range of general knowledge constituted him an authority upon many historical and topographical matters, one of his successful efforts in that direction being the paper read before the British Archaeological Society, when it visited Wisbech, giving a description of Wisbech Castle.

He had one son, Gilbert Joseph (1860-?), an engineering graduate from Glasgow University who emigrated to Australia.



Robert Dawbarn's fifth son Joseph (1829–1850) died as a young man at the age of twenty-one in 1850, and nothing further has been discovered of him other than a portrait hanging on the wall behind the Dawbarn men in a family photo taken in 1878.

John Dawbarn (1825–1895), the fourth son, retired as a leather merchant in London. He was living in London no later than early 1854 when his marriage to Hepzibah Place was announced in the 4 February 1854 issue of the *Daily Mail*. At the time of the 1861 Census he was living in Bloomsbury and his occupation was Grocer, Ship and Insurance Broker. According to the 1871 Census, John and his family were living with his father in Wisbech and his occupation was listed as Merchant. At this time John's fifteen-year-old son Robert Place was apprenticed to Dawbarn & Sons. A business reversal in London might have brought John home to Wisbech, but by the time of the 1881 Census he was back in London, now living in Tottenham and his occupation was Leather Merchant. His son Robert Place was living with him and was occupied as a Grocer's Assistant. His eighteen-year old son was a Leather Trade Clerk.

Robert's third son, also a Robert (1825–1915), was the first Dawbarn to enter the professional ranks. He was a solicitor who practiced law in Wisbech for many years; in 1901 at the age of seventy-six his occupation was Solicitor. He lived to the age of ninety and died in his home, Oakleigh, in Queen's Road in Wisbech leaving a probated estate of one hundred and fifty-two pounds. Apparently the law was not as lucrative a business as groceries and drapery. On the other hand, perhaps, as a lawyer, Robert had found a way to disburse his wealth before his death, thereby avoiding death duties.

Robert, the younger, had four sons. The occupation of the fourth, Edward Algernon (1867-?) is unknown but the first three were professionals. Thomas Richard (1860-1931) was a solicitor who established his own firm in Wisbech. Robert A. (1861–1916) was a civil engineer. Charles (1871–1925) was a journalist and author with an entry in *Who's Who*. Moving to the fifth generation, Thomas's son John R. (1895–1953) followed in his father's footsteps and entered into his father's law firm following service in World War I. Robert's son Graham Richards (1893–1976) was a well-known architect, with an entry in *Who's Who*.

Robert, the elder's, second son was James (1823–1896) who was in the traditional Dawbarn family trade of drapery. At the time of the 1851 Census James was living in Exchange Street in nearby Norwich where he was a Linen Draper employing fifteen assistants. This might have been a branch location of Dawbarn & Sons being run by James on behalf of his father; a property in Exchange Street, Norwich was owned by Robert Dawbarn Senior at his death and was devised to his son James. James's first and second sons, George Barber (1847–1885) and James Proctor (1849-1937), were also in the drapery trade and his third son, Edwin (1862-1899), was an actor. One of James's grandsons, Lancelot Proctor (1881–1917), was a Tea Merchant's Assistant who died as a Private in the Balkans in World War I. Lancelot Proctor was one of fourteen Dawbarns who served in World War I and one of three who died in the conflict.

William Dawbarn, the eldest son of Robert Dawbarn, was the most energetic and prolific of Robert Dawbarn's seven sons. He demonstrated the widest range of business endeavour, was the wealthiest, the most active in public affairs, the most published, and

he had the largest family (twelve children, eleven of whom survived into adulthood). He and his family, along with his brother Robert and his family, are the most representative of the seven brothers and their families in terms of the transition from a merchant family to one in which the professions took on a more significant role. As noted earlier, among Robert's sons were a solicitor, an engineer, and a journalist. William's three oldest sons were merchants and tradesmen, while his three youngest sons were Cambridge graduates: Joseph Yelverton (1857–1943) was a lawyer and painter whose pictures are still at auction today; Climenson Yelverton Charles (1859–1951) was a lawyer and author; Albert Yelverton (1862–1949) was a mathematician who published several mathematical texts. Furthermore, the children of these three men included a medical doctor and an architect.

At the age of fourteen William's indenture papers tell us he was apprenticed to his father's firm for seven years. Sometime thereafter he became a partner in Dawbarn & Sons. In 1843 he married Elizabeth Yelverton of Liverpool. Maria, the first of their eleven children, was born in Wisbech in 1845. According to the 1851 Census, William and his growing family, five more children had followed Maria, were living in the fashionable Crescent in Wisbech. During his partnership with his father, William founded another firm, Hall's Wisbech Cotton. This was a successful business and one which the authors of the *Cambridge Directory* felt worthy of special attention:

Nor should we omit to make especial reference to another interesting branch of commerce, which till lately formed an adjunct to this establishment, but which is now a separate and distinct business, and belongs solely to Mr. William Dawbarn. The Cotton factory, to which we allude, has long been in a growing state, but was not established on any larger scale than the employment of about

twenty hands till this year (1850). A piece of land having been procured near the canal side, in the spring of the year, a building for the accommodation of about forty hands was erected. This however, soon proved too small, and a larger building was forthwith commenced, to which a steam-engine was added. The large building is 120-feet, by 38, and at this time, there are about 120 hands employed in cotton-winding, reel-turning, cloth-cap, stay and slop-making: the cotton-winding being solely carried on in the large building, and the other branches in the smaller building first erected. It is worthy of mention, that the steam-engine was wholly made in Wisbech, by Mr. James Pear. The establishment of this factory and thereby the employment of upwards of one hundred hands that probably would have otherwise been idle, is entirely due to Mr. William Dawbarn, who is now sole proprietor of "Hall's Wisbech Cotton."

The success of the cotton venture and William's partnership with his father-in-law William Yelverton in the latter's slate business in Liverpool must have led William to withdraw from his partnership in Dawbarn & Sons in 1850 as reported in the 14 September 1850 issue of the *London Gazette*. Some time after his marriage, but before May 1850, he became a partner in his father-in-law's business as agents for E.G. Douglas Pennant and his slate quarries in Wales. By May 1850 his father-in-law must have withdrawn from the business as 'William Dawbarn & Co., Agents to the Honourable E.G. Douglas Pennant' advertised their wares in the 31 May 1850 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury*. William Yelverton died in his son-in-law's home on 1 May 1852.<sup>33</sup>

Despite his business commitments in Liverpool, William was able to remain living in Wisbech until about 1859; William wrote in the introduction to the first edition of his book *Government, Conduct, and Example* published in 1861 that 'by the good offices of my late worthy partner and father-in-law, William Yelverton, Esq., I was permitted for some years to be a non-resident from my mercantile engagements in Liverpool, and to live in a small country town.' About 1860 William relocated to Liverpool; his son Climenson Yelverton Charles, born in Wisbech, was two years of age

when the 1861 Census located the Dawbarn family, now with nine children, in Liverpool. Two more children were born soon after. By 1871 William's company was well established and had expanded into other lines of business; the Commercial Directory of Liverpool listed William Dawbarn & Co., slate, timber, tile and iron merchants, 3 Temple, Dale Street W with slate and timber yards on Garston dock and Canada dock. By the time of his death, he had expanded beyond Liverpool; the *Liverpool Mercury* reported in his obituary that 'Mr. Dawbarn, whose office was in The Temple, Dale-street, carried on an extensive business as a slate, timber, tile, and iron merchant, and he had also branch establishments in Hull, Whitby, and other places'.

William and Elizabeth Dawbarn had six sons. The three eldest were merchants and all three worked in their father's business according to the 1871 Census. The third son, Francis Yelverton (1853–1875), was living at home in 1871 and was a Clerk with a Timber Merchant, presumably his father. The second son, Robert Yelverton (1850–1923), was also living at home in 1871 and was a clerk in his father's business. There is here an interesting family connection back to Wisbech. The 22 April 1872 issue of the *Ipswich Journal* announced the marriage of Robert Yelverton to Caroline, the only daughter of William's cousin George Dawbarn. Caroline died in 1892. By 1901 Robert Yelverton was a Joinery Manufacturer in Derby and had a new wife Lydia, whom he had married in 1893.

The eldest son, William Yelverton (1849–1887), married in 1871 and by the time of the 1881 Census was living with his family in Everton; his occupation was Timber and Slate Merchant, possibly in his father's business. William Yelverton had a good deal less

business success than his father. As evidenced by his last will and testament, William senior had wished that one or more of his sons would take over his business upon his death. This did not happen and might have been as a consequence of a number of factors: the business was in difficulty at the time, the sons might not have been interested, or the Trustees did not see that the sons were fit. There is evidence that William Yelverton would have been interested as in 1884, three years after his father's death, a company named William Dawbarn & Co. advertised in a Welsh newspaper. Yet by 1886 there are newspaper accounts of a successful court action against William Yelverton, proprietor of William Dawbarn & Co., for misrepresentation in the sale of slates.<sup>34</sup> This news prompted two of his younger brothers, Joseph Yelverton and Climenson Yelverton Charles, both trustees of their father's estate, to write to the editors of the *Liverpool Mercury* on 1 November 1886:

Gentlemen, - To prevent misapprehensions, will you kindly insert in your paper that the firm of W. Dawbarn and Co., tile and slate merchants, mentioned in your columns of today, is not the firm of W. Dawbarn and Co., whose head offices used to be at 3, The Temple, Dale-street. The late W. Dawbarn was the sole member of the latter firm. He died in May, 1881, and the winding-up of his business was commenced by his executors and trustees in the following June under the provisions of his will, and finished within nine months of his decease. Neither his estate nor his executors nor his trustees have ever been in the slightest degree interested in or connected with the present firm bearing the same name.

William Yelverton clearly had tried to benefit from his father's good name, a not uncommon tactic in this period. However, when something went wrong other family members could suffer. William Yelverton died in 1887 leaving a family with seven children under the age of sixteen.

William Yelverton had four sons. In 1901 all seven continued to live with their widowed mother in Bootle. The eldest, William Yelverton Junior (1872-?), was an employer and his occupation was Builders Merchant. He emigrated to Canada before World War I and lived until at least 1954 when his brother Frederick wrote to him upon hearing of the death of William's wife.<sup>35</sup> Frederick (1878–1962) was the father of Simon Yelverton Dawbarn.

Tracing the Dawbarn family's businesses and occupations through the nineteenth century has provided a picture of a family that over at least five generations depended on the grocery and drapery trades, especially in the earlier generations, to provide jobs for its sons and incomes for its individual families. Even in later generations, when more Dawbarns had opportunities in the professions, those who did not become professionals were merchants in the grocery and drapery or related trades. Along the way fathers, sons, and brothers, with the occasional outsider, formed partnerships to consolidate capital and spread risk. Uncles provided apprenticeship positions for nephews. There were many successes but also failures. The families stuck together, and not just in business; for example, cousins married cousins. As the century progressed, with fathers having more wealth and societal barriers to Dissenters's rights falling, an increasing number of Dawbarn men entered the professions. The successful Dawbarn businessmen also leveraged their achievements into civic life. In particular, the Wisbech Dawbarns and William Dawbarn in Liverpool were mayors, aldermen, town councillors, JPs, members of various public boards, and of course, leaders in their Baptist congregations. A few found the time and the energy to give public lectures, write, and publish. All of this

suggests that, although a family business surviving five generations was unusual, the Dawbarns were typical of successful middle-class families of the nineteenth century.

That the nineteenth-century Dawbarns had the opportunity to engage in a broad range of public affairs and to indulge in lecturing, writing, and publishing was greatly facilitated by the substantial wealth they had created. W.D. Rubenstein, in his *Men of Property*, analysed the distribution of wealth in nineteenth century Britain using will and probate data as a principle source. A summary of the distribution of wealth in the society in 1858 showed that, of the estates which went to probate in 1858, those which were in the range of £30,000-£40,000 (excluding real estate) were within the top one percent; but ‘only 14.7 per cent of all persons aged 21 or more dying in 1858 left any property recorded by the probate statistics.’<sup>36</sup> Therefore, this top one percent of wealth holders whose estates went to probate represented less than 0.2 per cent of those dying in 1858. By translating Robert Dawbarn’s and his son William’s probated estates into 1858 terms, as a proportion of GDP, we see that they fall within that top one percent of wealth holders whose estates went to probate and 0.2 per cent of those dying (see Figure 5 in the Appendix). Richard Bunbury, the grand patriarch, fell within the top two percent of wealth holders. The nineteenth-century Dawbarns were not in the league of the top industrialists, financiers, and landed wealthy, but they nevertheless were very wealthy people. Before the end of World War I twelve other Dawbarns fell within the top ten percent of wealth holders, when their probated estates are translated into 1858 terms, but thereafter there were no Dawbarns who accumulated anywhere near the same levels of wealth as the nineteenth-century Dawbarns.



If a man was fortunate enough to have accumulated wealth during his lifetime he then had to find an effective means of transferring that wealth to the next generation. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Dawbarns followed the pattern of the middle class in disposing of their estates, further suggesting the representativeness of this family as typical of the middle class over the course of the Victorian era.

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Notes: Dawbarn Family Business

<sup>1</sup> Stana Nenadic, “The Small Family Firm in Victorian Britain”, in (*Business History*, vol. 35 no.4, pp. 86-114, Oct. 1993), 86.

<sup>2</sup> E.J. Hobsbawn, *The Age of Capitalism: 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 241.

<sup>3</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 198.

<sup>5</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 199.

<sup>6</sup> Nenadic, “The Small Family Firm in Victorian Britain”, 89,90.

<sup>7</sup> R.J. Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54.

<sup>8</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 199.

<sup>9</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 229.

<sup>10</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 205, 206.

<sup>11</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 199.

<sup>12</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 114.

<sup>13</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 115.

<sup>14</sup> *The Wisbech Society: 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 1989*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Material provided by Simon Yelverton Dawbarn.

<sup>16</sup> Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 151, 152.

<sup>17</sup> *The Universal British Directory, 1793-1798*.

<sup>18</sup> *1851 Cambridgeshire Directory*, 593.

<sup>19</sup> Clyde Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1973), 62.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Yelverton Dawbarn.

<sup>21</sup> *J. Pigot's Cambridgeshire Directory, 1823- 1824 and 1829*.

<sup>22</sup> Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.*, 61.

<sup>23</sup> Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.*, 61, 62.

<sup>24</sup> *Liverpool Mercury* (16 Nov., 1834) and *1841 Census*.

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<sup>25</sup> *1841 Census.*

<sup>26</sup> *Liverpool Mercury* (22 Nov., 1839).

<sup>27</sup> *Liverpool Mercury* (25 Jun., 1867).

<sup>28</sup> *The Wisbech Society: 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 1989*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Frederic John Gardiner, *History of Wisbech and the Neighbourhood During the Last Fifty Years 1848-1898*, (Wisbech: Gardiner & Co., Publishers, 1898), 414.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times* (19 Jul., 1915)

<sup>31</sup> *New York Times* (4 Sep., 1908)

<sup>32</sup> *1891 Census.*

<sup>33</sup> *Manchester Times* (8 May, 1852)

<sup>34</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 September 1866, *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 November 1886.

<sup>35</sup> Simon Yelverton Dawbarn.

<sup>36</sup> W.D. Rubinstein, *Men of Property* ( London: Croom Helm, 1981), 28.

## Inter-generational Wealth Transfer

*What was remarkable was the degree to which those in the same sort of situation [testators] made the same sort of choices. . . . the maker of the last will and testament identified and affirmed key features of social reality, expressed values and affections, sustained life cycle strategies but, above all, would endeavour to lay down the terms for reestablishing order after death.<sup>1</sup>*

*R.J. Morris*

R.J. Morris, in his study of the strategies the Leeds middle classes of 1780-1870 employed to manage family wealth, writes that a key cultural boundary distinguishing the middle and upper classes was the middle-class practice, through the instrument of the last will and testament, of gendered equity when transferring wealth between generations.<sup>2</sup> The upper classes practiced strict primogeniture, often combined with entail, while the middle class favoured partible inheritance and treated daughters, sons, and their issue equitably in quantitative, although not necessarily qualitative, terms. However, there were often restrictions, frequently implemented via trusts, attached to accessing those monies, especially for women and under-age children.

Male testators often put restrictions on how widows and unmarried daughters could access their inheritances. Widows could have their inheritances reduced and limited to their personal use or even revoked should they remarry. If a widow's inheritance continued after remarriage it might have been reduced or restricted to her use, explicitly excluding any new husband. A widow was often limited to accessing the profits on her share of the capital for her natural life, as were daughters who remained unmarried. In these cases, at the end of the woman's life, the capital went into the residue. Unmarried

daughters could have their inheritances revoked, reduced, or limited to their use, explicitly excluding any new husband, should they marry without the consent of executors or guardians. The principle reason for treating the widows and daughters in this fashion was that under the law a woman lost all legal status upon marriage and all her assets, unless specifically identified, became her husband's.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the unscrupulous suitor, or a husband who fell upon misfortune, was believed to be an ever present danger and thus a prudent testator "reached beyond the grave" to minimize the risk that his widow and daughters did not find themselves in these circumstances. Yet, there was incentive beyond ensuring a man's fortune did not fall into the hands of such a suitor. Joan Perkin, in her *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (2003), writes that 'there was a vast difference [in terms of independence] for a wife between having even a small private income, and having none at all' and 'we should not rule out the very real affection that parents felt for their daughters.'<sup>4</sup> Sons were more often given their shares absolutely and with a portion of it in the form of real estate. Other practices included providing funds for the education and apprenticeship of underage children and encouraging adult male children to take over the testator's business. In these ways the testator could "reach beyond the grave".

The wills and probate records of Dawbarn family members, where the testators died between 1826 and 1951, have been analyzed. The wills available are very representative in that we have access to those of five Dawbarn men at three different stages of the life cycle and of one Dawbarn woman who died as a spinster. The wills

reveal that the Dawbarns followed all of the middle-class practices identified by historians such as Morris.

The concerns of a testator were significantly influenced by the life cycle stage in which he or she found himself or herself at the time of the drawing up of the will. A man who was in an early stage of life, establishing a business or career, supporting a young family, and building wealth for future security, was faced with providing for a widow with underage children and finding a means for his business, which was the main source of income for the family, to be carried on. This was the situation for Richard Dawbarn, the second son of Richard Bunbury. In contrast, the former's brother Robert and their father, Richard Bunbury, were in the last stage of life, having succeeded in business, when they drew up their wills. With sufficient wealth for comfortable retirements, they were primarily concerned with providing for their widows and equitably distributing their wealth to their descendents. That said, such men were not always completely free from the obligation of supporting other family members. There were often unmarried daughters who remained dependents until the deaths of their parents; in the early nineteenth century almost eight per cent of people never married. Middle-class women had limited opportunities for employment outside the home and so those who remained unmarried often resided in the family home attending to aging parents. This was the case of Richard Bunbury's daughter Ann and the three unmarried daughters of his son Robert. Also, in an age of uncertain life expectancy, there was the risk that orphaned children of other family members would require maintenance. Richard Bunbury found himself in this position when his widowed daughter-in-law predeceased him by two months. He

provided money, in trust, for the support of his orphaned grandchildren and he gave his trustees authority to spend each child's share on maintenance and education before his or her reaching the age of twenty-one.

At the time Richard Bunbury's grandson, William Dawbarn, drew up his will he was at a life stage situated between that of his Uncle Richard and that of his father Robert and grandfather, Richard Bunbury. William had built a successful business of substantial size and lived in a large house, Elmswood, on almost fourteen acres of land in an area of Liverpool to which the wealthy business men of Liverpool had gravitated. Eight of his eleven living children, and all of his sons, were under the age of twenty-one at the time he drew up his will in 1868, thirteen years before his death.

Despite the importance of religion in the lives of the nineteenth-century Dawbarns, the wills are remarkably secular documents. Other than dating some, but not all, of the wills with the phrase "in the Year of our Lord", and Robert Dawbarn's bequest of a Bible, provision of a legacy for a French Baptist minister, and a donation to a missionary society, there are no direct references to religion in any of the wills. This is consistent with Morris's findings when he analyzed hundreds of Leeds wills. The April 1881 issue of the periodical *The Christian Observer* 'urged that a will should start with the words "In the name of God . . .". Only ten wills in the Leeds sample took any notice of this.'<sup>5</sup> Nor did any of the Dawbarns, including Richard Bunbury the pastor of the Upper Hill Street Chapel, take any notice of the *Observer's* admonition. Morris finds the secular nature of the wills somewhat peculiar; over half of the wills he analyzed were drawn up within six months of death and this was an age when 'the drama of death,

especially for evangelicals, was important to religious life.’<sup>6</sup> Two Dawbarn wills were drawn up just weeks before the testator’s death: that of Richard Dawbarn, the son of Richard Bunbury, was drawn up eight weeks before his death and Richard Bunbury’s six weeks before his death. The secular nature of these nineteenth-century wills contrasts with that of Richard Bunbury’s grandfather’s will. Thomas Dawbarn, who died in 1700, began his will with the statement ‘I earnestly hope to attain everlasting life and salvation of my soul in and through the merits of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ.’

Richard Bunbury’s second son, Richard, died at the age of forty in 1826 leaving his widow Mary and seven children aged seven to sixteen. The couple’s two youngest children had died as infants. At the time of his death, Richard was in partnership with his younger brother Robert; the two brothers were the proprietors of Dawbarn & Sons, the Wisbech business established by their father. Richard was thus at the life stage of building his wealth while supporting a large family. Like other men of his time, he first provided for the immediate needs of his widow Mary by bequeathing to her two hundred pounds to be paid within three calendar months of his decease. All his plate, dinner china, wines, liquors, bar trinkets, rings, household goods and furniture, books (except for business) went to Mary ‘for her own absolute use and benefit.’ He then gave a legacy of four hundred pounds to each of his children: sons at age twenty-one, daughters at age twenty-one or upon marriage should that marriage be approved by the bride’s guardian. Richard owned three pieces of real estate, one of which was to be sold to his brother Robert for three hundred and fifty pounds if he chose to purchase the property. Two other pieces of real estate were to be sold and the proceeds, along with the proceeds of the first

property, were to be invested and the profits paid to the widow Mary 'for her sole use, not to be controlled by any future husband.' Upon her death the capital was to be equally divided amongst the children when they individually attained the age of twenty-one for sons, and in the case of daughters, the age of twenty-one or upon marriage if the marriage was approved by the trustees. Before age twenty-one, the profits on the trust money, at the discretion of the trustees, was to be used for the education and maintenance of the children.

After the maintenance of his wife and children and the distribution of the capital upon his widow's death, Richard's major concern was the disposition of his share of the business partnership with his brother. He desired that his share of the partnership be assumed by his eldest son Thomas when he reached the age of twenty-one. Should Thomas not be interested, or the trustees deem him unsuitable, then Richard's wish was that the partnership be taken up by one of his other sons. Upon assuming the partnership Thomas, or one of his brothers, was to pay three hundred and fifty pounds to the trustees for the goodwill of the business. In the meantime, his widow was to run the business on his behalf and take the profits after paying the wages of the journeyman. Should Mary die before the sons were of age, then the trustees were to run the business until a suitable son was of age. Finally, in the event Mary remarried before a suitable son was of age, the trustees were to run the business and ten pounds of profit was to go to each child with the balance going to Mary for her sole use. The concerns about a widow remarrying went beyond mere financial matters; Richard specified that if his widow remarried and the



trustees felt the children would be better served not living with their mother they could remove the children from her care and provide money for their maintenance.

Richard Dawbarn's wish that one of his sons take over his share of the business partnership with his brother Robert was not realized. His children were to receive a further blow when they were orphaned on 5 June 1829. Thomas was just becoming eighteen years of age when his mother died and Richard, the next brother in line, was fifteen. Perhaps a loss of parental influence had led Thomas to take a different path in life and it is unlikely the trustees would have decided that Thomas was suitable for the partnership if he had been interested. As noted earlier, Thomas had gone off to become a soldier at the age of sixteen.<sup>7</sup>

By 1829 the family must have been concerned about the wayward Thomas's welfare as his grandfather, in his will, had set aside four hundred pounds, under the control of his trustees, as the basis of an annuity for Thomas. Under no circumstances was Thomas to have any control over the capital. At the same time, each of his siblings was to receive his or her share of eight hundred pounds unconditionally at the age of twenty-one. Some twenty-five years later, Thomas continued to be a burden to the family. Lucy Elizabeth, Thomas's younger sister, upon her death gave one thousand pounds to her brother Richard 'to apply to the maintenance or advancement of my brother Thomas Dawbarn or his family in any way or manner my said brother Richard Dawbarn may think proper.' Elizabeth further gave three hundred pounds to each of the children of her deceased sister Mary Wood Ollard. The residue of her estate went unconditionally to her spinster sister Julia.

