

# Creating a landed dynasty: Sir William Heathcote (1693–1751) of Hursley, Hampshire\*

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## *Abstract*

William, later Sir William, Heathcote (1692/3–1751) was one of the wealthy outsiders with a mercantile background who purchased a country estate during the eighteenth century. He transformed a run-down manor into a prosperous enterprise and from a young London merchant became a prominent member of the Hampshire elite. The paper examines his background, his inheritance, estate finances, approach to funding large-scale purchases and projects, and the estate's continuing dependence upon Heathcote's investments in external ventures. It describes the problems encountered during periods of agricultural depression in finding new tenants and persuading existing tenants to pay their rents. It examines Heathcote's management style, his treatment of his sons and his servants, and the steps taken to ensure the estate's long-term future. Although successful in passing a financially sound estate to his descendants, his vision and business acumen was not shared by all of them and, by the late nineteenth century, estate income was significantly less than expenditure and the estate had to be sold.

On 29 September 1715, shortly after celebrating his twenty-first birthday, William Heathcote (1692/3–1751), a young London merchant, wrote in his diary:

At Michaelmas 1715, I begin to draw home that part of my estate that I have abroad in trade, being fully resolved to leave off trade, and to be content with my present estate with a modest profit in the funds at home.

Heathcote had inherited a large fortune and within two years had begun the process of becoming a country landowner, employing an agent, William Day, to assist in choosing an estate.<sup>1</sup> Day had identified 12 estates at various locations across southern England by 3 November 1718, when Heathcote decided upon the Hursley estate, near Winchester.<sup>2</sup> His choice may have been influenced by Hampshire being a county which more readily accepted newcomers, unlike Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, where property was concentrated in the hands of a few landowners able to expand their estates as land became available, or Devon, which was dominated by numerous small estates owned by the middling and lesser gentry and which experienced few changes in ownership. Hampshire had more in common

\* All documents cited are in the Hampshire Record Office.

<sup>1</sup> 63M84/235, Notebook of Samuel Heathcote 1692–1716, continued after his death in 1708 by his son William, entry dated 29 Sept. 1715.

<sup>2</sup> 18M54/C2/2.

with Lincolnshire and Wiltshire, where significant numbers of wealthy outsiders had bought or were buying and developing estates.<sup>3</sup>

Hampshire was never home to a great lord and great estate. Prior to the dissolution, landownership was dominated by the Church, and the secular estates that existed in the county were generally small. The dissolution produced a major transformation of landownership, and, although the Church continued to have a major influence beyond the dissolution, as 28 manors and five boroughs remained in ecclesiastical hands,<sup>4</sup> a substantial amount of land passed into secular ownership. Three relatively large estates emerged, owned by the main beneficiaries of the crown's sales: William Paulet (c.1484–1672), first Marquess of Winchester and Lord High Treasurer of England; William Sandys (1470–1540), first Baron Sandys of the Vyne; and Thomas Wriothesley (1505–1550), created first Earl of Southampton in 1547.

The Paulet and Sandys families were already landowners in Hampshire, but Thomas Wriothesley, who 'was the greatest beneficiary of the dissolution', having gained '22 per cent of the grants of monastic manors' was a newcomer to the county.<sup>5</sup> He also bought a number of manors, becoming the major Hampshire landowner following the dissolution, but the family's fortune declined and, by the time that the fourth earl died in 1667, 34 of the 50 individual manors/estates owned by the first earl were no longer owned by the family. As the fourth earl died without male issue, the remaining estate was divided between his three surviving daughters and parts were later sold. The landholding of the Sandys family suffered a similar fate. They had been Hampshire landowners and lords of the manor of the Vyne, near Basingstoke, since 1368, and although Sir William Sandys (d. 1542), who had become Henry VIII's Lord Chamberlain, and was created William Lord Sandys of the Vyne in 1523, had benefited to a lesser extent than Sir Thomas Wriothesley, he had been granted the former priory lands at Mottisfont together with a number of smaller manors. The £5,000 fine and imprisonment of William, third Lord Sandys, for his part in the Earl of Essex's plot, began the breakup of the family estate, and by 1670 eleven manors had been sold, including Upper Clatford, Preston Candover, Sherborne St John, and, crucially, the family's principal seat, the Vyne, which was sold in 1653.<sup>6</sup> The family's financial troubles continued and in c. 1684 Edwyn Lord Sandys sold the family's other principal seat, Mottisfont, together with the remaining manors, to Sir John Mill, Bt, of Camois Court.<sup>7</sup>

The Paulet family estates did not suffer such reductions and the family became more powerful following the arrival of William III, but the demise of the great estates of the Wriothesley and Sandys families resulted in a substantial amount of land, mainly small, geographically dispersed estates, becoming available for purchase. Added to this, demographic and economic changes in Hampshire resulted in only a quarter of estates/manors experiencing no changes in ownership between 1690 and 1800. Just over 29 per cent of estates/manors changed hands at least once, 21 per cent changed hands twice, 13 per cent changed hands three times, and 6 per cent

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Clay, 'Landlords and estate management in England', in J. Thirsk (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V (ii) (1985), p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Page, *The medieval bishops of Winchester: Estate, archive and administration* (Hampshire Papers

24, 2002), pp. 4–5.

<sup>5</sup> John Hare, *The dissolution of the monasteries in Hampshire* (Hampshire Papers 16, 1999), pp. 12–13.

<sup>6</sup> VCH, *Hampshire* IV, pp. 161–2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 449–51.

changed hands more frequently.<sup>8</sup> The manor of Hurn, for example, changed hands six times.<sup>9</sup> Many of these estates were beyond the means of existing smaller landowners,<sup>10</sup> but were within the means of wealthier existing landowners, such as the Portal family of Laverstoke and the St John Mildmay family of Dogmersfield, who extended their landholding within the county. They were also within the means of landowners from outside of the county, and John Smith de Burgh (1720–82), eleventh Earl of Clanricarde, acquired the manor of Warnford,<sup>11</sup> and Henry Temple, (c.1673–1757), first Viscount Palmerston, bought the Broadlands estate.<sup>12</sup> Both Smith de Burgh and Temple were seeking a country base with reasonable access to London, which spared them the long journey back to their Irish estates. Hampshire was also attractive to naval officers because of the easy access to Portsmouth. Admiral Sir Peter Warren (c.1703–52), owner of the manor of Westbury, was just one of 25 naval officers identified, from the Hampshire volumes of the Victoria County History, as owning estates in the county between 1689–1800.<sup>13</sup>

The county also attracted wealthy outsiders, bankers, financiers, lawyers, merchants, and plantation owners. These were men whose wealth reflected their success in their chosen careers or business ventures. Estate ownership offered recognition of this together with power and status, and it could also, in certain locations, provide access to a parliamentary seat. For some of the new entrants, estate ownership was a short-term arrangement, the crowning glory to their life and career. For others, it was a long-term commitment, designed for the benefit of their descendants. The actions of William Heathcote of Hursley in Hampshire place him firmly in this latter category.

