

POLITICS AND SOCIETY
IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
1649-1714

Ph. D. 1983

P.R. BRINDLE

UMI Number: U345541

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U345541

Published by ProQuest LLC 2015. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346



Thesis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. THE COUNTY COMMUNITY IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	1
The Topography of Northamptonshire	1
The Seventeenth Century Image of the County	6
The County's Agriculture	11
Enclosure	20
The Waters of Northamptonshire	24
Northamptonshire Forests	26
A Comfortable Environment	30
The Human Geography of Northamptonshire	35
Industry and Poverty	46
II. THE COUNTY COMMUNITY OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1649-1714	60
The Number of Gentry in Late-Stuart Northamptonshire	60
The Distribution of Gentry in Northamptonshire	67
The Wealth of the Gentry	74
Change in the Gentry Community	81
The County Community and the County Elite	86
III. THE INTERREGNUM	104
The County and the Execution of Charles I	104
The Shire and its Representatives	104
The Response of the County's Governors: Co-operation	111
The Response of the County's Governors: Defection	117
The Revolutionary Settlement	128
The Adherents of the Good Old Cause	128

	Page
Social Discontent in Northamptonshire	145
The Opponents of the Good Old Cause	155
IV. THE RESTORATION	168
The County and the Return of the Rump Parliament	168
The Elections to the Convention Parliament	181
The Restoration of County Government	191
The Settlement of the Militia	193
Policing the County	203
V. THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT: ELECTIONS AND ELECTIONEERING IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1661-75	209
VI. THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT UNSETTLED: THE POPISH PLOT; EXCLUSION; ROYAL REACTION AND THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION	248
The Popish Plot	248
The Stuart Revenge, 1681-1685	281
The Reign of James II, 1685-1688	291
VII. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND THE STRIFE OF PARTY 1689-1714	304
The County after the Glorious Revolution, 1689-1695	304
The County Community and Party Politics, 1695-1714	327
The Commission of the Peace in the Reign of Queen Anne	337

	Page
Elections and the Electorate in	
Northamptonshire	342
Conclusion	349
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 351

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Acts and Ord.</u>	C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, ed., <u>Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum</u> 3 Vols., 1911.
<u>Al. Cant.</u>	A.J. Venn, ed., <u>Alumni Cantabrigienses</u> P.t. 1, 4 Vols.
<u>Al. Oxon.</u>	J. Foster, ed., <u>Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714</u> , 4 Vols.
Baker.	G. Baker, <u>History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton</u> , 2 Vols. 1822-41.
<u>B.I.H.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research.</u>
B.L., Add. MSS.	British Library, Additional Manuscripts.
B.L., Eg.	British Library, Egerton Manuscripts.
Bodley.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
<u>Borough Records</u>	C. Markham and J.C. Cox, eds., <u>Records of the Borough of Northampton</u> , 2 Vols., 1898.
Bridges.	P Whalley, ed., <u>History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire, compiled from the collections of J. Bridges</u> , 2 Vols. 1791.
<u>Cal. Adv. Mon.</u>	<u>Calendar of the Committee for the Advance of Money.</u>
<u>Cal. Clar. S. P.</u>	Various editors, <u>Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers</u> , 4 Vols. 1872.
<u>Cal. Comm. Comp.</u>	<u>Calendar of the Committee for Compounding.</u>
<u>Cal T.B.</u>	<u>Calendar of Treasury Books.</u>
<u>C.J.</u>	<u>Journals of the House of Commons</u>
<u>Diary of Thomas Isham.</u>	Sir Gyles Isham, ed., <u>The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1658-81</u> , 1971.
<u>D.N.B.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography.</u>
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review.</u>
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission.
<u>N.P. and P.</u>	<u>Northamptonshire Past and Present.</u>
<u>N.N. and Q.</u>	<u>Northamptonshire Notes and Queries.</u>

N.R.O.	Northamptonshire Record Office.
N.R.S.	Northamptonshire Record Society.
P.R.O.	Public Records Office.
<u>T.S.P.</u>	T. Birch, ed., <u>A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe Esq.</u> , 7 Vols., 1742.
V.C.H.	Victoria History of the Counties of England.
<u>V.C.H. Northants.</u>	<u>Victoria History of the Counties of England, Northamptonshire</u> , 1902.

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTY COMMUNITY IN THE LATE-SEVENTEENTH CENTURYTHE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LANDSCAPE: "A COUNTY OF SPRINGS, SPIRES AND SQUIRES".¹The Topography of Northamptonshire

In the early modern period most writers on Northamptonshire, at some place in their description, drew their readers' attention to one of the county's few distinctive features - its geographical shape. It was probably Thomas Fuller who first pointed out the county's rather peculiar form when, with the local insight and amor patriae of a native "worthy", he reverentially intoned, "O long Northants."²

That Northamptonshire is "a long narrow inland county . . . stretched from north-east to south-west" is now a commonplace, but it is an observation still worth repeating.³ During the period of this thesis, long before the Soke of Peterborough had been detached from the north-eastern end of the county and added to a greater Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire stretched for some seventy miles in length, from Aynho in the south-west to the North Fen in the furthestmost extremity of the Soke, but was scarcely ever more than twenty miles in breadth, measuring only twenty-five miles at the widest. This frequent observation was often coupled with another feature of the county - its geographical location. To use Fuller's anatomically picturesque metaphor, Northamptonshire is "seated almost in the navel of England".⁴

1. Nineteenth century proverb quoted in H. Rider Haggard, Rural England, II, 1906, p. 127.

2. J Gutch, ed., Collectanea Curiosa, I, 1781, p. 222, Mr Fuller's Observations of the Shires, c. 1633.

3. T. Fuller, The Worthies of England ed., J. Freeman, 1952, p. 423.

4. Gutch, Collectanea, p. 223.

Because of its situation and shape Northamptonshire "bordereth on more counties than any other in England" - Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Rutland.⁵ Or, as another writer had it, "Northamptonshire . . . by reason of its oblong form touches upon more counties than any other shire in England."⁶

It is for this reason that any topographical description is bound to make Northamptonshire seem perhaps too sharply divided into separate segments so that it lacks an overall identity. The county's position, in an area of geographical transition between the Fens, the Midland Plain and the Costswolds, allows several distinct divisions to be drawn between one part of the county and another; and these divisions are accentuated by the distances created by the county's peculiar, elongated form. In many places the Northamptonshire countryside seems to have more in common with one of its bordering counties than with its own hinterland. John Clare's "naked fens" in the Soke of Peterborough, where "there's not a hill in all the view," resemble Lincolnshire far more than, say Rockingham Forest. At the other extreme of the shire, the south-eastern flank of the county takes on the character of the Bedfordshire Ouse, while in the south-west, the Northamptonshire Wolds have the same characteristics as the Oxfordshire hills beyond the Cherwell that rise into the Cotswolds. Even apparently distinct boundaries can seem less clear than they should be. The River Welland is a sharply defined boundary, marking the county's

5. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, p. 423.

6. T. Cox, Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua et nova. Or, a New Survey of Great Britain wherein to the topographical account given by Mr Camden and the late editors of his Britannia is added a more large history, III, 1724, p. 459.

western and northern borders for some forty miles, but both sides of its valley tend to look much alike whether the county opposite be flat Lincolnshire, gently undulating Rutland, or more rolling Leicestershire. Even the prominent scarp that shapes the county's north-eastern edge is often mirrored on the other side of the Welland, as at Barrowden in Rutland. It is interesting to note, in this context, that at least one seventeenth century writer, the pastoral poet, Michael Drayton, also shared this opinion and made much the same kind of comment about Northamptonshire and Rutland when he wrote that they "did shew by their full soils all of one piece to be."⁷

Inside the county these changes in topography are often more subtle than dramatic. Being a county of transition few sharp dividing lines can be drawn within Northamptonshire, as one regional landscape merges with the next. The geological factors underlying these topographical changes can help to distinguish separate regions in the county. Although the geology of the county presents a somewhat confusing picture for the layman, and hence can blur the distinctions between one region and another, a simplified sketch reveals some of Northamptonshire's internal contrasts.⁸

Much of the county is founded upon that belt of Oolite limestone which stretches from Dorset, up through the Cotswolds, to Lincolnshire. This forms an initially elevated tract that runs through the middle of the county, gradually descending along its main axis from Brackley to Stamford.

7. J W. Helsall, ed., Poly-Olbion by Michael Drayton, Being the Fourth Volume of his Works, 1933, p. 471.

8. The following description is based on V.C.H., Northants, I, pp. 1-40; and L.D. Stamp, The Land of Britain, The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, Parts 58 - 59, Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough, 1943, passim.

Partly because of the effects of glacial drift boulder clay, and partly because the Oolite takes a wide variety of different forms, such as the Great, the Lincolnshire limestone, and such Inferior Oolites as the Northampton Sands of the Ironstone series and the Stone- and Cornbrashes, many of these frequently existing in isolated pockets or strips, it is difficult to generalise about the Oolite belt. In the main, however, with some notable exceptions like the heathlands around Wittering and north of the county town, the Oolite belt, as it conforms to the pattern of low-lying hills held between the River Nene and its tributaries, is quite fertile and particularly suited to mixed farming. In the early-modern period, in fact, a mixed sheep-corn husbandry was essential for maintaining the fertility and consolidation of the rather loose "Redland" soils founded on the Northampton Sands and other ironstones.

Running north-east between Yardley Hastings and Warmington, parallel to the Oolite belt's eastern flank, is an area of low-lying Oxford Clay. This is mainly on the eastern side of the Nene Valley but drifts south and west into the district of Whittlewood and Salcey Forests, and crosses the Nene around Aldwinkle and Oundle into Rockingham Forest. Most of this land is wet and sticky in winter and baked hard in summer; cultivation is therefore unrewarding, except where good drainage can be obtained, then it is reasonably fair for beans; it makes poor quality grassland and so the county's woodlands probably make the best use of a weak soil.

On the western flank of the Oolite belt, as the land rises and because the Oolite layer is inclined upwards in that direction, the Oolite has been stripped away to reveal the underlying Liassic rocks. The Lias are also frequently exposed by the removal of the overlying Oolite along the bottom of the county's river valleys. The Lias area takes the form of sometimes steep, interlocking hills and ridges capped either by drift clay or by outliers of the Oolite, with marls and other clays on the hill sides and on

the valley bottoms. Despite some differences in fertility between the clays associated with the Upper, Middle and Lower Lias, they all help to create the right conditions for fair to excellent grassland, although they are too heavy for general arable use. The exposed Liassic clays that follow the river valleys are usually mixed with limestone and covered by alluvial deposits and thus give rise to good meadowland.

North of the Clay belt and east of the Oolite are the Fenland Valley gravel deposits in the Soke of Peterborough. The alluvial rich black mould formed on this is very fertile both for pasture and for arable.

In general terms, therefore, the topography of the county can be simplified by dividing it into seven main regions. At the northernmost end is the low-lying fenland of the Soke of Peterborough. To the west and south of the Soke are the steadily rising undulations of the Rockingham Forest region. Running from the south-west, and including most of its own headwaters together with the lower reaches of the River Ise, is the valley of the River Nene. Between the Nene Valley and the Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire borders is the flat and uninteresting landscape of the Clay Vale. South and west of the Vale is the area of Salcey and Whittlewood Forests. On the west side of the county, running between Market Harborough and Chipping Warden are the Northamptonshire Heights. Otherwise known as the Northamptonshire Uplands they are an elevated tract usually between 450 and 550 feet above sea level in height, although they reach 723 feet at Arbury Hill, otherwise known in the seventeenth century as Hellidon Hill, south-west of Daventry. The Uplands are the county's main watershed. Forming one continuous descent in the west, like an uninterrupted fence to the county, they give rise to the Rivers Welland, Leam, Avon, and Cherwell. Dropping away more gently to the east they give rise to the River Nene and all its tributaries, which in a general way all flow east and north, and the Ouse and Tove which flow further south. The last region that needs delineating is an extension of

the Uplands, the Northamptonshire Wolds, which occupy the south-west corner of the county. They are no higher than the Uplands but are far steeper and more rolling.

This topographical pattern can be simplified even further. Of particular importance are the contrasts between the Uplands, the Forest regions, the Nene Valley and the Fens. More simply and more important still, is the fundamental division, clearly seen even from the Legend of Christopher Saxton's map of 1576, between the highlands in the west and the lowlands in the east. It was to this stark contrast that the most recent of the county's historians drew attention when he expressed his impression that more than the distance of thirty-five miles separates the character of Northampton, a midland town, from Peterborough, an eastern town.⁹

The Seventeenth Century Image of the County

Professor Everitt has eloquently reminded us of the individual character of such otherwise closely situated localities and of how important are the variations to be found in English provincial life.¹⁰ The importance of such regional diversity as to be found in seventeenth century Northamptonshire must be constantly borne in mind throughout this description of the county.

-
9. W. J. Sheils, The Puritans in Church and Politics in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1570 - 1610, London University Ph. D. thesis, 1974, p. 10.
 10. A. M Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, 2nd Series, I, 1969, pp. 6 - 8.

There is, however, a contrary point of view which, although not incompatible with an appreciation of the county's internal contrasts, would prefer to stress the shire's overall identity. This line of thought was best exemplified by such early-modern topographers as William Camden, John Norden, John Speed, and even at times, by their successors, the Northamptonshire bred biographer of "worthies", Thomas Fuller, the later Stuart travellers, Daniel Defoe and Celia Fiennes, and John Morton, the Curate of Oxenden from 1694 and Rector from 1707, the author of The Natural History of Northamptonshire with an Account of the Antiquities in 1712.¹¹ Most of these writers are well enough known to make any comments upon them unnecessary, but a few words might here be said about Morton. Based on material obviously gathered over a long period, his Natural History is a careful and well organised work which, despite some occasional excesses, comes closer to being a systematic analysis of the county than the literary descriptions of some of its predecessors. He should be considered the most perceptive of all the writers on early-modern Northamptonshire.

Apart from John Morton, Northamptonshire's earliest topographers rarely took any pains to consider the nature of the local variety to be found there. Yet their point of view is still worth considering. Contemporary descriptions, of course, can be useful in forming an impression of the county at this time, especially when they are corroborated by reference to recent research using non-literary sources. Such observations, even if unsupported or even flatly contradicted by modern research, can still be valuable, however, for they tell us what worth was set on any particular attribute of the natural or man-made environment.

11. H. Isham Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500, III, 1940, p. 273.

In the early-modern period almost every writer on Northamptonshire formed a highly favourable impression of the county. Although their flattering comments are for the most part well-known, it will be worthwhile examining and comparing them, not only to assess the correctness of their judgments, but also to reveal through their fulsome panegyrics the degree of unanimity they had in singling out what they, and presumably their peers and contemporaries, thought was most praiseworthy or most notable in the Northamptonshire landscape.

Notwithstanding some awareness of the wide variety of local contrasts to be found in Northamptonshire, most writers went so far as not only to ignore topographical differences, but also to make little attempt to distinguish between the county's material advantages, aesthetic pleasures and social attractions - for the most part they were all mentioned in the same breath. The air, the climate, the scenic views, the population, the number of towns and villages, the woodlands, the fertility of the soil and the nature of local farming were all mentioned one along with another.¹² Even the normally restrained John Morton could succumb to this practice and at one point echoed his predecessors and wrote a more excessively panoramic view of the shire than any of them had ever before attempted. For him, Northamptonshire was:

12. E.g. E. Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, Newly Translated into English, 1695, p. 430; J. Norden, Speculi Britannia Pars Altea, or a Delineation of Northamptonshire, 1720 (originally 1591), p. 24; J. Speed, The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, 1614, p. 55.

"A variety consisting of fruitful fields, pastures and glades and of groves and little woods, or of larger woods intersected by vistas and lawns that the eye may pass through: a country enamelled with brooks and rivers, and embellished with fine well built towns . . . adorned with a great number of handsome churches, of lofty pinnacles and spires, especially along the banks of the River Nene, and is graced with many stately houses of the nobility and gentry."¹³

Morton's vision of an arcadian paradise in all its diverse glory differs from other writers only in the extent of its hyperbole. For Morton this lapse into sentimental fancy was merely an aberration balanced by less indistinct and more detailed descriptions elsewhere. But even Morton, like every other major writer on the county, was concerned to try and establish its overall character by describing its bucolic splendours in such a way as to make it appear an aristocratic playground. Northamptonshire as a whole was identified as a "most pleasant shire" where a gentleman's seat could be both "salutary and profitable."¹⁴ The county was deemed to have everything a nobleman or gentleman could desire by way of natural and man-made amenities, and to have an agrarian economy profitable enough for him to make the best use of them. It was therefore sufficient to go not much further than to single out and list the county's rural charms and thus identify the county by association with its gentle allurements. The link that was recognised to exist between the gentry and the county's many material and aesthetic attractions was made explicitly clear by John Norden:

13. J. Morton, Natural History of Northamptonshire with an Account of the Antiquities, 1712, p. 19.

14. Norden, op.cit., p. 24.

"The fertility, salutary, pleasant perspects and
 conveniency of this Shire in all things to a generous
 and noble mind have so allured the Nobility to plant
 themselves within the same . . . No Shire within this
 land is so plentifully stored with gentry in regard
 whereof this Shire may seem worthy to be termed the
 Herald's garden."¹⁵

That the county was supposed to be well stocked with gentry was a
 curiosity much touched upon by all of Norden's contemporaries. Whether or not
 the gentry population of Northamptonshire was unusually large or thickly
 distributed is a subject better left until the next chapter which is on the
 gentry community. What is important for this chapter is that ever since
 John Leland had discovered in the 1540s that there was a gentleman living in
 almost every Northamptonshire parish, the county was supposed to be "everywhere
 adorned with noblemen's and gentlemen's seats".¹⁶ Even at the beginning of
 the eighteenth century, after two centuries of rising gentry numbers, Daniel
 Defoe thought that the county being "full of gentlemen's seats" was still
 worth remarking upon.¹⁷

Writers like Camden, Norden, Speed and Morton were to a large extent
 concerned to identify the county with this one of its aspects and to try and
 explain why it had proved so attractive. Morton's eulogy and Norden's glowing
 tributes more than adequately summarise Northamptonshire's many supposed
 attractions: fertile farmland; extensive woodlands; a good water supply;
 the aesthetic scenery created by a rolling, pastoral landscape; strong building
 materials, many populous and salubrious townships; and, of course, an already
 long-established and still flourishing gentry community. All of these in

15. ibid., pp. 28 - 29.

16. L. T. Smith, ed., The Itinerary of John Leland, in or about the years
 1535 - 1543, IV, 1964, p. 22; Gibson ed., Camden's Britannia, p. 430.

17. D. Defoe, A Tour through England and Wales ed., G. D. H. Cole, 1928, II, p. 89

combination were discerned to make the county attractive both as an aristocratic playground and as a place of rich agrarian profits. It is for this reason that attention should be paid to the opinions, if not necessarily the observations, of Northamptonshire's early-modern topographers, especially as this thesis is on the seventeenth century gentry community. It will, therefore, be worthwhile examining each of these attractions in turn to compare early-modern attitudes to the Northamptonshire environment alongside modern research.

The County's Agriculture

The first and most attractive of these features that needs examining was the county's material advantage of having a fruitful agriculture. Seventeenth century comment on Northamptonshire presents a picture of a well endowed agrarian economy. Norden described the shire as "adorned with many and noble sheep pastures, rich feedings for cattle, fertile corn grounds and large fields greatly enriching the industrious husbandmen" - an impression repeated by Speed and Camden who thought its soil "rich and fertile" "both for tillage and pasturage".¹⁸ Their view was also shared by Thomas Fuller who, with his presumably wide local knowledge, thought the land fruitful for both corn and grass. Along with Norden, perhaps with greater native pride than objective judgment, he also considered there to be so little unproductive waste ground in the county that, with his usual turn of phrase, he likened it to "an apple without a core to be cut out, or a rind to be pared away" and dismissed a supposedly barren place like Wittering heath as a mere "beauty-spot".¹⁹

18. Norden, op. cit., p. 24; Speed, op. cit., p. 55; Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, p. 430.

19. T. Fuller, The Worthies of England, ed., J. Freeman, 1952, pp. 423, 425; Norden, op. cit., p. 24.

The picture thus composed of a predominantly agrarian county with soils uniformly fertile for both arable and pasture is too unvarying to be taken at face value. It has already been seen that the county can be divided into several topographical areas, yet little note seems to have been taken by the writers of possible regional differences. What they portray would seem to suggest that a system of fielden or mixed farming was practised throughout the shire, but whereas this is most likely for the Nene Valley and areas of the Uplands, it does not seem probable for the Forest and Fen districts.

Not all writers on early-modern Northamptonshire made sweeping generalisations. Fifty years before Norden, John Leland had attempted to differentiate between the agricultural patterns of the woodland and fielden zones, although his description of Rockingham Forest as "furnished about with wood and plenty of corn and grass" is hardly illuminating.²⁰ More perspicacious, and more appropriate to the period of this thesis, was John Morton, and it is instructive to compare what he wrote with the observations of some of his contemporaries and with more modern research. Morton divided the county into four natural regions: Heath, Fen, Fielden or Tillage, and Woodland.

According to Morton there were three areas of the county covered by heath at this time: Wittering, Harlestone, which ran in an arc around the north of the county town, and Bayard's Green, between Hinton and Croughton. So far from being "beauty-spots" their infertility was revealed by their remaining largely unploughed. Heaths were not useless land, however, for they furnished rabbit warrens for meat, turf to be cut for fuel, and grazing for sheep, although the widespread ferns on Wittering heath for instance, made the shepherd's job difficult.²¹

20. Smith, ed., Itinerary of John Leland, I, pp. 11 - 13.

21. Morton, Natural History, pp. 9 - 11.

The Fenlands could have appeared similarly unrewarding because of their frequent inundations, but Morton and Thomas Cox, who borrowed a great deal from him, were quick to point out that these had been much reduced by the works of drainage begun under Charles II. The undertakers licensed in 1663 had drained some 9,800 acres, about a fifth of the area of the Soke, in and around Borough Fen, but had still left a ground that was renewed every winter with alluvial soil brought down by the abated floods. Morton described this soil as "black, spongy and deep," and Borough Great Fen as "one of the richest parcels of feeding land" in the shire, ideal meadowland for grazing sheep and cattle.²² What Morton failed to mention, because for him the Fens had been "filthy quagmires, impassable marshes and unprofitable ground", was that before the Great and Little Borough Fens had been drained, the Fen dwellers had made good use of their environment. They had enjoyed considerable hunting and fishing rights in their marshes and pools, and had held extensive common grazing rights to the spacious lush summer meadows left by the receding winter floods. Nor had these floods been as damaging as might be supposed, for, as Cox suggested, they had rarely driven the cattle out of the Fens completely, and locally bred sheep had been supposed to be immune to the Rot.²³ Many of the Fen dwellers were, in fact, worse off after the drainage work had been completed, and showed their dissatisfaction by rioting; for not only did the ditching and embanking drive out much of the wildlife, but they were also refused compensation by being largely excluded from the new common lands and even denied some of their traditional grazing

22. ibid., pp. 7 - 8; T. Cox, Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua et nova, III, 1724, pp. 462, 558.

23. J. Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500 - 1640, 1967, p. 39; Cox, op. cit., p. 558.

rights.²⁴

The kind of agriculture practised in Northamptonshire at this time has given rise to some confusion, particularly over the relative distribution of arable and pasture, and the extent of enclosure, especially in Morton's Tillage or Fielden districts that covered so much of the county's area. This was not so in the early modern period itself. All of the early topographers, from Camden to Cox, concurred in considering the county to be mainly champion and the land still largely open field. The only serious qualification to this judgment came also from Camden who paradoxically thought Northamptonshire to be overrun with sheep in 1586 - an observation with which Morton pointedly took issue over a hundred years later.²⁵ According to John Morton and Thomas Cox, who have the fullest descriptions of Northamptonshire agriculture, pasture was predominant in the Northamptonshire Uplands, especially in the quadrangle bound between a line drawn from Market Harborough and Brixworth on the one side and the line of Watling Street as far south as the River Nene on the other. There were other important Upland and Wold pastures between Hellidon and Moreton Pinkney, and around Marston St Lawrence and Greatworth. There was also, as Daniel Defoe noted, a range of meadows, up to two miles wide in places, which stretched for thirty miles along the River Nene above Peterborough. Elsewhere, outside the Fen, Forest and Heathland districts, champion country was supposed to prevail; the most "spacious" open corn

24. J. Raithsby, ed., Statutes of the Realm, V, 1819, 15 Car. II, Cap 17; P. R. O., P. C. 2/55, p. 38; P. C. 2/59, pp. 430, 439, 475; P. C. 2/61, pp. 311, 325, 356, 358; Bridges, II, p. 513.

25. Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, p. 430; Speed, op. cit., p. 55, W. Blith, The English Improver Improved, 1652, pp. 100-1; J. Aubrey, The Natural History of Wiltshire, 1685, p. 104; Morton, op. cit., pp. 13 - 16; Cox, op. cit., pp. 558 - 9; and the anonymous author of Dictionarium Urbanicum, 1704, quoted by W. E. Tate, Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire, N.P. and R., I, No. 2, 1949, p. 26.

country, it was thought, lying in a wide area around Northampton and Wellingborough.²⁶

By comparing the relative value of crops and livestock to be found in autumnal probate inventories for the county in this period it should be possible to provide a rough estimate of the kind of farming practised in each region of Northamptonshire and thus check the accuracy of Morton's and Cox's account.²⁷ According to J.A. Yelling a figure for livestock of around 50% or less of the total value of crops and livestock is a good indication of mixed or champion farming.²⁸ In the Soke of Peterborough livestock made up an average of 75% of the total value of livestock and crops along the bank of the River Welland. Along the bank of the River Nene the figure was 86%. In both cases the value of cattle was more than twice that of sheep. In the middle of the Soke farming was more mixed for livestock accounted for only 55% of the total value of farm produce, again with cattle having far more importance than sheep. Other predominantly livestock rearing areas were the lower part of the Nene Valley from Islip

26. Morton, op. cit., pp. 13 - 16; Cox, op. cit., pp. 465, 473, 512, 529 558 - 9; Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, ed., G.D.H. Cole, II, 1928, p. 111.

27. The following is based on a total of 223 autumnal inventories for husbandmen, yeomen and other farmers in the Administrations of the Archdeaconry of Northampton for the years 1664 - 1689 in the Northamptonshire Record Office; on 78 similar inventories for the years 1683 - 89 in the Administration of the Consistory Court of Peterborough, also in the N.R.O. and on 29 others for the years 1662 - 85 for the Prebendal Court of Nassington in the Lincolnshire Record Office.

28. J.A. Yelling, Common Field and Enclosure in England. 1450 - 1850, 1977, pp. 177 - 8.

to Wansford where livestock was over 60% of total livestock and crop values; Rockingham Forest where livestock was 71% of total values; the northern and central Uplands, 66% to 70%; directly north of the county town, 68%; and in the Wolds, 76%. Only in the northern Uplands, Harlestone Heath and the Wolds were sheep more than 50% of the total value of all livestock; in the other places cattle and horses, especially in the central Uplands and the Nene Valley, and pigs, especially in Rockingham Forest, were more important in terms of overall value.

Elsewhere, but outside the Clay Vale, the upper Nene, Isle and Tove valleys, figures for livestock of between 46% and 58% of total farm produce would seem to indicate mixed farming was more usual. In the above four regions, however, with figures respectively of 41%, 29%, 39%, and 40%, a more arable form of farming would seem to have been practised. The main cereal crops were wheat, particularly in the upper Nene Valley, and barley, except in the Soke of Peterborough where rye and oats were also grown. These were supplemented, and in the Clay Vale even rivalled for importance, by pease and beans.

These figures augment and support rather than contradict anything written by Morton and Cox, and seem to underline, despite a slight difference in emphasis, the importance of mixed or fielden farming for Northamptonshire agriculture identified by Dr. Thirsk.²⁹ The prosperity of the county's agrarian economy is difficult to quantify, but three appropriate, if not strictly analogous, comparisons indicate a degree of relative affluence. Compared to neighbouring Bedfordshire, where farmers each had on average one horse, four cattle, two to three pigs and eight sheep in the early seventeenth century, farmers in south Northamptonshire had almost three times as many horses, twice as many cattle, more than three times the number of pigs and five times the number of sheep in the

29. J. Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500 - 1640, 1967, pp. 91 - 2.

1660s.³⁰ Such a disparity cannot be explained away completely by the forty year difference between the two figures or by differing patterns of agriculture.

A better, and contemporaneous, comparison can be made with Rutland, where a mixed herd of six to nine beasts of all ages and a flock of about thirty sheep were usual on the average farm. In the two counties, both of which had a great deal of animal husbandry, sheep were obviously the more important in Northamptonshire and made its livestock inventories larger.³¹

A third, and different kind, of comparison is afforded by an analysis of the relative wealth of yeomen and husbandmen in Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire in the 1660s. Yeomen in Northamptonshire were 9%, and husbandmen 13% better off at this time than their counterparts in Nottinghamshire.³² What is

30. These figures are based on a comparison of 92 farm inventories in the Administration in the Archdeaconry of Northampton for the years 1660 - 1674 in the N. R. O., and 166 farm inventories analysed by E. G. Emmison, *Jacobean Household Inventories*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, XX, p. 38.

31. Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History, pp. 91 - 2.

32. These figures are based on a comparison of the probate inventories for 69 named yeomen and 35 named husbandmen in the Administrations of the Archdeaconry of Northampton for the years 1660 and 1674 in the N. R. O., and the probate inventories for 57 named yeomen and 48 named husbandmen between 1660 and 1664 in the Nottinghamshire Record Office, P. R. S. W., 87 - 9.

more, Northamptonshire yeomen and husbandmen became substantially richer in the second half of the seventeenth century. From an average figure of £142 7s 10d each in goods and chattels in the 1660s, Northamptonshire yeomen increased their individual average wealth to £174 9s 5d in the 1680s and £176 1s 7d in the 1700s. Husbandmen made even more dramatic improvements: from £97 4s 4d in the 1660s to £131 11s 2d in the 1680s and £132 16s 10d in the 1700s.³³

Clearly there was a thriving agrarian community in Northamptonshire from which gentry landlords could mulct substantial rents. Unfortunately, although probate records tell us a great deal about the nature, variety and prosperity of agriculture practised in the county, they do not tell us all that much about the kind of farming undertaken in each area by the gentry and other greater landlords, and how their presence affected local agricultural patterns. There are only twenty-two autumnal inventories extant for gentlemen in the county for the period 1660 - 1689, and most of these list just household goods and debts, so any survey of the pattern of farming undertaken by the gentry is bound to be defective. Nevertheless an examination of all of the seventy-eight probate gentry inventories for this period in the Northamptonshire Record Office gives an impression that the greater landowners, when they were involved directly in farming, concentrated more on livestock production, especially that of sheep, than on arable. The most interesting inventories, however, are the private household ones of Richard Knightley of Preston Capes esq., which lists six flocks of sheep totalling 1, 722 in number, and of Sir William Haslewood of

33. These figures are based on a comparison of probate inventories for 104 named yeomen and husbandmen for the years, 1660 - 74, 185 for the years 1680 - 89, and 119 for the years 1698 - 1710, in the Administrations of the Archdeaconry Court of Northamptonshire in the N. R. O.

Maidwell which reveals a flock of 527.³⁴ On average, the fifty-three probate inventories which indicate gentry sheep farming on some scale in the country, show a flock of over 350 belonging to each gentleman.

That gentry sheep farming was long established in Northamptonshire is well known. In the 1540s there were thirty-five flocks totalling 36,200 sheep grazing on the sites of depopulated villages alone.³⁵ Dr. M. E. Finch has shown extensive sheep farming being practised all over the county in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by the five Northamptonshire families she has studied.³⁶ Of the most relevant of her examples for the period of this study she cites the Ishams of Lamport as having a large flock of sheep there in the 1640s, and the Spencers of Althorp as having 2,645 sheep in Northamptonshire in the 1630s.³⁷ There is little reason to suppose, with what has been discovered of the farms of the county's lesser gentry, that matters had changed by the later - seventeenth century. If, for example, any of the 2,250 - 3,000 sheep grazing on Brigstock plain in the 1680s had been recorded in the probate inventories

34. N. R. O., K. 1140; F-H., 1140.

35. K. J. Allison, M. W. Beresford, J. G. Hurst, The deserted Villages of Northamptonshire, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, XVIII, 1966, pp. 35 - 48.

36. M. E. Finch, The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540 - 1640, N. R. S., XIX, 1956, pp. 19, 31, 66; 74 - 5, 87 - 8, 90, 104, 114, 116, 128, 138 - 9, 145, 147n., 155 - 6, 162, 177, 184 - 5, 193.

37. ibid., pp. 31, 193.

examined then perhaps sheep farming would have featured more prominently in the description of agriculture in Rockingham Forest.³⁸ There is, perhaps, more in Camden's claim about Northamptonshire being overrun by sheep than allowed by Morton or even the evidence of the probate inventories.

Enclosure

The main physical manifestation of large-scale sheep farming was, of course, pasture enclosure. Northamptonshire has long been held as "the incloser's county par excellence" - a view most recently repeated by Professor R. Ashton.³⁹ Despite the fact that most of the early-modern writers on Northamptonshire confirmed it to be more champion than enclosed, the county had early on acquired a reputation for widespread enclosures.⁴⁰ Yet it is easy to see how the county acquired this reputation. Northamptonshire always figured prominently in the government's Inquisitions of Depopulation and Inclosure Commissions, and it was the scene of some of the worst violence during the

38. P. A. J. Pettit, The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy, 1558 - 1714, N. R. S., XIII, 1968, pp. 178 - 9.

39. E. F. Gay, Inclosures in England, Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1903, p. 592; R. Ashton, The English Civic War, Conservatism and Revolution, 1603 - 1649, 1978, p. 80.

40. Anon., Certain Causes . . ., 1550 - 53, quoted in, W. E. Tate, The English Village Community and the Enclosure Movements, 1967, p. 168; J. Moore, A Scripture Word Against Enclosure, 1659, quoted in J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, eds., Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, Oxford, 1972, p. 149.

Midland or Leveller Revolt of 1607.⁴¹ Petitions from prominent local figures, like Sir Edward Montagu in 1604, grieved at "the depopulation and daily excessive conversions of tillage into pasture," and local clergymen, like Joseph Bentham, Rector of Broughton in 1635, published sermons that preached against enclosures as "cursed and cruel consumers of the commonwealth".⁴² Possibly what contributed more than anything else to the popular impression of the county was the fact that although its cereal crops were exported to most of its neighbouring shires and as far afield as Derby, its wool went further, to the weaving districts of East Anglia, Yorkshire and the West Country, and a great deal of its fat livestock was "topped-up" specifically for the London meat market, or as Thomas Fuller had it, no sooner were Northamptonshire sheep fed than London devoured them.⁴³

-
41. E. F. Gay, *The Inquisitions of Depopulation in 1517 and the "Domesday of Inclosures,"* T.R.H.S., N.S. XIV, 1900, p. 298; and, *The Midland Revolt and the Inquisition of Depopulation of 1607*, T.R.H.S. N.S.XVIII, 1904, p. 233, Pettit, op. cit., p. 147; Bridges, II, p. 206; H.M.C., Rutland MSS., I, p. 406. The combined enclosure figures for 1517 and 1607 were double those of any other county, but they still indicate that only about 6½% of the county was officially enclosed by the beginning of the seventeenth century.
42. H.M.C., MSS. of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, p. 42; J. Bentham, The Christian Conflict, showing the difficulties and duties of this conflict . . . Preached in the Lecture of Kettering, 1635, B. L. 4479 bb. 41.
43. Morton, op. cit., pp. 15 - 16; Cox, op. cit., p. 559; C. J., XI, p. 414; J. Gutch, ed., Collectanea Curiosa, I, Oxford, 1781, p. 222, Mr Fuller's observations of the Shires, c. 1633; H. Thorpe, *The Lord and the Landscape*, in D. Mills, ed., English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy, 1973, pp. 52 - 64.

Any account of the exact extent of enclosure is bound to seem contradictory. On the one hand, because 193 Parliamentary Enclosure Acts between 1727 and 1841 enclosed 324,114 of the county's 641,992 acres, or some 50% of its surface area, it is to be supposed that at least that amount was open land before the eighteenth century.⁴⁴ On the other hand there is an almost overwhelming amount of evidence for widespread, but scattered rather than extensive, enclosure by the end of the seventeenth century. E. F. Gay, for instance, found 217 individual examples of enclosing activity of up to 500 acres in Northamptonshire between 1485 and 1607.⁴⁵ Forty-nine villages in the county were depopulated between c. 1450 and c. 1700.⁴⁶ John Bridges recorded eighty-six lordships enclosed, in whole or in part, by the beginning of the eighteenth century. To this figure can be added another twenty-nine lordships, frequently associated with earlier depopulation, in which the population remained so low, as recorded by the Hearth Tax returns and by Bridges, and for which there is no evidence of later enclosure, that they should be considered to all intents and purposes as largely enclosed pasture by the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ There is, furthermore, evidence to show that there were enclosures in at least another nine lordships by this time: Culworth, Preston Capes, Holdenby, Haselbech, Lamport, Deenethorp, Braybrooke, Wadenhoe, and

44. W. E. Tate, A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards, ed., M. E. Turner, Reading, 1978, pp. 191 - 9.

45. Gay, Inclosures in England, loc. cit., p. 576.

46. Allison, Beresford, Hurst, Deserted Villages of Northants., pp. 35 - 48.

47. Bridges, I and II, passim; P.R.O., E. 179/254/12, E. 179/254/14; q.v. Map 1.

Dogsthorpe.⁴⁸ All in all, both 124 lordships and parishes were affected by enclosure, or about 25% of all lordships and about 40% of all parishes.

Most of these enclosures had been established before 1600, but at least 28 were created between 1600 and 1720, and about sixteen of these since the end of the Civil War. As Map One in this thesis shows, except for a tract of fenland in the extreme north-east, some of the forest districts of Rockingham and Whittlewood, and an extensive tract of the Nene and Ise valleys, hardly any region of the shire was untouched by enclosures. The pattern of enclosure, however, does seem to have had a great propensity to follow the better pasture lands of the Wolds, Uplands and lower Nene valley. This tendency was most pronounced in those enclosures set up during the later-seventeenth century, when nine were established in the Uplands, three in the lower Nene valley, and only four elsewhere, two on the outskirts of Northampton and two in Rockingham Forest.⁴⁹ But, as both Morton and Cox pointed out, enclosures lay "dispersedly up and down the county" and many lordships "had their proper inclosures and lays of green sod" and this, no doubt, also added to the general impression that

48. Baker, I, p. 606, II, p. 7; N.R.O., F - H. 272, ff. 58v - 60, 62; N.R.O., Wykes (Yarwell) Collection, 16, ff. 1 - 4; N.R.O., I.C. 195 A; N.R.O., Bru. ASR. 562 - 299 1/4; Bru. Maps, 6 and 8; E.M. Leonard, The Inclosure of the Common Fields in the Seventeenth Century, T.R.H.S., N.S. XIX, 1905, pp. 107, 141, N.R.O., F(M). Misc., 52.

49. Baker, II, pp. 7, 404 - Preston Capes and Litchborough; Bridges, I, pp. 83, 524, 571, 585 - Stowe, Upper Heyford, Lilbourne and Watford; Bridges, II, pp. 42, 73 - Loddington and Sibbertoft; Leonard, Inclosure of the Common Fields, loc. cit., p. 107 - Braybrooke; Bridges, II, pp. 214, 399, 417 - Barnwell All Saints, Hemington and Armston; Baker, II, p. 7 - Abington and Weston Farell; N.R.O., Bru. ASR. 562 - 299 1/4 - Deenethorp; P.R.O., SP 34/12, f. 81 - Benefield.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HUNDREDS & PARISHES

0 5 10 MILES

MAP ONE
AGRICULTURE AND ENCLOSURE

- FOREST PARISHES
- HEATHS
- PARISHES KNOWN FOR PASTURE
- PARISHES WHOLLY OR PARTLY ENCLOSED

Source: see Chapter I, pp. 22-23

SCALE
0 5 10 MILES

Large map also in the
Archives of Rugby & Warwick

Large map also in the
Archives of Peterborough & Huntingdon

Northamptonshire was largely enclosed.⁵⁰

Not all enclosures prospered: at least two, in Shutlanger and in Orlingbury, were abandoned in the 1650s; and not all enclosures were for pasture: part of Brampton Ash, for instance, was turned from arable into woodland towards the end of the seventeenth century; but it is clear that pasture enclosure continued to change the Northamptonshire landscape and that the late seventeenth century was not an hiatus in the enclosure movement between the periods of classical depopulating enclosure and Parliamentary enclosure.⁵¹ Although Rockingham Forest, for example, suffered comparatively little from piecemeal enclosure, and open fields still comprised about a third of its total area, even it was not without "an interesting pattern of small closes" by the late seventeenth century.⁵²

Northamptonshire remained an open field county until the mid- or late-eighteenth century, but neither the extent nor the importance of enclosure in the seventeenth century for local agriculture, particularly for "gentlemen farmers", should be underestimated.

The Waters of Northamptonshire

An important contributory factor in encouraging livestock farming must undoubtedly have been the easy access to water to be had throughout the county. In the seventeenth century it was no small matter of local pride that every river that ran through it was "native bred", or rose, within the county's borders.⁵³ With five major rivers and their brooklets flowing through the county or along its borders nowhere in Northamptonshire is far from running water. Apart from the advantages this had for animal husbandry, the waters of Northamptonshire also had aesthetic and social allurements for the local gentry. John Morton, for instance, made such a point of the River

50. Morton, op. cit., p. 15; Cox, op. cit., p. 559.

51. Bridges, I, p. 238, II, p. 121; Morton, op. cit., p. 13.

52. Pettit, op. cit., pp. 16, 180, Maps I and IV.

53. T. Fuller, The Worthies of England, ed., J. Freeman, 1952, p. 423.

Isle flowing through the grounds of Lord Cullen's estate at Rushton and Lord Montagu's at Boughton that it is clear the local aristocracy and gentry appreciated the picturesque enough to utilise natural water features in their gardens.⁵⁴ A different kind of water feature, the county's mineral water springs, had social attractions for the local gentlemen. Northamptonshire in the late seventeenth century had a reputation, now often overlooked, for its curative mineral waters. Wellingborough had enjoyed a short-lived renown in the 1630s, but other springs, like those at King's Cliffe and New-Well, near Northampton, were discovered in the reign of Charles II and replaced it in popularity.⁵⁵ The most important as a spa-town, however, was Astrop Well near King's Sutton. Perhaps its greatest moment of splendid living was the magnificent banquet held there by John Willoughby of Purston to celebrate his election as Mayor of Northampton in 1672.⁵⁶

One very important and eminently practical advantage to be had from the county's extensive river system was never taken in the seventeenth century. It was a source of disappointment to many writers that little use was made of the county's rivers for navigation.⁵⁷ That so little was done is surprising considering the notoriously bad state of Northamptonshire's roads in the period. Daniel Defoe thought the local roads to be so "deep and dismal" as to be the "dirtiest and worst in all this part of the country", and the record of delays and frustrations suffered by Sir Justinian Isham on his travels around the county in the

54. Morton, op. cit., p. 4.

55. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, p. 426; Cox, op. cit., pp. 557 - 58.

56. Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 155; A. Clark, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary of Oxford, 1632 - 1695, described by himself, II, 1892, pp. 250 - 51.

57. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, p. 442, Morton, op. cit., p. 5.

early eighteenth century would seem to support this view.⁵⁸ It is therefore surprising that, although a scheme to make the River Nene navigable between Northampton and Peterborough was surveyed in 1606 and another between Oundle and Peterborough in the 1690s, nothing of practical use was done until 1713.⁵⁹

Northamptonshire Forests

Undoubtedly, next to the agricultural land that was the basis of their wealth, the natural amenity that so many gentry and nobility found most attractive in the county was its woodland. As Norden suggested, it was the abundance of game, that sheltered in the woodland, especially "deer both red and fallow, both in parks, forests and chases . . . so plentiful as no shire yieldeth the like" that made the county so attractive as an aristocratic playground.⁶⁰ In the early-modern period, however, it was widely thought that there was a general shortage of woodland in Northamptonshire. Camden described it as "not well stocked with wood unless at the hither and further end."⁶¹ Norden thought the scarcity "of the Places of Wood" to be a blemish on the shire, although he went on to mention the well wooded districts of Rockingham, Whittlewood and Salcey Forests.⁶² Fuller observed that Northampton was the dearest town in England in fuel "where no coals can come by water and little wood doth grow on land" and quoted a seventeenth-century proverb: "He that must eat

58. Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, ed., G. D. H. Cole, II, 1928, pp. 87, 118; H. Isham Longden, The Diaries (Home and Foreign) of Sir Justinian Isham, 1704 - 1736, T.R.H.S., 3rd Series I, 1907, p. 197.

59. Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 5; V. C. H. Northants., II, p. 290; III; p. 88.

60. J. Norden, Speculi Britannia Pars Altea, or a Delineation of Northamptonshire, 1720, (originally 1591), p. 29.

61. Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, p. 429.

62. Norden, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 - 49.

a buttered faggot, let him go to Northampton."⁶³ Thomas Cox, however, offered a disparaging explanation for this when he suggested the town's notoriety was due to the exorbitant charges for heating made to travellers by the local innkeepers!⁶⁴ John Morton was at a loss to understand why it was that the impression conveyed by Norden and Fuller was so widespread. He thought Northamptonshire "not so destitute of woods as is commonly imagined," for if some parts were bare, as might be supposed were the Uplands and the Nene Valley, then other parts, like Rockingham, Whittlewood and Salcey Forests, were "copiously furnished therewith."⁶⁵ Apart from these woods there were also many private parks in the county, of which John Speed's map of 1610 shows twenty-one and John Harris's of 1712, twenty-eight.⁶⁶ This made Northamptonshire a more emparked county than any of its neighbours or any other county in the Midlands.⁶⁷ There was also the extensive private woodland of Yardley Chase, largely the property of the Earl of Northampton, which lay just outside Salcey Forest, but was greater than it in area, and more resembled, with its great trees, what is generally understood by a forest than Whittlewood with its under-wood and bracken.⁶⁸ The southern part of the county was well enough wooded for one foreign visitor at the very end of the sixteenth century to consider that the stretch from Northampton to Towcester was eight miles of uninterrupted woodland country.⁶⁹ There were other smaller private woodlands like the

63. T. Fuller, The History of the Worthies of England, II, 1811, p. 160.

64. T. Cox, Magna Britannia, p. 536.

65. Morton, op.cit., p. 12.

66. J. Arlott, ed., England: a coloured facsimile of the maps and text from the Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain by John Speed, 1953:
Northamptonshire; Harris' map forms the frontispiece of Morton's
Natural History

67. Cf. Robert Morden's maps in Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, passim.

68. Morton, op.cit., pp. 11 - 12.

69. J. Arlott, ed., England: a coloured facsimile of the maps and text from the Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain by John Speed, 1953, pp. 115 - 116.

ash woods of Sir William Craven at Winwick and of the Earl of Thomond at Great Billing which were planted and nurtured for mature felling and sale to the ironsmiths of Birmingham.⁷⁰ There are, however, enough references to individual great oaks as objects of curiosity, such as the King Stephen's and Bocase Oaks at Brigstock, the Kings Oak at Moulton, the Queen's Oak at Grafton and other examples at Upton and Yardley, to indicate that trees reaching full maturity were quite rare.⁷¹ The twenty-four coppices in Salcey Forest, for instance, were cut down in turn at twenty-one years' growth. The practice of coppicing and cropping underwood could have been widespread enough to give Northamptonshire its reputation for being poorly wooded.

The three most important wooded districts were the forests of Rockingham, Whittlewood and Salcey. These have been well described in much detail by Dr P. A. J. Pettit, and certainly little can be added about their economy and administration.⁷² Dr Pettit and John Morton, however, make some interesting points about the forest landscape that are worth repeating here. By the mid-seventeenth century the mediaeval forest boundaries had shrunk and grown indistinct due to the piecemeal process of disafforestation carried on by the local gentry. During the late 1630s, for example, the Crown, which could also take advantage of the confusion over the boundary lines, levied composition fines on twenty-one local gentry landowners for emparking or converting to pasture thirty-eight separate places in

70. Morton, op. cit., pp. 12, 486.

71. Cox, op. cit., pp. 478, 509, 528; V. C. H. Northants., II, p. 351; the Bocase Oak is commemorated by a stone tablet in Harry's Park Wood, Brigstock, and the oak in Yardley was, of course, William Cowper's "Yardley Oak".

72. P. A. J. Pettit, The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy, 1558 - 1714, N. R. S., XXIII, 1968.

Rockingham Forest alone.⁷³ The perambulation of 1641 was supposed to have set the bounds of Rockingham Forest at agreed limits but even this caused some confusion. Whereas Morton thought the Forest extended some fourteen miles in length and five miles in width, Dr. Pettit has the impression Rockingham was some four miles longer and three wider.⁷⁴ There was similar confusion about the size of Whittlewood Forest in the late-seventeenth century; some writers thought it was six miles long by three miles wide but others, more accurately, measured it at nine miles by six.⁷⁵ Despite this inexactness it must be remembered that the county's three Royal Forests covered over ten per cent of its surface area.

Not only were the Forests' external limits unclear but internally they were far from being one distinct, uniform mass of trees. It must not be assumed that Rockingham Forest, for instance, was an uninterrupted tract of woodland from Wilbarston to Yarwell. Rather, all of the county's forests were "dismembered into several smaller parcels," often with some distance between them, "by the interposition of fields and towns", as Map One in Dr Pettit's book clearly shows.⁷⁶ Rockingham Forest was divided between three independent bailiwicks, the northernmost of which lay some distance from the other two; and the coppice and purlieu woods of these in turn were separated by a variety of lawns, walks, plains and fields, the largest of which, "a spacious plain called Rockinghamshire" was big enough to touch on the four towns of Rockingham, Cottingham, Corby and Gretton.^{76a} Salcey Forest was similarly broken up and parcelled into

73. P.A.J.Pettit, Charles I and the Revival of Forest Law in

Northamptonshire, N.P.and B, III, No. 2, 1962, pp. 54 - 62.

74. Morton, op.cit, p. 10; Pettit, Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, p. 12.

75. Cox, op.cit, p. 559.

76. Morton, op.cit, p. 10. 76a. ibid. p. 10.

three walks and the Deputy Ranger's lawns, and Whittlewood was divided into five, two of which were completely detached and at some distance from the main body of the forest. All in all, perhaps less than half of Rockingham and two-thirds of Salcey and Whittlewood were woodland.⁷⁷

A Comfortable Environment

If the county's forests and parks provided the thrills of the chase and game for dinner, then a further aesthetic attraction for the gentry huntsman was to be found in the local scenery. Sir John Cotton was so enraptured by the view from the Lamport - Houghton road that he told his hosts, the Isham family, that he was only too eager to return with his hawks and hounds so that he could hunt in the surrounding countryside.⁷⁸ That the county could offer some fine scenic views was a fact often commented upon by seventeenth century writers. It was known as a county "open to the eye", and valued for its picturesque but comfortable pastoral landscapes. Even the flat Soke of Peterborough was "no ungrateful sight in the verdant part of the year."⁷⁹ But it is in the Uplands and the Wolds that the more splendid vistas are to be had. There seems to have been an unconscious competition between the various writers on Northamptonshire to report the greatest number of church steeples observable from one spot, John Morton thought it was the Nene valley that was graced with more lofty church towers than anywhere else, but Thomas Baskerville was certainly more correct in calling the area south of Market Harborough, "the land of spires."⁸⁰ It was from there that he

77. ibid., p. 10; Pettit, Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, pp. 10 - 14.

78. Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 131.

79. Cox, op. cit., p. 464.

80. Morton, op. cit., p. 19; H.M.C., XIII, Portland II, p. 307.

spied twenty-five spires, nine more than Thomas Fuller, who was handicapped by poor eyesight, and it was probably from around there that another sight-seer claimed to be able to see thirty-two.⁸¹

If the Northamptonshire countryside made a pleasant sight to the seventeenth century eye then so did its buildings. The county was particularly well endowed with stone quarries: a point noted by at least one visitor to Northampton in the mid-seventeenth century.⁸² The most famous of the county's stones, Barnack Rag, had been exhausted in the sixteenth century, but there were many other quarries, like those at Stanion and Weldon, which continued to provide for the building or rebuilding of gentry manor houses and aristocratic mansions with, what is perhaps England's finest building stone, the Lincolnshire Oolite.⁸³ As Thomas Fuller remarked:

"no noblemen in England have fairer habitations. And although the freestone, whereof they be built, keepeth not so long the white innocence as brick doth the blushing modesty thereof, yet, when the fresh lustre is abated, the full state thereof doth still remain"⁸⁴

Other contemporary observers, like Thomas Baskerville in the 1670s and Thomas Cox in the 1700s were more taken by the "freestone of an ochre colour" and that of the "Red-kind" - references more likely to the durable Northampton Sandstones from Duston and Harlestone than to their friable cousins from quarries further south.⁸⁵

81. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, p. 423; Cox, op.cit., p. 459.

82. R.Greenall, A History of Northamptonshire, 1979, p. 72.

83. V.C.H., Northants, II, pp. 295 - 6, 301.

84. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, p. 426.

85. H.M.C., XIII, Portland II, p. 289; Cox, op.cit., p. 512; V.C.H., Northants., II, pp. 299 - 302; Morton, op.cit., p. 102.