Richard Bunbury Dawbarn, “gentleman”, died at the age of seventy-two in 1829. By the nineteenth century the term gentleman often was descriptive of a retired man in the last stage of the life cycle living off rents and income from property.<sup>8</sup> A testator retired from business with an accumulation of assets and no longer having minor dependents wrote a different form of will than that of a younger man. The former was in a position to distribute his assets more broadly and with immediate effect rather than anticipating the coming of age of his children. Richard Bunbury’s will dealt with more than five pieces of real estate, some of which were bequeathed directly to selected children and some put in trust with the earnings to be paid to selected children. He had sufficient assets to bequeath six thousand pounds in cash to family members in addition to the gifts of real estate, and even provided for non-family members.

First he took care of his widow’s welfare. Elizabeth was to receive a payment of one hundred pounds within one calendar month of his decease plus all his household goods. His sons Thomas and Robert were directed to pay their mother an annuity of £16 5s out of the earnings of the property given to them. After all other gifts and bequests were dealt with the trustees were to turn all other real property not yet allocated into money and, combined with any other money, invest it. Any earnings from the investments were to be paid to the wife of the testator until her death. The provision for a widow’s maintenance was intended to eliminate her claim to any property rights brought into the marriage and was made explicit in the will:

And I do declare that the provision hereby made for my said wife is intended by me to be in lieu . . . and satisfaction of and for all and all manner of dower and .

. . . while she my said wife is or . . . shall or may have claim or be entitled to out of or in all or any of my real estate provided always.

One principle consistently applied by middle-class testators was that of equitable inheritance in money terms. As part of this practice intra-family debts were not forgiven. Sons Robert and Thomas, who were partners in Dawbarn & Sons, jointly received the property in Market Square which was the premises of Dawbarn & Sons and also a property in Castle Estate, both situated in Wisbech. The Castle Estate property had been purchased by Richard Bunbury from his son Richard's estate. However, in return, Thomas was to pay £212 10s to the trustees who would then apply it to the residue. This was presumably to repay a debt Thomas owed to his father. There were additional strings attached to this gift of property; as just noted, in return, Thomas and Robert were to provide their mother with an annuity of £16 5s. This settling up of accounts included Richard Bunbury's third eldest son John who had departed Wisbech for Liverpool some years before Richard Bunbury's death and must have owed money to one or more of his siblings. John was given a lump sum of nine hundred pounds in cash within twelve months of decease less 'any sum or sums of money which he . . . may stand indebted . . . to any or either of my children at the time of my decease.'

Two other tracts of real estate were made available to Richard Bunbury's children. His daughter Elizabeth Cripps was to have the earnings from the property in Newport Pagnell until her death. Following Elizabeth's death her husband, should he survive her, was to receive those earnings and, after his death, their children were to receive those earnings upon reaching the age of twenty-one. Yet Richard then had a change of heart; less than three weeks after the signing of his will he applied a codicil

specifying that the Newport Pagnall property was to go directly to Elizabeth upon his death. In the same codicil the testator revoked the instruction that his trustees were to hold in trust Elizabeth's share of the residue upon her mother's death making the profits on the invested monies available to Elizabeth and instead gave that share directly to her.

The principle of equitable distribution applied to each generation of the family, even to those members of a generation who were dead at the time the will was drawn up. Richard Bunbury was predeceased by his eldest daughter Mary, for whom he had great affection; her death was recorded in the Hill Street Baptist Chapel's records by the Pastor, her father:

My dearest and much beloved and most affectionate daughter Mary Dowson wife of John Dowson died Thursday evening August 21, 1828 – and interred Wednesday August 27, 1828 in the vault. Her remains lie next to her Brother Richard's. She was age 45 years.

Richard Bunbury bequeathed to her only living child Julia Dowson the identical sum of nine hundred pounds which had been bequeathed to his son John. Unusual for female inheritors, this money was given outright to Julia rather than placed in trust, with only the earnings on that money passing to her. This may have been as a consequence of Julia's father still remaining alive and therefore absolving Julia's grandfather of the responsibility for looking out for her welfare.

Any real estate not given directly to inheritors was sold and the proceeds either used to provide for the cash bequests or to be placed in the residue. However, children were often given first right of refusal on the purchase of the property. Thus Robert

Dawbarn had the option to purchase a piece of property in the village of March, near Wisbech, for the sum of £1,367.

Richard Bunbury had now taken care of his three living sons, his living daughter, and his granddaughter Julia. There remained the seven underage orphaned children of his son Richard. We saw earlier that the eldest male child, Thomas, had left Wisbech to join the army and that Richard Bunbury had seen the need to provide a legacy for Thomas but with limits on his access to that legacy. For the remaining six children, Richard Bunbury provided eight hundred pounds to the trustees to use as they saw fit in educating and maintaining the children until the age of twenty-one, at which time each child was to receive his or her share. Should a child die before the age of twenty-one his or her share was to go into the residue unless that child had, before turning twenty-one, produced legitimate children, in which case those children were to receive their parent's share on an equitable basis.

Finally, Richard Bunbury, having felt he had sufficiently provided for his family, directed his trustees to sell one of his pieces of property for the partial benefit of the widow of his friend Robert (surname indecipherable). The trustees were to make such payments as they saw fit to the widow and place the balance of the sale money in the residue.

Robert Dawbarn, Richard Bunbury's fourth son died in 1888 at the age of eighty-nine. Of all the Dawbarns, he left the largest estate, over £58,000 excluding real estate. When his estate was finally settled in 1897 the total value, including real estate, came to over £92,000. Even at the age of eighty-nine Robert was not free of all responsibilities for

his family members. His three daughters never married, and at the time he first drew up his will all three were alive. Robert was a widower and so he gave his household effects to his three daughters to be divided equally. Additionally, he gave cash and property, valued at £1,500 in total, to each of his daughters. He also gave one or more of his daughters the option to live in a property which he gave to his son Robert. Finally, he set aside £5,000 in trust for each of his daughters with the interest and income to go to the daughters for their sole use. When each sister died the interest and income was to go to their issue. When one of the daughters, Jane, passed away before him the testator reallocated her share of the personal effects, cash, and property equally between her two sisters.

At the time of his death, Robert had five living sons; his eldest son William had predeceased him. He gave William's children £3,000 to be shared equally among them. To the living sons he gave a mix of cash and property which approximated £3,000 for each. A number of properties were listed which any of the five living sons could opt to buy. If more than one expressed an interest in a property then the eldest was given preference. If none of the five living sons wished to buy one of these properties then William's children had the option to purchase, with the eldest being given preference should there be a conflict. Finally, when all the expenses were paid, legacies distributed, and trusts established, any real estate not explicitly disposed of under the terms of the will was to be disposed of and the proceeds combined with any other cash and investments and, after deducting any monies owed to the testator, distributed in six equal shares to the five living sons and William's issue.

There are numerous examples here of the testator 'reaching beyond the grave'. Robert's sons James and John had limitations placed on their access to their shares. For these two, their shares were to be held in trust and, unless they 'commit some act of default', the interest and profit was to be paid to them. However, if they were in default, the profits were to be used by the trustees to maintain them and their families. The restriction applied to James's inheritance was possibly as a consequence of the bankruptcy of his coal business in 1875.<sup>9</sup> In a codicil dated 1 June 1886, William Yelverton, the testator's grandson, had his share placed in trust with the profits going to him, his widow, and his children and their issue. This undoubtedly was intended to serve as a protection from creditors following the legal difficulties in which the testator's grandson had found himself when he had misrepresented his slate products to a customer. In a final codicil dated, 13 July 1887, the trustees were not to be held responsible for whatever they did with respect to settling the testator's claim on George Dawbarn, the testator's nephew and business partner in Dawbarn & Sons. This was presumably with respect to a dispute between Robert and George.

The last will to be examined is that of William Dawbarn of Liverpool which was drawn up in 1868. An aspect of William's will which differed from the previous wills examined was in his choice of executors. Of all the Dawbarns, William appeared to be the most ambitious in terms of elevating his social position. The acquisition of a large residential property, Elmswood Hall, in fashionable Aigburth, is one indicator. Another was the choice of executors for his will. His second named executor was the Reverend Hugh Stowell Brown, the respected pastor of the Myrtle Street Baptist Church and a

prominent Liverpool citizen. The third named executor was a baronet, Sir James Malcolm (1823–1901). Other Dawbarns' executors were typically family members or close business associates. Richard Dawbarn had named as his joint executors his brother and business partner, Robert Dawbarn, and his brother-in-law, John Dowson. Richard Bunbury's executors were the same two family members. At the time William Dawbarn's will was drawn up, he was unable to name one or more of his sons as executors as they were all under the age of twenty-one. Of the four original executors only one was a family member, his father Robert Dawbarn. However, he did name his son-in-law William Turner as a replacement for William Peacop, a farmer living at Jericho Farm, Aigburth Lane which was within a kilometre of Elmswood Hall, an executor in a codicil dated 18 July 1877. This is noteworthy as by this time William's two eldest sons were ages twenty-eight and twenty-seven and employed in the same line of business as their father, possibly in their father's firm. That William did not see fit to name either of his sons as an executor demonstrated a lack of confidence in them. When William died the will was proved by Brown and Turner with Robert Dawbarn and Sir Malcolm renouncing the probate and execution of the will.

William's will is also different from those of his grandfather, father, and uncle with respect to the timing of the preparation of the will. As noted by Morris, many wills were drawn up shortly before the testator's death. It was a matter of weeks for Richard Bunbury and his son Richard. William's will was dated 11 November 1868, thirteen years before his death. The timing might have been as a consequence of Dawbarn's substantial investment in real estate; he had purchased Elmswood Hall the year before. It



might also have been as a consequence of a bout of poor health. He was up for re-election to the Liverpool town council in November 1868. Dawbarn lost this election, possibly because he was unable to campaign actively. The 31 October 1868 edition of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that 'Mr. Dawbarn, the retiring member, has been incapacitated by illness from attending a public meeting in the ward and giving an account of his stewardship on seeking re-election.' He had been absent from two October Health Committee meetings, a rare occurrence. If his health had caused him sufficient concern to prepare his will, that concern passed as he lived another thirteen years. When death came it was sudden and unexpected; the 27 May 1881 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* captioned the announcement of his death with 'Sudden Death of Mr. W. Dawbarn' and reported that he had been at business in his office on the day of his death. Also, had he been in ill health he would have updated his will as, by the time of his death, most of his children were adults.

William Dawbarn's first order of business, after appointing his executors, was to provide 'my dear wife Elizabeth Taylor Dawbarn two hundred pounds for her immediate use to be paid within ten days after my decease.' He then gave ten pounds to each of his eight living siblings and his sister-in-law Miss Mary Yelverton, who was living in his household at the time, 'that each of them may purchase some memento of me.' The only other bequeaths outside his immediate family were the provision of net annual incomes of twenty-five pounds for his sister-in-law Mary Yelverton and his good friend Thomas Craddock. He next authorized his executors to sell, when and as they saw fit, his real and leasehold property in order to carry out the intent of his will. Before the sale of any

properties, the trustees were to manage those properties as they saw fit, but always with the goal of carrying out the intent of the will.

A principle concern of Dawbarn was the fate of his business. He desired that one or more of his three eldest sons carry on his business once the youngest had reached the age of twenty-three. At the time the will was drawn up, the eldest sons William, Robert, and Francis were twenty, nineteen, and sixteen years of age respectively. Yet Dawbarn left it to the discretion of the trustees to wind up the business at any time should they see fit, the proceeds to be invested as later directed in the will. Should the trustees not wind up the business, they were then to operate the business and, if they saw fit, employ the testator's son-in-law William Turner as one of the managers. Turner was to receive one hundred pounds annual salary in addition to whatever salary he was receiving at the time of the testator's death. Perhaps to entice the sons to be patient with respect to gaining control of the business (William would be twenty-seven before Frances was twenty-three), the testator's three sons were to begin sharing, in the form of remuneration for services provided, in the profits of the business before achieving ownership. The trustees were instructed that if any of the three eldest sons

shall by their energy, good conduct, saving, careful habits and attention to business obtain and keep the confidence of my Trustees to pay or allow them or him on their or his attaining the age of twenty-one years respectively by way of remuneration for their services any annual sum which my said trustees may think fit not exceeding for each of my said sons one eighth of the net profits of the said business after all charges of interest and management have been deducted.

The eldest sons, although favoured in terms of being given the option to take over the business, were not to be given the business outright. They had to work for their share

of the profits before gaining ownership and, when of age, should the trustees see fit, were to assume ownership of the business, but only upon compensating their father's estate for the capital in the business. Should they not have the funds at hand the trustees were to loan the capital in the business to the sons. This loan was to be repaid over four years in annual instalments with interest at 6% per annum to be paid on the balance. The manner in which the family business was passed to the next generation demonstrates adherence to the principle of equitable treatment of children in financial terms; the inheritors of the business were not given the business, rather they were required to purchase the business, although at some discount from the market price as no consideration was given for the good will of the business. Furthermore, the three eldest sons were obligated to demonstrate adherence to middle-class values of 'energy, good conduct, saving, careful habits and attention to business' should they wish to receive their inheritance. William Dawbarn's desire that his business should pass into the hands of his sons did not materialize. The trustees reported in the 1 November 1886 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* that William Dawbarn, having died in May 1881, 'the winding up of his business was commenced by his executors and trustees in the following June, under the provisions of his will, and finished within nine months of his decease'. We can only speculate about the demise of William's business but there are a number of possibilities for why it occurred.

By the time of William's death, the two oldest sons were past thirty years of age and their brother Francis was already dead. The surviving sons might have become disenchanted with waiting for their father to retire and started their own businesses. At

the time of his death William's company was Dawbarn & Co. rather than Dawbarn & Sons, an indication that he had not deemed his eldest sons to have demonstrated the 'energy, good conduct, saving, careful habits and attention to business' that he so valued. On the contrary, as noted above, some years later his eldest son, William Yelverton, was convicted in court for having misled a customer in the sale of building slates. A second possibility is that William's business was in trouble and was not a viable business to be taken over; in 1880 he wrote that 'the year 1879 has been amongst the worst, of the last two or three, perhaps of the last thirty or forty years, to me and many others engaged in mercantile affairs.'<sup>10</sup>

After dealing with the continuity of his business, William's will turned to the welfare of his widow Elizabeth and their children. He directed that 'my trustees shall permit my said wife . . . personally to occupy her residence the Mansion wherein I now reside called "Elms Wood" in Aigburth' together with the outbuildings, stables, pleasure grounds, gardens and adjoining fields and 'to use therein my household furniture and utensils, pictures, prints, books, plate, linen china, and consumable stores.' The trustees were to keep the property in repair and pay for fire insurance. Elizabeth was to receive annually one thousand pounds in quarterly instalments for her own use. She was then to receive two-thirds of the remaining income of the trust property for the purpose of bringing up and educating sons until the age of twenty-one, daughters until twenty-one or married, and daughters after the age of twenty-one if not married, although the trustees were not obligated to see this last direction fulfilled. During Elizabeth's lifetime up to three thousand pounds per child was to be made available for his or her advancement.

When Elizabeth died the trust funds were to be shared equally among the children as they individually reached the age of twenty-one, although up to fifty per cent of any child's share could be made available for that child's education and advancement before the age of twenty-one. Finally, should Elizabeth remarry, all bequests to her other than the initial two hundred pounds were revoked and she was to receive for her sole use four hundred pounds per annum.

William Dawbarn's estate was substantial; the sworn gross value was £62,883 and the net value £46,968. This amount excluded the value of real estate, including Elmswood Hall, which would have been worth many thousands. There must have been a requirement to raise cash immediately following William's death. Just one month after the funeral the sale by auction of a 'valuable collection of pictures' was announced in the 28 June 1881 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury*. Included were six commissioned paintings by William Daniels. One of these paintings, *The Cardplayers*, today hangs in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. In addition there were paintings on offer from twenty-eight other artists. A second cash-raising effort involved the sale of Dawbarn's interests, ranging from twenty-six to sixty percent, in five commercial ships.<sup>11</sup> This was the first step in winding up his business.

Under the terms of the will, Elizabeth continued to live at Elmswood following her husband's death. The 1881 Census taken shortly before Dawbarn's death listed a total of fourteen people living at Elmswood. Five of the Dawbarn children were living in the family home, namely spinster daughters Elizabeth and Harriett, ages thirty-five and thirty-four respectively, sons Joseph and Climence, ages twenty-four and twenty-two

respectively, both studying law at Cambridge University, and Midred, age nineteen. The youngest child, Albert, was age eighteen and away from the family home at the time studying mathematics at Cambridge. Elizabeth's spinster sister, Mary Yelverton, completed the family which was supported by six domestic servants. At the time of the 1871 Census the house was even more populated with nineteen people resident; nine of the eleven Dawbarn children were at home plus Elizabeth's spinster sister, all supported by seven servants.

By 1884 the only family still remaining at Elmswood were four women: Elizabeth, her two spinster daughters, and her spinster sister. By this time Elizabeth's other three daughters were married, her two oldest sons married, and the last three sons had graduated from Cambridge. Significantly, the youngest child, Albert, attained the age of twenty-one in the early part of 1884, just months before the family home was placed on the market. Elmswood may have been much too large, and possibly too expensive to run, for the four remaining women. Whatever the reason, the property was available for purchase by mid-1884. The 17 June 1884 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* advertised the auction sale of Elmswood:

All that Capital MANSION, known as "Elmswood Hall", . . . together with the entrance lodge, land, pleasure grounds, shrubberies, and outbuildings thereto belonging, including vineries, conservatory, pine and forcing houses, stabling for eight horses, shippon for four cows, pigstye, fowl pens, etc. [is for sale].

The elevated property 'commanded lovely views over the river Mersey and the Cheshire and Welsh ranges of hills.' The total area of land was over thirteen acres. Although Elizabeth was about to depart her home of more than fifteen years, she would not have

been destitute. The trustees were 'prepared to leave on mortgage one-half of the purchase money at 4 per cent, or two-thirds at 4 ½ per cent, interest per annum' which indicates there remained sufficient capital to generate an income for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Dawbarn died on 4 January 1893. She left to her spinster daughter Harriett an estate valued at £1,241. Under the terms of her husband's will, the residue of his estate would have been equally divided and distributed to their children and grandchildren as they respectively reached the ages of twenty-one. In terms of financial success William Dawbarn's five sons who survived him came nowhere near their father's accomplishment. As noted above, William and Robert, the two eldest sons, had followed their father's footsteps and became merchants. Their dates of decease and probate values were: William (1887, £2,033), Robert (1923, £1,296). The three younger sons turned to the professions. The lawyers successfully traded off the potential to make fortunes for security. Their dates of decease and probate values were: Joseph (1943, £16,233), Climenson (1951, £12,863). The youngest, Albert, a mathematician, died in 1949 with an estate at probate of £1,452.

In these first chapters we have had an overview of the Dawbarn family's source of wealth, the manner in which that wealth passed between generations, and how the Dawbarn men increasingly, as the generations passed, forsook business for the professions, trading off the potential to make fortunes for financial security and enhanced social status. Those who remained in business into the twentieth century did not have the same success in terms of wealth creation as their mid-nineteenth-century forefathers. These first chapters have provided evidence that the Dawbarns conform to the picture

historians have drawn of the Victorian middle class. Yet, as we shall see, an examination of William Dawbarn's life provides another perspective.

We now turn to a more detailed look at William Dawbarn's life, or rather his "plurality of life-worlds", both private and public. Of all the Dawbarns, William is arguably the most interesting individual. As noted earlier, Houghton had argued that the Victorian mind could hold contradictory conceptions.<sup>12</sup> Although William Dawbarn largely conformed to the norms and values of the middle class, he demonstrated an eccentricity and at times adopted contradictory attitudes.

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Notes: Inter-Generational Wealth Transfer

<sup>1</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 114.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of a mid-Victorian law as it applied to married women see: Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, 51.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 90.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 91.

<sup>7</sup> *The Wisbech Society: 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 1989*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 80, 81.

<sup>9</sup> *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, 2 January 1875, 583.

<sup>10</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, preface.

<sup>11</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 Jul. 1881.

<sup>12</sup> "The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870 by Walter E. Houghton", in *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Sep., 1957), 407-409.



## William Dawbarn's Social Life Worlds

*To be human means to live in a world – that is, to live in a reality that is ordered and that gives sense to the business of living. It is this fundamental characteristic of human existence that the term “life-world” is intended to convey. This life-world is social both in its origins and in its ongoing maintenance: the meaningful order it provides for human lives has been established collectively and is kept going by collective consent.<sup>1</sup>*

*Berger, Berger, and Kellner*

In *The Homeless Mind*, Berger, Berger, and Kellner argue that all societies ‘provide an overall structure of meaning’, or a “life-world”, within which individual human interactions take place.<sup>2</sup> They are particularly interested in modern society, in which they contend individuals live in a ‘*plurality of life-worlds*’.<sup>3</sup> Berger, et al. discuss modernization in terms of ‘*the institutional concomitants of technologically induced economic growth.*’<sup>4</sup> Urbanization, rapid communications, increased literacy, fragmentation of organized religion, and increasing secularization are some aspects of modernity. All of these factors have a tendency to fragment, or pluralize life-worlds. Not all individuals lived exclusively in one life-world in pre-modern societies; yet, for the majority of people, there was essentially one life-world centred on their families and living space, usually closely connected with their work space, and integrated with that of other people living in a hierarchical society sharing one common religion. By the mid-nineteenth century a bipolar society consisting of private and public spheres had been established. Even within these two spheres there was fragmentation, or plurality, as Berger, et al. contend. Furthermore, there was overlap between these fragments and

across the private and public divide. Religion, for example, although public in the sense of churchgoers worshipping in a public place, was increasingly private with the acceptance of a diversity of Christian denominations and an increasing secularization of society. Another example is that business success in the public sphere could be the basis for holding political office and provide opportunities for public speaking to organizations such as the Y.M.C.A.

Berger *et al.* argue that this plurality of life-worlds has an impact on how individuals define themselves, on how their “identities” are formed through ‘actual experience of self in a particular social situation.’<sup>5</sup> Modern identity has a number of characteristics. The first is that it is *peculiarly open*; although primary socialization fixes certain features of an individual, ‘the modern individual is nevertheless peculiarly “unfinished” as he enters adult life.’<sup>6</sup> The modern individual, moving through life, encounters different social institutions which can be transformational in terms of identity. Thus, although William Dawbarn’s primary socialization would have been within the context of his family in the small town of Wisbech, his experience in the larger centre of Liverpool undoubtedly provided a broader range of ideas which might have been transformational. As a consequence of the individual living in a plurality of social worlds his identity becomes *peculiarly differentiated*. These social worlds become relativized and the individual turns inward for a sense of reality; this subjective reality ‘becomes increasingly differentiated and complex – and “interesting” to himself. Subjectivity acquires previously unconceived “depths”.’<sup>7</sup> The wide variety and continually changing social experience means modern identity is *peculiarly reflective*. Modern man reflects on

both these external social worlds and his identity: ‘not only the world but the self becomes an object of deliberate attention and sometimes anguished scrutiny.’<sup>8</sup> Much of William Dawbarn’s writing is reflective and deliberative in consideration of how a man can best develop his character to operate effectively within the social worlds in which he is called upon to participate.

William Dawbarn lived within a plurality of social worlds, both private and public. His large family and the family home at Elmswood were at the centre of the private sphere, but he also devoted time and energy to his church and intimate male friendships. The church and male friendships shaded into the public arena. His business was the focus of his life in the public sphere, yet his business activities shaded into other areas such as associational life and politics. In this section we will look at Dawbarn’s business, religious, associational, political, family, and male friendship social life-worlds.