## I

William Heathcote (Figure 1) was the son of Samuel Heathcote (1655–1708) and his wife Mary (1670–1720). A London merchant, Samuel Heathcote, together with his brothers, had been given £500 to begin his career by his father, Gilbert Heathcote, a bell founder from Chesterfield in Derbyshire. Samuel had started his working life as a factor in what is now Gdansk in Poland, and Kaliningrad in Russia, before becoming a London merchant, a Director of the East India Company, and a Director of the Eastlands Company. He also held various appointments, which included that of Deputy Lieutenant of Tower Hamlets. William Heathcote followed his father into the world of commerce under the guidance of his uncle on his mother's side of the family, William Dawsonne (d.1727). Following the early death of his elder brother, Gilbert (1691–1710), William Heathcote became the main beneficiary of his father's fortune, which amounted to £73,788 19s. 0d. His inheritance was subsequently enhanced by a legacy of £3,000 from his uncles, John and William Heathcote, and by a further legacy of £39,597 2s. 5d. from William Dawsonne.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Analysis of the ownership of manors and estates in Hampshire was derived, principally, from VCH *Hampshire*, supplemented by records in the form of feet of fines, family and estate accounts and correspondence.

<sup>9</sup> VCH, *Hampshire* V, pp. 96–7.

<sup>10</sup> Clay, 'Landlords', p. 182.

<sup>11</sup> VCH, *Hampshire* III, p. 270.

<sup>12</sup> VCH, *Hampshire* IV, p. 454.

<sup>13</sup> VCH, *Hampshire* III, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> 63M84/110/2, Statement of account showing how Sir William Heathcote 'came by my present Estate as appears in My Ledger to be £190,522 16s. 2d.', 25 Mar. 1740.



FIGURE 1. Sir William Heathcote (1692/3–1751) by Sir Godfrey Kneller, reproduced courtesy of the Heathcote family.

It was the availability of a significant part of this inheritance, following his twenty-first birthday, which enabled William Heathcote to purchase the Hursley estate, near Winchester in Hampshire, completed on 6 November 1718, with possession twelve days later.<sup>15</sup> The return of £736 per annum on the capital investment of £31,500, was poor in comparison with Heathcote's earnings in the world of commerce. He was, in Christopher Clay's words, one of those wealthy outsiders 'for whom land was a "conspicuous investment" in the sense that acquiring it involved conscious acceptance of a relatively low rate of return on capital because of the social (or political) advantages its possession conveyed'.<sup>16</sup> Heathcote believed that the

<sup>15</sup> 63M84/287, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1716–49, entries for 6 Nov. 1718 and 18 Nov. 1718; 58M71/E/T31, Bargain and sale for £35,000: the manor and manor farm of Merdon, the park of Hursley and the advowsons of Merdon and Hursley, 6 Nov. 1718.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Clay, 'Henry Hoare, banker, his family, and the Stourhead estate', in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *Landowners, capitalists, and entrepreneurs: Essays for Sir John Habakkuk* (1994) p. 135.

estate offered potential for improvement and expansion, and his actions indicated that his thinking stretched beyond his own lifetime to his descendant's inheritance.<sup>17</sup> The estate was not a short-term 'refuge from urban sights and smells', but the means of entering county society.<sup>18</sup> He moved quickly, and on 10 December 1718, he was writing to his mother advising of the work he had initiated for reclaiming some of the swampy areas of the estate, of his plans for improving the returns on the estate's timber, and of his recent purchase of carp for restocking the already cleared fish ponds. He had also begun work on reclaiming the deer park, in readiness for importing deer.<sup>19</sup> The park had been in existence in 1588,<sup>20</sup> and Heathcote would have been aware of the importance of venison, and of the use of gifts of venison by the gentry, as symbols of landed power.<sup>21</sup> His deer park would, in later years, provide the venison for making such gifts to a wide range of people, including the Earl of Peterborough and the Mayor of Southampton, relatives, such as Lord Macclesfield, and in support of the organizers of charities, such as the stewards of the 'Alien's Feast', an event organized by a charitable organization that supported apprentices born outside of Winchester.<sup>22</sup> A sister organization supported apprentices born within the city.

Extending the estate was another early priority and consideration was given to purchasing an estate at Owslebury almost immediately,<sup>23</sup> and to acquiring an unspecified estate near Winchester eighteen months later.<sup>24</sup> A number of small additions were made in the area close to the estate before, in 1722, the manor of Compton became the first major addition.<sup>25</sup> Other substantial purchases followed, including the manor of Stoke Charity in 1728,<sup>26</sup> the manor of Fullerton in 1730,<sup>27</sup> and the manor of Pittleworth in 1734.<sup>28</sup> All of this property was reasonably close to, although not always coterminous with, the main estate at Hursley. Heathcote was following the common practice of the time, having begun with a substantial purchase, then consolidating this with nearby farms and manors and pursuing opportunities to add more substantial nearby properties as they became available. The long-term aim of ambitious landowners, as earlier studies have indicated, was to consolidate the ownership of land around their main seat and '[t]he ideal holding was one where the estate stretched out from the country house'.<sup>29</sup> Christopher Clay has described the Hoares of Stourhead as the ultimate example of this. They made their first purchases at Stourton in Wiltshire and Stourton Caundle in Dorset in 1718, the same year as Heathcote made his first purchase, and they went on to add a substantial number of properties at both estates between then and 1785, none of which lay more than six miles from the centre of the original purchases.<sup>30</sup> Heathcote

<sup>17</sup> 63M84/107.

<sup>18</sup> Clay, 'Henry Hoare', p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> 63M84/335, Letter from William Heathcote [hereafter Heathcote] to his mother, 10 Dec. 1718.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy Mowl and Jane Whitaker, *The historic gardens of England: Hampshire* (2016), p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and power in late Stuart England: The cultural worlds of the Verneys, 1660–1720* (1999), pp. 29–33.

<sup>22</sup> 63M84/362/25, Letter from Lord Macclesfield, 7 Sept. 1741.

<sup>23</sup> 63M84/185, Letter to Heathcote from his uncle, also William Heathcote, 6 Dec. 1718.

<sup>24</sup> 63M84/188.

<sup>25</sup> VCH *Hampshire*, III, p. 407.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>27</sup> VCH *Hampshire* IV, p. 413.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>29</sup> J. V. Beckett, 'The pattern of landownership in England and Wales, 1660–1880', *EcHR* 37 (1984), pp. 7–8.

<sup>30</sup> Clay, 'Henry Hoare', p. 127.

did not match this, although the overall acreage of his Hampshire estate was well in excess of the 11,625 acres owned by the Hoares. He was one of the very few eighteenth-century businessmen, who Christopher Clay suggested, would have built up larger estates than the Hoares.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to purchasing the Hursley estate Heathcote had expressed the view that it would not be worth spending money in repairing and refurbishing the Old Lodge, claiming that ‘the patchwork will not keep us dry this winter’.<sup>32</sup> The mansion was old and in poor condition, but there were other reasons for replacing it. A large number of new or replacement houses were built by landowning families during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, including those of Heathcote’s Hampshire neighbours at Dogmersfield Park, Farleigh House, Hackwood House, Herriard House, South Stoneham House, Warbrook House, and West Green House.<sup>33</sup> As a new landowner seeking to establish himself in the higher echelons of county society, Heathcote saw the need to provide himself with a comparable seat. The country house during this period was the outward demonstration of the power of the landowner. It was ‘the headquarters from which land was administered and power organised’, the ‘show-case, in which to exhibit and entertain supporters and good connections’ and the tangible evidence of the owner’s wealth.<sup>34</sup> Heathcote set about demolishing the Old Lodge and building a new mansion.

