

Richard Musgrave, introduced into the Commons a bill to deprive the Earl of Cumberland of his hereditary shrievalty in the County of Westmorland. Cumberland's men were quick to respond. Thomas Jolye, the Earl's nominated Burgess for Appleby, purchased a copy of the bill from the commons' clerk. Sir William Babthorpe and Sir Nicholas Fairfax 'with so many of your lordship's friends' spoke against the bill. '[I] thinketh it will be no further spoken of, but, just in case, he had recruited seven other members to voice their opposition to it and he trusted to have 'almost the whole House of that part'. However, Jolye assured Cumberland that Lord Dacre had promised to resist the bill if it did reach the Lords. The bill failed.²¹ In Mary's reign Wharton complained to the Council of 'sundry heinous and greivous disorders' committed by Cumberland against him and his tenants and in February 1558 a bill was introduced into the Lords to punish the 'lewd misdemeanours' of the Earl's servants and tenants towards him. That attempt too was scotched.²²

Boroughs, as well as great men, had their interests to push. Here we witness a reverse process. Exeter, for example, needed to build a 'cutt' (a canal) to the sea in order to bypass the River Exe, rendered unnavigable by silting and the encroachment of Exminster Marsh. It looked to its powerful patrons, the first and second Earls of Bedford, to promote its scheme in parliament, greasing the palm with occasional gifts such as a tun of Gascon wine. However, there were shoals and rapids in their relationship, as in 1563 when Exeter rebuffed Bedford's request to nominate one of its members and he retaliated with a thinly-veiled threat to withdraw his favour.²³ Above all there was London. It was the most powerful urban economic interest and active, organised lobby in Tudor parliaments. This can be illustrated by its tenacious campaign to conserve existing timber supplies and replenish forests. There were two reasons for this. The City provided cheap subsidised bread and fuel for its poor, an expression both of the paternalism of the City governors and their concern to prevent social discontent, which might lead on to public disturbance. Secondly, London's rapid growth demanded timber for the building industry. However, the depredations of the Wealden iron industry, south of London, were rapidly depleting resources in order to produce charcoal for smelting. From the 1540s through to the 1580s the City fought a running parliamentary battle to preserve timber and, increasingly, against the iron interest. It looked to powerful patrons at Court, especially in the Council, and it argued in parliament that it was defending the public interest. However, it also had formidable opponents. The Sidney family had invested in the iron industry. In 1572 its