## **Business**

*Now for the bustle of Business Life. The busy hum of city occupations shows life in earnest. Of the hundreds you pass in a day, all seem bent on one design – to accomplish their purposes.*<sup>9</sup>

*William Dawbarn*

*Their [middle-class men] identity depended on their ability to operate as economic agents.*<sup>10</sup>

*Davidoff and Hall*

The principle preoccupation of nineteenth-century middle-class adult men was to apply ‘determination and skill in manipulating the economic environment’ to provide ‘a livelihood which made possible a domestic establishment where they and their

dependents could live a rational and morally sanctioned life.’<sup>11</sup> Their business purpose was to make money. Dawbarn expressed the necessity of making money:

money buys everything, from a nurse and a doctor who bring you into the world, to the doctor and nurse who take you out of it; from the parson that marries you to the undertaker who buries you – all for payment. . . . do not be extravagant, make money your defence, and always keep a reserve of this power in your hands if you can.<sup>12</sup>

Yet there was more to it than that. Harold Perkin observed ‘the limitless pursuit of wealth for its own sake is a rare phenomenon’ and quoted Adam Smith: ‘to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of the world? . . . It is our vanity which urges us on. . . . It is not wealth that men desire, but the consideration and good opinion that wait upon riches.’<sup>13</sup> Thomas Malthus also saw great societal benefit to the pursuit of money: ‘If no man could hope to rise or fear to fall in society; if industry did not bring its own reward, and indolence its punishment; we could not hope to see that animated activity in bettering our own condition.’<sup>14</sup>

William Dawbarn was in complete agreement with Perkin, Malthus, and Smith. For Dawbarn ‘success in that which you undertake is the one thing needful in life. . . . It is a law of nature that success shall be the one object worthy to be obtained. . . . anything less than success will not do for getting on in the world.’<sup>15</sup> Social position depended on success in business: ‘our business talents are those by which we hope to maintain ourselves in a good social position.’<sup>16</sup> Failure had social consequences:

[if] you fail or fall in your worldly condition, do not be surprised or disappointed at your friend cutting you, as it is called. Ever remember that most positions in life are held on the tacit compact that “you keep your place socially, and I will keep mine.” . . . I would have you well consider the consequence of any imprudence on your part, for if failure should overtake you, you really are not

the same person you were, and have, therefore, to look out for new friends and acquaintances for your new condition of things.’<sup>17</sup>

In 1834 William Dawbarn, at the age of fourteen, was apprenticed for seven years to the family business and subsequently became a partner in Dawbarn & Sons. His business interests expanded to include the sole proprietorship of a sewing cotton manufacturing operation in Wisbech and a partnership with his father-in-law, who was an agent for Douglas Pennant, in the slate business in Liverpool. The cotton factory produced a product (reel and ball sewing cottons) of sufficient quality to be displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition<sup>18</sup> and at the 1853 New York Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations.<sup>19</sup> By 1850 his time commitment to the Liverpool slate business must have been on the rise as ‘William Dawbarn & Co., Agents to the Honourable E.G. Douglas Pennant’ advertised its wares in the 31 May 1850 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury*, an indication that his father-in-law had retired. Over the next thirty years the Liverpool slate business expanded to regions outside Liverpool and the products offered for sale were greatly extended to include a wide range of building materials, with some of these materials imported on a number of ocean going ships of which Dawbarn was a part owner. Wm. Dawbarn & Co., Slate, Timber, Tile and Iron Merchants published a monthly price list for their customers. This price list was printed on the same printing press Dawbarn loaned to his friend Thomas Craddock for the printing of a biography of Charles Lamb. In the preface to *Charles Lamb* (1867) Craddock wrote:

“mine own familiar friend”, Wm. Dawbarn. Esq., of Elmswood, near Liverpool, found it necessary, in the development of an extensive mercantile business at Liverpool, to establish a private Printing Office on his premises. Mr. Dawbarn used his Press, during leisure intervals, for printing lectures on Government,

Conduct, and Example; which he had delivered several years ago. When this work was finished, he offered the Press to me, and I accepted this boon. I have, therefore, to thank Mr. Dawbarn for hazarding a publication, which I should never have been sanguine enough to hazard myself.<sup>20</sup>

In 1875 the price list included over fifty individual items ranging from slates to drainpipes to boards to plumbing fixtures. Dawbarn was bold in advertising his business products. At the 1853 New York Exhibition, where he exhibited his cotton products, he also had displayed ‘framed writing slates, from the Bangor slate quarries, North Wales; roofing slates, slate pencils, Welsh hones, &c –Wm. Dawbarn & Co., *manu. Prince’s* Basin, Liverpool.’<sup>21</sup> By the time of William’s death, Wm. Dawbarn & Co. had expanded beyond the borders of Lancashire. The *Liverpool Mercury* reported in William Dawbarn’s obituary that he had ‘branch establishments at Hull, Whitby, and other places.’<sup>22</sup>

William Dawbarn’s risk-taking in investing in his Wisbech cotton winding business and expanding his father-in-law’s slate business establishes him as a typical nineteenth-century entrepreneur, as described by Harold Perkin: ‘the active owner-manager of the Industrial Revolution, not the passive or remotely controlling financier of later corporate capitalism.’<sup>23</sup> Perkin writes that ‘the entrepreneur was the impresario, the creative force, the initiator of the economic cycle. He it was who conceived the end, found the means, bore the burden of risk, and paid out the other factors of production.’<sup>24</sup> We have seen earlier how the *Cambridge Directory*, in its survey of business in Wisbech, had credited the expansion of the cotton winding business from twenty to upwards of one hundred employees to be solely as a consequence of Dawbarn’s investment in land, buildings and machinery.<sup>25</sup> The *Builder’s Weekly Reporter*, in a review of Dawbarn’s

*Essays, Tales, etc., etc.*, wrote in reference to the Wisbech cotton business: ‘after ten or twelve years struggling, and indomitable perseverance, Mr. Dawbarn succeeded in establishing the occupation alluded to, and in making it remunerative to those to whose capital was engaged therein.’<sup>26</sup> Dawbarn wrote of the struggle he experienced in establishing this business:

Although engaged in mercantile life, it seems that I did not consider I had enough occupation, for I was tempted some years since, from observing so much unemployed labour in the neighbourhood in which I had my residence, to engage in the interesting but arduous experiment of introducing one of the very simplest branches I could find of that important manufacture – the cotton – into a district which had been, from time immemorial, an agricultural one.

That new branch of manufacture, as almost all new branches of any kind of occupation, even though trifling, required great efforts to fix it so successfully as to make it pay the capitalist and the labourer as much as it ought, for all the trouble and difficulties which had to be overcome in its introduction.<sup>27</sup>

The Liverpool-based business provided William with the opportunity to apply on a larger scale the business techniques he had developed in Wisbech. The 1851 *Cambridgeshire Directory* described Dawbarn & Sons as one of the more extensive businesses in Wisbech. Following a tour of the premises the authors of the directory wrote that the firm

is the most extensive, and general house of business in the county, and from the business-like, and perhaps peculiar style in which it is conducted, we might pronounce it, for the district, a “model” establishment.<sup>28</sup>

The *Cambridge Directory* authors were particularly impressed by the innovation of the *Fact Book* which provided statistical data in support of managing the business:

their system of conducting the business, especially the statistical arrangement of what is called the *Fact Book*, (which is in *fact* a novelty,) the proprietors are able to furnish for any given time, their total returns – number of customers served,

number of letters received, number of errors discovered, omissions of goods supplied, with many other matters esteemed by men of business as useful.<sup>29</sup>

This statistical approach appears to have been the creation of William Dawbarn. The *Fact Book* was discussed in great detail by William in his 1861 speech to the Cambridge branch of the YMCA. This speech was republished in 1867 and in this second edition Dawbarn wrote: ‘since the first edition of this work, it has fallen to my lot to apply with success these business principles on a much larger scale’,<sup>30</sup> a likely reference to his Liverpool business. He had relocated to Liverpool around 1860.

William Dawbarn was greatly impressed by statistical methods: ‘the great value of the business statistics contained in this *Fact Book* is that, it always tells you, with but little labor, what is the health of your business.’ However, of an even more substantial benefit, statistics could be used to gain ‘a glimpse at the greater laws of nature’.<sup>31</sup> For Dawbarn understanding cause and effect was essential to success, both in business and in life:

if a man has failed in life, there has really been a cause for it, and little or no chance in the matter. . . . no effect exists without a cause. . . . the inspection and investigation of all natural phenomena tell us how all consequences have been anticipated, measured and arranged.<sup>32</sup>

Dawbarn’s system had three levels or “wheels” as he called them. The first “wheel” was the Daily Report, the second “wheel” the book in which the information from each Daily Report was entered, and the third “wheel” was the ‘book of all books for the eye of the master – the “Fact Book”’.<sup>33</sup> He must have believed that his methods were innovative as he refers to his Daily Report as a “new notion”.<sup>34</sup> This Daily Report was not a formal accounting report; it did not refer to debits and credits. Rather, Dawbarn



developed a method of book-keeping that used arithmetical notation in place of the double-entry bookkeeping method. The report records

debtings [a term Dawbarn claimed he had invented] – that is, how much I daily get into debt, and my sales, by which I live. . . . an abstract of all letters and replies. . . . cash paid in . . . and the amount . . . paid out. Every day the state of the cash box is rendered along with the bank balance.<sup>35</sup>

These daily reports were then summed up weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. If this was done on a regular and consistent basis the business man would ‘know all that book-keeping, without stock taking, is capable of telling.’<sup>36</sup>

Although Dawbarn was a believer in gathering statistics, he was not a slave to statistics. He recognized that the contents of the Fact Book were ‘at best only a series of approximations’<sup>37</sup> and ‘they must be correctly applied, or they are of no value. It is proverbial that figures may be made to speak any thing one pleases.’<sup>38</sup> He then provided the example of how simply looking at the averages of his clerks’ attendance records could be misleading. One clerk might be late by 15 minutes each of the first four days of the week and then make that up by being an hour early the fifth day, whereas another clerk might be one or two minutes early or late each day and not appear to have any better punctuality record. Nevertheless, Dawbarn believed that the use of statistics was invaluable, not just for business, but for society as a whole: ‘I cannot, therefore, direct your attention in these days of progress to a more useful or more interesting branch of study than statistical science.’<sup>39</sup> In the seventeenth century the world had been seen as being shaped by religious forces under the direct hand of God. In the eighteenth century there was an intense debate about the nature of the universe and the extent to which it

was under the direct control of God. By the nineteenth century many believed that these forces, although still designed by God, operated as natural laws without the direct intervention of God. In this world view man's task was to understand the underlying laws of nature and to overcome nature. Dawbarn believed that the use of statistical methods could reveal these underlying laws of nature: 'a mind conversant with the law of regular repetition, may obtain much truth from mere inspection of the first terms of statistical investigations . . . So many things uniformly repeat themselves.'<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the minds of men obeyed natural laws: 'every mind in relation to other minds is a separate force, and acts as a cord pulling in one direction, against other antagonistic minds pulling another.'<sup>41</sup>

Dawbarn had two other pieces of method for young men entering business, namely the maintenance of a *Minute Book* and the use of job descriptions. Dawbarn maintained for himself a book, which he called a *Minute Book*, in which he recorded ideas as they occurred to him during the busy day. He also made minutes of instructions he gave to his clerks. He could thus look back at the end of a busy day and pursue ideas which he had had no time to consider earlier. The notes of instructions gave him grounds for discussing errors and omissions made by his clerks. Another technique, 'perhaps rather a new-fangled notion for a tradesman, manufacturer, or merchant', was to 'write out for each person you employ, his instructions as to the business you wish him to do. Give him a copy, and keep yours.'<sup>42</sup> This 'new-fangled notion' looks like a job description, a term first used in the mid-twentieth century.

Dawbarn's business methods of fact gathering, statistical analysis, reporting, and controlling all demonstrate an effort to bring some discipline, or professionalism, to his entrepreneurial activities. In this regard Dawbarn was part of what Perkin sees as 'the general rise in the status of the professional intellectual in society.'<sup>43</sup> We shall see later that Dawbarn was an advocate of fact gathering and the application of statistical methods during his presidency of the Trade Protection Society and his tenure on the Liverpool Town Council.

William Dawbarn's business methods were advanced for his time, but his advice with respect to what we might now call "soft skills" required for business success was common for the time. Most of the ideas could be found in the writing of Samuel Smiles, and Samuel Smiles was not an original thinker. Although Dawbarn does not cite Smiles, given the range of material he did read, he must have been aware of *Self-Help*, first published in 1859, and *Character*, first published in 1871. In *Self-Help* Smiles wrote that 'attention, application, accuracy, method, punctuality, and despatch are the principal qualities required for the efficient conduct of business of any sort.'<sup>44</sup> He further identified 'quick perception and firmness in the execution of his plans' and tact as essential qualities of 'the business man of the highest class.'<sup>45</sup> In *Character* Smiles wrote that experience in business was 'the best discipline of character; for it involves the exercise of diligence, attention, self-denial, judgement, tact, knowledge of and sympathy with others.'<sup>46</sup> Dawbarn addressed all of these same points:

- Self-denial – 'no young man is fit for a master who cannot greatly restrain and govern his desires.'<sup>47</sup>

- Judgement – ‘is that quality of mind that presides over and directs all schemes from beginning to end.’<sup>48</sup>
- Attention – ‘attention is the competing quality that makes success of one more than that of another. Attention to the details of business prevents waste of time and stock.’<sup>49</sup>
- Tact – ‘is the great agent by which quarrels are avoided, plans developed and made successful, and enemies converted into friends.’<sup>50</sup>
- Knowledge of and sympathy with others – ‘a life without generous emotions, resolves, and actions, is not a life worth living.’<sup>51</sup>
- Punctuality – ‘I could show you how the great events in the lives of men have all been influenced by their punctuality, and I could as easily show you numberless illustrations of the effects of the want of it, by which men have ceased to advance.’<sup>52</sup>

William Dawbarn was a business man, first and foremost. Success in business provided him with the reputation to engage in public affairs, the financial security to allow him to raise a large family in comfortable surroundings while sending three sons to Cambridge University, and the time to pursue his literary interests. He cannot be described as a self-made man; he was the beneficiary of both the successful business his grandfather had started and a marriage which brought him into the business of his father-in-law. Of Robert Dawbarn’s seven sons he achieved, by a wide margin, the greatest business success outside the family firm. Of all the Dawbarns, his wealth at his death was only second to that of his father.

## Religion

*No one will ever understand Victorian England who does not appreciate that among the highly civilized, in contradistinction to more primitive, countries it was one of the most religious that the world has known.*<sup>53</sup>

*R.C.K. Ensor*

Success in business was one criterion by which the populace judged a middle-class man's suitability for being entrusted with leadership in public affairs. A second criterion was his attitude toward religion. A regular church-goer who took a leadership role in his church could be entrusted with public business.

Religion was a major part of William Dawbarn's life, as it was for most middle-class Victorians. There was an 'association between the middle class and a Christian way of life' such that 'attendance at church or chapel was a social necessity even when it was not a religious imperative'.<sup>54</sup> William Dawbarn may have been one of those who attended out of social necessity. Life for publicly known members of the middle class in mid-century Liverpool must have been similar to that in Birmingham where 'few were prepared to admit that that they were not believers.'<sup>55</sup> Although it is impossible to know whether he was a true believer, William's writings that touch on religious matters are entirely free from doctrinal issues. Instead they focus on virtue and demonstrate a good deal of liberality. In a review of his book *Government, Conduct, and Example the Patriot* newspaper wrote: 'Its tone is highly moral, although not actually religious; its whereabouts in this respect may be judged from the fact that the last chapter is devoted to "Sydney Smith and his Writings".' G.K. Chesterton wrote that Smith, greatly admired by Dawbarn, was a free man who 'was free from all sorts of constraints', including that of

religion. Smith's religion was that of 'free and fraternal benevolence, which recognized God as a matter of common sense; and really called itself Christian for the excellent reason that it would sound a little cranky to call itself Deist.'<sup>56</sup>

William's liberality and lack of dogmatism in religious matters would not have been predicted based on his upbringing as a Particular Baptist in Wisbech. General and Particular Baptists were active in Wisbech at the close of the seventeenth century. Over the next two hundred and fifty years both gatherings went through a number of transitions, but always retained their separate identities until 1960 when they agreed to set aside their differences and amalgamate. This was accomplished when

the two churches conducted a joint mission, assisted by Christian students from Cambridge University. At the end of the mission, the leader of the students' group, John Briggs challenged the churches to give fresh consideration to amalgamating into one church.<sup>57</sup>

John Briggs is the author of *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, one of the texts reviewed in this study. That two hundred and fifty years elapsed before the two Baptist traditions were able to come together is an indication of very strongly held views.

In Wisbech the Particular Baptists erected their first chapel in 1694 in Deadman's Lane. Their first pastor was William Rix who attended the General Assembly of Particular Baptist Churches in London in 1689, and again in 1692. Throughout the late eighteenth century, a period of religious indifference in England generally, this small congregation was often without a minister. In 1781 it fell under the leadership of Samuel Fisher (1742-1803) and Richard Wright. It was about this time that the Dawbarn family joined this congregation. The marriage of Richard Bunbury Dawbarn and Elizabeth

Saltonstall is recorded in the Wisbech St. Peter Parish Register on 30 April 1782. A Dawbarn family researcher wrote that Richard Bunbury Dawbarn was encouraged by his wife Elizabeth (Saltonstall) to leave the Church of England for a Particular Baptist meeting in Wisbech. This took place no later than 1783 when the birth of the Dawbarn's first child, a daughter Mary, was recorded in the Deadman's Lane Chapel Records. There followed Thomas (1785), Richard (1786), and Elizabeth (1790), whose births were all entered in the Deadman's Lane records. About this time a schism developed in the Deadman's Lane Chapel

when the Unitarian doctrines began to be preached in that chapel in 1792, by the late Mr. Richard Wright, in order to avoid contention about the chapel, those who objected to the Unitarian doctrines separated from the rest, and built their present chapel in Upper Hill Street [formerly Ship Lane].<sup>58</sup>

The Upper Hill Street Chapel was led by Samuel Fisher until his death in 1803.

The Register Book for the Upper Hill Street Chapel has the following entry for 12 March 1804:

At a Church meeting held at Brother Taylors it was unanimously agreed to invite Brother Dawbarn to take the Pastoral care over the Church meeting in Ship Lane Chapel, and a written invitation signed by all the Brethren and Sisters was then presented unto him requesting him to accept the all.<sup>59</sup>

Richard Bunbury accepted the call succeeding the late Samuel Fisher and remained in this role until his death in 1829 when he was succeeded by Robert Reynoldson. Sons and grandsons were prominent members of this meeting throughout the nineteenth century. A number of them acted as Deacons which was one means of gaining the credibility to take on other positions of public responsibility: 'a man who could be a trustee for God and caretaker of the financial affairs of the chapel could certainly fill other positions of public

responsibility.’<sup>60</sup> In 1912 William’s brother Robert edited a book, *History of a Forgotten Sect of Baptised Believers* (1912), which traces the history of the Upper Hill Street Chapel from Samuel Fisher’s ministry through to the end of Robert Reynoldson’s ministry in 1871. Few Dawbarn family births and deaths are recorded in the Upper Hill Street Register Book for the 1790s but from 1800 they become more frequent. Beginning in 1802, with the recording of Richard Bunbury’s grandson Joseph Dowson, the births and deaths of all Wisbech Dawbarns are recorded in the Upper Hill Street Register Book until 1837 when all births, deaths, and marriages, regardless of religious affiliation, began to be recorded centrally in England and Wales.

Not only was William’s grandfather a minister but his grandmother also provided religious instruction. Baptist teaching in the early nineteenth century was not the sole preserve of men. As the separation between public and private spheres increasingly excluded women from the public, ‘writing provided a form of intervention for women at a time when other kinds of public speech were increasingly difficult’.<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth (Saltonstall) Dawbarn published at least five books and pamphlets between 1794 and 1806. We have seen earlier that she had austere views when she expressed her ‘disapprobation, displeasure, and disgust’ with respect to the theatre. Austere attitudes continued with the next generation. Thomas Craddock, a very close friend of William Dawbarn, wrote to William Yelverton Dawbarn, William’s eldest son:

I am quite ashamed of your grandfather. I knew he was bigotedly attached to the Chapel, not to it because it is Christian, but because it is peculiar, I may think, if I do not say, that its peculiarity is illiberality. I should not have even said so much of my thoughts concerning it, if I had not been deeply angry with his hard, malignantly bigoted expression to you that “he could not bless the union”,



because the young lady does not go to chapel. Nothing so inflames one into disgust with peculiar sects and parties as this kind of implied persecution. It means that he would not at all regret that you were linked unhappily to a wife you did not like provided she went to chapel.

How did William Dawbarn escape this bigotry? One factor must surely have been his relocation to Liverpool where he encountered the theology of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). Fullerism

brought to an end the reign of hyper-Calvinism among the great majority of Particular Baptist ministers and churches. . . [he] dealt the mortal blow to the system which held that it was impossible for any but the elect to embrace the Gospel and that it was therefore useless to invite the unconverted to put their trust in Christ.<sup>62</sup>

In Liverpool William became a member of the Myrtle Street Baptist Church under the leadership of Hugh Stowell Brown who had a reputation for liberal views. The Myrtle Street congregation had become Fullerite under the leadership of Brown's predecessor, James Lister. Wayne Clarke, a Liverpool pastor who is preparing a biography of Brown wrote:

under the ministry of James Lister the new church in Lime Street prospered. Lister was a "Fullerite", a Particular Baptist in the tradition of Andrew Fuller of Kettering, who had led a movement in the late eighteenth century away from the hyper-calvinism of Johnson and others. His pamphlet "The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation" set forth an evangelical Christianity which was to set the tone for Free Church life in the Nineteenth Century and beyond. Fuller's teaching was practical and evangelistic. He spoke of the role of Holy Spirit in conversion, and although he believed that God chose people for salvation, he stressed the need to challenge people to turn to Christ in faith. This middle way between Arminianism and the blind alley of Hyper-Calvinism allowed James Lister, and Hugh Stowell Brown after him, to find a theological position that gave a new confidence to Baptists in the new world of the Nineteenth Century.

With respect to the all-critical question of a particular or universal atonement, it was then accepted that both were valid. William Dawbarn had come to the same conclusion. In *The Eccentric Club* he wrote about free agency:

Limit the powers of God and you have man a free agent. Extend with your limited capacity the power of God without limit, and you have man the victim of predestination; neither conditions meet the case; therefore by faith in the unlimited power of the Creator believe that He can make a man a perfectly free agent, and yet have no limitation in omniscience or omnipresence.<sup>63</sup>

Brown was a great orator who became known for preaching to large audiences of up to several thousand people in public settings where working people were more comfortable. Brown's public speaking was a consequence of the focus in the second half of the century on the 'great concentrations of unchurched urban masses rather than scattered village labourers. . . . Open-air evangelism was to be energetically undertaken, supplemented by lectures given by ministers in theatres or halls not associated with religion.'<sup>64</sup> From 1851 Brown spoke regularly to audiences of many thousands in St. George's Hall in Liverpool. In 1863 he ceased these lectures expressing a concern that they reinforced the separation of the classes. His goal was 'the drawing together of "rich and poor" in the "House of the Lord", where if necessary the style of sermon should be adapted to making working people "feel that they are really welcome to God's house.'<sup>65</sup> He must have been successful in this regard as Wayne Clarke reports that 'the membership of Myrtle Street was a mixture of the "nouveaux riche" merchants of Liverpool and the poorer working classes'. Whether William Dawbarn was drawn to Brown because of this approach or Brown influenced Dawbarn to take an interest in those lower in the social order is uncertain, but Dawbarn became involved in a number of

causes in support of improving the lives of the working class. The causes included The Early Closing Association and working for improvements in sanitary conditions in the slums of Liverpool.

An interesting example of Brown's liberal attitude was his invitation to the Hindu Keshub Chender Sen of India to speak in the Myrtle Street Church. Sen toured England in 1870 with the purpose of promoting 'a clearer understanding between the two countries, and especially to excite the interest of the English public in the political, social, and religious welfare of the men and women of India'.<sup>66</sup> Allowing Sen to speak at Myrtle Street did not sit well with the more severe members of the Liverpool Christian community:

The presence of the Hindoo Reformer, Chunder Sen, at Liverpool, has stimulated into feverish activity the religious dissensions of Christianity which he so emphatically condemned. The Rev. H.S. Brown, the Baptist minister who allowed Mr. Sen to occupy his pulpit, has received strong condemnation from some of his co-religionists and others, when Mr. Sen, in his public speeches, subsequently proclaimed principles of Unitarianism or Deism, and deprecated the introduction of missionaries and Christian sectarianism into India.<sup>67</sup>

During his visit to Liverpool, Sen became ill and convalesced at Elmswood, William Dawbarn's home: 'The latest accounts from Liverpool represent the Hindoo Reformer as much improved in health. The distinguished gentleman is laid up from vertigo, owing to over-mental exertion; and is at the residence of Mr. W. Dawbarn, Aigburth, Liverpool'.<sup>68</sup>

As this situation attests, William Dawbarn was an active member of the Myrtle Street Church. His name appeared numerous times in newspaper reports of meetings which he chaired at the Church. The 1866 Baptist Union meeting in Liverpool discussed

the insurrections in Jamaica and the death of George William Gordon. At the conclusion of the discussion Hugh Stowell Brown suggested

that it would be a good thing to complete and crown the union meetings by endeavouring to erect a place of worship and sustain it at Morant Bay, as a memorial of the late George William Gordon. . . . He had ascertained that, if £500 could be raised to encourage the people in Jamaica, the rest could be raised there. He should be glad to receive subscriptions towards the object.

Mr. William Dawbarn, of Liverpool, promised a subscription of £50; and Mr. H. Kelsall, of Roschdale, a subscription of £30 towards the object.<sup>69</sup>

The close relationship between Brown and Dawbarn is clear from the selection of Brown as one of the executors of Dawbarn's will. In 1881 Brown was one of two people who proved the will. In the *Liverpool Mercury* report on the marriage of Brown in 1867 Mr. and Mrs. William Dawbarn were specifically mentioned as close friends of the family. The newspaper account of Mrs. Brown's funeral has Dawbarn listed first amongst 'upwards of 100 gentlemen' to join the funeral cortege.