The design of the new house, which became known as Hursley Lodge, has been attributed to John James (c.1672–1746).<sup>35</sup> The son of a Hampshire vicar, James worked with Nicholas Hawksmoor at Greenwich Hospital, at Lord Lempster’s house at Easton Neston in Northamptonshire, and as a member of the Commission, established in 1711, for Building Fifty New Churches in or near the Cities of London and Westminster. His major contribution was the baroque-style St George’s Church in London’s Hanover Square. He was also responsible for the design of country houses in Hampshire, including Warbrook House, built for himself in the village of Eversley, and described by Pevsner in *The buildings of England* as ‘An impressive, remarkably individual house’.<sup>36</sup> Having agreed the design with his architect, Heathcote followed a pattern adopted by many landowners at the time in that he engaged his own workmen, arranged the various contracts, and supervised the building work himself, assisted by John Draper, Clerk of Works, and his uncle, William Dawsonne. Dawsonne had recently retired from his business and had moved from London to Hursley.<sup>37</sup> Building work was completed in 1724,<sup>38</sup> and Heathcote recorded the cost of building the new mansion as £11,000, with more than £3,000 being saved as a result of making use of materials from the Old Lodge. As well as the new house, Heathcote’s rebuilding programme included a new brew house and laundry, which cost £500; the garden was developed at a cost £800; reclaiming and

<sup>31</sup> Clay, ‘Henry Hoare’, p. 116.

<sup>32</sup> 63M84/232, Heathcote family scrapbook, 1721–1877, letter dated Oct. 1718.

<sup>33</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, *The buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1999), p. 192, p. 228, p. 261, p. 288, pp. 581–3, p. 216, pp. 646–7.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English country house:*

*A social and architectural history* (1978), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Pevsner, *Hampshire*, p. 300.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215–6.

<sup>37</sup> 63M84/563, William Dawsonne to Sir Francis Drake, 18 Jan. 1722.

<sup>38</sup> 63M84/100, William Dawsonne to Heathcote, 4 Apr. 1724.



FIGURE 2. Hursley Lodge. Source: J. P. Neale, *Views of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen, in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland* (1818, repr. 1830/31). Hampshire Record Office: HP286.

paling the park amounted to £1,000; bringing in water added a further £1,200 of expenditure; and provision of a new farmhouse for the home farm cost £500.<sup>39</sup>

Shown in Neale's *Seats* of 1818 as a square, red-brick building, with long first- and second-floor windows and dormer windows in a hipped roof<sup>40</sup> (Figure 2), Hursley Lodge was fairly typical of the more modest country houses that appeared in the years following the Restoration, which were based on the Palladian style of Inigo Jones and incorporated Baroque and Dutch features. It did not generate the bitterness and resentment among his neighbours as that shown by Lord Townshend when his Raynham estate, which he had viewed as the metropolis of Norfolk, was eclipsed by the arrival in the county of Robert Walpole, who purchased nearby land, and built the splendid and lavishly equipped and furnished Houghton Hall.<sup>41</sup> Rather, Heathcote's new country house would have drawn no more than favourable comparison with the houses of his neighbours in early eighteenth-century Hampshire. An article in *Country Life*, written in 1909, noted that 'Sir William built the house in excellent material from good classic design,

<sup>39</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–39, note of start and completion dates and a breakdown of the costs associated with building Hursley Lodge, 30 Mar. 1730.

<sup>40</sup> James Lees-Milne, *English country houses: Baroque, 1685–1715* (1970), p. 275.

<sup>41</sup> Girouard, *English country house*, p. 4.

but the design was uncompromisingly square'.<sup>42</sup> William Heathcote was, nevertheless, highly pleased with the outcome of his building work, claiming that Hursley Lodge, together with its furnishings, was 'one of the best seats in England'.<sup>43</sup>

He appears to have been less ambitious about the surrounding grounds. An offer from the garden designer and author, Stephen Switzer, was rejected. Heathcote apparently preferred to undertake the work himself. Little of his scheme has survived, however, as a result of developments by subsequent owners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and by IBM, who have occupied the main house since 1958, and built a large office complex on the adjoining grounds in the early 1960s.<sup>44</sup> Heathcote's garden development is recorded as costing £800,<sup>45</sup> which was not on the scale of gardens at other eighteenth-century estates. The famed classical landscape at Stourhead, initiated and developed by the banker, Henry Hoare II (1705–85), took twenty years to complete, and accounted for a significant proportion of the £20,000 spent on the new house, landscape, and paintings.<sup>46</sup> The second Earl of Egremont paid Launcelot 'Capability' Brown £5,500 over a twelve-year period, for creating the extensive landscape park at Petworth,<sup>47</sup> and on a much smaller scale within Heathcote's own county, Brown was paid £1,400 for landscaping the estate at North Stoneham.<sup>48</sup> These estates all employed gardeners, in some cases in large numbers, but only a single gardener, paid £9 per annum, was included in the list of servants at Hursley during the early 1720s, and there are no records of any gardeners being employed in later years.<sup>49</sup>

## II

Within two years of acquiring his estate, Heathcote had begun to build a modern mansion and initiate various improvements to the estate, and he had married. His marriage to Lady Elizabeth Parker, the only daughter of Thomas Parker, Baron (soon to be Earl) Macclesfield, Lord Chancellor, took place in the Royal Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, Tower of London, on 7 April 1720.<sup>50</sup> Lady Elizabeth brought with her the status of the aristocracy (admittedly new aristocracy), a £12,000 settlement,<sup>51</sup> and an influential father who later appointed his new son-in-law to enter commissions of bankruptcy on record and to receive the appropriate fees.<sup>52</sup> It is also possible that he helped his new son-in-law in the acquisition of a parliamentary seat at Buckingham.

The Parkers and the Heathcotes were London neighbours and friends, and their connections were re-enforced by a political affinity. Both families were Whigs. Despite the relationship

<sup>42</sup> 'Hursley Park, Hampshire, the seat of Sir George Cooper, Bt.', *Country Life* 2 Oct. 1909, pp. 562–4.

<sup>43</sup> 63M84/110/7.

<sup>44</sup> Mowl and Whitaker, *Historic gardens*, p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–39, note of start and completion dates and a breakdown of the costs associated with building Hursley Lodge, 30 Mar 1730.

<sup>46</sup> Victoria Hutchings, *Messrs Hoare Bankers: A history of the Hoare Banking dynasty* (2005), pp. 50–4, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Rowell, *Petworth: The people and the place* (2012), p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> Mowl and Whitaker, *Historic gardens*, pp. 110–11, 127; Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (1975), p. 241.

<sup>49</sup> 63M84/313/1 and 2, salaries and wages of servants for the years 1724, 1732, and 1745.

<sup>50</sup> 63M84/287, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1716–49, entry for 7 Apr. 1720.

<sup>51</sup> 63M84/110/2.

<sup>52</sup> 63M84/258.



between the Parkers and the Heathcotes and, more particularly, the evident advantages and benefits of the marriage, William Heathcote does not appear to have entered into it lightly. The 'creation of an elite landed family' demanded rather more and he considered it necessary to check on Lady Elizabeth's suitability as his partner in providing descendants for his future family. In a letter addressed to Mr Griffeth, described as a 'most faithful and affectionate friend', he referred to an earlier discussion they had had 'about ye matter proposed', which is a 'great concern', and he asked if Mr Griffeth would be 'in a convenient place' to:

make all ye enquiry at a distance yet possible you can, into ye temper & qualifications of ye party, and likewise into ye family's on both sides in every particular & especially whither there is any hereditary distemper on either side & whither integrity and honesty has been prevalent amongst them.