Northamptonshire magnates had a variety of attractive and sound stone building materials near at hand with which to build their prodigy houses, and they were not slow to put the local quarries to use. Of the sixty-three mansions listed by C.A. Markham and J.A. Gotch, thirty-one were either built or substantially added to in local stone during the Stuart period.⁸⁶ At least sixteen of these were constructed or re-edified between 1650 and 1714.⁸⁷ Visitors and passers-by rarely had a bad word to say about Northamptonshire's noble piles and gentry halls. Thomas Fuller thought that Burghley was "magnificent"; Daniel Defoe thought that Boughton was like Versailles; John Morton described Pytchley as "truly pleasant", Greatworth as "neat and new", and Cottesbrooke as "commodious and elegant"; the use of local stone was especially praised at Althorp, by Cosmo, Prince of Tuscany, and at Easton Neston by John Bridges; only Castle Ashby was found fault with, by John Evelyn, as "not wholly modern" - a sneer to which Thomas Fuller would have taken exception.⁸⁸

The gardens surrounding Northamptonshire's stately homes were also much liked by seventeenth century tourists. Thomas Cox singled out the gardens at Burghley, Kirkby, Drayton, and Rushton as of note for their walks, varieties of exotic plants, "wildernesses" of flowering shrubs and "English

-
86. C.A. Markham, The County Buildings of Northamptonshire, 1885, passim;
 J.A. Gotch, Old Halls and Manor Houses of Northamptonshire, 1936, passim,
Squires' Homes and other Old Buildings of Northamptonshire, 1939, passim.
87. Gotch, Old Halls, pp. 11, 16, 26, 30, 46 - 8, 58 - 62, 68 - 9, 74, 86 - 9, 91 - 4; Morton, op.cit., p. 491; J Gibson, Three Lost Northamptonshire Houses and their Owners, N.P. and P., V, 1976, p. 320
88. Fuller, Worthies, ed., Freeman, pp. 426 - 7; Defoe, Tour Through England, ed., Cole; Morton, op.cit., pp. 491 - 3; Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 24; Bridges, I, p. 289; E.S. De Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, IV, Oxford, 1955, pp. 593 - 4.

trees ranged in fine order."⁸⁹ John Evelyn thought that the gardens at Althorp were "exquisitely kept."⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that it was after many years of service in Philip Holman's gardens at Warkworth that Leonard Meager produced one of the earliest, and rarest, pioneering treatises on horticulture, The English Gardener.⁹¹

Stone was not just the prerogative of the upper classes: there is evidence that stone built village dwellings were quite widespread in Northamptonshire by the middle of the seventeenth century.⁹² In fact, just about the only place without contemporary domestic village architecture in stone was the northern Uplands, where cottages with walls made of a mixture of clay, gravel and straw prevailed.⁹³

The commonplace use of stone in most buildings was often commented upon by contemporary observers and, no doubt, helped give rise to the impression of prosperity made by most of Northamptonshire's market towns. John Leland, in the early sixteenth century, thought that almost all the towns in the county were built of stone, and only in Northampton did he notice that timber had become important because of the new building there.⁹⁴ Despite "the great rebuilding" Northampton remained largely of stone before

89. Cox, op.cit., pp. 470, 481, 494 - 5.

90. Quoted in , Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 228.

91. L.Meager, The English Gardener, c. 1670, the dedication, B.L. 41 a. 5

92. M. Seaborne, Small Stone Houses in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., III, 1963, p. 141; M Seaborne, Small Stone Houses in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., IV, 1972, p. 376; R Wood - Jones, Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region, 1963, passim.

93. M.Seaborne, Cob Cottages in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., III, 1964, p. 216 .

94. L.T.Smith, ed., The Itinerary of John Leland, in or about the years, 1535 - 1545, I, 1964, pp. 3, 7.

the Fire of 1675.⁹⁵ After its near destruction, Northampton, built on "a site worthy of a capital city", enhanced its reputation and became "the handsomest and best town built in all this part of England." Unlike Leicester, Northampton's rival for provincial pre-eminence, which after its sack in 1645 remained "an old stinking town situated on a dull river," Northampton was "re-edified and nobly improved" "in a far more noble and beauteous form," with streets, that were "straight and not winding," fronted by houses of excellent, squared freestone and civic buildings that could "compare with the neatest in Italy itself."⁹⁶

Most of the other towns in Northamptonshire had similar images of neatness and prosperity, and their appeal to the pseudo or urbanised gentry was obvious. Peterborough was "no contemptible place" "but an industrious and thriving town," "very well and handsomely built but /unlike places further south/ mostly timber works," with streets that were "clean . . . neat, well pitched and broad."⁹⁷ Oundle was "pleasantly seated," Daventry, although of "greater antiquity than beauty" had "good inns," and Towcester was a "handsome town" with the best inn, the Talbot, on Watling Street. In this respect, the most telling descriptions were of Thrapston which was said to be "salubrious" and was so portrayed that, as it stood at a "due distance from" Rockingham Forest, a gentleman who desired the pleasure

95. J. Speed, The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britian, 1614, p. 55;

R. Greenall, A History of Northamptonshire, 1979, p. 72.

96. J. Gutch, Collecteana Curiosa, I, 1781, p. 223; Defoe, Tour through England, ed., Cole, II, p. 86; Morton, op. cit., p. 23; H.M.C., XIII, Portland II, p. 289; Cox, op. cit., p. 512; John Evelyn, quoted in, A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, Leicester, 1969, p. 7.

97. Defoe, Tour through England, ed., Cole, II, p. 101; Cox op. cit., p. 464; The Journeys of Celia Fiennes, ed. C. Morris, 1949, p. 160.

of country life could not choose "a better place to live in."⁹⁸

The Human Geography of Northamptonshire

It was considered a great convenience that "no village, parish or place in the whole shire" was "scarcely four miles from some one market town" and "so universally dispersed that in every two or three miles was found a place of ease to the wearisome traveller."⁹⁹ There were, in fact, 295 parishes in Northamptonshire incorporating, according to the Hearth Tax returns of 1674, 380 villages and hamlets at an average density of one settlement in every $2\frac{2}{3}$ square miles.¹⁰⁰ Settlements were substantially thicker on the ground in the Soke of Peterborough, around the county town and in the south-east of the county; they were noticeably thinner in the Wolds, southern and central Uplands, and in Rockingham Forest.

In the 1670s, after the plague of 1665 - 66 had carried off perhaps one person in ten in places, as it ran its course along the Nene Valley, the population of the county was, according to the Compton Census of 1676, 84,262.¹⁰¹ This figure should be brought up to around 87,000 to include places missed by the Census compiler. These were distributed in a total

98. Cox, op. cit., pp. 483, 486, 501, 540; Morton, op. cit., pp. 25 -7; Defoe, Tour Through England, ed., Cole, II, p. 111.

99. J. Norden, Speculi Britannia . . . Delineation of Northants., p. 24.

100. This section is based largely on the Hearth Tax returns of 1662 and 1674: P.R.O.E., 179/254/11, E. 179/254/14; the Compton Census of 1676: N.R.O., Baker 708; and the numerous references in Bridges I and II to the number of dwellings in each parish c. 1720. Regarding the number of parishes it would seem that both Camden and Morton, who quotes him, Natural History, p. 22, were wrong in each respectively asserting there to be either 326 or 290 parishes in the county - the Map of Hundreds and Parishes issued by the N.R.O. shows 295.

101. Bridges, I, p. 399; V.C.H., Northants., III, p. 88. The Census's compiler claimed to have recorded "all persons both young and old." N.R.O. Baker 708.

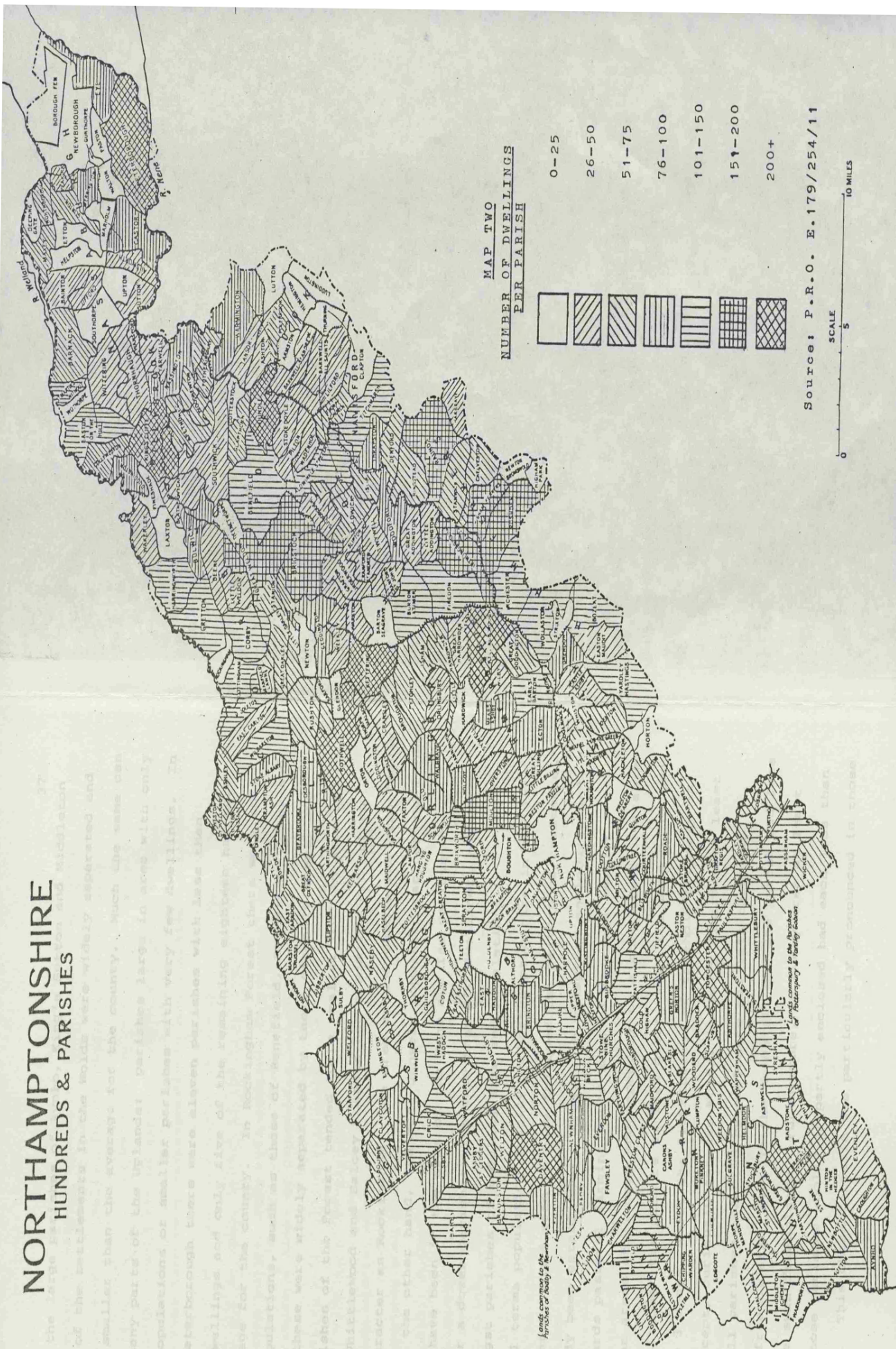
of 22,632 dwellings, recorded in the Hearth Tax, at an average density of 3.8 people per house. The average distribution of people in the county was about 86 per square mile. In this respect, and excluding the market towns, the following areas were underpopulated: the Wolds, with less than 70 people on average per square mile; the southern Uplands, much of the area between Daventry and Rothwell and parts of Rockingham Forest, with less than 80; and the Soke of Peterborough, with less than 75. The more crowded areas were along the Ise and Nene Valleys where population density in agricultural parishes was between 100 and 115 people on average per square mile, and as much as 150 around Wellingborough.

In 1614 Sir Edward Montagu had lamented that although the county contained many parishes yet they were very small; but he was probably thinking only of certain areas of Northamptonshire recently depopulated by enclosure for, with 76 dwellings or 295 people on average in each parish, there would seem to have been little justification in his complaint.¹⁰² As can be seen from Map 2, which uses the Hearth Tax because, unlike the Compton Census, it covers the whole county, the only areas that were thinly populated were the Wolds, parts of the Uplands, the northern Nene valley and the corresponding section of the Clay Vale opposite Oundle, and the Soke of Peterborough.¹⁰³ Apart from the town of

102. J.Wake, ed., The Montagu Musters Book, 1602 - 23, N.R.S., VII, 1935, p. 235.

103. The Hearth Tax is almost as reliable a guide to the population of the county as the Compton Census for Northamptonshire, which itself is a lot more detailed than those for many other counties. The number of households in each parish recorded in the Hearth Tax of 1674 corresponds quite well with the account of the population and the number of families in the Compton Census. Any difference between the number of families and number of dwellings in each parish can usually be explained by the difference between the average number of people per household in the county - 3.84-and the size of the average family in the county - 4.45.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HUNDREDS & PARISHES



Brackley and the large parishes of Aynho, King's Sutton and Middleton Cheney, most of the settlements in the Wolds were widely separated and usually much smaller than the average for the county. Much the same can be said for many parts of the Uplands: parishes large in area with only medium size populations or smaller parishes with very few dwellings. In the Soke of Peterborough there were eleven parishes with less than twenty-five dwellings and only five of the remaining eighteen had more than the average for the county. In Rockingham Forest there were some very large populations, such as those of Benefield, Brigstock, Corby and Gretton, but these were widely separated by their sizeable areas, and the other parishes of the Forest tended to be smaller both in area and population. Whittlewood and Salcey Forests had a similar but not so pronounced character as Rockingham. The area around Oundle was also thinly populated. On the other hand, the most densely populated part of the county would seem to have been in the area of the Nene and Ise valleys where there were over a dozen parishes with more than 100 dwellings, evenly dispersed amongst parishes of middling size and population.

In general terms population density in Northamptonshire in the late seventeenth century would seem to have followed the pattern of enclosure that had already been established. Areas with widespread enclosures and a tendency towards pastoral farming would seem to have had smaller populations than areas still open and dependent on a more mixed or arable agriculture. Although the picture is less clear, much the same point can be made, as Map 3 shows, about the distribution of freehold property in the county. Except, curiously for the Wolds, in every district at least two thirds of all parishes affected by enclosure had less than ten forty-shilling freeholders. Even in the Wolds all but one parish had less than twenty-five such freeholders. Furthermore, in every area at least two-thirds of those parishes wholly or partly enclosed had each less than fifty dwellings. This characteristic was particularly pronounced in those

areas most affected by pasture enclosure: the Wolds, the Uplands and the lower Nene Valley around Oundle. In the pastoral economy of Northamptonshire there was obviously a connection between enclosure; the division of the land, presumably in consolidated blocks, amongst only a few property owners; and the working of that land by a correspondingly small number of tenants and labourers.

Occasional and seasonal labour in the close parishes was probably drawn in most cases from neighbouring open parishes. A comparison of Maps 1, 2 and 3, reveals how often a close or group of close parishes was associated with an open parish with a large population. The crescent of freeholds in the south-west, from Aynho to Edgcote surrounded the open parishes of King's Sutton and Middleton Cheney. The enclosures of the southern Uplands ran alongside such open parishes as Green's Norton (which was only a quarter enclosed), Bugbrooke, Everdon, Badby and Newnham. The enclosed parishes of the Northern Uplands could draw labour from the large populations of Long Buckby, Crick, that part of Welford which was not enclosed, Naseby and Clipston. Brixworth and the unenclosed part of Moulton must have been similar sources of labourers for the enclosed parishes that surrounded them. The only exception would seem to have been the enclosures in the lower Nene Valley around Oundle which, being more concerned with stock farming than elsewhere, probably drew occasional labour from further afield - from Raunds, Brigstock and King's Cliffe which have also been identified as open parishes.¹⁰⁴

What an open parish was defies precise definition (except the semantic one of unenclosed) but open parishes were clearly associated with large populations, many tenants and landownership fragmented between a good number of freeholders. Badby and Newnham, for instance, had each over 400

104. Greenall, History of Northants., p. 50.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HUNDREDS & PARISHES



inhabitants, over 80 copyhold tenants and around 30 forty-shilling freeholders.¹⁰⁵ The forest open parish of Brigstock had 900 inhabitants divided between 166 landless householders and 52 landholders - fifty of whom owned less than ten acres and thus were mostly without the electoral franchise.¹⁰⁶ There is, however, another characteristic of the open parish which should be pointed out; almost all of the more open parishes grew in population between c. 1670 and c. 1720.

Between c. 1670 and c. 1720 the number of householders in Northamptonshire grew by 9.6% from 22,632 to 24,808.¹⁰⁷ A growth rate of less than a quarter of a per cent a year is not remarkable; yet it is remarkable considering that of the 101 enclosed parishes for which figures are available, 50 decreased in size, 29 had no appreciable change and only

105. Bridges, I, pp. 19, 22.

106. Pettit, Royal Forests of Northants., p. 169.

107. P.R.O., E.179/254/14; Cox, op. cit., p. 459. A comparison of the population figures for the nineteen parishes given by both the Compton Census and Bridges indicates a smaller population growth of about 8%: N.R.O., Baker 708, ff. 85-92; Bridges, I, pp. 23, 168, 322, 338; II pp. 50, 54, 77, 85, 88, 194, 199, 230, 239, 246, 308, 327, 338, 354, 379. Both sets of figures are in line with the 8.5% growth for the country as a whole suggested by E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, The Population History of England 1541 - 1871: A Reconstruction, 1981, pp. 528-9, 532-3. A comparison of the change in number of dwellings in parishes recorded by both the Hearth Tax and Bridges shows an increase of only 1.5% between 18,559 and 18,842, but as Bridges is unforthcoming for many of the market towns and larger parishes he can in this respect be discounted. Nevertheless, all of this seems flatly to contradict Gregory King's statistic of 26,904 houses in the county based on the now unobtainable Hearth Tax returns for 1690. A supposed growth rate of nearly 19% in only 16 years is past comprehension.

22 increased; and of the 176 unenclosed parishes for which population can be checked, 56 decreased in size, another 56 grew and 64 remained stable. Clearly a marked redistribution of the county's population was taking place in the late seventeenth century. Amongst the enclosed parishes the most notable depopulations occurred in those that were enclosed between 1674 and c. 1720. Lilbourne, enclosed in 1682, fell from 69 to 48 households; Armston, enclosed in 1683, fell from 9 to 4; Barnwell All Saints, enclosed the same year, fell from 45 to 16; and Benefield, partly enclosed at some time around 1710, fell from 144 to 120.¹⁰⁸ The process of depopulation obviously continued for some time after a parish or lordship had been enclosed. Many of the more recently enclosed parishes also lost inhabitants in the late seventeenth century: Watford, for instance, largely enclosed in 1644, fell from 50 to 34 households between 1674 and c. 1720; and Hemington, enclosed in 1655 fell from 12 to 8 in the same years.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the most dramatic reductions occurred in those places where the aristocracy and gentry were erecting their country mansions or building them anew at this time. Castle Ashby, the Northamptonshire seat of the Earl of Northampton, fell from 37 to 12 households in the late seventeenth century; Stanford, the home of the Cave family, fell from 36 to 15; and it would seem that the whole village of Easton Neston was removed to prevent it detracting from the magnificent edifice built by Nicholas Hawksmoor for the Fermors because the number of dwellings in the parish had fallen from 25 to only 1 by 1720.¹¹⁰

Not all enclosed parishes lost population, 22 grew in size, and not all unenclosed parishes expanded, in fact as many lost inhabitants as gained them, but it was the increase in size of such large open parishes as Bugbrooke,

108. Bridges, I, p. 571; II, pp. 214, 392, 417; P.R.O., S.P. 34/12, f. 81.

109. Bridges, I, p. 585; II, p. 399.

110. Bridges, I, pp. 289, 324, 580.

Welford, Naseby, Clipston, Long Buckby, Green's Norton and Raunds which explains, at least in part, the growth and redistribution of the county's population. Whereas the population of Northamptonshire grew by 9.5% in 50 years, such parishes grew in size by an average of 22.5%. The movement of population in the county as a whole was generally away from the Soke of Peterborough, the Nene and Ise valleys, the Tove valley and the Clay Vale towards the immediate vicinity of the county town, parts of the southern and northern Uplands, and Whittlewood and Salcey Forests. The population of the other districts, including Rockingham Forest, remained more or less stable.

A kind of symbiotic relationship can be discerned between close and open parishes. Although the open parishes tended to have a greater degree of poverty than close ones, they also tended to have greater provision for dealing with pauperism when they were closely associated with enclosed states. Fifty-two per cent of all householders in Welford were discharged from having to pay the Hearth Tax in 1674 because they were too poor, thirteen points greater than the county average of 38%, but there were also twelve almshouses in Welford by 1720, more than almost anywhere else in the county.¹¹¹ In the open parishes adjoining the knot of enclosures in that corner of the county around Welford there was a total of 54 almshouses; in those same enclosed parishes there were only six, all in the recently enclosed parish of Lilbourne.¹¹² Similarly, the impoverished parishes of Ravensthorpe and Spratton, next to the enclosures of Teeton, East Haddon and Holdenby, had eighteen almshouses between them.¹¹³ Around the enclosed parishes near Oundle there were five charity schools - a

111. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, f.14; Bridges, I, p. 592.

112. ibid., pp. 71, 549, 558, 565, 571, 592.

113. ibid., pp. 464, 533.

greater proportion of free places to population than anywhere else in the county.¹¹⁴ On the other hand Bridges recorded only six almshouses in the relatively open area of the middle Nene between Earls Barton and Islip and there were none in the Ise valley.¹¹⁵ At least some enclosing landlords or prosperous yeoman farmers would seem to have diverted a portion of their profits to charitable use.

Yet the expansion of certain open parishes is only a partial explanation for population movements in the county in the late seventeenth century. Much of this movement can be explained by the extraordinary growth of certain market towns. Of course, it is well known that some market towns in Northamptonshire were decayed or decaying by the second half of the Stuart period. Brackley's importance as a great wool market was much diminished by the time of the Restoration. In Rothwell the market was "almost lost by its nearness to Kettering," and Higham Ferrers suffered similarly by its proximity to Wellingborough. King's Cliffe and Rockingham were "scarce thought worthy of the name market town," and nobody seriously regarded Great Weldon as one any more.¹¹⁶ As a consequence some of these towns decreased in size; Higham Ferrers shrank from 158 dwellings in 1674 to 120 in about 1720; Weldon from 111 to less than 100; and King's Cliffe from 209 to 140. But, on the other hand, despite their decaying markets, Brackley grew from a town of 213 houses to one of 270, and Rothwell from 256 to 299.¹¹⁷ At respective growth rates of 27% and 17% over the course of half a century, both of these "decaying" towns were growing twice or three times as fast as the county as a whole.

114. Cox, op. cit., pp. 584-7.

115. Bridges, I, p. 358.

116. Morton, op. cit., pp. 17, 27; Cox, op. cit., pp. 486, 552; Greenall, op. cit., p. 51

117. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. 9v., 11v., 16, 17, 24; Bridges, I, p. 143;

The other market towns of Northamptonshire were considered to be prospering in the late seventeenth century. Almost all of them grew at similar or faster rates than Rothwell or Brackley. Only in Oundle, despite the founding of a serge manufacturing industry there at the end of the century, did population growth remain stagnant. The town did not grow at all from the 365 houses recorded in 1674. The one other town to grow more slowly than the county as a whole was Daventry. Thought of as "a town of very good business", it grew by only 7% from 297 to 319 dwellings, between 1674 and 1720.¹¹⁸ All of the other market towns, Towcester, Thrapston, Wellingborough, Peterborough and Kettering, grew enormously. Towcester grew by nearly 16% from 303 to 350 dwellings. Thrapston expanded by 20% from 85 to 102 houses, and its population increased by 33% from 340 to 457 inhabitants. Wellingborough increased in size by 38% from 508 to 700 houses. The population of Peterborough went up by at least 44% from 1,950 to 2,800 or more inhabitants. The most astonishing increase was that of Kettering, the population of which grew by 60% from 1,650 to 2,645 residents, and the number of houses by 87% from 303 to 566.¹¹⁹

The growth of the county town is more difficult to quantify, but it too would seem to have grown greatly and disproportionately in size during the course of the late Stuart period. As the vote was vested in the householders of Northampton after 1660, it can be supposed that any increase in the numbers voting at the parliamentary elections for the borough should reflect changes in the size of the town's population.¹²⁰ In the election of 1661 a total of 999 votes were cast for three candidates

118. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. 22, 25v.; Bridges, I, p. 41; II, p. 404; Morton, op. cit., p. 25.

119. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. lv., 8, 19, 25, 30; Bridges, I, p. 272; II, pp. 149, 241, 379, 537; N.R.O., Baker 708, ff. 88, 90.

120. C. J., VIII, pp. 70 - 1.

indicating, by the method described by Dr. W. A. Speck, a poll of 583 householders.¹²¹ This figure corresponds quite closely with the 558 households not in receipt of alms recorded in the Hearth Tax of 1674.¹²² Both of these figures when augmented by the 249 households in receipt of alms at this time and brought up to between 807 and 832 correspond quite closely to the figure of 840 houses described as having survived or been destroyed in the Fire of 1675.¹²³

Nevertheless, the borough elections of 1702 and 1708 still reveal a sizeable increase in the number of enfranchised householders. In 1702 there were 1,509 votes cast between four candidates representing a poll of over 750 householders.¹²⁴ In 1708 there were 1,976 votes cast between three candidates representing a poll of about 1,244 householders.¹²⁵ Whereas the increase in the number of enfranchised householders by 29% between 1661 and 1702 was probably less than the overall increase of the town's population, the growth rate of 113% between 1661 and 1708 does seem rather excessive. Many of the votes cast in the 1708 election were no doubt illegitimate. As one-third of the town's householders on average should have been disfranchised because they were in receipt of alms and therefore should not have been registered at the poll, and as many householders would also have stayed away voluntarily, the poll of 1708 would seem at first sight to indicate between 2,000 and 2,500 adult male inhabitants, or a total population of over 8,000. These last figures must surely be very high and wide of the mark for the poll of 1708 probably recorded just about every householding and propertyless

121. N.R.O., X. 4478/712; W. A. Speck, Tory and Whig, The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701 - 1715, 1970, p. 125.

122. P.R.O., E. 179/254/14, f. 29.

123. C.S.P.D., 1675-76, p. 318.

124. N.R.O., I.C. 3296.

125. Borough Records, II, p. 498

male present in the town who could be passed off as an adult. Even so, as Professor Everitt has remarked about the similarly sized but equally dubious poll-book for Northampton of 1768, electoral lists can still give some indication of the size of the male populace of a town borough.¹²⁶ If the poll of about 750 voters taken in 1702 is regarded as more or less untainted by electoral malpractice, then the poll of 1,244 voters in 1708 can be considered to have included that one-third of the adult male population disfranchised for reason of poverty and perhaps another hundred or so under-age or non-resident interlopers. An adult male population of between 1,000 and 1,200 does not seem unreasonable, and the total population, towards which this figure points, of between 4,500 and 5,000 inhabitants, fits in quite well with Professor Everitt's estimates for the town of 3 - 4,000 in the early seventeenth century and around 6,000 in the mid-eighteenth century.¹²⁷

These approximations can help make a little clearer the extent to which the town's population grew between c. 1670 and c. 1720. In 1676 three of the four Northampton parishes, All Saints', St Giles' and St. Sepulchre's, had a total population of 2,578 "persons both young and old".¹²⁸ This figure divided by the 689 dwellings in the town's Checker, South, East and North wards, shows that an average of 3.74 people lived in each

126. A. M. Everitt, *Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England*, T.R.H.S., 5th Series, XXIX, 1979, p. 108.

127. *ibid.*, p. 108; A. M. Everitt, *The Market Town, in Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500 - 1640*, 1967, p. 488.

128. N.R.O., Baker 708, f. 86.

household in Northampton.¹²⁹ Multiplied either by the Hearth Tax total of 807 dwellings, or by the 840 houses mentioned in 1675, this average indicates a population of between 3,000 and 3,150 inhabitants. Population growth in the town must therefore have been somewhere between 30% and 66%, but all things considered, was probably in the region of 35% to 45%. Although greater precision is impossible within the scope of this thesis, it is clear that the population of later Stuart Northampton was growing at a rate commensurate with the county's other successful market towns and much faster than the population of the surrounding countryside.

Industry and Poverty

The redistribution of the county's population in the late Stuart period can be largely explained by the development of new and traditional industries and the resurrection of moribund ones. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Sir Edward Montagu had lamented that there was no "special trade" in

129. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, f.29. The average of 3.74 people per household must be hedged about by several qualifications. In the first place, the Fire of 1675, which intervenes between the Hearth Tax of 1674 and the Compton Census of 1676, because it destroyed some 700 houses, must invalidate the exactness of the ratio. On the other hand, as has been seen so often after the natural and man-made disasters of the twentieth century, many of the homeless probably stayed put and made do, and most of the others who had become refugees probably drifted back to what was left of their homes in the six months between the Fire and the Census. In fact, at least 150 houses had been rebuilt in the three months before the end of 1675: N.R.O., X.4478/712. Secondly, if the figure of 2,578 parishioners seems a little too small, so in all likelihood is the figure of 689 houses. Thirdly, although some doubt can be cast on the completeness of the Census, its compiler was adamant in his claim to have recorded "all persons both young and old".

Northamptonshire to provide employment for the county's surplus population.¹³⁰

Outside of the leather and footwear manufactures of the county town there would, indeed, seem to have been little large scale industry to provide employment. This is not to say that there were no cottage industries whatsoever in Northamptonshire. Although Thomas Fuller thought that the county had no need of manufactures he was wrong to suggest that it was totally reliant on agriculture. There were a wide variety of industries practised in the county during the early modern period: quarrying, frame-work knitting, flax dressing, basket weaving from osiers were all undertaken and leather tanning seems to have been almost ubiquitous, but they were on a small scale and had to wait until the late seventeenth century to be developed alongside other, newer industries. Some effort was made in the years before the Civil War to introduce or revive the weaving of woollen cloth in the county, but this also remained stunted for it met with no success.¹³¹

Only the growth of Northampton's boot and shoe industry was continuous and without set-back between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.¹³² But, as the county town prospered so did the number of its crafts increase and diversify. Although the number of different kinds of craft workshop seems to have remained, at around 60 or 70, more or less the same between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the number of trades to which boys were apprenticed nearly doubled from 45 in the late sixteenth century to 83 in the late seventeenth and had increased further to 114 by the mid-eighteenth .

130. J. Wake, ed., The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., VII, 1935, p. 235.

131. T. Fuller, The Worthies of England, ed., J. Freeman, 1952, p. 425; Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History, p. 175, V.C.H., Northants., II, pp. 289 - 340, p. 332.

132. ibid., pp. 317 - 20.

Such was the rise in the number of crafts practised in Northampton that the expanding shoemaking business decreased from about 19% to around 15% of the town's craft workforce and workshops between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³³ With the widening variety of trades came an increase in the recruitment of apprentices. The number of apprentices taken on each decade trebled between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³⁴ As it is thought that an increasing proportion of these apprentices were being recruited from the environs of the county town, it may be supposed that the increasing growth and diversity of trades carried on in Northampton explains, at least in part, its disproportionate increase in population.¹³⁵

This is only a partial explanation because Northampton's function as an entrepôt probably played as great, if not a greater part in the growth of the town. The county town's increasing importance as a market has been much commented upon, then as well as now. Northampton's pre-eminence as the horse-market for the region; the rapid increase in the number of inns in the town from 40 to 60 during the late seventeenth century; and the wealth of its merchants and other middle-men, all attest to its ever burgeoning importance as a commercial centre in this period.¹³⁶ Other towns in the

133. A. Dyer, Northampton in 1524, N. P. and P., VI, No. 2, 1979, pp. 77-80; W. G. Hoskins, Provincial England, pp. 73 - 4; A. M. Everitt, Country, County and Town, loc. cit., p. 92.

134. ibid., p. 99.

135. P. Clark and P. Slack, English Towns in Transition, 1500 - 1700, 1976, p. 92.

136. A. M. Everitt, The Marketing of Agricultural Produce in Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History, pp. 480, 489, 492, 535; D. Defoe, A Tour Through The Whole Island of Great Britain, ed., G. D. H. Cole, II, 1928, p. 86; A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, 1969, pp. 25, 39.

county prospered as entrepôts. The most notable was Peterborough which developed as a thriving inland port during the seventeenth century. By the beginning of the eighteenth century 6,000 quarters of Northamptonshire malt a year, for instance, were being shipped downstream from Peterborough, while the city was also handling a considerable traffic in coal, corn and cloth.¹³⁷ The city's mercantile interest was probably so powerful that, in all likelihood, it rather than any corn lobby prevented the opening of the River Nene to navigation above Peterborough. There is a suspicion that Thomas Fuller's dark hints of opposition to such a scheme from "back-friends" and "private profit" referred more to the merchants of Peterborough than to the arable farmers of the shire.¹³⁸ Peterborough's river-borne commerce, however, was supplemented by industry. There was a long established brewing industry in the town, which by the beginning of the eighteenth century was consuming 6,000 quarters of barley a year. This was augmented in the last decades of the seventeenth century by all kinds of woollen manufactures.¹³⁹

The combination of trade and industry led to Northampton's and Peterborough's rapid growth in the late Stuart period, but those towns which depended solely on their markets, however bustling their business, hardly grew at all. As has been seen, many small market towns, like Higham Ferrers, King's Cliffe and Weldon, which were without much industry, dwindled in size and influence in this period. Others, like Daventry, notable for its horse and sheep markets, remained busy and prosperous but, without any principal manufacture, barely grew in size.¹⁴⁰ Most notable

137. T. Cox, Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua et nova, 1720, p. 464.

138. Fuller, Worthies, p. 442; V.C.H., Northants., II, p. 290.

139. J. Morton, Natural History of Northamptonshire, 1712, p. 24; Cox, op. cit., p. 465; The Journeys of Celia Fiennes, ed. C. Morris, 1949, p. 161; A. M. Everitt, Marketing of Agricultural Produce, in Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History, p. 492.

140. ibid., p. 492; Morton, op. cit., p. 25; Fiennes, ed. Morris, p. 118.

of all is the example of Oundle where all Sir Matthew Dudley's efforts to establish a weaving industry would seem to have failed and as a result the town stagnated.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, those towns where the county's new industries were introduced and developed experienced a large increase in population and some in prosperity. The two most vital industries that were established in Northamptonshire towards the end of the seventeenth century were lace-making and the weaving of such woollen cloths as serges, tammies and shalloons. Cloth-making, established in the area at some time in the 1670s, clearly had a large part in the growth of Rothwell and Kettering during the late seventeenth century, for Rothwell's "market was almost lost", and there is no other explanation for Kettering's extraordinary population explosion.¹⁴² The settlement of lace-making in many parts of south-east Northamptonshire was providing employment for 591 people in Towcester by 1698. This figure represents over 50% of the town's population before, and about 40% after, lace-making was introduced into the town. In Wellingborough lace-making provided work for around 1,146 people and probably accounted for the increase in the town's population from 2,713 in 1676 to an estimated 3,700 in c. 1720.¹⁴³

Writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, John Morton thought that the swelling populations of market towns like Kettering and Wellingborough and many other open parishes were a result of the depopulation of recently enclosed villages.¹⁴⁴ As has been seen there is much to be said for this

141. Morton, op. cit., p. 17; V.C.H. Northants., III, p. 88.

142. Cox, op. cit., pp. 488 - 9; Morton, op. cit., p. 16; V.C.H., Northants., II, p. 333.

143. ibid., p. 337; N.R.O., Baker 708, f. 87; Bridges, II, p. 149.

144. Morton, op. cit., p. 15.

observation, but it is doubtful whether the towns would have been able to absorb the influx without the new industries. Even then it is unlikely that the absorption was complete. Most of the towns where old manufactures had expanded and new ones taken root already had large populations and an excessive number of inhabitants too impoverished to pay the Hearth Tax.¹⁴⁵ Towns such as Rothwell, Towcester and Wellingborough had a degree of poverty well over the average for the county of 39% of the population exempt from paying the Hearth Tax. Towns less afflicted by poverty, like Northampton, Peterborough and Kettering, still had one household in three discharged as being too poor to pay the Hearth Tax. In fact, it would seem that a large pool of unemployed or underemployed labour was a necessary prerequisite for the successful growth of an old or new manufacture, for those towns that lacked one were those where industry failed to prosper. The smaller market towns, like Higham Ferrers or Weldon, had a high proportion of paupers but in absolute terms their numbers were quite low. On the other hand the larger, more prosperous market towns, like Brackley, Daventry or Oundle, had a comparatively low proportion of the poverty stricken. But in those places where old manufactures expanded and new ones were established it is unlikely that industry cured the blight of pauperism. As most of these towns had poverty rates of around one-third or more, and as most of them grew in size by more than a third, then it does not seem probable that any new industry could provide the staple employment for a half of their swollen populations. Even on the assumption that these manufactures could possibly have provided full-time and remunerative work, and on the further assumption that such work would, in the first place, have been set aside for the indigent, then the employment created by the introduction of lace-making into Towcester, where the population grew by only a sixth, would have barely absorbed those 43% of the

145. Much of the following information can be gleaned from Maps 2 and 4 which are based on P.R.O., E. 179/254/14.

town's inhabitants who were needy and workless in the 1670s. In Wellingborough, the 1,146 jobs created by lace-making were more than 200 short of the number of inhabitants out of work in the 1670s.¹⁴⁶ As the town grew by 38% in the late seventeenth century those jobs would have provided just enough work for the newcomers. Furthermore, as lace-making was estimated to bring about £2,600 a year into Wellingborough, the 1,146 lace-makers would have earned an average of only £2 each a year, or only a fraction of a labourer's rock bottom wage.¹⁴⁷ The inference to be drawn is that the part-time piece work provided by the lace and cloth industries, however vital a supplement to ordinary income it was, so far from eradicating the problem of poverty in fact made matters worse by attracting the out of work and the rootless in search of a subsistence.

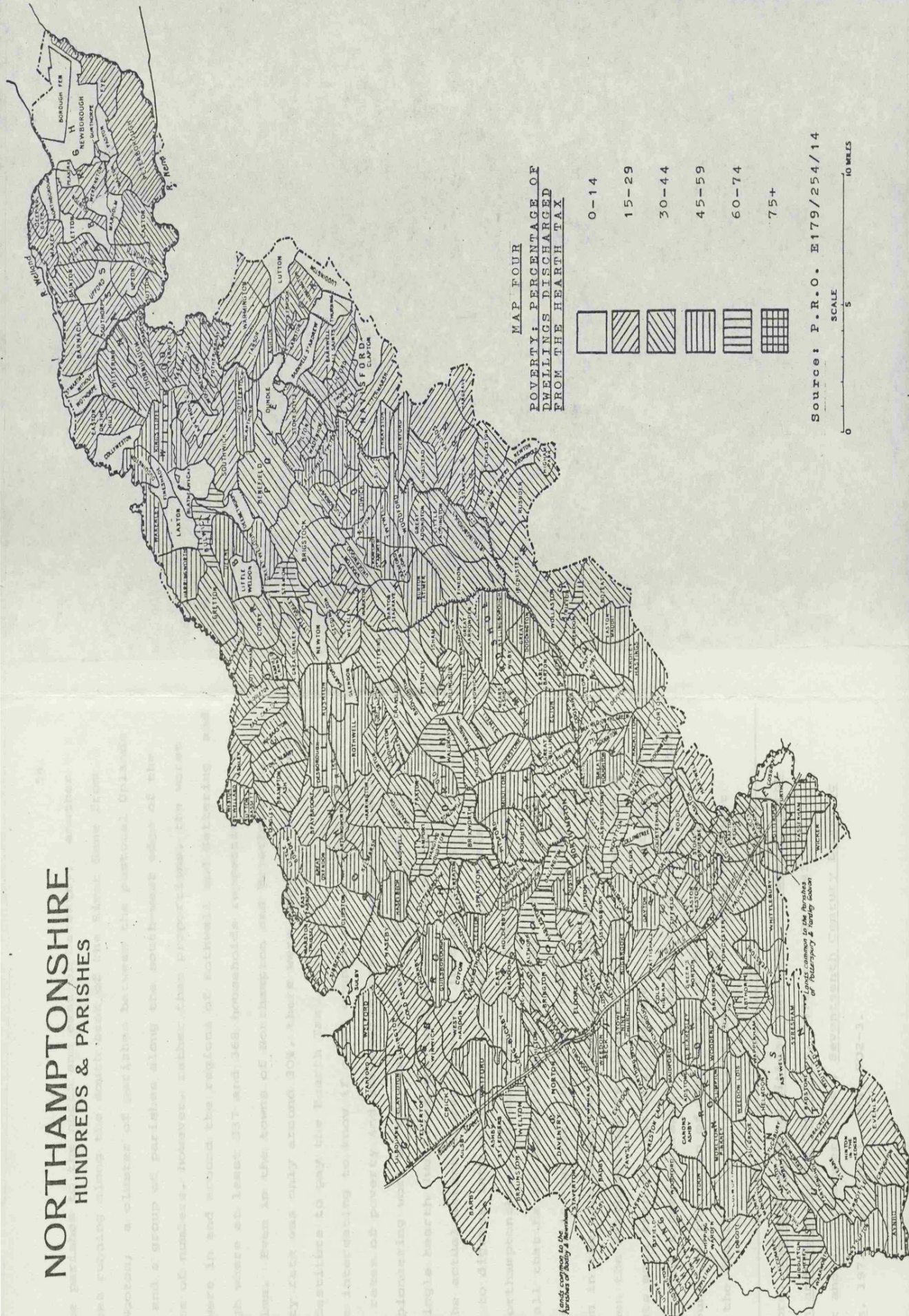
The experience of the rural open parishes, where weaving and lace-making were settled, was somewhat different from the market towns. Although some of the lace-making villages in the south-east of Northamptonshire grew quite large others did not: Denton increased in size by 18%, Whittlebury by 32% and Blakesley by 76%; but places like Ashton, Ecton, Earl's Barton, Grendon and Wilby grew at a slower rate than the county overall, and one or two places, such as Castle Ashby and Little Houghton, even decreased in size. Much the same was true of the cloth-making district where Desborough hardly grew and Little Bowden shrank. Despite this disparity most of the centres for lace-making and weaving had certain factors in common. In the first place, all but four of these villages were open, and the four that were not were enclosed only in part. Secondly, in almost all of them property

146. V.C.H., Northants., II, p. 337. If 50% of the town's households were exempt from the Hearth Tax then about 1,350 people would have been indigent.

147. ibid., p. 337; Morton, op. cit., p. 25; Cox, op. cit., p. 529;

N.N. and Q., I, p. 82.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HUNDREDS & PARISHES



Lands common to the
Hundred of Roding & Roding

Boundary to the Hundred
of Roding & Roding

Northampton; the parishes to the north and east of Daventry; another string of parishes running along the south bank of the River Nene from Weedon Beck to Wooton; a cluster of parishes between the pastoral Uplands and the Wolds; and a group of parishes along the south-west edge of the county. In terms of numbers, however, rather than proportions, the worst concentrations were in and around the regions of Rothwell and Kettering and of Wellingborough where at least 337 and 368 households respectively were in receipt of alms. Even in the towns of Northampton and Peterborough, where the poverty rate was only around 30%, there were 249 and 190 households considered too destitute to pay the Hearth Tax.

It would be interesting to know if other counties suffered such widespread high rates of poverty and concentrations of human distress. Dr. Spufford's pioneering work on the Cambridgeshire Hearth Tax, by totalling all single hearth dwellings together whether exempt or not, is unclear about the actual extent of real poverty in that county.¹⁴⁹ Without wanting to digress into an unsubstantiateable hypothesis, it is possible that Northamptonshire was worse afflicted than many others. After all, for all that he is unreliable, Gregory King did seem to think that about 400,000 families out of a national total of 1,360,586 were poverty stricken in the late seventeenth century. If this is anywhere near correct then the Northamptonshire rate, at 39% could have been as much as 10 points more than the national average. It is certainly very interesting that King's contemporary, Charles Davenant, estimated the Poor Rate for the county in the reign of Charles II to be £21,516 a year: proportionally the fourth largest in the Kingdom.¹⁵⁰ This no doubt

149. M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 1974, pp. 39 - 45.

150. J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, eds., Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, 1972, pp. 780-1, 784, 802-3.

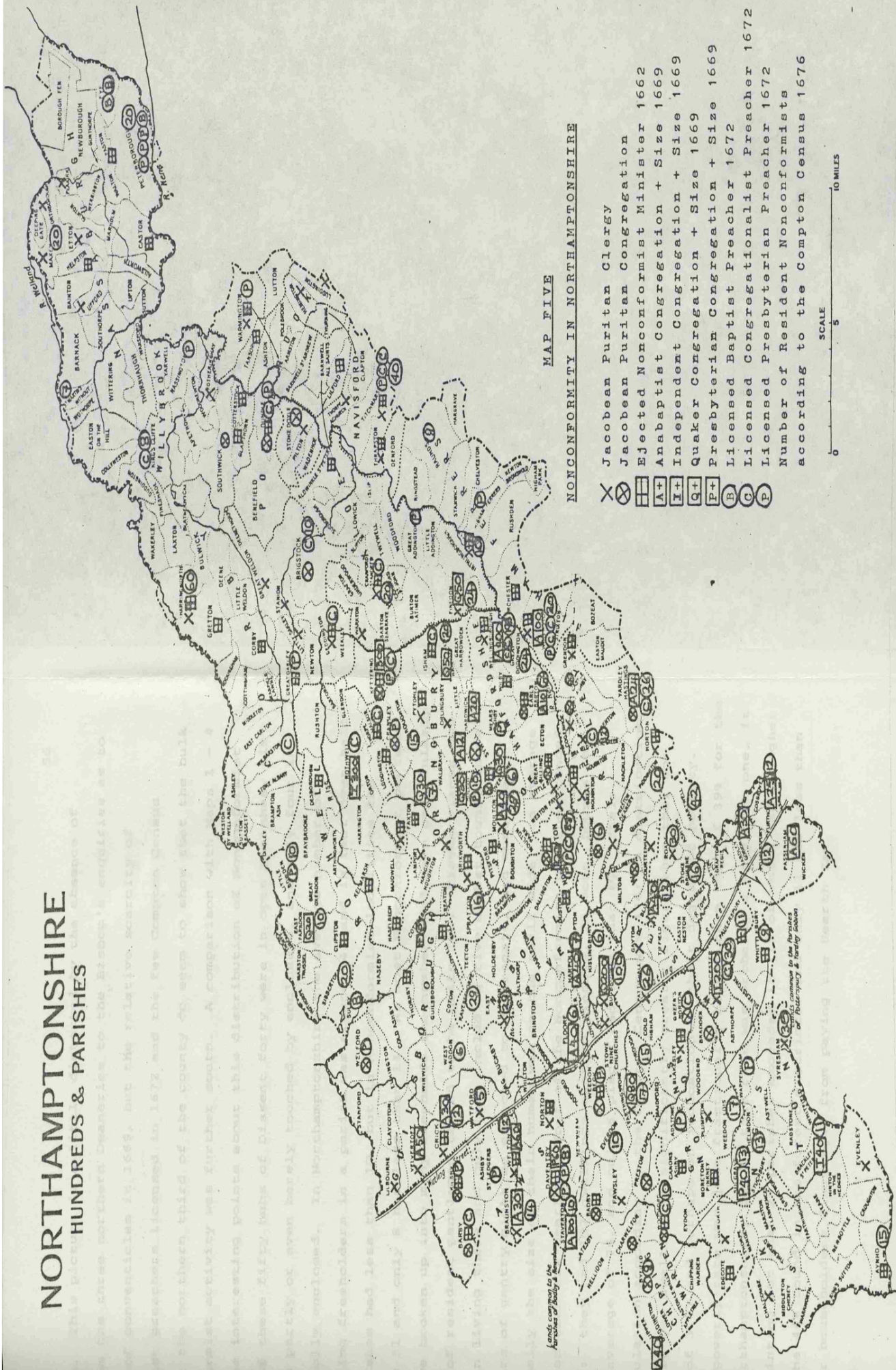
reflected both the philanthropy and ability to pay of the Northamptonshire gentry, their substantial tenants and the independent yeoman farmers, but it has also to be said that their prosperity had probably been achieved at the expense not of a "submerged tenth" but of an immiserated four-tenths".

What is clear is that there was an association between poverty, open parishes, the size of the parochial population, even the number and status of resident gentry, and the various expressions and symptoms of personal and social discontent that prevailed in the late seventeenth century. Of these varieties, religious nonconformity yields most readily to statistical analysis. In the great majority of cases, Nonconformist conventicles and other large numbers of Dissenters were found in market towns and sizeable open parishes not dominated by any one magnate but divided up between a good many freeholders. This is not to say, however, that the relationship between these factors and Dissent is a straightforward causal one or even that religious dissent was a particularly explosive creed attractive only to the rabidly discontented. After all, some types of Nonconformism were more socially respectable than others, although many Northamptonshire Presbyterians, it would seem, conformed in 1662, and as Dr. Spufford has shown for the Cambridgeshire villages she scrutinized, Dissent had its followers in every income group.¹⁵¹ It must be said, however, that while any sort of crude determinism must be avoided the evidence for an association between these factors is interesting and worth examination.

According to Map 5, the 36 active Nonconformist conventicles outside Northampton and Peterborough, and most of the 14 other places with 20 or more "obstinate separatists" recorded in the Compton Census were mainly distributed in the southern two-thirds of the county particularly along Watling Street and between Rothwell, Kettering, Wellingborough and the

151. Spufford, op. cit., pp. 298-306.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HUNDREDS & PARISHES



county town. This picture is a little distorted by the absence of replies from the three northern Deaneries to the Bishop's enquiries as to the number of conventicles in 1669, but the relative scarcity of Nonconformist preachers licensed in 1672 and the few Compton Census returns for the northern third of the county do seem to show that the bulk of Nonconformist activity was further south. A comparison with Maps 1 - 4 reveals some interesting points about this distribution of Nonconformist centres. Of these fifty hubs of Dissent forty were in open parishes, six in parishes partly or even barely touched by enclosure, and only four in parishes wholly enclosed. In Northamptonshire the average number of forty-shilling freeholders in a parish was around 14, and in fact over half of all parishes had less than 10, but in Nonconformist localities the average was 31 and only 8 had less than 14. As most Nonconformist parishes tended to be broken up into many freeholds the number, and more particularly the status of resident gentlemen tended to be quite low. Eleven places had no gentleman living there and only ten, including five market towns, where large numbers of gentry might be expected to congregate, had more than three. Usually the size of their homes was on the small side: on average each had less than six hearths. Most of the Nonconformist parishes tended to be large: they had 107 dwellings each on average, 21 more houses than the county average of 76, and only 6 places had less than 60. Their average population according to the Compton Census was 474: a distribution of 4.4 people per dwelling (a significantly greater figure than that for the county of 3.8) and perhaps an indication of their degree of poverty. The actual poverty rate was just fractionally higher than that of 39% for the whole of Northamptonshire, but as this rate was probably a very high one, it is worth pointing out that 29 parishes exceeded it (18 of which had a higher rate than the 44% found in the forest districts) and only 12 had less than 30% of their householders discharged from paying the Hearth Tax.

Statistical averages, however, can conceal a lot of local variation. By no means every parish shared all of these characteristics and there are many exceptions to one factor or another. The precise nature of the relationship between them, therefore, was not a simple one and a full explanation would require a detailed analysis of each of the fifty parishes in question needing much more than the limited amount of information available and would be beyond the scope of this thesis. All that can be done is to make a few general observations to point out some of the statistical shortcomings and reconcile a few of the irregularities. One problem that stands out is that several poverty stricken areas are unassociated with any form of religious dissent. In the extreme south-west of the county and also along the upper reaches of the River Welland around Thorpe Lubenham, Little Bowden, Sutton Bassett and Weston by Welland, this was probably because any disaffected persons were attending conventicles outside the county boundary in Banbury or Market Harborough.¹⁵² Similarly it is likely, though less certain, that Dissenters from the west bank of the Nene north of the Isle were going to Kettering and perhaps Wellingborough as well as Finedon, but the comparative scarcity of Nonconformists in this district is still puzzling and indicates that poverty was not always accompanied by Dissent. Open fields also did not necessarily make for religious nonconformity for the parishes north and south of Higham Ferrers have very little sign of it. But it is possible, and this could be just as true of the above mentioned district on the other side of the Nene, that these were the last open parishes proper in the one area of the county completely untouched by enclosure. The persistence of older agricultural patterns in an area, except for Raunds, of stagnant or declining population, could have created the social stability required to make Nonconformity less

152. T. Coleman, Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire, 1853, p. 122.

appealing to the individual.

Some centres of Nonconformity were in parishes far from poverty stricken. Sometimes they were even enclosed and lorded over by a great family as Titchmarsh was by the Pickerings, but in such few cases a Nonconformist family like the Pickerings was patronising and protecting Dissent on its estates.¹⁵³ More often relatively well-to-do parishes were not the homes of Dissenters but the sites for conventicles drawing members from nearby areas much more impoverished and convenient for surreptitious religious services because the usual guardians of social order, the territorial magnates, resident gentry and stolid yeomen, were missing. Places like Cosgrove, Braunston, Staverton, Harpole, Pattishall and Overstone had poverty rates significantly lower than the county average but were situated in or adjacent to areas much worse afflicted. Very often they tended to be populous parishes too large to be "policed" by the small number of gentry and substantial property owners present. In this respect the importance of market towns like Rothwell, Kettering, Wellingborough, even Brackley, and also Northampton must be stressed. They were both markets for agricultural produce and sites for embryonic craft industries offering the prospect of employment. They were the county's crossroads in every sense of the phrase: one-half of Kettering's Congregationalist church came from places outside the town and the one at Rothwell drew members from over sixteen parishes in the reign of Charles II.¹⁵⁴ They far more than the rural parishes, proved to be the focal points for sectarian dissent and social unrest in the late-seventeenth century.