Religion was a powerful force in William Dawbarn's life and in the lives of members of the middle class as they made space for themselves in society: "religious belief gave confidence as to how to behave, how to know what was right and what was wrong."<sup>70</sup> Whether William was a true believer or not, his upbringing would have inculcated middle-class Christian notions of manhood within him, namely 'stress on moral earnestness, the belief in the power of love and a sensitivity to the weak and the helpless.'<sup>71</sup> This model of middle-class manhood continued into the latter part of the century, when in 1886 William's fourteen year-old grandson, William Yelverton Dawbarn Junior, was exhorted by his missionary aunt in a letter from China:

I suppose by this time you will have left school and are learning to be a man then to do man's work. I hope you will be very happy in your work and are finding that the truest way to be a man is to be good and pure and kind and temperate and that to be this you must be a Christian and have God's strength to keep you out of temptation. If you are a godly man you will be a great blessing to your family and friends and companions and you will set them a good example.

The notion of the family was seen as essential to social organization and 'was an extension of the heavenly family' and there was 'an unshaken belief in a future life where the members of the household would meet again and would recognize each other and be eternally happy'.<sup>72</sup> Aunt Lillian assured little William: 'I often think how happy it will be when we are all together in heaven.'

William's upbringing provided plenty of opportunity for him to adopt dogmatic hyper-Calvinist beliefs. Yet all the evidence is to the contrary. In his writing relatively little is said about religion, and what is written is free of doctrine and is of a liberal nature. Why did he take a different path than his father? One factor must have been his relocation to Liverpool which, in 1860, was rapidly urbanizing and was a much larger centre than Wisbech. In Liverpool he would have been exposed to a broader range of ideas. The bulk of his published writing appeared after his relocation to Liverpool. His exposure to Hugh Stowell Brown, who was known to be uninterested in doctrinal issues, would have been a change from the Upper Hill Street Chapel where Robert Reynoldson espoused strong doctrinal views. Yet the change might also have been as a consequence of the changing society in which his generation matured; it was a society where multi-denominational Christianity was increasingly accepted. That changing society was also characterized by an increasing prevalence of societies and associations, many of which

were quasi-religious, but which had a bias toward focusing on virtue rather than doctrine. William Dawbarn was a joiner of societies and associations and frequently found himself in a leadership position wherever he joined.

## **Associational**

*The Religious Societies (and the Societies for the Reformation of Manners after them) were an early manifestation of a larger disposition for association together into clubs and societies that swept England and Scotland from the late seventeenth century on. . . . it apparently represented a stage in the evolution of more secular, or at least more prudential, values, since most of the societies (and the Religious Societies were no exception) focused far more attention on the pursuit of virtue than they did on religious doctrine.<sup>73</sup>*

*Margaret R. Hunt*

*Both club life and low life were features of urban middle-class society which long predated the nineteenth century. The most distinctive contribution of the Victorian middle class was its development of formal associations for public life. A fine line divided the club which aimed at no more than oiling the wheels of men's society from the association committed to the 'improvement' of its members or the reform of society. But the distinction was vital to the public standing of the bourgeoisie. It was the dedication with which like-minded men of the middle class forgathered to pursue intellectual, political and philanthropic goals which underpinned their claim to be public men and members of the body politic.<sup>74</sup>*

*John Tosh*

An eighteenth-century man of the middling sort often carried out his work in the home or in quarters adjacent to the home. At the end of a day's work this man often would socialize in coffee houses and taverns with other men to whom he was related through family, religion, or business. As the century advanced these men increasingly formed clubs, lodges, and societies through which they provided mutual economic support, engaged in political debate, and attempted collectively to influence the state. The separation of work from home and the related cult of domesticity were responsible, at

least in part, for middle-class men of the nineteenth century gradually transforming these home/social gatherings into formal public voluntary associations and societies with specific goals and objectives aimed at fulfilling public duties. In this way a man could justify devoting at least some of his free time to activities outside the home without being reproached for ignoring his domestic duties. Considerable effort was made to show how a commitment to both domesticity and public duty were mutually supportive. A solid public reputation reinforced a man's authority in the home while, reciprocally, a man seen as committed to domestic values and overseeing a successfully functioning home could be trusted to be a committed public servant.

John Tosh suggests the model for these new voluntary associations and societies was based on church and chapel as well as the Masonic Lodge. By the nineteenth century membership in a religious organization was voluntary and Victorian churches and chapels were increasingly concerned with moral and social concerns. However, unlike the narrowly religious groups, which were somewhat inclusive with respect to class and completely inclusive with respect to gender, the new voluntary associations were confined to men and made an effort to cross denominational boundaries, much like the Masonic Lodge which was therefore 'a more convincing prototype than the church, since it too was secular (or at least non-sectarian), restricted to men only, and closely associated with status and respectability in the community.'<sup>75</sup> Yet, by the Victorian era, the Masonic Lodge had become much more secretive, while the new associations were open to public scrutiny:

The public character of such societies made them open and visible to all and indeed *public* accountability was one of their principles. Meetings announced in newspapers, formal constitutions with named patrons and committees, accounts which were published; these were the hall-marks of the new societies. Some were public also in their efforts to create a national network and such societies mushroomed from the late eighteenth century.<sup>76</sup>

Davidoff and Hall categorize these associations into four overlapping groups: philanthropic societies (Sunday schools, charity schools, infant schools); educational societies (libraries, book clubs, reading rooms, literary and philosophical societies) catering to the middle classes themselves; business related societies (Chambers of Commerce, trade protection societies); and those which were more political (anti-slavery, Anti-Corn Law League). Annual general meetings were held where accomplishments and financial matters were reviewed: ‘a procedure echoing both the casting up of accounts to God by the religious, and the principle of subscriber democracy so dear to the hearts of middle-class men.’<sup>77</sup> William Dawbarn was active in a wide range of associations and societies covering all of the above four categories.

Given his family background, Dawbarn’s first involvement in an association might have been, naturally enough, related to his religion: ‘he was one of the earliest to commence Sunday School work in Wisbech, starting a Sunday afternoon class in a room in Hill Street’.<sup>78</sup> However, he soon surpassed purely religious pursuits. In the educational field the Dawbarn family played a leading role in the Wisbech Mechanics’ Institute. At the 1857 annual meeting of the institute, William’s father Robert was elected president and William and his cousin George Dawbarn were elected to committee positions.<sup>79</sup> At this time, William’s primary focus on voluntary work outside his chapel was with another organization having religious ties, the Young Men’s Christian Association. Possibly he



was drawn to the Y.M.C.A. as it had been founded in 1844 by men in London whose leader was George Williams, a Dissenter and a draper. The Wisbech branch was established in 1853 and by no later than its third anniversary William Dawbarn was president of that branch.<sup>80</sup> In 1858 he was still the president and represented Wisbech at the Leeds Y.M.C.A. Conference where he was elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the conference.<sup>81</sup> At this conference ‘Dr. Gladstone delivered a paper on Recreation and he was backed by Wisbech’s delegate, W. Dawbarn (whose family were Coleman’s agents in the area).’<sup>82</sup>

At that same conference were representatives advocating that secular education should be part of the activities of the Y.M.C.A.: ‘Brighton’s delegate claimed that “Christianity was in harmony with every science and art. All intellectual efforts should be used as a means to an end.”’<sup>83</sup> These discussions reflected an ongoing debate within the association about the range of its activities. At its inception, the Y.M.C.A was oriented toward the spiritual growth of its members with the aim of keeping young men from straying from a Christian way of life when they were released from their long days of employment and could be tempted by the sinful attractions of the ever increasing urban environment. Drapers worked fourteen hour days and, when apprenticed, often lived in cramped quarters on their employer’s premises. When the day was done, the taverns, gambling dens, and music halls were an attractive source of diversion. William Dawbarn experienced these long days as an apprentice; in *The Eccentric Club* he wrote, in reference to his apprenticeship, of ‘excessively long hours at business, from seven in the morning until nine at night.’<sup>84</sup>

The organizational structure of the Y.M.C.A. was of a decentralized nature. With the passing years some local branches found that by adding educational and recreational activities to their offerings they were more successful in attracting young men to the organization. Dawbarn was clearly in the camp of those advocating a broader offering: he delivered lectures to the Wisbech, Cambridge, and Liverpool branches on the commercial environment of Glasgow and Wisbech, his interpretation of Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769), and his own views on personal conduct in the private, business, and public spheres. Differing views amongst the leadership about the appropriateness of moving beyond the Y.M.C.A.'s religious base continued for many years but in the end Dawbarn's camp triumphed; in 1893 'the Sheffield Conference . . . marked a climax in the Y.M.C.A. debates on education, recreation, politics, and the whole man. . . . educational classes and recreational activities [had become] an indispensable part of Y.M.C.A. life.'<sup>85</sup>

When William relocated to Liverpool he stepped up the pace of associational life. He was active in the latter three of Davidoff's categorization, educational, business, and political, while continuing to be an active member of the Baptist community, now as a leading member of the Myrtle Street Baptist Chapel. He attended the Myrtle-Street Chapel Improvement Society seventh annual soiree in 1858 where a number of papers were read, but none by Dawbarn.<sup>86</sup> In 1876 William presided over a meeting at the Chapel where Thomas Cooper (1805–1892), author of *The Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time: A Popular View of the Historical Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (1871), delivered

the second of a course of three lectures on the subject of the evidences of Christianity. Mr. Cooper devoted his address to a review of the infinite nature and glory of God as reflected in the immensity of the universe.

Cooper's third lecture was designed to show that the theories of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and others were inconclusive and then to provide a 'review of the unshaken proofs of God's existence as the creator and moral governor of the universe.'<sup>87</sup>

Dawbarn had been a leader with the Y.M.C.A. in Wisbech and continued to play a leadership role with the Y.M.C.A. in Liverpool.<sup>88</sup> Yet, other than the Y.M.C.A. and his chapel, his participation in educational associations was as a follower rather than a leader. William attended the Glasgow meeting of the British Association in 1855<sup>89</sup> but did not deliver a paper. He was accepted into the Liverpool Literary & Philosophical Society on 2 November 1863; the Society's *Centenary Roll, 1812 to 1912, Vol. I.* recorded that 'He did not at any time read a paper to the Society.' In December, 1863 he was elected an Ordinary Member of the Liverpool Geological Society<sup>90</sup> and remained so until at least 1875; again there is no evidence that he contributed any papers.

The fourth associational category identified by Davidoff and Hall included clubs of a political nature. Hugh Cunningham, in his *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780 – c.1880* (1980), outlines the history of the early closing movement. A forerunner of Early Closing Associations was the Metropolitan Drapers Association, formed in 1838. Its vice-patrons were the leading Evangelicals, Lord Ashley and Sir Andrew Agnew. The Association, which 'became a force to be reckoned with by the 1840s, was to a large degree concerned to secure early closing on Saturday in order to be able to argue in favour of keeping the Sunday holy.' That there would also be secondary benefits

to the worker was argued at a public meeting in London in 1855; a resolution was put forth for the early closing of London shops on Saturday which, if acted upon, would, it was claimed, prove 'highly beneficial to large classes of society, socially, mentally, and physically; added to the most important effect of tending materially to a better observance of the Lord's day.'<sup>91</sup>

Apparently Dawbarn's involvement with the Y.M.C.A. led to his leadership of the Liverpool Early Closing Association: 'At a meeting held on Friday evening, at the Young Men's Christian Association rooms, it was resolved to form an Early Closing Association – the movement to be made with the concurrence of employers, and not in opposition to them.'<sup>92</sup> Dawbarn took pride in this co-operative approach, seeing himself as a link between disparate groups. Just two weeks later, at a public meeting chaired by Dawbarn, it was announced that the objectives of the society were 'the early closing of shops and offices, Saturday half holiday, the early payment of wages and the abolition of Sunday trading.'<sup>93</sup> The association had some impact in Liverpool. The 8 July 1861 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported on a meeting of 'the clerks, porters, and carters of the various railway and canal companies, and members of the Early Closing Association' at which the chairman, Mr. William Dawbarn, reported on a meeting he had held with representatives of the various companies. Dawbarn reported that at that meeting he had been received cordially and respectfully, and that the companies' representatives were sympathetic to the request for the early Saturday closing. The positive response was undoubtedly encouraged by Dawbarn's approach; he took the initiative and provided assurances to the companies that the work force would not take advantage of the early

closing and would be accommodating in special circumstances, such as the urgency to get ships to sea and in handling perishable goods. The employers quickly acceded to the request for early closing; just one month later, on 12 August 1861 the *Liverpool Mercury* reported on a Saturday evening ‘*soiree* in celebration of the half-holiday recently granted to their employees by the railway, canal, and carrying companies connected with Liverpool.’ Dawbarn was the chairman of that evening’s event.

Although the establishment of the Early Closing Association was motivated by Sabbatarianism, Dawbarn seems to have placed less emphasis on that aspect of the plan and more on other virtues associated with it. In an address about the past operations of the Liverpool Association, he provided anecdotal evidence, gleaned from the workers themselves, about how the additional leisure time was being put to advantage. For the family man the benefits included spending more time with family, improving the physical condition of the home, reading, studying, taking walks, and engaging in sport. As for the younger man

whether a porter, or a clerk, it is seen that the half-holiday gives greater opportunities for self-improvement. It has been observed that at Manchester much mental improvement and self-culture have taken place; some young men finding amusement at one mechanical employment, and some at another; some taking photographs, others studying a language; some following the sciences of natural history and chemistry; as others have followed their amateur carpentering.<sup>94</sup>

The Early Closing Association was of a political nature, but it was also obviously closely linked to business. Dawbarn was a businessman himself and this perhaps gave him an advantage in addressing the concerns of the other businessmen, while at the same time pressing for concessions to the worker. Perhaps it is not surprising that business

related voluntary associations were the place where Dawbarn stepped most to the front. Trade Protection Societies (before the mid-1860s often referred to as Guardian Societies, and therefore sometimes confused with Guardian Boards which had a role in administering the 1834 Poor Law) were his specialty and he was intimately involved in this cause from 1862 until his death in 1881. The extent of his reputation can be gleaned from an address he gave on 29 January 1863 to the Annual Dinner of the Nottingham and Midland Merchants' and Traders' Association. Other speakers on the program included two M.P.s and Samuel Morley, one of the most successful businessmen and wealthiest commoners in England. In introducing Dawbarn's address the Secretary of the Association said,

That it had been kindly prepared for the occasion by Mr. Dawbarn, at the request of the Committee. The interest he has taken in the movement of Merchants and Manufacturers forming associations among themselves for their own protection, fully entitles him to speak authoritatively on any subject affecting the welfare of such associations; and it is hoped the perusal of this paper may cause the Commercial community to take a greater interest in the public affair affecting themselves, and especially in the making of laws bearing on commerce.<sup>95</sup>

Dawbarn introduced his talk by explaining the role of a Trade Protection Society: 'we are an association for the prevention of traders being plundered or swindled out of our property' and our goal is 'that kind of action that will produce . . . the most benefit to society at large.'<sup>96</sup> Dawbarn believed that he and his associated tradesmen were not only looking after their own interests but also those of the greater society. The principal thrust of his address was to encourage the individual associations across the country to form a federation enabling them more easily to exchange information on the creditworthiness of individuals. These associations had been operating for upwards of forty years in larger

centres such as Liverpool and Manchester. However, by mid-century, societal advances had resulted in trade being undertaken over a much wider geographical area: ‘cheap postage, cheap locomotion, cheap carriage, have brought us altogether as one great town.’<sup>97</sup> It was now necessary for associations to answer queries from traders outside their local area and to serve their own members by answering queries about potential non-local trading partners. To do this required a federation of local associations, so that agreed-upon procedures and funding mechanisms could be established, all of which Dawbarn was advocating. He further argued that the primary duty of the Trade Protection Associations was to provide information about creditworthiness rather than provide legal support in the event of a bad debt:

I hold that prevention is far better than cure. . . . my great objective . . . is to secure the management . . . [of] a better organization than that which is in existence – an organization that may effectively be able to recommend the trustworthy, and denounce the swindler.<sup>98</sup>

He then assured his audience that this was practicable as, during his presidency of the Liverpool Guardian Society in the previous year, that organization had ‘been able to find respectable correspondents in seventy or eighty towns more than we had previously.’<sup>99</sup>

Apparently William Dawbarn justly gained his reputation as an expert on trade protection associations through his involvement with the Liverpool Guardian Society during the year 1862. At the outset of that year the organization was in some difficulty. On 12 February an extraordinary meeting was held at which

The present condition of the society was discussed at some length, and it was ultimately decided that the meeting be adjourned to give time for the following gentleman, namely, Messrs. Steel, . . . Dawbarn, and Brooks to act as a committee of inquiry into the affairs and general working condition of the

society; that the said committee shall report to a future early meeting the result of such inquiry, and be also requested to suggest that course of proceeding which they shall consider will render the association one of increased permanent usefulness.<sup>100</sup>

Just one month later the Annual Dinner of the Liverpool Guardian Society was held and the chair was occupied by the new President, William Dawbarn. During this meeting Dawbarn initiated discussion about the lax attendance at meetings of the Society. The immediate past president commented on the poor attendance record of the subscribers: ‘now, that would not always do, and he was glad to find it did not always do, for the chairman [Dawbarn] had come boldly forward by himself to take the reins of the new government.’ Dawbarn had been in regular attendance: it was noted that ‘out of 41 meetings called during the [past] year, the president had attended them all.’<sup>101</sup> This dedication was undoubtedly instrumental in securing his position as President of the Society. A year on Dawbarn was again the President of the Society, presiding at the annual dinner, where he and his colleagues on the Committee of the Society were toasted by Town Councillor Nickson in recognition of their efforts to return the Society to a solid footing: ‘very great credit was due to the president and the various other officers of the society for the vigour and spirit they had infused into its management.’<sup>102</sup>

By 1865 Dawbarn was no longer president of the society, but held the position of treasurer. He continued to be an influential figure in the organization. At both the 1865 and 1866 annual meetings he seconded the chairman’s motion to accept the annual report. In both those years his nominations for the position of president were accepted by the members. The president in 1866 was John Cripps, Dawbarn’s cousin. In 1867 Dawbarn attended the annual meeting in London of the Association of Trade Protection Societies



of the United Kingdom where he was elected Treasurer of the organization.<sup>103</sup> At the 1868 meeting of this Association Dawbarn seconded motions put to the meeting with respect to lobbying Parliament as it considered legislation related to bankruptcies and debtors.<sup>104</sup>

In 1873 a new organization appeared, the Liverpool Mercantile and Trade Protection Society, with William Dawbarn as the first President.<sup>105</sup> This organization seems then to have been recast into the Incorporated Trade Protection Society of Liverpool, which was founded in 1875 with William Dawbarn as one of the first directors.<sup>106</sup> The objectives of this organization were:

1. To protect the members against fraudulent dealings and bankruptcies . . .
2. To diffuse information as to sound principles of trading, and to impress upon the mercantile community the necessity of . . . keeping correct sets of business books.
3. To procure information for members as to the standing and responsibility of parties with whom they propose to transact business.
4. To collect debts for members . . .
5. To communicate with merchant companies, chambers of commerce . . . and concert joint measures for the protection of traders.
6. To communicate, when necessary, with the law officers of the crown . . .
7. To co-operate with other societies having similar objects . . .

By 1880, on the date of the annual dinner marking its seventh anniversary (therefore linking it back to the earlier 1873 organization), the group was thriving. According to the members, this success was as a consequence of the efforts of William Dawbarn, President since inception.<sup>107</sup> At the dinner the directors presented Dawbarn with an address conveying their feelings about him:

The address, which was bound in crimson morocco leather, contained a portrait of Mr. Dawbarn, and also a view of his residence in Aigburth. . . . The address was as follows: . . .

Dear Sir, - We, the directors of the Incorporated Trade Protection Society of Liverpool, desire, on the seventh anniversary of its existence, to express to you the high esteem which we entertain for yourself personally, and to mark our sense of the invaluable services you have rendered to our society as president since its foundation. . . . We feel it is principally owing to your exertions that the society has attained its present position of influence, numbering as it does upwards of 1000 members, as well as being financially free from debt. . . . we attribute this gratifying result to the unanimity and kindly feeling which have always characterised the meetings of the directors, due to the energy, tact, and excellent management you have brought to bear upon our proceedings. . . . our sincere respect and affectionate regard.

The high esteem in which Dawbarn was held was again confirmed publicly at the following year's annual meeting on 18 May 1881. In the speeches following the dinner Mr. Chantrell

said their progress during the past three years had been very steady, mainly owing to the able management of the president, the vice-president and the other officers. . . . Mr. L. Davis offered the "Toast of the President", thanking Mr. Dawbarn, in the name of the society, for his valuable services in their behalf.<sup>108</sup>

Dawbarn's business methods, his attention to statistical data, and his use of a Fact Book, are evident in the directors' report to the membership;

In 1878 the society's inquiries numbered 5140; in 1879, 6493; and in 1880, 7113. The debts collected amounted to £7074 in 1878, £9811 in 1879, and £12,983 in 1880. The number of members in 1878 was 619; in 1879, 741; and in 1880, 1000. Those figures, it would be admitted, showed fair progress indeed.

Just eight days later, on 26 May 1881 William Dawbarn lay dead of heart disease in his home, Elmswood Hall. The monthly meeting of the directors of the Trade Protection Society was to have been held the afternoon of their president's death but

Mr. J.R. Renner, vice-president, who occupied the chair, moved that the meeting be immediately adjourned, which was seconded by M. Chantrell, and unanimously carried. In moving the adjournment, Mr. Renner alluded in very feeling terms to the sorrowful event, and the great loss the society had sustained in the death of the president.<sup>109</sup>

The *Liverpool Mercury* reported that the membership of the Trade Protection Society was well represented at the funeral. A full year later, at the annual meeting held on 10 May 1882, the Society again acknowledged its debt to Dawbarn:

The directors, in closing the report, referred to the loss the society had sustained by the death of their esteemed president, the late Mr. William Dawbarn. The valuable aid he rendered at the formation of the society, and the zeal and energy he displayed in furthering its interests, were mainly instrumental in placing it in a sound position at an early period of its existence; while his urbanity and friendliness, when presiding at its meetings, endeared him to all associated with him in the work of the society.<sup>110</sup>

William Dawbarn's involvement in associations began close to home and chapel with Sunday School organization. During his time in Wisbech he remained with the educational theme by working with the Mechanic's Institute and the Y.M.C.A. His interest in youth education and training might have been as a consequence of his experience with the employment of a work force of upwards of a hundred people in his cotton business in Wisbech. In his Lecture, *The Resources of Wisbech*, Dawbarn describes his unhappy experience with employing Wisbech's young people:

I can look around at this time, and see how a number of boys and girls whom I have tried, one time or another, to teach, train, and employ in the cotton manufacture of this town, but, from the causes named [habits have been neglected, wilful waste allowed by parents, unpunctuality in attendance permitted, trifling excuses made for absence], they have left my employment for precarious and doubtful occupations, because they could not settle to business, being wholly untrained to anything like perseverance.<sup>111</sup>

With his relocation to Liverpool, Dawbarn continued his association with the Y.M.C.A. which led to his leadership of the Liverpool Early Closing Association. Shortly after relocating to Liverpool he joined two intellectual societies, Liverpool Literary & Philosophical and the Liverpool Geological Society, where he was a follower rather than

a leader. Dawbarn was deeply involved with the Liverpool Guardian and Trade Protection Societies for close to twenty years. It was here that he gained a national reputation, participating in conferences in other cities, including London; all aimed at reducing credit risks for businessmen.

William Dawbarn's success as a business man and leadership in associations of all kinds provided the necessary experience and reputation to engage in political life. Associations were run on a formal basis, following parliamentary procedure, with public reporting on accomplishments. Dawbarn was the president or chairman of a number of associations and he had made a study of the proper way to run meetings. After more than twenty years of associational life he stepped into political life at the local level in 1866.

## **Political**

*The advocates of the dry earth system and the fluid method of deodorisation fight as bitterly as did the partisans of the Neptunian against the Vulcanian philosophers who theorised upon the original formation of the world.*

*Liverpool Courier, 5 August 1870*

As industrialization progressed, and with it urbanization, members of the middle classes made space for themselves in the urban environment where they had their businesses, raised their families, educated themselves, and worshiped. Experience in associations of all kinds provided training opportunities for politics at the local level and The Municipal Corporations Act 1835 together with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1829) increased opportunities for men to do so. The landed upper

classes continued to dominate national and rural politics and culture, but ‘urban leadership, in politics, culture and voluntary associations came predominantly from the small groups of professionals, merchants, and to some extent “gentlemen”’.<sup>112</sup> By the nineteenth century the term gentleman often referred to men who were at the upper end of the middle classes, rather than the lower end of the upper classes.

Liverpool, where Dawbarn was an elected municipal official in 1867 and 1868, was one of the urban areas which had prospered in the eighteenth century under the old governance system, but which had become increasingly ungovernable under that system as the nineteenth century progressed. The common council of freemen consisted of forty-one members elected for life from which a mayor and two bailiffs were chosen annually. Although a closed system, subject to the dangers of conservatism and corruption, the eighteenth-century Liverpool council was relatively successful. The councilmen were drawn from middle-class merchants who, in addition to wanting to preserve their privileges, were also anxious to enlarge their businesses. With improvements in transportation they were forced to broaden their horizons, improving port facilities and the navigability of the river. As the commercial activity of the town grew, so did the population. It rose from 35,000 in the 1760s to about 130,000 by 1815 and then to about 200,000 by 1835.