Mr Griffeth's conclusions about 'Mistress Parker' and her family background, which were not to be placed in writing, as the affair was to 'be a secret to all', were obviously favourable. The marriage went ahead, and in time there would be nine children, six sons, and three daughters.<sup>53</sup>

The marriage and the related strict settlement provided a further indication of Heathcote's long-term plans for his estate. The strict settlement had developed during the mid-seventeenth century from earlier arrangements into a form of property settlement. It had been adopted by most segments of English landed society by the early eighteenth century and, until the twentieth century, it was the usual means by which landed wealth was transmitted through the generations.<sup>54</sup> The Heathcote settlement followed the standard arrangement whereby, the settled estate, a specified part of the overall family estate, descended in each generation to the eldest surviving son, with the interest of the father and his eldest son in the settled estate being limited to that of life tenants. Beyond their lifetimes the estate was entailed on the eldest son of the following generation, the father's grandson, who was known as the tenant in tail. The arrangement would normally be repeated on each occasion that the eldest son of the family married or came of age. Heathcote's family legacy would thus be preserved in ensuring the succession – male succession – to the family estate. The settlement provided further insurance as it prevented an irresponsible son or grandson frittering away the settled estate, which was specifically reserved for the purpose of raising jointures for wives, dowries for daughters and portions for younger sons.<sup>55</sup>

The Heathcote settlement included a further, and less frequently used, provision to protect against possible long-term failures in the male line of either family, by placing titles and estates in remainder for specific descendants. In the event of a failure of male heirs in the descendants of her father, the heirs male of Lady Elizabeth would be in remainder to the titles and estates of the Earls of Macclesfield. A reciprocal arrangement was made in respect of a failure of the male heirs of Sir William and his wife, Lady Elizabeth, whereby the Heathcote estates would

<sup>53</sup> 63M84/6, 'Copy of letter my dear mother wrote for me to Mr Griffeth enquiring about Mistress Parker', n.d..

<sup>54</sup> Lloyd Bonfield, *Marriage settlements, 1601–1740: The adoption of the Strict Settlement* (1983), p. xiii.

Barbara English and John Saville, *Strict Settlement, A guide for historians* (1983), 17–30; Sir John Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt, and the estates system: English land-ownership, 1650–1950* (1994), pp. 146–68.

<sup>55</sup> 219M87/E/T26.

pass to the male descendants of the Earls of Macclesfield. In practice, neither family benefited from this arrangement. The respective male lines have survived down to the present day, and any advantage for the earl's descendants was removed in the late nineteenth century when the Heathcote estate was sold.<sup>56</sup>

During the first four years of their married life, the Heathcotes lived in London. Following the completion of Hursley Lodge in 1724, the family divided its time between Hursley and London. Initially, their London home was in Hackney, where Sir William had been born and brought up. By 1725 they had moved to a rented house in Great Russell Street.<sup>57</sup> In 1734 Sir William bought a property in St James's Square and, in a repeat of his earlier actions at Hursley, he demolished the old house and built himself a new one at a cost of £6,000.<sup>58</sup> The plans for the new house were illustrated in a small booklet,<sup>59</sup> and the architect on this occasion was Henry Flitcroft. The house, number ten, together with the house adjoining has been described as 'perfect examples of the Palladian idea of a London street front reduced to its barest elements'.<sup>60</sup> Number 10, St James's Square, was subsequently home to three Prime Ministers, Chatham, Derby, and Gladstone, and it is now one half of the headquarters of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, formerly Chatham House.

Following their move to Hampshire, the family's time in London was determined by the requirements of Parliament, the business affairs of Sir William, and their social connections. They were usually in London by late November and returned to Hursley the following May. There were shorter visits at other times of the year to accommodate Sir William's business interests, including his investments in stocks and shares, and his arrangements for and the provision of loans. In later life he accepted various London appointments, which ranged from being a vestryman of the parish of St James, Westminster,<sup>61</sup> to being a Justice of the Peace for the liberty of the Dean and Chapter of the Collegiate Church of St Peter, Westminster and St Martin le Grand.<sup>62</sup> He also acted as a trustee for a number of London improvement and repair schemes, such as the repair of the road from St Giles's pound to Kilburn Bridge, and the provision of paving in Oxford Street.<sup>63</sup>

The younger Heathcotes would have grown up experiencing urban and rural social networks. Susan Whyman has described the urban community in London as being made up of a wide range of people at different levels of society, living closely together and linked by business, political and social interests that would have included landed society. Landed society, she claims, was equally flexible, 'forever expanding and contracting, in response to moral and practical considerations, with people mingling together on the basis of shared interests and

<sup>56</sup> C. Mosley, *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* (1999), p. 1366.

<sup>57</sup> 18M54/B2/2/4, Records of purchases by William Heathcote of household goods and furniture from the late Lady Gower's house in Great Russell Street, 17 May 1723; 63M84/287, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1716–49, recording birth of his son, Samuel, at 'my house in Great Russell Street', 2 Sept. 1725, and the birth of his son, George, also at Great Russell Street, 1 Mar. 1735, and 18M54/B2/2/7, Counterpart of

assignment by Sir William Heathcote to Sir John Eyles of his house in Great Russell Street, 2 May 1735.

<sup>58</sup> 63M84/110/7.

<sup>59</sup> 63M84/104.

<sup>60</sup> John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830* (1992), p. 337.

<sup>61</sup> 63M84/265.

<sup>62</sup> 63M84/264.

<sup>63</sup> 63M84/266.

neighbourhood, not just status and occupation'. Whyman does not accept the long-held view that there was a simple dichotomy between rural and urban culture, but claims that rural and urban culture 'teemed with interconnections.' Her examples include John Verney, a younger son of a gentry family. He had become a London merchant and 'created new Metropolitan networks with landed gentry, merchant colleagues, and financiers that overrode social, religious and political values' and, through him, his family had 'gradually absorbed urban culture.'<sup>64</sup> Two of the Heathcote's Hampshire neighbours provide a further and rather different example of this interconnection. Anthony Henley (1667–1711) of the Grange at Northington, and Richard Norton (1667–1732) of Southwick, were both wealthy landowners, fully immersed in the life of the county, but who spent the major part of the winter months in London. They were members of parliament, patrons and practitioners in the world of the arts, members of the Whig Rose Club and the Kit Kat Club, and contributors of satirical articles for *The Tatler* and *The Medley*. Their social, business, and political networks included the aristocratic leaders of the Whig Party, fellow MPs, the leading wits of the day, playwrights, actors, musicians, concert and theatre impresarios, writers and publishers. Norton would later bring acting companies from London to his house in Hampshire during the summer months, where he staged plays for the entertainment of the local population.<sup>65</sup>

Heathcote's networks would not have extended as widely as those of Henley and Norton but, as a London merchant moving into the country, Sir William Heathcote did not experience the 'barrier between business and land', whereby a family could expect to wait for one or two generations before they would be fully accepted into the landed community.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, he found a ready acceptance from the landowning community in Hampshire following his purchase of the Hursley estate, becoming part of the social circle of the county elite and active in local administration. Appointed Deputy Lieutenant for the county as early as 1723,<sup>67</sup> he had become a Member of Parliament for Buckingham in 1722, and from 1729–1741 he sat as one of the members for Southampton. He may have looked towards the more prestigious county seats, but both were dominated, at the time, by the powerful Powlett family, dukes of Bolton.<sup>68</sup>

William Heathcote's acceptance into the Hampshire elite would have been assisted by his upbringing within London's merchant community, his education, his exposure to landed society during the London season and at events outside the capital, a background similar to that of the sons of the aristocracy and gentry.<sup>69</sup> His acceptance would have been further assisted by his wealth and his obvious long-term commitment to the county, and the fact that there were gaps to fill because of the loss, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, of a number of established landed families. Heathcote's intention had clearly been to become a

<sup>64</sup> Whyman, *Sociability and power*, pp. 67–73, 18, 80.