As such, poverty, although widespread throughout Northamptonshire, should be considered as more of an urban than a rural problem. In the

153. C.S.P.D., 1671-72, p. 305.

154. Coleman, op. cit., p. 83; N. Glass, The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell, 1871, p. 28.

countryside, except perhaps in the woodlands, the dangers poverty presented were more diffuse, and the construction of a few alms houses, or similar ventures, could usually cope with them. In the towns, the numbers were too overwhelming for the country gentry and magistrates to deal with them easily. As will be seen, particularly in towns like Northampton, where widespread poverty was unavoidable, and Wellingborough where it was almost endemic, political radicalism, religious enthusiasm and social unrest readily took root in urban squalor and destitution. Whether Parliamentary or Royalist, Whig or Tory, the county justices of the peace and deputy lieutenants often had to deal with the intermittent, but never ending, problem of urban unrest in this period.

THE COUNTY COMMUNITY OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1649 - 1714The Number of Gentry in late-Stuart Northamptonshire.

In assessing the size of the gentry population in this period there are five related technical issues that are important enough to require discussion before arriving at an adequate estimate for the number of gentry in the county between c. 1650 and c. 1714. First of all there is the need for a homogeneous source in the form of a list for the whole county compiled more or less at the same time which then can be compared with other lists composed at later dates. There are six such lists extant complete enough to be useful: the compilation of those subscribing to the Free and Voluntary Gift of 1661; the two Hearth Tax registers of 1661 and 1674; the list of the Oaths under the Test Act those gentry who took / in 1673; the heraldic visitations of 1618-19 and 1681; and John Bridges's History of the county, compiled in the second decade of the eighteenth century but not published until 1791.¹ Such compilations are more valuable than a collection of individual pedigrees and family histories accumulated from a variety of heterogeneous sources because they do, at least, make a claim to being in some way complete. Even the 117 pedigrees attested to during the Visitation of 1681, together with the 70 or so other family trees pertinent to the period recorded in earlier visitations

-
1. P.R.O., E.179/254/9; E.179/254/11; E.179/254/14; N.R.O., Names of those persons taking the Oaths of Supremacy; W. C. Metcalfe, ed., The Visitations of Northamptonshire made in 1564 and 1618-19 with Northamptonshire Pedigrees from various Harleian MSS., 1887; H. Isham Longden, ed., The Visitation of the County of Northampton in the year 1681, 1935; J. Bridges, The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire, ed., P. Whalley, 1791. It is unfortunate that there are no Protestation returns for the early 1640s and no Poll-tax for the 1690s otherwise this discussion would not be needed.

or by John Bridges, are too few in number to represent a complete list of gentry for the county, and are best used to supplement or cross-check the information available from more methodically collected sources.

This is not to say that these other sources are without their shortcomings, but the second difficulty is also to do with a drawback to the use of accumulated family pedigrees. There is a natural tendency for gentry families to have their lineages recorded, either by themselves or by later genealogists, the longer they have been settled in a region. Besides these the only genealogies likely to be recorded were of gentry who were around to take advantage of one of the infrequent Heràlds' visitations. By and large those most likely to have their pedigrees thus set down were those gentry most recently settled in the district or those whose social origins were upstart enough to be unsure of their armorial status. Any attempt to estimate the total number of gentry in the county by collecting genealogies would leave out many families and would thus give an incomplete and distorted picture. Historians of earlier ages must perforce work by this method but those of the late-seventeenth century should try to collate the fullest possible of the available sources.

There then arises the third problem of comparing these various and disparate sources. All of them are no doubt flawed by clerical errors and oversights, but they have other defects as well. The Voluntary Gift of 1661 records 374 gentry and nobility who welcomed the return of Charles Stuart, or made their peace with him, by donating a substantial money payment. But it is doubtful if every Northamptonshire gentleman made a contribution. The Oath Rolls of 1673, registered 381 gentry subscribing to the Oaths of Allegiance and the Test Act, but no member of any of the eight Catholic gentry families submitted to it, and there were at least 44 Whig gentry of the 1680s, presumably conscientious Nonconformists, who similarly refused.² The

2. H.M.C., XI, App. Pt. II, MSS. of the House of Lords, 1678-88, p. 228;

P.R.O., S.P. 29/421 Pt. 3/216.

Hearth Tax returns of 1662 and 1674 provide the fullest account of the number of gentry by respectively recording 554 and 651 gentry homes in the county. Unfortunately, the 1662 return is marred by the serious omission of Northampton and Peterborough and it is necessary to add the 81 gentry homes listed in these towns in 1674 to the figure for 1662 to arrive at a total of 635.

This is far from being the only problem connected with any analysis of the Hearth Tax returns. First, there is the difficulty posed by individual gentle and noblemen owning more than one house. It has proven possible to recognise multiple property ownership in 84 cases in both 1662 and 1674, but this is where the 39 individuals concerned are easily indentifiable. Who is to say, however, whether or not, for instance, the John Adams of Crick is the same man as the John Adams of Welton even though the genealogies of two families of that name are well documented?³ On the other hand who would suppose the Mr. Weekleys of neighbouring Irthlingborough and Little Addington were two different people without the fortuitous survival of their two separate family trees?⁴ All in all there are another 72 names which, if accurate identification were possible, could prove to belong to only 36 individuals. In fact, it is more than probable that 40 of these names are examples of multiple property ownership because they could well belong to 20 of the oligarchic pseudo-gentry of Northampton who were very likely to have possessed country residences as well as their town houses. The problem of identification is complicated even further by the fact that there are another 74 individuals belonging to 33 families, who can be connected with reasonable certainty to a close relative of the same family name living nearby.

3. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. 13v., 22; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 1-6.

4. ibid., pp. 230-3; P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. 2-3.

This last point raises the fourth difficulty which is the wider issue of whether to count gentry families or their individual members. If the family is to be used as the unit for numbering the gentry then its limits have to be clearly defined and this can prove impossible. It is hard, for instance, to include under one heading both Sir Richard Samwell and his son, Richard, when they were both acting independently as magistrates at the time of the Restoration.⁵ It is equally hard to separate the brothers Henry Benson of Charwelton and George Benson of Towcester who, although they were first generation immigrants into the county and had married co-heiress sisters, were equally active in Northamptonshire affairs.⁶ It is even harder to do the same with Sir James Langham and his brother, Sir William, when both had earned on their own merits knighthoods and places on the Northamptonshire bench even while their father, Sir John, was alive.⁷ A different aspect of this problem is posed by such loose family groupings as the Montagus. The Montagu clan had five main branches of the family with properties in the county. There were the Montagus who were the Lords of Boughton; the Montagus of Horton, later Earls of Halifax; the Montagus of Little Oakley; the Mountagues of Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire who were the Earls of Manchester and who sold Hanging Houghton to the Ishams in 1670 but continued to own their property in Elkington; and the Montagus of Hinchingsbrooke, also in Huntingdonshire, who were the Earls of Sandwich and who came to possess a large mansion in Aldwinkle.⁸ Probably the best

5. Bridges, I, pp. 539-40; P.R.O., C.220/9/4.

6. Baker, I, p. 296; J. Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S., I, 1924, p. 255.

7. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, pp. 30-1; P.R.O., C.220/9/4; C.193/12/3.

8. P.R.O., E.179/254/14, ff. 2, 14; N.R.O., I.L. 55; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 136-42.

criterion for counting individual members of the same family separately is whether or not they had their own independent establishments. The Samwell family owned two residences at Gayton and at Upton, and Sir Richard's forty year old son probably had his own household in the latter for his widow was living there shortly after his death.⁹ The Langham brothers had separate establishments at Cottessbrooke and Walgrave. Thus, the 74 individual householders who were scions of widely spread families have been counted separately.

The fifth problem is presented by people like the Earls of Manchester and Sandwich who, despite their Northamptonshire homes, were clearly non-residents for most of the time. The size of the problem is difficult to gauge, but it has proven possible to identify 22 gentry landowners who probably did not live in the county by comparing the Hearth Tax returns with Bridges, and both of them with the Northamptonshire poll-books for 1702 and 1705.¹⁰ The total number of non-resident gentry was probably much higher, but because non-residence did not preclude activity in county affairs, they have been included in the final estimate of the county's gentry population. After all figures like the Earls of Manchester and Sandwich performed important political and social functions in the county community. The Second Earl of Manchester was, for instance, Recorder of Northampton between 1642 and 1671, and the first Earl of Sandwich was a vital link between two old Northamptonshire parliamentary families, the Crewes and the Pickerings, and the restored royal government.¹¹

9. ibid., pp. 186-7; P.R.O., E.179/254/11, ff. 13, 16v.

10. Copies of the Polls taken at the Several Elections for Members to represent the County of Northampton in Parliament, 1832, p. 78.

11. P.R.O., C.231/6, f.32; Borough Records, II, p. 106; Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 142; D.N.B., XV, p. 1128; R. Latham and W. Matthews, eds., The Diary of Samuel Pepys, I, 1970, passim.

Despite its shortcomings the Hearth Tax clearly provides the best source for an estimate of the number of gentry in Northamptonshire in the late seventeenth century. If the appropriate deduction of 45 is made for multiple household ownership then there must have been around 600 gentry and noblemen owning property in Northamptonshire. This figure could possibly include one or two clergymen overlooked while cross-checking the Hearth Tax with H. Isham Longden's Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, and the reader may still wish to exclude non-residential and junior gentry, but this would still leave a gentry population of about 550 individual householders.¹² The reader may also think it necessary to subtract the 36 cases of suspected multiple property ownership, and even the 110 or so urban pseudo-gentry not known or suspected of owning rural properties, but there would remain a figure of at least 400 gentry in Northamptonshire. All things considered, however, there were probably around 550 to 600 independent gentry households in Northamptonshire, including 130 town gentry, during the Restoration period.

Whether or not Northamptonshire was unusually thickly populated with gentry in this period is hard to say. It would require a detailed examination of the Hearth Tax returns for many other counties to provide accurate comparisons. All that can be said is that, if like sources should be compared to like, Northamptonshire was proportionately less well populated than counties in the south and south-east of England, and just as well or more densely settled than counties in the East Midlands or in the north of the kingdom. Previous assessments presumably based largely on Heralds' Visitations and antiquarian histories, would seem to show that Northamptonshire with between 278 and 335 gentry families had a gentry community proportionally much smaller than those of 800 - 1000 found in Kent,

12. H. Isham Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500,

I - XV, 1932-43.

Somerset and Suffolk. Even neighbouring Leicestershire, which was only four-fifths the size of Northamptonshire, had a gentry community of around 350 families.¹³ Another county in the East Midlands, Nottinghamshire, although it was also about four-fifths the area of Northamptonshire, apparently had, with about 220 gentry families, a gentry population only two-thirds as big.¹⁴ Further north, the county of York, which had an area six times that of Northamptonshire, with 679 gentry families, had a community only twice as large.¹⁵

Although the figures for the East Midland counties are probably underestimates, the proportional differences between them would seem to be more or less correct. An examination of the Nottinghamshire Hearth Tax returns for 1664 and 1674, for instance, reveals a gentry community of some 350 households.¹⁶ As this was about two-thirds the size of the Northamptonshire gentry community recorded in the Hearth Tax, it corresponds very well with the proportional difference drawn from the estimates based on genealogical sources.

The question remains, therefore, why was it that writers from Leland to Defoe gave Northamptonshire a reputation for a prolific gentry community?¹⁷

13. A. M. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60, 1966, pp. 33-4; A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: The

Seventeenth Century, 1969, pp. 13, 38.

14. R. Thoroton, The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire, with additions by J. Throsby, 1970, passim; G. Marshall, ed., Visitations of Nottinghamshire in the Years, 1569 and 1614, Harleian Society, IV, 1871, passim; K. Train, ed., The Nottinghamshire Visitation, 1662-1664, Thoroton Record Series, XIII, 1950, passim.

15. Everitt, Community of Kent, p. 34.

16. P.R.O., E.179/254/28, 30, 31; E.179/160/320-322.

17. L. T. Smith, ed., The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543, IV, 1964, p.22; D. Defoe, A Tour through England and Wales, ed., G. D. H. Cole, II, 1928, p. 89.

Part of the answer must lie in what has already been said about the association made between the arcadian amenities to be found in the Northamptonshire landscape and the bucolic tastes of most English gentlemen. Without wanting to sound unnecessarily cryptic, Northamptonshire was renowned as gentry country because it looked like gentry country. But a more objective, if equally tentative, answer is to be found in the population statistics of the period. In Northamptonshire, gentry households constituted 2.7% of the total number of dwellings. Despite the shortcomings and discrepancies of Gregory King's statistics, and despite the fact that households and families are not necessarily the same thing, this figure can be compared to the percentage of gentry families in the country as a whole. According to King there were some 16,560 aristocratic and gentry families in the nation and they constituted only 1.2% out of the total number of 1,360,586 families in the whole kingdom.¹⁸ Allowing for some errors, it would seem that the Northamptonshire gentry were twice as numerous as in the country at large.

The Distribution of Gentry in Northamptonshire

The number of gentry in Northamptonshire was, of course, greatly exaggerated by the presence of a great many urban or pseudo-gentry. Gentlemen's town houses accounted for about one quarter of all gentry households in the county. In 1674 there were 158 gentry homes in the ten most important market towns. Higham Ferrers, Kettering, Rothwell and Wellingborough had only 18 between them, but Peterborough and Towcester had 10 each, Brackley had 14, Oundle 15, Daventry 20 and Northampton no fewer than 71. The attractions of such towns have already been examined and so that discriminating "fine lady", Celia Fiennes's description of

18. In J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, eds., Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, pp. 780-1.

Daventry as, "a pretty little market town and all of stone", will have to suffice here for an explanation.¹⁹ Despite such appeal, Daventry, Northampton and other such places did not encourage many gentry of the first rank to forsake residence in the country for the convenience of a town house. Nor, for that matter, were many country gentlemen proper persuaded by urban amusements to build town houses as fashionable seasonal alternatives to their country seats. Making up the first group of gentry who had some standing in the country community but preferred to live in one of the Northamptonshire towns were: Henry Freeman and Goddard Pemberton of Higham Ferrers; Edmund Sawyer of Kettering; Humphrey Orme of Peterborough; George Benson of Towcester; Philip Lord Wenman of Brackley; John Creed and William Page of Oundle; Henry Berkeley and John Combes of Daventry; and Sir Edmund Bray, William Buckby and Hatton Fermor of Northampton. Amongst the second group maintaining town houses were the Andrewes of Harlestone, the Arundells of Stoke Bruerne, the Barnards of Abington, the Danvers of Culworth, the Fermors of Easton Neston, the Fleetwoods of Aldwinkle, the Heselrigges of Harlestone, the Haslewoods of Maidwell, the Mulshoes of Finedon, the Pargiters of Greatworth and the Willoughbys of Purston: all of whom owned second homes in Northampton. The only other important urban residences owned by country gentlemen were in Oundle: they belonged to the Pickerings of Titchmarsh, the Treshams of Pilton and the Walcots of Cranford St. Andrew. As only about one gentleman's town house in five or six was owned by the country gentry, the day still lay in the future when the county town would, according to the first edition of the Northampton Mercury in 1720, become "the soul of conversation" for the Northamptonshire gentry.²⁰

19. The Journeys of Celia Fiennes, ed. C. Morris, 1949, p. 118.

20. A. M. Everitt, Country, County and Town: the Patterns of Regional Evolution in England, T.R.H.S., Fifth Series, XXIX, 1979, p. 96, n.36.

By far the largest number of gentlemen's town houses were owned by town or pseudo-gentry. It was about the time of the Great Fire of Northampton that the phrase "our town gentry" first appeared.²¹ In Northampton, about 55 out of the 71 gentlemen's homes there were occupied by town gentry. At least two-thirds of these had urban and not country roots, for 35 of those who aspired to gentility, having served on at least one occasion as mayor or bailiff, belonged more to the town oligarchy than to the country gentry.²² Whether they were completely without country property is open to doubt, as it has already been pointed out there is a strong suspicion that twenty of the town gentry also had residences elsewhere in the county. If their country estates matched their country homes, however, then they must have been quite small and more for residential use than agricultural enterprise.²³ None of the probate inventories of Northampton town gentry make much mention of agricultural implements, livestock or rents.²⁴ Clearly over 130, or about a quarter of the county's gentry were only county gentlemen in their ambitions, and should perhaps be set apart from the 450 or so country gentry proper.

Apart from the concentrations of town gentry, the rest of the county community was distributed more or less evenly throughout Northamptonshire. Despite Leland's claim, there was not a gentleman in quite every parish, but four out of every five villages, however, had at least one in residence.²⁵

21. ibid., p. 95, n.34.

22. Borough Records., II, pp. 552-3, 562-3.

23. Only three had more than five hearths and none more than seven.

24. N.R.O., Archdeaconry Court of Northampton, Probate Inventories of:
John Barnes, 1664; John Ventris, 1678; William Chester, 1682;
John Twigden, 1682.

25. L. T. Smith, ed., The Itinerary of John Leland, in or about the years 1535-1543, IV, 1964, p. 22.

The only regions that had a thinner distribution were the Soke of Peterborough, the north-eastern part of Rockingham Forest, the area to the west and north-west of the county town, and the south eastern side of the county between the Rivers Tove and Nene, where at least one village in four was without any gentry. Leland's observation, however, had remained, or had become more or less true of the Wolds, much of the Uplands, the region north and east of Northampton bounded by the River Ise, and the west bank of the Nene between the Ise and Harper's Brook.

If these ratios are inverted much the same pattern remains discernible. On average there were 1.4 gentlemen to every village in Northamptonshire. The regions where there were much fewer than this were once again the Soke of Peterborough, where on the north and east side there were as few as 0.5 gentlemen per village, the north end of Rockingham Forest, the district immediately to the west of Northampton, and the south-east side of the county. Using this ratio, however, the Nene Valley, below the confluence of the Ise on the one side and Ringstead on the other, appears much less gentrified than the proportion of villages to gentlemen suggests. Although 24 out of 29 villages in this area had a gentleman in residence there were no more than 34 gentry in total at an average distribution of less than 1.2 per village. In the district around, but not including, Oundle the number of gentry to each village was even lower at 0.8. The regions where the local average was well over, sometimes double, that for the county were once again the Wolds and most of the Uplands. Nevertheless, apart from these regional disparities, it must be stressed that the gentry of Northamptonshire do seem to have been spread evenly and usually quite thickly over much of the county.

As the Northamptonshire gentry were so numerous and so evenly distributed it is difficult to pinpoint any other significant local variations except perhaps for the proportion they constituted of the regional populations. In the county as a whole gentry households amounted to 2.7% of the total, but in much of the Nene valley below Northampton

(except on either bank around Higham Ferrers) and especially around Oundle, the proportion was generally lower than this. The west side of Rockingham Forest was slightly less well stocked with gentry than the rest of the county and the margin widened the further north one went in the Forest where gentry homes made up only 1.8% of the total. Further north still, in the Soke of Peterborough, gentry homes constituted just 1.4% of all households. There was also an area in the lee of the central Uplands west of Northampton where the gentry, who composed 1.8% of the local population, were more thinly spread than usual. The populations of the northern Uplands, much of the upper Ise valley, the southern Uplands, the Wolds and the Tove valley were more thickly distributed with gentry than normal, especially the last two districts where the gentry component was over 4% of all households.

In examining these figures, however, two points need to be remembered. Firstly, in many of the places where the gentry were apparently spread thin, like the Nene valley, the local population was large and thickly distributed. On the other hand, in some areas like the northern Uplands, the Wolds and the Tove valley, where the gentry seemed to be a larger proportion of the local population than normal, frequently that local population was comparatively small or thinly spread. Secondly, the above figures exclude the market towns and their inclusion can change the ratio of gentry to commoners quite substantially. If the 297 households, including 20 gentry homes, in Daventry are incorporated with the rest of the region of the central Uplands west of Watling Street, for instance, then the gentry component of the area's population rises from 1.8% to 2.6%. On the other hand if the eight gentry and five-hundred other inhabited households in the large and populous market town-cum-open parish of Wellingborough are numbered with the rest of the district of the Nene valley between Northampton and the River Ise then the ratio of gentry to commoners in the region drops from 2.3% to 1.8%.

In this context it is worth pointing out that the percentage of pseudo-gentry in the county's market towns varied considerably. In Towcester the town gentry were 3.3% of the total population; in Oundle 4.1%; in Brackley and Daventry 6.5% and 6.7%; and in Northampton they were as high as 8.7%. Elsewhere the proportions were much lower: in Peterborough and Wellingborough as low as 1.6% and 1.5%; in Rothwell 1.1% and Kettering 0.9%. It is interesting to note that once again the reader's attention cannot help but be drawn to the Rothwell-Kettering-Wellingborough region as a heavily populated area devoid of a significant gentry presence. Towns like Northampton, Brackley, Daventry and Oundle, however, were clearly becoming important gentry centres by the second half of the seventeenth century even though most of the gentry presence in them was composed not of country squires but of townsmen and professionals who aspired to the status of gentility.

If the density of the local population or the presence or the site of a large urban settlement nearby can frequently account for any apparent patchiness in the gentry presence, then there is also an interesting correlation that might explain their comparative absence from several localities.²⁶ Certainly from this correlation emerges the only other significant pattern of local variations in the distribution of gentry households. It is interesting that in most of those districts where aristocratic estates occupied a good proportion of the area gentry numbers were lower than elsewhere in the county. It is not surprising that the

26. This section is based on: N.R.O., Ex.(B), 66/1-28, 78/1-4; F.H., 296, 298, 3514, 4086; Mont. (B), 1-13; Westmorland Apethorpe Coll., Box I; Bridges, I and II, passim; V.C.H., Northants., II, III, IV, passim, M. E. Finch, The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S., XIX, 1956, passim, C. Wise, The Montagus of Boughton, 1888, passim.

ratio of gentlemen to villages should be so low in the western Soke of Peterborough and the north end of Rockingham Forest where the extensive estates of the Earls of Cardigan, Exeter and Westmorland and Lord Fitzwilliam took up at least a part of 26 out of the 32 parishes in the region. In these magnate dominated parishes the number of gentlemen per village, at 0.9, was well below both the county average of 1.4 and the regional average of 1.2. On the Cardigan estates around Deene there were only two gentry families - an average of 0.5 gentlemen per village. On the estates of the Earls of Peterborough and Westmorland and Lord Montagu, that ran intermittently on both sides of the River Nene northwards from Great Addington and Denford to Wadenhoe and across to Lutton, the number of gentry per village averaged only 0.4 as opposed to the regional average of 1.2. The concentration of most of these frequently enclosed lordly estates south and east of Oundle does seem to explain the paucity of gentlemen in this region. This does not mean that there were no gentlemen living in these neighbourhoods, far from it, as has been seen, the most significant fact is that there were quite a few; nor does it indicate the absence of sizeable gentry estates; but lesser gentry were relatively scarce. West of Northampton the estates of the Earls of Sunderland with only two gentlemen in six villages also seem to have something to do with the low proportion of gentry in that area. Just about the only exception to this otherwise general rule seems to have been on the Earl of Northampton's lands around Castle Ashby, Denton, Grendon and Yardley Hastings where there were at least nine gentlemen living in 1674. Since the area on the south bank of the Nene as the river turns northwards was one where gentry were rather thin on the ground this incongruity is hard to explain away. All that can be said is that around the swelling estates of the Montagues of Horton, future Earls of Halifax, in Horton, Denton, Piddington and Quinton, which were in the same vicinity, the number of gentry

conformed more closely to the regional norm.

In general terms this evidence points to what is already well known: that Northamptonshire was becoming a county of lordly magnates.²⁷ But it does seem to indicate that the drift in favour of the great lord and the large estate could well have been already well established before the end of the century. It could well have been that the economic and social forces that reduced the gentry presence in certain quarters were not the result of aristocratic expansion or even consolidation, although the nobility were certainly doing this in the late seventeenth century, but were a consequence of already existing settlement and farming patterns which made the Wolds and the Uplands more attractive to and more easily penetrated by the independent gentleman than was the Nene Valley. As will be seen, it would appear that there was no diminution in the total number of gentry in the county. Georgian Northamptonshire was indeed a county of noble domains but it is open to doubt whether the aristocracy bought their prominence at the direct expense of the gentry.

The Wealth of the Gentry

It has proven possible to discover or estimate with reasonable accuracy the incomes of 15 noble and 144 gentry families in Northamptonshire between 1650 and 1685. The reader should be aware that family incomes over such a long period of time would have varied quite significantly and that discrepancies are therefore inevitable. That one family's income in say 1650 can be compared to another's in 1685 is open to doubt. The income of any one family can also be expected to vary, perhaps considerably, over a period of thirty-five years. Furthermore many of these figures are based on assessments made

27. H. J. Habakkuk, English Land ownership, 1780-1840, Economic History Review, X, 1939-40, pp. 2-16.

for the government of the day and in many cases would have been warped either by maliciously laid information or by the efforts of the landowner under scrutiny to conceal his real wealth. Such assessments, however, have one advantage over estate rent-rolls in that they frequently take debts and other charges on family income into account and often reveal other sources of income like jointures which might otherwise be overlooked. As such their usefulness is in disclosing disposable income which, in the short term, is probably more important than capital possessions. There are too few complete family accounts for this period and in the end, if a large sample of gentry families is required in order to take a broad view, the researcher is compelled to use a variety of disparate sources to make what in many cases are only estimates however intelligent.²⁸

28. The main sources used for this section are: Cal. Comm. Comp., complemented, where necessary by the fuller entries in, P.R.O., Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, S.P.23; Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., complemented by entries in P.R.O., S.P.19; P.R.O., S.P.29/421, pt.3, f. 216 - Whig estates assessed in 1683; B.L., Add. MSS. 34, 222, f. 38v. - aristocratic estates assessed for militia duty in 1661; N.R.O., Fermor-Hesketh-Baker, 719 - Popish Recusant estates in 1657; N.N. and Q., II, p. 208 - Northamptonshire "Knights of the Royal Oak" and the yearly value of their estates; T.S.P., IV, p. 511 - half-yearly Decimation Tax, 1656. These have been complemented and supplemented by numerous references in Baker, Bridges and V.C.H., Northants. to the value of several estates and by such family accounts and land surveys as: B.L. Add. MSS. 15889, f.59 - Spencer of Althorp; B.L., Add. MSS. 14030, f.164 - Yelverton of Easton Mauduit; N.R.O., Ex. (B) 66/1-28 - Cecil of Burghley; N.R.O., M. (TM). 375 - Cockayne of Rushton; N.R.O., D. (CA). 305-6 - Dryden of Canon's Ashby; Bodley; MS. Eng. Lett. c. 210 and N.R.O., F - H.296, 3614, 4086 - Hatton of Kirby; N.R.O., I.C. 1003 - Isham of Lamport.

The 159 discoverable family incomes amount to a total of £147,469. The fifteen noble families received 33% of this and had an individual average income of £3,298 a year. Twelve baronets had together 12% of the total and an average income of £1,400 p.a. each. Sixteen knights were in receipt of 10% of the total and had an individual income of £936 p.a. on average. Ninety-three gentlemen with the dignity of esquire had 42% of the total and had an average income of £665 p.a. Twenty-three mere gentlemen had only 3% of the total sum and an average income of £190 p.a. Although the value of the exercise is open to doubt, if these average incomes are multiplied by the respective numbers in each status group according to the Hearth Tax, it is found that the aristocracy, 3.5% of the county's gentility, received 22% of that class's income; the baronetage, 3% of its number, had 8% of its income; the knights, 4%, had 7%, the squirearchy, around 30%, had 40%; and the parochial gentry, about 60%, had 23% of the gentility's income.

Quite clearly there were great differences between the various strata of gentle society, particularly between those of the rank of esquire or above and the ordinary parochial gentry. There were also great discrepancies between families of the same status. There were for instance, baronets like Sur Justinian Isham of Lamport with incomes well over £2,000 a year, and some almost as prosperous, like Sir Thomas Cave of Stanford with £1,500 p.a. or so, but there were others like Sir Henry Pickering of Elmington or Sir John Wake of Salcey Forest who were worth only £200 or £300 a year.²⁹ A knight like Sir Anthony Haslewood of Maidwell with between £1,000 and £1,200 p.a. had an income perhaps ten times as great as Sir John Andrews of Denton with only £110 a year.³⁰ Such discrepancies meant that noblemen and

29. N.R.O., I.C. 1003; T.S.P., IV, p. 511; V.C.H., Northants., III, p. 95; Cal. Comm. Comp., III, p. 1879.

30. Ibid., III, p. 1884; T.S.P., IV, p. 511.

titled gentry were often only as rich or even poorer than ordinary esquires. The Brudenells, Earls of Cardigan, with £1,478 p.a., and the Crewes, Barons of Steane, with £1,660 p.a., were together barely as wealthy as George Clarke of Watford, esq., who had an income assessed at £3,000 p.a.³¹ Sir John Barnard of Abington, knight, with an income estimated at £850 p.a. was only as well off as John Hill of Rothwell, gent., with £800 p.a.³²

Despite these incongruities titles almost always went hand in hand with the incomes to match their status. None of the nobility had less than £1,000 a year and only two were poorer than the average baronet. More than half of the Northamptonshire peers were worth over £3,000 a year. Only five of the twelve baronets had less than the group's average income of £1,400 p.a. and only two were in receipt of an income less than an average knight's. Although eight of the sixteen knights received less than £900 a year, all but three of them had over £600 p.a. Out of 93 esquires only ten had incomes of less than £200 p.a., while out of 23 mere gentlemen just one-third had more than £200 p.a. and only one more than £600 p.a.

From an examination of eighty-two probate inventories in the Northamptonshire Record Office from between 1660 and 1685, it is possible to estimate the average capital wealth of three or four classes of Northamptonshire gentry.³³ Two of these inventories are out of the top drawer of county society: Richard Knightley of Fawsley and Preston Capes, one of whose more immediate heirs and successors was knighted by

31. N.R.O., Fermor-Hesketh-Baker, 719, ff. 27-8; B.L., Add. MSS. 34,222, f.38v.; N.N. and Q., II, p. 208.

32. Baker, I, p. 10; Bridges, I, p. 402; P.R.O., S.P. 29/421 pt.3, f.216.

33. N.R.O., Administrations in the Archdeaconry of Northampton, Administrations of the Consistory Court of Peterborough, and q.v. note 34.

Charles II, left assets worth £5,140; and Sir William Haslewood of Maidwell left £2,045 in goods and chattels.³⁴ Two inventories are nowhere near enough to make any worthwhile generalisations but it is clear that such members of the county élite were a great deal wealthier than even the squirearchy. There are eight inventories extant from this period for esquires, plus two for squire's widows which are of such fullness that they probably represent the bulk of their husband's possessions.³⁵ Of these, two indicate a great degree of affluence: Richard Benson's of Charwelton worth £1,296 in 1670 and Henry Lucas's of Guilsborough worth £1,432 in 1681; but the rest are for figures of around £500 or less. With Benson's and Lucas's possessions the average inventory was worth £596; without them it was worth £328.

The remaining eighty inventories are for mere gentlemen. Fifty-eight of these are for parochial country gentry and twelve for pseudo-gentry from the county's market towns. In both groups there was a great disparity between the richest and the poorest gentlemen. Amongst the country gentry the wealthiest man thus recorded was John Hoare of Greens Norton who was worth £877 when he died in 1684. There were another eight, all in all 15% of the group, who were worth more than £500 at their deaths. On the other hand

34. N.R.O., K. 1140; F-H. 1140; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 104-108.

35. William Watts of Blakesley, 1669; Richard Benson of Charwelton, 1670; John Sanderson of Little Addington, 1672; Godfrey Chybnale of Orlingbury 1678; Henry Lucas of Guilsborough, 1601; William Chester of Northampton, 1682; Edmund Bacon of Burton Latimer, 1684; Robert Fish of Finedon, 1684; and Mrs Mary Mulshoe of Finedon, 1681 and Mrs Margaret Brooke of Great Oakley, 1684.

there were twenty-two, 38% of the total, who had possessions worth less than £100 when they died. The poorest country gentleman was George Nason of Byfield worth only £19 in 1685. The average wealth of mere country gentry in this period was £237, but thirty-seven, nearly two-thirds of the whole, had less than this recorded in their probate inventories.

Northamptonshire town gentry inventories reveal the same kind of broad spread in their wealth. The richest was John Ventriss gentleman and maltster of Northampton who died worth £1,426 in 1676. There was only one other gentleman living in a market town who was worth anything near as much: John Tew of Towcester whose more agricultural estate was valued at £1,407 in 1683. Of the other ten all but one died with goods worth less than £500, four of these less than £100. The poorest was William Bawe of Wellingborough who had just £12 by him when he died in 1669. The average wealth at their deaths of these twelve pseudo-gentry was £410, but if Ventriss and Tew are excluded from this small and rather badly weighted sample, the average is almost halved to £209. In this case there does not seem to have been any significant difference in wealth between town and country gentlemen. As a group, however, with average inventories of £226, mere gentry were twice as wealthy as the average yeoman or husbandman.³⁶

There is perhaps another way in which the relative distribution of capital wealth amongst the gentry can be estimated: through an examination of the size of their homes as indicated in the Hearth Tax. Before doing so, however, it must be pointed out that there is no real correlation between the number of hearths in gentry households and the value of their goods and chattels recorded in their probate inventories. The aforementioned Henry Lucas of Guilsborough, who was worth £1,432, had a house in the hamlet of

36. Supra. p.18.

Nortoft, with only six hearths whereas Thomas Harris of Badby, who was only worth £39 in 1667, had one more hearth in his home. Richard Benson, worth £1,296 at his death in 1670, had ten hearths in his house at Charwelton but so did John Saunderson in his at Little Addington and he left, in 1672, an estate less than a third the size of Benson's. Ralph Lane of Glendon who left £725 in 1674 obviously had a house that, with seventeen hearths, was far too large for him to maintain, and so did Godfrey Chybnale of Orlingbury, whose possessions valued at £392 in 1678 did not match a residence of thirteen hearths. There is a better correlation between income and size of dwelling, but it is only of a general nature and cannot be applied with any great certainty. Of those country gentry with incomes of less than £500 p.a. over 90% had houses with ten or fewer hearths; and of those gentry with houses of ten hearths or less more than 80% had incomes of less than £500 p.a. Of those gentry with over £500 p.a., 90% had houses with eleven hearths or more; and of those with dwellings larger than eleven hearths, 98% had incomes of over £500 p.a. Any further refinement to what after all is quite a crude correlation quickly leads to its break down.

In 1662, 11% of all gentry households had between one and three hearths; 40% between four and six; 18% between seven and nine; 11% between ten and twelve; 12% between thirteen and nineteen; 4% between twenty and twenty-nine; and 4% had thirty or over. There were no significant regional variations in the distribution of house sizes other than a noticeable but not pronounced absence of the smaller gentry homes from an area north of a line drawn between Corby and Thrapston and incorporating the north end of Rockingham Forest, the north end of the Clay Vale and the Soke of Peterborough. The larger houses were correspondingly in greater prominence in this region - seven with over twenty hearths in Rockingham Forest alone and four with over thirty in the Soke - but again the numbers and the statistical bases are too small to hang any importance on any perceived disparity in the proportions.

All that can be said is that if the correlation between house size and income is used then there is a surprising degree of congruence between the statistical supposition ventured earlier that 60% of the Northamptonshire gentry had incomes of less than £500 p.a. and the proportion of 59% arrived at by using the correlation. (The number of houses - 394 - multiplied by the correlation - 80% - divided by the number of dwellings outside the large market towns - 536 - equals 59%). The converse of this, of course, is that 40% of the county's gentry population had incomes over £500 p.a.: quite a sizeable proportion even by Kentish standards!³⁷

Change in the Gentry Community

It is by now well known, thanks to the industry of Professor Everitt, that on the eve of the Civil War only 27% of the Northamptonshire gentry community were "truly indigenous", that 40% were Tudor in origin and that 33% had settled into the ranks of the armigerous less than forty years before.³⁸ Although this point is qualified elsewhere by the fact that about one half of the county gentry had local, agrarian roots, the overall picture, remains of a gentry and to some extent a squirearchy in some flux being penetrated if not exactly by the self-made, the upstart and the social climbing then by the newcomer whose origins were obscure and not always local.³⁹ In this case it should prove instructive to examine this trend as it developed in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Of the 540 country gentry proper in Northamptonshire recorded in the Hearth Tax of 1674, 249 have family histories that are readily accessible in Baker, Bridges and Herald's Visitations of 1618-19 and 1681. Of these

37. A.M. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60, 1966, p. 41.

38. A.M. Everitt, The Local Community and the Great Rebellion, 1969, p. 21.

39. A.M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, 1969, p. 13.

249 families, 6% had been settled in the county since before the reign of Henry VII; 14% were early Tudor in origin; 26% were Elizabethan; 32% were Jacobean or early Caroline and a surprising 22% had joined the ranks of the Northamptonshire gentry since the eve of the Civil War. It would be interesting to examine the pseudo-gentry, particularly those of Northampton, in the same way but the number of pedigrees discovered is too small to provide a meaningful sample. All that can be said is that about one-half of the 55 Northampton town gentry recorded in 1674 had had a family member serve as mayor or bailiff to the Corporation in the previous two centuries. Of these about one-half again had served during Tudor times and the other half since the coming of the Stuarts.

The subsequent fate of the 249 gentry families is illuminating. Out of these only 148 survived, at least inside the county, until 1720. Fifteen of the 51 pre- and early Tudor families, or about 6% of the total had either left the county or been extinguished; 29 of the 65 Elizabethan families, about 12% of the total, also went; 29 of the 79 Jacobean and early Caroline families, about 12% of the total, vanished; and 28 of the 54 post-Civil War newcomers, about 11% of the total, disappeared. Put another way, between one-third and one-half of each group, or 40% of the whole group, had dropped out of the county society in the space of fifty years. This figure is corroborated if an examination is made of the similar and overlapping sample of 274 families mentioned by Bridges or the Heralds' Visitation of 1681 as living in the county around the middle of the seventeenth century. Again, 115, or 42%, were no longer in the county by c. 1720.

It was not just that there was a steady rate of attrition amongst the gentry community for a comparison of the two Hearth Tax returns shows that this slow seepage of less than 10% a decade in fact far more resembled a haemorrhage. Between 1662 and 1674 no less than 207 named gentlemen, out of a total of about 500 country gentry, ceased to live in Northamptonshire.

The rate of loss was therefore perhaps twice what might be supposed from say Bridges. But it would seem that a balance was maintained for, however great the outflow of gentry, there was always an influx just as large or larger to replace those who left. Between 1662 and 1674 211 new gentry appeared in the county, and Bridges is useful in showing that this large proportion of newcomers amongst the gentry population was maintained or even increased. Bridges records 327 gentry landowners in the county at the beginning of the eighteenth century of whom 194 had been settled since the end of the Civil War. Of these, 168 were not mentioned in the Hearth Tax returns of 1674 and therefore must have been settled in the county for something less than fifty years. The high rate of turnover within the gentry community thus suggested by Bridges and the Hearth Tax indicates that at any one time in the late Stuart period between 40% and 60% of all resident gentlemen were first or second generation newcomers to the county.

As well as an overall high rate of turnover the Hearth Tax also indicates some redistribution of gentry numbers within the county. Between 1662 and 1674 the number of gentry in the Soke of Peterborough was halved and in the southern half of Rockingham Forest their numbers dropped by 35%. On the other hand the Wolds, southern and northern Uplands, and the northern end of Rockingham Forest made gains in gentry residents of between 10% and 70%. Elsewhere the number of gentry remained more or less static. These regional changes, however, do not indicate a substantial relocation of individual gentry within the county. Virtually none of those who disappeared after 1662 reappeared in another place twelve years later. A new gentry name to, say, the Wolds in 1674 was just as new a gentry name to Northamptonshire as a whole.

This redistribution of gentry would also seem to have been accompanied by a redistribution of wealth represented by changes in the size of gentry households. Whereas in 1662 59 gentry homes or 11% of all gentry households had had three hearths or less, by 1674 there were only 13 or just over 2% of the total. The number of gentry homes with between four and six hearths, however, increased from 218 to 249, or from 40% to 45% of their respective totals. The number of gentry homes with between seven and nine hearths also rose, from 97 to 115, or from 18% to 21% of the total. There were more marginal increases amongst the larger homes. Much of the disappearance of smaller households occurred not only in places which lost large numbers of gentry but also in those areas that gained them. All eight of those gentry households in the southern part of Rockingham Forest with fewer than three hearths vanished between 1662 and 1674, but so did all six in the Wolds. The difference would seem to have been that whereas the number of gentry in south Rockingham Forest with houses of between four and nine hearths, also shrank, from 41 to 25, the number in the Wolds rose from 36 to 48. Across the whole county it would seem that the extinction of the poorer sort of gentleman was nearly universal, but those of the middling kind, except in places like Rockingham Forest and the Soke of Peterborough, were increasing in number almost everywhere.

On the other hand it was, as might be expected, amongst this middle group that the greatest flux occurred. Whereas 51 gentry in the 1-3 hearth bracket disappeared and only 5 came into the county to replace them, 127 newcomers in the 4-6 hearth group emerged but 96 of those living in 1662 vanished. Even in the 7-9 hearth group there was a similar kind of turnover: 34 left the county and 52 came in to replace them. Clearly the rate of turnover of departures and arrivals was much greater amongst the lower and middling sections of the gentry community. Between 1662 and 1674, 78% of the 1-3 hearth group either left or arrived in the county; 48% of the 4-6 hearth group; 41% of the 7-9 hearth group; 33% of the 10-12 hearth group;

23% of the 13-19 hearth groups; and only 12% of those with households of twenty hearths or over.

It is impossible to say who exactly comprised these short-lived ranks of lower and middling gentry. No doubt many of them had professional or commercial backgrounds but the evidence is far too scanty to hazard an estimate as to what proportion were prosperous tradesmen or successful lawyers. In fact there is far more evidence to associate up and coming members of the squirearchy and upper echelons of county society with such origins than there is for their more lowly fellow gentry. Quite a few, if the evidence of the Heralds' Visitation of 1681 is anything to go by as far as the transient newcomers were concerned, were minor gentry from elsewhere in the country. Although the analogy is not strictly correct, because they were all in the county for a lot longer than a mere twelve years, 20 out of 117 pedigrees recorded in 1681 refer to minor gentry families which had come from gentry backgrounds from as far afield as Cornwall or Cumbria, had taken up residence in the county in the previous fifty years or so, and were gone well before the next fifty were up.⁴⁰ Why they did so, of course, remains a mystery.

Impermanent and lowly gentry do not seem to have been younger sons or junior army officers down on their luck. Not one of the thirty-five ex-Royalist Northamptonshire army officers who petitioned the Crown for relief in 1661 appears amongst the migrant gentlemen of either 1662 or 1674.⁴¹ Some, at least, of the transitory minor gentry would seem to have had more humble origins. Wealthy yeomen and husbandmen could still apparently penetrate the ranks of the gentry with some ease. Again the evidence is far from firm but it is possible that perhaps as many as one in five or

40. Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 9, 12, 17, 22, 47, 57, 65, 70, 75, 78, 95, 117, 120, 132, 151, 180, 200, 204, 206, 244.

41. P.R.O., S.P. 29/68/43, ff. 1-153.

even one in four of the new junior gentry recorded in 1674 were from families of the same name recorded in 1662 as substantial villagers from the same or a neighbouring parish.

Whatever their origins, whether local or far-flung, humble or proud, the presence in Northamptonshire of a large proportion of recent arrivals (their number only matched by that of the recently departed) must raise some doubts about the stability of the gentry community. If the gentry community was in such a state of continuous flux then the historical picture of the close county community in the seventeenth century could be seriously criticised just as Dr. C. Holmes has done in his work on Lincolnshire.⁴² But as will be shown in the next section, and throughout this thesis, Northamptonshire, despite a great many inconveniences, did survive if not as a close-knit then as a well-knit and thriving county community throughout the late seventeenth century.

The County Community and the County Elite

George Baker, the second of Northamptonshire's antiquarian historians, writing to the Gentleman's Magazine in 1833 clearly described the most awkward of the county's impediments:

This elongated shape is peculiarly unfortunate for the county historian. There is no local sympathy between the inhabitants of the opposite extremities; and I find it difficult to excite the interest and patronage of the Peterborough and Stamford districts whilst my attention is directed to the neighbourhood of Brackley.⁴³

As has already been seen Northamptonshire had many drawbacks to impair

42. C. Holmes, Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire, History of Lincolnshire Committee, XVI, 1980.

43. Gentleman's Magazine, April, 1833, p. 301.

its existence as an integrated and functioning county community. It was a county of geographical transition marked by several, sometimes sharp contrasts, in the pattern of agricultural practice and human settlement. Surrounded by nine other counties, and with such a small lateral width, a large part of the county's economic and social activity must have been drawn outside its boundaries. Northamptonshire was virtually ringed by no less than fourteen market towns situated within five miles of, and often right on, its boundaries: Stamford, Market Deeping and Crowland in Lincolnshire; Yaxley in Huntingdonshire; Deddington and Banbury in Oxfordshire; Rugby in Warwickshire; Lutterworth and Market Harborough in Leicestershire; and Uppingham in Rutland. Their banlieues and market catchment areas must have penetrated quite a long way in places into Northamptonshire.

A combination of all these factors must have seriously undermined the survival of any real sense of community in Northamptonshire, but as has also been suggested the very identity of the county was often linked by association with the bucolic tastes and gentle aspirations of its gentry inhabitants. Despite much evidence to the contrary a county community existed in Northamptonshire because of a tautology: one was deemed to exist, according to most contemporary observers, because Northamptonshire was thought to have all the proper amenities for a gentry society to flourish and prosper, and those amenities were identified because they were the gentle pursuits of the county community and particularly its leading members. More simply, the tautology arose because all the geographical, economic and social obstacles to a sense of county identity were thought to be too unimportant to dwell upon. A gentry community of which the majority were either coming or going and the fate of lesser and upstart gentry were comparatively unimportant when the nature of Northamptonshire society was established by the top 150 or so families.

There were a good many forces for social cohesion amongst the top ranks of the gentry. The border of 95 armorial shields around Thomas Harris's map of the county in Morton's Natural History shows that his gentry patrons had exactly the same kind of abiding interest in the status and family background of their neighbours as Sir Christopher Hatton had with his three heraldic pyramids at Holdenby, or Sir Lewis Tresham with his arms adorned Market Hall at Rothwell a century or so earlier.⁴⁴ One of Hatton's seventeenth century descendants also inherited his predecessor's inquisitive taste for other gentry's pedigrees and collected several hundred of them. The Cartwrights and the Maunsells took a similar delight in recording the comings and goings of their relatives and neighbours.⁴⁵ Good neighbourliness was often shown by frequent visits and generous hospitality. The Diary of Thomas Isham records that in the years 1671-73 the Ishams of Lamport were on visiting terms with at least twenty-two other important county families.⁴⁶ The rites of passage also provided the social occasions for the gentry to mix and associate. At the baptism of one of Sir Edward Nicholls's sons were present, Lord Montagu, who was godfather, the Cullens, the Langhams and the Palmers.⁴⁷ Gentry acted as trustees and executors for their departed neighbours as Francis Crane and Henry Edmonds did for Sir Samuel Jones and his adopted son, Charles Wake. Similarly Richard Knightley, Edward Farmer, Henry Benson, John Thornton and Richard Butler were witnesses to the will of Sir John Dryden.⁴⁸ Perhaps one of the most awesome assertions of solidarity

44. A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, 1969

p. 27; T. Cox, Magna Britannia, III, 1724, p. 492.

45. N.R.O., F-H. 3913; M(TM). 603; Bodley MS. Don. e. 6.

46. Diary of Thomas Isham, passim.

47. ibid., p.115.

48. Bridges, pp. 353-5; N.R.O., D(CA). 925.

amongst the county's ruling élite came in 1731 when at the funeral of Mrs Knightley the pall bearers were a Cartwright, a Clarke, a Dryden, an Isham, a Stratford and a Thornton.⁴⁹

Sport gave the squires the occasion for both hospitality and social mixing. There were at least five big race meetings in the county by the start of the eighteenth century and countless smaller ones.⁵⁰ At these races it was the normal custom for the gentry to be their own jockeys. Thomas Isham's diary records Lords Brudenell, Cullen, Exeter and Messrs. Haslewood, Lisle and Washbourne as all keen racehorse owners and riders at the Harlestone, Irthlingborough and Rothwell races.⁵¹ The Earl of Exeter was such an inveterate race-goer that he had the temerity to beard Major-General Whalley in Stamford in 1656 and ask for Lady Grantham's Cup still to be run despite the state of unrest in the country at large.⁵²

Above all else the county's woodland gave rise to all kinds of opportunity for social activity. The Northamptonshire forests offered to those rich and privileged enough not only the thrills of the chase but also an antique legal system that conferred real power on the officers of the Crown and their subordinates in the extensive bailiwicks, lawns and walks of Rockingham, Salcey and Whittlewood. Just as important, they gave to the plethora of Verdurers, Keepers, Bailiffs and Rangers a social status that verged on the mystique attached to a Master of Fox-Hounds in the nineteenth century. Such offices were much sought after. In 1693 the Earl of

49. H. Isham Longden, *The Diaries of Sir Justinian Isham, 1704-1736*, T.R.H.S., 3rd Series, I, 1907, p. 200.

50. ibid., p. 201.

51. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 99, 147, 150-1.

52. T.S.P., IV, p. 607.

Westmorland said that the office of Warden of Rockingham Forest was more prized as a mark of honour than a position of power.⁵³ Such respect, however, was often bought with gifts of venison or other game. Thomas Isham's diary records gifts of venison being made to the Ishams by the Earls of Exeter and Sunderland and from Lord Rockingham.⁵⁴ Lord O'Brien was constantly imploring both Lords Cullen and Hatton for presents of venison.⁵⁵ Hatton and Sir James Langham frequently gave away bucks as political presents - the only disadvantage was that "some take exception by the omission and become disobliged".⁵⁶

In overall terms, however, the upper ranks did not display any remarkable homogeneity, for they were only just about sufficiently integrated and interrelated enough to be a community. It has proven possible to trace the male line of 146 armigerous families resident in Northamptonshire between c. 1650 to c. 1720 over two or three generations.⁵⁷ Of these, 106 show that at least one son and heir out of two or three generations married into a gentry family living in Northamptonshire. In twenty-seven of these families at least two generations of eldest sons married within the county

53. P. Pettit, The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1968, p. 21.

54. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 113, 139, 213.

55. *ibid.*, p. 121; B.L. Add. MSS. 29551, passim.

56. ibid., f. 59.

57. This section is based on genealogies in Baker; Bridges; Visitation of Northants., 1681; G.E.C., Complete Peerage, G.E.C., Complete Baronetage; G. Marshall, ed., Le Neve's Pedigrees of Knights made by King Charles II, King James II, King William and Queen Mary, King William alone and Queen Anne, Harleian Soc., VIII, 1873.

community. All in all 161 of the 455 marriages traceable for sons and heirs in this period were contracted within the county; 133 were made in one of the surrounding nine counties; 32 with Londoners; and 129 elsewhere in the kingdom.

One out of every three marriages made within the county and two out of three families with a major family alliance within the community would seem to indicate some sort of cousinhood amongst Northamptonshire families, but as George Baker suggested, these family alliances were much more limited and localised. Of the 90 families that lived south of a line drawn between Welford and Wellingborough only 14 made a marriage alliance over these three generations for an eldest son with a family in the north of the county. On the other hand, 66 made at least one marriage in the southern half of Northamptonshire, and 16 of these contracted two or more. Eighty-nine of the 104 marriages made within the whole county by these 90 families for their sons and heirs were in the south of Northamptonshire. Sixty-three of the 82 marriages contracted in one of the surrounding counties were in the directly neighbouring shires of Bedford, Buckingham, Oxford and Warwick.

Of the 56 families that lived in the north of the county only 12 made marriages for their eldest sons south of the line between Welford and Wellingborough. Thirty-two made alliances with families from the north of the county, and eight of these made more than one. Only twelve of the 57 marriages within Northamptonshire made by these 56 families over three generations were with southern families, 45 were in the northern half of the county, and of the 51 marriages contracted in one of the surrounding shires, 36 were in Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire.

Much the same kind of pattern emerges from an examination of the marriages made for the daughters of the 116 families recorded in the Haralds' Visitation of 1681. Of these, at least 111 married at least one daughter into another Northamptonshire family during the course of three

generations. Forty-seven made more than one traceable match within the county. Of the 476 marriages made for the daughters of these 116 families, 174 were within Northamptonshire; 135 were in one of the surrounding nine counties; 51 were in London; and 116 elsewhere in the country. But again the distinct separation between north and south is readily apparent. Only ten of the 45 families resident in the north of the county made a matrimonial connection with the south compared to 28 with their own region. Northerners made 46 marriages for their daughters in their part of the county, 35 in the northern adjoining shires, but only 11 in the south of the county and another 11 in the southern neighbouring counties. Forty-seven out of the 71 southern families made marriages within their own region but only 11 made marriages in the north. A total of 103 matches were made in the south, 61 in the adjoining shires, 14 in the north and 28 in the northern neighbouring counties.

Whether or not one out of three marriages for sons and heirs within the county, or one out of three for daughters, over the course of three generations was sufficient to maintain a close "family" community is difficult to establish but it was probably enough to perpetuate a looser "cousinhood" or at least sufficient to reinforce local connections and loyalties. Whether those links and loyalties were to the county as a whole is somewhat more open to doubt because the pattern of marriages does seem to point not to one county community but two. Common sense, however, should remind us that matrimonial alliances were more likely to be contracted in a family's immediate neighbourhood, and indeed more than two out of three made within the county were within a radius of ten miles of the family's place of abode. The extremely high incidence of marriages made in immediately adjacent shires is an equally good indication of this practice. Extremely localised connections would not have precluded loyalty to the larger community and should in fact have strengthened those local ties which are after all the rock bed of every kind of patriotism. In this sense the perception of two

separate gentry communities in Northamptonshire is too simplified because in all probability there were not two but dozens.