The governing body of merchants took pride in the growth of Liverpool, but felt little responsibility for the welfare of those lower in the social order. This was left to the administrators of the poor laws and to individuals, or groups of individuals, undertaking charitable initiatives. What was deemed important was ‘the expansion of the town,

whether measured in terms of the development of trade or the growth of population, . . . regardless of the consequences.’<sup>113</sup> As the urban population grew, the gap between the government and the masses widened and ‘it became increasingly apparent that a system that permitted only freemen to vote could not survive.’ In 1750 seven percent of the population voted, but by 1812 that number had been reduced to 2.3 percent.<sup>114</sup> Change came with the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 which extended the franchise to all rate payers who had lived in the town for one year. In the case of Liverpool, the town council was comprised of 48 councillors who in turn elected 16 aldermen and annually a mayor. The councillors served three years with a third of them having their terms expire each year. The aldermen were elected every three years for a six year term.

As the new town councils were established and found their footing in the following decade an urgent, if not the most urgent, concern was sanitation and water supply. Industrialization had brought forth a new social problem, namely how to provide sanitary living conditions for a population that was increasingly urban. ‘In 1842, [Edwin] Chadwick showed . . . that public health was the essential need of an industrial society.’<sup>115</sup> In the years following the Municipal Corporations Act, Liverpool, perhaps because its lower classes endured some of the worst living conditions of any English urban area, became a leader in public health. Indeed, according to Derek Fraser, Liverpool ‘was one of the first towns to act in the wake of’ Edwin Chadwick’s report on *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population (1842)*.<sup>116</sup>

Dr. William Henry Duncan was instrumental in advancing the public health cause in Liverpool. He had contributed information on the living conditions of the labouring

classes in Liverpool, delivered lectures on mortality rates in Liverpool to the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, and provided evidence to the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns (1844). Dr. Duncan's efforts came to fruition in the mid-1840s when he was appointed Liverpool's Medical Officer of Health, the first such appointment in the country. This appointment was made under a Parliamentary Bill, the 1846 Liverpool Sanitary Act, 'which was a milestone in British social history.'<sup>117</sup> The public concern which had resulted in the 1846 Act had been aroused, in part, by writers such as Hugh Shimmin (1819–1879), a popular satirical social and political commentator in Liverpool and editor of the *Porcupine*. Shimmin had been a severe critic of the sanitary condition of Liverpool and the *Porcupine's* 'scarifying denunciations of sanitary conditions and moral failings, and deflations of municipal pomposity, found a ready audience'.<sup>118</sup> Shimmin foresaw that under the 1846 Act the council could both upgrade the environment and act as an educator:

It is the duty of authorities, when they find people so ignorant in regard to cleanliness and housekeeping to do all in their power to instruct them. The court and alley inspectors, if rightly trained for their work and fully alive to the importance of it, ought to act as schoolmasters to bring the poor to cleanliness. Rightly viewed, all inspectors under the health acts are educational officers.<sup>119</sup>

In addition to being a significant step toward improving public health, this Act was instrumental in the evolution of the responsibilities assumed by town councils. Before 1846 public institutions separate from the town council were responsible for paving and sewerage and for providing the water supply for public purposes. That there were a number of other urban institutions separate from the town council which had responsibility and 'the main municipal institution [the town council] was not

overwhelmingly identified as the obvious public health agency was symptomatic of the uncertainty of contemporary opinion on the proper role of local government.’<sup>120</sup> The 1846 Act required the appointment of a Health Committee of the town council as the main executive agency. The Liverpool council was given wide powers over environmental control and the means to enforce those powers through the appointment of an inspector of nuisances, a borough engineer, and a medical officer of health. The 1846 Act combined with an 1836 initiative to take control of responsibility for watch lamps and scavenging, meant the Liverpool ‘council was now authorized to make sanitary regulations, to build sewers, to control street improvement and to cleanse and pave the highways.’<sup>121</sup>

These new powers led to public investments which, after an initially difficult period in the late 1840s when death rates rose as a consequence of massive Irish immigration, an economic depression and a cholera epidemic, made for a much improved situation in the 1850s: ‘Duncan estimated a saving of over 3,000 lives per annum in the late 1850s.’<sup>122</sup> Although there were rate payers who complained about the cost of these reforms, ‘the Corporation of Liverpool had already acknowledged a responsibility for the environmental welfare of the community’<sup>123</sup> and it was now a question of the pace of reform and the choices to be made amongst competing technical solutions.

Yet, as the 1860s advanced, death rates rose once more concurrent with a return of typhus in 1865 and cholera in 1866, the resurgence of which can be at least partially traced to the success of eliminating the cellars as living quarters in the 1850s under the powers of the 1846 Sanitary Act. Unfortunately, the cellars provided accommodation for



those lowest on the income scale and ‘when incomes were low and intermittent, it was natural that desperately poor tenants . . . would be driven into the courts and alleys to live.’<sup>124</sup> The courts were only marginally better to begin with and became worse with overcrowding. The typical design of a court consisted of about ten houses gathered around a narrow courtyard which was accessed from the street by an even narrower passageway with a low ceiling. People entering and exiting their homes were forced to walk past open sewers and cesspools which were at the entrance ways. These courts and the system of privies and tunnel middens (which ran under the houses) were attacked by reformers in the 1860s. The reformers gained the upper hand in 1864 with the passing of the Sanitary Amendment Act. Before the passage of this Act the ‘Health Committee had frequently been clamped between the opposing views of the sanitary reformers, who wished to light and ventilate working-class dwellings . . . and cottage owners who wished to cram the largest number of dwellings in the smallest space.’<sup>125</sup>

With the 1864 Sanitary Amendment Act in hand, the council moved ahead with opening up the courts and dealing with the sewerage problem, but not without controversy. Property owners, and others, questioned the wisdom of converting to a water-borne sewerage system. This debate was partially a consequence of the additional cost required to provide sufficient water to operate a water-borne system and partially a matter of inefficiencies in the use of the water that was available. It was at this stage that William Dawbarn was elected to political office in Liverpool, where he focused on the sanitation question. Dawbarn was elected to represent St. Anne’s Ward on the Liverpool

Town Council in December 1866. He was returned at a special election when one of the representatives of St. Anne's had resigned after serving one year of a three year term.

From the outset of his two-year term as a councillor Dawbarn's principle area of interest was the sanitary condition of Liverpool. The 6 December 1866 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that, when the Liberal electors in the ward approached Dawbarn at his home and invited him to become a candidate, 'Mr. Dawbarn, having accepted the invitation, stated his views on various local topics, more particularly the sanitary question.' The 12 December 1866 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported on the 'numerously-attended' *Meeting of Mr. Dawbarn's Friends*. His supporters included Councillor S.G. Rathbone, son of William Rathbone 'the natural leader of Liverpool Liberalism,'<sup>126</sup> who was an MP for twenty-seven years, representing Liverpool from 1868 to 1880. Before asking Mr. Dawbarn to address the meeting the chairman decried the use of bribery to win votes, saying that Dawbarn's supporters 'would feel in their hearts that it was better to lose without bigotry and bribery than to win with their aid. (Applause).' When Dawbarn spoke he articulated the general principles by which he would operate if elected: 'to remember that the public money was for the public use. . . . to practise economy, and to be efficient in his trust.' Yet he would not buy his seat denouncing the "beer-barrel influence" and 'expressed his determination to contest the ward on pure principles. . . . when he was solicited to become a candidate he told the gentlemen who waited on him that he would not in any way be a party to giving a bribe.' Several other supporters denounced the use of bribery and a motion was approved 'pledging the meeting to use every legitimate means to secure the return of Mr. Dawbarn

to the town council.’ William Dawbarn handily won the election by taking 154 of 228 votes. *The Liverpool Mercury* said the margin could have been higher, but once it was clear Dawbarn would win, his supporters reduced their efforts to get out the vote.

However, this election was not a true test of Dawbarn’s electioneering skills as his opponent, William Tarbuck, had made his best effort to remove himself from the ballot.

The new Councillor attended his first Town Council meeting on 3 January 1867. According to the *Liverpool Mercury*’s account of the meeting Dawbarn did not speak. Although he attended meetings regularly, he seems to have been a rather quiet member of the council. The *Liverpool Mercury* provided accounts of over twenty-five meetings during the two years he was a councillor. Other than when a vote was called, Dawbarn’s name only appears five times as a speaker. As well, he spoke mostly on very minor issues. This gives some justification to a comment in the 22 June 1867 issue of the *Porcupine* newspaper which referred to Dawbarn as ‘a gentleman who, beyond springing from a corner, Jack-in-the-Box fashion, blurting out some commonplace question, and then scratching his head, has taken no part in municipal affairs.’

It was in connection with sanitation that the *Porcupine* had commented upon Dawbarn’s contribution to municipal affairs, but in a very negative way. Despite the *Porcupine*’s “head scratching” comment, Dawbarn had educated himself on sanitary matters through the study of the statistics published by the Health Officer and visits to working class neighbourhoods. He was passionate about the sanitary state of Liverpool, which had been deteriorating in the 1860s.

Although not a member of the Health Committee, as a member of the town council he had plenty of opportunity to raise his concerns. Dawbarn attended the April and May 1867 council meetings at which he twice spoke briefly. On 11 April the *Liverpool Mercury* reported the proceedings of the previous day's council meeting in which Dawbarn spoke in support of remarks made by Alderman Bennett. Bennett appears to have been, at the time, the primary voice in the council with respect to the ongoing controversy over the conversion of dry middens to water closets. The section covering the Health Committee was headed; 'ANOTHER PROTEST AGAINST WATER CLOSETS BY MR. ALDERMAN BENNETT'. The Alderman 'condemned not only the water closets, but also the system of ventilating the sewers.' He then reported that he and Mr. Dawbarn had paid a visit to a number of courts and the 'general impression produced on their minds was that the dry middens were kept in better order, and were more cleanly and less offensive, than the modern water-closets.' The Alderman then moved that a recommendation by the Health Committee with regard to the continued adoption of water-closets should not be adopted. The motion was seconded by Councillor Dawbarn who 'further complained that poor people were turned out of their houses in order to provide space for water closets.' Alderman Bennett's motion was defeated 38 to 4, 'the four dissentients being Messrs. Picton, Bennett, Cooper, and Dawbarn.' Then, at the 1 May council meeting, 'Mr. Alderman Bennett entered another protest against the policy of the Health Committee in the matter of water-closets.' Dawbarn 'drew attention to the returns of the death-rate for the different wards being grouped together in Dr. Trench's

report, and suggested that the statistics for each ward should be kept separate' thereby providing clarity on where conditions were the worst.

The controversy over water-closets had been going on for some time and would continue into the following year. Those objecting to the policy of conversion to water-closets were in a clear minority. Perhaps it was because of frustration that Dawbarn decided on a new tactic, namely to write a series of four letters to the mayor in April 1867. The subject of these letters was the deteriorating sanitary condition of Liverpool and Health Committee policies which, in Dawbarn's opinion, were contributing to that deterioration.

In his first letter to the Mayor he backed up his claims by quoting from the Medical Officer's annual report, citing the increase in the death rate beginning in 1860 through to 1866. He pointed out that prior to the 1846 Sanitary Act the death rate had been in the order of 32.5 per thousand for ten years. As a consequence of the improvements made subsequent to the 1846 Act, the rate had been reduced to 25 per thousand, but since 1860 the rate had again been on the rise and stood at 41.7 per thousand by 1866. He directly attributed this increase to the introduction of water-closets:

Everybody knows that the midden system, in use for many years among the poor, has been vigorously attacked, in order that it might be replaced, at an enormous cost, with the water-closet system. With what results? The unsuccess of this water-closet system is sufficiently clear for every unprejudiced man to see, and I hold the above-named facts show that the present policy is a policy which ought to be reconsidered and altered at once.

Dawbarn asserted that with the introduction of water-closets the regular emptying of the remaining middens had been neglected and had led to the increased mortality rate:

we have been gradually going from bad to worse, by trying to bring into operation the water-closet system, on so large a scale, and neglecting the midden, among a class of people whose poverty and untrained dirty habits, render such a progressive system of refinement unsuitable.<sup>127</sup>

Exhibiting a common attitude of the time, Dawbarn laid at least some of the blame for disease and resultant high death rates on the habits of the lower classes; he wrote that Sawney Pope-street, 'that death-stricken street of drink and dirt', had a death rate of 45 per 1,000 while Rodney-street, a respectable part of town, had a death rate of only 11 per 1,000. Yet, he went on to argue that the well-informed had a responsibility 'to show the ignorant on what law health depends . . . [and] to adopt a good scheme of education, that will train the habits of the poor to decency, industry, and forethought.'

While Dawbarn was very critical of the water-closet system, he took a comprehensive view of the sanitary question. In his second letter to the Mayor he contended that 'the healthy condition of a town depends on three parties well performing their duties. When any one of the three neglects them, a sensible increase in the death rate will at once take place'<sup>128</sup> The three parties were: the individuals occupying the houses, the Guardians of the Poor, and the Municipal Authorities. The authorities could not be held responsible for diseases, such as syphilis and delirium tremens, which were a consequence of the 'vicious and intemperate habits' of individuals. However, the Guardians of the Poor had a responsibility to intervene in dwellings where the occurrence of disease was not within the control of the inhabitants. And finally, the Municipal Authorities were responsible for the environment exterior to the dwellings: water supply, sewerage, refuse collection, and clean air. With regard to air quality, he made specific proposals to improve the circulation of air in the poorest working class neighbourhoods

near the docks, where walls had been erected between the river and the residential dwellings.

Dawbarn's letter writing might have contributed to his appointment to the Health Committee the following year. Inspection of the proceedings of the Health Committee, as reported in the *Liverpool Mercury* in 1868, shows that Dawbarn now, as a member of the Health Committee, took a more co-operative approach to dealing with Liverpool's sanitary problems. At the 27 March 1868 meeting of the Health Committee, Dawbarn gave an extensive report on a visit that he, the Health Committee Chairman, and the Medical Officer of Health had made to about twenty working class dwellings. In his report Dawbarn exhibited his propensity for organizing and classifying information:

The visits, he said, might be thus classified: - First, old property wanting improvement and removal of middens; second old property with the improvement effected; third, comparatively new property, badly constructed; and fourthly, new property satisfactorily constructed.

He then went on to describe the inadequacies of individual dwellings and the particular problem of damp caused by broken water pipes. The report was well received by his fellow committee members and there appeared to be no wrangling over the facts as reported.

It was with respect to the water-closet controversy and Dawbarn's four letters to the mayor that the *Porcupine* published, between June 1867 and November 1871, four articles about William Dawbarn. There is a peculiarity surrounding Dawbarn's letters which the *Porcupine* seized upon and satirized. According to the *Porcupine*, the writer of the first three letters, identified himself as XYZ. Shimmin had been a strong advocate for

the improvement of Liverpool's sanitary condition and was very critical of the midden system. He thus took exception to the claim that the move to water-closets had increased the mortality rate and in an article titled *The Ghoul!* in the 25 May 1867 issue of the *Porcupine* he satirized XYZ's advocacy of the dry midden system;

Every reader of Eastern stories is familiar with that impish monster of unnatural appetites – the Ghoul. . . . Ghouls of a minor rank, the Ghouls of the eye and of the smell – the wretches who have no pleasure in beauty and no enjoyment of fragrance, but delight in deformity and luxuriate in fetidness . . . a Ghoul has lately assumed as his signature the last three letters of the alphabet, and has written epistles to the Mayor in defence of the cherished object of his ardent passion – the stink of privies and middens!

Then, in a second article in the 22 June 1867 issue of the *Porcupine*, Shimmin wrote that the fourth letter (4 June) to the Mayor was signed William Dawbarn. Thus Dawbarn finally identified himself as XYZ. Shimmin satirized this claim and wrote that a cruel joke had been played on Dawbarn: 'a very simple and transparent attempt to malign a humble member of the Town Council.' After having pointed out what he considered to be a number of illogical and overbearing statements, Shimmin wrote that while

Mr. Dawbarn could not, or at least should not, have written the nonsense in the letters to the Mayor, we are compelled to admit that the fourth epistle which bears his signature is an excellent imitation of X.Y.Z.'s style; quite as rambling, inconsequent, vulgar, and illogical.

Shimmin then went on to argue that if the town council had moved ahead steadily with water-closet conversions, as it had proclaimed its intent in 1849, the rising death rates of the 1860s would have been avoided. From this perspective it had been a case of too slowly converting to the water-borne system rather than too quickly.



The controversy surrounding conversion to water-closets was only resolved with the availability of a reliable supply of a sufficiently large quantity of water to feed the water-closet system. An insufficient supply of fresh water led to the risk that the water-closets were less sanitary than a well maintained midden system. This was recognized by at least one of Dawbarn's fellow councillors, James Samuelson, co-editor of *The Quarterly Journal of Science*. In *Volume IV* of the 1867 edition an article on public health detailed the experience in Liverpool and referred to Dawbarn's letters on the subject. The article pointed out that Liverpool had at that time an inadequate supply of water and thus,

although the author [Dawbarn] . . . is quite right in believing that it is unsafe to provide water-closets without ensuring a sufficient supply of water, yet we think the pressure should be brought to bear, not upon those who are doing their part of the work of conversion, but upon those others who neglect to provide the necessary and proper auxiliary, the supply of water.<sup>129</sup>

After serving two years of a three-year term, Dawbarn stood for re-election in St. Anne's Ward in 1868. On this occasion his opponent, James Denton, was fully engaged in the process and as a result Dawbarn, who was incapacitated by illness, was not returned. The *Liverpool Mercury* in its 27 October 1868 issue reported that Dawbarn's supporters foresaw that Denton's supporters would use underhanded means to get their candidate elected: 'provided that a fair fight could be assured in the ward we should have no doubt as to the result of the contest; but here . . . there is a residue of electors to be "bribed, beered, and bamboozled" in favour of the side which is willing to spend the most money.' If the *Mercury*, a Liberal paper, was accurate in its 31 October 1868 report on a meeting of Denton's supporters, Dawbarn's supporters had some reason to be suspicious.

At that meeting ‘a resolution was passed approving of Mr. Denton as a suitable person to represent the ward in the town council, and pledging itself *to use every means to secure his return.*’

Despite Dawbarn’s absence due to illness and the accusations of bribery the contest was close; the vote was 229 for Denton versus 217 for Dawbarn. The *Mercury* reported that following the defeat Dawbarn’s supporters continued to complain about the Conservative’s tactics: Mr. T.D. O’Keefe said that ‘five men had come into the committee room and said they would give their votes for £5, and another said he would vote for Mr. Dawbarn if the committee paid his rates.’ The Liberals stood staunchly by their commitment to having fought the election on principles: ‘to be defeated on noble and righteous principles was better than to gain a victory by bribery, drunkenness, and intimidation.’ Yet, Dawbarn came very close to winning, despite having been gravely ill at the time. After the polls closed and the result announced the 3 November 1868 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that Dr. Watts spoke to Dawbarn’s supporters: ‘he could assure them that Mr. Dawbarn was at the moment seriously indisposed and under medical treatment.’ Dawbarn must have been truly ill, possibly fearing for his life; his last will and testament is dated 11 November 1868.

Dawbarn was to make one more attempt at the polls. Just two months after his defeat in St. Anne’s Ward, the death of Councillor Bairstow in Lime-Street Ward created a vacancy for which Dawbarn’s name was put forth. His opponent was Henry Hornby ‘landlord of the spirit vaults at the “Grand Junction”, Lime-Street’.<sup>130</sup> The *Liverpool Mercury* again foresaw bribery on the horizon: ‘there is reason to fear that the

representation of the ward will fall into the hands of the man who has the most beer and spirits at his disposal. . . . the beer barrel is all-potent in Liverpool.’<sup>131</sup> The first item of business for Dawbarn when speaking to his supporters was to establish his credentials as a Liberal: ‘to put himself right with the public with reference to an impression which had got abroad to the effect that he was not a Whig, but a Tory.’<sup>132</sup> There had been a report that Dawbarn did not vote in the Liberal interest at the last election. Dawbarn pointed out that he had ‘voted for the two Liberal candidates in Cambridgeshire, and returned immediately to Liverpool to vote in the afternoon for Messrs. Gladstone and Grenfell . . . to exercise the double vote which he possessed.’<sup>133</sup> He then went on to give an account of his efforts in the previous two years on the Council and expressed his views on a number of issues including the public library, the need for a public art gallery, and the management of the corporation schools. He emphasized that he was an economist who ‘wished every penny to do its duty in buying a penny’s worth.’ A number of supporters then spoke on his behalf emphasizing his past contribution to council affairs, his hard work to the point of it affecting his health, and his commitment to ensuring ‘that every pound was spent in the way it should be.’ Dawbarn did not refer to his opponent but his supporters were more than willing to do so, linking Hornby’s business to the ill health of the populace:

It was therefore . . . a matter of serious consideration whether a gentleman whose places of business were in the very centres of the worst classes of the population – the worst neighbourhoods, where vice and demoralization of every kind existed to a very large extent – whether a gentleman whose business contributed so much as Mr. Hornby’s contributed to that vice and demoralization was a fit and proper person to be placed upon the health committee. His interest

consisted in selling as great a quantity as he could of spirits, and was therefore . . . antagonistic to the social and moral interest of the community.

When it came to polling day the *Liverpool Mercury*, a Liberal newspaper, reported that Mr. Hornby's committee met at two local hotels where 'there was evidently no scarcity of drink, for drunken men were seen lounging about in all directions, or hiccupping out "Hornby for ever."' Hornby defeated Dawbarn with a majority of 72, winning 346 to Dawbarn's 274 votes. Following the announcement of the result, Hornby's supporters addressed a crowd of 300 while Dawbarn's supporters disbursed. Hornby's supporters took issue with the *Liverpool Mercury* heaping 'so much vulgar and disgraceful abuse' upon licensed victualers and in turn were critical of 'men who strut about on the Exchange flags with all the appearance of gentlemen having swindled Liverpool in such a manner that they have made every poor man poorer.'

William Dawbarn's experience with electioneering was common for the time, especially in the period before the enactment of the Ballot Act in 1872 which abolished public nominations, increased the number of polling stations, and introduced the secret ballot. At the same time the use of public houses as committee rooms during election campaigns was banned. The choice of a public house as the base for political operations during an election, and this was done by both parties, eased the way for bribery, either through drink or cash. However,

as the size of the electorate increased, bribery of individuals became economically unfeasible and was replaced by an increased offering of free liquor on a community-wide basis. . . . It was common for candidates to make commitments to public houses to pay for whatever drinks were dispensed during the polling period.<sup>134</sup>

Dawbarn's political career in Liverpool was short, yet he made a positive impression upon his fellow citizens in St. Anne's Ward. The 4 February 1873 edition of the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that Dawbarn 'was last evening the worthy recipient of a little memento of the esteem and gratitude of his former constituents' which was presented to him at a dinner attended by 'nearly forty gentlemen, chiefly members of the Liberal Committee of the ward.' Dawbarn's dedication to real economy on behalf of the rate payers and 'the integrity of his political and business career' were acknowledged. In his reply Dawbarn picked up on the reference to economy, and demonstrated his Dissenter and utilitarian orientation by alluding to two of the persistent political issues at the level of local politics of the time: poor-law reform and ever increasing rates.

He trenchantly criticized the fiscal policy of the town council with regard to the corporate churches, the public works, and paving and lighting. He said it was not the business of a corporation to prepare souls for heaven at the expense of the ratepayers; that the expenditure on the parks might be kept down by proper and efficient supervision; and the chief object which should be kept in view in the corporate expenditure was the maximum of good.

Like many of his contemporaries, William Dawbarn parlayed his experience and success as a business man, an active member of the Baptist Church, and his leadership of associations such as the Y.M.C.A., Early Closing Association, and the Trade Protection Society into a position on the Liverpool Town Council and Health Committee. What was Dawbarn's motive in seeking public office? Perhaps it was no more than what his supporters suggested were the goals of his opponent, Mr. Hornby, in Lime-Street Ward:

In common with many other persons, he seems to think that a seat in the council chamber confers a great dignity and secures a position in the town which cannot be acquire by mere wealth, and he may even dream of attaining the aldermanic rank or occupying the civic chair.<sup>135</sup>

And yet, for Dawbarn, one of the duties he specified in his five-level hierarchy of duties was that which one owed to the local community in which one lived.