<sup>65</sup> Albert Gallon, 'The West End Theatre comes to Hampshire: Richard Norton (1667–1732) of Southwick Park, landowner and man of the theatre', *Theatre notebook: A journal of the history and technique of the British theatre*, 72 (2) (2018), pp. 66–77.

<sup>66</sup> G. E. Mingay, *The gentry, The rise and fall of a ruling class* (1976), pp. 6–7, and Lawrence and Jeanne

C. Fawtier Stone, *An open elite? England, 1540–1880* (1984), p. 221.

<sup>67</sup> 63M84/259.

<sup>68</sup> 63M84/287, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1716–49, entry 22 Oct. 1722; Romney Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1715–54* (2 vols, 1970), II, p. 197.

<sup>69</sup> Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 6.

county landowner and establish a landed dynasty.<sup>70</sup> By 1733 he was the owner of a large estate and country seat in Hampshire, he had built a new house in fashionable St James's Square in London, he was a Member of Parliament, he had a prominent role in the governance of the county, and he had a wife and six children which, importantly, included four sons. His position within the county elite was sealed on 16 August of that year, when he was created a baronet.<sup>71</sup>

### III

Sir William Heathcote's Hursley estate was run in a business-like manner and, in necessarily delegating much of the work to his steward, he provided detailed instructions, expected to be kept informed through regular communications, and was quick to intervene if he disagreed with the actions being taken. He was particularly interested in the woods and the production and sale of timber, given that this made a significant contribution to estate income. He continually sought improvements, kept up to date with developments in agriculture, and was happy to seek advice from fellow landowners on a range of matters. In February 1728, for example, he was questioning the number of deer that he should keep in his park and received a response from a Mr Cartwright who advised him to keep 200, out of which he would kill eight brace of bucks and eight brace of does each year. The keeper of the Duke of Bedford (the duke kept deer at his Stratton Park estate, near Micheldever in Hampshire), and Lord Lymington were also consulted, and the advice received was rigorously followed.<sup>72</sup>

Servants provide further examples of Heathcote's continuing practice of consulting and seeking advice from fellow landowners. An entry in his diary in March 1738, noted that he had consulted Sir John Shelley and Sir Henry Gough about the wages they paid to their stewards. Sir John, with an estimated income of £6,000 per annum, is recorded as paying his steward '30 guineas a year', with board and a horse, whilst Sir Henry paid his steward '£40 a year', with his board when he was in town.<sup>73</sup> Heathcote's steward was paid £50 per annum in 1732, and £80 in 1745, but did not receive any allowances for board, and does not appear to have been supplied with a horse.<sup>74</sup> On another occasion he consulted on the wages paid for keepers, and his diary records that the figures varied from the £4 per annum paid by the Earl of Radnor, to the £12 per annum paid by Colonel Fleming.<sup>75</sup> The annual wage of Sir William's keeper had been £14 since 1732.<sup>76</sup>

It is not clear if these consultations and comparisons reflected a concern about paying too much, or the need to establish if his wage rates were sufficient to attract and retain key servants. Heathcote did, nevertheless, pay well. His wages bill for 17 servants in 1724 amounted to £215, for 18 servants in 1732 it was £283, and for 17 servants in 1745 it was £198.<sup>77</sup> These figures

<sup>70</sup> 63M84/235, Notebook of Samuel Heathcote 1692–1716, continued after his death in 1708 by his son William, entry for 29 Sept. 1715.

<sup>71</sup> 63M84/262, 232 p. 11, nineteenth-century copy of the Patent of Baronetcy granted to William Heathcote of Hursley in 1733.

<sup>72</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote 1724–39, entries for 28 Feb. 1728, Jun. 1728,

and 13 Aug. 1730.

<sup>73</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1723–39, entry Mar. 1739.

<sup>74</sup> 63M84/313/1 and 2.

<sup>75</sup> 63M84/314.

<sup>76</sup> 63M84/313/1 and 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

compare favourably with those paid by the dukes of Bolton, the leading landowning family in Hampshire during the first half of the eighteenth century. The figures were also at the higher end of the wages of eighteenth-century servants provided by J. Jean Hecht,<sup>78</sup> so it is perhaps not surprising that the Heathcotes were rather more successful in retaining their servants for lengthier periods than many other landowners. Samuel Pineau, for example, was employed by the Heathcotes for over 30 years. John White, the steward, was in the employment of the Heathcotes for over 15 years, whilst John Noyce, a butler, and Edward Bishop, a keeper, were both employed for over 25 years. William Clark, a coachman, remained with the Heathcotes for 23 years, and Richard Fielder, postilion and groom, for over 20 years. Mary Potter, the housekeeper, Charles Nichols and Joseph Lane, both footmen, stayed with the Heathcotes for at least eight years.<sup>79</sup> Pineau was particularly well regarded as provision was made for him to receive a pension of £25 per year – equivalent to half his wages – in Heathcote's will.<sup>80</sup> Pineau had initially been employed as a tutor for the Heathcote children and had later become a valued administrative assistant.

There were other examples of Heathcote's generosity towards servants. John Laison was pardoned for what was clearly not a first offence, and although 'his most insolency saucy behaviour deserved his being immediately discharged my service', he was forgiven because 'he seems to be penitent for his offence and in compassion for his wife'. Any future such behaviour would, nevertheless, result in him 'being turned away'.<sup>81</sup> Referring, in a letter to his steward, to the servant Ruth Fielder, he noted that 'I had no occasion for Ruth this winter, but kept her out of kindness to her family, & that we take her to be truly honest and diligent servant'. The same letter illustrates the other side of his character: his strong sense of discipline. His steward was criticized for failing to exercise his responsibilities, with Sir William expressing his surprise:

that the Dairy Maid refuses to let you see the directions Lady Betty (Heathcote's wife, Elizabeth) left with her that you may see she performs her directions. When I am absent you are in my place; on receipt of this ask her for her directions which if she refuses to produce discharge her from my service and employ Ruth Fielder to do her business.<sup>82</sup>

On another occasion, when he had been advised that some of his servants were frequenting the Dolphin Inn in Hursley, 'which is represented as a very bad house and that they get drunk & keep very disorderly company', he left instructions that, 'without noise', his steward 'would have a watchful eye upon them and the house, to prevent any bad consequences that may happen by a company of drunken fellows'.<sup>83</sup>

The steward, John White, was later discovered to have embezzled £614 9s. 4d. after being criticized for failing to keep the books up to date and to provide the accounts.<sup>84</sup> Heathcote dismissed him from his service, demanded that he pay back all of the money, and in a letter

<sup>78</sup> J. Jean Hecht, *The domestic servant class in eighteenth-century England* (1956), pp. 141–9.

<sup>79</sup> 63M84/313/1 and 2.

<sup>80</sup> 18M54/D7/7.

<sup>81</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to Benjamin White, 12 June

1748.

<sup>82</sup> 27M54/2, Heathcote to John White, 22 Oct. 1730.

<sup>83</sup> 27M54/2, Samuel Pineau to John White, 26 Nov.

1730.

<sup>84</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 28 Jan. 1738

to his son, John White Jun., an attorney of Romsey, said that he was ‘unwilling to go to extremities with him, but will give him some time to pay the money though he deserves no favour from me having made such bad returns for all the kindness I have shown him and his family’.<sup>85</sup> Heathcote appointed another of White’s sons, Benjamin, as his steward. He also allowed the family to continue living in their house because he did not consider that John White’s wife should suffer for her husband’s misdemeanours.