The superior gentry were also not immune to the constant changeover experienced by the lesser gentry. Most of the figures referred to in the previous section provided by Professor Everitt, the *Heralds' Visitations*, Bridges and Baker refer to the "truly armigerous". Although high the rate of turnover experienced by the upper echelons of county society between 1662 and 1674 was nowhere near that of the lesser members of the community. The number of arrivals and departures for those with homes of ten or more hearths was 84, or 24%, of a combined total for this group of 351 for both Hearth Taxes. This rate of turnover was one-third that of the 1-3 hearth group and one-half of both the 4-6 and 7-9 hearth groups.

The reasons for this rate of turnover are diverse and numerous. Although it is an obvious point to make, much of this changeover in personnel was because of conveyances of property from one gentry family to another. Property transfers by and large occurred either from or between members of the landed élite. There is little evidence of newcomers, whatever their origins, consolidating a country estate by piecemeal purchase. According to Bridges, at least 136 of the 165 families he records as having arrived in the county since c. 1640 did so by acquiring established gentry estates. One hundred and two of these acquisitions were by purchase but 34, or precisely one quarter, were inherited through female descent by the husband of an heiress.

There does not seem to have been any substantial change in the pace of property transfer during the late Stuart period. Between 1640 and 1660, 17 families according to Bridges, sold up, 14 were extinguished and 29 new families acquired their properties. Between 1660 and 1690, 43 disposed of their Northamptonshire lands, 9 became extinct, and 57 acquired their estates. Between 1690 and 1720, 29 sold up, 11 died out and 50 came into

their lands.

Individual families dropped out of sight for a whole variety of causes which, although frequently tragic for those who suffered, did not affect the gentry class as a whole. Premature and violent death, lunacy, and of course profligate overspending and consequent debt all led to families disappearing from county society. What is worthy of comment is that these disappearances were often only temporary. Whereas the Haslewood family of Maidwell was extinguished by the early death of its head and then manslaughter of its young heir and successor, the Creswell family of Purston survived the death in a duel of its head and re-emerged to take its place in the county community when his young heir grew of age.⁵⁸ Other families were brought to an end by untimely and violent deaths. The county presumably did not miss the likes of the rapacious Sir James Enyon of Floore, killed in a duel during the Civil War, or the conniving Theophilus Hart of Wappenham who had his brains beaten out by a butcher who found him in bed with his wife. A little more sympathy, however, might have been felt for the publicly active Sir Lewis Pemberton of Higham Ferrers when his grandson and heir was killed in a duel in 1670.⁵⁹ But it was after all a violent age when sudden death was accepted and meted out by all gentlemen of honour and high temper. There were at least four Northamptonshire magnates of the first rank who were responsible for murder, manslaughter or grievous bodily harm. The "meek" Earl of Manchester seems to have caused the death of one of his servants in the 1650s. Both Sir Roger Norwich of Brampton and Sir Pope Danvers of Culworth had to sue for pardon for

58. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 27-8, 145, 177; Wood, Life and Times, III, p. 461; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 62-3.

59. ibid., pp. 169-70; Bridges, I, pp. 211, 508; II, p. 217.

murder; and the future Sir Justinian Isham had to flee abroad when in 1681 it looked like the victim of one of his alehouse assaults would die.⁶⁰ But it was merely a matter of capricious fortune whether the family succumbed to or survived the buffets of fate. It was only a stroke of luck, for instance, that the Bathursts of Hothorp survived the deaths of nearly all its many sons in the Civil War to re-emerge as a prominent county family in the 1690s.⁶¹

Insanity also took its toll. The Lane family of Glendon seemed doomed when the mind of Francis Lane (1627-89) began to give way and he started to waste an already diminished estate on all manner of extravagance, but the family was still living in Glendon when Bridges compiled his work in the early eighteenth century.⁶² The Brookes of Great Oakley and the Robinsons of Cransley also seem to have surmounted the problem of a mad head of the family; and although the Combesses of Daventry never got back the importance achieved by Sir John Combes before his suicide in 1697 the family none the less survived.⁶³

A wastrel in the family was probably a greater danger to a family's fortunes but again the resilience of a family whose wealth was founded on a landed estate was remarkable. Christopher, the first Lord Hatton left a "shattered estate" at his death in 1670 but it was soon "repaired" by his

60. G. Warner, ed., The Nicholas Papers, Camden Soc., 3rd Series, LVII, III, 1897, pp. 120, 218; G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 110; N. N. and Q., VI, p. 155; Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 44.

61. T. Cox., Magna Britannia, III, 1724, p. 493.

62. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 190-92.

63. Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 27-8, 58, Bridges, II, pp. 90, 326-7; V.C.H., Northants., IV, pp. 164-5; G. Marshall, ed., Le Neve's Pedigrees of Knights made by King Charles II, etc., Harleian Soc., VIII, 1873, p. 450.

son.⁶⁴ Brien Cockayne second Viscount Cullen of Rushton, a spendthrift and bad debtor, married an heiress said to be worth £6,000 p.a. who turned out to be a worse profligate than himself.⁶⁵ When he died in 1687 his estates were mortgaged almost up to their full value of just over £2,000 a year yet his heirs survived these encumbrances to improve and beautify their estate at Rushton.⁶⁶ The Dryden family estates around Canons Ashby and in Huntingdonshire, worth only about £1,500 p.a., were burdened with providing £13,000 for his seven younger children by the will of Sir John Dryden in 1657.⁶⁷ So onerous did the Dryden brothers consider these charges that they swore never to marry, presumably in order to avoid any such further provisions and to pass on the estate intact to their cousins the Drydens of Titchmarsh.⁶⁸ But it is doubtful if such an extreme course was warranted because by 1703 the surviving brother, Sir Robert Dryden could afford to bequeath the George Inn in Northampton, which had cost him £2,000 to build in c. 1675, to the poor of the town.⁶⁹ John Hanbury of Kelmarsh was a straightforward wastrel whose gambling debts eventually led to his flight from the country, but his descendants were still leading Whigs in the county in the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷⁰

64. D.N.B., IX, p. 163; Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. c. 210.

65. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 99-100.

66. N. N. and Q., VI, p. 8; Cox, Magna Britannia, III, p. 495; J. Morton, Natural History of Northamptonshire, 1712, p. 4; N.R.O., M(TM). 374.

67. N.R.O., D(CA). 27, 305, 306.

68. Bridges, I, p. 225.

69. N. N. and Q., II, p. 53; D. Defoe, A Tour Through England and Wales, ed., G. D. H. Cole, II, 1928, p. 86.

70. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 27, 60, 113, 138.

As Professor Habakkuk has shown in his examination of Royalist estates in Northamptonshire the immiseration and financial failure of a family was frequently a long drawn-out process.⁷¹ Extravagance could be paid for through mortgages, and debts could eventually be met by the sale of an outlying estate which would realise something like twenty years' worth of its income at one fell swoop. It took two generations of drink and debauchery to finish off the Staffords of Blatherwick - and then it is far from clear whether it was the physical strain or the cost that did for them.⁷² Edward Saunders inherited the family lands in Brixworth in 1666, ran himself deep into debt by the usual methods, married himself to an heiress, but was still eventually forced to mortgage his property to his father-in-law. The estate was left to Saunders's wife and when she died she bequeathed it to their son, also Edward, "without intermeddling" by her husband. The son ejected the father in 1699 but the accumulated family debts did not force the estate to be sold until the son's death in the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷³ It took five generations and one hundred years for the Norwich family to decline from the foremost political prominence in the county to the obscurity of woodmen in North America.⁷⁴

A succession of such examples would fill several theses but would still not provide an overall picture of the general trends of social movement

71. H. J. Habakkuk, *Landowners and the Civil War*, Economic History Review, 2nd Series, XVIII, 1965. See also his, *The Rise and Fall of English Landed Families, 1600-1800*, T.R.H.S., 1979.

72. Bridges, I, p. 22; II, p. 233; Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 174; Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. c. 210, f. 46.

73. Bridges, II, p. 80; Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 27, 69.

74. ibid., pp. 147, 185; G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 110-111.

within the upper echelons of the Northamptonshire gentry community. What should be clear, however, is that they illustrate the long-term staying power of landed magnates. What is more the longer a family survived very often the more chance it had to consolidate its position and fortune. Of the 96 families whose histories and incomes are readily traceable those who had been settled in the county since before c. 1500 had an average income of £1,657 p.a.; early sixteenth century families had £867 p.a.; late sixteen century families, £1,060 p.a.; early seventeenth century families £859 p.a.; and late seventeenth century families £692p.a. In this sense the older established families would seem to have been more secure, and newer ones more vulnerable, but as has been seen the numbers out of each of these groups that disappeared in the late seventeenth century did so in almost equal proportions. The only conclusion that can be drawn, therefore, is that most families from the county elite had the reserves to withstand the usual forces of attrition; when they did collapse it was normally for reasons more individual, and sometimes more dramatic, but which in overall terms resembled a process of natural wastage.

There was certainly no single cause that affected the whole of the gentry, or even a sector of it, and brought about the final collapse and failure of broad sections of the county community. Professor Habakkuk has shown how much sequestration and composition fines on Royalists can be discounted as a cause of gentry bankruptcy.⁷⁵ Another way of examining the same issue is to trace the future careers of Royalist families in the county. Of the 103 Royalists listed for the Committee for Compounding in 1648, seven were not gentlemen, eight are so hard to identify that they must have been very minor figures indeed, and seven were either women or

75. Habakkuk, *Landowners and the Civil War*, loc. cit.

priests.⁷⁶ Leaving these aside, of the remaining 81, 45 were still resident in the county in 1674 according to the Hearth Tax, and of the 36 who disappeared 29 did so between 1662 and 1674. A rate of disappearance of 44% is only slightly higher than that of 42% experienced by the county as a whole. If the Royalist élite of this period is compared to the Parliamentary Justices of the Peace of the 1650s, it is found that only 7 of the Royalists out of 35, or 20% were no longer in the county in 1674, and only 10 of the 43 Parliamentarians, or 23% had vanished.⁷⁷ Again both figures are in line with their respective class.

If the county's ruling élite was more stable than the rest of the gentry body it was not necessarily more homogeneous. The average Justice of the Peace was, with £943 a year, as wealthy as the average knight, yet 48 of the 86 late seventeenth century Justices whose incomes have been used for this estimate received less than £900 a year, and no less than 31 were poorer than £600 p.a. On the other hand the Justices of the Peace did exhibit a greater degree of uniformity in the size of their homes. Of the 116 late seventeenth century Justices' houses that are traceable in the Hearth Tax, only 33 had less than thirteen hearths and all but 9 of these had ten or more. None the less, wealth does not seem to have been the sole criteria for membership of the county élite, although absolute poverty, however, genteel, was extremely rare on the bench of Justices.

Some coherence was given by family relationships between the Justices. Family relationships are difficult to describe in detail because any such

76. Cal. Comm. Comp., I, pp. 88, 98.

77. B. L., Add. MSS.34013, ff. 21-22; Add. MSS.34217, ff.68b-69; B.L., Stowe MS. 577; N.R.O., F-H. 133; P.R.O., C. 193/13/4; C. 193/13/5; C. 193/13/6.

description quickly degenerates into the "toe bone is connected to the foot bone" variety. What is more, it has to be stressed that a family relationship is only as important as the use made of it by one or other of the relations. For this reason the precise nature of any or all of these relationships is better left to the appropriate point in the text of this thesis. Yet in general terms it is quite clear the county's ruling élite frequently formed a closer community than the county as a whole. Thirty-eight of the forty-three Parliamentary magistrates in the 1650s were related to at least one other Justice of the same period although, because of governmental purges, not necessarily on the bench at the same time. Every single magistrate of the 1660s was clearly related to at least one other member of the bench at this time. Thirty-one out of sixty-five were related to two or more fellow Justices. Yet too much should not, perhaps, be made of these figures for very often family connections cut right across political lines. On the bench of Justices in the early 1690s were 13 identifiable Jacobites, 18 Tories and 14 Whigs. Six of the Jacobite families were clearly connected by blood to other Jacobites, nine to Tories and five to Whigs. Thirteen of the Tories were related to other Tories, nine to Jacobites and nine to Whigs. Eleven of the Whigs were related to other Whigs, five to Jacobites, and nine to Tories.

What should perhaps be considered, therefore, is that membership of the bench of magistrates was something other than a prestigious mark of esteem conferred on the county's natural rulers. After all the county élite was somewhat larger than the extremely small hardcore of families that provided members of the bench throughout the seventeenth century. Out of the 171 families that provided J. P.s for the Northamptonshire bench between 1649 and 1714 only 31 had sat before the Civil War. Only 19 of the 43

Parliamentarian J. P.s of the 1650s sat themselves or their descendants at any time thereafter.⁷⁸ Only 33 of the 65 Restoration Justices had members of their families sitting on the bench after the Glorious Revolution. No less than 63 of the J.P.s appointed after 1680 had had no predecessor in the Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace. Although these figures indicate the remarkable persistence of a very small cadre of J. P. families within the county élite, to talk of a county community of only around fifty families would be to make a mockery of the very phrase. Yet, as has been seen, the county élite displayed no great homogeneity or even stability: it was just more uniform and more stable than the rest of the county gentry. In this case the county community should be considered to have been described as well as given force of expression, by the county's institutional arrangements. The Quarter Sessions, the Deputy-Lieutenancy, and the parliamentary hustings were not merely the forums of debate within the county community; it was they which focused and defined Northamptonshire's separate identity. It was the actuality of Northamptonshire as a political and an administrative unit which, more than the presence of any natural community, gave the county its independent existence.

Between 1642 and 1714, 82 individuals sat in Parliament for one of the county or borough seats in Northamptonshire.⁷⁹ Of these only 15 had no strong

-
78. See the previous note plus: P.R.O., S.P. 16/405, ff. 45v. - 47v.; J. Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S. I, 1924, pp. 254-5; P.R.O., C. 220/9/4; C. 193/12/3; C. 66/2986; C. 193/12/4; C. 193/12/5; C. 234/27: Jan., 1687; C. 234/27, March, 1689; N.P. and P., VI, 5, p. 258; P.R.O., C. 235/27, October, 1705; C. 234/27, Feb., 1711.
79. This section is based on: The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England from the Earliest Times to the Restoration of Charles II, XX - XXII, 1763; Members of Parliament, I-II, Parliamentary Report 345, 1878.

association with the county and had been intruded by political pressure from the government or by family connection and influence within the county.

Even then, such men as Sir Thomas Dacres of Hertfordshire, M.P. for Higham Ferrers in 1660, and Sir Rice Rudd of Carmarthen, four times member for Higham twenty years later, were important local landowners.⁸⁰ In a total of 207 separate elections and by-elections over the course of 72 years, the five Northamptonshire constituencies chose a truly native gentleman on 178 occasions. During the Long Parliament of 1642-60 only one of the nine Northamptonshire members was an outsider, Sir Martin Lister of Buckinghamshire, M. P. for Brackley, but no less than another twelve Northamptonshire men represented constituencies elsewhere in the country.⁸¹ At the turn of the century William Cecil, second son of the Earl of Exeter, Sir John Dryden of Canons Ashby, Sir Henry Pickering of Elmington, Sir Matthew Dudley, and Sir Robert Clarke, were representing constituencies in neighbouring counties.⁸²

To explain why Northamptonshire was by and large represented by Northamptonshire men, and why a great many local gentlemen represented places elsewhere, it is only necessary to re-iterate what has been said about the comparative size and wealth of the gentry community. But numbers and rent-rolls do not necessarily make for a county community, especially as the Northamptonshire one could be so unstable and heterogeneous; they did, however, give the county's political and administrative institutions the vitality to make them the active organs that expressed the county's identity

80. V.C.H., Hertfordshire, III, p. 445; D.N.B., XVII, p. 380; Bridges, II, pp. 176-7; V.C.H., Northants. III, p. 270.

81. M. F. Keeler, The Long Parliament, 1640-41. A Biographical Study of its Members, 1954, pp. 57, 94, 119, 138, 172, 177, 178, 275, 276, 338, 403; N. N. and Q., V, p. 48.

82. Return of Members of Parliament, I, pp. 579, 581, 586, 588-9, 593, 595, 600, 602.

and independence. The Assizes, Quarter Sessions, militia drill and the hustings united, indeed unified the county. In the early seventeenth century Justices of the Peace had been chosen more or less two to each Hundred to ensure the county was evenly represented as well as policed.⁸³ By 1669 the practice of holding the Quarter Sessions in different market towns had lapsed, to the regret of John Palmer, the Archdeacon of Northampton, in favour of holding them in a Sessions House in the county town.⁸⁴ But the building of a Sessions House in 1670 symbolised not just the growing importance of Northampton but through its centralisation the unifying power of the Commission of the Peace. The Sessions House, along with everything else Northampton provided, from markets to hustings, became the focal point for Northamptonshire society and politics in the late seventeenth century.

83. Wake, Quarter Sessions Records, p. 254.

84. N.R.O., Baker, 708, f. 76; Borough Records, II, p. 247.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERREGNUMTHE COUNTY AND THE EXECUTION OF CHARLES IThe Shire and its Representatives

The execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649 found few supporters in the county community of Northamptonshire. Just two years before, the county town, which Edward Hyde had said would have shut its gates in the king's own face, had in fact greeted the King on his way to captivity in Holdenby House with pealing bells, gun salutes and acclamations of "God Bless your Majesty."¹ The crowds of Northamptonshire, however, were fickle and in July 1650, greeted Oliver Cromwell in much the same way and with such cheering that he was prompted to remark to General Lambert, "These very persons would shout as much if you and I were going to be hanged."² Ten years later, when the wheel of fortune had turned again, that same crowd did indeed jeer Lambert as a captive of Colonel Ingoldsby.³ None the less, Northampton's display of ceremonial pomp and popular acclamation in 1647 was a genuine show of the traditional respect owed to the hereditary King of England.

If the Northampton crowd could be expected to cheer any person of power and authority (provided he was no longer seen as a threat), a greater

-
1. W. Dunn Macray, ed., The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, begun in the year 1641, by Edward, Earl of Clarendon, III, 1888, p. 241; The King's Majesty's Propositions to the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament concerning His Majesty's coming to Whitehall, 1647, B.L. E.377 (16).
 2. W. C. Abbot, ed., Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, II, 1940, p. 281.
 3. T. Burnet, ed., Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time, I, p. 154.

constancy and a more profound fidelity to the traditional hierarchical order of the country might be expected of the political nation, the country gentry. The gentry of Northamptonshire had also appeared in the county town in 1647 to lend the King a greater majesty with the presence of their numbers. Led by Edward Lord Montagu of Boughton, one of the commissioners for receiving the King's person and the most important parliamentary magnate in Northamptonshire, over two hundred gentry appeared to escort the King to Holdenby House.⁴ Allowing for some exaggeration, this figure still represents a sizeable proportion of the county's three hundred and thirty or so important armigerous families; and one which is about double the number of Northamptonshire's one hundred and three convicted Royalist delinquents.⁵ These proportions must perforce be vague, but it is clear that those gentry who appeared to welcome the King and acknowledge his majesty were many more than those who had actually supported the King in the First Civil War. Their leader, in 1647, was indeed a parliamentary whose activities had acquired for him the soubriquet, "The Roundhead".⁶ Many of those who rode with the King in 1647 must have fought against his régime, but few, if any were anti-monarchists.

-
4. Edward Montagu, 2nd Baron Montagu of Boughton, "The Copie of a Letter from the Commissioners with the King: concerning the manner of the Souldiers fetching His Majestie to the army"/signed E M/, 1647, B. L. E.391 (10); and, "A Letter from the right Honourable Edward Lord Montague, one of the Commissioners attending His Majesty, with a perfect Narration of all the Passages betwixt his Majesty and those forces that brought him from Holdenby, being resident now at Newmarket," 1647, B. L. E.392 (10).
 5. A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, 1969, p. 13; Cal. Comm. Comp., pp. 88, 98, et passim.
 6. C. Wise, The Montagus of Boughton and their Northamptonshire Homes, Kettering, 1888, p. 36.

This outlook was reflected by the political position of the county's representatives in parliament. Of the nine members who represented Northamptonshire and its constituent boroughs, eight had been sitting in parliament since 1640. The royalist activities of the ninth member, Sir Christopher Hatton, had led to his expulsion, and he had been replaced as burgess for Higham Ferrers in the "recruiter elections" of 1644 by Edward Harby of Adston. All eight of the original members had been elected as opponents of Charles I's government, but only one of them had been unequivocally for the rigorous prosecution of the war that followed in 1642.⁷ He was Zouche Tate of Delapre Abbey, one of the members for Northampton, who had chaired the parliamentary committee of inquiry into the Earl of Manchester's conduct at the second battle of Newbury.⁸ It had been Tate who had proposed the first and most censorious draft of the Self Denying Ordinance.⁹ His speech on the royal letters discovered after the battle of Naseby was also particularly scathing about the King and Queen.¹⁰

That Tate was part of the movement to oust the Earl of Manchester from his commands is of some note. Tate probably owed his seat to his father's good friend, the first Lord Montagu of Boughton, who was also Manchester's uncle.¹¹ Montagu's influence in Northampton was so great that Philip Warwick called him the town's "Topical Deity"; and it must have been the power of this influence that had led Tate to be chosen as burgess, " without

7. M.F. Keeler, The Long Parliament, 1640-41, A Biographical Study of its Members, 1954, pp. 57-8.

8. C.J., III, p. 704.

9. R. Baillie, Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A.M., Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637-62, II, Edinburgh, 1841, p. 247.

10. Three Speeches spoken at a Common Hall, Thursday the 3 of July 1645 By Mr Lisle, Mr Tate, Mr Brown continuing many observations upon the King's letters found in his own cabinet at Naseby fight, 1645, B. L. E. 292 (29).

11. H.M.C., MSS. of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, 1900, pp. 87-9.

his making any interest and without his knowledge until after the election."¹² Shortly after his election the rather volatile Northampton mob had turned on his patron when Montagu had professed Royalist sympathies, and had jeered the noble lord from the town, so there is a possibility that Tate's extremist views were the product of pressure from his electorate.¹³ On the other hand, Montagu's influence remained paramount in Northampton despite popular feeling for the Earl of Manchester elected as Recorder in 1646.¹⁴ The result of so many conflicting pressures, Tate's betrayal of Montagu's patronage, is a good example of the way in which the exigencies of war could erode traditional loyalties.

The other seven of the county's original representatives were less single minded. Some of them, like the Knights of the Shire, Sir John Dryden and Sir Gilbert Pickering and the member for Brackley, Sir Martin Lister, were conscientious servants of parliament, both in the House of Commons and in the county committees, but never displayed the war fever of Zouche Tate.¹⁵ Dryden saw himself with pleasure as "a carrier of straw and stubble for the skilful builders of the great work."¹⁶ Pickering's activities were mainly confined to the county committees.¹⁷ Lister supported the popular party but was rarely appointed to any parliamentary committees.¹⁸ The burgesses for Peterborough were clearly unenthusiastic about the war. William Lord Fitzwilliam was named in parliament only for minor committee work and in 1644 was accused of royalism and assessed at £800 p.a. The

12. Sir Philip Warwick, Memoires of the reigne of King Charles I, 1701, p. 222; Bodley, Top. MS. Northants., c. 9, f. 92.

13. H.M.C., Buccleuch, III, pp. 414, 416-7; Warwick, op.cit., p. 225.

14. P.R.O., C. 231/6, f. 32.

15. Keeler, Long Parliament, pp. 57-8.

16. H.M.C., II, p. 63.

17. D.N.B., IV, p. 1128.

18. Keeler, op.cit., p. 254.

charge, however, was not proven.¹⁹ Sir Robert Napier was also clearly lukewarm and like Edward Montagu, who was member for Huntingdon until he inherited the barony of Boughton in 1644, barely escaped disablement in 1644 for infrequent attendance in the Commons.²⁰

Perhaps the careers of John Crewe, burgess for Brackley, and Richard Knightley best typify the political education of Northamptonshire in the 1640s. Knightley had been a colleague of Hampden's and Pym's in the early days of the Long Parliament and had even been one of the tellers for the Grand Remonstrance.²¹ Although he signed the Solemn League and Covenant he was a leading member of what has been called the "middle group". He did not join with the Presbyterians proper until the confrontation between parliament and the army in July-August, 1647.²²

Crewe, on the other hand, although a man of "exact strict life", had voted against the abolition of bishops, against the attainder of Strafford, and against the Grand Remonstrance.²³ None the less, with the intervention of the Scots, he left the peace party and joined the middle group. His experience of negotiating a settlement with the King's commissioners at the Uxbridge conferences in 1644-45 gave him a more uncompromising attitude towards the King. Although he was "most solicitous upon all opportunities for peace . . . /he/ contracted more bitterness and sourness than formerly . . . towards the King's commissioners."²⁴ In September, 1644, he urged the Earl of Manchester to sink his differences with Cromwell, but in

19. C.J., II, pp. 160, 825; Cal. Adv. Mon., I, p. 248.

20. C.J., III, p. 374.

21. D.N.B., XI, p. 169.

22. D.M. Underdown, Pride's Purge, Politics in the Puritan Revolution, 1971, pp. 41, 84n., 86-7.

23. B.L., Harl. 164, f. 217; Harl. 166, f. 9; Add. 18779, ff. 56v-57.

24. Macray, op.cit., p. 497.

December he finally voted for the Self-Denying Ordinance.²⁵ His distrust of the King's party was compounded by a growing wariness of the Scots. In 1646 he told the County Committee of Northamptonshire that parliament refused a personal treaty with the King because he would immediately join with the Scots to overcome them.²⁶ In the summer of 1647 he preferred to join with the army rather than risk a Scottish-Presbyterian-Royalist settlement. Yet, Cromwell was mistaken in supposing that Crewe had been won over completely to the army, for he had continued through out 1648 to try to wring concessions from all sides and establish a compromise settlement at the Newport negotiations.²⁷

Disparate as their motives might have been for supporting parliament's side in the Civil War, only one of Northamptonshire's representatives had shown any anti-monarchist sentiments. When the army seized power in December 1648, the leaders of the coup d'état had felt they could not trust six of the burgesses either to stand aside from or assist in the great work of bringing the King to justice. Colonel Pride's soldiers imprisoned Crewe, Knightley and Lister, and secluded Fitzwilliam, Napier and even Tate.²⁸ The latter's exclusion was probably due to his speech against the Remonstrance of the Army on 20 November 1649: even he could not support the usurpation of parliamentary authority; the breaking off of the "evil and most dangerous treaty" of Newport; and the bringing of "the capital and grand author of our troubles" to justice.²⁹ Two other Northamptonshire

25. H.M.C., VIII, App. ii, p. 61; Macray, op.cit., p. 508.

26. Mercurius Academicus, 12 January, 1646, B.L.E.316.

27. B.L.Add. 37344, f. 129v; C.S.P.D., 1648-9, pp. 300, 306-7, 319.

28. J.Rushworth, Historical Collections, VII, 1680, p. 1355; A List of the Imprisoned and Secluded Members, 1648, B.L., 699 f.13 (64).

29. Mercurius Elencticus, 22-29 November, 1648 B.L.E.473 (39).

A Remonstrance from the Army to the Citizens of London, 1648, B.L.E.472(9).

gentlemen, George Mountagu of Horton who sat for Huntingdon, and Sir Christopher Yelverton of Easton Mauduit, who sat for Bossiney in Cornwall, were also excluded. With the abolition of the House of Lords, three of the remaining peers connected with the county, Lord Montagu, the Earl of Manchester (George Mountague's brother), and the Earl of Exeter were also deprived of their seats.³⁰

Of the three representatives of the shire not secluded, Dryden, Harby and Pickering, not one committed himself wholeheartedly to the revolution of December 1648-January 1649. Sir Gilbert Pickering wished to avoid being implicated in the King's execution. Although he was chosen one of Charles I's judges, he not only withdrew from the court after two sittings and refused to sign the death warrant, but also did not sign the dissent from the parliamentary vote of 5 December 1648, which had agreed to accept the Newport proposals, until twelve days after the King's execution.³¹ Edward Harby also clearly wanted to dissociate himself from the revolutionary events of December 1648-January 1649. He did not dissent from the vote of 5 December and return to the Commons until 23 July 1649: nearly five months after the parliamentary rump had decided to put an end to readmission.³² The very last absent member of parliament to seek readmission was the county's other Knight of the Shire, Sir John Dryden. He did not appear at Westminster until 21 April, 1652: the day the Rump parliament debated how it was to be supplied with new members.³³ "The Northamptonshire magnate" did not make any further appearances in the House of Commons, except to

30. Somers Tracts, VI, pp. 37-39.

31. J Nalson, A true copy of the Journal of the High Court of Justice for the tryal of King Charles I, 1684, pp. 50, 52; Underdown, op.cit., p. 382.

32. ibid., pp. 217, 375.

33. ibid., pp. 218, 265, 372.

attend meetings of the Committee for Plundered Ministers.³⁴ One further Northamptonshire squire, who represented a constituency outside the county, Robert Andrews of Harlestone, who sat for Weobley in Herefordshire, also tardily dissented from the vote of 5 December, 1648. Although he was given permission to return to parliament on 28 February, 1649, he did not exercise this privilege until 27 April 1649.³⁵

The Response of the County's Governors: Co-operation

The response of the county community at large to the news of the King's execution was typified by the actions of the sheriff, Sir Samuel Danvers of Culworth.³⁶ At the ensuing Assizes he clothed his retinue entirely in black as a symbol of the county's mourning.³⁷ Apart from this sombre gesture, however, and a petition from a few Presbyterian ministers in south-west Northamptonshire against the execution of the King, the county's rulers did not make any significant protest.³⁸ Indeed the Brackley petition quickly brought a critical response from some other Northamptonshire clergymen who were more committed to the revolution.³⁹ Of even greater

34. P.R.O., S.P. 22/F2, ff. 405, 408v, 412, 432.

35. Underdown, op. cit., pp. 217, 366, 391, n.3.

36. P.R.O., Lists and Indexes, IX, List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the earliest times until A.D. 1831, 1898, p. 94.

37. Baker, I, p. 605.

38. Z. Breedon, The Humble Advice and Earnest Desires of certain well affected Ministers, Lecturers of Banbury . . . and Brackley . . . to His Excellency, Thomas Lord Fairfax and to the General Council of War: presented January 25, 1649 . . . B.L., 103 b. 29.

39. J. Fido, T. Jeanes, W. Shaw, The Parliament justified in their late Proceedings v. Charles Stuart . . . an answer to . . . the humble advice of the Lecturers of Banbury . . . and Brackley, 1648 [old style], B.L., E.545 (14).

importance is the fact that an examination of the sheriff's quietus rolls between 1645 and 1649 reveals that of the twenty-two justices of the peace who attended the Quarter Sessions between the end of the First Civil War and the autumn of 1648, at least sixteen were not deterred from attending two or more Quarter Sessions in 1649.⁴⁰ To this figure might be added another four justices who attended only one of the Sessions in 1649: Thomas Bletsoe, Richard Andrews, Philip Holman and Sir John Norwich. It is impossible to say whether the one these four attended was the Hilary Sessions held immediately before the King's execution and therefore not as politically significant as the following three Quarter Sessions of 1649; but within the year, Bletsoe and Norwich were again serving on the bench, and so they, like their sixteen colleagues, would seem to have reached at least a temporary accommodation with the regicides.⁴¹ Only Andrews and Holman had consciences which prevented them from ever again serving the new régime.⁴²

Richard Andrews of Thorpe Underwood's defection is understandable. He had not been prominent on the bench or on the county committee during the 1640s and his family background was politically equivocal.⁴³ Although he was the uncle of Robert Andrews of Harlestone, the dilatory burgess for Weobley in Herefordshire, he was also brother to the royalist recusant, Sir William Andrews of Little Doddington and brother-in-law of another royalist, Sir William Wilmer of Sywell.⁴⁴ Philip Holman of Warkworth's objections to

40. P.R.O., E.372/490-493, Northamptonshire.

41. P.R.O., E.372/494, Northamptonshire.

42. P.R.O., E.372/494-504, Northamptonshire.

43. P.R.O., E.372/488-94, Northamptonshire; N.R.O., F-H.133.

44. Baker, I, p. 168; Cal. Comm. Comp., II, p. 1462; III, p. 1884.

serving the Rump are probably to be found in his religious beliefs.

Although Holman was one of the "rising gentry", having acquired his Warkworth property in 1629 with a fortune amassed as a London scrivener, there was nothing radical about his religious views.⁴⁵ He was a staunchly conservative Presbyterian, as can be seen by his close association with two eminent Presbyterian divines. In 1637, Holman appointed the zealous anti-Laudian, Francis Cheynell to the living in his gift of Marston St. Lawrence. Cheynell was nominated one of the Divines at the Westminster Assembly in 1642 and eventually became President of St John's College, Oxford; but he had acquired his theological reputation while Vicar of Marston between 1637 and 1648. His reputation had been acquired not only for his anti-Laudian stance but also for his condemnation of any religious belief which smacked of sectarian heresy.⁴⁶ Holman was also closely associated with Edward Reynolds, the Presbyterian Rector of Braunston, where Holman held the advowson in trust.⁴⁷ Reynolds, like Cheynell, had opposed the Laudian church reforms, this time on the occasion of the episcopal visitation of Daventry in 1638. Also, like Cheynell, he had been elected one of the Westminster Divines in 1642, and been appointed Head of an Oxford college (and finally Vice-Chancellor of the University); but his opposition to Independency and his intransigence in the face of the revolution of 1648-9 had led him to adjure the Engagement Oath and to resign his University Offices.⁴⁸ Philip Holman, it can be confidently supposed, shared the strong

45. Baker, I, pp. 739-41.

46. Baker, I, pp. 642-3; F. Cheynell, Truth triumphing over Error and Heresy, 1646, B. L., E.371(7); F. Cheynell, The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, 1650, B. L., 4225 a.15; F. Cheynell, The Rise Growth and Danger of Socinianism, 1643, B. L., E.103(14).

47. Baker, I, p. 273.

48. Bridges, I, p. 31.

theological views of his clerical protégés and neighbours. It is equally likely that Holman's staunch theological Presbyterianism was matched in him by a strong political Presbyterianism which could not accept the destruction of the Presbyterian party in parliament or the execution of Charles I.

There were four justices who did not attend the Quarter Sessions in 1649, from whom political considerations had not a part in their absence. Richard Ouseley had ceased to act as a justice in 1646 and would seem to have left the county, for in 1650 he sold his Northamptonshire estate at Courtenhall to Samuel Jones.⁴⁹ Nathaniel Humphreys of Barton Seagrave had also stopped serving on the bench in 1646, but was re-appointed in August 1649 and returned to his duties at all four Quarter Sessions in 1650.⁵⁰ Sir Gilbert Pickering had made his peace with the new government in February 1649 and his absence was probably due to parliamentary business in London. John Claypole was father-in-law to Elizabeth daughter of Oliver Cromwell. Like Pickering, Claypole did not scruple at advancement in the Protector's court later in the 1650s, and, therefore, whatever qualms they might have held about the King's execution, neither Pickering nor Claypole can be regarded as opponents of the regicides' régime.⁵¹

There remains one other group of justices whose absence from the Quarter Sessions in 1649 requires further consideration. These were the justices who had never been active on the bench and who continued to absent themselves from the Sessions after January 1649. As this group was, with one exception, composed entirely of those secluded members of parliament who

49. P. R. O. E.372/490, Northamptonshire; Bridges, I, p. 353.

50. P. R. O. E.372/490-494, Northamptonshire; C.231/6, f. 164.

51. N. P. and P., I, No.4, p. 24; D. N. B., XV, p. 1128.

were resident in Northamptonshire, it can be assured that they opposed the new régime. John Crewe, Richard Knightley, Sir Christopher Yelverton and Lord Montagu all leaned towards Presbyterianism. Crewe's appointment as minister at Steane, Thomas Harris; Yelverton's at Wilby, Andrew Perne; Montagu's appointments at Broughton, John Bazeley, at Barnwell, John Lyons and at Scaldwell, William Spencer, all took the Presbyterian Testimony in 1648; while Knightley's minister at Fawsley until that year, John Wilkins, took the covenant.⁵² Almost all their other various appointments to livings in their gift conformed at the Restoration.⁵³ Lord Fitzwilliam and the Earl of Exeter were equally conservative in religion for almost all their appointees also conformed in 1662.⁵⁴ Before December, 1648, the burden of parliamentary business would have kept the Northamptonshire burgesses in London for much of the time, but after their exclusion they would no longer have had this alibi for failing to attend to their magisterial duties. What is interesting is that despite their patent boycott of the Quarter Sessions, and equally obvious opposition to the government, they continued to be named as magistrates in 1650.⁵⁵ Indeed, William Lord Fitzwilliam, and the excluded peer, the Earl of Exeter, were added to the Commission of the Peace for the Soke of Peterborough in August that year.⁵⁶

The only member of this group who had not been a member of parliament

-
52. Bridges, I, pp. 70-71; A.G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, 1934, p. 556; H. Barber, A Forgotten Chapter in English Church History, A.D. 1642 to 1662, The Diocese of Peterborough, 1898, pp. 21, 25, 42, 46, 53, 61.
53. ibid., pp. 13, 26, 55, 61-63, 72, 76.
54. ibid., pp. 58, 63, 65, 66, 69-71.
55. The Names of the Justices of the Peace in England and Wales, printed for Thomas Walkley, 1650, B.L., E.1238.
56. P.R.O., C.231/6, f.199.

was Edward Hanbury of Kelmarsh. Hanbury, like Philip Holman, had Presbyterian sympathies; in 1648 he appointed as rector of Kelmarsh, Samuel Ainsworth, who later in that year signed the Northamptonshire Presbyterian Testimony.⁵⁷ His supposed parliamentary sympathies were the token result of being browbeaten by Colonel John Hutchinson when on the way to join the King's forces in 1642, and yet, despite this obvious lack of enthusiasm, the new régime entrusted him with the office of sheriff in 1651.⁵⁸ None the less, neither the secluded members nor Edward Hanbury were ever induced to act as justices after January 1649, and all those still alive, except Edward Lord Montagu, were eventually removed from the bench in September 1653.⁵⁹

The most important boycott of the Quarter Sessions, therefore, had been by the county's most active politicians. Ironically, it had been this same political activity which had prevented them from fulfilling their duties as magistrates before 1649, and thus it is unlikely that their subsequent absence from the Quarter Sessions caused any inconvenience. Only two of the county's active magistrates can be said with any certainty to have abstained from their official duties as a direct result of the execution of Charles I. But, if the majority of the active justices did not, at least in the first instance, make their feelings known by withdrawing from their official duties, it cannot on the other hand, be supposed that their attendance at the Quarter Sessions was necessarily a gesture of support for the Rump. From the beginning of 1650, a full year after the King's execution, there began a mounting number of defections from the bench. Because of this,

57. Matthews, Calamy Revised, pp. 3, 556.

58. C.H.Firth, ed., Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson . . . by his widow Lucy, 1906, p. 98; P. R. O., Lists and Indexes, IX, List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the earliest times until A.D. 1831, 1898, p.94.

59. P. R. O., C.231/6, f.267; C.193/13/4.

it must be supposed that many of those justices who served on the bench in 1649 were not so much well-affected supporters of the Rump, as acquiescent collaborators who preferred peace to continuing disorder.

The justices' reasons for collaborating with the new régime must have been a compound of a wide variety of mutually dependent arguments amongst which the common sense counsel of "wait and see" would have been prominent. As for their other reasons, the Northamptonshire magistrates of 1649 failed to put them into writing. Yet some of the circumstances which would have affected their reasoning are known and, although they are dealt with in more detail in a later section, they are worth summarising here. The three main contingent factors were: the continuing disorder and lawlessness of the country areas in the aftermath of the Civil War; the necessity of having the army, as the only effective instrument of law and order, to subdue troublesome areas; and paradoxically, in that same army a mutinous temper in the ranks, fired by small but vocal radical elements, which was kept in check only by the army's grandees. In such circumstances, the justices of the peace might have felt it necessary to co-operate with the Rump government. If such was the case, the question must be asked: whether the later defections from the bench were a much belated emotional response to the execution of Charles I or whether they were a more calculated protest, not just against its first deed, but against the régime itself?

The Response of the County's Governors: Defection

In 1650, by which time some sort of political and social stability had been achieved, disaffection amongst Northamptonshire's magistrates began to become plain. The first magistrates to defect were a group of the county's traditional governors: Sir Edward Nicholls of Faxton, Sir Thomas Samwell of Upton and Gayton and Thomas Elmes of Warmington. Elmes's defection is probably the easier one to explain. He had never been a particularly active justice of the peace; nor had he ever been appointed to any of the county committees.

In fact in 1642 his equivocation had been so obvious that he had been named as one of Charles I's Commission of Array. Such was his doubtful loyalty that in 1651 he was suffered by the Committee for the Advance of Money to contribute £500 to the service of the state.⁶⁰ There is some likelihood that he was preserved from earlier prosecution by his impeccably parliamentary family connections: the Harbys of Adston, the Haselrigges of Noseley in Leicestershire and, through the Bevills of Chesterton in Huntingdonshire, the Drydens of Canons Ashby.⁶¹ He was particularly well connected with the Dryden - Knightley clan and this may have had something to do with his defection.⁶² Apart from any prompting from Dryden or Knightley, and a lack of personal enthusiasm for the parliamentary cause, he might have had other considerations in deciding to withdraw from the bench, for he was in severe financial difficulties. Later in 1651, the Committee for the Advance of Money discharged Elmes as not having any considerable estate; in 1653 he suffered a recovery of the manor of Warmington; and in 1657 he had finally to transfer the manor to trustees.⁶³

Nicholls's and Samwell's abstentions are harder to explain because until 1649 they had both been solid parliamentarians. Both had been on the county committee; Samwell had been a sequestrator; Nicholls was so highly thought of that he was appointed a trustee for the incomes of the ministers of Cotterstock, Glapthorn and Oundle; and both had been active

60. N.R.O., F-H. 133; P.R.O., E.372/488-94, Northamptonshire; Cal. Adv. Mon., II, p. 730.

61. Bridges, I, pp. 226, 230; II, pp. 242-4, 482; J. Fetherston, ed., The Visitation of the County of Leicester in the year, 1619 taken by William Camden, Harlclian Soc., II, 1870, p. 16.

62. N.R.O., D(CA), 924-5.

63. Cal. Adv. Mon., II, p. 730; V.C.H. Northants., III, p. 115.

justices of the peace.⁶⁴ In Nicholls's case, disinclination to serve a regicide state was probably due to the same reasons as his refusal, when sheriff in 1658, to proclaim Richard Cromwell as Protector: he simply wished to wash his hands of the republic.⁶⁵ Samwell's reasons are even more a matter of conjecture, but must have been equally political in nature. In the Civil War, he had been "so severe in his treatment of delinquents", and such "a bitter enemy to the [Anglican] clergy" that it would be reasonable to conclude that he was one of the county's "hardline" parliamentarians.⁶⁶ Yet, as has been seen in the parliamentary career of Zouche Tate, vigorous prosecution of the war against Charles I did not necessarily predispose men like Nicholls, Samwell, or Tate to regicide. Unfortunately, the course their political ideas followed between 1642 and 1650 is hard to plot. It is difficult to understand the refinement, if that indeed is what it was, in Samwell's attitudes, between imprisoning his own vicar until he starved to death, and protesting against the King's murder by refusing to work for the perpetrators of the deed.⁶⁷ If Nicholls, Samwell and all subsequent defectors were re-asserting their emotional loyalty to the Stuart monarchy, they were, despite the exigencies of social disorder, doing so a little bit too late. In all likelihood, the defectors were not so much protesting against the King's execution alone, but against a régime which was to their distaste for

64. N. R. O., F-H. 133; Cal. Comm. Comp., II, pp. 1054, 1088; P. R. O., E.372/488-94, Northamptonshire.

65. N. R. O., X. 4478/712: there is no foliation, but all entries follow a strict chronological order, and all references can be found entered under their respective dates.

66. J. Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N. R. S., I, 1924, p. 245; H. Barber, A forgotten Chapter in English Church History A.D. 1642-1662 the Diocese of Peterborough, Leicester, 1898, p. 41.

67. J. Walker, An attempt towards recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England, 1714, pp. 332 - 3.

other reasons as well as the act of regicide.

One of these other reasons must have been the differences in religious belief between the defectors and the supporters of the Rump. Although there was not a very clear connection between Nicholls's and Samwell's war-time and post-war political attitudes, there was a clearer connection between their politics and Presbyterianism. The religious affiliations of any seventeenth century lay-man must always remain a matter of some conjecture, but in the case of lay impropiators of ecclesiastical benefices at least their religion can be defined by association with their appointees. There is, however, a further problem in the definition of the term Presbyterian. The label is confused by its generic nature; including not only several varieties of English and Scottish Presbyterianism, but also the "political Presbyterians" of the Long Parliament. None the less, Nicholls, Samwell and, as will be seen, the later defectors, had a marked propensity for appointing Presbyterian ministers to the livings in their gift. The erstwhile minister in Nicholls's parish of Hardwick, John Baynard, had attested to the Presbyterian, Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ and our Solemn League and Covenant in 1648.⁶⁸ His replacement, George Dix, who conformed in 1662, is as unlikely to have been an Independent as an Anglican.⁶⁹ As the joint living of Lamport cum Faxton was divided in the mid-1650s, it is reasonable to suppose that Sir Edward Nicholls also had a say in the appointment of John Willis, who was later licensed as a Presbyterian preacher under the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672.⁷⁰ Sir Richard Samwell's ministers at Gayton and Rothersthorpe, Richard Gifford and Jasper Symonds, both took the Presbyterian Testimony in 1648. It must also be added that at least two of their successors conformed in 1662 (both after moving to new parishes),

68. A.G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, 1934, p. 556.

69. Barber, op.cit., p. 43.

70. ibid., p. 51; C.S.P.D., 1671-72, p. 551.

while one, Richard Hooke, was licensed as a Presbyterian preacher at Northampton in 1672.⁷¹

Nicholls and Samwell were followed in absenting themselves from the Quarter Sessions by John Thornton of Brockhall, and like them, he too had strong Presbyterian connections. His appointee to the living of Brockhall since 1646 had been William Barlee, who in 1648 was a signatory to the Presbyterian Testimony.⁷² In the 1650s, Barlee joined with three neighbouring clergymen, Edward Reynolds, the Rector of Braunston (where Philip Holman held the advowson), Daniel Cawdry, the Rector of Great Billing, and Thomas Whitfield, the Rector of Bugbrooke, to defend the strict Calvinist interpretation of predestination against the polemics of another local clergyman, Thomas Peirce, the Rector of Brington, who espoused "divine philanthropy" and universal election.⁷³ Thornton's appointment in 1658 to the other living in his gift, that of Weedon, was George Martin, who carried his own Presbyterian convictions beyond the safe confines of the pulpit: he lost an arm fighting for Sir George Booth in the Presbyterian rising in Cheshire in the following year.⁷⁴ Martin, unlike Barlee, did not

-
71. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 556; H. Isham-Longden, ed., Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500, VIII, 1940, p. 93; Robert Kilsby; IX, 1940, p. 255, Edmund Morgan; C. S. P. D., 1671-72, p. 551.
72. Baker, I, p. 116; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 556.
73. W. Barlee, Predestination . . . defended against Post-destination in a Corremptorie Correction given in by way of an answer to . . . some notes concerning God's degrees, especially reprobation by Mr T P /Thomas Peirce/ To which are prefixed the epistles of Dr Edward Reynolds, Mr Daniel Cawdry /and of Thomas Whitfield/, 1656, B. L. 904 (1).
74. Isham-Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, IX, p. 151 .

conform in 1662, and eventually became a Presbyterian minister licensed in 1672 to preach in Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire.⁷⁵

Within another year, at least three more justices had made their discontent plain, either by retirement or by the infrequent performance of their duties, and a fourth justice, Charles Morrison, had either withdrawn or died.⁷⁶ John Norton, "a gentleman of approved fidelity" to parliament, with a large estate in Cotterstock and Glapthorn, had been until 1646 one of the more assiduous magistrates.⁷⁷ He attended the Sessions only twice in 1649; in 1650 he was sheriff and so could not act as a justice; but on stepping down he served on the bench on only one more occasion.⁷⁸ Norton, in all probability, was also a Presbyterian. He "was very much the friend" of William Malkinson, his appointee to the Rectory of Cotterstock in about 1651.⁷⁹ Malkinson's own religious persuasions are obscure; although he was ejected in 1662 for nonconformity, he could as easily have been an Independent as a Presbyterian, for he had not taken the Presbyterian Testimony in 1648 when he had been Rector of Heydon in Norfolk.⁸⁰ But, there are two contingent factors which make it much more likely that he was a Presbyterian. The first is suppositious: before going to Cotterstock, Malkinson had been a lecturer at Oundle; in the case of Oundle, the trustee for his maintenance,

75. G. Lyon Turner, ed., Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence, II, 1911, p. 831 .

76. P. R. O., E.372/494-497, Northamptonshire.

77. Cal.Comm.Comp. III, p. 1088; P R O, E.372/488-490, Northamptonshire.

78. P. R. O., 372/493-495, Northamptonshire; P. R. O., Lists and Indexes, IX, List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the earliest times until A.D. 1831, 1898, p. 94 .

79. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 334.

80. ibid., pp. 334, 555 .

and in the case of Cotterstock, the trustee for his tithes were the same man, the Presbyterian Sir Edward Nicholls of Faxton, who had withdrawn from the bench in 1650.⁸¹ The second reason why it is likely that Malkinson was a Presbyterian is that in 1655 he appointed as his curate to his joint benefice of Glapthorn, William Oliver, who was ejected in 1662 but later⁸² licensed as a Presbyterian minister at Nassington in 1672.

The second justice who definitely withdrew from the bench was Sir John Norwich of Brampton Ash. Like most of his fellow abstainers, Norwich had been appointed to several county committees and the Commission of the Peace by parliament, but had grown tired of the disaffected party and withdrawn to his seat at Brampton.⁸³ None the less, Norwich had been made sheriff in 1645, had reappeared at the Sessions in 1648, and had been active on the Committee for Sequestrations in that year.⁸⁴ Although he served only once in 1649, he was evidently prepared to co-operate with the Rump initially, for he served on the bench on three occasions in 1650. His old misgivings would then seem to have come back to him, because he went to the Sessions on only two more occasions in the following three years.⁸⁵ Norwich's personal, political and religious loyalties are obscure, but from the evidence available, he would seem to have been loyal to the Long Parliament, a monarchist at heart, and a Presbyterian not beyond the pale of the Church of England. In the winter of 1659-60 it was Norwich who first

81. ibid., p. 334; Cal. Comm. Comp., II, pp. 1054, 1088.

82. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 374 .

83. N.R.O.,F - H.133; Acts and Ord.,I, p. 528; Bridges, II, p. 281.

84. P.R.O.,Lists and Indexes, IX, List of Sheriffs, p. 94; B R.O., E.372/492, Northamptonshire; B L Add., 5508, ff. 78, 82, 90, 91.

85. P. R.O.,E.372/493-497, Northamptonshire.

secured the county for the Rump and then went on to organise the county's petition calling for the return of the secluded members which he personally presented to General Monck.⁸⁶ At the elections to the Convention and Cavalier Parliaments he stood in opposition to the corporation candidates of the "good old cause".⁸⁷ In religion Norwich had a preference for conformable preachers. Little is known about his appointee to the living of Brampton in 1652, John Ward, but his choice of a successor in 1659 was Richard Cumberland, who conformed in 1662 and eventually became Bishop of Peterborough.⁸⁸ About the time of his last period of magisterial activity, Norwich interceded with the Committee for Plundered Ministers, on behalf of Francis Quarles, Rector of the nearby parish of Rushton, to save him from local persecution.⁸⁹ His efforts to save this "man of godly, honest and sober conversation" were of no avail, for Quarles was ejected for his adherence to the Book of Common Prayer. Norwich's exertions put him into direct conflict with the rising faction on the bench represented by Quarles's persecutors, Thomas Brooke of Great Oakley, Erasmus Dryden of Titchmarsh and Thomas Pentlow of Weston Favell.

The third justice to defect was also ostensibly a member of this rising faction: he was Erasmus Dryden's brother, Sir John Dryden of Canons Ashby. In March 1649 the government had shown its esteem for Sir John Dryden by bestowing on him the title of Custos Rotulorum for Northamptonshire.⁹⁰ Whether this was a reward or an inducement it is hard to tell, but as Knight of the Shire, Dryden had not been secluded, nor had he yet made his formal peace with the Rump, and certainly the government tried

86. Infra., pp.168-70.

87. Infra., pp.172.

88. Bridges, II, pp. 283, 561.

89. B.L., Add. 34, 326, f.69

90. P. R. O., C.231/6.f.144

to tie him more closely to its activities by making him responsible for swearing in new justices.⁹¹ Dryden responded by attending the Sessions on three occasions in both 1649 and 1650.⁹² But Dryden's religious associates were Presbyterians; his appointee in 1646 to the living in his gift of Middleton Cheney was John Cave who was a signatory to the Presbyterian Testimony of 1648; and it is likely that his appointee to Canons Ashby was the same Mr Perkins who also signed that same document.⁹³ After 1650 Sir John Dryden attended but two more Sessions, and only returned to parliament on 21 April 1652, to attend the debate on how the Rump was to be supplied with new members.⁹⁴

The government's attempts to bolster the sagging magistracy of Northamptonshire met with only mixed success. Between the beginning of 1649 and the end of 1652 eight new magistrates were appointed to the county bench, but of these five never acted.⁹⁵ One of the unresponsive justices was John Browne, the clerk to parliament, who had only recently acquired property at Eydon, and whose duties in London would have kept him away from Northamptonshire.⁹⁶ Another was the notorious self-seeker and regicide, Humphrey Edwards, who soon quitted his stake in the county by selling his half-share in the manor house of Greens Norton.⁹⁷ The third was Henry Freeman of Higham Ferrers; an important figure in the town who held the rectory of the parish, had a sizeable household of ten hearths

91. P.R.O., C. 231/6, f. 203.

92. P.R.O., E.372/493-494, Northamptonshire.

93. Barber, op.cit., pp. 14, 22; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 556.

94. P.R.O., E.372/495-497, Northamptonshire.

95. P.R.O., C. 231/6, ff. 157, 164, 191, 218, 240; E.372/493-496, Northamptonshire.

96. Bridges, I, p. 122.

97. D.N.B., VI, p. 537; I. Gentles, The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, 1649-60, Midland History, III, (3), 1976, p. 213.

and was wealthy enough to create a jointure for his wife worth £200 a year.⁹⁸ Although he was the father-in-law of the tardy Rumper for Higham Ferrers, Edward Harby, and although he had profited from the revolution by the purchase of tenements to the value of £364 from the sequestered royal manor of Higham, Freeman never served on the bench.⁹⁹ The fourth was George Lynne of Southwick who preferred to remain faithful to the cause of his delinquent son and heir, John rather than serve the new regime.¹⁰⁰ It is of note that he was not only the first Northamptonshire magistrate to be appointed after the execution of Charles I, but also the first to be dismissed.¹⁰¹ The fifth, Robert Andrews of Harlestone, the half-hearted Rumper for Weobley in Herefordshire, was put into the Commission of the Peace in June 1652, just as the first wholesale dismissals from the bench were taking place.¹⁰²

Amongst this first group of dismissals were Andrews's uncle, Richard Andrews of Thorp Underwood, Thomas Elmes, Philip Holman, Charles Morrison, George Mountague and Sir Richard Samwell. These were followed in September 1653 by Robert Andrews himself, George Benson, Humphrey Edwards, Edward Farmer, Henry Freeman, Edward Hanbury, John Haselrigge, Nathaniel Humphreys, Sir Edward Nicholls, Sir John Norwich, Richard Ouseley, John Thornton and Sir Christopher Yelverton.¹⁰³ All in all there were nineteen deletions from

98. P.R.O., E.179/254/11.f.31, Gentles, The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, loc.cit., p. 215.

99. Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 85; Gentles, Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, loc.cit., p. 213.