## Family

*We attempt . . . to show how middle-class men who sought to be “someone”, to count as individuals because of their wealth, their power to command or their capacity to influence people, were, in fact, embedded in networks of familial and female support which underpinned their rise to public prominence.*<sup>136</sup>

*Davidoff and Hall*

*Sociologically the difference between working and middle class was that between servant-keepers and potential servants.*<sup>137</sup>

*E.J. Hobsbawm*

A nineteenth-century middle-class man’s role was to make sufficient money to maintain a family in a comfortable home and represent the family in the public sphere. A middle-class woman’s role was to manage, under the overall guidance of her husband, the family home. A well-run family home was essential for a man to advance his business and public interests; a man unable to oversee a successful family could not be trusted in business or public affairs.

Before the nineteenth century, when most enterprises were on a small scale and operated either from the family home or from premises adjacent to the family home, women more frequently participated in the family business. However, as enterprises grew in size, utilizing mechanical means of production, and employing a larger workforce, women progressively became excluded from business operations. Davidoff and Hall argue ‘for the centrality of the sexual division of labour within families for the development of the capitalist enterprise.’<sup>138</sup> In a world dominated by ‘religious,

commercial and scientific ideologies' a woman's role was largely confined to the home, with external activities limited to church or chapel and charitable activities. The rational world of commerce and science was deemed to be beyond female sensitivities and capacity, although in exceptional circumstances, such as the early death of a husband, a woman might be pressed into operating the family business to support herself and her family. Indeed as 'the nineteenth century progressed, it was increasingly assumed that a woman engaged in business was a woman without either income of her own or a man to support her.'<sup>139</sup> This was the exception rather than the rule. That said 'women partook equally of the religious framework of order and duty. They were also expected to act rationally in housekeeping and money matters, especially those related to consumption.'<sup>140</sup> We will see that William Dawbarn advocated applying the liberal and scientific principles, which he utilized in business and civic affairs, to household management.

William Dawbarn saw that if a man was to avoid chaos in the home he had to first practice self-restraint; 'an evening party and a showy girl may do the mischief' and result in 'a smoky kitchen and a scolding wife, a carpetless parlour and dirty children, filthy beds and broken crockery, grates never cleaned.'<sup>141</sup> When taking a wife Dawbarn advised men to follow Cobbett's choice in avoiding 'prim, delicate misses, who look upon usefulness as a sign of low birth' in favour of ones who showed 'the ruddy fingers of labour.' In *The Eccentric Club* Dawbarn warned of the dangers of making a poor choice in a wife by referencing the tracts published by the "Unhappy Husband's Club":

No.1 tract . . . the consequences of a neglect of household requirements. No. 2 was a tract on loss of life through the loss of a button. No. 3, the loss of a leg through a hole in a stocking. No. 4, a case of cancer supposed to be produced by irritation. No.5, a case of consumption brought on by a wife's deception. No. 6, sad effects of a millinery bill on a man's mercantile position. No. 7, a lent sovereign which cost a hundred to recover by law.<sup>142</sup>

William Dawbarn recognized the important role a wife played in the second of his duties, namely 'that which we owe to our families.'<sup>143</sup> Yet, even here, although a woman's role was important in family life, a man had ultimate responsibility: 'it is a most weighty obligation for every head of a family, to see that the best conditions of health and culture are satisfactorily provided for each individual making up that family.'<sup>144</sup> Unfortunately, said Dawbarn, 'family culture is by no means up to the mark of our present knowledge.'<sup>145</sup> Although there had been advances in practical and scientific knowledge, that knowledge was not very widespread and he knew of no families, including his own apparently, 'who are living up to the comforts they might have.'<sup>146</sup> In addition to learning religious teachings, he saw the need for families to attain 'economical, historical, scientific, and art knowledge.'<sup>147</sup> He regretted the lack of knowledge of household management and that 'there are no very high aspirations . . . among ladies, to be thought good managers.'<sup>148</sup> Even among high-income families there was a need to disburse that income intelligently. Dawbarn's attitude to the management of the home reflects that of Samuel Smiles who wrote, 'the management of a family, and of a household, is as much a matter of business as the management of a shop or of a counting-house.'<sup>149</sup> Smiles advocated that 'business habits are as necessary to be cultivated by women who succeed in the affairs of the home . . . as by men in the affairs of trade.'<sup>150</sup> These business habits were 'method, accuracy, organization, industry,



economy, discipline, tact, knowledge, and capacity for adapting means to ends,'<sup>151</sup> all of which we have seen Dawbarn reflected upon when he wrote about business. Yet, despite the importance of business habits being inculcated in women so they could carry out their household duties, women had were but 'efficient helpers in the world's daily life and work.'<sup>152</sup>

Dawbarn also saw the benefits of a better educated womanhood in the one area outside the home they could operate: 'at present, the visits made to the poor, are but very small doses of usefulness, and only because the very elements of economical, scientific, and medical knowledge are not at command.'<sup>153</sup> Smiles observed that 'the physical health of the rising generation is entrusted to woman by providence.'<sup>154</sup> Women could help women, not only in the improvement of the physical health of the nation, but also in the efficient running of the nation. In this regard, Smiles advocated that female reformers, rather than advocating the vote for women, would better serve mankind by encouraging the 'better economizing and preparation of human food, the waste of which at present, for want of the most ordinary culinary knowledge, is little short of scandalous.'<sup>155</sup> If the female reformers made an effort in this direction 'they would earn the gratitude of all house-holds, and be esteemed as among the greatest of practical philanthropists.'<sup>156</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Dawbarn saw a role for a woman in the public sphere outside charitable work, he did support better education for women. His admiration for Sydney Smith included agreement with Smith's position on education for women. Dawbarn said that it was Smith's opinion that any difference between men and women in capacity for learning was 'wholly to be accounted for by the different

circumstances in which they have been placed.’<sup>157</sup> When boys and girls played together in the dirt they were precisely alike, said Smith, but when one began separating them and giving them different training they could not help but diverge in capability. As women were excluded from the public sphere their training was directed to the ‘arts, drawing, piano playing, knowledge of French . . . [which] were deliberately paraded as being the opposite of business duties.’<sup>158</sup> Smith argued for a broader education for women: ‘a great deal is said in favor of the social nature of the fine arts; music gives pleasure to others; drawing is an art . . . . That is true; but there is nothing after all so social as the cultivated mind of a lady.’<sup>159</sup>

Evidence regarding the lives of Dawbarn family women is scarce, which confirms their limited role in the public sphere. Outside birth, marriage, and death records, census records, wills, and the occasional newspaper reference to charitable activities they left few traces. There were two exceptions. We had noted earlier that Elizabeth, William’s grandmother, had published a number of books with religious themes. A century later, William’s daughter, Harriett, published a novel; *A Double Conquest* was set in the mid-nineteenth century, centred on a brother and sister, raised by grandparents who were members of a ‘narrow’ Dissenter sect, and was the story of reconciliation between the Established Church and Dissenters.

Yet, the Dawbarn women played a significant role in the advancement of the family fortunes, although their actions were clearly limited to the private sphere. William Dawbarn saw the importance of a competent and supportive wife for a man to be successful.

William's wife Elizabeth must have been a strong and capable woman. Bearing twelve children, eleven of whom survived into adulthood, she lived to the age of sixty-eight. Her husband's commitment to business, his participation in all manner of public affairs, and his literary interest can only have meant that Elizabeth was the primary caregiver, or at least oversaw the care of the children, and was an effective manager of a large household. The size of the household can be judged from the description of the sale of the contents by the previous owner. The 27 September 1867 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* advertises the 'sale of the very Costly and Magnificent Contents of "Elmswood", Aigburth'. The announcement describes a vast amount of furniture (the dining room table sat eighteen), 'splendid bronzes, marble groups and statuettes, elegant buhl cabinets, mantel clocks of remarkable beauty and costliness, Sevres and Dresden china vases, oriental jars, choice engravings, silver plate of much elegance.'

William Dawbarn frequently entertained in this large house. Following Dawbarn's death the *Daily Courier's* 27 May 1881 obituary reported that 'Mr. Dawbarn was comparatively little known to the general public, but in a large circle of friends he was held in high esteem, and his death will be a sincere grief.' Some of these friends were from the artistic community: 'he was a cordial friend of literary men, his house being a frequent and hospitable rendezvous for their meeting.' His most intimate friend, Thomas Craddock, was one of these literary men. Craddock, in a letter written from London to William Dawbarn Junior, alludes to the welcoming environment at Elmswood: 'though I am very comfortable and happy here [London], yet I assure you I think on to

regret the happy days and nights at Elmswood.’ Dawbarn’s hospitality is memorialized in this sonnet, written by Craddock following the death of his friend.

*Elmswood*  
*May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1881*

*Farewell, dear friend of many years, farewell!*  
*All thou hast been and done in memory now*  
*As mummies lie; and often will she tell,*  
*When round the table friends more friendly grow,*  
*Of thy warm grasp; - that acted like a spell*  
*On the receiver, clearing from his brow*  
*Constraint and timorous mistrusts, that quell*  
*Our easy intercourse and pleasant glow.*  
*But none that ever ate thy bread and salt,*  
*Or shook the dust at thy expanded door,*  
*Can cease to recollect thee, and exalt*  
*The unbounded fervour, giving more and more*  
*Ease to the sinner till he seemed to be*  
*Friend, though a stranger; and though strange,*  
*yet free.<sup>160</sup>*

*Thomas Craddock*

The sonnet appears as the first poem in *Man and Nature*, a book of poetry published by Craddock in 1883. The book is ‘Mournfully Inscribed to the Memory of William Dawbarn, Esq. . . . by his Friend Thomas Craddock.’ A review of Craddock’s book in *The Academy*, a weekly review of literature, science, and art, observed: ‘the dedicatory sonnets to the poet’s friend, the late William Dawbarn, are delicately touched with the sentiment peculiar to age.’<sup>161</sup> Dawbarn recognized the importance of his friendship with Craddock in his will; Craddock was the only non-family member who received a bequest

which was in the amount of twenty-five pounds per annum. Also, Craddock was seated in the first carriage following family members in Dawbarn's funeral cortege.

Thomas Craddock (1811–1893), school teacher and author, was born to Samuel, the keeper of the local gaol, and Sarah in Wisbech eight years before William Dawbarn. Unlike Dawbarn, he was a formally educated man of letters, having matriculated at Cambridge in 1855. Craddock had an extensive private library of about 2,800 volumes which, along with a 'choice collection of COINS and MEDALS, gold, silver, and copper, some curious and rare',<sup>162</sup> was auctioned following his death in 1893. Mackenzie Bell (1856-1930), English writer and literary critic, referred to Craddock's library in a letter to the editor of the *Publishers' Circular and Book Sellers' Record*:

Much of my life in boyhood was spent in Liverpool; for some time Thomas Craddock was my tutor; and I was also well acquainted with his Maecenas, Mr. William Dawbarn. I recollect very vividly being taken up by Craddock to his little study near the top of the house in which he lodged, about 1877, where the elderly and stooping recluse talked lovingly of his favourite volumes. It has always seemed to me Craddock has never had his due as one of the earliest, if not the earliest of the biographers of our immortal Charles Lamb; . . . I know that numerous copies were purchased in Liverpool, some by my uncle, the late Mr. Isaac Oliver Jones, [Dawbarn's solicitor] a well-known book-lover.<sup>163</sup>

Dawbarn and Craddock appear to have had a symbiotic relationship: Dawbarn as Craddock's patron, or Maecenas as described by Bell; Craddock as Dawbarn's literary mentor.

Craddock authored a number of books, but does not appear to have gained much profit from his efforts, and so must have been grateful for Dawbarn's support. Bell referred to the biography of Charles Lamb, published in 1867 and printed on Dawbarn's

printing press. In an 8 August 1869 letter to his friend's grandson, William Dawbarn Junior, Craddock wrote that,

anybody will do what is some use when done but nobody likes to work at unprofitable things. In writing such things as *Charles Lamb* I find I am spinning round the wheel of an upturned wheel barrow. There is no profit in it. Hence I have been for some time merely study [sic] and noting subjects that may chance be profitable or useful afterwards. When I get an engagement that will employ my preparations I may write but it is to me hard impossible to write without motive or prospects of profit or use.

Before writing *Charles Lamb* (1867), Craddock published *The Influence of Christianity on Civilization* (1856), *Peterborough Cathedral: a General, Architectural, and Monastic History* (1864) and co-authored, with Neil Walker, *The History of Wisbech and the Fens* (1834), *Literary Papers* (1873), *Rousseau as Described by Himself and Others*, and *Man and Nature: Poems Written Long Ago* (1883).

The first direct evidence that Craddock was a central figure in Dawbarn's life is provided by a series of eight letters, now in the possession of Simon Dawbarn, written by Craddock to William Dawbarn and his son William Junior between 1863 and 1870. The first public sign of their friendship came in 1867 with the publication of *Charles Lamb*. In the Preface Craddock wrote:

However, the following work would never probably have been published but for one circumstance. 'Mine own familiar friend,' Wm. Dawbarn, Esq., of Elmswood, near Liverpool, found it necessary in the development of an extensive mercantile business at Liverpool, to establish a private Printing Office on his premises. Mr. Dawbarn used his press, during leisure intervals, for printing lectures on *Government, Conduct, and Example*; which he delivered several years ago. When this work was finished, he offered the Press to me, and I accepted the boon. I have, therefore to thank Mr. Dawbarn for hazarding a publication, which I should never have been sanguine enough to hazard myself.<sup>164</sup>

When Craddock published *Literary Papers* in 1873 it contained an inscription to William Dawbarn, Esq. of Elmswood, Liverpool:

About a third of the present volume was published some years ago, in connection with articles of your own, in a periodical, which you established with the object of improving and educating an agricultural district in the Eastern Counties. . . . If there were no other circumstances than our early connection in the same work, it would be sufficient to excuse this dedication; but an intimate friendship, which has never been broken since it commenced, more than twenty years ago, also claims more than ordinary regard.<sup>165</sup>

Craddock was referring to *The Olive Branch, a Family Journal* first published in 1849. In 1862 Dawbarn gathered a selection of material from *The Olive Branch* and published *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* In the “Introduction” he acknowledged the contribution of his friend “Thomas Smith” who provided assistance to him by penning a number of stories and poems for his journal:

By the way, I ought to say that my friend requests me to use this *nom de guerre* rather than his own, as he tells me that he places no such value on his miscellaneous writings as I do, - certainly not so much as to obtrude his name upon the public.<sup>166</sup>

Craddock, described by MacKenzie Bell as a recluse in his old age, had such tendencies from an early age. The only instance of Dawbarn directly acknowledging his friend in any of his publications is when he dedicated *The Eccentric Club* to Craddock with a verse from William Cowper:

To T.C.

“Hast thou a friend? – thou hast indeed  
A rich and large supply –  
Treasure to serve your every need  
Well managed till you die.”

Thomas Craddock might have met other creative men in William Dawbarn's home. William Dawbarn's intellectual interest went beyond literature. An obituary in the 28 May 1881 issue of the *Liverpool Lantern* praised Dawbarn as

a man of considerable intellectual achievements, of exceeding amiability, and of perfect integrity. . . . Mr. Dawbarn was passionately attached to the fine arts; he was a facile writer, and one of the chief supports of the Purcell Musical Society. He was a great lover of painting, and no one ever thought more of William Daniels as an artist than did William Dawbarn. His pictures by that master are many, and some of the artist's best.

The 28 June 1881 issue of the *Liverpool Mercury* announced the sale by auction of William Dawbarn's paintings (from over twenty-eight artists), including six by William Daniels. The most important was *Macbeth*, one of Daniels's principal works.<sup>167</sup> Also offered at auction was *Card Players*, which is today on display in The Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool with the description:

Both in its subject matter and in the handling of light, this painting recalls 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painting. Daniels's technique, however, is rapid and flashy, in contrast to the patience and detail of his Dutch models. Daniels was a Liverpool 'character', well known in the taverns and a familiar companion of sportsmen and gamblers.

This 'character' Daniels was a beneficiary of William Dawbarn's benevolence. In *The Eccentric Club*, Dawbarn used Daniels as an example of the need to never despise 'what may by the world be called uncommon or unclean.'<sup>168</sup> Daniels was an alcoholic who had been introduced to drink at an early age. From the age of eight or nine he worked from the earliest hours of the morning in a field loading freshly made bricks into a cart for his father, who was a brick maker. To help the child deal with the cold and damp his father provided him with whiskey and, it was to this experience, that Dawbarn



attributed Daniels's life of drunkenness and early death. Dawbarn wrote that, knowing this, one would be more charitable in judging a man 'whose works will live when you and I are dead.'<sup>169</sup>

Daniels's obituary in the *Liverpool Lantern* reported that Dawbarn had been introduced to Daniels by W.H. Jude the Liverpool organist. Jude had attended the Wisbech Grammar School in the late 1850s when Dawbarn was still living in Wisbech. Dawbarn became one of Daniels's greatest supporters after having assisted the latter in settling a financial debt with a former patron and 'Daniels painted several noble pictures for Mr. Dawbarn after that – . . . and honourably repaid the large sum advanced.' Daniels died just seven months before Dawbarn. The latter was listed as one of the chief mourners at Daniels's funeral.<sup>170</sup> It is not known when Dawbarn befriended Daniels, but he was there at the end as reported in the *Liverpool Lantern*:

Mr. Dawbarn exercised a wholesome restraining influence on the painter, took him to Wisbeach and on other friendly tours, and was in all ways his true unostentatious friend, which Daniels ever gratefully acknowledged, and the now dead merchant paid kindly visits to the dying painter daily up to the last.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) would have admired the patron William Dawbarn.

Ruskin believed that patronage was not just 'buying what strikes our fancies.' Rather, the goal was

to train the artist and further artistic genius by means of enlightened patronage. "The patron should give money, praise, and above all moral direction to the artist, that in all they paint they shall see and feel the noblest things."<sup>171</sup>

Whether Dawbarn bought paintings that struck his fancy or had a more sophisticated taste is unknown. Nevertheless, his support of William Daniels contributed to Liverpool

having one of the richest public collections of art in England outside London. Dawbarn and his contemporary merchants and industrialists were a new force in nineteenth-century art appreciation, patronage, and collection. *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors, 1770-1880* (1993) is a collection of three essays which ‘illustrate the local relationship between the history of art appreciation and the history of economic gain and social “enlightenment”’.<sup>172</sup> The art collectors discussed in these essays collected for different reasons: art appreciation; a desire to disseminate knowledge; or simply to raise their social status. Raised social status might have been Dawbarn’s objective in collecting paintings; Dawbarn wrote nothing of painting, other than his short description of the artist William Daniels in *The Eccentric Club*. Also, Elmswood Hall, the purchase of which was almost certainly at least partially aimed at increased social status, needed filling.

Dawbarn installed at least forty paintings in Elmswood Hall. At auction following Dawbarn’s death were more than six pictures by Daniels and another twenty-eight artists are listed. Some of these paintings were by artists who benefited from the patronage of one of Dawbarn’s fellow merchants, the tobacconist John Miller (?1795-1878). Although Dawbarn was not as active as Miller in the Liverpool arts community, his patronage of Daniels was similar to Miller’s approach; the latter’s ‘patronage took the form of supporting young, locally-based artists by various means, entertaining them regularly at his home, taking some of them on holiday to Scotland, and above all buying their work extensively.’<sup>173</sup>

The large William Dawbarn family grew up in a stimulating environment if Craddock, Daniels, and Jude were representative of the guests at Elmswood Hall. Census

records show that from 1851 through 1881 the William Dawbarn household had no fewer than eleven members and as many as nineteen. The household included, in addition to William and his wife Elizabeth, up to nine children, William's spinster sister-in-law who lived in his household for at least twenty years, and his widowed mother-in-law for a shorter period; all were supported by as many as seven servants. In 1881 Dawbarn's unmarried daughters, Elizabeth and Harriett, ages thirty-five and thirty-four respectively, remained in the family home. Middle-class daughters typically lived at home until marriage and, if never marrying, indefinitely. Their presence, along with that of their spinster aunt and widowed mother-in-law, demonstrate the lack of opportunities for women outside the private sphere and their consequent dependence on men.

Daughters were raised to be married, often with the result that the new husband was brought into the family business. This was the case for William Dawbarn, who joined his father-in-law's slate business and then built it into a much larger enterprise. William's first daughter, Maria Y., married Thomas Stones who was identified by the 1874 *Post Office Directory of the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk* as the manager of Dawbarn & Co.'s Wisbech location. William's fourth daughter, Alice Y., married William Turner who entered his father-in-law's business. In time, Turner was named one of William's executors and was designated as a preferred manager of William's business upon William's death. Thus, a daughter, through marriage, could be a source of manpower for a father's business and a mechanism for entering business for her husband.

Dawbarn did not live to see the marriage of his youngest daughter, Mildred. In 1882 the *Liverpool Mercury* reported the marriage of Mildred Y. to Reginald Heber Radcliffe, the youngest son of the solicitor and evangelist, Reginald Radcliffe (1825-1899).

Unmarried Dawbarn women, like most Victorian middle-class women, were severely limited in their life choices; it was not uncommon for an unmarried daughter to live in the parental home, care-giving for aging parents, and then, after the parents died, if money was in short supply, living with a brother or brother-in-law, as Mary Yelverton lived with William. Of the unmarried Dawbarn women, at least those whose fathers were wealthy, they did have the option of living independently once the parents had died. William Dawbarn's spinster daughters Elizabeth Y. and Harriett Y. died in 1915 and 1926 respectively with probated estates valued at £5,085 and £6,671. At their deaths, the wealth of each of these women, adjusted for inflation, was greater than that of any of their six brothers. Their mother's wealth at death was greater than that of four of her six sons. As well, William's two spinster sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, died with a wealth greater than that of any of his six sons.

William Dawbarn appears to have turned his views on the education of women into practice by ensuring that his daughters remained in education throughout their teenage years. In the 1861 census his three eldest children, Maria Y. (16), Elizabeth Y. (15), and Harriett Y. (14), were listed as scholars. In 1865 Harriett, age 18, was still a scholar attending Central School; she was awarded an honourable mention in the distribution of 'prizes awarded by her Majesty's art examiners to the successful students

connected with the South District Government School of Art.’<sup>174</sup> Her youngest brother Albertus Yelverton (age 4), also attending Central School, received a Second Grade, Good in Freehand Drawing. Sons, even those who went on to university, typically worked in the family business from the age of fourteen, before becoming partners in the family firm or striking out on their own, either in business or at university. The 1871 census listed Dawbarn’s sons Robert Y. (age 21), Francis Y. (age 18), and Joseph Y. (age 14), as ‘clerk’s with General Merchant’, presumably with Wm. Dawbarn & Co. Francis Y. died a few years later but Robert Y. went on to establish his own firm while Joseph Y. went on to Cambridge and became a lawyer and painter. The two youngest sons C.Y.C and Albertus Y. also attended Cambridge and graduated as a lawyer and a mathematician respectively, suggesting gentrification of the later generation Dawbarns.

We know nothing of William Dawbarn’s relationships with women outside his family. With the exception of the church, women were excluded from all the public institutions in which Dawbarn participated. There is no woman’s name included in any of the accounts of Dawbarn’s public appearances. Dawbarn does not use a woman’s name, other than as a fictional character, in any of his writing. Yet, we have seen that women played a significant role in Dawbarn’s busy life: his marriage to Elizabeth brought him into his father-in-law’s firm; the raising of a large family and the maintenance of a large property such as Elmswood would not have been feasible without the support of his wife Elizabeth; the marriage of two of his daughters brought managers into his business.

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Notes: William Dawbarn’s Social Life-Worlds

<sup>1</sup> Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 1973), 63.

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- <sup>2</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 63.
- <sup>3</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 64.
- <sup>4</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 9.
- <sup>5</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 76.
- <sup>6</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 77.
- <sup>7</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 78.
- <sup>8</sup> Berger, Berger, and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 79.
- <sup>9</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 82.
- <sup>10</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 229.
- <sup>11</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 229.
- <sup>12</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 293, 294.
- <sup>13</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 82, 83.
- <sup>14</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 82, 83.
- <sup>15</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 97.
- <sup>16</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>17</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 100.
- <sup>18</sup> *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, 146.
- <sup>19</sup> *Official Catalogue of the New York Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, 1853*. (New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1853), 102.
- <sup>20</sup> Thomas Craddock, *Charles Lamb*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1867), vii.
- <sup>21</sup> *Official Catalogue of the New York Exhibition*, 116.
- <sup>22</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 May 1881.
- <sup>23</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 221.
- <sup>24</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 222.
- <sup>25</sup> Page 46
- <sup>26</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, second last page of the book.
- <sup>27</sup> William Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., (London: Arthur Hall, and Co., 1872), vi.
- <sup>28</sup> *1851 Cambridgeshire Directory*, 593.
- <sup>29</sup> *1851 Cambridgeshire Directory*, 594.
- <sup>30</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 121.
- <sup>31</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 112.
- <sup>32</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 102.
- <sup>33</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 110.
- <sup>34</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 109.
- <sup>35</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 109.