Heathcote could also adopt a harsh approach to servants if they posed a threat to his household, for example, at times when outbreaks of illness were prevalent. When employing Henry Collins as a postilion in April 1729, a year when smallpox was causing great concern, Heathcote included a clause in the terms of his offer of employment noting that if Collins ‘shall be taken ill of the smallpox he is to quit my service and be at his own expense’.<sup>86</sup> This combination of discipline and paternalism was not untypical among landowners. Susan Whyman has provided examples of a similar approach by Sir Ralph Verney of Claydon (1613–96) who provided money for a servant who was sick, as he did not want her to continue suffering, and he also undertook to pay for the funeral of another servant, but with the proviso that she was buried at Claydon and not elsewhere.<sup>87</sup>

#### IV

William Heathcote’s treatment of his sons could be equally harsh. He believed in making them independent and encouraged them to live frugally, and the allowances he gave them were considered, particularly by his elder sons, Thomas and William, to be far less generous than those provided by the fathers of their contemporaries.<sup>88</sup> Their younger brother Samuel, at school in Hackney, and on a particular occasion plainly feeling the cold, asked that his father make arrangements for him to have a fire in his room as provided by parents of other boys.<sup>89</sup> On another occasion, Samuel, anxious to come home to St James’s Square in London during a holiday period, asked his mother if he might be so bold as:

to beg the favour of you and my father to be so kind as to give me leave to come home this Shrovetide and if you please I will walk it as I did last Shrovetide for I would much rather walk it than go in the coach and I will only have two shirts which I can carry in my pockets.<sup>90</sup>

Samuel’s hope of coming home was not to be jeopardized by using the coach and having to ask for money over and above his agreed allowance.

The terms and conditions of such allowances were generally specified with little, if any, room for manoeuvre. When the Heathcote’s eldest son Thomas completed his studies at Oxford in the summer of 1742 (he had come of age on 22 July), his father agreed to ‘continue to allow him

<sup>85</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White Jun., 29 Apr. 1740.

<sup>86</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–39, entry for 21 Apr. 1729.

<sup>87</sup> Whyman, *Sociability and power*, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> 63M84/305.

<sup>89</sup> 63M84/366.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

£150 a year'. He would also provide him and his servant with board and lodging at his houses in London and Hursley, and 'allow you hay and grass for two horses in the country', with Thomas having 'to find shoeing, farriering, saddles, bridles, etc.' Thomas could also expect to be provided with stable room, 'If at any time you have a mind to have your horses in town', but he would have to find the horses 'hay and corn, etc.' Sir William also undertook to hire a man for Thomas, 'before we go to Hursley next summer', with Thomas paying his wages and having to 'pay for his livery the same that I give'.<sup>91</sup> When Thomas's younger brother Samuel returned, in 1750, from a less than successful venture as a merchant in Lisbon, arranged by his father, Sir William advised him that he would

give you your lodging and board and washing and an allowance of £60 a year, to be paid until I can get you into some business or purchase you some place. You are to pay me all the money you shall receive from Mr Burrell or from Lisbon towards discharging the £2,700 that I have paid on your account. You are to pay for clothes, apothecaries' bills and other expenses.<sup>92</sup>

Samuel obviously lacked his father's energy and business acumen. He spent the rest of his long life living on the Hursley estate on a small allowance with some additional financial assistance from his elder brother Thomas.

The ordered and disciplined approach adopted by Sir William Heathcote, together with the general avoidance of anything other than small and short-term debts, and the financial and legal arrangements made for the future, did nevertheless ensure that the family estate was never under any form of financial threat. There were occasions when he did borrow, as illustrated in the 1728 purchase of the Stoke Charity estate. Heathcote had intended to fund the purchase from the sale of East India stock, but it took longer than expected and he borrowed £10,000 from his uncle, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, and from the bank, to avoid selling the stock 'when they are so much fallen'.<sup>93</sup> There was a further illustration in 1738 when he rejected a request for a loan from Sir Francis Drake, his brother-in-law, because he has himself had to borrow 'to make up a sum to pay the Earl of Burlington (of the order of £30,000 for an estate in Ireland) and have ready money only from hand to mouth'.<sup>94</sup> It is worth adding that he was also reluctant to loan anything to this particular relative because he had a poor record in making repayments.

A full account of his financial affairs is available for the year ended 30 March 1730 and is reproduced in Table 1. This shows the value of the Hursley estate to be £91,100. Associated items, such as jewels and plate, books, furniture, coaches, horses, and the stock of deer, brought the figure up to £97,500, and this accounted for a little under two thirds of his total wealth of £152,885. The remaining third, £54,885, was accounted for in various investments, loans (which he prosecuted vigorously when interest and capital payments were not made on time), and from property he owned in London and Oxfordshire.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> 63M84/305/1.

<sup>92</sup> HRO 6M84/305/2.

<sup>93</sup> 27M54/2, Heathcote to the earl of Macclesfield, 7 and 11 Dec. 1728.

<sup>94</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to Sir Francis Drake, 19 May 1738.

<sup>95</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–9, entry for 30 Mar. 1730.

TABLE 1. The value of William Heathcote's estate, 30 March 1730

<b>Hampshire Estate</b>	
Income of £2,100 per annum freehold at 25 years purchase	£52,500
Income of £800 per annum leasehold at 17 years purchase	£13,600
Value of timber computed at	£25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£91,100</b>
<b>Investments</b>	
East India stock: £6,000 at 80	£10,800
South Sea stock: £5,500 at 103	£5,665
Bank stock: £3,000 at 140	£4,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£20,665</b>
<b>Loans, mortgages, and small investments</b>	
Earl of Macclesfield on mortgage	£26,000
Half a New River share	£2,500
Ferne & Company on Bond	£1,500
Robert Brisco	£1,300
Nicholas Cory	£500
Thomas Parker	£400
Mrs. Holworthy	£200
Freeme & Company (turnpike)	£300
Circulating Exchequer bills	£200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£32,900</b>
<b>London and Oxfordshire property</b>	
House in Chequer Alley, London	£50
House in Portugal Street, London	£300
House in Great Russell Street, London	£600
Great Russell Street furniture	£300
Houses in Bensington, Oxfordshire	£70
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,320</b>
<b>Other</b>	
Jewels and plate	£1,500
Hursley books	£1,000
Cash	£1,800
Hursley furniture	£1,700
Two coaches, chariot, harnesses, seven coach horses, eight saddle horses	£200
Stock of deer	£200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,400</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>£152,885</b>

*Source:* HRO, 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–9, entry for 30 Mar. 1730.