100. Cal. Comm. Comp., II, p. 1352; Cal. Adv. Mon., III, p. 1383; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 128-9.

101. P.R.O., C.231/6, ff. 157, 232.

102. P.R.O., C.231/6, f. 240 .

103. P.R.O., C.193/13/4; C.231/6, f. 267.

a Commission of the Peace with a total complement of forty-two local justices. Since this second purge came after the dissolution of the Rump and the calling of the Barebones Parliament, it seems likely that four of the above justices, Benson, Farmer, Haselrigge and Humphreys, all of them very active magistrates, were dismissed over disagreements with the changes at Westminster.¹⁰⁴ Of the other fifteen dismissed, six have been shown to have had close ties with Presbyterianism. Two of the others were members of parliament who had been secluded alongside the parliamentary Presbyterians in Pride's Purge, and one more was a member of parliament who had been allowed to retain his seat but whose support for the Rump had been more equivocal than enthusiastic. Although little or nothing is known about the political or religious connections of the other six, the six, eight or possible nine dismissals with Presbyterian associations still seem to be too small a proportion of the whole to make a conclusive case for a purge of Presbyterians in 1652 and 1653. But of those active justices of the peace who declined to serve the Rump between 1649 and 1653, six out of nine showed Presbyterian sympathies: evidence that, as well as the Royalists, Presbyterians were a major source of resistance to the new régime. This, however, is not the complete picture, for at least eleven of the magistrates' old guard stayed loyal to the Rump, and at least two Presbyterian sympathisers and defectors, Dryden and Norton, did not lose their positions; an indication perhaps that there were other Presbyterian sympathisers who did reach a modus vivendi with the government. It remains to be seen in the next section who the loyal men were and whether they were connected by any common bond.

104. Their politics are discussed in the next section.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SETTLEMENTThe Adherents of the Good Old Cause

Of the eight appointments made to the Northamptonshire magistracy between the beginning of 1649 and the end of 1652 only three, John Cartwright of Aynho, John Haselrigge of Harlestone and Nathaniel Humphreys of Barton Seagrave, served the Rump government as justices of the peace. Cartwright, living as he did in the southernmost parish in the county, was as much an Oxfordshire as a Northamptonshire squire and was appointed to the Commission of the Peace for both counties in the autumn of 1650.¹⁰⁵ He was a well-to-do gentleman, worth around £1,000 a year, who married the daughter of Charles I's Attorney-General, "Ship-Money Noy", but who nevertheless had become a staunch parliamentary committee-man who had contributed £880 to parliament's cause in 1642.¹⁰⁶ For his pains, in 1645 royalist troops molested his family, burnt down his house and did other damage to his property to the cost of £10,000.¹⁰⁷ Cartwright, however, was not provoked into political or religious fanaticism. Instead, he seems to have been intent on steering a middle, if meandering, course. In 1646 he installed as Rector of Aynho, Robert Wilde, "a fat jolly man and a boon presbyterian" who after being ejected in 1660 was licensed as a Presbyterian minister at Oundle in 1672.¹⁰⁸ A year later Cartwright was made a Parliamentary Visitor

105. P.R.O., C.231/6, f. 203.

106. Bridges, I, p. 137; N.R.O., F-H. 133; Cal. Adv. Mon., I, p. 189. The Oxford antiquarian and gossip, Anthony A Wood thought that Cartwright was, although a benefactor to learning, "a sordid and covetous person", and reported him to have had £40,000 laying by him when he died in 1676: A. Clark, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, antiquary of Oxford 1632-1695, described by himself, II, 1892, p. 357.

107. Baker, I, p. 552; H.M.C., VI, p. 175.

108. Baker, I, p. 552; C.S.P.D., 1671-2, p. 551; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 529.

of Oxford University, "but disapproving of their proceedings he absented himself from their meetings."¹⁰⁹ Despite being a very moderate Presbyterian, Cartwright accepted his appointments to the Commission of Militia, of Assessment and of the Peace, and gave good service on the Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire benches between 1650 and the beginning of 1653.¹¹⁰ Only the Barebones Parliament would seem to have proved too much for his forbearance and he withdrew from magisterial activity until 1656.

John Haselrigge of Harlestone was the third son of Sir Thomas Haselrigge of Noseley in Leicestershire and brother of Sir Arthur Haselrigge, the leading parliamentary member and later Rumper for Leicestershire.¹¹¹ As a younger son Haselrigge was a comparatively unimportant gentleman of modest means. Through his father and through his wife he held some land in Alderton while he lived in the manor house at Harlestone which he rented from Sir Lewis Dyves.¹¹² The confiscation of crown lands and the estates of certain royalists, including Sir Lewis Dyves, gave Haselrigge the opportunity to consolidate his territorial status in the county. From the crown lands he purchased the manor house at Alderton for £793 and properties in Grafton and Potterspury for a total of £240.¹¹³ Together with William Denton of Blisworth, Haselrigge bought the sequestered properties of Sir Lewis Dyves in Harlestone for £2,893.¹¹⁴ Where Haselrigge found nearly

109. Bridges, I, p. 137.

110. Acts and Ord., I, p. 1240, II, pp. 305, 472, 669; P.R.O.E.372/494-497, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire.

111. J.Fetherston, ed., The Visitation of the County of Leicester in the year, 1619 taken by William Camden, Harleian Soc., II, 1870, p. 16.

112. Baker, I, p. 169; Bridges, I, p. 281.

113. Gentles, Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, loc. cit., p. 214.

114. Bodley, MS.Rawl . B.517, ff. 3v-4.

£3,000 for his purchases it is impossible to say, but clearly he was following his brother's lead in building up an estate from confiscated lands.¹¹⁵ This evident financial commitment to the "revolutionary settlement" and the political importance of his brother probably led to Haselrigge's appointment to the Commission of the Peace (but no other commission) in July, 1650.¹¹⁶ His brother's influence was also probably responsible for the appointment of John's son, Arthur, to a Fellowship at King's College Cambridge "by order of Parliamentary Committee."¹¹⁷ Haselrigge assiduously attended every Quarter Session from the end of 1650 to the end of 1653 even though his brother was bitterly opposed to the Cromwellian government after the dissolution of the Rump.¹¹⁸ It was probably his brother's prominence in opposition that caused Haselrigge to be dismissed from the Northamptonshire bench in September 1653.¹¹⁹ Haselrigge, however, had not been put off by the Barebones Parliament and might have come to an arrangement with the government had he had the chance, but he died in 1655.¹²⁰

Nathaniel Humphreys of Barton Seagrave, was not a newcomer to the bench in August 1649 but a re-appointment, and as such should be considered a protégé of the Rump.¹²¹ He returned to his duties with enthusiasm, for he attended every Quarter Session between the beginning of 1650 and the end of 1653.¹²² Despite this record of service, Humphreys was removed from the

115. D. N. B., IX , p. 745.

116. P. R. O., C.231/6, f. 191.

117. Al. Cant., II, p. 359 .

118. D. N. B., IX, p. 745; P. R. O., E.372/494-497, Northamptonshire.

119. P. R. O., C.193/13/4; C.231/6,f.267.

120. Bridges, I, p. 282.

121. supra, p.114.

122. P. R. O., E.372/494-497, Northamptonshire.

bench in September 1653 and, in all likelihood, from the Committee of Assessment at about the same time.¹²³ Why he was dismissed it is impossible to say. He had some strange connections for a loyal servant of the Rump: his daughter and heir, Elizabeth, married into the Catholic Brudenells; and his parson at Barton Seagrave until 1653 was the Presbyterian, Robert Hicknell.¹²⁴ Even though he continued to act as a justice during the sitting of the Barebones Parliament, it was probably his loyalty to the Rump, as evidenced by his re-appointment after a lapse of three years and by his faultless attendance at the Quarter Sessions, that probably led to Humphreys' dismissal.

All of the Rump's appointees between 1649 and 1652 had withdrawn or been removed from the bench by the end of 1653. The only element of continuity on the bench was provided by a hardcore of about a dozen magistrates, who by and large remained active despite political changes between the end of the Civil War and the middle of the 1650s. This group comprised: George Benson of Towcester, Henry Berkeley of Daventry, Thomas Blétsoe of Ringstead, Thomas Brooke of Great Oakley, John Clarke of Guilsborough, Erasmus Dryden of Titchmarsh, Edward Farmer of Daventry, Edward Harby of Adstone, John Maunsell of Thorp Malsor, John Parker of Northampton, Thomas Pentlow of Wilby, William Ward of Houghton Parva, and the Clerk of the Peace, Robert Guy of Isham. To this list should be added the name of Sir Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh, who was a constant supporter of the successive Cromwellian régimes and a member of all the Protectorate Councils of State, but who, because of his work in London, was unable to attend the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions.

123. P.R.O, C.193/13/4; C.231/6, f. 267; Acts and Ord., II, pp. 669, 1074.

124. Bridges, I, p. 218; Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 556.

Except as administrators, these men did not form a close circle.

Most of them had strong connections with those parliamentary supporters who had ceased to act for parliament in the previous five years: although as such they could be considered to have been well insulated from those with royalist sympathies. It is in their relationships with this wider circle of parliamentarians that a clue is to be found for establishing the character of the active magistracy in the 1650s. But, before examining these relationships, an important and related point needs first to be made. Most of them were gentlemen of relative insignificance in county society; Benson, Berkeley, Bletsoe, Dryden, Pentlow and Ward were not even of the Quorum, although Pentlow was eventually included between 1652 and 1656 after ten years of constant service.¹²⁵ Clarke and Parker were the Commission of the Peace's sergeants-at-law. Parker owed his position to government influence: he was Recorder of Gravesend, a judge in the Welsh circuit, a Baron of the Exchequer and Burgess for Rochester in 1654 and 1656. His position on the bench did not stem from any prominence in county society and it is interesting to note that his place of residence in Northamptonshire was the county town.¹²⁶ Clarke was a county gentleman in his own right, but he had not acquired his Guilsborough property from the profits of his legal practice until 1627, and his home of eight hearths does not point to impressive wealth.¹²⁷ Robert Guy was also a lawyer, whose house at Isham with only seven hearths also does not signify more than a modest income.¹²⁸

125. B.L.Stowe MS. 577; Bridges, II, p. 156.

126. J.Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S., I, 1924, pp. 252-3.

127. Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 51; Bridges, I, p. 567; P. R. O., E.179/254/11.

128. Sir Edgar Stephens, The Clerks of the Counties, 1360-1960, 1961, p. 140; P. R. O., E.179/254/11, f.35.

Berkeley and Farmer were both members of Daventry Corporation, which they had served as bailiff on individual occasions in 1626, 1627 and 1648.¹²⁹ Berkeley had a home of twelve hearths but would seem to have been no more than a figure of parochial importance.¹³⁰ Farmer's land holdings in Daventry were impressive, they included the manor, the site of the priory, 740 acres of land and some eighty buildings, but they were all leased and not owned by him.¹³¹

Several of the minor active justices seem to have been closely attached to greater gentry. Thomas Bletsoe's eight hearth home was in a parish, Ringstead, largely owned by Sir Gilbert Pickering.¹³² Robert Guy was married to Mary Sawyer, daughter of Pickering's close friend, Captain Francis Sawyer of Kettering.¹³³ Erasmus Dryden was closely related to the Pickerings: he married the daughter of Henry Pickering, Rector of Aldwinkle. All Saints, and his sister was the mother of the baronet of Titchmarsh, in which parish Dryden himself lived in a modest eight hearth residence.¹³⁴ Dryden was also the younger brother of Sir John Dryden of Canons Ashby. Sir John was the centre of a clearly defined circle of clients. Amongst his protégés still in the magistracy were Benson, Farmer and possibly Harby, who lived barely a mile away from Canons Ashby in Adstone.

129. Baker, I, pp. 321-2.

130. P.R.O., E.179/254/11, f.3

131. Baker, I, p. 317.

132. V.C.H., Northants, IV, p. 42

133. Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., I, pp. 554-7; N.N. and Q., N.S. VI, pp. 85-7;

Stephens, Clerks of the Counties, pp. 139-40.

134. Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 66, 171; P R O, E.179/254/11, f.26.

Farmer was one of Dryden's chief tenants and an overseer of his will.¹³⁵

George Benson was the younger brother of Henry Benson of Charwelton. Both came from a yeoman family from Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire and had not been settled in the county for longer than fifteen years: Henry Benson did not buy the 400 acres he had been leasing in Charwelton until 1648.¹³⁶

George was even less well to do: his house had only six hearths and even a generation later his family were worth no more than £300 a year.¹³⁷ They seem to have been taken up by Sir John Dryden; both were on good terms with him and Henry was a witness to his will.¹³⁸ In April 1650 Henry owed his promotion to the rank of colonel of a troop of militia horse, and George his majority in the same troop, to the recommendation of Sir John Dryden.¹³⁹

Henry remained loyal to his master and became an important figure in the opposition to the Protectorate; but George, and to some extent Edward Farmer, were prepared to serve most of the successive Cromwellian régimes.

Farmer ceased activity on the bench in 1652, at about the same time as Sir John Dryden, and was dismissed in 1653, but he was conducting civil marriages in Daventry and East Haddon from 1654 and was attending the Quarter Sessions again by 1656.¹⁴⁰ Benson, although dismissed in 1653, was reinstated in the same document that dismissed him, and never ceased activity until the end of 1659.¹⁴¹

135. N.R.O., D(CA). 27, 519, 593-5.

136. Baker, I, pp. 295-6; Bridges, I, p. 41.

137. P.R.O., E.179/254/11, f.18; S.P.29/421, part 3/216.

138. N.R.O., D(CA) 27, 519, 924.

139. C.S.P.D., 1650, pp. 53, 78, 505.

140. P.R.O., E.372/495-6, 500, Northamptonshire; C.193/13/4; C.231/6, f.267;

N.R.O., Daventry and East Haddon Parish Registers, n.p.

141. P.R.O., E.372/493-503, Northamptonshire; C.193/13/4, C.231/6, f.267.

How many of the other active justices were protégés of the greater gentry it is impossible to say, but many of the greater ex-magistrates continued to exert their influence on the bench, and some of the remaining active justices were prepared to exercise patronage of their own. Henry Freeman, appointed in 1651, was Harby's father-in-law; the barrister, Henry Goodyer of Cransley, appointed in 1653, was married to the granddaughter of Sir Richard Samwell; William Boteler of Barnwell, appointed in the same year, was the brother-in-law of Thomas Brooke. Thomas Crewe, appointed in 1655, was John Crewe's eldest son; Oliver St John, appointed in 1656, was the nephew of Sir Edward Nicholls; Robert Pargiter, appointed at the same time, was William Ward's first cousin; and Robert Maunsell was John Maunsell's eldest son and Thomas Brooke's son-in-law.¹⁴² All in all, these seven men formed half the total number of new justices of the peace appointed between 1653 and 1659.

Of this core of fourteen magistrates who barely or never wavered in their allegiance to the Good Old Cause, only four can be said to have had a "natural" place on the bench: Pickering, Brooke, Maunsell and Harby. Pickering with his baronetcy, his place at Cromwell's court, his connections with the Drydens and Montagus, and his mansion with twenty-two hearths at Titchmarsh, was clearly one of the county's greater gentlemen.¹⁴³ The other three possessed mansions with twelve to fifteen hearths; but this in itself was not enough to guarantee them a place on the commissions.¹⁴⁴ None of the

142. P.R.O., C.231/6, ff. 218, 251, 267, 327, 345, 359; Visitation of Northants., 1681, pp. 28, 85, 187, 226; Bridges, I, pp. 125, 198; II, 97, 266, 79.

143. D.N.B., XV, p. 1129; Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 171; P.R.O., E.179/254/11, f.26.

144. P.R.O., E.179/254/11, ff. 12v, 30v, 36v.

three was intimately connected with the Northamptonshire cousinhood. What kinship ties they had within the county tended to be either with the other ten active magistrates at this time or between themselves. It is perhaps a measure of their isolation in the county community that Maunsell's son and heir, Robert, married Brooke's daughter, Judith.¹⁴⁵ Of the three's forbears only Brooke's father had been a justice of the peace, and Brooke and Maunsell themselves were relative latecomers to the bench, both being appointed in 1646.¹⁴⁶ Brooke, Maunsell and Harby owed their places on the bench to commitment and hard work. Harby lost his commitment when the Rump was dissolved and he lost his seat in parliament, but until then he had served on all the Civil War county committees and as sheriff in 1643-4. He had also served on the Committee of Assessment, on the Militia Commission, on the select Committee for the Relief of Creditors and Poor Prisoners, and had regularly attended the Quarter Sessions.¹⁴⁷ Brooke and Maunsell served on all the major committees of the 1650s and regularly performed their duties as justices of the peace.¹⁴⁸ Brooke was appointed to the select Committees for Ejecting Scandalous Ministers and for Suppressing the Insurrection of March 1655, and was a colonel in the militia.¹⁴⁹ Alongside Sir Gilbert Pickering,

145. Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 28.

146. N.R.O., M(TM), 603: P.R.O., S.B., 16/405, f. 46v: P.R.O., C.231/6, f.56

147. Acts and Ord., I, pp. 528, 1240; II, pp. 305, 472, 669, 759; N.R.O., F-H., 133; P.R.O., Lists and Indexes, IX, List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the earliest times to A.D. 1831, p. 94.

148. Acts and Ord., II, pp. 305, 472, 559, 1074. Brooke's attendance at the Quarter Sessions became desultory after 1653, but there is evidence that he was performing his other magisterial duties until his death in 1658: N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/2 and the Parish Register of Gretton which records him as conducting civil marriages there.

149. Acts and Ord., II, p. 793; N.N. and Q., III, p. 63. C.S.P.D., 1650, p. 505.

he was nominated by the government the other member for Northamptonshire in the Barebones Parliament, and having won the government's approbation he went on to win the county seat in the election to the parliament of 1654.¹⁵⁰ Maunsell, although appointed to the select Committee for the Relief of Creditors and Poor Prisoners in 1653, was excluded from the Committee for Ejecting Scandalous Ministers the following year, possibly because of his support for Sir John Norwich's defence of Francis Quarles, the Rector of Rushden.¹⁵¹ He was, however, later added to this commission and appointed to the Committee on Popish Recusants' Estates in 1657.¹⁵² In 1656, even though his own estate was heavily encumbered with the cost of finding portions for his daughters, he volunteered for the office of sheriff after the previous incumbent, Henry Robinson of Cransley, had deterred many candidates with complaints of the office's extraordinary expense.¹⁵³ Major General Boteler, in proposing Maunsell as sheriff to the Council of State, said that he thought him "a great asserter of the government."¹⁵⁴

Diligence in the Good Old Cause could make an otherwise lowly member

150. Somers Tracts, VI, p. 249; The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England from the Earliest Times to the Restoration of Charles II . . . by several hands, XX, 1763, p. 301.

151. Acts and Ord., II, pp. 795, 973; B.L., Add. 34326, f.69.

152. By an Act of this present Parliament (1657) entitled, "An Act and Declaration touching several Acts and Ordinances made since 20th April, 1653 and before September, 1654": Additional Commissioners for Ejecting Scandalous Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters, 1657, Birmingham Public Library, Q.942.008, F/2; N. R. O., Fermor Hesketh Baker, 719, f.3.

153. Mercurius Politicus, 7-14 February, 1656; B.L., E.492; T. S. P., IV, p.234.

154. ibid., p. 207.

of the magistracy indispensable. Four justices stand out for their painstaking fulfilment of their magisterial duties: Edward Farmer, Thomas Pentlow, William Ward, and John Browne of Kettering, who was added to the Commission of the Peace in February 1653.¹⁵⁵ None of them would ordinarily have become magistrates: Ward was of the "middling sort of gentlemen", with a residence of eleven hearths; Pentlow's house at Wilby had nine hearths, but his Wilby property was worth only £200 a year; Browne and Farmer were minor gentry from the towns of Kettering and Daventry.¹⁵⁶ All of these men showed their commitment to the Protectorate by regularly attending the Sessions; Pentlow until his death in 1656 and the others all through the 1650s. But they earned their places by an industry not apparent in the attendance records. During the Easter and Michaelmas Sessions, 1657 and the Epiphany Session, 1658, Browne took thirty-five recognizances and examinations, Farmer took thirty-one, and Ward took forty: a total of 106 out of an overall figure of 150 taken by the bench as a whole.¹⁵⁷ Three of the sixteen magistrates who attended those Sessions were doing two-thirds of the administrative work. Such industry and commitment did not go unrewarded. Thomas Pentlow had been a member of most county committees since 1642. On the Committee for Sequestrations only Edward Farmer equalled him for application to duty between 1648 and 1649.¹⁵⁸ On 6 March 1649, Pentlow was the only member of that committee to "attend to business".¹⁵⁹ As a mark of esteem, after more than ten years service, Pentlow was appointed to the Quorum of the Commission of the Peace, a fact he proudly

155. P. R. O., C.231/6, f.251.

156. P. R. O., E.179/254/11; Bridges, II, p. 155.

157. N. R. O., Q. S. R., 1/2-4.

158. B. L. Add. 5508, ff. 75-104.

159. Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., I, p. 554.

Another way to advancement in the county administration, and therefore to personal status in county society, was through the militia. Whether a commission in the militia was more a mark of trust by the government or a reflection of personal commitment to the Protectorate, it is hard to say, but many justices were at one time or another active in the militia, and in the later 1650s a commission was a way to a place on the bench. George Benson, as has been seen, was a major in the militia. Edward Farmer first came to notice in December, 1642, as a captain in the militia force which accompanied John Sawyer in putting down the Royalist rising in Wellingborough led by Francis Grey.¹⁶¹ He was a Commissioner of Militia in December 1648, and remained so until 1660; he was largely responsible for collecting the horses from Northamptonshire for the army's artillery train during the Worcester campaign; and he was one of the select Commissioners of Militia for suppressing the royalist rising of Spring, 1655.¹⁶² Henry Berkeley was another of these select Commissioners, as was Thomas Brooke, who was also the colonel of a troop of militia horse in 1650.¹⁶³ Robert Guy was a captain in Brooke's own troop: it is probably not too much to suppose that it was Guy's additional activities in the militia that led to his promotion to membership of the local Committee for Ejecting Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers in 1654, and of the Committee of Assessment in 1657.¹⁶⁴ William Boteler owed his Major-Generalship of

160. B. L. Stowe MS.577; Bridges, II, p. 156.

161. Wake, Quarter Sessions Records, p. 252; Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., I, pp. 554-6; N. N. and Q., N. S. V., p. 87.

162. Acts and Ord., I, p. 1240; II, pp. 1329, 1438; N. N. and Q., III, p. 63; C. S. P. D., 1651, pp. 413, 418.

163. C. S. P. D., 1650, p. 505.

164. Acts and Ord., II, pp. 973, 1074.

Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Rutland to the goodwill he won from Major-General Berry for subduing violent unrest in Bristol early in 1655, and for his energetic pursuit of the rebels after Penruddock's Rising.¹⁶⁵ However, he owed much of his earlier local prominence to the good work he did with the Northamptonshire militia and army garrisons between 1646 and 1650.¹⁶⁶ His appointment to the bench in September, 1653, and his immediate assumption of a position of importance there, seems to have gone hand in hand with control of the county militia.¹⁶⁷ The promotions of Colonels Alexander Blake and William Rainsborowe from the militia to the magistracy are the clearest examples of military service to the Commonwealth leading to civil advancement. Blake was appointed to the Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace early in 1657; he had been a justice of the peace and a member of the Commission of Oyer and Terminer for Peterborough since 1651; he sat for the town in the Protectorate parliaments of 1654, 1656 and 1658; but it was his colonelcy in the county militia, a position he had held since before 1655, that gave him his entrée into the county administration.¹⁶⁸ By 1659, so close was the connection between the militia and the magistracy that William Rainsborowe became a justice on acquiring his first commission.¹⁶⁹ Military power had become more important to civil administrators than personal influence or family

165. M. Ashley, Cromwell's Generals, 1954, pp. 155-6; T. S. P., III, pp. 153-4, 161, 165, 169-72, 176-7, 191, 243, 309; C. S. P. D., 1655, p. 80.

166. C. S. P. D., 1648-9, p. 115; 1649-50, pp. 125-6; C. J., V, p. 625; L. J., X, pp. 328, 365; B. L., Add. 5508, ff. 82-86, 90.

167. P. R. O., C.231/6, f. 267; C. S. P. D., 1653-4, pp. 67, 89, 171.

168. P. R. O., C.231/6, ff. 215, 227, 359; C. J., VII, p. 573; N. N. and Q., III, p. 63; The Parliamentary . . . History of England, XX, pp. 301.

169. C. J., VII, p. 573; P. R. O., E.372/503, Northamptonshire.

connection.

One other characteristic marks a substantial number of Northamptonshire magistrates in the 1650s: many of them had a material motive for supporting the "revolutionary settlement." Some, like Gilbert Pickering, Lord Chamberlain at Cromwell's court, and Miles Fleetwood, a Clerk of the Privy Seal appointed to the Northamptonshire bench in 1657, held prestigious and lucrative central government offices.¹⁷⁰ Several others had bought sequestrated property. The cases of John Haselrigge and Henry Freeman have already been examined. John Browne had bought several houses from the sequestrated property of William Bond for £413 in 1653.¹⁷¹ Captain Adam Baynes bought the queen's manor and park of Holdenby in 1650 for £22,000, took up residence in the county and was appointed to the bench in 1656 or 1657.¹⁷² William Rainsborowe, another military man, a major in Colonel Thomas Harrison's regiment of horse and a late appointment to the Northamptonshire bench, acquired the Crown estate of Higham Park for £5,495. Major George Benson acquired ex-crown property in Green's Norton worth £78.¹⁷³ Major General Boteler demolished several royalists' houses and used the timbers to build his own house at Oundle.¹⁷⁴ There were others like Robert Guy, who bought land from impoverished delinquents; but since Royalists also bought estates from their less fortunate comrades - Sir John Robinson, for example, from the Earl of Peterborough - this does not signify any strong commitment to the new order.¹⁷⁵ Although the number of

170. D.N.B., XV, p. 1129; P.R.O., C.231/6, f.359.

171. Bodley, MS. Rawl, B.517, F.3a.

172. N.N. and Q., I, p. 173; P.R.O., C.193/13/5

173. I. Gentles, *The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, 1649-1660*, Midland History, III (3), 1976, pp. 209, 213.

174. Bridges, II, p. 373.

175. Sir Edgar Stephens, The Clerks of the Counties 1360 - 1960, 1961, p. 140; N.R.O., Robinson of Cranford MSS. 2.

justices who bought sequestered estates was not large, especially if one excludes Freeman (who never acted), Haselrigge (who was dismissed in 1653), and Baynes (who was a latecomer to the bench), it included some of the more prominent magistrates like Benson, Browne and Böteler.

So far it has been established that the active magistrates of the 1650s were by and large highly motivated men of modest or less than modest means. It is far from clear, however, whether these men acquired office in order to undertake the responsibilities of county government or in order to improve their personal social status. Were they being entrusted and rewarded by central government with the responsibilities of office, or were they being seduced by the prospect of local power and prestige? As with the defectors from the bench, one small indication is to be found in their religious convictions.

The surprising thing about the active magistrates of the 1650s is that they were not a monolithic body of Independents. The justices whose religious associations can be determined were almost evenly divided between Independents and Presbyterians. Sir Gilbert Pickering was "first a presbyterian, then an independent, then a Brownist, and afterwards an anabaptist, he was a most furious fiery and implacable man; was the principal agent in casting out most of the learned clergy".¹⁷⁶ In 1672 his widow's house was licensed as a Congregationalist meeting place.¹⁷⁷ Edward Farmer was another justice whose religious opinions changed from being violently Presbyterian to Independent.¹⁷⁸ Other Independents on the bench included Robert Guy and John Maunsell whose houses were also licensed

176. J. Walker, An Attempt towards recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England, 1714, p. 91.

177. Lyon Turner, Early Records of Nonconformity, p. 811.

178. Walker, Sufferings of the Clergy, p. 91.

as Congregational meeting places in 1672.¹⁷⁹ There is some probability that Thomas Pentlow was also of Independent persuasions, for in 1654, a future Congregationalist minister, Vincent Alsop, was intruded into the living of Wilby by the Parliamentary Commissioners. It was unlikely that they took note of the opinions of the owner of the advowson, Henry, the Royalist son of the Presbyterian, Sir Christopher Yelverton, but they may have consulted the lord of the manor and chief resident, Thomas Pentlow, who had been acting as registrar since 1653.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, there were six identifiable Presbyterians on the bench in the 1650s. Thomas Brooke's minister at Great Oakley, Francis Dandy; John Clarke's at Guilsborough, William Holmes; Edward Harby's at Adstone, Robert Allen; William Ward's at Houghton Parva, Thomas Martyn, all took the Presbyterian Testimony in 1648.¹⁸¹ Harby's house and that of Brooke's widow were also licensed as Presbyterian meeting places in 1672 for their ministers who were ejected in 1662.¹⁸² Furthermore, Alexander Blake's house in Northampton, and curiously, John Maunsell's son Robert's house at Newton, were also licensed as Presbyterian meeting places in 1672.¹⁸³ Brooke's, Harby's and Ward's Presbyterianism would seem to have been of a more uncompromising kind than that of most of the Presbyterians who defected from the bench between 1649 and 1652, for their ministers were ejected from

179. Lyon Turner, op.cit., pp. 809, 811: Maunsell's minister at ThorpeMalsor until 1662, John Courtman, was licensed a Congregationalist preacher at the same time.

180. Barber, op cit, p. 46; Lyon Turner, op cit, p. 810; Isham Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, I, p. 53; N. R. Q., Wilby Par. Reg.

181. Matthews, Calamy Revised, p. 556.

182. Lyon Turner, op cit, pp. 805, 808.

183. ibid., pp. 806, 808.

the Church of England in 1662 for nonconformity.¹⁸⁴

Whatever religious differences there may have been between the magistrates in the 1650s, those differences would seem to have taken second place to a united commitment to church reform. When the Barebones Parliament secularised the marriage ceremony and took the function of keeping the parish register out of the hands of the clergy, most of the Northamptonshire justices threw themselves wholeheartedly into the role of registrar. George Benson was registrar at Towcester and performed civil marriages at Paulerspury. Henry Berkeley was registrar at Claycoton. Thomas Brooke conducted civil marriages at Great Oakley, Stoke Albany and Wilbarston; Thomas Bletsoe at Wellingborough; John Browne at Gretton, Kettering and Wellingborough; John Clarke at Guilsborough; and Edward Farmer at Daventry and East Haddon. John Maunsell installed a registrar at Old, much to the disgust of the Rector, John Bullivant, a staunchly conservative Presbyterian. Maunsell conducted civil marriages at Stoke Albany, Wilbarston, and Wellingborough. Thomas Pentlow also performed civil marriages at Wellingborough as well as being parish registrar of Wilby.¹⁸⁵

The readiness of the active magistrates to perform these secularised clerical duties was at least an indication that the Presbyterians on the bench in the mid-1650s had more in common with their Independent fellow-justices than with their co-religionists who defected. Unfortunately for the Good Old Cause, however tireless the county's new governors were in their exertions, they had not the social prestige and influence to carry out the traditional functions of a Justice of the Peace and nor were they

184. Barber, op. cit., pp. 13, 37, 49; Matthews, Calamy Revised, pp. 7, 138, 342.

185. This paragraph is based on the parish registers, in the N. R. O., of the places named; N. R. O. M. (TM). 605; N. N. and Q. I, p. 7.

numerous enough to bear the added responsibilities the Protectorate imposed on them.

Social Discontent in Northamptonshire

Whether or not Northamptonshire was unusual in the degree of popular unrest it displayed at the turn of the half-century it is hard to say; but what can be said is that the reasons usually put forward to explain the county's rural tensions and protests in the early seventeenth century do not seem to explain the mainly urban discontents of 1649-50. In 1607 Northamptonshire and its neighbouring counties formed the centre of what was arguably the last peasants' revolt in England.¹⁸⁶ The Midland or Leveller Revolt of that year is usually ascribed to the degree of pastoral enclosure in the East Midlands, and indeed Northamptonshire was the most enclosed county in the region. The area of the county enclosed according to the Enclosure Commission of 1607 was over 27,000 acres, but this represented only 4.3% of the county's area, and it therefore seems likely that the Midland Revolt was a misguided and belated reaction to the change in land use not to its extent.¹⁸⁷ Despite continuing enclosure in parishes like Braybrooke, Culworth, Passenham and Watford during the Civil Wars, there was nothing on the scale of the "jacquerie" of 1607, only some erosion of enclosure rights, particularly those of absentee Royalist landlords like Lord Hatton.¹⁸⁸ Even in Hatton's case the chief source of opposition came

186. E.F. Gay, *The Midland Revolt and the Inquisitions of Depopulation of 1607*, T.R.H.S., XVIII, 1904, *passim*.

187. E.F. Gay, *Inclosures in England in the Sixteenth Century*, Quarterly Journal of Economics, XVII, 1903, p. 581; W.E. Tate, *Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire* N.P. and P., I, 1950, pp. 25-28.

188. W.E. Tate, *Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire*, loc.cit., p. 28; Bridges, I, p. 585; E.M. Leonard, *The Inclosure of the Common Fields in the Seventeenth Century*, T.R.H.S., NS. XIX, 1905, p. 141; B.L. Add. 29550, ff. 155, 199, 207, 233, N.R.O., F-H, 715.

not from impoverished commoners but from a substantial freeholder of Brigstock, and a Royalist like himself, Thomas Barton.¹⁸⁹ Shortly after the Civil War, Redmore Field in Litchborough and Loddington were enclosed, and Lord Montagu enclosed Hemington and his part of Weldon Plain without any apparent commotion. What dispute there was over the sheep walk at Weldon was quickly forgotten when the local inhabitants needed his help against Thomas Barton's plan to install his own nominee as schoolmaster of Brigstock.¹⁹⁰

It has also been suggested that the densely populated forests of Northamptonshire were centres of rural puritanism and extreme religious sects. Professor A. M. Everitt and Dr. Joan Thirsk have pointed out that the county's forest areas with their ample commons attracted large numbers of immigrants who formed "a relatively free and mobile society" of rootless men outside the social constraints of the manorial discipline to be found in the arable areas.¹⁹¹ John Aubrey thought that the woodlanders were "mean people [who] lived lawless, nobody to govern them, they care for nobody, having no dependence on anybody."¹⁹² The Northamptonshire sectary who in 1643 said that he hoped within a year never to see a gentleman in England was probably one of these mean woodlanders.¹⁹³ The poor of

189. N. R. O., F-H. 715; C. S. P. D., 1672-73, p. 275; P. A. J. Pettit, The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N. R. S., XXIII, 1968, p. 180.

190. Baker, II, p. 404; Bridges II, pp. 42, 399; B. L., Add. 29550, f.233; N. R. O., Mont. (B) 13/1.

191. J. Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640, 1967, pp. 54, 251, 411-12, 435, 463.

192. ibid., p. 411.

193. B. Ryves, Angliae Ruina, 1447, p. 96.

Northamptonshire were supposed to dwell in the woods and live like drones devoting themselves to thievery and breeding a spawn of vagabonds and rogues.¹⁹⁴ Writing of the area of Rockingham Forest west of Oundle in 1656, Major-General Boteler said that he could apprehend two or three hundred "rogues that were not fit to live" within twenty-four hours.¹⁹⁵ But the woodland regions were not the only parts of Northamptonshire which suffered from lawlessness and exhibited sectarianism during and immediately after the Civil Wars. The pastoral uplands of south-west Northamptonshire were as badly affected by lawlessness as Rockingham, Salcey or Whittlewood Forest. It was around Brackley that one troop of cavalry alone apprehended fifty robbers in the last six months of 1649, and such was the danger of being robbed that it was usual to go armed in the area.¹⁹⁶ Even the environs of Northampton had its 'pack of Knaves' led by one Lynhill who was caught and indicted for murder in March 1650.¹⁹⁷ No sooner was Lynhill's gang destroyed or dispersed than it was replaced by one based on the Blue Boar in the Horsemarket, and it too was supplanted by a third "knot of thieves" in 1652.¹⁹⁸ With such widespread disorder there can be little wonder that the majority of the Northamptonshire justices of the peace considered themselves obliged to stay and execute their office, and to co-operate with the army, when in such circumstances it was the only effective instrument of law and order.

194. Pettit, Royal Forests, pp. 16, 133, 173.

195. T. S. P., IV, pp. 695-6.

196. A Perfect Diurnall, 4 - 11 February, 1650, B. L., E.534.

197. A Perfect Diurnall, 11-18 March, 1650, B. L., E.534.

198. H. Lee's History of Northampton, Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club, XXVI, 1932, p. 93; T. Coldwell's History of Northampton, Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club, XXVIII, 1934, p. 76.

There were other types of discontent with which the Northamptonshire magistrates had to contend, some of them paradoxically from the army. In May 1649, after the Leveller defeat at Burford, a party of Levellers under Captain William Thompson made for Northampton. There the Levellers were sympathetically received and let into the town.¹⁹⁹ That for the next two days Thompson's band of only a dozen men were able to overawe and frighten the civil authorities into submission is indicative of the popular support they were able to attract.²⁰⁰ Three Levellers who had preceded Thompson into the town and had been arrested for circulating the mutineers' leaflets were forcibly released from gaol, and a magazine of arms was likewise seized. Thompson made a speech in the Market square announcing his intention of abolishing all taxes and tithes, and then took their money out of the excise men's tills and scattered it in the streets among the poor. The harvest of 1648 had been the third bad one in a row and the price of wheat in Northampton in 1649 was ten shillings a strike; Thompson's sentiments were therefore popular and several townsmen enlisted with him when he left for Wellingborough. At Sywell, Thompson was caught and killed, and his followers either captured or dispersed.²⁰¹ The Council of State punished the people of Northampton for their disaffection by quartering a regiment of 800 horse on the town with orders to live at their discretion.²⁰² On 28th May 1649 William Lord Fitzwilliam, the purged member for Peterborough wrote to Sir Justinian Isham, a Royalist sympathiser, that it was unwise to

199. Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1647-52, p. 105.

200. A. P. White, The Story of Northampton, 1914, p. 134.

201. A Moderate Intelligence Impartially Communicating Martial Affairs to the Kingdom of England, 24-31 May 1649, B. L., E.557; Thirsk, Agrarian History of England, p. 821; N. R. O., X4478/712.

202. Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1647-52, pp. 106-7.

send any money as the county was full of soldiers who under pretence of seeking for Levellers committed several insolences.²⁰³

The army, the force of law and order, could itself also be the source of disorders not of a political nature. The history of the Civil Wars in Northamptonshire is full of examples of soldiers, whether as individuals or as groups or even as whole regiments, pillaging the communities they were meant to protect. From the very beginning of the war, when the parliamentary army had been concentrated on Northampton, the soldiery had sallied out and about the country taking what they would.²⁰⁴ Perhaps the worst outrage happened at Wellingborough when a party of Lord Grey's men ransacked the town and caused £6,000 worth of damage.²⁰⁵ The ending of the Second Civil War did not put a stop to military misbehaviour. In May 1649 there were soldiers' "insolences" sanctioned by the government; but a year later, on yet another occasion of soldierly misconduct, the government's readiness to discipline unruly troops showed a more typical response to the complaints of the county's governors.²⁰⁶ Sometimes the country folk were so exasperated that the efforts of their governors to obtain redress seemed inadequate, and they took the law into their own hands. In January 1650 the villagers of Potterspury set upon and wounded a straggling soldier.²⁰⁷ In 1652 the town of Northampton was "put into great fear" by some foot

203. N.R.O., I C 266.

204 C.S.P.D., 1641-43, p. 384; H.M.C., VII, p. 441.

205. B. Ryves, Mercurius Resticus: or the countries complaint of the barbarous outrages committed by the sectaries of the late flourishing Kingdom, I, 1646, p. 57.

206. C.S.P.D., 1650, p. 165.

207. A Perfect Diurnall, 7-14 January, 1650, B.L. 533.

soldiers "who committed great disorder at Duston." Many of the townsmen banded together and went and suppressed them.²⁰⁸ But only the government and its better disciplined regiments had the power to keep the worse excesses of the soldiery in check.

Social unrest continued in Northamptonshire throughout the autumn and winter of 1649-50. The bad harvest of 1649, the fourth in succession, was probably instrumental in inducing the people of Wellingborough, like the Surrey Diggers, to plough and sow a common waste ground called Bareshank. The town had a volatile population. In December 1642, Francis Grey, the royalist Clerk of the Peace, had raised the town against the parliamentary committee at Northampton and the riot had only been suppressed after much bloodshed.²⁰⁹ Although the pre-war Vicar of Wellingborough had been a royalist and one of the leaders of the insurrection in 1642 had been the Anglican curate of nearby Harrowden, the town also had a strong Puritan tradition.²¹⁰ The owner of the advowson was the Puritan Lord Brooke, and as the Civil Wars progressed, sectarianism took a hold. In 1646 troopers preaching in Wellingborough were a common sight.²¹¹ It is noteworthy that Wellingborough was Captain Thompson's destination after he left Northampton in May 1649.

In March 1650 the Wellingborough Diggers published a Declaration explaining why they had begun to cultivate the common waste. There were 1169 people in the parish in receipt of alms without any prospect of employment:

208. T. Coldwell's History of Northampton, loc. cit., p. 76.

209. Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., I, pp. 554-6; T. Edwards, Gangraena, I, 1646, p. 215; B. Ryves, Angliae Ruina, 1647, pp. 51-7.

210. H. Barker, A Forgotten Chapter in English Church History, A.D. 1642-1662, Diocese of Peterborough, 1898, pp. 44-46.

211. Bridges, II, p. 151; Edwards, Gangraena, II, p. 173.

"Richmen's hearts are hardened, they will not give us if we beg at their doors. If we steal, the law will end our lives, divers of the poor are starved to death already, and it were better for us that are living to die by the sword than by the famine".²¹² Repression was soon in coming. Late in March four men who had been touring the Digger colonies in the Home Counties and the south-east Midlands, raising funds and recruiting sympathisers, were apprehended at Wellingborough.²¹³ Their arrest would seem to have been followed by a riot which was quickly put down by the arresting magistrate, Thomas Pentlow of neighbouring Wilby, whose swift action was commended by the Council of State.²¹⁴ The township of Wellingborough remained a well of poverty. In 1674 257 of the 508 dwellings in the parish were exempted from the Hearth Tax as being too poor to pay.²¹⁵ The townsfolk, as in so many other places, gave up social revolution and instead sought refuge in radical religion. During the 1650s Wellingborough became a centre for Quakers and other extreme sects.²¹⁶ During 1655 the Presbyterian Vicar of Wellingborough, Thomas Andrews, was frequently

212. Declaration of the Inhabitants of Wellingborough, 1650, B. L. 669, f.15(21).

213. A Perfect Diurnall, 1-8 April, 1650, B L 534.

214. C. S. P. D., 1650, p. 106.

215. P. R. O., E.179/254/14. There is no reason to suppose that there was any improvement in the interval between 1650 and 1674. The 1662 Hearth Tax, which does not give the numbers on the poor rate, reveals that only 191 dwellings were assessed in that year: an indication that, if anything, conditions were worse in the interim. P. R. O., E.179/254/11.

216. W. C. Braithwaite, The First Period of Quakerism, 1912, p. 174; J. Besse, An Abstract of the Sufferings of . . . the Quakers, I, 1733, pp. 176-9, 186-7, 190-1.

disturbed by Quakers while preaching in church.²¹⁷ In 1657 a Wellingborough Quaker, Francis Ellington, was indicted under the Blasphemy Act for saying, "confounded be thee and thy ' God, and I trample thee and thy God under my feet".²¹⁸

How many Northamptonshire men and women would have echoed those sentiments it is impossible to say. Amongst the few Quaker leaders in the county were Thomas Allen of Dingley, William Lovell of Hardingstone and John Mackerness of Finedon (Thingdon) next door to Wellingborough, but they were capable of attracting large numbers of followers.²¹⁹ In 1655 there was Quaker activity in Daventry which was only subdued when the ringleader was gaoled for three months.²²⁰ In May 1656 there were two very large meetings of Quakers: one of several hundreds at Old, and one of 600-800 on William Lovell's property in Hardingstone.²²¹ The Hardingstone congregation was

217. A true testimoney of what was done concerning the servants of the Lord at the assizes at Northampton, 1655, B.L., E.852(21); A.G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, 1934, pp. 11-12.

218. J. Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S., I, 1924, p. 136

219. C.S.P.D., 1655-56, p. 640. The Calendar entry is doubly in error. The date should be 19 December 1658, or possibly 1659, and not 1655, because the entry names Henry Benson as Sheriff, which post he held between 1658 and 1660. Secondly, "William Sowill of Hardingstone" is almost certainly William Lovell. The original document is hard to read, but the Northampton gaoler in October 1658 pointed out that Sowill or Soule was a secretarial error for Lovell: C.S.P.D., 1658-59, p. 164.

220. C.A. Markham, ed., Tracts Relating to Northamptonshire, 3rd Series, 1885, p. 2

221. Mercurius Politicus, 29 May - 5 June 1656, B.L., E.493; C.S.P.D., 1656-7, p. 291.

thought to be so large and so near to Northampton as to be dangerous and Major-General Boteler ordered the militia under Colonel Blake to disperse the crowd. Few Quakers were apparently ever imprisoned; the preacher alone at Old was gaoled; only four from the Hardingstone meeting were seized; while in September 1658 there were only three Quakers in Northampton gaol.²²² But, with police actions like that of May, 1656, stern prison sentences against Quaker leaders, and swingeing fines like the one of £30 on William Lovell in 1658, it is not suprising that most of the active magistracy of the mid-1650s were considered by the Quakers to have "given the power unto the Beast and fought with the Lamb."²²³

Most respectable, propertied men of authority disliked the Quakers, for in the words of John Evelyn they were men "of dangerous principles who show no respect to any man, magistrate or other."²²⁴ As such this is an adequate explanation for the natural repugnance held by men of property for the Quakers and other extreme sects. But, as has been indicated in the case of Wellingborough, radical religion also had roots in urban poverty and social unrest. Furthermore, the one occasion of politically-inspired popular disturbance in the county had taken place at Northampton; and this political dissatisfaction had also probably changed into extreme sectarianism, for Hardingstone with its Quaker meeting, was only a mile outside the town. This is not to say that radicalism, whether political or religious, was limited solely to the towns, but that, apart from Oundle and Peterborough, the urban centres of Northamptonshire were sinks of poverty. Although they were not

222. C. A. Markham, ed., Tracts Relating to Northamptonshire, 3rd Series, p.2
Mercurius Politicus, 29 May - 5 June ,1656, B. L. E.493;

C. S. P. D., 1658-59, p. 148.

223. ibid., pp. 148, 164.

224. E. S. De Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, III, 1955, p. 179, 8 July 1656.

much worse off proportionally than the fielden areas of Northamptonshire, where about one household in three was on the poor rate, and generally better off than the forest districts, where the number could be as high as one in two, the county's towns represented large concentrations of poverty not matched by the less densely populated countryside. It is therefore interesting to point out that most towns had sizeable sectarian congregations in the 1660s, but that towns like Rothwell and Wellingborough, where the numbers on the poor rate were very much higher, had even more sectaries.²²⁵ With their large congregations of indigenous sectaries and as natural meeting points the county's urban centres became the focal points for sectarian and later dissenting activity. The way in which such congregations frequently had recourse, as at Hardingstone and Old, to flock to the countryside in order to avoid the attention of the legal authorities, however, was probably a greater cause of consternation to the country gentry.

The attitude of such men of authority to the Quakers and the sects remained unchanged after the Restoration. Men who refused to take their hats off and made strange faces at magistrates sitting in Session clearly had no respect for authority, and Sir Justinian Isham probably echoed the sentiments of his predecessors when he called them, "that rabble".²²⁶ Nine years later the sectarians' poverty and their obedience "to God and not men" were both uppermost in the thoughts of John Palmer, Archdeacon of Northampton, when he replied to the Archbishop of Canterbury's seven enquiries of 1669.²²⁷

225. P. R. O., E.179/254/14; N. R. O., Baker 708, ff. 74-5.

226. Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham, 1650-1660, N. R. S., XVII, 1955, p. 186.

227. N. R. O., Baker 708, f.76.

The Opponents of the Good Old Cause

It is not the writer's intention in this section to concentrate on the finances of royalist families who paid composition fines for their delinquency during the Civil Wars. Nothing has been found to seriously contradict Professor H. J. Habakkuk's finding that family fortunes in Northamptonshire were only seriously affected by the payment of composition dues, worth rarely more than two years of their landed income, when the family estates were already handicapped by debt.²²⁸ Nor did any resident Royalist peer or gentleman suffer permanent sequestration and have to follow a tortuous trail through trustees and land agents, and finally to an act of the Cavalier Parliament in order to retrieve his lost estates. The one Royalist with private estates sequestered and sold off in Northamptonshire, Sir Lewis Dyves, did suffer financially and had to sell his estate at Brixworth, almost as soon as he had retrieved it, to a fellow Royalist, Sir Justinian Isham in 1661; but Dyves was a non-resident and is only of passing concern.²²⁹ The decline (and rise) of families in wealth and importance in the county was almost always a long term matter, and the subject has been dealt with in the opening chapter on the county community. The subject of this section will be the relationship between the two main opponents of the Good Old Cause, the Royalists and Presbyterians, and the county's new governors.

Relations between Presbyterians and Royalists were not always cordial. Sir John Norwich boxed the ears of the Royalist, Sir Edward Watson's unfortunate servant sent to demand the repayment of a loan.²³⁰ Lord Montagu snubbed Lady Hatton when he refused to act as godfather to her latest child

228. H. J. Habakkuk, *Landowners and the Civil War*, Economic History Review, 2nd Series, XVIII, 1965, pp. 131-148

229. Bodley, MS. Rawl. B.517, ff. 3v-4, N.R.O, I.L.953-960.

230. B. L., Add. 29550, f. 207.

in February 1649.²³¹ Arthur Samwell, brother of Sir Richard, and Lady Hatton conducted a long and drawn out struggle for possession of the Lawn of Benefield which, although in her custody and not that of her exiled husband, had been sequestered.²³² While their attorneys harangued each other in court, in Rockingham Forest the servants of both sides impounded the cattle of their opponent's tenants, and evicted or arrested each other. But such behaviour was no worse than that with which some Royalists treated one another. The secret Royalist, William Dudley of Clapton, had made a loan to Lord Hatton on the mortgage of certain coppice woods in Middleton and Pipewell. Upon Hatton's failure to repay the loan, Dudley "took advantage of the forfeiture and made great waste and spoil of them".²³³ Some notable Royalists had violent quarrels with one another: an altercation between Brian Cockaine and John Mordaunt almost came to the point of a duel, and differences between Sir William Fermor and Sir Charles Compton brought forth slanders and a challenge from one of the Compton's client gentry, John Willoughby of Purston. It is possible that there was more than meets the eye to both of these disputes since Cockaine and Fermor were close cousins, and Compton and Mordaunt were both active Royalist conspirators.²³⁴

By and large, however, relations between Presbyterians and Royalists were relatively cordial. Edward Lord Montagu soon thawed to his sister, Lady Hatton, and intervened with Sir Gilbert Pickering to delay New Model

231. B.L., Add. 29550, f.92 .

232. B.L., Add. 29550, ff. 117, 120, 148, 190, 226; Cal. Comm. Comp., III, p. 1581.

233. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 228.

234. C.S.P.D., 1651, pp. 360, 425; C.S.P.D., 1652-3, pp. 215, 477; C.S.P.D., 1654, p. 224; D.N.B., VI, p. 1235, G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 133.

soldiers being billeted in Hatton House, Holborn.²³⁵ In the winter of 1652-3, Montague joined with the Hattons, Cockaines and the Earl of Rutland to secure the release of their nieces from the guardianship of the aforementioned William Dudley before he married them off for his own profit.²³⁶ William Lord Fitzwilliam was on good enough terms with Sir Justinian Isham to warn him not to send money because the countryside was full of Cromwell's soldiers.²³⁷ Sir John Norwich treated Sir Justinian, another of his creditors, with more respect than he did Sir Edward Watson.²³⁸ However, perhaps the most notable friendly overture made by a Presbyterian defector to a die-hard Royalist was the marriage alliance proposed by Sir Christopher Yelverton between his son and the Earl of Northampton's daughter.²³⁹ In the end the match never took place but thanks to this overture links were forged, and the political alliance between Yelverton's son and heir, Sir Henry, and the Comptons was to prove important in county politics in the late 1650s and 1660s.