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- <sup>36</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 110.
- <sup>37</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 110.
- <sup>38</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 114.
- <sup>39</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 116.
- <sup>40</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 115.
- <sup>41</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 102.
- <sup>42</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 117, 118.
- <sup>43</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 255.
- <sup>44</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help*, 318.
- <sup>45</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help*, 325.
- <sup>46</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 112.
- <sup>47</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 83.
- <sup>48</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 91.
- <sup>49</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 125.
- <sup>50</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 92.
- <sup>51</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 96.
- <sup>52</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 129.
- <sup>53</sup> R.C.K. Ensor, *England: 1870-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 137.
- <sup>54</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 76.
- <sup>55</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 80.
- <sup>56</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *The Smith of Smiths*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937), 12.
- <sup>57</sup> Wisbech Baptist Church, "The Uniting of Two Churches", <http://www.wisbechbaptistchurch.org.uk/unitingtwochurches.html>, (accessed 14 November 2010)
- <sup>58</sup> Neil Walker and Thomas Craddock, *The History of Wisbech and The Fens*, (Wisbech: Richard Walker, Bridge-Foot, 1849), 394.
- <sup>59</sup> *Upper Hill Street Chapel Register*, National Archives, RG4/1880, Date 1986, Order No 3647.
- <sup>60</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 73.
- <sup>61</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 146.
- <sup>62</sup> Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 164.
- <sup>63</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 345.
- <sup>64</sup> J.H.Y Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 1994), 301.
- <sup>65</sup> Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, 301.
- <sup>66</sup> Keshub Chender Chen, *Lectures and Tracts*, ed. S.D. Collet.(London: Strahan & Co., 1871), v.
- <sup>67</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 July 1870.
- <sup>68</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 July 1870

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- <sup>69</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 October 1866.
- <sup>70</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 77.
- <sup>71</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 110.
- <sup>72</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 109.
- <sup>73</sup> Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 104
- <sup>74</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 132.
- <sup>75</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 133.
- <sup>76</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 419.
- <sup>77</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 421.
- <sup>78</sup> Gardiner, *History of Wisbech*,
- <sup>79</sup> *Wisbech Advertiser*, 24 April 1857.
- <sup>80</sup> *Wisbech Advertiser*, 11 January 1856.
- <sup>81</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 30 September 1858.
- <sup>82</sup> Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.*, 299.
- <sup>83</sup> Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.*, 279.
- <sup>84</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 380.
- <sup>85</sup> Binfield, *George Williams and the Y.M.C.A.*, 315.
- <sup>86</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 October 1858.
- <sup>87</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 16 February 1876.
- <sup>88</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 December 1862.
- <sup>89</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 228.
- <sup>90</sup> *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Liverpool Geological Society, for the first ten sessions, 1859 – 1869*, 12.
- <sup>91</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution: c. 1780 – c. 1880*, (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 143.
- <sup>92</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 June. 1859.
- <sup>93</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 July 1859.
- <sup>94</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 285.
- <sup>95</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 288.
- <sup>96</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 288, 289.
- <sup>97</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 291.
- <sup>98</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 298.
- <sup>99</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 298.
- <sup>100</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 February 1862.
- <sup>101</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 March 1862.



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- <sup>102</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 24 February 1863.
- <sup>103</sup> *London Daily News*, 9 May 1867.
- <sup>104</sup> *London Daily News*, 19 June 1868.
- <sup>105</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 June 1873.
- <sup>106</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 June 1875.
- <sup>107</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 May 1880.
- <sup>108</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 May 1881.
- <sup>109</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 May 1881.
- <sup>110</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 May 1882.
- <sup>111</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 261.
- <sup>112</sup> Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England*, 72.
- <sup>113</sup> Francois Vigier, *Change and Apathy: Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), 61.
- <sup>114</sup> Vigier, *Change and Apathy*, 82.
- <sup>115</sup> K.B. Smellie, *A History of Local Government*, (London: Unwin University Books, 1968), 34.
- <sup>116</sup> Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, (Leicester: Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 27.
- <sup>117</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 29.
- <sup>118</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
- <sup>119</sup> *Porcupine*, 13 August 1864.
- <sup>120</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 29.
- <sup>121</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 30.
- <sup>122</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 38.
- <sup>123</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 37.
- <sup>124</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 40.
- <sup>125</sup> Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, 42.
- <sup>126</sup> Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England*, 141.
- <sup>127</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 317.
- <sup>128</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., 321.
- <sup>129</sup> *The Quarterly Journal of Science, Volume IV, 1867*, 462.
- <sup>130</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 January 1869.
- <sup>131</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 January 1869.
- <sup>132</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 January 1869.
- <sup>133</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 January 1869.
- <sup>134</sup> Donald Richter, "The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections, 1865-1885, in *Victorian Studies*", Vol. 15, No. 1. (Sep., 1971), pp.19-28, 25.

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- <sup>135</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 January 1869.
- <sup>136</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 13.
- <sup>137</sup> Hobsbawn, *The Age of Capitalism*, 238.
- <sup>138</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 13.
- <sup>139</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 272.
- <sup>140</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 27.
- <sup>141</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 86.
- <sup>142</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 28.
- <sup>143</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>144</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 74.
- <sup>145</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 75.
- <sup>146</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 75.
- <sup>147</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 75.
- <sup>148</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 75.
- <sup>149</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 58.
- <sup>150</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 58.
- <sup>151</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 58.
- <sup>152</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 60.
- <sup>153</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 75.
- <sup>154</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 60.
- <sup>155</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 67.
- <sup>156</sup> Smiles, *Character*, 68.
- <sup>157</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 205.
- <sup>158</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 289.
- <sup>159</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 206.
- <sup>160</sup> Thomas Craddock, *Man And Nature: Poems Written Long Ago*, (Liverpool: printed for private circulation, 1883).
- <sup>161</sup> *The Academy: A Weekly Review of Literature, Science, and Art, January-June, 1885, Volume XXVII*, (London: Alexander and Shephard, 1885), 453.
- <sup>162</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 July 1893.
- <sup>163</sup> *The Publishers' Circular and Bookseller' Record*, Vol. 86, 1907, 153.
- <sup>164</sup> Thomas Craddock, *Charles Lamb*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1867), vi, vii.
- <sup>165</sup> Thomas Craddock, *Literary Papers*. (London: Arthur Hall and Co., 1873).
- <sup>166</sup> William Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., (London: Arthur Hall, and Co., 1872).
- <sup>167</sup> H.C. Marillier, *The Liverpool School of Painters: An Account of the Liverpool Academy, from 1810 to 1867, With Memoirs of the Principal Artists*, (London: John Murray, 1904), 98.

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<sup>168</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 69.

<sup>169</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 70.

<sup>170</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 October 1880.

<sup>171</sup> Pat Starkey, (ed.). *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 55, 56.

<sup>172</sup> Starkey, (ed.). *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Starkey, (ed.). *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880*, 56.

<sup>174</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 October 1865.

## The Eccentric

*“Look at the eccentric wheel in that steam engine: what motion would you get out of it without that wheel’s eccentricity – only rest. So in society, you get precious little driving force out of it but for eccentricities having free and active motion. Let us encourage them; let us utilize them!” (applause). – Extract of the opening speech of its first President, 1781.*

*The Eccentric Club<sup>1</sup>*

Was William Dawbarn simply a product of Victorian middle-class society following the norms and values of the Dissenting, provincial, merchant middle class; or did he, at least to some degree, consciously step out of the strictures imposed by his environment and develop his individuality? There is much evidence that he was a product of his environment. Yet there are also signs of individuality, and even eccentricity, in his approach to life.

Eccentricity should not be confused with flamboyancy, but rather with ‘deviation from an established pattern, or norm.’<sup>2</sup> In Dawbarn’s own words he saw he ‘must adopt some measures different from those in general use. The beaten track must be avoided, and some other road to success be discovered.’<sup>3</sup> This was written in reference to the method of advertising the cotton products he manufactured in Wisbech. Yet he sought some other road to success beyond advertising. For William Dawbarn, success in life, or leading a good life, was more than following ‘the beaten path’ as prescribed by conventional Victorian middle-class society.

The philosopher John Keekes, in his *Moral Tradition and Individuality*, writes that ‘the goodness of lives may be thought to depend either on the personal satisfaction

they provide or on the moral merit they possess.’<sup>4</sup> In his view moral merit is framed within the moral tradition within which the individual is situated; in the case of Dawbarn this would mean the Western tradition as it stood in Victorian England. According to Keeke the moral tradition has both social and personal aspects:

the social aspect is concerned with people’s responses to each other in the countless rather impersonal encounters of daily life. . . personal morality is concerned with people pursuing good lives by trying to realize private aspirations and establish enduring intimate relationships. We come to participate in social morality by being born into a society and by receiving moral education that initiates us into its ways. *The development of personal morality, however, requires the complicated process of trying to find a fit between our characters, opportunities, and ideals and the forms and restrictions of good lives provided by the moral tradition.*<sup>5</sup> [Author’s italics]

Does this not echo Thomas Carlyle’s thought in *Sartor Resartus*?:

To each is given a certain inward Talent, a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability. But the hardest problem were ever this first: To find by study of yourself, and of the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward Capability specially is.<sup>6</sup>

Keeke’s view is that ‘the ideal relation between a moral tradition and individuality is, therefore, one of reciprocal enhancement and limitation. The justification of a moral tradition must include that it improves its participants’ chances of living good lives.’<sup>7</sup>

Victorian England provided such an environment, at least for members of the middle and upper classes who had economic means beyond that needed for day-to-day survival.

Although Evangelicals had encoded a ‘certain level of behaviour for all who wished to stand well with their fellows’,<sup>8</sup> Victorian Englishmen saw themselves as a nation of free individuals. How was it that a society which laid down such rigid standards of public behaviour could, simultaneously, allow for individual self-expression?

As noted recently, ‘John Lucas, Linda Colley, [and more recently Paul Langford] have . . . argued that liberty was one of the predominant cultural claims on which an Enlightenment sense of Englishness was founded in the early years of the eighteenth century.’<sup>9</sup> English society, at least elite society, had a long history of embracing freedom; examples include: the Magna Carta and trial by jury, the rise of parliament and taxation by means of elected representatives, as well as the adoption of the consequences of the 1688 Revolution. Before the eighteenth century, England was often seen as a less developed society when compared to those on the continent. It was viewed as a country with a violent, unstable, and turbulent history, a society of factions and individuals. With the advance of the eighteenth century both industrialization and the frightening prospect of revolution, as had been seen in France and America, seemingly brought about the need for a more coherent national identity.

In his study of English nationalism, Gerald Newman gives the label “Sincerity” to the English nationalism that emerged between about 1750 and 1830.<sup>10</sup> The “National Identity of Sincerity” was based on increasingly egalitarian standards established by ‘attributes supposedly implanted in all the English or British people (innocence, honesty, frankness, originality, moral independence).’<sup>11</sup> These attributes were embraced in contrast to the earlier aristocratic standards of status based on family ancestry and social connections. A polite and imitative social morality deemed characteristic of the aristocracy was replaced by a ‘countercultural morality promoting the integrity and assertive independence of the individual.’<sup>12</sup> Sincerity was adopted by both individuals and the nation. For the individual it was a call for independence, but for the nation

sincerity was ‘a powerful affirmation of what was held to be the philosophical essence of the English nation at large, its identity, the *National Character*.’<sup>13</sup> Thus,

each individual supposedly found his true character in the primal moral essence of the nation, the values ascribed to the group as a whole; and, by the same logic, the nation itself achieved gradual realization not merely as an ideal but as a community of like-minded men and women, a living community of sincere English wills.<sup>14</sup>

Paul Langford sees this alignment of individual character with national character as requiring

a kind of character that could accommodate the needs of politeness and sensibility, without detaching Englishmen from their patriotic moorings of liberty of thought and action. A potentially anarchic tendency had to be subordinated to the demands of a disciplined national character, without sacrificing that “energetic individualism” which, according to the apostle of Self-Help, Samuel Smiles, “has in all times been a marked feature in the English character, and furnishes the true measure of our power as a nation.”<sup>15</sup>

The solution, according to Langford, was to conceive of the eccentric.

Earlier English “character” was associated with the concept of originality; the original behaved the same in private and public and could be a disruptive force. In the age of the original there was an absence of normative standards. The eccentric, on the other hand, provided an ‘engaging diversity without threatening conformity. . . . there was a norm, some “centricity” from which the eccentric had deviated.’<sup>16</sup> An eccentric sought not to do harm; any sort of harmless individuality was tolerated as long as the eccentric appeared to be unaware of his eccentricity. This acceptance of eccentricity, within bounds, provided a kind of safety valve in a society which required that individuals display a high degree of conformity in daily social matters.

We can discern these ideas of liberty and eccentricity in William Dawbarn's writing:

The prosperity and stability of our nation depend on the free action of individuals and of parties. No single action that is not injurious to society ought to be restrained by law. Eccentric people have their work to do in the world as well as the "centric". Every man has a mission; and it should be the business of the state to keep him free, in order to develop [sic] it.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the principle of freedom of the individual was extended to that of associations of individuals: 'the freedom we have as a nation is greatly produced and maintained, not only by the liberty of private and individual social action, but by so large a portion of the people belonging to . . . even a dozen different societies.'<sup>18</sup> Dawbarn saw involvement in a wide range of societies and associations as beneficial to rounding out a man's character as it enabled him to gain exposure to individuals and ideas representative of a broad swath of society: 'thus do extremes meet, and from the conflicting effects of public and private duties effects follow, by which the character of many active minds becomes greatly influenced.'<sup>19</sup>

This capacity of Englishmen to enter into associations, while simultaneously retaining their individuality, had been noted by Dawbarn's contemporaries and is still commented upon today. Paul Langford points out that William Hazlitt saw the benefits of association in a similar way: 'the English join together to get rid of their sharp points and sense of uncomfortable peculiarity.'<sup>20</sup> Alphonse Esquiros (1812-1876) wrote that: 'the Englishman possesses the extreme advantage of remaining himself in the midst of a group of friends or companions, and there is no reason to fear that he will ever sacrifice his liberty for any consideration.'<sup>21</sup> Langford observes that the Victorian gentleman's



club expressed best ‘the crucial characteristic of the English, their curious ability to imprison themselves within a cumbersome framework of rules and constraints while retaining their apparent freedom of action.’<sup>22</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, William Dawbarn was a member of many organizations. Just months before his death he placed himself, disguised as the eccentric Mr. Banward, as an honorary member of the Eccentric Club in his book *The Eccentric Club and its protégé, Morton Melville, with some of the notions of its members*.

*The Eccentric Club* is a curious book. It is a combination of essay, fiction, biography, and autobiography. The term autobiografiction was used by Stephen Reynolds in his 1906 essay *Autobiografiction* to describe the intersection of essay, fiction, and autobiography. Max Saunders in his book *Self Impression* has leant heavily on Reynolds’s essay in his exploration of the development of autobiografiction in English writing from the 1870s to the 1930s, a period in which there was an ‘explosion of literary activity where the borders between autobiography, biography, and fiction intersect.’<sup>23</sup> Saunders has argued that autobiografiction had been common in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth century the form withered, although

there are brilliant exceptions, certainly: Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34); Kierkegaard’s *Diary of a Seducer* (1843). But these are sports, in a period in which the establishing of sincerity and earnestness were paramount, and the documentation of a real life became the prime mode of guaranteeing them. In other words, Victorian culture was in many ways inimical to the playing of fictional games with the forms of autobiography or biography.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the typical biography and autobiography of the nineteenth century consisted largely of a portrayal of the subject at hand at his or her best and provided details of the public

activities of the individual. Victorian era biographers were unabashed hero-worshippers; their heroes represented the loftiest of Victorian middle and upper class values. Victorian era politicians such as William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli were the superstars of their time, and it was not unusual for their followers to worship their heroes just as the superstars of sports and pop music are idolized today. In the introduction to his biography of Gladstone, Jerrold said his aim was ‘to bring out that integrity of character, that strict honesty of purpose which has animated him in all his actions, and which has been acknowledged by all.’<sup>25</sup> The passage ended with the statement ‘crowned with the loving homage of thousands of his countrymen and the loving admiration of all, we must take leave of our great hero.’<sup>26</sup> Froude wrote of his hero Disraeli:

in public or private he had never done a dishonourable action; he had disarmed hatred and never lost a personal friend. The greatest of his antagonists admitted that when he struck hardest he had not struck in malice. A still higher praise belongs to himself alone – that he never struck a small man.<sup>27</sup>

In such works little was said of the subject’s inner life, nor of the less savoury aspects of his or her character.

As the century advanced scepticism developed over this hero worship and contemporaries expressed a desire to know more of the individual including his or her inner life. The notion that biographies should include “warts and all” came to the fore. Biographers and auto-biographers began exploring alternative forms, including what Stephen Reynolds has labelled autobiografiction:

So the genesis of autobiografiction may be imagined thus. A man, usually of an introspective nature, has accumulated a large body of spiritual experiences. He feels that he must out with it; *cacothēs [sic] loquendi* is upon him. What is he to do? Fiction is impracticable. He does not wish, or is not able, to invent such a

complicated apparatus for self-expression. Besides, the story's the thing in fiction. To use that medium would be to scatter and sink precisely the spiritual experience which he wants to record. Formal autobiography would present much the same difficulty - the introduction of a large amount of (for his purpose) extraneous matter - for a man's life and the events of it, chronological sequence and completeness, are the aim in autobiography. Essays, again, would be too disconnected and would scarcely admit of an attitude frankly egotistical enough. How, then, are the pitfalls of spiritual experience in bulk to be avoided? He invents a certain amount of autobiographical detail, or (which comes to much the same) he selects from his life the requisite amount of autobiographical material, adding perhaps a quantity of pure fiction, and on that he builds the spiritual experience, with that he dilutes it, and makes it coherent and readable. The result is autobiografiction, a literary form more direct and intimate probably than any to be found outside poetry.<sup>28</sup>

Reynolds pointed out that autobiografiction was commonly published with some degree of anonymity:

when a writer has revealed to the world more of his inner self than he would exhibit to his friends, it is only natural that he should wish to stay behind the scenes, at least until he finds out how the world will take his revelation - whether with inattention, ridicule, or with sympathy.<sup>29</sup>

Autobiografiction aptly describes *The Eccentric Club*, which was published by Dawbarn under the pseudonym "xyz".

At first glance *The Eccentric Club* appears to be an account of the real London Eccentric Club of which there have been at least three incarnations. The first was in existence in the late eighteenth century, as has been recorded by Bryant Lillywhite in *London Coffee Houses* (1963). An entry for Fulham's Tavern and Coffee House (c. 1780-90's) refers to it:

this house comes to light, when used as a meeting place late in the 18<sup>th</sup> c, by a convivial club called "The Eccentrics" which was an offshoot of "The Brilliants". The Club later removed to Tom Rees' in May's Buildings, St. Martin's Lane, where says Timbs "they were flourishing at all hours, some thirty years since."<sup>30</sup>

This club closed in the mid-nineteenth century and there is some evidence that the minutes of the club found their way into the possession of a Liverpool man.<sup>31</sup> In 1890 the club was revived under the leadership of London theatre people and remained open until 1984. In 2008 a small group of people again revived the Eccentric Club. The twenty-first-century club, in its account of the club's history, has included the epigram from Dawbarn's work which appears at the beginning of this chapter. There is no evidence that Dawbarn was ever a member of the Eccentric Club, but the secretary of the current Eccentric Club speculates that he might have been the mid-nineteenth century Liverpool man who had come into possession of the minutes of the club. Maybe the London Eccentric Club was the model for Dawbarn's Eccentric Club.

There was a YZ Club founded in Liverpool in 1870. The minutes of this club demonstrate a good deal of eccentricity, but again there is no evidence that Dawbarn was a member. However, one of the peculiarities of this club was that its members affixed the letters yz to their names when members. Ex-members were permitted to affix the letters xyz to their names. Dawbarn used xyz as a pseudonym when he published *The Eccentric Club*. However, he had also used xyz before 1870, the date the YZ Club was founded. Dawbarn would have certainly known some of the members of the YZ Club, and might have attended a meeting as a guest. The YZ Club might have been the model for his Eccentric Club. There is an entry in the YZ Club's minutes describing a visit from Ralph Waldo Emerson who visits the Eccentric Club in Dawbarn's book.

Whatever the source for Dawbarn's Eccentric Club, Dawbarn assessed himself as embodying the attributes of eccentricity that his book's club most admired. The club

president, Thomas Smith, modelled on Thomas Craddock, Dawbarn's closest friend in real life, introduces Dawbarn, as Mr. Banward, into the story as an honorary member of the club stating that:

There are few specimens of the genuine eccentric man more worth the study of the society than the actions of this gentleman, for all the eccentricities that he possessed, which proceeding, no doubt, from benevolent motives, he had combined with them an abundance of good temper. . . . Successful in business, chimerical in his notions, Quixotic in his actions, admiring talents and genius, he became a joining link, by philanthropic feelings, in bringing into harmony much that would be otherwise separate, and unnoticed, and useless in society.<sup>32</sup>

A requirement for membership in the club was a good temper, which was one of the qualities Dawbarn most admired in a man: 'let us beware, then, of giving way to a bad temper, and the excuses we plead for it, lest it be only a mask to destroy not only our peace, but the peace of others.'<sup>33</sup> Yet, even though 'the eccentricity of the bad or hard-hearted never found a footing intentionally in the society', the club had such high admiration for the abstract quality of eccentricity that hard-hearted persons who also had a public reputation for eccentricity were 'made members outside the society, being in all particulars enrolled as much members as the rest, only never informed that they were members.'<sup>34</sup>

There is plenty of evidence to support the accuracy of William Dawbarn's view of himself as an eccentric of the benevolent sort. He sought to make life better for those who found themselves in less fortunate circumstances than his own; he was president of The Early Closing Association, a member of The Board of Guardians, a member of The Board of Health, president of the YMCA, and the patron of the alcoholic painter William Daniels. Yet, make no mistake, Dawbarn was at core a practical businessman and no

one's fool. For many years Dawbarn was the president of the Liverpool branch of the Trade Protection Society which had as its aim the sharing of credit-worthiness information amongst merchants and trades people with the goal of minimizing bad debts. This desire 'not to be done' was emphasized at the outset of *The Eccentric Club* when Morton Melville opened negotiations with Adam S. Smith for the club's lease of Smith's property. Morton told Smith that 'our society has no need to *do* anybody in order to live, but it don't like to be *done*, and so is careful at the beginning of any transaction to begin rightly.'<sup>35</sup>

Whether Dawbarn had any association with the London Eccentric Club or not, it seems probable that Dawbarn's intent in writing and publishing the book *The Eccentric Club* was two-fold. First, perhaps we can take him at his word that, having encountered severe business, social, and family anxieties in the late 1870s, 'I found I had no alternative, if I wished to keep my mind healthy and cheerful, but to write'.<sup>36</sup> If a sense of humour is a sign of cheerfulness he achieved some success; at the close of his preface to the book he wrote, 'some of my friends may wish, after perusal, that I may recover my sleep'.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, he had more purpose than just to divert his mind from his problems. There is no evidence that he had health issues immediately before his sudden death.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, having reached the age of sixty and suffering considerable anxiety about his business and family life, perhaps he felt it time to record something of his life for the record. A second epigram at the outset of *The Eccentric Club* reads:

“But the images of men’s wits and knowledge remain in *books* exempted from the wrong of time and capable of renovation. . . . They generate still and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages.” – Bacon’s “*Advancement of Learning*.”

Perhaps he had begun to reflect on the course his life had taken. Dawbarn was a man who fulfilled duties. As noted earlier he had identified a five-level hierarchy of duties; namely self, family, neighbourhood, country, and the world. Dawbarn had fulfilled his duties at the first four levels but there is no evidence that he had done anything at the world level which included missionary work, Morton Melville’s calling. After a life dedicated to business did Morton Melville’s choice represent an alternative path which Dawbarn now lamented he had not followed?<sup>39</sup>

That he chose to record his thoughts in a somewhat nonsensical book is curious, but perhaps explainable by his fascination with Sydney Smith. Smith was a clergyman, author, and critic and had a reputation for eccentric behaviour. He wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* for twenty-five years and was known for his wit; G.K. Chesterton identified him as ‘the real originator of Nonsense’.<sup>40</sup>

In *The Eccentric Club* Dawbarn used the mask of eccentricity to communicate his moral views on what it meant to be an Englishman in Victorian England. Julia Saville has argued that ‘the coupling of eccentricity with Englishness is only cultivated consciously in the early-to-mid-Victorian period (1830s to 1860s) through figures such as Charles Dickens and Mill.’<sup>41</sup> Saville’s interpretation is that all of Dickens’s characters, ‘with the exceptions of the hero and heroine – seem to some degree eccentric.’<sup>42</sup> Dickens’s eccentric characters consciously assumed masks under which lay deep moral values such as sincerity and earnestness, which were seen as good, or their threatening counterparts,

hypocrisy and cant. Saville has argued that in the novel *David Copperfield* the hero's moral character was developed through an educational process facilitated by eccentric characters revealing, over the course of the story, their real characters, both those valued and those seen as threatening, which lay under their public masks.