The policy of retaining a significant proportion of wealth in other forms of investments was crucial in enabling him to build capital to finance the development and expansion of his estate, and it also provided a safeguard against a downturn in estate income. Annual income in 1733 from the settled estate (entailed on his eldest son, Thomas), for example, amounted to £2,445 9s. 6d.<sup>96</sup> Eight years later, in 1741, it had risen to £2,542 19s. 8d. Income from leasehold properties in that year amounted to £859 8s. 10d., which increased the overall income from the Hampshire estate to £3,619 11s. 10d. Timber was valued at £30,000 and computed at 4 per cent to provide an annual value of £1,200, although it was not sold on an annual basis. Expenditure on the estate during 1741 amounted to £910, of which almost half, £440, was accounted for by the Land Tax at 4 per cent. Repairs and deductions accounted for a further £150; bad debts £72; wages for the steward, Benjamin White, £80; management of the woods and coppices £18; loss on the park £100, and a further £50 on small items. Available income was thus reduced from £3,619 11s. 10d. to £2,709 11s. 10d.<sup>97</sup> It was further reduced by the £2,000 expenditure incurred by the house and family on various items ranging from housekeeping (£410); servant's salaries and wages (£280); stable expenses at Hursley (£275); and clothes for the family (£200); to the cost of dancing and writing masters for the children (£25); liveries for servants (£50); and garden expenses (£90).<sup>98</sup> Although financially healthy, the resulting balance of £709 11s. 10d. would not have been sufficient to have funded the various building projects, estate expansion and improvements undertaken by Heathcote, without long-term borrowing and this he sought to avoid.

## V

Concern for meeting such expenditure in the future prompted him to look at increasing his landholding and he briefly considered the purchase of estates at Kings Somborne and at Odiham, but he was, by this time, becoming disillusioned with his Hampshire estate. From the late 1730s and for much of the 1740s there were repeated failures to find tenants for his farms and to obtain payment of rents for farms that were leased. It was a period of agricultural depression that stemmed from a long-term decline in grain prices stretching back to the 1650s, and it affected farming over a wide area from Yorkshire and Cheshire in the north, through the Midland counties to as far south as Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.<sup>99</sup> He was continually demanding that his steward send him some rents, complaining that 'there is now owing me in Hampshire near £9,000 which appears by the books, this is a very great sum to lie dead'. He referred to another problem in asking 'can you hear of no good tenants yet to take Merdon, Pittleworth, and Park farms, and what of Hiltingbury and Growd Hill farms? I am very unfortunate to have these farms so long in my hands'.<sup>100</sup> Two months later he was again complaining about the failure to find suitable tenants, but, strangely, was prepared to pay up to £2,050 for 'Fielder's estate'.<sup>101</sup> In late February of the

<sup>96</sup> 63M84/109.

<sup>97</sup> 63M84/110/4 and 5.

<sup>98</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William Heathcote, 1724–39, computation of yearly expenditure, 30 Mar. 1730.

<sup>99</sup> G. E. Mingay, 'The agricultural depression, 1730–1750', *ECHR* 8 (1956), pp. 333–4.

<sup>100</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 17 Oct. 1737.

<sup>101</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 20 Dec. 1737.

following year, he was pressing the need to collect rents and arrears briskly, as he is to ‘pay about £30,000 in three to four months in part of a purchase’ (of an estate in Ireland).<sup>102</sup> The pressure on his steward continued and he was still being urged to collect money from tenants into the 1740s.<sup>103</sup>

Landowners ‘could not prosper unless their tenants prospered and, if their tenants were in difficulties, they could not expect to escape unscathed. The best way to deal with the situation was to help tenants to weather the storm’. Christopher Clay has provided examples of such help, which included allowing tenants to accumulate arrears, providing rebates and loans which, in some cases, amounted to hundreds of pounds. Landowners also looked to improvements that could result in rents being more reliably paid. They included improving the land and introducing changes in the way farming was carried out and, more controversially, combining small tenancies into larger holdings.<sup>104</sup> Heathcote regularly sought means of improving his land, but opportunities were limited because of the location of his estate. Hampshire has three basic agricultural regions: the 180 square miles of peaty, sandy, and clay soils in the north, part of the London Basin, which is relatively unproductive; the 550 square miles in the south of the county, known as the Hampshire Basin, which includes the New Forest, and apart from some fertile and productive land in the south west, is particularly poor agricultural land; and the 760 square miles of fertile, elevated, and undulating chalk lands, known as the central chalk lands, which provided the best returns on investment,<sup>105</sup> and where the largest estates, as well as the most extensive occupations, were found.<sup>106</sup> The Heathcote estate was partly within the Hampshire Basin and partly within the central chalk lands and, as a valuation of the late nineteenth century indicated, the northern area of the estate was productive and attractive to tenant farmers, but the southern part of the estate, located in the Hampshire Basin on tertiary clays, gravels, and sands, was poor and unproductive land and unattractive to tenant farmers.<sup>107</sup> This was the area of his estate where Heathcote experienced continuing difficulties in the 1730s and 1740s.

By 1746 he was again informing his steward that:

I am in want of money therefore be diligent in dunning my tenants to get some to remit me. I am quite sick of my Hampshire estate for I believe that few gentlemen have their rent so very ill paid as mine are, if they had they must all run away which would be my case if I had not estates in other places where my rents are punctually paid.<sup>108</sup>

The estate had not lived up to his expectations, and the need for other, more reliable income was a major factor in his decision to look beyond Hampshire and buy a large estate in Ireland in 1737. This estate, which exceeded 60,000 acres across the counties of Cork and Waterford, and included freehold and leasehold property, was managed by agents and, following deductions, brought in just over £3,100 per year.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>102</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 28 Feb. 1738.

<sup>103</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 18 Dec. 1739.

<sup>104</sup> Clay, ‘Landlords’, pp. 230–41.

<sup>105</sup> Ruscombe Foster, *The politics of county power. Wellington and the Hampshire gentlemen, 1820–52* (1990), pp. 6–7.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight* (1813), p. 51.

<sup>107</sup> 63M84/499.

<sup>108</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White, 29 Apr. 1746.

<sup>109</sup> 63M84/110/7; 18M54/C2/1/27.

TABLE 2. The value of Sir William Heathcote's estate, 10 May 1751

<b>Estates</b>	
Hampshire	£90,932 13s. 1d.
Value of Hampshire timber computed at	£23,390 19s. 5d.
Ireland	£55,000 0s. 0d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£169,323 12s. 6d.</b>
<b>Investments</b>	
New River shares	£5,250 0s. 0d.
London Assurance: 200 shares	£2,355 0s. 0d.
7 per cent Emperors Loans (£2,000 principal)	£2,000 0s. 0d.
5 per cent Emperors Loans (£2,400 principal)	£2,287 15s. 0d.
4 per cent Bank annuities (£2,000 stock)	£2,000 0s. 0d.
4 per cent Bank annuities (£7,500 stock)	£7,500 0s. 0d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£21,392 15s. 0d.</b>
<b>Loans, mortgages, and small investments</b>	
Peter Colson on mortgage	£336 0s. 0d.
Hawksworth Cleverley due on Bond	£312 0s. 0d.
Josiah Cannon due on mortgage	£108 0s. 0d.
Eliza Holworthy	£338 6s. 9d.
Harper & Company	£4,972 7s. 2d.
Samuel Heathcote, Junior	£1,938 0s. 2d.
Gilbert Heathcote	£800 0s. 0d.
Bank circulation	£500 0s. 0d.
Advowson of Walton, Liverpool	£3,220 1s. 0d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,524 15s. 1d.</b>
<b>London and Oxfordshire property</b>	
House in St James Square, London	£3,000 0s. 0d.
House in Portugal Street, London	£447 6s. 6d.
Houses in Bensington, Oxfordshire	£72 0s. 0d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,519 6s. 6d.</b>
<b>Other</b>	
Jewels and plate	£1,500 0s. 0d.
Hursley books	£14,998 17s. 0d.
Cash	£967 8s. 6d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£17,466 5s. 6d.</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>£224,226 14s. 7d.</b>

*Note:* The figure was reduced by Sir William Heathcote's debts of £3,647 2s. 5d.  
*Source:* HRO, 63M84/110/2, Summary of the source of Sir William Heathcote's wealth, 25 Mar. 1740.