The Presbyterian defectors, being mostly men of quality themselves, treated their Royalist counterparts with respect, and at first the men who replaced them in the government of the county were equally deferential. Thomas Brooke of Great Oakley, instructed by the government to search Rockingham Castle, wrote to its owner, Sir Lewis Watson, that although it was his duty to be faithful to the state yet he desired to show himself civil to Watson and thus sent an officer to conduct the search whom he trusted to be polite.²⁴⁰ In May 1650, the Hattons' representatives were "civilly received

235. B.L., Add. 29550, f.121.

236. B.L., Add. 29550, ff. 161, 168, 169, 175, 177, 179, 188; Add. 29558, f.28v.

237. N.R.O., I.C.266.

238. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 171.

239. H.M.C., VIII, Pt. 2, p. 64.

240. J.A. Gotch, Old Halls and Manor Houses of Northamptonshire, 1936, p. 35.

by Mr Peter Whalley," an alderman of Northampton and the new Receiver of Public Revenues in the county. Whalley had strong Presbyterian connections, was closely associated, for instance, with Dr Edward Reynolds, the Rector of Braunston, who gave the oration at his funeral service, and "spent his whole endeavours to settle peace amongst his neighbours," but under government pressure was forced to reject the Hattons' family deeds as evidence and to insist on examining their current rent-rolls.²⁴¹ The Hattons' agents, who included another servant of the new regime, Francis Harvey of Weston Wavell, the Deputy Recorder of Northampton, rebuffed Whalley, refused to comply with his demand and withheld the rent-rolls. But eighteen months later, once government interference had eased, relations between the two sides were much improved. Whalley and his fellow Commissioners for Sequestrations grew so lax as to "make Saturday a playday" and to accept "true copies of rent-rolls" as evidence of the value of the Hattons' estates.²⁴² As Robert Guy made it clear to William Jones, one of the Hattons' foresters, when he ordered a stay of their rents in order to pay their composition debts, the commissioners only ever acted harshly when under orders from London, "for they had undergone much displeasure from above for not having done anymore upon the estate".²⁴³ Once government pressure on the commissioners was again relaxed, they returned to treating Lady Hatton "with all the favour they could do her honour".²⁴⁴

241. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 119; C.S.P.D., 1657-8, p. 170; Borough Records, II, pp. 496, 552; E. Reynolds, Death's Advantage, opened in a sermon . . . preached . . . at the funeral of Peter Whalley esq., 1657, B.L., E.192(6).

242. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 148.

243. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 153.

244. B.L., Add., 29550, f. 164.

Such co-operation came to an end with Penruddock's Rising in March, 1655, and the appointment of William Boteler as Major-General of Northamptonshire. His opinion of the commissioners for assessing the Decimation Tax was that they "were not very hearty in the work... Two or three of the most active gentlemen were in London and Colonel Blake cannot be here at this time. And considered with the nature of the work, it made some that did meet a little timorous and averse to the business" of assessing the Royalists' estates.²⁴⁵ The effect of Boteler's appointment was to end the compliant collusion between the more deferential of the government officers and the Royalists, and to stiffen the resolve of the extremists. Taking his cue from Boteler, who had treated Lady Hatton's attorney roughly and charged him with being a delinquent in arms (not without some justice) in order to prevent him appearing for his mistress, John Maunsell ruled that the Hattons had to pay tax on any rent paid directly to their creditors. Daunted by such behaviour Peter Whalley declined to attend a private meeting asked for by the Hattons' steward, George Jeffreys, and Thomas Brook turned down a similar request and "professed all power to be in the Major-General's hands".²⁴⁶

Boteler's treatment of other Royalists was just as arrogant and brusque as his treatment of the Hattons. It was rumoured amongst the Royalists that he had once been a "broken attorney's clerk" and he was said to behave like a "proud, insolent, domineering Turkish Bashaw".²⁴⁷ In May, 1655, Sir Justinian Isham and many others of our county" including the

245. T.S.P., IV, p. 179

246. B.L., Add. 29550, f. 237.

247. Walker, Sufferings of the Clergy, p. 91.

Earl of Northampton, a son of Lord Brudenell's and probably most or all of the 46 "Suspected Persons from Northamptonshire" listed for the Council of State, were imprisoned in St James's Palace.²⁴⁸ In the summer of 1658, Isham and other Royalist gentlemen of the county, including Lords Brudenell and Cullen, were again put into gaol by Boteler, this time at Northampton.²⁴⁹ Although Isham referred to the peaceable condition of the county and, like his fellow inmates, proclaimed his innocence on both occasions, Boteler's arbitrary actions were excusable on the grounds of public order, but his manners were not. He called one unnamed Northamptonshire person of quality, for instance, "Sirrah", and threatened to make that man eat his sword unless he proclaimed Charles Stuart a traitor.²⁵⁰

Boteler's efforts to exact security from the Royalist party for its peaceable behaviour showed the same rude impatience. When the Royalists of the county were gathered together for the purpose of a lecture on the justice of the Decimation Tax, the Earl of Northampton was called to enter into a bond for good behaviour that had no time-limit. The Earl naturally protested that such a bond would be a perpetual encumbrance on his estate and would prevent him raising any more money by loan or mortgage. Boteler balked at this reasonable objection in unmistakeable terms: on the grounds that the Earl's protest would encourage other recalcitrant Cavaliers, he imprisoned him.²⁵¹ Unchecked by the Protector's ruling that the Earl needed to give a

248. G. Warner, ed., The Nicholas Papers, Camden Society, 3rd Series, LVII, III, 1897, p. 8; N R Q, I C 358; B L, Add. 34013, ff. 21-2; Isham, Duppa-Isham Correspondence, p. 114.

249. N R Q, I C 495-62; F. P. and M. M. Verney, eds., The Verney Memoirs, II, 1907, p. 125.

250. Warner, ed., Nicholas Papers, III, pp. 261-2.

251. T S P, IV, pp. 189-90; C S P D, 1655-6, pp. 70, 154.

bond for only one year, Boteler continued to be as overbearing as ever. He subjected Lady Hatton to a tirade of verbal abuse and accused her and her husband of treason.²⁵² He stepped into the dispute between the executors of Sir Thomas Hatton and his tenant, Robert Manley over the unpaid arrears of rent for the manor of Holdenby. Boteler prevented the sheriff distraining Manley's sheep and cattle, seized the estate and imprisoned a shepherd who had sold stock for Manley until he agreed to deposit the money in Captain Baynes' house in Holdenby, from where it was then forcibly removed.²⁵³

Boteler did not remain immune from criticism. Even Cromwell's son, Henry thought that it was a pity his father had to employ such as Boteler rather than others of "better principles and parts".²⁵⁴ The rule of the Major-Generals exacerbated anti-government and particularly anti-military feeling not only amongst the Royalists but also in the country at large. Sir Justinian Isham naturally held a jaundiced view of the military's "levelling peitions" to Richard Cromwell's parliament, but others like the Presbyterian, Richard Knightley, a member for Northamptonshire in that parliament, were also similarly antagonised.²⁵⁵ Anti-military sentiment was widespread in the largely Presbyterian parliament of 1659; William Boteler's arbitrary proceedings over Sir Thomas Hatton's estate were taken up and severely criticised and the subsequent debate became the occasion for a more general

252. B L, Add. 29500, f. 237.

253. J. T. Rutt, ed., The Diary of Thomas Burton esq., Member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell from 1656 to 1659, IV, 1828, pp. 403-4; T S P, VII, p. 653.

254. Sir Charles Firth, Regimental History of Cromwell's Army, Oxford 1940, I, p. 73.

255. N R O, I G 455; State Papers Collected by Edward, Earl of Clarendon, III, Oxford, 1786, p. 433.

attack on Boteler and the whole system of Major-Generalships.²⁵⁶ "This gentleman has robbed me and keeps my goods to this day" charged one member, and another, Lord Falkland, said that Boteler's actions were cried out against all over Northamptonshire and turned parliament's friends into Cavaliers. In its dislike of military rule parliament disregarded Boteler's defence that he was acting under the orders of his military superiors and came close to impeaching him, but eventually settled for removing him from the Commission of the Peace.²⁵⁷ Boteler's ascendancy was now at its end: in May, 1659 he was discharged from his regiment, and when he was proposed as Quartermaster-General in July, another relation to the Rump parliament of his proceedings in Northamptonshire was enough for his nomination to be defeated.²⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter Boteler re-emerged as the commander of a troop of horse in Northamptonshire and a commissioner for the militia of the county, but this was only because of his good standing with the army officers who had forced Richard Cromwell to dismiss his parliament.²⁵⁹ At this time another of the county's new governors, Sir Gilbert Pickering, also put his trust in the army and in doing so lost any support he had in the country.²⁶⁰ When the junta finally collapsed at the end of 1659, the foundations of Boteler's and Pickering's power also crumbled.

256. G.Davies, *The Election of Richard Cromwell's Parliament*, English Historical Review, LXIII, 1948, p. 488.

257. Rutt, ed., Diary of Thomas Burton, IV, pp. 403-12, 429; T S P, VII, p. 653; C J, VII, p. 636.

258. C S P D., 1658-9, p. 384; C J, VII, pp. 704, 710.

259. C S P D., 1659-60, pp. 83, 112, 566; Acts and Ord., II, p. 1483; M Ashley, Cromwell's Generals, 1954, p. 196.

260. T S P, VII, pp. 495-6; Sir Richard Baker, The History of the King's of England, 1674, p. 657.

In antagonising the Presbyterians by his high-handed methods Boteler alienated that party which had the greatest support in Northamptonshire and, as far as the county was concerned, was the most successful of the opposition groups.²⁶¹ At the beginning of the 1650s there had been some concerted planning between the Presbyterians and Royalists. In a far-reaching conspiracy to seize the town of Northampton, the names of the Royalists, Richard Kynnesman, Edward Griffin, Sir William Fermor, Sir William Fleetwood, and Sir Charles Compton were linked in 1651 with the Presbyterians, Edward Lord Montagu, Sir John Norwich, John Barnard and the Presbyterian divine, Thomas Ball of Northampton.²⁶² As most of these had close associations with the county town, and as Ball was a staunch opponent of the practice of intruding godly but unordained ministers into church livings, it is not surprising that the government took the revelations of the plot seriously enough to disarm the town of Northampton.²⁶³ For a while it was even rumoured that there would be a mass arrest and imprisonment of all disaffected persons.²⁶⁴

This plot was the last ostensible liaison between Presbyterians and Royalists. After its discovery the county's Presbyterian leaders kept well away from the doomed conspiracies of the Northamptonshire Royalists. The Royalists themselves were frustrated in one abortive rising after another. In 1655, the Council of State was so well forewarned of Royalist plots in

261. Cal. Clar. S. P., IV, p. 493.

262. H. M. C., XIII, pp. 581, 585.

263. T. Ball, Pastorum Propagnaculum, Or, the Pulpit's Patronage against the Force of Unordained Usurpation and Invasion, 1656, B. L., E.863(10); C. S. P. D., 1651, p. 42 .

264. N. R. O., I. C. 298.

Northamptonshire at the time of Penruddock's rebellion, that Oliver Cromwell wrote to the Royalist poet and plotter, Edmund Waller, in order to frighten him into leaving Northampton.²⁶⁵ When the Royalists eventually rose in the "dis affected corner" around Oundle in April, 1655, Colonel Blake was able to disperse them with merely sixty troopers.²⁶⁶ Royalist activities in the county in 1658 were so ineffective that their only consequence was to sweep the party's leaders, supporters and even inactive sympathisers into gaol.²⁶⁷ By the time of Booth's rising in Cheshire in the summer of 1659, and long before the news had reached them that Charles Stuart had called off the projected national rebellion to coincide with it, the Earl of Northampton and his brother, Sir Charles Compton, had decided to abandon the rising planned for Northamptonshire. Although they offered as an excuse the reason that the harvest was soon due it is clear that they were suspicious of what they thought to be the "totally Presbyterian" nature of the abortive rebellion. Such was the Comptons' lack of trust in their fellow conspirators that they considered them "vain, rash and giddy".²⁶⁸ But in all probability, what had made up the Comptons' minds for them was that their fellow Royalists, like Sir Justinian Isham, had ignored their letters, full of dark injunctions to secrecy, calling for a rendezvous at Wollaston.²⁶⁹ When the government

265. Notes and Queries, 2nd Series, V, p. 2 .

266. C.S.P.D., 1655, p. 149; N.N.and Q., III, p. 63; V.C.H., Northants., III, p.88.

267. N.R.O., I.C.459-62.

268. M.Coate, ed., Letter Book of John Viscount Mordaunt, 1658-1660, Camden Society, 3rd Series, LXIX, 1945, p. 31.

269. ibid., pp. 31, 67; Isham, Duppa-Isham Correspondence, pp. 165-6.

ordered the arrest of Sir Charles Compton, Sir William Wilmer and the latest recruit to the Royalist cause, Sir Christopher Yelverton's son, Henry, the order was in a sense only a formality, for the Royalist threat in Northamptonshire had ceased to exist.²⁷⁰ Either Royalism had degenerated into drunken, futile gestures like Robert Clarke's verbal and physical assault on the minister of Potterspury for praying for the Protector, or it had lapsed into quietism.²⁷¹

The only effective opposition given to the Protectorate came from the Presbyterian party, mainly because the Presbyterians were prepared to work to some extent within, and were acceptable to, the "revolutionary settlement". Important Presbyterian county figures, like Edward Lord Montagu, although out of favour with the Protectorate, maintained their social prestige and their local influence was enough to keep their protégés safe from the régime's agents. Montague was able to prevent Thomas Brooke and John Browne from ejecting his appointees to the livings of Kingsthorpe and Upper Isham, Thomas Hill and Moses Hodges, for their refusal to take the Engagement Oath.²⁷²

The strength of the Presbyterians in the county became increasingly clear in the parliamentary elections of the Interregnum. In 1654 the county elected three Presbyterians, John Crewe, Sir John Dryden and Sir John Norwich as well as Sir Gilbert Pickering, John Cleypole and Thomas Brooke.²⁷³ Northampton returned a former mayor and county sequestrator with Presbyterian leanings,

270. C.S.P.D., 1659-60, p. 83.

271. Wake, Quarter Sessions Records, pp. 159-61.

272. H.M.C, XIV, p. 309; Matthews, Walker Revised, p. 277.

273. The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England . . . by several hands, XX, p. 301.

Peter Whalley.²⁷⁴ In Peterborough the Royalist, Humphrey Orme, exercised his considerable local influence to be elected, but to no avail, for he was unseated by the government and replaced by the more amenable Colonel Alexander Blake.²⁷⁵

The Protectorate learnt its lesson from the parliament of 1654, and efforts were made in Northamptonshire, as in Herefordshire and elsewhere, to secure the return of government supporters more by intimidation than persuasion to the 1656 parliament.²⁷⁶ Although the Presbyterians, led by Colonel Henry Benson tried to elect Richard Knightley and others of their party, they were shouted down by Major-General Boteler's troopers who had surrounded the hustings. The freeholders' votes were brushed aside by the threat of force, and Boteler's nominations were elected instead: Sir Gilbert Pickering, John Lord Cleypole, James Langham, Thomas Crewe, Alexander Blake, Francis St John, Francis Harvey and Boteler himself.²⁷⁷ Even so, as events turned out in 1660, Boteler may have overestimated the loyalty of Crewe, Harvey and Langham, who was yet another close associate of the Presbyterian (but later Anglican Bishop), Dr Edward Reynolds.²⁷⁸

The Presbyterian reaction in the county was hostile, and two years later, in 1658, the Presbyterian sheriff, Sir Edward Nicholls refused to sign the

274. Borough Records, II, p. 496.

275. N, N, and Q, II, p. 85; III, pp. 31. 402.

276. H. M. C., XIV, p. 208.

277. Bridges, II, p. 383.

278. E. Reynolds, The Church's Triumph over Death . . . a sermon preached . . . at the funeral of Lady Langham, 1662, B L, 1417.d.8; D. Lacey, Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689, 1969, p. 417.

proclamation of Richard Cromwell as Protector.²⁷⁹ At the very end of the year the county returned two Presbyterians, Philip Holman and Richard Knightley as Knights of the Shire to Richard Cromwell's parliament - the parliament that did so much to humble William Boteler.²⁸⁰ Brackley returned two gentlemen of doubtful loyalty, Thomas Crewe and William Lisle, and Northampton returned the Presbyterian, James Langham, and a possible Presbyterian, Francis Harvey. In Higham Ferrers, Major-General Boteler was unable to prevent the double return of a James Nutley and a Royalist sympathiser, James Suckley, and the government was able to unseat Suckley only because the borough was supposed to return just one member and Suckley had the good grace to retire.²⁸¹ In Peterborough alone was the Protectorate able to secure the return of the candidates, Alexander Blake and Francis St. John, the son of Oliver St. John.

Clearly by the end of the 1650s the Presbyterians were the most powerful party in Northamptonshire.²⁸² As will be seen, it was they who took the lead and won the county first of all for the Rump, then the Long Parliament and finally Charles II.

279. N.R.C., X.4478.

280. Returns of Members of Parliament, I, 1879, p. 509.

281. Bodley, MS. Rawl. A. 63, ff. 236-7, 261; C. J., VII, p. 595.

282. C.S.P.D., 1660-1, p.317.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESTORATIONTHE COUNTY AND THE RETURN OF THE RUMP PARLIAMENT

On the 26th of December, 1659 the remnants of the Rump Parliament reassembled at Westminster, the result of failure upon failure to settle the English nation. The prevailing mood of uncertainty which caused the Rumpers to go furtively by the backstreets on their way to retake their seats was reflected in Northamptonshire and the East Midlands by the stealthy seizure of Coventry by a party of horse under Sir John Norwich and Colonel Francis Hacker just two days later. The baronet of Brampton had acted almost certainly without any official authority¹ on behalf of, and probably not without the cognizance of, the survivors of the purged Long Parliament: loyalty which had caused his dismissal from all the Northamptonshire Commissions in 1653.² His letter to the Speaker, William Lenthall, on 29th December implies he was not acting on his own initiative.³ The date of the letter alone is enough to create the suspicion of some preliminary and concerted planning; especially as it mentions the securing of Belvoir and Warwick and directions about the raising of forces in five other Midland counties besides Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. In Coventry, Norwich and Hacker proceeded to raise a regiment of foot and two troops of horse. Leaving them as a garrison under the command of Major Beake, the ex-member for Coventry, Norwich departed for Northampton early in the New Year with 150 horse⁴ - probably

1. H.M.C., Rep. XIII, Pt I, p. 689; H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 311.

2. P.R.O., C. 193/13/4.

3. H.M.C., Rep. XIII, Pt. I, p. 689.

4. Cal. Clar. S. P., IV, p. 512.

his original contingent sixty of them he may have raised at his own charge.⁵

The county proved receptively disposed. Writing to Edward Hyde on 23rd December 1659, Christopher Hatton thought that many gentry were ready to serve even the King, although the Presbyterians were of the greatest power in the county.⁶ Sir John Norwich was a moderate, who had nevertheless conformed to the Rump until 1653, but was by 1659 possibly a wavering Presbyterian: witness his institution of Richard Cumberland as Rector of Brampton in that year.⁷ He was still, however, a leading member of the county's old guard of Civil War Parliamentarians and a representative of Presbyterian opinion in the county. He was joined in Northampton by the Sheriff, Colonel Henry Benson of Charwelton.⁸ Benson had been suspected of aiding the Royalist garrison in Banbury during the Civil War and had certainly continued to pay rent direct to one of his landlords, the Papist-in-arms, Sir Antony Morgan of Heyford, against Parliament's orders.⁹ He had revealed his feelings about the Cromwellian régime by opposing the "forced election" on Kettering Heath in 1656.¹⁰ None the less he had been pricked as Sheriff in 1658 and had not been replaced in November 1659. From

5. Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, p. 493

6. C.S.P.D., 1660-61, p. 317.

7. Bridges, II, p. 238.

8. Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, p. 512.

9. Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., II, pp. 893, 1078, 1174.

10. Bridges, II, p. 383. The late Miss Joan Wake identified Colonel Benson with Henry's brother, George of Dodford, in Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S., I, 1924, p. 251. The only reference known to the present writer, however, which allows an identification to be made gives the title, Colonel, to the High Sheriff in 1660, Henry Benson: Address of the County of Northampton to General Monck, 1660, B.L., C.11.(69).

Northampton Norwich and Benson issued a summons inviting the gentry of the county to meet them at Kettering about 3rd January, in order, the Earl of Exeter informed Lord Montagu, "to discourse what is best done in this juncture of time for the good of the nation."¹¹ The Earl of Exeter, was "unwilling to appear on any public account," and distrusting Norwich's associate, Colonel Hacker, continued to behave with considerable circumspection. He apparently persuaded his correspondent, Lord Montagu of Boughton, to do the same.¹²

Other gentlemen were more responsive. Amongst them was a group of Royalist sympathisers in touch with the exiled Court through Dr. Barwick, the chaplain to the now dead Bishop of Durham, and led by Sir Henry Yelverton of Easton Mauduit, the son of the secluded M. P. for Bossiney in Cornwall, Sir Christopher Yelverton. Sir Henry, who had inherited Easton in 1654 had been born in 1633 and had thus been too young to fight in the Civil War.¹³ He had been converted from his family's ^{earlier} Presbyterianism to Anglican and Royalist principles by Thomas Morton, Bishop of Durham, who had been given shelter by his father in 1652 and continued to remain under the Yelverton roof until his death in 1659.¹⁴ The love and respect for Bishop Morton Bridges attributes to Yelverton can be seen by his preparedness to risk Morton's planned consecration at Easton of young bishops to continue the succession.¹⁵

11. Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, p. 512; H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 311.

12. Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. C. 210, f. 41.

13. Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, pp. 496, 501-2.

14. Sir Gyles Isham, The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham, 1650-1660, N.R.S., IVII, 1951, p. 182.

15. Bridges, II, p. 168; H. Barber, A Forgotten Chapter in English Church History, A.D. 1642-1662, Diocese of Peterborough, 1898, p. 57.

Since December, Yelverton and his friends had been preparing the ground for the re-establishment of rule from Parliament. The news of Monck's march south, so far from being viewed with apprehension seems to have been welcomed as a necessary intervention by the one force left for stability remaining in the confused state of English politics. The Earl of Manchester, another survivor of the Presbyterian old guard, connected with the brazenly Royalist Earl of Northampton, through the latter's agent, Mr. Braye,¹⁶ produced the design of using the opportunity of Monck's likely route of march, taking him through Northamptonshire to focus and give force of expression to political opinion in the county by means of raising a petition to the general.¹⁷ Spurred on by reports from the Earl of Manchester of Lincolnshire's success in collecting signatures for their own petition, Yelverton and Norwich mobilised all the support they could muster in the business of gathering subscriptions. Norwich, agreeing with Lord Manchester that the success of the enterprise depended on the number of subscribers, was adamant that every gentleman, minister, freeholder, and inhabitant of the county should sign the petition.¹⁸ Fortunately, neither signatures nor the helpers to gather them were lacking. Through his cousin, the Reverend John Palmer of Ecton, Yelverton was able to use churchmen of long and good standing in the county like Daniel Cawdry, the rector of Great Billing since 1625, and Moses Hodges, rector of Isham since 1637, to promote the petition.¹⁹ Gentlemen volunteered to disperse the petition around their parts of the county; amongst them Thomas Samwell of Upton and Gayton,

16. Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, p. 527.

17. Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett, C. 210, f.33 .

18. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. C. 210, ff. 33, 37.

19. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. C. 210, ff. 33, 41; Bridges, I, p. 407;

II, p. 109.

Sir Edward Nicholls of Faxton, the elder brother of John Viscount Mordaunt's correspondent, Francis, and Hugh Cholmondley, Yelverton's cousin and brother-in-law of the Earl of Northampton, who had come down from Whitby in Yorkshire to further the business.²⁰ Even Lord Montagu promoted it, although "being a Lord" he felt he was "not fit to sign it himself".²¹ The response to such effort was most encouraging. Sir John Norwich claimed to have gathered "6,000 hands, having all from 16 to 60".²² The county was virtually unanimous in its support; and in the county town the petition passed with no opposition, the Mayor alone refusing to sign and he "only for fear of his lands".²³ When the remonstrance was finally handed to General Monck by Colonel Benson on 25 January it was accompanied by over 100 gentlemen of Northamptonshire and signed by "above 10,000 hands and three times as many more whose names there wanted time to engross".²⁴

This vast effort expended in gathering 40,000 signatures almost went to waste when Norwich was so discouraged by the rebuff which the City of London's emissaries met with in Market Harborough that he was prepared to abandon the venture. A little discreet encouragement, however, from Monck's camp bolstered his courage sufficiently to proceed with the presentation.²⁵

-
20. M. Coate, ed., The Letter Book of John, Viscount Mordaunt, Camden 3rd Series, LXIX, 1945, p. 7; Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. c. 210, ff. 33, 37, 41.
21. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. c. 210, f. 41.
22. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. c. 210, f. 37.
23. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. c. 210, f. 37.
24. Bulstrode Whitelocke, Memorials of English Affairs, IV, 1853, p. 391; Address of the County of Northamptonshire to General Monck, B.L., c.11. (69).
25. Sir Richard Baker, The History of the Kings of England, 1674, p. 703.

The demands made in the address are interesting as they reveal the political climate of the county after eleven years of minority rule from London. Of course, the articles do not differ markedly from those of the many other petitions handed to Monck from various counties at this time; but Sir Richard Baker does say that the Northamptonshire petition formed the pattern for all the other counties on the route to London, and his opinion is backed by an inference to the same effect made by Bulstrode Whitelocke.²⁶ Only Suffolk, by the force of its language, and Devon in its demand for the return of monarchical government, stand out from all the others.²⁷ Nor can the views expressed be said to be representative of the whole country. Many of the people who signed were probably dragooned by their social superiors or persuaded against their better judgement by the politically active segment of county society who drafted the document. Of these politicians, many regarded their own demands as expedient short term aims to further their long term ambitions. The Earl of Manchester, the area's leading Presbyterian peer and a perceptive politician certainly believed that a confirmation of land sales made to army officers was highly necessary in order to secure the army's support for the King's recall. It was at his behest, and much against the advice of Dr. Barwick who feared "the shoe was most likely to pinch" that the Northamptonshire gentry included a request "for the confirmation of sales to please the army".²⁸ Nevertheless the demands made in the petition do show a consensus of opinion in the county in the opening months of 1660. Forty-thousand unwilling or hesitant signatures could not have been gathered in the space of three weeks: a feat which itself indicates a high degree of organisation on behalf of the

26. ibid., p.703; Bulstrode Whitelocke, op. cit., IV, p. 391.

27. David Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, 1967, p. 20.

28. State Papers Collected by Edward, Earl of Clarendon, III, 1786, p. 663.

petitions promoters.²⁹

The inhabitants of Northamptonshire expressed the following requests in their petition.³⁰ They wanted all the secluded Members of Parliament to be re-admitted and any empty seats filled. They believed that no free born Englishman should have taxes levied on him without the consent of the whole Parliament and Parliament should assert and defend the principles over which it went to war in 1642. They asked that the true Protestant religion (a loose term, indicating that in one area there was no real consensus) may be professed and all "Heresies and Schisms discountenanced and suppressed". From fear of the power of a standing army and an ingrained belief that common soldiery were little better than mercenaries, the propertied men of Northamptonshire offered the common soldiery a bribe. The army would be paid as long as it acquiesced in the judgement of a "Free and Full Parliament". Provided they did so, soldiers who had purchased lands from Parliament could continue to enjoy their bargains. The political attitudes of the country had barely changed since 1642.

At the same time he was raising the petition, Sir John Norwich, still without any commissioned authority was settling the militia. Not until mid-January did he ask for a commission for the government of Northamptonshire.³¹ On 23rd January the Council of State sent him a letter,³² in which he was styled Colonel Sir John Norwich, thanking him for his fidelity to the Parliament and guaranteeing payment to the militia troops of horse who had similarly remained faithful to the service. Not one of the militia captains

29. N.N. and Q., I, p. 99.

30. Address of the County of Northampton to General Monck, 27 January, 1659/60, B.L. c.11.(69).

31. Cal. Clar. S.P., Vol. IV, p. 532.

32. C.S.P.D., 1659-60, pp. 319-320.

they mention had been an officer in any troop the previous August.³³ As one of them was a Charles Norwich (presumably the baronet's third son) the inference to be drawn would seem to be that they were Sir John's appointees and he had purged the militia of William Boteler's, Alexander Balke's and William Rainsborough's protégés.³⁴ Sir John's actions were underlined by the appointments of Militia Commissioners in the Act of 12th March 1660. Although neither Blake nor Rainsborough were excluded, the ten or so Army supporters were swamped by 49 others. Of these, fifteen can be said to belong to moderate Presbyterian opinion and sixteen to the crypto-royalist camp. They were further outweighed by the influential presence of the Earl of Exeter and the well-represented and powerful Montagu clan.³⁵

In the matter of the other organs of local government no-one was prepared to be quite so ruthless rooting out the supporters of the Good Old Cause. On the contrary, the Commission of the Peace and the Committee for Assessment were expanded to comprehend more varied shades of political opinion. Those whose dissent was harmless but whose participation was required to give credibility and executive efficiency to the Committee of Assessment had rarely been excluded from membership. Disaffected but not rabidly hostile critics of the government such as Richard Knightley, Edward Lord Montagu, John Crewe and John Cartwright had kept their positions on this Committee between 1653 and 1660.³⁶ Nevertheless the Committee of 26th

33. C. J. Vol VII, p. 573.

34. Rev. Henry Isham Longden, ed., The Visitation of the County of Northampton in the Year 1681, Harleian Society Publication, LXXXVII, 1935, p. 156.

35. Acts and Ord., II, p. 1438.

36. Acts and Ord., II, passim.

January 1660 was increased, from an average figure of fifty, to sixty-five members. Amongst them were men of more diverse political persuasions than had hitherto been allowed to participate. Old Parliamentarians like John, Earl of Exeter, and Sir John Norwich were reinstated amongst the "Rumpers" and those who were willing to collaborate who still formed the bulk of the committee. No apparent attempt was made to remove such supporters of the Protectorate as John Maunsell and John Browne of Kettering. Nor were the ousted militia officers, Colonel Alexander Blake and Captain John Shephard, removed. Sir Gilbert Pickering, described as a "favourer and abettor of the Army", kept his place.³⁷ The discreet but probably not unsuspected, Royalist sympathisers, James Langham, Richard Rainsford and Humphrey Orme of Peterborough were also present.³⁸ Only those who had remained overtly attached to the exiled Stuart monarchy were missing to complete the full spectrum of political opinion in the county. One adherent of Cromwell was also conspicuous by his absence, the erstwhile Major-General, William Boteler; but this is perhaps not surprising considering the opprobrium he brought on himself during his Major-Generalship.

He did however, keep his place on the more important Commission of the Peace. Here again, expansion was the keynote. After several deletions, the

37. Sir Richard Baker, op. cit., p. 657.

38. Langham had been in communication with Christopher Hatton since 1656: H.M.C., I, p. 25, B.L. Add., 29,550 and 29,551, passim.; Rainsford was a known loyalist: N.N. and Q., IV, p. 69; Orme, although initially a Parliamentarian, had been refused his seat in the Parliament of 1654-5 for his Royalist leanings: Acts and Ord., II, pp. 472 and 670; N.N. and Q., III, p. 31.

Commission of the Peace of 1657, besides dignitaries, had numbered thirty-two. In early March, 1660 this number was increased to forty-seven.³⁹ The promotions followed much the same pattern as those to the Commission of Assessment. The "collaborationists" stayed; as did Rumpers like Edward Harby and faithful supporters of the Protectorate like Sir Gilbert Pickering and John Cleypole. Less important members of the last group, however, such as Maunsell, Ward, Brown, Blake and Baynes were displaced from the Quorum: a social snub intended to indicate they were no longer part of the ruling élite. The Old Parliamentarians, Edward Lord Montagu, Sir John Norwich, John Crewe and Robert Andrewes were reinstated along with more recent opponents of the Protectorate such as Oliver St John and Richard Samwell. The crypto-Royalists were represented by Yelverton, Langham, Rainsford and John Robinson, alderman of London, Lords of the manor of Grafton Underwood since 1652 and royalist conspirator.⁴⁰ With these re-appeared a sprinkling of names not seen in the Commission since 1642. The pre-Civil War county élite, in its token representatives Thomas Elmes and Maurice Tresham, was beginning to re-assert itself. As on the Commission of Assessment only the ostentatious royalists and the associates of "The Sealed Knot" were left out

39. "A Perfect List of all such Persons as by Commission under the Great Seal of England are now confirmed to be Custos Rotulorum, Justices of Oyer and Terminer, Justices of the Peace and Quorum, and Justices of the Peace. In the Several Counties, Cityes, Towns and Liberties within England and Wales. As they were approved of and allowed by the late Parliament after the readmission of the secluded Members. Printed by Thomas Leach, London, 1660.

40. N.P. and P., III, pp. 89-90.

as a group. There is one individual whose curious omission should be mentioned: the Earl of Exeter. It may be that Norwich remembered his lukewarm response to the summons to Kettering and repaid him with this snub; but it is more likely that the Earl had his hands full settling the militia. He was far too powerful a figure to be antagonized by Norwich, whose influence was drawn only from time and circumstance.

Events in London, meanwhile, were moving swiftly. Amongst the readmitted members of the Long Parliament were two of the most influential Northamptonshire gentry, Richard Knightley and John Crewe. Both had consistently opposed successive governments since 1648 and were now rewarded with places on the Council of State.⁴¹ They were joined by another secluded member, Lord Chief Justice Oliver St. John. The St. John family interest was still growing in the county; but his recently built, thirty-five hearth, residence at Longthorp near Peterborough was already significant of his influence in that city.⁴² These three were leaders of Presbyterian opinion in the county - the persuasion Christopher Hatton considered the strongest in Northamptonshire. All of them were probably in London throughout the winter and spring of 1660. Crewe, indeed, had been living in Lincoln's Inn Fields for some time.⁴³ Their absence from the county would not have prevented them throwing the considerable interest of their wide-ranging family connections and personal prestige behind Norwich's petition. There can be no doubt that they were working for the return of the King in parliament, as is evident from the rewards they received from Charles Stuart after his coronation.

41. Acts and Ord., II, p. 1419.

42. V.C.H. Northants., II, p. 458.

43. R. Latham and W. Matthews, eds., The Diary of Samuel Pepys, I, 1970, p. 2.

In the strong representation of the Montagu family on the Commissions of the Peace and the Militia may be seen some of the influence of Crewe and his son-in-law, Edward Montagu, the future Earl of Sandwich. Crewe, at least in part, received his barony because of his application of local influence.⁴⁴ Anthony Wood thought little of his efforts and uncharitably ascribed them to a lack of religious or political principle; but Wood's views were not surprising in view of his jealousy of Nathaniel Crewe, John's fourth son. Samuel Pepys on the other hand, an equally prejudiced judge of character, for his patron was Edward Montagu, held Crewe in high regard. The last word should be left with the personally impartial Clarendon, who called him a man of "the greatest moderation".⁴⁵

Others not of Presbyterian persuasion and perhaps of less moderation were also in London. On the 1st of March, Sir Henry Yelverton, accompanied by John Holman and John Crewe's eldest son, Thomas, handed a letter to General Monck at Whitehall, "subscribed by above fifty of the most considerable gentlemen in the county".⁴⁶ This address called for the restoration of the King and the "restitution of religion" "without effusion of blood".⁴⁷ The individuals who subscribed to it were Presbyterian

44. D.N.B., XIII, p. 79.

45. A. Clarke, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by himself, II, 1892, p. 16; Latham and Mathews, op. cit., I, passim; W. Dunn Macray, Clarendon's History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, III, 1888, p. 529.

46. The Second Adresse from the Gentlemen of the County of Northampton, To his Excellency the Lord General Monck, in Anon., Northamptonshire Poll Books and Election Pamphlets, no place or date of publication, p. 36.

47. P.R.O., S.P. 29/1, f. 71.

and Anglican Royalists in almost equal proportions. Its claim, however, that they were fifty considerable gentlemen of Northamptonshire ^{was} somewhat exaggerated because many families were doubly or even trebly represented. It included the Royalist families of Compton, Fane, Hatton, Griffin, Dove, Downhall, Kynnesman, Kirkham, Orme, Stafford and Tresham and the Presbyterians Montagu, Norwich, St John and many individuals. But despite backing from Royalists and Presbyterians alike it is to whose care ^{the address} ~~that~~ was entrusted ^{that} attention should be paid. All three were young and more or less untainted by the events of the previous twenty years: being young they also had their eyes fixed on their future careers. What is more, not one of them showed in their later lives any deep attachment to Presbyterianism. Yelverton was already a rigid Anglican, and Holman became a "melancholy and besotted convert" and Catholic exile.⁴⁸ Crewe's opinions are harder to judge but it is worth noting that after the Restoration he was held in higher esteem than his Presbyterian father, for he received his rewards from the Crown for promoting the return of the King long before his father did. Clearly the Royalist faction, coupled with an obvious youthful opportunism, was already preparing to capitalise on Presbyterian uncertainty and force the political pace.⁴⁹

48. Clarke, ed., Wood's Life and Times, I, p. 276.

49. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, III, p. 533, says that John Crewe was ennobled on 20 April, 1661 and that his son was knighted on 24 December 1660. W. Shaw, ed., The Knights of England: A complete Record, II, 1906, p. 231, however says that Thomas was knighted on 26 September, 1660.

The Elections to the Convention Parliament

The emergence of overt Royalism became apparent during the elections to the Convention Parliament in the first week of April, 1660, when John Crewe and Sir Henry Yelverton were returned as Knights of the Shire. The manner of their election is unknown, but it is likely that they stood on a single ticket, since Yelverton had the support of the Earl of Manchester and Lord Montagu of Boughton.⁵⁰ The Montagu interest would surely not have been forthcoming for an opponent of Edward Montagu's father-in-law and associate on the Council of State. Yelverton in any case had not the financial resources to risk a contested election.⁵¹ As he confided to John Palmer, had it not been for the open encouragement of Sir Samuel Danvers and Henry Howard of Winwick he might not have stood at all. He seems indeed, to have recognised his position of probably only temporary pre-eminence in county affairs and financial vulnerability by putting himself forward as a candidate and soliciting the interest of the Earl of Manchester as early as the beginning of March - long before the elections had even been called. His part in the deputation to London may well have been to impress the Earl and gain his support.⁵² This support together with the political influence of the Earl of Exeter and Richard Knightley, was powerful enough to overcome the opposition to Yelverton and Crewe.

This opposition, not surprisingly, considering the rapidly changing mood of the country, came from their Royalist flank. Henry Benson, the Sheriff, proposed Sir Justinian Isham but he withdrew after Richard Knightley had his agents canvass for Crewe.⁵³ Further opposition came

50. H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 312.

51. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett. c. 210, f. 46.

52. H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 312.

53. N.R.O., I.C. 499.

from Royalists whose description is almost archetypally Cavalier. "Some blades at some drinking gang" led by William Stafford of Blatherwick attacked Yelverton for having opposed the King's prerogative in some obscure detail concerning the Bishopric of Peterborough. Yelverton's response was to use the Earl of Exeter to smooth over his mistake of protocol, and indignantly counterattack Stafford for his "unhandsome carriage" and ingratitude for all Yelverton and his fellow activists had done for "the service".⁵⁴

Elsewhere in the county, those who had not done as much for "the service" or indeed had opposed it, had equally little success. All those whose Royalism was suspect were forced to falsify their returns to secure their elections: a procedure on which the Convention looked with neither credence nor approval. The election in Northampton in April was the opening round of the fight over the extent of the franchise which was to continue for the next four years. The sheriff, the mayor and the corporation returned the deputy-recorder, Francis Harvey, who had also represented the borough in the parliaments of 1656 and 1658, and the man whom he had replaced as deputy-recorder, Richard Rainsford.⁵⁵ Compared to the county election, where the seats were divided between a Presbyterian-Royalist and an Anglican-Royalist, the Corporation's choice of candidates seems curious. That the largely covenanter Corporation should choose Harvey is understandable but not so the patently Royalist Rainsford. Perhaps his nomination was a concession to the prevailing mood; perhaps he had some vestigial prestige

54. Bodley, MS. Eng. lett., c. 210, f. 46.

55. Borough Records, II, p. 497.

and influence with the assembly left over from his days as deputy-recorder, and certainly the borough had a tradition of returning its deputy-recorders to parliament. Or perhaps the Corporation was unwilling to relinquish the independence from the county gentry it had gained during the Interregnum, and chose the only two resident freemen of any stature as candidates. Whatever the reason, the populace at large did not agree with any choice of candidates not wholly Royalist, for they voted for Richard Rainsford and Sir John Norwich. When the matter came before the Committee for Privileges it agreed with the householders and at one stroke (and somewhat paradoxically) took the sole right of election from the Common Council, which had held it for over two hundred years, and extended it to the commonalty.⁵⁶

The Corporation must have seen the implications of a popular franchise. The bulk of the inhabitants of the town were enthusiastically, even ecstatically, Royalist as can be seen from the rejoicing in the town on 8th May. The acclamations of Charles II on that day were so loud that Sir Justinian Isham was thrown from his mount which had been overborne by other horses startled by the rumbustious celebrations.⁵⁷ Such electors were no bulwark against the designs of a government determined to remodel the Corporation. They certainly would not elect members of parliament who could be relied upon to protect the interests of the Common Council as it was then constituted. The writing was on the wall for the Corporation even before the Committee for Privileges delivered its decision. Two days before on 19th June the assembly had ordered, "That this town do unite with

56. C. J., VIII, pp. 70-1.

57. Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham, 1650-1660, N.R.S., XVII, 1955, p. 183.

any other corporation of the neighbourhood for the maintenance and continuance of their constancy in the choice of Burgesses to serve in Parliament by the major, Bailiffs and Burgesses."⁵⁸ The Corporation knew it was having to fight for its own self-preservation.

Another corporation in the county also ran into popular opposition. The electorate(s) of Higham Ferrers made a double-return: one group claimed that only a select number of householders had the right of election; another, the majority, claimed that the right of election was in the householders as a whole.⁵⁹ The oligarchs chose Edward Harby, the recruiter member and later Rumper for the borough. The others returned Sir Thomas Dacres of Cheshunt in Hertfordshire.⁶⁰ His association with Northamptonshire came through his wife, Martha, daughter of Thomas Elmes of Lilford and Green's Norton, sister-in-law of Arthur Hesilrige and cousin of the St. Johns and Knightleys.⁶¹ He also held some seventy acres of land in Higham Ferrers and Newton Bromswold, which had belonged to the dissolved college at Higham Ferrers and was granted to his family in 1542, together with the advowson of the church.⁶² Such sizeable territorial influence in the borough had been reflected in his election to serve it in 1626, although on that occasion he had preferred to represent his own shire. He again sat for Hertfordshire in the Long Parliament, where he later joined the Presbyterian party and was eventually secluded in 1648. Nothing can be

58. Borough Records, II, p. 498.

59. C. J., VIII, p. 33.

60. "By several hands," eds., "The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England from the earliest times to the Restoration of Charles II", London, 1763, XXII, p. 217.

61. Bridges, II, pp. 242, 480.

62. V.C.H. Northants., II, p. 178.

discovered of his later political activity, but an indication of his feelings may be seen in the nomination of his son as a Knight of the Royal Oak, and by the patronage he gave John Tillotson, the later Archbishop of Canterbury.⁶³

The Corporation's attempt to usurp the old charter was eventually overthrown by the Committee of Privileges. Harby's election was disallowed while the popular, and more acceptable, candidate was declared to be duly returned.

In Peterborough, where there was no corporation to be split by faction and feuds, the election settled into a three-cornered contest between Humphrey Orme, Francis St John, son of the Lord Chief Justice, and Charles Fane, Lord Le Despenser, the son of the Earl of Westmorland. St. John resorted to as wide a variety of electoral devices and vices to secure his return as was exhibited in this period. With or without the sheriff, Henry Benson's connivance, the precept was directed to Humphrey Austin as bailiff of the City of Peterborough, when he was only the bailiff of the St. Johns' manor of Longhorp, instead of the bailiff of Nassaborough hundred. Austin proceeded to hold the election an hour before the announced time of 9.00 a.m.; he enfranchised a number of men who were in receipt of alms and therefore not allowed to vote; while many who were paying scot and lot he disqualified or simply refused to count. Indeed he went so far as to take no notice of the count and declared St. John elected along with Orme without consulting the clerks who kept the tally on the electoral rolls. Despite these malpractices, and even though the voices given in the confusion to Lord St. John, who was there taking a paternal and patronly interest in the affair, were entered in the name of his son, the cries for Lord Le Despenser were still greater than those for St John. Fane thus petitioned the Committee

63. M. F. Keeler, ed., The Long Parliament, 1954, pp. 150-1; V.C.H., Hertfordshire, III, p. 445.

of Privileges, which, after juggling with the figures, declared his election valid. The margin of victory, however, was still remarkably narrow. Fane could have beaten St. John by no more than twenty-six votes. On the other hand there was no question about the election of Humphrey Orme, the established patriarch of Peterborough, who "had without dispute the greater number of votes".⁶⁴

At Peterborough, as at Northampton and Higham Ferrers, two Royalists had thus been returned by a popular vote; but in this case a Presbyterian-Royalist had been defeated by two Anglicans. For the St. Johns it was a double disappointment, since Oliver had lost the Cambridge University election to Edward Montagu. The frequent changes of St. John allegiances had always looked suspiciously like opportunism. Professor Valerie Pearl has shown that Oliver St. John was a moderate Presbyterian. He had opposed Pride's Purge and the King's execution, but he had not underlined his protest by resignation from the judiciary because there was an "absolute necessity" of preserving the legal system and maintaining "public justice between party and party." Yet there were many who believed him to be the "dark lantern" behind the Protectorate and it must have been these critics and the political set-backs of April which prompted him to write an explanation of his actions in July 1660.⁶⁵ His defeat at Peterborough was also a serious set-back for the family's growing interest in that area. For the Fanes, victory was a sign of a revival in their fortunes and a successful re-assertion of their

64. Bodley, MS. Rawl., C. 366 ff 191, 204-5. C.J., VIII, p. 45.

65. Valerie Pearl, 'Oliver St. John and the Middle Group in the Long Parliament,' E.H.R. LXXXI, 1966, pp. 490-519. The Case of Oliver St John, esq., 30 July, 1660: B.L., E.1035, 5.

interests after twenty years of neglect. But, of the two final victors, Humphrey Orme had scored the greatest triumph. After ten years of inability to use his enormous influence in the city he had finally been able to carry off an election in the face of strong opposition from two of the three main interests in the town (the other was ^{that of} the Fitzwilliams, of Milton). His position as Peterborough's most prominent lay resident was now established.

In Brackley, Thomas Crewe and William Lisle of Evenley had also reason to feel secure. Their victory in 1660 repeated their joint election to Richard Cromwell's Parliament. Like Yelverton, they would seem to have started to secure support from amongst the town's thirty-three burgesses at least one month before the elections were held. By 13th March 1660 they had already forestalled the Earl of Bridgwater, and neutralised his interest as the town's largest rate-payer: by obtaining promises of support from twenty-seven of the burgesses. The Earl blustered, and accused Crewe and Lisle of filching votes previously promised to his own nominee; but he was unable to change the course of the election.⁶⁶

Both Crewe and Lisle were closely connected with the town. Crewe was steward to the Corporation; and Lisle was the nephew of a local benefactor and owner of the advowson of Brackley St Peter's.⁶⁷ They were the only gentlemen of note whose family seats were in the vicinity of the borough. As the incumbent Members of Parliament they had a natural advantage over any opponents.

The two men also had much in common. They were both young: Crewe was thirty-seven, and Lisle, twenty-eight. They were near neighbours whose residences had been acquired by their families at much the same time, at the

66. N.R.O., Ellesmere (Brackley), 613-4.

67. N.R.O., Ellesmere (Brackley), 565, 613; Bridges, I, 150.

beginning of the century.⁶⁸ Both those families had represented the borough before.⁶⁹ Neither Crewe nor Lisle, however, were tied to provincial country life, and both were well-connected. Crewe, as has been seen, had political ambitions and gambled on the coming régime. Lisle was a barrister of the Middle Temple with Royalist associations.⁷⁰ He went on in his legal career to become a Master-in-Chancery in 1665. He began a second career as a lieutenant in the country's militia in the following summer, soon becoming a captain and eventually a colonel. By the 1670s he was on intimate terms with the Earl of Exeter and other members of the county nobility such as the Fanes and Cullens, as their horse racing companion.⁷¹ Crewe and Lisle were to repeat their partnership for a third time in 1678, then as Whigs.

All in all, by the second week of April 1660 the county and its boroughs had returned twelve members of Parliament. Three Royalists and three moderates had been returned without serious opposition; of the other six, two Protectorate men had been returned on a narrow franchise, one whose moderate Royalism looked suspiciously like opportunism by trying to "manage" a large electorate; one longstanding Royalist and two more recent ones were returned by franchises interpreted widely. Yet only one of the twelve new members was free of Parliamentary, Protectorate or Presbyterian connections. The elder Crewe and D'Acres had been secluded members while Harby had been a Rumper. Rainsford and Harvey had both served the Protectorate as members for the puritan Corporation of Northampton while the younger Crewe, St John, Orme, probably Lisle and also Yelverton had Parliamentary and Presbyterian fathers. Norwich, who had served on all the county committees until 1653,

68. Bridges, I, p. 198. Baker, I, p.

69. Bridges, I, p. 144.

70. Calendar of the Committee for Compounding, II, p. 970.

71. J. A. Venn, ed., Alumni Cantabrigienses to 1751, Part I, III, 1922, p. 917; P.R.O., S.P. 29/26, f. 75. Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1658-81, 1971, pp. 151, 231; Bridges, I, p. 144.

was not off the Committee for Assessment for long during the Interregnum and served in the Parliament of 1654. Even Humphrey Orme in 1650 began as a Parliamentarian and remained on the Committee of Assessment until after 1652.⁷² The true Royalists, the supporters of Charles I and the younger generation who had never flirted with the Protectorate, were yet to come into their own. In the mean time the moderate, by and large, Presbyterian-Royalists of Northamptonshire were in the ascendant. This makes the election results for Northamptonshire unusual. Elsewhere the Cavaliers did much better than the Presbyterians. The moderation of the Northamptonshire members should be underlined, however, for not one of them is to be seen attached to any of Lord Wharton's managers when the Convention finally met.⁷³

There was, however, one last drama to be played out in Northamptonshire. It was the last skirmish of the Civil War, and not particularly important except that it reveals what the various county factions were unanimously opposed to even if the county as a body did not agree on what it wanted. On the night of 11th April, John Lambert escaped from the Tower of London and, accordingly to Dr. Morley, made for a pre-arranged rendezvous with the sectaries at Northampton. Whether Northampton was chosen because of its puritan leanings or because of its geographical position in the navel of England is unclear. Clarendon thought that Lambert went to Northamptonshire because it was "a county infamously famous for its disaffection to the King and for adhering to Parliament". Morley went further and predicted that the "rigid Presbyterians" were likely to join with them: but they did not.⁷⁴

72. N.R.O., F.H. 133. Acts and Ord., II, p. 670.

73. Bodley, Carte MSS., 81, ff. 74-77.

74. W. Dunn Macray, Clarendon's History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, VI, 1888, p. 184; Cal. Clar. S.P., IV, p. 662.

The county's Presbyterians evinced not the slightest degree of temptation of joining the crowds of soldiers who were reported to be crowding the roads of Daventry, for which Lambert was now heading.⁷⁵

Nor, in the face of these events, was the county at all passive. At first the county's freeholders who were gathered together for the election fled in panic at the name of Lambert, but subsequently they regained their composure and reassembled.⁷⁶ The Northampton trained bands appeared under arms for the Council of State; nearly one hundred militia horse captained by the Earl of Exeter offered their services to the loyalist garrison of Northampton; and four hundred horses waiting to be sold at the town's Easter fair were readily surrendered to mount Colonel Streater's infantry and facilitate Lambert's pursuit.⁷⁷ Lambert was taken two miles from Daventry by Colonels Streater and Ingoldsby, and when he entered Northampton as the latter's captive he was reminded by his gaoler of Oliver Cromwell's bluff aside to both of them in the same streets ten years before: "These very persons would shout as much if you and I were going to be hanged".⁷⁸ The crowds of Northampton at least were not only hostile to Lambert but also indifferent to all he, his master and his comrades had done and tried to do. There must have been few left in the county to welcome a return of the army to power.

75. Baker, II, pp. 325-6.

76. C.S.P.D., 1676-7, p. 178.

77. Sir Richard Baker, History of the Kings of England, London, 1674, p. 720.

78. W. C. Abbott, ed., The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, 1937-47, II, p. 281; Thomas Burnet, ed., Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, London, 1818, I, p. 154.