Without any claim that Dawbarn's literary capability is even remotely in the same class as that of Dickens, interpreting *The Eccentric Club* along these lines is insightful. The character David Copperfield was modelled on Dickens himself. The hero of *The Eccentric Club* was Morton Melville who, like Copperfield, was essentially a foundling, raised in an unconventional environment. Yet, unlike Copperfield, who became a novelist like Dickens, Melville rejected Dawbarn's world of commerce in favour of medicine and missionary work.

In *The Eccentric Club*, Dawbarn employed fiction, autobiography, and essay forms. The main thread of the book was a fictional account of middle- and upper-class benevolent eccentrics befriending three less fortunate lower-class young people who were then guided toward leading productively moral lives. Here biography and auto-biography infringed, as the benevolent eccentrics included Thomas Smith (Dawbarn's close friend Thomas Craddock in real life) who was cast as the wise President of the Eccentric Club, Abraham Seaton, a stone mason and sculptor who was one of the most respected members of the club (there was an Abraham Seaton, age fifty, a stone mason living in Wisbech according to the 1841 census), and Mr. Banward who was clearly Dawbarn; the two names are anagrams. The young people, all young children when befriended by Abraham Seaton, were Morton Melville and two sisters, Janie and Jessie. These young



people, supported by their benefactors, displayed persevering self-reliance, a trait much admired by Dawbarn, to overcome difficult circumstances in which, through no fault of their own, they have found themselves.

Intertwined with the story of the development of the young people are a series of what Dawbarn calls diversions. These diversions are short essays, aphorisms, and dialogues covering experiences in Dawbarn's life and his opinions on topics ranging over religion, habits, housing for working men, trades unions, strikes, education, morals, and drink to name but a few. He described his friendship with the painter William Daniels and his acquaintance with Mr. Borthwick, an engineer assigned by Robert Stephenson to evaluate engineering works on the River Neen near Wisbech. Some of these diversions were delivered by the honorary member Mr. Banward, some by the narrator of the story, and some by a club member named John Brewin, described by the club president as having one of the club's 'most philosophic minds'. Brewin had a wife called Sarah. Again, these characters were likely modelled on real people; the 1841 Census had John, miller and brewer, and Sarah Brewin living in Wisbech. In these diversions Dawbarn demonstrated that he had read widely. References are made in the book to historical and contemporary writers including Cobbett, Carlyle, Locke, Buckle, and Emerson.

The diversions and the main storyline of the book emphasized 'the virtues of self-reliance and the philanthropic benevolence of voluntary societies.'<sup>43</sup> These values were one aspect of what F. David Roberts, in his *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians* (2002), labels a "laissez-faire society," whose members shared a 'belief in solving social problems through individual moral improvement . . . more self-reliance

among workers and greater benevolence on the part of the propertied.’<sup>44</sup> We have seen how Dawbarn subscribed to these values with his five level hierarchy of duties. In *The Eccentric Club*, he expressed these ideas as follows:

Time, temper, patience, and money, are all required to minister to those ills and accidents incident to the condition of man. In our country we often speak of our artificial condition. This condition is no more than the result of a silent compact existing amongst us to help each other according to our means. I suppose that there is no nation in the world which has such generous laws, or in which there are more people who act from a direct principle of love for their species, and so render whatever assistance they can to promote the well-being of all.<sup>45</sup>

Abraham Seaton was perhaps the quintessential example of the character of the membership of the Eccentric Club where

eccentricity, to be *the* thing, should be free from all malevolent feeling. The eccentricity best borne within the society was that which did good turns for bad ones, - overlooked the faults of the vicious, forgave the unchaste, clad the naked, fed little ragamuffins, and gave them a start in life.<sup>46</sup>

It was this form of benevolent eccentricity that Dawbarn so much admired and he used the rescuing of Morton, Janie, and Jessie to emphasize the view that all men and women were to be valued. Referring to ‘the outcasts of the world, especially to those poor women whom the respectable portion of society dared not take into its keeping’ Dawbarn asked:

You know with me that our “respectabilities” in their looms of life are accustomed only to weave equal-threaded regular pieces, irregularities of the smallest kind must be avoided, good plain cloth is the thing, no defects allowed. But have you not continually seen that He . . . is quite content to accept and work into this plain pattern and regular cloth of life a jacquard pattern of His own special design – a jacquard pattern the disturbs and breaks up, as the birth of Morton did, the regular threads of society altogether.<sup>47</sup>

Morton Melville, the illegitimate son of a well-to-do mother, was raised from infancy by Abraham and his housekeeper. This eccentric benevolent act of ‘bringing up of another’s child . . . not respectably begotten in holy wedlock’ resulted in Abraham being invited to join the Eccentric Club. Abraham was known as Silent Seaton, silence being his defence against the constant chatter of his late wife. At home he was Morton’s Silent Governor and used the same silent approach in disciplining Morton; the former’s expressive face was all that was required to either praise or reprimand, neither of which was liberally applied. Morton’s education for the first five or six years of his life consisted of him being allowed to follow his own curiosity supplemented with some teaching by the housekeeper. However, the child’s precociousness became too much for the housekeeper and Morton was then sent to school. At this time, Seaton began to ponder Morton’s religious education.

We have seen earlier that Dawbarn took a non-dogmatic approach to religion. Roberts writes that in the nineteenth century there had been a ‘gradual move from a conservative, fundamentalist theology and an otherworldly concern for salvation to a liberal, rational theology and a worldly concern for the moral improvement of man and society.’<sup>48</sup> Abraham Seaton described how as a child he, after reading the first chapter of Genesis, had asked his mother who made God? She had no answer. Dawbarn wrote that

this was to be an interminable basis for thought for Abraham, as for all of us, for ever. How could it be that manhood should repose its creeds, definitions, religious institutions, and rites, on such a shadowy and unknown basis as this, which none could fathom? Motion and gravity fix the globe with conditions of steadfastness, but with an undetermined base like this or religion, and ceremonies, and creeds to stand on, how foolish to waste time in considering and

discussing foreknowledge, predestination, free agency, original sin, and so forth.<sup>49</sup>

Fortunately for Abraham ‘the one religious element that had crept into [his] moral nature was very simple – God is love.’<sup>50</sup> Thus Abraham kept it simple; he entrusted Morton’s religious training to his house keeper on weekdays and ‘on Sundays from – as Seaton called his parson – “Old Solid”, the “bread-and-butter preacher.”’<sup>51</sup>

The entire membership of the club took an interest in the welfare of young Morton. Enquiries were continually made about Morton’s health and general progress. At a young age, Morton became secretary of the club when the former occupant of the office suddenly passed away. Morton was thus deeply involved in the affairs of the club in his formative years. As a consequence of that exposure and the guardianship of Abraham Seaton, the basis of his character derived from the moral values that his Governor and the other members of the club espoused, including honorary member Mr. Banward. Mr. Banward gave a talk to the Eccentric Club and subsequently sent a letter with some of his ideas which was read to the membership. Morton paid close attention to Mr. Banward’s ideas and ‘hung on the words of Mr. Banward, they were so much in his [Morton’s] way of thinking.’<sup>52</sup>

In time Morton was apprenticed to the business of one of the Club’s members. ‘Seaton thought that three or four years spent at this employment of buying and selling would be the best way to ascertain what was in the lad, and what he would be best fit for.’ During this apprenticeship there were occurrences that profoundly impacted Morton’s life and Dawbarn observed that it was remarkable how often ‘some trifling cause influences the future destiny of man. The first happenstance was that Morton

became friends with a medical student; 'this friendship with the young surgeon . . . prepared the way for the future studies of medicine, which Morton pursued with much youthful ardour and success.'<sup>53</sup> He then, in his leisure hours, became acquainted with, and subsequently fell in love with, a girl in a dance hall. The members of the Eccentric Club became aware of this relationship and were concerned that the girl's sole interest was in the money Morton had inherited from one of the Club members. A scene was set up whereby Morton overheard his girl's conversation with her friend, which made it clear she was playing him for a fool. In his repentance for this folly Morton became friends with a well-wisher who encouraged him to become a Sunday School teacher, a vocation which suited Morton: 'his proficiency and power of teaching soon made him the teacher of a class of boys only younger by a year or two than himself.'<sup>54</sup> As a consequence of these experiences Seaton agreed to a change of vocation for Morton once his apprenticeship time was up. Morton was now on his way to becoming a medical doctor and a missionary.

Abraham Seaton again demonstrated that he had earned his reputation as an eccentric of the benevolent sort when he provided a home for a young girl Janie, who had been injured by a runaway horse and cart in the street outside his home. Janie's parents were poor circus performers who traveled about the country and so were unable to care for the partially paralyzed girl. Janie's convalescence spanned many years during which she spent most of her waking hours on Abraham's sofa. Yet, during this time Janie remained cheerful, finding ways to be useful and came to be considered by Morton as his sister with the result that 'new sympathies, and associations, and sentiments were

developed.<sup>55</sup> Janie was rewarded for her perseverance when, after a lengthy period of near immobility, a sudden twitching of a muscle had an effect on her nervous system such that her mobility was restored.

Janie's older sister, Jessie, was a circus acrobat. She also traveled about the country with the circus but always made time to visit her sister. Although she was frequently on the move, there were periods when she lived in one place for a lengthier time. On one such occasion she rented a room in a house in which an older man also rented a room. Little was known of this man other than that he was a printer. Jessie became fond of this man when she saw him exhibit a benevolent eccentricity by taking care of a sickly child whose poor family lived in the same rooming house. This kindness made an impression on Jessie and it came to pass that the printer, a Mr. Walton, asked her to marry him. She accepted, believing that she would be the wife of a man of very modest means. Following the marriage, Mr. Walton took his new bride to the home, Oaklands, where he was raised and which he still owned. Jessie discovered that Mr. Walton was a wealthy man, having inherited land and wealth from his father. Walton had taken little interest in his wealth until he found Jessie. An even greater surprise was the discovery that Mr. Walton's father had, many years earlier, contracted Abraham Seaton to build a chapel for him on his property. As the story came to a close, Abraham lived the last weeks of his life at Oaklands in the company of Morton, Janie, and Jessie, who comforted him in his dying days.

The benevolent eccentricity of Abraham Seaton and Mr. Walton made for better lives for Morton, Janie, and Jessie. The eccentric Abraham Seaton was rewarded with the

opportunity to spend his dying days near his chapel and in the company of his charges. Mr. Walton was rewarded with the companionship of a young wife who had demonstrated that she had not married him for his wealth and social position.

Morton Melville adopted the club's moral values to the extent that at the end of the story he renewed the cycle; as a medical missionary in Africa, he rescued a young boy from being made a human sacrifice and made him his invaluable chief nurse. Morton had developed the same expressive face as Abraham Seaton; he wrote to his sister Janie that his chief nurse 'reads my face as a book.'<sup>56</sup>

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Notes: The Eccentric

<sup>1</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, epigram.

<sup>2</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

<sup>3</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., vii, viii.

<sup>4</sup> John Keekes, *Moral Tradition and Individuality*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Keekes, *Moral Tradition and Individuality*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1837), 109.

<sup>7</sup> Keekes, *Moral Tradition and Individuality*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, second edition*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Julia F. Saville, "Eccentricity as Englishness in 'David Copperfield'", in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, Vol. 42, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century* (autumn, 2002), pp. 781-197, 782.

<sup>10</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 127.

<sup>11</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 144, 145.

<sup>12</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 145.

<sup>13</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 155.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 300.

<sup>16</sup> Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, 300.

<sup>17</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 142.

<sup>19</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 145.

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- <sup>20</sup> Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, 284.
- <sup>21</sup> Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, 284.
- <sup>22</sup> Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, 284.
- <sup>23</sup> Max Saunders, *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.
- <sup>24</sup> Saunders, *Self-Impression*, 10.
- <sup>25</sup> Walter Jerrold, *W.E. Gladstone: England's Great Commoner*, (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., 1895), vi.
- <sup>26</sup> Jerrold, *W.E. Gladstone: England's Great Commoner*, 160.
- <sup>27</sup> J.A. Froude, *Lord Beaconsfield*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington Limited, 1890), 257, 258.
- <sup>28</sup> Stephen Reynolds, "Autobiografiction", in *Speaker, new series*, 15, no. 366 (6 October 1906), 28, 30.
- <sup>29</sup> Reynolds, "Autobiografiction".
- <sup>30</sup> Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: a reference book of coffee houses of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), 697.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Ancestry/RobertLloyd.htm>
- <sup>32</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 176.
- <sup>33</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 63.
- <sup>34</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 5.
- <sup>35</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 10.
- <sup>36</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, xi.
- <sup>37</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, xii.
- <sup>38</sup> *The Liverpool Lantern*, 28 May, 1881.
- <sup>39</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 178.
- <sup>40</sup> Pearson, *The Smith of Smiths*, 13.
- <sup>41</sup> Julia F. Saville, "Eccentricity as Englishness in 'David Copperfield'", in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, Vol. 42, No. 4*, The Nineteenth Century (autumn, 2002), pp. 781-197, 782.
- <sup>42</sup> Saville, "Eccentricity as Englishness in 'David Copperfield'", 784.
- <sup>43</sup> David F. Roberts, *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 457.
- <sup>44</sup> Roberts, *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*, 458.
- <sup>45</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 79.
- <sup>46</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 68.
- <sup>48</sup> Roberts, *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*, 155.
- <sup>49</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 56.
- <sup>50</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 57.



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<sup>51</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 63.

<sup>52</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 188.

<sup>53</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 86.

<sup>54</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 92.

<sup>55</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 77.

<sup>56</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, 372.

## Conclusion

*The Early Victorians bequeathed to their successors a powerful vision of a laissez-faire society. It was an amalgam of the old – a paternalism based on the sacredness of property and the rightness of the providential order - and the new – the truths of political economy and, in terms of a greater emphasis, the virtues of self-reliance and the philanthropic benevolence of voluntary societies<sup>1</sup>*

*F. David Roberts*

The Dawbarn family of nineteenth-century Wisbech, Cambridgeshire is a representative slice of the period's emerging middle class and its values with respect to family, business, religion, and community. Rising from eighteenth-century obscurity, the descendents of Richard Bunbury Dawbarn became prominent citizens of Wisbech and, to a lesser extent, Liverpool. The public record demonstrates that the Dawbarn family conformed to the nineteenth-century commercial and social patterns established by the Dissenting middle class as described by Davidoff and Hall in *Family Fortunes*; sons joined fathers' businesses and, as the nineteenth century advanced, those who did not enter their fathers' businesses increasingly turned to the professions as the century progressed; daughters were raised to be married and those who did not remained in the family home with aging parents; religion was a central part of life and one of the few areas outside the home where women could make space for themselves; successful business men were active in local politics; membership in associations of all sorts was common; and partible inheritance was the norm when passing wealth to the next generation. Several second- and third-generation Dawbarns, including William Dawbarn, built substantial wealth putting them, like the patriarch Richard Bunbury, in the top few

per cent of non-landed society wealth owners. All of this was accomplished within a society which adhered to a conformist morality heavily influenced by Evangelicalism which had, as G.M. Young wrote, 'imposed on society . . . its code of Sabbath observance, responsibility, and philanthropy.'<sup>2</sup>

William Dawbarn, born just five months before Queen Victoria, came of age in the early Victorian period and by his mature adulthood had fully internalized Roberts's 'vision of a laissez-faire society'. He made it clear in his *Blackstone and His Commentaries* lecture that he respected the old institution of the Peerage and all it represented in terms of a paternalism based on property and a providential order: 'though the Commons are all-powerful, yet they usually pay the Lords great deference. It is the deference of youth to age, of knowledge to wisdom, of wealth to birth.'<sup>3</sup> Thus the old was combined with the new; self-reliance and political economy combined to create knowledge and wealth which could then be used to reinvigorate what had become an open peerage: 'hereditary as the Peerage is, unless it were continually impregnated with the new blood of the Commons it would soon cease to command respect.'<sup>4</sup> We have seen how Dawbarn, once having achieved success in business, devoted his time to voluntary associations, including those of a benevolent and philanthropic nature.

William Dawbarn dutifully followed the patterns established by the moral tradition within which he found himself. He was successful in business, raised a large family in comfortable surroundings, was an active member of his Baptist congregation, and participated in public life. Yet, he found paths by which to express his individuality: he advertised his cotton products in an unconventional way; as a businessman he led, on

behalf of the shop working class, the fight for early closing in Liverpool; he hosted a Hindu in his home; he befriended an alcoholic painter; his books, expressing his 'opinion of life, of men, of manners, of books, and nobody knows what'<sup>5</sup> were printed on his business's printing press.

We are left with a sense that what William Dawbarn really wanted to do was live the life of an intellectual, veering somewhat off the 'beaten path', recording his thoughts in order to provoke and cause 'infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages.'<sup>6</sup> He wanted to leave something behind. Yet his intellectual achievements were of less significance than his business and civic affairs successes where he fit the moulds of Harold Perkin's entrepreneurial and professional middle-class ideals. Entrepreneurial success in establishing his cotton-winding business in Wisbech was followed by greater success in expanding and broadening his father-in-law's Liverpool-based slate business. In both business and civic affairs he successfully applied disciplined business and statistical methods. He made a significant contribution to the associations to which he belonged which had a practical bent (trade protection, early closing, the health committee), although he seems to have been more of a spectator when he joined intellectual organizations (the literary society, the British Association). The *Porcupine* ridiculed his literary efforts. Although the Dawbarn name became known beyond the borders of Cambridgeshire and Lancashire, by the middle of the twentieth century it had again become obscure in Wisbech and Liverpool. Nevertheless, images of William Dawbarn's 'wits and knowledge remain' in his books more than a century and a quarter following his death.

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Notes: Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*, 457.

<sup>2</sup> G.M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, second edition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Dawbarn, *Government, Conduct, and Example*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Dawbarn, *Essays, Tales, Etc., Etc.* Second ed., viii.

<sup>6</sup> Dawbarn, *The Eccentric Club*, epigram at outset of book.

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## Appendices

**William Dawbarn**

William Dawbarn  
1819 - 1881



Engraving by Joseph Brown from a Carte de Visite

## Robert Dawbarn Senior and Sons



**Robert**  
1799-1888



**William**  
1819-1881



**James**  
1823-1896



**John**  
1825-1895



**Robert**  
1825-1915



**Joseph**  
1829-1850  
(portrait on wall  
behind John)



**Richard Bunbury**  
1831-1896

Missing - Charles (1833-1915) – Emigrated to America c. 1859

**Elmswood Hall**

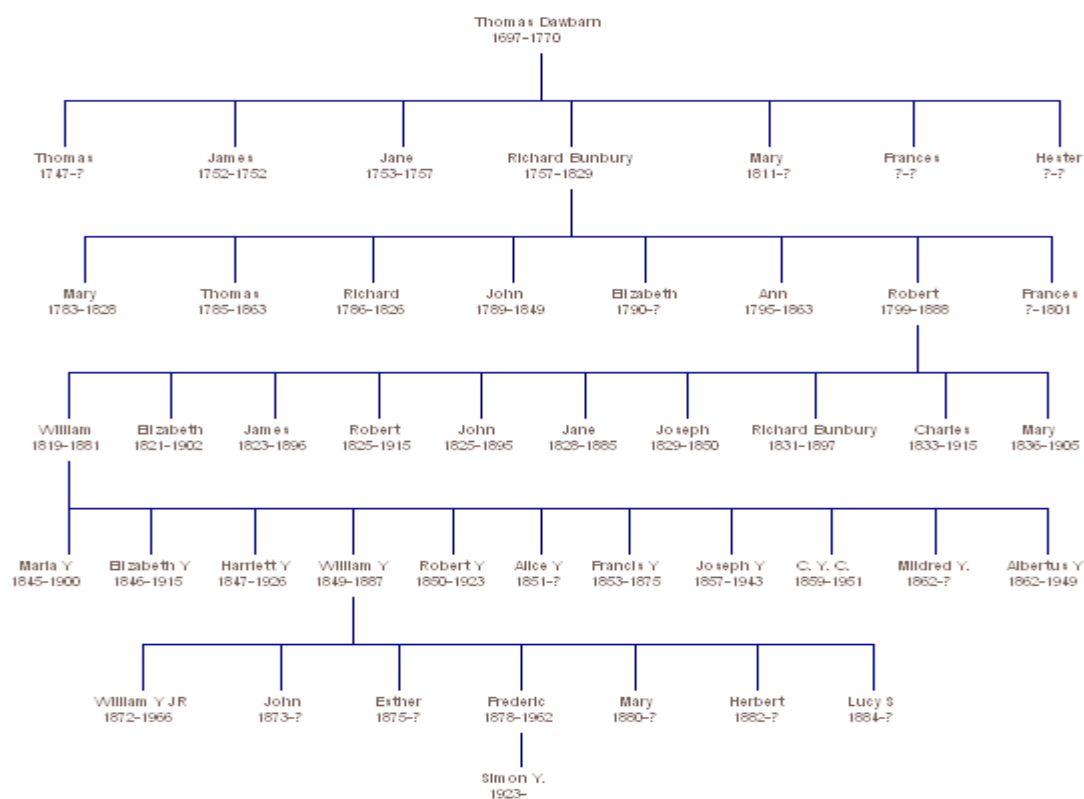
**William Dawbarn's Liverpool Residence**

**1867-1881**



## Dawbarns of Wisbech

### Dawbarns of Wisbech





## Dawbarn Family Members' Wealth at Death

Dawbarns						Wills and Administrations Probated in 1858 England and Wales *				
Name	Death		Sworn Value (£)			Sworn Value (£) Range (1,000's)	Number		%	
	Age	Year	At Probate	2009 Share of GDP (1,000's)	1858 Share of GDP		In Range	Cumulative	In Range	Cumulative
Ethel M.	84	1953	479	39	20	Under .02	1,935	1,935	6.5	6.5
Agnes Marion	39	1886	55	63	35	.02 - .10	6,368	8,303	21.2	27.7
Robert+++	90	1915	152	62	40					
Lilian D.	67	1950	1,386	131	75					
Lancelot Proctor	37	1917	560	183	100	.10 - .20	4,670	12,973	15.6	43.3
Maud L.	36	1926	689	221	120					
Sophia Farrar	83	1952	2,764	225	130					
Lucretia	67	1892	404	401	220	.20 - .30	2,512	15,485	8.4	51.7
Robert Y.++++	73	1923	1,296	425	230					
George Barber	38	1885	380	349	230					
Albert Y.++++	87	1949	5,000	557	300					
Gerald M.	57	1953	8,012	653	350	.30 - 45	2,426	17,911	8.1	59.7
James+++	73	1896	777	671	370					
Sarah	37	1874	777	713	450					
Edwin	36	1899	1,298	1,000	550	.45 - .60	1,877	19,788	6.3	66.0
Elizabeth Taylor#	69	1893	1,241	1,230	650	.60 - .80	1,622	21,410	5.4	71.4
C.Y.C++++.	91	1951	12,863	1,210	650	.80 - 1.0	1103	22,513	3.7	75.1
Harriett Y.++++	80	1926	6,671	2,140	1,150	1.0 - 2.0	2,671	25,184	8.9	84.0
William Y.++++	38	1887	2,033	2,220	1,200					
Joseph Y.++++	86	1943	16,233	2,230	1,200					
John R.	57	1953	36,351	2,960	1,600					
Elizabeth	80	1902	5,085	3,720	2,000	2.0 - 4.0	2,058	27,242	6.9	90.9
Mary	80	1905	5,144	3,530	2,000					
Elizabeth Y.++++	69	1915	8,363	3,970	2,100					
Robert A.	55	1916	10,038	4,080	2,300					
Lydia	78	1913	7,724	4,400	2,400					
Henry	69	1889	5,268	5,220	2,800					
John+++	68	1895	6,507	5,970	3,000					
Margaret M.	76	1930	19,417	5,870	3,200					
Arthur G.	66	1917	31,258	10,200	5,500	4.0 - 6.0	806	28,048	2.7	93.6
George	78	1899	17,166	13,200	7,000	6.0 - 8.0	439	28,487	1.5	95.0
Alfred Harry	59	1906	22,521	15,500	8,000	8.0 - 10.0	303	28,790	1.0	96.0
Richard B.+++	64	1896	16,924	15,000	8,000					
Richard Bunbury+	72	1829	7,000	17,300	11,000	10 - 20	602	29,392	2.0	98.0
William	61	1881	46,968	52,800	28,000	20 - 30	231	29,623	0.8	98.8
Robert++	89	1888	58,217	61,000	33,000	30 - 40	126	29,749	0.4	99.2
						40 - 50	61	29,810	0.2	99.4
# William's Wife						50 - 75	73	29,883	0.2	99.7
+ William's Grandfather						75 - 100	29	29,912	0.1	99.8
++ William's Father						100 - 200	43	29,955	0.1	99.9
+++ William's Brothers						200 - 400	19	29,974	0.1	100.0
++++ William's Children						400 - 500	3	29,977	0.0	100.0
						500 - 1m+	1	29,978	0.0	100.0
						1m+	1	29,979	0.0	100.0
							29,979	29,979	100.0	100.0

\* Source: W.D. Rubenstein, *Men of Property*, pp: 29.