Despite all the frustrations with legal disputes, the lack of tenants, and tenants who did not pay their rents on time, Sir William Heathcote was able to demonstrate a handsome profit on his business transactions, landed estate, and other incomes. His wealth at 25 March 1740 was estimated at £190,522 16s. 2d.<sup>110</sup> and by 10 May 1751, the day he died, his estimated wealth, as shown in Table 2, was recorded as £220,580 2s. 2d.<sup>111</sup> Dissatisfaction expressed with the Hampshire estate should also be placed in perspective. Sir William Heathcote could certainly have derived a greater return from investments other than land, or from land elsewhere, but the annual Hampshire estate income of £3,619 11s. 10d., plus the further £1,200 of timber income, and the income (in excess of £3,000) from the Irish estate, placed the Heathcotes within the wealthy category of gentry families, according to various estimates of gentry family incomes. Using the figures of the contemporary statisticians, Edward Chamberlayne, Patrick Colquhoun, and Gregory King, Mingay estimated that a wealthy gentry family of England and Wales would have earned between £3,000 and £5,000 from their estate by 1790, the figures having doubled during the one hundred years from 1690.<sup>112</sup> By this estimation, the Heathcote family with an income close to £8,000 would be categorized as very wealthy gentry, but other problems were increasing his dissatisfaction.

There was his wife's health, the discovery that his trusted steward had embezzled the sum of £614 9s. 4d.,<sup>113</sup> and then, in December 1742, the news that his son and heir, Thomas, had secretly married Elizabeth Hinton, a local girl from the village of Hursley. Heathcote and his wife were furious. As heir to the baronetcy and his father's estate, valued at the time by his father as providing an income in excess of £9,000 per annum,<sup>114</sup> Thomas was expected to make a good match and to benefit from a handsome dowry, but his new wife was the daughter of a carpenter, and she brought neither status nor dowry. His parents' anger did not readily subside. In a letter to Thomas, some four years after his marriage, his mother described her continuing unhappiness at the rift that had developed between them and claimed that 'the loss of my health or life would have been little in comparison with the loss of my child'. He was recommended to 'use your utmost endeavours to regain some degree of your father's favour and mine', reminded that he had failed to perform his duty to his parents, and in so doing had failed to perform his duty to God. The letter offered little hope of reconciliation, with Lady Elizabeth signing herself as 'Your Afflicted Mother', rather than her customary 'Your Affectionate Mother'.<sup>115</sup>

Thomas was not reconciled with his mother, and his father was unable to reconcile himself with Elizabeth's family, who were living in a house provided by him in Hursley village. He instructed his steward to remove them.<sup>116</sup> Although he was not able to alter the strict settlement arrangements made for Thomas to succeed him, he did withhold the provisions for his eldest son to have a portion of the unsettled estate at Lady Day 1746, when Thomas would have been 25 years of age, by when, it had been assumed, he would be married to a wife of his

<sup>110</sup> 63M84/110/2.

<sup>111</sup> 63M84/303.

<sup>112</sup> G. E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), pp. 22–6.

<sup>113</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to John White Jun., 29 Apr. 1740.

<sup>114</sup> 63M84/110/7.

<sup>115</sup> 63M84/49, Lady Elizabeth Heathcote to her son, Thomas, n.d.

<sup>116</sup> 27M54/3, Heathcote to Benjamin White, 17 Feb. and 12 Mar. 1742/3.

parents' choice. Proposed initially in 1733, and updated in 1742, these provisions would have given Thomas an income of £1,907 per annum, based on his father's 1742 calculations.<sup>117</sup> But, in his will, dated 11 June 1748, Heathcote confirmed that he had devised the unsettled estate on his son, Thomas, for life, and to trustees to provide contingent remainders. The will also contained the proviso, which illustrated his continued disapproval of his son's choice of wife, that Thomas 'should not permit or suffer his present wife to come to or reside in the parish of Hursley, and that if he should permit or suffer her to come and reside there the said two devises should henceforth become absolutely void'.<sup>118</sup>

Elizabeth may not have been acceptable, but her children received full recognition from their grandfather. Succession was a key factor in Heathcote's long-term plans. He recorded the births in his memorandum book, noting, for example, that 'On 21 June 1746 my grandson William (eldest son of my son Thomas) was born, his Godfathers were his great uncle, the Rt. Hon. George, Earl of Macclesfield, and myself,' and that his Godmother was 'the Lady Drake, his great aunt'.<sup>119</sup> The ban on Elizabeth was subsequently revoked in a codicil dated 1 July 1749, and Sir William was very sympathetic when soon afterwards, on 27 December 1749, his daughter-in-law died of smallpox. He wrote expressing his pity and hope of 'God to support you under this great affliction' and agreed immediately to Thomas's request that Elizabeth should be buried in the family vault at Hursley. 'It shall always be my endeavour', Sir William added, 'to shew myself a kind and affectionate father to you and to your children', and it was 'his desire and advice that Thomas should come home to live with me directly, where you will always find a hearty and sincere welcome'.<sup>120</sup>

## VI

Thomas did return to Hursley, and when Sir William died on 10 May 1751, he inherited his father's title and the settled part of his father's Hampshire estate as a tenant for life. Sir William had achieved his part in creating a landed dynasty by passing on a financially sound estate to his descendants. The estate continued in the family's ownership through the next four generations, but the external wealth of the first Sir William Heathcote, so crucial in the development and running of the estate, was no longer available by the time that the fifth Baronet, another Sir William (1801–81), inherited the estate in 1821. Added to this, the Irish estates, property in London and Oxford, and a significant part of the Hampshire estate had been disposed of following a modification of the entail and a subsequent family disagreement. Income was less than that required to support the lifestyle of a country elite family throughout the tenure of the fifth Baronet, and he struggled to resolve this by borrowing and then mortgaging parts of the estate. His hopes of recovery ended with the onset of the late nineteenth-century depression and the estate, by this time just over 14,000 acres,<sup>121</sup> was placed in the hands of

<sup>117</sup> 63M84/110/6–7, and 63M84/111.

<sup>118</sup> 18M54/D7/10.

<sup>119</sup> 63M84/288, Memorandum book of William, later Sir William, Heathcote, 1716–49, entry for 21 Jun. 1746.

<sup>120</sup> 18M54/D7/10, codicil to Heathcote's will, 1 Jul. 1749,

and 63M84/350, Heathcote to Thomas Heathcote, 30 Dec. 1749.

<sup>121</sup> John Bateman, *The great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1878), p. 215.

Trustees following his death. The house and main estate at Hursley was sold in 1889,<sup>122</sup> and the remaining parts of the Hampshire estate, the manors of Compton,<sup>123</sup> Stoke Charity,<sup>124</sup> Fullerton,<sup>125</sup> Pittleworth,<sup>126</sup> and Durley, together with a number of advowsons and smaller properties, had all been sold by 1892.<sup>127</sup> The first Sir William Heathcote's vision of a landed dynasty had suffered the same fate as that of many of his wealthy contemporaries who had become part of the eighteenth-century landed elite.

<sup>122</sup> 219M87/E/T46; VCH *Hampshire*, III, p. 420.

<sup>123</sup> VCH *Hampshire*, III, p. 407.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>125</sup> VCH *Hampshire*, IV, p. 413.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 492.

<sup>127</sup> VCH, *Hampshire*, III, p. 289; VCH *Hampshire*, IV, pp. 432, 447.