The Restoration of County Government

The newly formed Commission of the Peace of the autumn of 1660 was, of course, predominantly Royalist in composition. Of the 68 gentry Justices of the Peace (out of 75) whose political connections can be established, 46 had either been sequestered, fined under the Decimation Tax, imprisoned⁷⁹ in 1655 by the Protectorate, or nominated as Knights of the Royal Oak. Nevertheless, as many as 22 magistrates had, either themselves or a near relation, served either Parliament or Cromwell during the Interregnum. Whether many of them had seriously opposed the return of Charles II is open to doubt. Some like the Cartwrights, Danvers, Drydens, Elmes, Holmans, Knightleys, Norwiches, Samwells and Yelvertons had, as has already been seen, fallen foul of the old régime and been dismissed from public office. Others like Francis Harvey and Richard Rainsford as Recorders for Northampton had been professional time servers with no other commitment other than their careers. Many like the Crewes, Langhams, Lises and Montagus had actively worked for the Restoration.⁸⁰

The Commission of the Peace in the 1660s was closely interrelated. Nine out of ten of the magistrates of this time had blood relationships with other members of the bench, and distant cousinhoods can be tentatively established for those seven J.P.s whose lineage is not easily traceable. It was further financially and socially superior to the magistracy of the 1650s. Not counting those peers in the Commission, there were 24 J.P.s whose wealth is now assessable and their average income was £1,198 p.a. Whereas,

79. P.R.O., C. 220/9/4; Cal. Comm. Comp., I, pp. 88, 98; T.S.P., IV, p. 511; B.L., Add. MSS. 34013, ff. 21-22; N.N. and Q., II, p. 208.

80. W. Dunn Macray, Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, VI, pp. 188-89.

on the other hand, the sample of Parliamentary J.P.s reveals an average income of £940 p.a., but it is such a small and badly weighted sample that the suspicion is that there was an even greater difference than £250 p.a.

There were certainly no figures like the Blakes, Botelers, Horsemans or Rainsborowes on the bench of the 1660s. There were only two individuals whose place on the Commission was not in keeping with their position in county society: Richard Naylour of Stoke Bruerne and Sir Wadham Wyndham, who was a non-resident according to the Hearth Tax of 1662. The Commissions of the 1650s had had only five baronets or knights as members: Sir John Dryden, Sir Edward Nicholls, Sir John Norwich, Sir Richard Samwell and Sir Christopher Yelverton - and none of these had been happy about serving the Rump or Protectorate. The Commissions of the 1660s, on the other hand, had no less than twenty-four baronets and knights: Sir Edward Alston, Sir John Barnard, Sir Thomas Cave sen., Sir Thomas Cave jun., Sir Samuel Clarke, Sir Charles Compton, Sir Thomas Crewe, Sir Samuel Danvers, Sir Robert Dryden, Sir William Dudley, Sir John Edgerton, Sir William Fermor, Sir Anthony Haslewood, Sir Justinian Isham, Sir Samuel Jones, Sir James Langham, Sir John Norwich, Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Sir William Pargiter, Sir Richard Rainsford, Sir John Robinson, Sir Richard Samwell, Sir Wadham Wyndham, and Sir Christopher Yelverton. Whereas the Commissions of the 1650s had had only two peers, one of them Irish, on their lists: Lords Fitzwilliam, the Commissions of the 1660s had all the Northamptonshire aristocracy except the Catholic Brudenells and Vauxes. Furthermore, almost the complete bench of the Restoration period were genuine country gentry. The only identifiable practising professional lawyers were Richard Buckby, the Clerk of the Peace, Sir Samuel Clarke, Sir Heneage Finch, Francis Harvey, Sir Geoffrey Palmer, the Attorney-General, but also the squire of Carlton, and Sir Richard Rainsford. Two of these, at least, should more properly be regarded as country gentry. The only recognisable man of commerce was Sir John Robinson, an alderman of London

and Keeper of Farming Woods.⁸¹

In its activities the Commission also showed greater unity of purpose and cohesion than its predecessors in the 1650s. During its first year of operation thirty-three of its seventy-five members put in at least one appearance at the Quarter Sessions.⁸² Even one titled aristocrat, the Earl of Westmorland, deigned to put in an appearance. Attendance then slackened off rather dramatically during the 1660s but each year showed a hard core of between ten and a dozen magistrates as assiduous Quarter Sessions' Justices.⁸³ There were still years, however, like 1667 and 1670, when between twenty-five and thirty-five Justices appeared at the Quarter Sessions. None the less it has to be stressed that the majority of J.P.s never attended the Quarter Sessions and only a handful of Justices attended two or more Quarter Sessions a year.⁸⁴ Those that did attend or take recognizances, however, were greater in number than most of the 1650s and probably enough in number to represent differing views within the county. Despite the small attendances the Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace was homegrown and homogeneous enough to give full force of expression to the county's sense of community.

The Settlement of the Militia

Probably what was more important than the Commission of the Peace and, in the circumstances of the 1660s, worthier of greater consideration was the militia. Although Members initially paid very little attention to the militia, it was the militia that was listed first amongst the issues

81. Sir Gyles Isham, *Two Local Biographies*, N.P. and P., III, No.2, pp. 86, 90.

82. N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/18-22.

83. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/23-62; P.R.O., E.372/505-514, Northamptonshire.

84. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/44-47; 1/56-59.

confronting the Convention Parliament in May 1660.⁸⁵ The establishment of a loyal and efficient militia was a subject of the greatest importance if the disbanding of the Cromwellian army was to be effected without military opposition. The Convention's neglect of the equally important problem of the control of the militia allowed the King and court to seize the initiative during the summer. According to the late J. R. Western, Charles and his advisers hoped to create a "new militia" on the model of Cromwell's project of 1655, a gendarmerie auxiliary to the powers of the Crown and independent of the county gentry.⁸⁶ Among the first steps the court took was to appoint Lords Lieutenant sympathetic to the King.⁸⁷ Secretary Nicholas's choices for Northamptonshire were the Earls of Exeter and Westmorland. The county was probably divided into two Lieutenancies, less for reasons of administrative convenience, as the two were reunited in 1678, more because there was no single nobleman with an impeccable Royalist record and military experience in the county. The Earl of Northampton now had a regiment of horse in the regular army as well as the Lord Lieutenancy of Warwickshire and the Earl of Peterborough was making a career for himself at court.

The newly appointed Lords Lieutenant for Northamptonshire proceeded to follow the detailed instructions sent out by Secretary Nicholas for the management of the militia. Their first task was to appoint deputy-lieutenants. In May, six of the old Militia Commissioners, Edward Montagu, John Robinson, Edward Nicholls, John Maunsell, John Browne and William Rainsborowe at a public meeting "did in all humility lay hold of the King's grace and favour" and "did openly declare their return to the loyalty and obedience of good

85. C.S.P.D., 1660-61, p. 608.

86. J. R. Western, The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century, 1965, p.8.

87. H.M.C., Fifth Report, Pt. I, Appendix, p. 153.

subjects.⁸⁸ Such declarations were not proof sufficient of loyalty for Lords Lieutenant, particularly as the old Militia Commissioners had been persecuting respectable Royalists for outstanding militia dues owed since the Protectorate. Their instructions required them to choose only "well-affected" men.⁸⁹ In August, they proposed for deputy-lieutenancies: Charles Lord Le Despenser, William Stafford, Sir Justinian Isham, Sir Edward Griffin, Brian Cockaine, Sir John Norwich, Francis Lane, Sir John Robinson, Edward Montagu, Sir William Fermor, Sir Charles Compton, Sir Hentry Yelverton and Henry Howard.⁹⁰ That, of this thirteen, three had personally fought for Charles I; five had had to pay composition fines; five had been on the list of suspected Royalists drawn up in 1655; six had been decimated, and two proposed as Knights of the Royal Oak, is proof of their affections.⁹¹ Indeed, the names of Compton, Fermor, Griffin, Isham and Stafford are to be found in at least three of these categories. Cockaine, Le Despenser, Montagu, Norwich, Robinson and Yelverton, however, are not to be found in any of them. Cockaine, however, was the son of that stalwart supporter of the Stuarts, the first Viscount Cullen; Despenser was the son of the Earl of Westmorland and probably owed his preferment to that fact; and the latter four had been actively engaged for the Restoration of Charles II, a qualification shared by Henry Howard and Sir William Fermor's son, who had tried to seize

88. H.M.C., Buccleuch I, p. 312.

89. C.S.P.D., 1660-61, p. 150; N.R.O., Baker 705.

90. P.R.O., S.P. 29/11, f.175.

91. Calendar of the Committee for Compounding, passim; B.L., Add. 34,013; Thurloe State Paper, IV, p. 511; N. N. and Q, II, p. 208.

Carlisle for General Monck.⁹² Two of the three additions made to the list by Secretary Nicholas: Thomas Crewe, Colonel Samuel Jones and Edward Onley, had also been actively engaged for the Restoration of Charles II.⁹³ Crewe's participation in the Restoration has already been discussed. Jones had offered Charles Stuart a substantial loan on or before 3rd May 1660,⁹⁴ and his appointment by Nicholas may have been a reward for this service as well as an addition of military experience to the Commission to stiffen the ranks of the militia. Onley does not appear to have done anything active for the Restoration, but he was on the list of Suspected Persons in 1655 and his dedication to the Stuart cause earned him a nomination as a Knight of the Royal Oak.⁹⁵ By October 1661 there were three further additions, to replace Compton, Howard, and Norwich who by that date were dead: Sir Thomas Cave, an ex-Royalist-in arms;⁹⁶ George Clarke, a nominee as Knight of the Royal Oak; and Sir Samuel Danvers whose one known token of Royalism had been the flamboyant gesture of dressing his retinue in black for the 1649 Assizes.

Apart from a strong attachment to the Royalist cause, did these nineteen share any other characteristics? Connections to prove the homogeneous nature of this group are hard to establish and where they occur are

92. Supra., for Howard, Norwich, Robinson and Yelverton; D.N.B., IV, p. 673, for Montagu; D.N.B., VI p. 1235 for Fermor's son.

93. P.R.O., S.P. 29/11, f. 175.

94. Cal. Clar. S.P., V, p. 7.

95. B.L. Add, 34013; N.N. and Q., II, p. 208.

96. The son not the father because the latter was sixty-five in 1660 and because in a later commission he is described as baronet, a title bestowed on the younger Sir Thomas in 1641.

probably coincidental. They had some features, however, in common. The Commission tended towards youth. The average age of the seventeen whose ages are known was thirty-nine, and of these, eleven were below the average. Indeed, five were under thirty and only two over fifty. Furthermore, six of the nineteen occupied junior positions in their respective families: five were sons of living fathers and one was a younger brother. Their educational background is more disparate but ten of the seventeen had been to university: five each to Cambridge and Oxford, with Christ's and Emmanuel sharing the honours for the former establishment. The group also seems to have had a marked tendency toward wealth. Of the thirteen who were heads of families the income of all but one is ascertainable and only two of these were worth less than £1,500 p.a.⁹⁷ In fact by reputation, Clarke, Jones and Stafford were worth more than £3,000 p.a.⁹⁸ The poorer two, Onley and Lane, were worth £1,000 and nearly £600 a year respectively; but Lane was sufficiently extravagant to rank him amongst the greater gentry.⁹⁹

The group also shared a number of less obvious characteristics. Eight of the deputies had rather weak connections with the county in 1660. Le Despenser, Stafford and Clarke had spent lengthy periods abroad in the 1650s; Griffin was a pre-war courtier, Montagu was more interested in a career in the fleet under his cousin Admiral Montagu; Robinson was an Alderman of London; and like Howard and Jones, had not acquired property

97. These estimates are based on the rentals in P.R.O., S.P. 23;

Decimation Tax assessments in Thurloe State Papers; income qualifications for Knights of the Royal Oak; property assessments in B.L. Add. 34, 222, f. 38v; in S.P. 29/42, Pt.3, f. 216; and various estate rentals in the N.R.O.

98. N.N and Q., II, p. 208.

99. Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 191.

in Northamptonshire until after 1650.¹⁰⁰

Kinship ties were not particularly strong. There was a family circle linking the Cockaines, Comptons, Fermors, Norwiches and Staffords, which, as the century progressed, would be consolidated, but other connections by blood were extremely tenuous. Some other ties, however, can be seen. Clarke, Compton and Lane were friendly correspondents of Sir Justinian Isham. Howard and Danvers had assisted Yelverton in his election as Knight of the Shire, though Isham and Stafford had opposed him. Crewe and Montagu were connected by kinship and politics through the future Earl of Sandwich.

To these remarks might be added a comment on the deputies' geographical distribution. Eight of them came from the Rockingham Forest-Isebrook region: Cockaine, Griffin, Lane, Le Despenser, Montagu, Norwich, Robinson and Stafford. This group, plus Isham from Lamport and Yelverton from Easton Mauduit, represented the county's Eastern Division. The other nine deputy-lieutenants, by contrast, were scattered over the whole of the Western Division of the shire. If Christopher Hatton and Lewis Palmer are added to this list the importance of the Forest neighbourhood for Royalism in Northamptonshire may be seen more clearly.¹⁰¹ Both of them were sons of Royalist fathers and Commissioners for Regulating the Corporation of Northampton.

The recruitment of the militia is also worthy of interest. Geographical proximity played a part, as one would expect, in the composition of the volunteer troops of horse set up over the summer. The two troops of horse raised were drawn almost exclusively from three distinct areas. The Lord

100. C.S.P.D., 1651-2, pp. 552, 555; Clarke's M.I. in Watford St Peter's;

D.N.B., XIII, p. 69; N.P. and P., III, p. 90; Bridges, I, p. 353.

101. B.L., Add. MSS. 34,222, f. 33.

Lieutenant had, by the end of August, successfully embodied nearly ninety men from Willybrook, the northern part of Navisford and the eastern part of Polebrook Hundreds, plus no more than a dozen from adjacent parishes in Nassaborough, Corby and Huxloe Hundreds, under the command of Charles Lord Le Despenser.¹⁰² Of that ninety, thirty-nine and possibly as many as forty-four, came from the Fane territories of Apethorpe, Nassington, Wood Newton, Yarwell and Tansor. It is hard to gauge whether these were tenants or freeholders, for no estate rent-rolls survive for this period. What can be said is that by the end of the century, and probably much sooner, because the third and fourth earls were wastrels not landed entrepreneurs, Apethorpe and Wood Newton were completely Fane demesne, except for three small freeholds; Tansor was divided between the estates of Fane and Brudenell, except again for three small freeholds; and most of the lands in Nassington and Yarwell were copyholds held of the Earl of Westmorland.¹⁰³

In 1662 fourteen of the twenty Volunteers from Apethorpe had dwellings of three hearths or less: the remaining six are not mentioned in the Hearth Tax Return and would thus appear to have been household servants. In Wood Newton, five had three or less and one had five hearths; in Tansor three had less than three, and one had four hearths; in Yarwell one had three and three had four hearths; and in Nassington five had less than four, two had four, and three had individually six, seven and eight hearths respectively.¹⁰⁴ Of the forty-four, one was a gentleman, nine were

102. S.P. 29/26, ff. 74-75; B.L. 34, 222, ff. 11-14.

103. Bridges, II, pp. 458, 475, 485; H.M.C., Hastings, II, p. 331;—
H.M.C., Montagu, p. 177; N.R.O., Westmorland MSS. passim.

104. P.R.O., E.179/254/11.

yeomen and one was a husbandman. These, together with two others, are the only ones for whom inventories have survived and whose status it is possible to discover. Apart from the gentleman, Robert Brudenell of Sulhay Lodge in Apethorpe, who was Le Despenser's cousin, the overall picture is of a modest standard of living. Only two of the yeomen, Leonard Thoroughgood and Thomas Hunt, both of Nassington can be described as prosperous. Without their inventories of £193 and £147 respectively, the average value of the remaining ten's goods and chattels is just under £55.¹⁰⁵ If any implication can be drawn from this it is that the Fanes were the chief source of recruits for the East Division 'volunteer' militia.

The rest of Le Despenser's command conformed more fully to a true yeomanry but even then, sixteen of the remaining, identifiable thirty-four troopers had homes with three hearths or less. Whereas all but two of Le Despenser's own squadron had been raised in Fane parishes, in his lieutenant, Maurice Tresham of Pilton esquire's, squadron, by November 1660, twelve were drawn from Oundle and eight from the surrounding parishes of Glapthorne, Barnwell St Andrew, Stoke Doyle and Tansor. Tresham owned Churchfield House in Oundle and the town's most prominent Royalist resident, William Page esquire, was a volunteer in the Cornet's squadron. This third squadron, however, was under the command of Thomas Briscoe of Yarwell gentleman, and was drawn half from Nassington and Wood Newton and the rest from more distant parishes like Collyweston, Deene (virtually a Brudenell estate), and Helpston.

The correlation between areas connected with the possessions of a few landed Royalist magnates and the volunteers' parishes of origin is remarkable. The Fanes, of course, had extensive estates in seven, but the Montagu family had lands in four, the Brudenells and Cecils each had estates in three and

105. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Prebendal Court of Nassington, I and

II, passim.

the Tresham family in two. In all the remaining ten parishes (excluding Peterborough and Oundle) the largest landlord had been a Royalist.

If the Free and Voluntary Gift of October 1661 is anything to go by, all of the gentleman Volunteers were also committed to the Restoration as were the more substantial members of the militia. Twenty-four of the twenty-seven Volunteers with homes of four or more hearths contributed sums of between two and thirty shillings. Less than one-third of the forty-six with less than four hearths on the other hand, made any contribution at all.¹⁰⁶ Relative poverty or the feeling on the part of some people that they had done their share, would account for these perhaps. There is, however, a hollow ring about the idea of a man who will turn up to musters in all weathers but begrudge his King a few shillings and about the husbandman who will waste valuable time serving in the militia. If this is the case the idea that a large part of the Volunteers were not yeoman volunteers but were indeed recruits dragooned by their social betters, must be considered.

The other two areas which were sources for the Volunteers were Northampton town and the parishes in the eastern border, and the parishes around Brampton Ash where the Hundreds of Corby and Rothwell meet. Much the same pattern for this troop of Captain Roger Norwich's emerges as for Le Despenser's. Nine of the sixty-one Volunteers came from Norwich's own parish of Brampton Ash and, just as the large number of thirteen had come from the town of Oundle, the still larger number of twenty came from the town of Northampton. Although eighteen of the twenty who came from parishes which sent forth more than one Volunteer had dwellings of three hearths or less, and three were actually noted as servants, the overall picture is one of Volunteers better off and more independent than their comrades in Le Despenser's troop. This is due largely to the Northampton contingent and the eleven Volunteers who, excluding the troop leaders, had the status of gentleman and homes, if not necessarily standards of living, to match.

That the less well accommodated one-third of this force came from parishes virtually owned by four landowning and by now Royalist families, Norwich, Griffin, Watson and Halford, and that seven of the eleven minor gentry were the chief residents of their parishes, however, cannot be ignored. Once more almost all the poorer Volunteers failed to disgorge even a modest contribution to the King's Exchequer.

Although the evidence is far from concrete, there might seem to be some substance to Sir William Darcy's remarks about freeholders being reluctant to serve in the militia.¹⁰⁷ Only freeholders who were enthusiastic monarchists would seem to have come forward. If the Lord Lieutenants' warrant of October 1660 was obeyed no-one, however, was arrayed who was in arms against the King.¹⁰⁸

One more point, perhaps the most significant, must be drawn about the distribution of the Volunteers: only three, one from Towcester, one from Quinton, and one from Newbottle, together with Lieutenant William Lisle of Evenley, esq., came from places south of the Nene or west of Northampton.

This may have been a matter of administrative convenience but the organisation of the Volunteers was more chaotic than convenient over the summer of 1660. Although the Volunteers were raised from a few distinct localities they were not embodied in squadrons based on these areas. Military maxims about the concentration of resources would seem to have been forgotten. Thus, in August 1660 in Le Despenser's troop, of the men of Apethorpe, six were allocated to the Captain's squadron, six to the Lieutenant's and four to the Cornet's. Norwich's own squadron was drawn half from Brampton Ash and half from Northampton, seventeen miles away.

107. B.L., Eg. MSS. 2542, ff. 526-7.

108. B.L., Add. MSS. 34222, f. 11.

Continuity as well as concentration was also lacking. By early October, just after the deputy-lieutenants had met at Wellingborough, the Earl of Exeter had decided to divide the Volunteers for the Eastern Division into two troops under the commands of William Stafford of Blatherwick and Humphrey Orme of Peterborough. Other changes were the promotion of William Page of Oundle to Cornet and the relegation of Thomas Briscoe to the rank of Quarter Master.¹⁰⁹ Barely a month later the Volunteers were once more in three troops officered by Le Despenser, Tresham and Briscoe. Such turnabouts were reflected in the high rate of turnover in Volunteers. Although the Eastern Division's squadron's average complement was ninety between August and November twelve militia men had left and fourteen had joined.¹¹⁰ With such changes in a militia ten per cent under its expected strength, it is surprising that the militia was able to perform its assigned duties.

Policing the County

The militia's first duty was to act as a deterrent to sectaries and to police their meetings. These the sectaries in Northamptonshire persisted in holding through the autumn of 1660 and into the winter.¹¹¹ Not until November were the volunteer troops of horse embodied and commanded as we have seen. One month later, however, in response to an order from the Privy Council they mustered and proceeded to search the houses of those "of loose principles and of known disaffection" for arms. They also secured their

109. C.S.P.D., 1660-61, p. 309; B.L., Add. MSS. 23,222, ff. 11-12.

110. ibid., f. 13; P.R.O., S.P. 29/26/74.

111. H.M.C., VII, p. 130; B.L. Add. Mss. 34,222, ff. 16-16v.

persons, and for good measure, the zealous Sir Justinian Isham and Sir William Fermor administered the Oath of Allegiance to their captives.¹¹² The haul of weapons taken in this raid was, for the deputies, disappointingly small. They might well have asked themselves why the operation was so necessary when what evidence there was for armed insurrection was so small. Subsequently the troops of horse made less concerted, more sporadic forays against the homes of their neighbours and rode out less often against innocent assemblies of Quakers.¹¹³

As well as the sectaries the towns had also to be disarmed. The government's main weapon against towns was the Corporation Act, but in the case of Northampton (and Coventry, Gloucester and Taunton) this was not thought enough, and the independence of the town was further sapped by the destruction of its fortifications. The order for the razing of Northampton's town walls was given on 30th June 1662.¹¹⁴

The joint Lord Lieutenants of Northamptonshire were ordered to go in person with a body of the county's forces to the town and to inform the Corporation of what was to be done. They told the deputy-lieutenants to occupy the town with the trained bands from the surrounding area and to seize all arms. Although the hay harvest made it difficult to collect any men, the deputy-lieutenants were able to occupy the town a day ahead of schedule. They seized 200 muskets from the town hall, and a few more from the vestry of All Saints' church.¹¹⁵ The next day, the two earls arrived

112. B.L. Add. MSS. 34,222, ff. 15-16v.

113. ibid., f. 18.

114. C.S.P.D., 1661-62, pp. 423-4.

115. B.L. Add. MSS. 34, 222, ff. 22-7.

and sent for the mayor and other dignitaries, who complied with the Lord Lieutenants' orders, "yet we dare not say with what countenance of satisfaction because we could not pierce into their hearts".¹¹⁶

Demolition proceeded forthwith under the watchful eyes of the militia and the supervision of Sir Justinian Isham and Sir Samuel Jones. Only the castle yard was to be left standing as the traditional and sheltered site for the county's Assizes and Quarter Sessions. The work was completed by the end of August at a cost of £136 18s. 6d., nearly £87 more than the government's original budget.¹¹⁷

The execution of the Corporation Act had to wait until the autumn. Although most of the deputy-lieutenants had been in Northampton in July and all but two of the Commissioners for Regulating the Corporation were also militia commissioners, the proceedings against the town council were postponed for two months, perhaps to take advantage of the Assizes. The Commission was comprised of Brian Cockaine, now Viscount Cullen, Charles Lord Le Despenser, Sir Justinian Isham, Sir Thomas Cave, Sir Samuel Danvers, Sir Roger Norwich (who had succeeded his father Sir John), Edward Montagu, William Stafford, George Clarke, Francis Lane, Christopher Hatton, son of Lord Hatton, and Lewis Palmer, son of Sir Geoffrey Palmer, the Attorney-General.¹¹⁸ Sir William Dudley, however, also appeared at Northampton in September to help deliver the Oath of Allegiance along with the others, all

116. ibid., f. 27.

117. ibid., ff. 27-34; C.S.P.D., 1661-62, pp. 431, 434, 443.

118. B.L. Add. MSS. 34,222, f. 33.

of whom had put in an appearance. Over seventy members of the Corporation took the Oath of Allegiance on 19th September. In spite of this, probably unanimous show of loyalty, the Commissioners ejected the mayor-elect, the bailiffs-elect, eight aldermen, fourteen ex-bailiffs, and thirty-two of the Forty-Eight. The town had also to pay £200 for the renewal of its charter, which now included the proviso that the offices of Recorder and town clerk had to be confirmed by the King.¹¹⁹

The Militia Act of 1662 considerably increased the size of the force at the Lord Lieutenants' disposal. The horse contingents were increased by 25% to 174 horse supplied by commoners and a further 40 by local peers. The foot for the county increased by 41% to a total of 833.¹²⁰ The Western and Eastern Divisions now contributed 100 and 74 horse, and 534 and 299 foot respectively. Whether these augmentations caused any dilution of the militia's Royalism is hard to tell. All that can be said is that the pattern of distribution of the élite nucleus of the militia, the troopers, was much the same as that of the Volunteers in 1660 and that their officers remained the same.¹²¹ The charge of the foot was left in the hands of Sir Oliver St John of Woodford,¹²² who had recently been given a baronetcy.

The militia's increase in strength was, however, more apparent than real. In 1663 the Lord Lieutenants were still complaining of slowness in settling the militia.¹²³ One of their problems was the difficulty of

119. Bodley, Top. MS., Northants, c. 9, f. 113.

120. B.L. Add. MSS. 34, 222, ff. 36-7, f.55.

121. ibid., f. 55.

122. Bedfordshire Record Office, D.D. J., f. 1071.

123. B.L. Add. MSS., 34,222, ff. 36, 40.

enforcing militia service. The Lord Lieutenants were forced to defer the "soldier's duty" prescribed in the royal letter of January 1664 until better weather and better times for the husbandmen.¹²⁴ They also had difficulty finding a muster master "of Civil Carriage and Soldier Sufficient to undertake" the task of drilling them.¹²⁵ Their other difficulty was a confusing system of assessing militia dues. In addition to the 174 horse supplied by the county's commoners, another forty were raised from assessments on lands belonging to twenty-three lay and ecclesiastical peers,¹²⁶ who were evidently assessed on their own. The commons' horse, like the foot, were apportioned among the hundreds while the peers' were not.¹²⁷ The levy in the hundreds themselves was complicated by the different bases used for assessment. Thus, in the Hundred of Nobottlegrove, thirteen townships contributed twenty-four musketeers and ten pikemen; five ministers contributed four musketeers; and three individuals associated with two towns in two partnerships were charged with two musketeers.¹²⁸

The system whereby the charge of equipping a militia trooper was shared by one or more freeholders was the cause of much confusion and grievance. George Jeffreys, steward at Kirby to Lord Hatton and late organist to Charles II, was vexed at being charged with half a horse in 1667 since his own estate was worth less than £100 p.a. He had heard that gentlemen worth more than £500 p.a. were being charged with no more than he. Two years before he had appealed against his assessment and been told he would hear no more of it. Nevertheless, in the middle of the Second Dutch War, his contribution was suddenly demanded with only a day's notice and he had once again to appeal.

124. B.L., Add. MSS., 34,222, f. 46.

125. ibid., f. 54.

126. ibid., f. 38v.

127. ibid., ff. 57-75.

128. ibid., f. 63.

It appeared that his partner in the charge of one horse had passed on the summons without attempting to comply with it himself.¹²⁹

Not only had the Lord Lieutenants to face complaints about real or supposed injustice. They had also to deal with flat refusals to contribute. The most notable instance was in 1668 when Sir John Dryden of Canons Ashby not only defaulted but refused to pay the five levied on him as a punishment. He gave way only when summoned before the Privy Council.¹³⁰

In the end the burden of efficiency rested on the deputy-lieutenants. If their hearts were in the job such problems could be dismissed as nuisances. The militia's cadre were committed government supporters, and where there was no conflict of interests or loyalties, as in the policing of Dissenters, they pursued their tasks with vigour. When they had Papists to deal with, however, they were often faced with personal problems since Recusants were often local gentry. Lord Cullen was most puzzled how to act towards his Catholic neighbours, especially towards one of Lord Peterborough's aunts from whose house five or six persons had been seen to go out at night armed with portmanteaus. He dutifully took part in the search of Papists' houses and found that his neighbour, Poulton, had two birding guns and a sword, besides militia arms. He asked leave to restore the fowling pieces - Poulton was so fond of shooting!¹³¹

In 1669 the Earl of Westmorland died and was replaced as joint Lord Lieutenant by the Earl of Peterborough. It remained to be seen how the militia would act under the control of a crypto-Catholic who believed that the militia was a two edged weapon, for it taught the use of arms to the disaffected.¹³²

129. B.L., Add. MSS. 29,551, f. 325.

130. P.R.O., P.C. 2/60, f. 238.

131. C.S.P.D., 1666-7, pp. 174, 337.

132. C.S.P.D., 1663-4, p. 300.

CHAPTER V

THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT: ELECTIONS AND ELECTIONEERING IN
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1661-75.

"The present convention in parliament will be dissolved on the 20th of next month. I pray take care of good members, for parliament will be called in February or March." Thus wrote Sir Christopher Hatton to Sir Justinian Isham in November 1660.¹ Forewarned, Isham's reaction was, in the terms of greatest modesty, to put himself forward as a future Knight of the shire. "Ever since Mr Crewe was voiced for a baron I have been solicited by diverse of the Gentlemen . . . to stand . . . as Knight of the Shire; to some of whom I have already expressed myself in effect that I shall neither seek for it myself or friends, nor yet desert my Country when freely chosen."² Isham's idea of unimportuned choice had been to circulate manuscript electoral pamphlets amongs his friends ever since the previous August; eight months before John Crewe was elevated to the peerage.

There are at least two of these circulars in the Northamptonshire Record Office: completely identical both in fair hands, and both with the name of the addressee left unfilled.³ The contents open with Isham declining to "send about to such as have not offered themselves to /him/." Denying "secret pride" in himself, he self-effacingly asserts he would "much rather be a High Constable . . . free and legally chosen than be a Knight of the Shire /chosen/ by such palpable canvassing for to turn Beggar . . . or Barterer for voices." Later, in December, Isham was to claim that as a "provok'd person having suffered by sequestration and imprisonment" he should give way, "for the peace and quiet of the Country" to a person "unengaged . . . in the late unhappy

1. N.R.O., I.C. 503.

2. N.R.O., I.C. 503.

3. N.R.O., I.C. 3377 and 4011.

differences."⁴ Whether this was a genuine attempt at compromise, an advertisement for Isham's temperance, or a reminder that he had suffered under the old régime is not clear. What he thought of supporters of that régime, its collaborationists and temporisers, however, is clear from the letter of August 1660: the rebels were "those whose fathers' fortunes were never known to the Country" before and those who acquiesced in their rule were those unashamed of keeping or increasing their estates and unmindful of the betrayal of their King and Country. Isham, having expressed his belief that "elections ought to be free" went on to disapprove of "factious canvassing and tumultuous elections." His proposals to remedy these (in the seventeen-century context) unfree practices was to have "the chief gentlemen in every hundred . . . to meet at some public place a little before the election and such of them that have most of the gentlemen's voices or rather votes on paper . . . from thence . . . to be only recommended to their neighbours and Countrymen."

In this we see the reason for Isham's diffident canvassing: to build up his interest in the county indirectly through his friends. According to an unpublished contemporary history of Northampton,⁵ - anonymous, though obviously Whig - the county election proceeded at first much as Isham had intended.

"The High Sheriff of the county, Sir William Dudley, came to this town on the 20th of March [1661] intending as it was verily believed to have chosen two men [Sir Justinian Isham and George Clarke of Watford esq.] that the gentlemen had pitched upon at London in a private clandestine way."

4. N.R.O., I.C. 510.

5. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

Both were J.P.s and deputy lieutenants: their Royalism and their social standing made them eminent candidates for Knights of the shire. The appointment of the zealously Royalist Sir William Dudley as sheriff by Privy Council order in place of the "pricked" sheriff, the equally Royalist but less sober and less efficient William Stafford, assured the success of the Cavaliers.⁶

Their success, however, was not unhindered. Opponents to Isham and Clarke, led by "four or five gentlemen joined to the Presbyterian clergy, Quakers and Anabaptists" gathered enough voters in Northampton by 6 o' clock on the morning of the election to make the Royalists unsure of victory.⁷ Sheriff Dudley attempted to cajole the mayor, John Twigden, to procure through his influence a unanimous vote for the Royalist candidates. Failing to win Twigden's co-operation, Dudley, at the unreasonable hour of 11 o' clock that night presented him with a demand to provide a hall for the election by eight o' clock the following morning. The mayor again refused and Dudley seized the excuse to adjourn the election to Oundle that day fortnight . . . "There was chosen (but not freely) Sir Justinian Isham and Mr Clarke."⁸

How unfree the election was is a matter of personal opinion. What is apparent is that more than twenty of the county's ninety resident J.P.s turned out to lend their influence to the Cavalier cause.⁹ These were the most fervently Royalist and judicially most active members of the bench.¹⁰ They

6. P.R.O., P.C. 2/55, f. 32.

7. N.R.O., I.C. 515, X.4478/712.

8. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

9. P.R.O., C.219/52.

10. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/17-19.

also represented for the most part those gentry families which dominated the northern half of the county around Oundle and consequently the great majority of freeholders likely to be present at the hustings. Reliance was not placed solely in the family influence of the Fanes, Cockaines, Palmers, Treshams, Lanes, Downhalls, Kinnesmans, Robinson and Staffords to achieve victory. Isham, at least, had recourse to a more tangible stimulus. Against his professed principles he had his agents, George Graydon and Gilbert Clerke pay out £1,643 18s. 8d. in electoral expenses.¹¹ The result was, according to Isham, an overwhelming victory for him and Clarke by three votes to one. Not only was the northern part of the county carried for the Cavaliers but also "a great part of the west side was gained to the royal interest."¹² If Isham was not exaggerating the extent of his and Clarke's triumph, the margin of their victory and their penetration of the hitherto parliamentary west side indicates a rout in Northamptonshire for all those factions which in their turn had dominated English politics since 1642. Whether the result, after the political sharp practice of the election, reflected the true feelings of the electorate or represented a successful coup by a Royalist caucus it is, however, impossible to say.

An examination of the other elections in Northamptonshire in 1661 does reveal a stronger Royalist sentiment (or a worldly acceptance of the new régime) than the artful Sir William Dudley might have supposed existed. A week after the Oundle election, the borough of Higham Ferrers returned as its single member, Lewis Palmer, the eldest son of the King's Attorney-General, Sir Geoffrey Palmer of Carlton.¹³ The circumstances of the election are unknown, but in all probability the borough had resumed its pre-war

11. N.R.O., I.C. 3296.

12. N.R.O., I.C. 515

13. Return of Members of Parliament, I, 1879, p. 526.

practice of electing court candidates. As in 1640 and 1660, the householders of Higham Ferrers, when included in the franchise had voted for Royalist candidates. Their deference was largely due to the entangled legal relationships between the borough and the manor of Higham Ferrers, whereby the burgesses held the borough of the Crown as of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Crown's Steward of the manor had a place in the corporation.¹⁴

In 1661, their choice might, in part, have been in gratitude to Lewis' father who had advised the parliamentary committee to decide on a liberal interpretation of the borough's franchise.¹⁵ The father would seem to have had political ambitions for his family.¹⁶ Lewis was not the only one of his three surviving sons to be elected to the Cavalier Parliament, the youngest, Geoffrey, was returned for Ludgershall in Wilshire.¹⁷ But, Lewis, at least, was not simply his father's protégé; he was an adult of thirty years with an income of his own of £800 p.a. and his father allowed him sufficient independence to acquire debts in the order of £3,000.¹⁸ A stalwart supporter of the Crown like his father, Lewis was burgess for Higham Ferrers until the dissolution of the parliament in 1679; during which time he usually voted with the court party and acquired a notoriety as a "trader in protection", although not an opprobrium strong enough to earn the distinction of three "V's" on the Earl of Shaftesbury's list of members of parliament.¹⁹

14. V.C.H., Northants., III, pp. 270-1.

15. N.R.O., F - H., 3467, 3500 .

16. Bridges, II, p. 293.

17. Return of Members of Parliament, I, 1879, p. 530.

18. Thomas Wotton, The English Baronetage, IV, 1741, p. 370; G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, 1903, p. 28.

19. A. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, III, 1951, passim; K.H.D., Haley, "Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-78", B.I.H.R., XLIII, 1970, p.86.

The town of Peterborough also returned Royalist representatives. The two successful candidates in 1660, Charles Lord Le Despenser and Humphrey Orme, were chosen once more and, as there appears to have been no opposition to their election, there is no need to repeat what has already been written about them.²⁰

There was, however, a contest in the borough of Brackley between the incumbent member, Sir Thomas Crewe, who was returned by thirty-one of the burgesses, and Sir William Fermor of Easton Neston and Robert Spencer of Althorp, who were returned by the mayor.²¹ Crewe's background has already been discussed; Fermor's royalism had been of longer duration: he had served Charles I both as soldier and privy-councillor, and had compounded for his "delinquency" at one-tenth for the sum of £1,400.²² He was, however, officially exempted from paying the decimation tax, and although his mother had to pay it, and he was several times harrassed by the Council of State, this may be an indication that his opposition to the Cromwellian régime was confined to thought and did not extend to deed.²³ In fact he seems to have fallen foul of the Comptons, whose retainer, John Willoughby of Grendon and Purston, esq., insulted and challenged him

20. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 625.

21. P.R.O., C.219/52, Part2; N.N. and Q., III, p. 23.

22. D.N.B., VI, p. 1235; Cal. Comm. Comp., II, p. 1063: Fermor's composition fine represents an income of £700 a year but this does not include his wife's estate of £300 a year, nor does it include his mother's substantial jointure of between £420 and £540 a year.

23. T.S.P., IV, p. 511.

to a duel. The fight was prevented only by the intervention of the Council of State which gave orders for Willoughby's restraint and commended Fermor's behaviour "as a man of honour".²⁴ Despite such approbation, Charles II on his return reinstated Fermor on the Privy Council and shortly after the Brackley election in 1661 created him a Knight of the Bath.²⁵

Fermor's colleague on the mayor's indenture was Robert Spencer, the younger brother of Henry, first Earl of Sunderland, who had been killed fighting for the King in 1643. Although his later career is well documented, little can be discovered of his early life, except that he had been in Paris with John Evelyn, until his thirtieth year when he had been elected to the Convention as member for Great Bedwin in Wiltshire.²⁶ Spencer probably owed his election to political sentiment rather than family connection, for the Spencer inheritance had been held by a minor since 1643, and furthermore the young earl had been in Italy since the end of the Commonwealth. Whether Spencer himself had spent much time in the county after returning from France would appear unlikely: he had no residence or lands of his own in Northamptonshire and much of his later life was divided between rooms in Christ Church, Oxford and court. He would seem to have been a career courtier who owed everything from his honorary doctorate

24. C.S.P.D., 1653, pp. 420, 477; 1654, pp. 203, 219, 220, 224, 226, 287; 1655, p. 254.

25. D.N.B., VI, p. 1235.

26. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XII, p. 676; William Bray, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, II, 1952, p. 103; Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 516.

from Oxford University, to his positions in the King's bedchamber and in the Excise, to his loyalty to Charles II.²⁷ That loyalty showed itself during the course of the Cavalier Parliament by Spencer's assiduous service in the interests of the court party and Shaftesbury's tag, "very vile".²⁸

The upshot of the Brackley election was that the committee of privileges recognised Fermor and Spencer's indenture, as coming from the proper returning officer, as valid. Crewe, not content with this verdict, petitioned the committee which, no doubt in the knowledge that Fermor had died from smallpox a month before, reversed its decision and declared Crewe the second member for Brackley.²⁹

It remains to examine the election for one other borough, that of Northampton. This has been left, despite its importance, until the end of this section on the elections of 1661, because it and the subsequent by-elections are one coherent, if confused, struggle for the political control of the county town, which reflects and focuses the political activity of the most active section of the county community.

Like the elections for Brackley, and like that for Northampton the year before, the election for the county town finished in a double return. In contrast with 1660, however, the issue was not obscured by a constitutional dispute over the extent of the franchise. In the election to the Convention

27. Bray, op. cit., II, pp. 45, 103; W. Cobbett, Parliamentary History of England, 1066-1803, IV, 1808, C.S.P.D., 1661-2, pp. 590, 598.

28. Browning, op. cit. III, passim.; K. H. D. Haley, "Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-78", loc. cit., p. 86.

29. C.J., VIII, pp. 252, 295, 305; N. N. and Q., III, p. 78.

the division between a royalist populace and a parliamentary corporation allows for a political description of the poll which is more apparent than real. This is not to deny that the corporation was largely republican in sympathy, or that the popular sympathy in 1660 was monarchist, but to assert the fact that in 1660 the corporation had returned a Royalist, who was also its ex-deputy-recorder, as well as one of its own servants, its present deputy-recorder, who was presumably parliamentary. In 1661, when both the restored monarchy and the enlarged electorate had become established facts, the mayor's indenture again returned one Royalist, this time Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke, and the same deputy-recorder, Francis Harvey. The alternative indenture, on both occasions returned the other candidate to Harvey together with Sir John Norwich of Brampton. No satisfactory explanation of the election in March 1661 or of the following by-elections can successfully disentangle political factor from others nor give it pre-eminence. That explanation must take into account not only the background of "party" politics, but also faction struggles in the corporation, personal antipathies amongst local gentry, and an apparent rivalry between two groups of county gentry both of which can be described as royalist.

The mayoral return of March 1661 accepted the householders' poll of 416 votes for Harvey, 331 for Langham and 252 for Norwich, and declared the first two the winners.³⁰ This was a startling reversal of the 1660 result. Harvey, who had been rejected by the commonalty twelve months before, was in 1661 the victor by a wide margin; whereas Norwich, who had shared the "general clamour" in 1660, was the loser by a margin equally as wide. Why there was this dramatic change in fortunes it is hard to discern, but there

30. N.R.O., X. 4478/712.

are some pertinent points which are worth mentioning, and Norwich's subsequent actions are also illuminating.

Though Norwich had not served the Cromwellian régime and had been one of the prime-movers of the Restoration in Northamptonshire, his Royalism was of only recent origin, and he had not received any significant reward from the crown after May, 1660. Norwich's partners in the returns of 1660 and 1661, Sir Richard Rainsford and Sir James Langham, had their services to the restoration recognised with knighthoods and other honours,³¹ despite the fact that Rainsford had served the borough as deputy-recorder for a period in the 1650s and Langham had been acceptable to the parliament of 1656 as a member for the county. Norwich's single, tangible connection with the town was that his son was captain of the local contingent of militia, whereas Rainsford and Langham had strong ties with the borough. Rainsford had been deputy-recorder and Langham had served the borough as member in 1659, while his father had given a substantial charitable bequest of £600 to the poor of the town in 1654.³² On the other hand, Norwich had strong associations with that party of gentry led by Sir William Dudley, which had appeared at the Oundle election to support Isham and Clarke, and which also dominated the deputy-lieutenancy; while Rainsford and Langham would appear to have been excluded from this group.³³

Norwich's connection with this group can be seen in his reaction to defeat at the poll. Although Langham and Harvey had been chosen "as fairly and as impartially as ever men were", Norwich persuaded the sheriff, Sir

31. D.N.B., XVI, p. 627; G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, 1903, p. 31.

32. P.R.O., S.P. 29/26/75; B.L., 34,222, f. 14; Borough Records, II, pp. 111, 342, 361, 369.

33. P.R.O., S.P. 29/11/175.

William Dudley to return an alternative indenture bearing his name and that of Langham.³⁴ Dudley co-operated with his usual alacrity and went so far as to delay the mayor's indenture for four days after he had returned his own.³⁵ Indeed, he might have delayed it indefinitely had not Twigden responded promptly by printing a public attack on Dudley's behaviour. The Committee of Privileges was bound to accept the indenture of the proper returning officer but it forbore to censure Dudley for erring on the side of zeal.

Norwich and Dudley, however, were not content to accept this verdict and attempted to overthrow it by petitioning the committee with accusations against Twigden of electoral malpractice. The anonymous memorialist of Northampton mentioned earlier had thought the election was fair, and he regarded their criticisms as "false and feigned pretenses that the mayor had miscarried the election".³⁶ Too much credence cannot be given to this commentator, for he is obviously Whig in prejudice, but his claims are apparently substantiated in Norwich's own complaints.

Norwich accused the mayor of enfranchising infants, disfranchising and menacing some of his own supporters, even of quashing an early call for the re-election of Sir Richard Rainsford on the grounds that he had given a charge for the Book of Common Prayer.³⁷ Such corruption is not incredible, and was indeed common practice in the seventeenth century amongst all parties with access to the necessary office and influence. Even Sir William Dudley, as we have seen and shall see again, was not above it.

34. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

35. C.J., VIII, p. 257.

36. N.R.O., X. 4478/712.

37. C.J., VIII, pp. 269-70.

There are indications, however, that Norwich was overstating his case. Several of his complaints are clearly appeals to Anglican sensibilities, intended rather to discredit Twigden than to prove him guilty of electoral malpractice. He accused Twigden of using the church of All Saints as an election hall and profanely using the communion table as a rostrum. The town clerk, however, baldly reported that the election had been adjourned there from the market cross because of a heavy downpour of rain.³⁸

Norwich levelled one other accusation, at once more serious and more sensational against Twigden. He accused the mayor of releasing Quakers from gaol and arming them with halberds to suppress his own supporters. These particular Quakers were evidently not pacifists, and indeed may not have been Quakers at all; but Quakers were bogeymen to the imagination of the seventeenth century ruling classes and Norwich's intention was clearly to associate Twigden with them. They were as unacceptable to Presbyterians as to Anglicans, however, and it is unlikely they were ever armed by either party.

Most of the members of the Committee of Privileges had their doubts about both claims, for it voted to declare both the election returns of May 1661 void. None the less, the decision was far from unanimous and at 185 votes to 127 the margin of victory was relatively narrow. The committee then ordered fresh writs to be issued for another election.³⁹

This election would seem to have been delayed until after the summer and the nomination of a new mayor.⁴⁰ This time, as the anonymous analyst

38. Bodley, Top. MS., Northants., c.9, f. 111.

39. C.J., VIII, p. 269.

40. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 526, where the return is dated 4th November 1661.

reports with malicious irony, "Sir John Norwich counted himself sure of it /the parliamentary election/ but it pleased God to out him by death".⁴¹

Deprived of Norwich's candidacy, the inhabitants of Northampton chose Sir Richard Rainsford and Sir Charles Compton instead.⁴²

The reason for Compton's selection is obscure. As a brother of the Earl of Northampton and as a prominent member of the Sealed Knot organisation during the 1650s, he held a prestigious position in county society; but his personal fortunes amounted to less than £300 a year and except for his large residence at Grendon, there is no evidence that he had sufficient means of his own for the honour of serving as a burgess.⁴³ As the brother-in-law of the late Sir William Fermor, who had held the toll of Northampton market, and also of Hatton Fermor, the town clerk from 1657 to 1660, he might have exercised influence in the town through their means; but the Compton

41. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

42. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 526.

43. D. Underdown, Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660, 1960, pp. 38, 80, 270-1; P.R.O., S.P., 23/207, f. 535; Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., III, p. 1380; T.S.P., IV, p. 511; P.R.O., E. 179/254/11, f. 19.

Compton's assessments for the committees for compounding and assessment indicate an income of between £32 and £40 a year, however, his decimation tax reveals an income possibly as high as £260 a year; which is more in keeping with his portion of his father's estate, of £3,000.

family interest in Northampton was still in its infancy and was as yet untried.⁴⁴ Probably, Compton owed his place merely to the fact that he was the Earl of Northampton's brother, or, in other words, to the sentiments of respect for rank and deference to 'natural' authority.

The contentious exercise of electing representatives for Northampton, however, was not over, for Sir Charles Compton was killed by a fall from his horse at the end of 1661.⁴⁵ The resulting by-election was a contest between Sir James Langham and Sir William Dudley of Clapton, the former sheriff.

Here it is appropriate to say something more of Dudley, who has hitherto been mentioned only in passing. Dudley had been born in 1597, the younger son of a family established in the county since before 1500.⁴⁶ As a younger son he would not ordinarily have inherited the family's estates in Clapton, Barnwell All Saints, Thorpe Achurch, Titchmarsh, and Turvey in Bedfordshire, had not his elder brother, Edward, died in 1641 leaving four young daughters, with Edward, later Lord Montagu, as their ward and William charged with raising £2,000 portions for each of his nieces.⁴⁷ How Dudley avoided the fee tail is not clear, for Edward Dudley's indenture of 1637 apparently exceeds its power, but by 1660, Dudley had the family estates in his possession.⁴⁸ What is clear is that

44. Borough Records, II, p. 570. H.M.C., XIII, Portland, I and II, p. 289. P.R.O., S.P. 23/10r, ff. 195-17; which shows the Earl of Northampton's properties in Northampton to be far from extensive.

45. William Bingham Compton, 6th Marquess of Northampton, A History of the Comptons of Compton-Winyates, 1930, pp. 117-118.

46. Bridges, II, p. 372.

47. B. L., Add. MSS. 29550, ff. 168-9.

48. B.L. Add. MSS. 29550, f. 179; Bridges, II, p. 369.

in acquiring the estates and his dealings with his nieces, his relations with their cousin Montagu, and their grandmother, Lady Hatton, became intensely acrimonious.⁴⁹ That this hostility was entirely his fault is unlikely, for much of Montagu's antagonism came from his thwarted design to purchase part of the Dudley estate; but Dudley certainly did nothing to avoid the animosity of two of the most powerful families in the county.

The fact that Dudley was seeking election at the advanced age of 65 is a measure of his ambition. He had on two occasions in the 1640s narrowly escaped being fined by the Committee for the Advance of Money; he had avoided the decimation tax and any implication of Royalism in the 1650s; yet in 1660 he had been lavishly rewarded with a knighthood and a baronetcy by the King.⁵⁰ Because Dudley's activities between 1642 and 1660 were so clandestine as to leave no record, the royalist faction to which he was attached must be surmised from his associations after 1660 with that group of Rockingham forest gentlemen that dominated the deputy-lieutenancies. As sheriff in 1661 he had displayed a partiality for Sir Justinian Isham, Gilbert Clerke and Sir John Norwich. Although Norwich was now dead, Sir Justinian Isham returned the favour and, as knight of the shire, wrote to the mayor recommending Dudley to replace Compton.⁵¹ Further support for Dudley's ambitions came from within Northampton, from aldermen Brafield, Freind, Hensman, and Howes, thus, once more showing how difficult it is to disentangle faction fights on the Common Council from gentry rivalry and national politics.⁵² It is interesting to note that it was the faction

49. B.L. Add. MSS. 29550, ff. 168-9, 175, 177, 179 , 188.

50. Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon., II, p. 795.

51. N.R.O., I.C. 527.

52. N.R.O., X. 4478/712.

led by these aldermen, which replaced the burgesses turned out by the commissioners for regulating the corporation in the autumn of 1662, aided unofficially by Sir William Dudley. All but two of these commissioners were the deputy-lieutenants.⁵³

The contest between Dudley and Langham in February 1662 ended in another deadlock. Langham would appear to have won the popular vote but, according to Dudley and his friends on the common council, not without the connivance of the mayor, Thomas Thornton, who they claimed had excluded some thirty inhabitants from the poll. The anonymous annalist of the borough thought that these claims were false but the committee of privileges was not so sure, and decided that the controversy surrounding the election was so intricate that it could not determine the rights of the case, and therefore, ordered writs for another election.⁵⁴

The new by-election was postponed for nearly a year by the rising of parliament, but in February, 1663, a fresh writ was issued and the election took place on 7th March.⁵⁵ Sir William Dudley was again a contestant and at the beginning of the electoral campaign in January, Sir James Langham appeared ready to oppose him again. On this occasion Langham had the open support of Francis Harvey's interest but by the end of the month he was clearly reluctant to stand himself, for he tried unsuccessfully to persuade Richard Lane and then Lord O'Brien to stand in his stead.⁵⁶ There was,

53. ibid.; B.L., Add. MSS. 34222, f. 33. Borough Records, II, p. 474.

54. N.R.O., X. 4478/712; C.J., Viii, pp. 394, 414.

55. Borough Records, II, pp. 498-9.

56. B.L., Add. 29551, f. 7.

however, a third party, Sir Christopher Hatton, who was interested in standing, and Langham, whose family was friendly with the Hattons, readily gave way and conferred his interest on him.⁵⁷

Having won Langham's interest, Hatton's campaign began in earnest. His father, Lord Hatton wrote to the mayor, John Brafield, recommending his son as a candidate. He described him as a man "of virtuous and religious conduct, of prudent and discreet carriage, wanting not the value of the highest nor the esteem of the best".⁵⁸ This letter was not merely a father's eulogy for his son. Lord Hatton went on to remind the mayor with the unmistakeable innuendo that he "desired to continue serviceable" to the borough, adding that neither his son, himself, nor his friends would tamely accept any affront, and that the King also thought his son worthy of a great trust. Apparently, the King was not the only member of the royal family to make his wishes known; The Duke of York also sent a recommendation for Hatton.⁵⁹ When the Montagu interest, the most powerful in the borough was placed at Hatton's disposal, his victory at the poll seemed assured.⁶⁰

Lord Montagu, however, was not so certain. On his own admission the Montagu interest had withered from neglect and his chief contacts in the town, aldermen Gifford, Collins, Selby and Twigden, were those who had suffered most at the hands of the Commissioners for Regulating the Corporation. Montagu, furthermore, foresaw with admirable political perspicacity that the mayor, Brafield, who had been appointed by the commissioners, would "do

57. *ibid.*, f. 3; B.L. Add. MSS. 29550, *passim.*; N.R.O., X.4478/712.

58. N.R.O., F-H. 4084.

59. N.R.O., X.4478/712; Hatton was a gentleman of the Privy Chamber.

60. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, ff. 5, 9; N.R.O., F-H. 3498.

anything to have Sir William elected".⁶¹

The mayor, in fact, proved very active in promoting Dudley's cause. He offered sums as large as £7, preferments in the corporation, and licences to sell ale.⁶² He was equally active in obstructing Hatton's campaign, even to the point of threatening or imprisoning his supporters. Dudley for his part, declined to cultivate the aristocratic or gentry interests in the borough, apart from that of Sir Richard Rainsford. Instead he concentrated on canvassing for popular support in the inns and alehouses of the town.⁶³ While Dudley was buying votes with pots of ale, the mayor facilitated his rabble-rousing by continually postponing the execution of the electoral precept in order to give him more time.

Although it would be naive to suppose that Hatton's agents ignored the alehouses, they would appear to have been more concerned about preserving their majority among "sober and discreet party of the town", which the interest of Langham and Harvey gave them.⁶⁴ Dudley tried to disrupt this party by attacking its leaders. According to the puritan leaders, aldermen Lovell, Gifford, Sergeant, Pendleton, Wollaston, Sprigg, Selby, Collins and Twigden, he tried, like Tarquin the Proud, to render them "civiliter muti" as well as, after the regulation, "civiliter mortui", by requesting the privy council to deprive secluded burgesses of their vote.⁶⁵ The privy council, however, would seem to have ignored Dudley's dispatch, for there is no record of its being heard in the council's registers.

61. ibid., f. 5.

62. N.R.O., F-H. 3492.

63. H.M.C., I, p. 19; B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, f. 12.

64. ibid., f. 12.

65. ibid., f. 9.

Despite the mayor's procrastination the election was eventually held on 7th March. Dudley attempted to break Hatton's majority at the poll, but the market square was full of voters clamouring, "A Hatton! a Hatton!" According to Hatton, there were about 400 of his supporters to only ten of Dudley's.⁶⁶ If his claim was correct, it should be pointed out that it implies that two-thirds of the town's enfranchised voters were either too apathetic, too antagonistic, or too scared, to attend the hustings. Contrary to the Committee of Privileges' ruling that had extended the franchise to all the householders, the mayor responded by moving the election into the town hall, which was then barred to the commonalty by forty men armed with halberds and clubs.⁶⁷ After two aldermen and thirty common councillors had left the meeting, the mayor and about forty burgesses elected Sir William Dudley. The other thirty-two burgesses joined the congregation at the market cross and put their names to an indenture returning Sir Christopher Hatton.⁶⁸

The sheriff received both indentures and, as he was in duty bound, returned the one sealed by the town clerk. Hatton, however, appealed to the House of Commons and mobilised impressive support for his petition. Hatton Fermor, the previous town clerk, and brother of the recently deceased Sir William Fermor, offered legal advice.⁶⁹ Sir John Barnard of Abington and Henry Lord O'Brien of Great Billing, two of the more important county gentlemen living in the vicinity of Northampton, gave evidence on Hatton's behalf to the Committee of Privileges.⁷⁰ Lord Montagu made suggestions as

66. Bodley, Top. MS, Northants., c. 9, f. 113; N.R.O., F-H. 1753.

67. N.R.O., F-H. 1753 -4, 3492, 3494-5.

68. N.R.O., F-H. 1753b, 3158.

69. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, f.16.

70. ibid., ff. 31, 124.

to the presentation of Hatton's evidence and advised him to avail himself of the services of Sir Heneage Finch.⁷¹ The Committee of Privileges, whether influenced or not by the prestige of Hatton's partisans, determined to uphold its previous interpretation of the extent of the borough franchise: Dudley was unseated and Hatton installed in his place.⁷²

The composition of Hatton's party illuminates the proposition that there is no simple relationship between personal, local and national politics in mid-seventeenth century Northamptonshire. Hatton, during his subsequent parliamentary career became a supporter of the Duke of Ormonde and eventually a Tory opponent of exclusion.⁷³ Amongst his gentry adherents only O'Brien had much in common with him, despite Langham's intimate correspondence with the Hattons. Henry Lord O'Brien was heir to an Irish title and estate; was member for Clare in the Irish parliament and vigorously owned the English and Protestant interest in Ireland, as did Ormonde, to whose recommendation the family owed the (never assumed) title of Marquess of Billing. Shaftesbury considered him to be a more vile Tory than Hatton.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Sir James Langham had a Presbyterian Royalist background but continued to have "a large room in the hearts of able, good ministers".⁷⁵ After the Restoration he was associated with the

71. ibid., f. 18 .

72. C. J. , VIII, p. 469.

73. Bodley, MS. Carte, 36, f. 320; D.N.B., IX, pp. 163-4.

74. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XII, Part I, pp. 708, 711. K.H.D.

Haley, "Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-78", loc. cit. , p. 86.

75. E. Pierce, Christ alone our Life, 1691, Dedication. B. L. 4474.a.40.

conformed vicar of All Saints', Dr. Simon Ford and in particular with the vicar of St Sepulchre's, Edward Pierce, alias Pearse, whom the Langhams appointed to the living of Cottesbrooke when the intruded minister's position ceased to be tenable.⁷⁶ Both of these were scornful of the Laudian liturgy and held strong Protestant views not strictly compatible with contemporary Anglican practice.⁷⁷ Just as Ford's conformity did not prevent him espousing his own brand of Protestantism, and even criticising the royal administration, Langham's nonconformity did not prevent his serving on the Brook-house committee in 1668. Neither did his loyalty prevent his

-
76. ibid., Dedication; J. Cox and R. Serjeantson, History of the Church of Holy Sepulchre, Northampton, 1897, p. 158; A.G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, 1934, p. 91; S. Ford, A Christian's Acquiescence in all the Products of Divine Providence, 1665, Dedication; B.L., 14818, a. 12; R. Serjeantson, History of All Saints', Northampton, 1901, pp. 213-8; N. N. and Q, V, pp. 252-3.
77. Pierce, Christ alone our Life, Dedication; E. Pearse, The Conformist's Plea for the Non-Conformists, 1681, passim.; B.L., 698, i. 1.(4); E. Pearse, The Conformists' Second Plea for the Non-Conformists, 1682, passim.; B.L., 701. f. 24; E. Pearse, The Conformists' Third Plea for the Non-Conformists, 1683, passim.; B.L., 698. i. 1.(5); E. Pearse, The Conformists' Fourth Plea for the Non-Conformists, 1683, passim.; B.L., 698. i.1. (6); Serjeantson, History of All Saints, pp. 213-8; D.N.B., XV, pp. 604-5.

attending Baxter's conventicle in Great Russell Street.⁷⁸

Lord Montagu and Sir John Barnard had even less in common with Christopher Hatton. Although Montagu was related to Hatton through his great-aunt, the latter's mother, there was no kinship at all between Barnard and Hatton. Barnard's relations in the county were exclusively puritan: the Edmonds of Preston Deanery, the Knightleys and the St Johns. Both Montagu and Barnard were pious if moderate puritans who had served parliament in the 1640s but had evaded or refused to give their services during the Interregnum.⁷⁹ Barnard, like Langham, had been knighted after the Restoration but unlike him, he had not served on any of the county committees or in Parliament during the 1650s.⁸⁰ Like Langham also, Barnard was closely associated with moderate presbyterian ministers who later conformed. In Barnard's case these were, John Bullivant and John Howes, successively rectors of Abington.⁸¹ Bullivant, who had become rector of Old,

-
78. Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1658-81, 1971, pp. 146, n.42, 177; O. Airy, ed., Burnet's History of My own Time, Part I, Reign of Charles II, I, p. 483.
79. N.R.O., F-H. 133; B.L., Stowe MS. 577; P.R.O., C.193/13/4-6; E.373/493-503; Acts and Ord., II, pp. 39, 304, 472, 669.
80. H. Barber, op. cit., pp. 30, 52; John Howes, Christ, God-Man, 1657, Dedication; B.L., 114.d.23; John Howes, Real Comforts Extracted from Moral and Spiritual Principles ...in a sermon preached at the funeral of Thomas Ball, 1660, passim; B.L., E.988 (29); John Howes, A Sermon preached at the Assizes at Northampton, August 9th 1669, 1669, passim; B.L., 226, f.19.(2).

a living in Hatton's gift, would seem to have acted as an intermediary between Hatton and Barnard.⁸² Unlike Montagu, whose debts were neither great nor pressing, and unlike Langham, whose family had acquired at least six properties in the county since 1638, but like Hatton whose patrimony was for the time being, "shattered", Barnard would seem to have been in financial difficulty.⁸³ In 1659 he had been forced to ask Sir Justinian Isham for a loan of £6,000 on the security of his land at Abington (with what success is unknown) and eventually he had to sell the land in 1669 (for £13,750 to William Thursby of the Middle Temple) and take up residence in Northampton.⁸⁴ While his residence in the town together with that of his nephew, Henry Edmonds, esq, was Barnard's only known connection with Northampton, and Hatton's and O'Brien's were equally vague, Montagu's and Langham's ties with the town, as has been seen, were strong.

Nevertheless, despite these differences between Hatton's gentry supporters, the difference between Hatton's personal politics and those of his supporters in the town is the most marked. Hatton's party of gentry can be described as an alliance between Anglican Royalists who later became Tories and ex-Parliamentarians of puritan persuasions who supported the Restoration but later tended towards Whiggery. The alliance with members of the town oligarchy was one with men who had faithfully served both Parliament and Cromwell, many of whom had been ejected from the corporation in 1662. Of the forty-seven ex-mayors and bailiffs who had held office between 1643 and regulation in 1662 and who were alive in 1663, twenty-four voted for Hatton

82. B.L. Add. MSS. 29551, f. 33.

83. H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 312; Bridges, I, pp. 384, 554; II, pp. 3, 75, 128, 186; D.N.B., IX, p. 163.

84. Isham, Diary, p. 230; Baker, I, p. 10; Bridges, II, pp. 401-3; P.R.O., E.179/25/4/14.

or signed his indenture: of the thirty who served the corporation between 1662, after the regulation, and 1671, only five voted for Hatton.⁸⁵ This is a clear indication of where Hatton's support lay.

Amongst Hatton's supporters were some of the more substantial inhabitants of the town: nineteen of those who voted for him gave sums in excess of ten shillings to the free and voluntary gift of 1661.⁸⁶ This is not, however, an indication of unusual enthusiasm for the new régime. Neither can the fact that eighteen gave less than ten shillings or that about three hundred contributed nothing at all be construed as signs of antipathy. There were ninety-two subscribers to the voluntary gift, of whom thirty-seven voted for Hatton and these gave between them £40 12s. out of the total collection of £132 8s. 10d. Both of these figures represent a proportion of about one-third, but the 400 supporters that Hatton claimed were in the market place, 311 of whose names were collected by Hatton's agents, represent a similar proportion of the potential electorate, and there is therefore little statistical significance in this fraction regarding approval or dislike of the new régime.⁸⁷

There is, however, one important statistical inference that can be drawn, and that is there is no evidence of Hatton's support having a class nature. The number out of the thirty-seven contributors giving any sum, whether three shillings or three pounds, always represents a proportion of between thirty and forty per cent of all those giving that sum. Furthermore, reference to the hearth tax returns shows this more clearly. Out of the 558 households not receiving alms, all the following gradations of **Hearth Tax**, except the last, exhibit similar percentages: one hearth, two hearths, three, four to six,

85. Borough Records, II, pp. 552-3, 562-3; N.R.O., F-H. 3156-8.

86. P.R.O., E.179/254/9.

87. N.R.O., F-H. 1753, 3156-8.

seven to nine, and ten or more.⁸⁸ Only three occupants, out of a total of twenty with houses of ten or more hearths, voted for Hatton, but this can be explained largely by the number of innkeepers in this group whose social status is obscured by the size of their dwelling. Admittedly, there were six prominent members of the new regulated corporation who were known opponents of Hatton in this group, Robert Addis, John Brafieid, Henry Flexney, Robert Ives, John Somers and Lawrence Tomkins, and only one of his supporters from before the purge, John Spicer. But, this number is not statistically significant enough to reveal a class nature amongst Hatton's opponents; because firstly, it is a small part of a proportionally smaller élite, and secondly, the majority of town officers, before and after 1662, come from the four to six, and seven to nine hearths groups where the proportion of absentees from the poll to Hatton's supporters is the same as that for the total poll: two to one.

Another examination, however, of the mayors and bailiffs of Northampton between 1643 and 1671 does show a difference of size between voters' and absentees' households. This difference is equally marked between all those who served as mayor or bailiff before 1662 and those who served after the regulation. In both cases, however, if the seven with ten or more hearths are discounted, the difference in size of household between the respective groups disappears and the average in all four groups is about six. This would seem to indicate that the oligarchy was equally divided by three connected factors: the Cromwellian régime, the regulation of the borough, and the Hatton-Dudley contest. The exception was the topmost élite who had declined or been excluded from office in the 1650s but had re-entered politics after 1662 and begun to exercise a dominating influence in borough affairs.

88. P.R.O., E.179/254/14.

Hatton's support in the town, therefore, was drawn from all sections of society, but amongst its politically active oligarchs support came from the modestly well-to-do servants of the old régime. Most of them had been purged from the common council, although a good number had tried to make their peace with Charles II's government by the voluntary presentation of sums of money. Opposition to Hatton in this group came largely from those who were more acceptable to the new régime and they were led by a very small élite of very wealthy townsmen.

Hatton's victory and the vindication of his party were not the end of the struggle for control of the borough. Even before the 1663 by-election it was known that Sir Richard Rainsford would soon retire in order to take up a royal office, and preparations would have to be made to replace him.⁸⁹ Those defeated by Hatton in 1661, moreover, were eager for revenge. Sir William Dudley had lost much pride, reputation and money in the course of the 1663 contest. He was reputed to have spent £500 in electoral inducements; and this seems to have involved him in some financial difficulty for he mortgaged his lands in Barnwell All Saints for £1,500 in the following year and eventually had to sell them.⁹⁰ Despite this financial set-back, he tried to revenge himself on Hatton's party.

The best-documented episode in the vindictiveness of Dudley and his supporters against Hatton's adherents amongst the gentry is their attack on Lord Montagu. During the early summer of 1663 Dudley's party gained control of the Commission for Subsidies in Northamptonshire, ousted Hatton's supporters and severely increased the assessment on Montagu's estate, which was worth

89. B.L. Add. MSS. 29551, f.7.

90. N.R.O., X.4478/712; Bridges, II, p. 214.

about £2,300 a year in lands in the county. Montagu appealed to the royal court, where his eldest son, Henry, was master of horse to the queen, and succeeded in winning the personal intervention of the King.⁹¹ Although Charles agreed that the surcharge was an act of malice, he could not promise immediate redress, for fear of establishing an unfortunate precedent, but promised a fair assessment and an abatement in the next two subsidies.

Dudley's importance in Northamptonshire politics was at an end. At the beginning of 1664 rumours spread amongst Hatton's supporters in Northampton that Dudley had been removed from the Commission of the Peace.⁹² These rumours happened to be premature, but Dudley was indeed dismissed from the bench in the following year.⁹³ In 1667, an aged and ailing man, he sought reconciliation between Montagu and himself before his time ran out; but with what success is unknown.⁹⁴

The aftermath of the 1663 election in Northampton itself was a continuation in the struggle for the control of the borough. Despite being admonished by the Committee of Privileges, Brafield, aided by alderman Freind, took out oaths for the peace against thirty-five of Hatton's party and bound them over for good behaviour. Brafield's own behaviour continued to be swaggering and tyrannical until his term of office expired. His successor in November 1663, William Vaughan, although he had been bailiff to Thomas Thornton in 1661, was described as "one of their [Brafield's party's] children".

91. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, f. 53; B.L. Add. 34222, f. 38v.; Bodley, MS.

Carte, 223, ff. 259-60; H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 314.

92. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, f. 78.

93. P.R.O., C.231/7, f. 271.

94. H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 316.

Vaughan proceeded after Brafield's fashion and commenced his period of office by ejecting three of Hatton's supporters from the common council. Hatton, for his own part, does not appear to have done much to protect his followers who were left to endure daily affronts by Brafield's party and his few exertions on their behalf would appear to have been made from London. He seems to have ignored Salathiel Lovell's battery of letters imploring him to make an appearance at Northampton. He left his supporters to contest the long awaited by-election which was occasioned by Sir Richard Rainsford's elevation as Baron of the Exchequer, on their own.⁹⁵

Hatton's neglect or non-involvement is understandable because the by-election in March 1664 was fought between his former supporter, Sir John Barnard and another of his connections, Sir Henry Yelverton. How closely Hatton and Yelverton were connected in 1664 is a matter of some doubt. They were not correspondents; but Hatton eventually married Yelverton's daughter, Frances and became guardian of Yelverton's sons, so that there cannot have been any hostility against him amongst the Yelverton family. Furthermore, just as Hatton had received a commendation from the Duke of York before the 1663 election, Yelverton also was considered a friend of the Duke of York.⁹⁶ Hatton's failure to support his followers, moreover, as well as Montagu's, O'Brien's and Langham's, can be explained by Yelverton's possession of the Earl of Exeter's interest and approval.⁹⁷ Exeter was associated with the Montagus and besides, his office of Lord-Lieutenant gave him a pre-eminence in county affairs which made any clash with him, perilous.

95. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, ff. 37. 39, 53, 59, 61, 63, 78.

96. A. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, III, 1951, p. 37.

97. Bodley, MS. Add. c. 305, f. 304.

The contest between Barnard and Yelverton was one between a Presbyterian turned Royalist and an Anglican conformist whose principles of high-church Toryism were already clearly defined.⁹⁸ Since 1662 Yelverton had won notoriety for persecuting Nonconformists and he had been instrumental in ejecting Vincent Alsop from Wilby, a rectory in his own presentation.⁹⁹ Like Barnard, he was the recipient of the dedication to one of Dr. Simon Ford's printed sermons; but unlike Barnard, Yelverton considered Ford, indiscreet and of no clerical esteem.¹⁰⁰

More curiously, Yelverton was opposed at the election by Vaughan, Brafield and Freind. There was no attempt to restrict the franchise to the corporation and a poll of the inhabitants was held at the end of March, 1664. Although Yelverton was said to have spent a great deal of money to secure his election, Barnard, whose own limited financial resources have been noted, was returned by the election officers, Vaughan, Brafield and Freind with a majority of eighty votes¹⁰¹ - Yelverton, however, petitioned the Committee of Privileges with an accusation that the mayor had miscarried the election by enfranchising those inhabitants who shared in the charitable gift at Christmas. The committee agreed with the charge that these voters were in receipt of alms and therefore disqualified from voting, and after a recount declared that Yelverton had been elected by the majority of freeholders.¹⁰²

98. Sir Henry Yelverton, A Short Discourse of the Truth and Reasonableness of the Religion Delivered by Jesus Christ, 1662, passim.; B.L., 4014.aaa. 20.

99. Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. c. 210, ff. 61, 65, 73, 78-9, 81.

100. S. Ford, The Loyal Subject's Exultation for the Royal Exile's Restoration in the Parallel of King David and Mephibosheh, 1660, dedication, B.L., E.1038.(5).

101. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

102. C.J., VIII, pp. 544, 550.

In the light of subsequent events, Brafield's and Freind's opposition to the Tory candidate and Vaughan's collaboration with the aldermen mentioned earlier, become understandable. For a variety of reasons the divisions caused by the regulations of the Corporation of the early 1660s had begun to break down; the old parties were fragmenting leaving an alliance between the two extremes and a large middle group from which Yelverton recruited his majority. Whether Hatton's abstention from the internal politics of the town drove some of his supporters into the ranks of their opponents, or whether he merely recognised a change in the status quo and declined to ally himself with the extremists it is impossible to say. What can be said is that after the election Vaughan was still associated with a group of pre-regulation officials, aldermen, Thornton, Collis and Whiston, who refused all attempts at reconciliation on Yelverton's behalf.¹⁰³ In fact, Vaughan in his last days of office tried to eject several persons recognised as well-affected to the government from the corporation; and only a letter from the King, at Yelverton's and Rainsford's prompting, prevented him from doing so.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, many who had voted against Yelverton claimed to have had their votes pre-engaged and readily accepted invitations to Yelverton's victory celebrations.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the party of the Good Old Cause was falling apart.

Brafield's party remained in the ascendant long enough to have one of its members, Francis Pickmer, elected mayor in the autumn of 1664, but a year later it was in the throes of dissolution itself. In 1665, the aldermen convened the assembly without the presence of the mayor and chose John Freind to succeed in the office. Why Freind deserted Brafield is not clear, but

103. Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. c. 20, f. 85.

104. C.S.P.D., 1663-4, p. 603.

105. Bodley, MS. Eng. Lett. c. 20, f. 85.

there was probably a clash of temperament between them as on previous occasions: for Brafield's character was described as high handed and Freind's as naturally venomous.¹⁰⁶ Brafield retaliated by pretending to the Lord-Lieutenant that Freind had turned fanatic or Nonconformist and had him carried off to the house of a deputy-lieutenant at Rushton, Lord Cullen, on the day that he was due to be sworn.¹⁰⁷ Francis Pickmer supported Brafield and offered testimony that Freind had vehemently opposed the King's personal intervention to have Alexander Ekins elected steward of the borough; and this is probably true because of Freind's peremptory manner and because even Yelverton had strict views regarding how far the King could bend the laws and liberties of England. But Pickmer's charge that Freind entertained fanatics and encouraged them to speak disparagingly of the government is almost certainly untrue, because the following day the aldermen of Northampton went to Rushton and put up a bond of £1,000 for Freind's loyalty.¹⁰⁸ Thwarted and piqued, Brafield and Pickmer absconded with the mace to prevent the mayor-elect from being sworn, even though the Earl of Manchester, with three hundred gentlemen of the county, had arrived to perform the service. Manchester informed the King, who sent the sergeant-at-arms to arrest Brafield and Pickmer and bring them before the Privy Council. After nineteen days in custody they revealed the whereabouts of the mace and were released but disfranchised from participating in borough politics again.¹⁰⁹

106. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551, ff. 37,39.

107. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

108. N.R.O., X.4478/712; C.S.P.D., 1665-6, p. 15.

109. N.R.O., X.4478/712; P.R.O., P.C. 2/58, ff. 260, 277.

There were two other occasions when the town of Northampton became the focus and mirror of Northamptonshire politics in the period under review. The first was the by-election occasioned by Sir Christopher Hatton's elevation to the peerage after his father's death, in 1670. The town was set for another contest, this time between Henry Lord O'Brien and Sir William Fermor of Easton Neston, the eldest son of the member for Brackley in 1661. The Fermors' influence in Northampton has been mentioned before. Not only did they hold the toll of the market, but Sir William's uncle, Hatton Fermor was an ex-town clerk, while he himself owned the second largest residence in Northampton, assessed at twenty hearths. The Fermors' ties with the town would seem to have been of long standing, for Sir William's grandmother had been resident there during the Interregnum; but to what extent he could capitalise on this association is unknown, for he was only twenty-one years of age. His tender years are an intimation that the contest was one of family prestige, and not of deeply-felt political issues. Seven years later, Shaftesbury considered both Fermor and Lord O'Brien "vile" in different degrees.¹¹⁰

Neither family's prestige was put to the test because the other sitting member, Sir Henry Yelverton died shortly before the poll and both candidates were elected. In fact the election had an insular nature in that the town's representation was collusively divided between the two families at the poll, to the exclusion of any third party.¹¹¹ The only other contender was George Digby, the son of the factious Earl of Bristol, and he might have introduced

110. K.H.D. Haley, Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-8, B.I.H.R., XLIII, 1970, p. 87.

111. H.M.C., XIII, Portland, I and II, p. 289.

a measure of conflict into the competition had he not been ignored by the local gentry, so that he did not appear at the poll.¹¹²

Any contemporary observation that a consensus of political opinion had been reached in the county would have been premature because in 1672 the town once more became the arena for county rivalries. This time the rivals were more than local potentates: they were national figures, the Earls of Peterborough and Northampton. In 1671, on the death of the Earl of Manchester, the Earl of Peterborough had been elected Recorder of Northampton by the corporation.¹¹³ Peterborough had been a distinguished Cavalier during the Civil War and, with his brother, a persistent plotter in the 1650s. After the Restoration he had received such rewards as the Governorship of Tangiers, a life pension of £1,000, and the office of Groom of the Stole to the Duke of York.¹¹⁴ Royalist ardour was not the issue, however, for Northampton's record of unflinching devotion to the crown was at least equally impressive.¹¹⁵ In 1666, despite an estate in Northamptonshire worth only £260 a year, he had secured for himself the office of joint Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire in place of the late Earl of Westmorland. In this position he proved active and diligent, but was clearly jealous of the Earl of Northampton, who had a regular commission and was able to raise nearly 240 volunteers for the Dutch war in that year while he himself could raise only a troop to supplement the King's lifeguard. The Comptons and Mordaunts had not often been in harmony in the 1650s and the Northamptonshire levy of 1666 was not the first occasion when their mutual jealousy had manifested itself in a

112. Bodley, MS. Carte, 219, f. 110.

113. C.S.P.D., 1671, p. 245.

114. D.N.B., XIII, pp. 850-1.

115. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, IX, p. 682.

military rivalry.¹¹⁶ In 1660 Northampton and Peterborough's brother had raised rival troops of horse to greet the King at Dover on his return to England.¹¹⁷ Peterborough used his lieutenancy to establish an independent and eminent position in the county. He did so by apparently obstructing administrative co-operation with the Earl of Exeter, his joint Lord-Lieutenant, until his separate position was officially recognised in 1673, when he was made Lord-Lieutenant for the west division of the county, and Exeter for the east.¹¹⁸

A year after Peterborough's nomination as Recorder of Northampton, the corporation chose John Willoughby as mayor, a gentleman of Purston, some sixteen miles from Northampton, and a Justice of the Peace, because they could not find anybody else "to undergo this troublesome and chargeable office".¹¹⁹ The need to go into the county for a mayor is a sign of how subdued urban politics had become since 1665. John Willoughby's family were longstanding gentlemen retainers of the Comptons, and his father and brothers had done much to support the Earl of Northampton during the Civil Wars.¹²⁰ As a reward, Willoughby had been suggested as a Knight of the Royal Oak and the Lord-Lieutenants had intervened on his behalf for a greater honour but the King, although he recognised his worth, had thought that his fortune (of about £600 a year) was insufficient for any great employment. Willoughby was obviously well connected, since he chose to celebrate his election with an enormous banquet to which he invited the nobility from a

116. C.S.P.D., 1665-6, pp. 484, 504, 507; Bodley, MS. Carte, 54, f. 341.

117. H.M.C., V, p. 150.

118. C.S.P.D., 1665-6, p. 422; 1673, p. 425.

119. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

120. N.N. and Q., II, p. 208; C.S.P.D., 1661-2, pp. 434-5.

hundred miles around, and even the royal family.¹²¹ It is interesting to speculate who was the channel for these invitations and whether or not it was in fact the Earl of Northampton who in fact was celebrating this notable extension of his interest, for Willoughby's income was too small to bear the cost of such a banquet.

Shortly afterwards, Northampton extended his interest in the borough even further: Willoughby induced the corporation to replace Peterborough with the Earl of Northampton as Recorder.¹²² Peterborough protested to the Privy Council, which was clearly embarrassed by this rebuff of a royal favourite at the instigation of one of the crown's staunchest supporters. A compromise, however, was reached: the mayor was summoned to the council and, although he defended his actions as within the rights of the borough charter, he was sternly rebuked. None the less, Northampton's election was allowed to stand, but to save Peterborough's pride a quo warranto was issued against the corporation "for their contemptuous proceedings and the disrespect they had shown to the Earl of Peterborough".¹²³

The controversy over the Recordership of Northampton was a set back to the Earl of Peterborough's rise in county affairs, but it was also a prelude to his ascendancy in the county community in the 1680s. Only a man of Northampton's influence and reputation could have cheated Peterborough of his desire and delayed his continued rise in local politics. As such,

121. Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 155; A Clark, ed., The Life and Time of Anthony Wood, Antiquary of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by himself, II, 1892, pp. 250-1.

122. Bodley, Top. MS., Northants, c. 9, f. 112.

123. P.R.O., P.C. 2/63, ff. 327, 336; Borough Records, II, p. 107; H.M.C., XII, Part VII, Le Fleming, p. 98.

the controversy was the most significant occasion before the Popish Plot on which the county town was used as an arena for conflicting county interests. As such it represents a watershed and marks the true beginning of the Earl of Peterborough's rise to dominance in county affairs.

An illuminating corollary to the struggles in Northampton was the by-election in Peterborough in 1666 occasioned by the death of the Earl of Westmorland, an event which also brought about the Earl of Peterborough's appointment as joint Lord-Lieutenant, and the subsequent elevation of Charles Lord Le Despenser to his father's peerage. Three contenders appeared: Sir Vere Fane, Le Despenser's younger brother, who had been created a K.B. at the time of the Restoration; Edward Palmer of Stoke Doyle, who would have been a Knight of the Royal Oak had the order been instituted; and William Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton, on the outskirts of Peterborough, who had recently returned after completing his education on the continent.¹²⁴

Peterborough was at this time divided by three interests,; the Fanes, Fitzwilliams and Ormes. All three families had recently represented the town: Fane's brother from 1660 to 1666, Fitzwilliam's father from 1640 to 1648 and Orme as the current member. Palmer was an interloper who owned a few properties in the town but was a wealthy man with an income of £1,200 p.a.¹²⁵ Fane mobilised his support early and quickly gained the assistance of the Bishop of Peterborough and Humphrey Orme. Despite these powerful interests, Fitzwilliam won by 240 votes to Fane's 158 and Palmer's 138.¹²⁶

124. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XII, p. 571; N.N. and Q., II, p. 208;

N.R.O., F(M)M., 300-350.

125. N.R.O., F(M)M., 888.

126. N.R.O., F(M)M., 857, 860, 884, 859.

The survival of the poll-book allows the composition of the vote to be analysed. Despite Fane's powerful supporters, Fitzwilliam had the majority of the more influential residents of the town: seven of the town governors voted for him, four, including Orme, for Fane, and two for Palmer.¹²⁷ Fitzwilliam had the votes of 104 residents paying scot and lot, Fane had 40 and Palmer 87. A comparison with the Hearth Tax reveals that the votes cast by those with four hearths or more were almost equal, at 33 for Fitzwilliam, 34 for Fane and 32 for Palmer; but the payment of scot and lot is probably a better guide to those who were substantial residents. Of those not paying scot and lot and not in receipt of alms Fitzwilliam had 113, Fane 91 and Palmer 27. Only Fitzwilliam was able to draw almost equally from the well-to-do and the less affluent. More than half of Fane's vote came from the latter group, while Palmer relied heavily on the votes of the affluent. Despite the intervention of the Bishop, Fitzwilliam had the votes of fourteen of the cathedral clergy whereas Fane had only six and Palmer thirteen. Fane and Palmer also relied more heavily on the few ineligible votes they could smuggle onto the hustings. Of these Fitzwilliam had nine. Fane had seventeen, and Palmer thirteen.

A comparison with the Free and Voluntary Gift of 1661 does not reveal whether any contestant had a monopoly of support. Twenty-four of Fitzwilliam's supporters contributed a total of £10 16s. 6d. to the crown;

127. W. Mellows, ed., Peterborough Local Administration: Parochial Government from the Reformation to the Revolution, 1541-1689: Minutes and Accounts of the Feoffees and Governors of City Lands, N.R.S., X, 1937, pp. 161, 167-9.

thirteen of Fane's gave a total of £6 14s. 6d.; and sixteen of Palmer's gave a total of £6 14s.¹²⁸ Proportionally more of Palmer's supporters contributed to the voluntary gift, but their average payment of 8s. 5d. formed the lowest contribution. The proportion of Fitzwilliam's and Fane's voters contributing was about equal, at about one-tenth of the total but Fane's supporters contributed substantially more generously than Fitzwilliam's their gifts averaging 10s. 4d. to the 9s. of Fitzwilliam's men. None the less, the overall view that the candidate's Royalism was not a crucial issue is borne out by the parity of votes conferred on Fitzwilliam and Hatton by those town governors who had served under Cromwell's regime.¹²⁹

Palmer, however, did not accept his defeat. As well as coercing his tenants to vote for him or else have their houses pulled down, he had had the foresight to bribe the bailiff of the Dean and Chapter, who was the returning officer, to allow his agents to alter the poll-books. Palmer appeared to have won, but Fitzwilliam appealed to the Committee of Privileges with evidence of Palmer's alterations, and the Committee, possibly with the knowledge that Palmer had since died of plague, upheld Fitzwilliam's petition.¹³⁰

The other candidate, Sir Vere Fane did not long remain disappointed, for he was returned unopposed to fill the seat vacated by Humphrey Orme's death in 1671.¹³¹ Both Fane and Fitzwilliam in the last years of the Cavalier Parliament were considered by Shaftesbury to be country party

128. P.R.O., E.179/254/9.

129. W. Mellows, ed., op. cit., p. 161: Both received four votes.

130. N.R.O., F(M)M. 411-12, 415, 887-8, 1259-66; C.J., VIII, pp. 626-7.

131. Return of Members of Parliament, I, 1879, p. 526.

supporters, and were given his stamp of approbation: two w's.¹³²

The last election held in Northamptonshire was the unopposed election of John Lord Burleigh, the son of one of the county's greatest magnates the Earl of Exeter in 1674.¹³³ This event was illustrative of the general conclusion of this chapter, that, as the Restoration period proceeded, contests ceased to have much political significance and either became matters of family pride or else were settled by collusion. Clergymen were ejected from their livings, the Commissions of the Peace and the Militia remodelled, corporations purged, but what rancour there was does not seem to have been reflected in the by-elections. The arenas for local political competition were restricted to the relatively open boroughs of Northampton and Peterborough. In the case of Peterborough there was little or no political dispute behind the election on either occasion and the poll was dominated by three landlord families seeking the prestige of nomination. In the case of Northampton, rival country gentry became embroiled in a faction struggle for control of the Common Council which was further complicated by the intervention of the government to root out the remains of the Good Old Cause. But even in Northampton faction gave way to a nascent Toryism, or at least a Tory in embryo, Yelverton, simply because the principles of Whiggery had yet to be defined.¹³⁴ Before the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis forged the Whig party all the gentlemen who stood for election between 1661 and 1674 were first and foremost loyal monarchists.¹³⁵

132. K.H.D. Haley, 'Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-8,' B.I.H.R., XLIII, 1970, p. 86.

133. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

134. H. Yelverton, A Short Discourse of the Truth and Reasonableness of the Religion Delivered by Jesus Christ, 1662, B.L. 4014. aaa. 20. - a High Anglican manifesto.

135. There is, however, evidence to show that the increasing polarisation between Court and Country factions during the 1670s was seen in Northamptonshire in the last elections to the Cavalier Parliament: infra., pp. 260-62, 265-68.

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT UNSETTLED: THE POPISSH PLOT;
EXCLUSION; ROYAL REACTION AND THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTIONThe Popish Plot

Although Northamptonshire had been the seat of several prominent Roman Catholic families, by the last quarter of the seventeenth century there were few adherents of the old religion within the county. By 1675, there were few surviving representatives of those families which had maintained their devotion to Rome since the Reformation. Two of the most important families had died out in the male line: the last Lord Vaux had died in 1661; and Sir William Tresham of Lyveden had died in 1643 leaving what remained of his properties to his aunts and Protestant cousins.¹ Other families of lesser importance, such as the Morgans of Heyford, the Bawdes of Walgrave and the Andrewes of Denton, had similarly disappeared, or changed their religion.² Of the twenty Catholic recusant families of gentry status listed by the government in 1651, eight had disappeared from view by 1656, and by 1675 only three of prominence were left: the Brudenells of Deene, the Poultons of Desborough and the Saunders of Welford.³ By 1680 there were only eight Catholic gentry families in the county.⁴

-
1. Bridges, II, pp. 103, 374; N.N. and Q., II, pp. 40-6; G.E.C. ed., Complete Baronetage, I, 1900, p. 56; M.E. Finch, The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, N.R.S, 1956, p. 99.
 2. Bridges, I, pp. 357, 523; II, p. 129. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 145.
 3. P.R.O., S.P. 23/254, f. 101; S.P. 23/261, passim; Cal. Comm. Comp., I p. 741-42; N.R.O., Fermor Hesketh-Baker, 719.
 4. H.M.C., XI, App. Pt. II, MSS. of the House of Lords, 1678-88, p. 228.

Despite their patent piety and commitment to the survival of their faith (six of John Poulton's seven sons had joined the Society of Jesus, for instance) few converts had been made to fill the void left by family extinction.⁵ Only two gentlemen can be traced who changed their religion for that of Rome; one was that "Melancholy and begotted convert", George Holman of Warkworth; the other, the Earl of Peterborough, was Lord-Lieutenant of the county. As such, he would have been a prestigious conversion to Rome had he not in 1678 still openly to declare his new allegiance. By 1676, according to the Compton Census, there were only ninety-three recusants in the whole of the county, and most of these lived in or near the households of the surviving Catholic magnates or their dowagers.⁶

Few in numbers, and apparently without many powerful leaders, the Catholic residents would seem not to have been regarded as a threat by Northamptonshire's Protestant community. One reason for this was, obviously, the Catholics' weakness in numbers, and their tendency to collect in isolated congregations, under the protection of a local magnate, in parishes such as Deene, Harrowden and Welford.

There were, however, two other factors which should be described. The first factor which explains the Protestant community's benevolent attitude to its Catholic fellow country-men, was the Catholic's own predisposition to political quietism. During the civil wars, only six out of the twenty-one Papists named by the government took up arms for the King.⁷ There were

5. H. Foley, Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, VII, 1883, pp. 590, 619.

6. William Salt Library, Stafford, MS. 2112.

7. P.R.O., S.P. 23/254, f. 101; S.P. 23/261, passim.

doubtless some others who were not tested, like the three younger sons of Sir William Andrewe who were killed fighting for Charles I, but the number of Catholic combatants from Northamptonshire must still have been small.⁸ Indeed, only two of those listed, the Morgan brothers of Heyford, can properly be described as Papists-in-arms; the others confined their activities to providing money for the King's service.⁹ The remaining fifteen recusants adopted a course of strict neutrality. The innocence of Edward Lord Vaux of any act of delinquency was established to the satisfaction of the Committee for the Advance of Money.¹⁰ Sir William Andrewes, his son John, George Poulton and Sir William Tresham were also similarly acquitted.¹¹ Although, after the Restoration, Lord Brudenell claimed to have raised a troop of horse for Charles I, the contemporary evidence indicates that he remained inactive during the hostilities, and consequently, he also was acquitted of the charge of delinquency.¹²

The other explanation for the county community's benevolent attitude was that it had always had a strong tradition of toleration for its

8. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 146.

9. D.N.B., XIII, p. 910; P.R.O., S.P. 19/22, f. 343; S.P. 23/25, f. 228.

10. P.R.O., S.P. 19/10, ff. 41, 94; S.P. 23/254, f. 101; S.P. 23/261, f. 123.

11. P.R.O., S.P. 23/219, f. 615; S.P. 23/247, f. 46; M.E. Finch, The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, N.R.S., 1956, p. 99.

12. J. Wake, The Brudenells of Deene, 1954, pp. 101, 125; House of Lords Record Office, Petitions of Robert, Lord Brudenell and annexed papers, 23 December 1645, 3 August 1647; P.R.O., S.P. 23/70, ff. 311.14, 317, 327, 334, 357; S.P. 23/163, f. 447; S.P. 23/157, f. 459.

members, which at times had been carried to the point of protectiveness and co-operation. This can be traced from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Edward, 4th Lord Vaux of Harrowden, even in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, had been able to return from exile and convey his estates to five of his Protestant neighbours to prevent his properties being seized by praemunire. That one of those neighbours was a notorious anti-Catholic, William Tate of Delapre, is an indication of the ambivalent attitude held by Protestants towards Catholics in general and Catholics known to them personally.¹³ The Pickerings of Titchmarsh, whose Protestantism is beyond doubt, also had every reason to dislike Catholics. Gilbert, the grandfather of Sir Gilbert, Pickering's son was badly wounded in trying to apprehend the same Lord Vaux for his suspected participation in the Gunpowder plot, but that did not prevent a Pickering daughter marrying into the Catholic Catesby family or another becoming a governess to the Mordaunts.¹⁴ The Northamptonshire justices made this attitude quite plain when they said about Sir Thomas Brudenell in 1613: "if there had not been much regard for him by some of us, there had passed a conviction /for recusancy/ before this time".¹⁵

Such feelings of regard could not always shield local Catholics from the depredations of the mob. In the arrest of Lord Vaux his house was ransacked and eighty-three years later the Earl of Peterborough's suffered a similar fate.¹⁶ Nor could the county community shelter them for long if the

13. G. Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden, Newport, 1953, pp. 395-6, 402, 419.

14. Bridges, II, p. 383; H. Belgion, Titchmarsh Past and Present, 1979, p. 49.

15. J. Damien, *These Be But Women*, in C. H. Carter, ed., From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, 1966, p. 373.

16. Bridges, II, p. 383; H.M.C., XII, Pt. VII, Le Fleming, 25, p. 230.

central government took a keen interest. Throughout the 1630s, for instance, the Poultons of Desborough were persistently harried for the payment of their composition dues as recusants.¹⁷ Nor could local opinion protect recusants from particularly zealous justices who occasionally enforced the law against Catholics with their full rigour. The Interregnum, especially, allowed the rise to the rank of justice of gentlemen known for their Protestant fervour. Three of these, Major-General William Boteler, John Maunsell of Thorpe Malsor and John Browne of Kettering, headed the local Commission into Papists' Estates and spared no effort exacting the full two-thirds' value of recusants' estates.¹⁸ They did not attempt to moderate the demands of the law by accepting the Catholics' own valuation of their estates, but made full inquiries into those values themselves. The result was that most of the twelve Catholic recusants examined had to pay around thirty per cent more and two, William Saunders of Welford and Sir Percy Herbert of Pipewell, forty or fifty per cent more than their own valuation.¹⁹ Nevertheless, after the Restoration, Protestant justices and deputy-lieutenants intervened to mitigate the effects of the penal laws on their Catholic neighbours. Lord Cullen considered Ferdinando Poulton sufficiently law-abiding to be allowed to retain his beloved birding guns. Cullen was equally loath and far too embarrassed to interfere with the regular nocturnal visits of priestly gentlemen carrying portmanteaus to the house of the Earl of Peterborough's Catholic aunts at Grendon.²⁰ The successors of justices Boteler, Maunsell and Browne would seem to have been more lenient in their treatment of recusants' estates for there were only three

17. P.R.O., Excheq., 351, ff. 416-25.

18. N.R.O., Fermor Hesketh-Baker, 719.

19. N.R.O., Fermor-Hesketh-Baker, 719, passim.

20. C.S.P.D., 1666-7, p. 128.

properties being compounded for in 1671.²¹ The government's plan in 1675 to raise more money by applying the recusancy laws more stringently had as little effect in Northamptonshire as elsewhere.²²

The county community's tolerance was not merely confined to its popish gentry but percolated down to all classes of Catholic society. Not only did those two noble ladies of Grendon appear just once as recusants in a parish constable's bill to the Quarter Sessions but also no other identifiable Catholic was presented for recusancy between 1660 and 1677. Furthermore, the number of Catholic recusants singled out in such bills was always very small. The constables' bills to any one Quarter Sessions never included the whole county, but amongst the twenty to eighty individuals presented for non-attendance at church at any one time, never more than three were named as Catholics. More to the point, popish recusants living in or near the home of a Catholic landowner would seem to have been considered in some way under his protection and virtually immune from presentment. Not one Catholic resident of Deene, Desborough or Harrowden was presented between 1660 and 1677, only one out of the nineteen living at Welford, and two out of the several who were presumably living at Deenethorpe but were included under Deene in the Compton Census.²³ How many of those who were presented were found guilty of recusancy it is impossible to discover, except that it is on record there were no convictions for recusancy in Northamptonshire during

21. B.L., Add. MSS. 20739.

22. Cal. T.B., 1672-5, pp. 694, 804.

23. This paragraph is based on the several thousand constables' bills amongst the Quarter Sessions' Rolls for 1660-77 in the Northamptonshire Record Office: Q.S.R. 1/15-86. The examples cited are in, Q.S.R. 1/24, and Q.S.R. 1/58.

1677.²⁴

On the eve of the Popish Plot there was thus a distinct lack of fear or animosity to Roman Catholics in Northamptonshire. In 1673, Sir Justinian Isham wrote that there was no need for concern as long as the Roman Church abroad remained politically disunited, and as such any popular Catholic insurrection could hardly take place.²⁵ There is little other direct evidence of a Northamptonshire gentleman's opinions of Roman Catholics, save that Lord Hatton was not ashamed to retain the Jesuits' own lawyer, Richard Langhorne.²⁶ Indirectly, notes made by Lord Brudenell reveal some common aspersions against Roman Catholics, but Brudenell's notes counter attacked popular myths about Catholics, and not sectarian hatred.²⁷ There is, however, one interesting corollary, or at least illuminating fact, amongst the notes of Sir Justinian Isham. The learned baronet was probably not representative of his class or times (although he was probably more representative than his descendant, the late Sir Gyles Isham, believed), but in his notes on Roman Catholic theology he reveals a personal prejudice against Jesuits which may have been more widespread. His discourse on the beliefs of the Roman Church is a model of dispassionate reason; his hatred is reserved for the Jesuits who "play banquerupt with other men's souls".²⁸

Perhaps the most illuminating point about the attitude held by the Protestant natives of the county towards their Catholic neighbours is the least direct. On 25th September 1674 the town of Northampton was devastated by fire. The fire was probably the most important single event in the county's

24. C.J., IX, p. 470.

25. N.R.O., I.C. 3044, endorsed reply.

26. B.L., Add. MSS. 29551-29556, passim.

27. N.R.O., Bru. I, XIV. 78.

28. N.R.O., I.L. 4057.

history in the period of this thesis; 700 houses were destroyed, leaving only 140 standing, and damage done to the cost of £200,000.²⁹ Despite the contemporary tendency to ascribe all such urban disasters to Catholic incendiaries, not one of the many printed descriptions of the conflagration blames Catholic fire-raisers.³⁰ In fact, the Earl of Cardigan's and George Holman's substantial donations of £50 and £100 respectively to the relief of the town, must have earned them great credit.³¹

29. C.S.P.D., 1675.76, p. 318.

30. J.P. Kenyon, The Popish Plot, 1972, pp. 13-15; An Account of the late dreadful fire at Northampton, with the manner how it began, and the lamentable destruction it made, 1675, B.L., 1302, a.18; The Fall and Funeral of Northampton in an Elegy late published in Latin [by Simon Ford, D.D.] Since made English by F.A. [Ferdinando Archer] M.A. a sad spectator of the frightful scene, 1677, B.L., 11621.bb.56; Northampton in Flames: or, a poem on the dreadful fire that happened there on Monday the 20th September, 1675, 1675, B.L. Lutt. II, 152; The State of Northampton from the beginning of the Fire, 20th September 1675 to 5th November. Represented in a letter to a Friend in London By a Country Minister, [Edward Pierce], 1675, B.L., 1303.e.14; A true and faithful relation of the late fire at Northampton, 1675, B.L. 10803 aa. 16.(9).

31. Borough Records, II, pp. 245-50.

This provincial level-headed sense does not seem to have been upset by the wild imaginings and inflamed passions of Plot-beset London. In fact the scarcity of references to the Popish Plot in the contemporary collections of correspondence for the county indicates a marked indifference to the events in London. The Plot did have its cruel effect on the county's Catholic population. Ferdinando Poulton's Jesuit brother, Charles, was "chased up and down the country like a wild boar".³² Lord Brudenell was put in gaol for nearly a year.³³ His father, the Earl of Cardigan, Ferdinando Poulton and George Holman all fled abroad for their own safety.³⁴ The Catholics were blamed for the fire in Kettering in 1679 which burnt down twenty houses.³⁵ These sufferings, however, were a result of the national hysteria not local persecution.

The Catholics who stayed in Northamptonshire did not escape local harassment completely. Between 1679 and 1680 the constable of Desborough repeatedly presented the same three Catholic individuals for recusancy, but this was negligible compared to the nine Non-conformist families of Harringworth, for example, presented in the same eighteen months.³⁶

32. N.N. and Q., III, p. 118.

33. L. J., XIII, p. 396.

34. C.S.P.D., 1678, p. 615; The Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 66;
N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/97.

35. N.N. and Q., V, p. 19, which mentions a pamphlet entitled, A true relation of the fire at Cottering in Northamptonshire caused by some Popish agents; those harbingers of ruin, whose contagious nostrils belch quotidian flames. This tract is untraceable and there is no evidence that it is local in origin.

36. N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/93-99.

The justices, however, continued to be lenient in the treatment of their Catholic neighbours. Their moderation was encouraged by the Catholics' pragmatic compliance or guileful evasiveness. Early in 1680, the government instructed the nation's justices to tender the oath of allegiance to all known Roman Catholics and to imprison those who refused to take it. In Northamptonshire, Sir Roger Norwich and Sir Lewis Palmer were chosen for the task and were able to report from the Easter Sessions that William Saunders of Welford, esq., William Linwood of Deene, gent., and Thomas Manning of Brigstock had taken the oath of allegiance when it was tendered to them. They had to apologise, however, that Ferdinando Poulton, the younger, of Desborough, esq., George Blount of Rushton, esq., Philip Styles of Paston, gent., and all the other recusants mentioned in their commission had so "obscured themselves that we could not give the oath, nor send them to gaol for refusing".³⁷ There is no evidence that either Norwich or Palmer sought their quarry with any real enthusiasm. If any Roman Catholic recusants had been imprisoned in Northamptonshire due to the ramifications of the Popish Plot, there were none left in gaol in 1684.³⁸ Owing to the smallness of the Catholic population; the good relations between the Protestant majority and the Catholic minority; and the common sense displayed by both communities, Northamptonshire escaped the worst effects of the national (or was it only the metropolitan?) hysteria.

Exclusion

In 1675, political relations within the county community of Northamptonshire were, to all intents and purposes, harmonious. There had been some internal conflict, notably that between the Earls of Peterborough and Northampton over the Recordership of Northampton, but the uncontested election of John Lord Burleigh as knight of the shire was a more reliable indication that the county's differences were lacking in political content.³⁹ Perhaps the best

37. N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/97.

38. C.S.P.D., 1684-5, p. 287.

39. supra., pp.241-3,247.

example of collaboration within the county community was the written agreement between thirty-five resident gentlemen to share the several burdens of the office of high-sheriff.⁴⁰ These agreed to do away with all unnecessary ostentation and share the remaining costs by each providing one man in modest livery for the sheriff's service. The agreement was not a political compact; the subscribers can later be almost evenly divided amongst the Whigs and Tories of the 1680s. All that they had in common was that they came from the middling sort of gentry who were habitually chosen as sheriffs by the government. Indeed, four of their number, Edward Harby, John Norton, Charles Neale and Richard Saltonstall were successively sheriff between 1675 and 1679.⁴¹

A further occasion for the county community to concert its efforts was the fire of Northampton in September, 1675. The neighbouring gentry, headed by the Earl of Northampton, flocked into the county town to give what help they could, and a subscription list was at once opened.⁴² There was not complete concurrence initially over the order of priorities: Lord Chief Justice Sir Richard Rainsford disagreed with the Earl of Northampton as to the direction of the funds being raised; he wanted provision to be made for the poor, whereas the Earl wished to concentrate on the rebuilding of the town. This was probably a difference of opinions and not a personal or political conflict between the two men, although it is noteworthy that

40. N.N. and Q., I, p. 239.

41. P.R.O., Lists and Indexes, IX, Lists of Sheriffs for England and Wales, 1898, p. 94. As a point of interest, the four men were by later inclination, Whig, Tory, Non-conformist neutral and Tory respectively.

42. H.M.C. XIII, Portland MSS., p. 290. C.S.P.D., 1675-76, p. 318.

the Earl's prestige was not sufficiently great to dominate the direction of the relief operations. The disagreement was settled by establishing two funds; one for the poor and the other for rebuilding the town. In the end, however, either the Earl's judgement or his prestige held sway: the latter fund attracted the greater contributions and the proposals concerning the town's rebuilding bear the stamp of his influence.⁴³ That influence must have been further enhanced in the town by his promotion of a Bill for rebuilding the town and his request to the King that Parliament's prorogation be delayed until it was passed.⁴⁴

The Earl of Northampton's personal contribution to the relief of the town was, with the Earl of Sunderland's, the largest at £120. Other gentlemen and ladies of the county gave between them over £1,500.⁴⁵ Those having strong ties with the town naturally tended to give more than those whose connections were weaker. Sir William Fermor, Member of Parliament for the borough, Sir William Langham, Lord Chief Justice Rainsford and Sir John Bernard all gave sums commensurate with, or in excess of what they could afford. Yet there were some contributions which must have appeared niggardly to Northampton's homeless citizens. The Montagus of Boughton were remarkably parsimonious despite their much vaunted interest in the town. Lord Montagu contributed only £50, although many of those with incomes like his own of around £3,000 a year gave more.⁴⁶ None the less £50 was one of the larger gifts and was probably gratefully accepted, but his son, Ralph's contribution was laughably paltry, a mere £4. That Ralph was elected to serve the borough on three occasions is a matter of no small wonder.

43. C.S.P.D., 1675, pp. 318-9.

44. Bodley, Top. MS., Northants.,. 9, f. 121.

45. Borough Records, II, pp. 249-250.

46. P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, III, f. 216.

Small though £4 was, Ralph Montagu did at least make a contribution, whereas two of the county's most important gentlemen shamelessly did not. They were the other member for the borough, Henry Lord O'Brien, and the county's Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Peterborough. O'Brien at least did the town some service by procuring an abatement from the town's assessment.⁴⁷ Peterborough, however, compounded his callousness by blocking attempts by Lord Cullen to re-appropriate £490 of the militia's money to the use of the town.⁴⁸ Although Lord-Treasurer Danby had suggested that the militia money be put to the town's use, Peterborough was within his legal rights.⁴⁹ He was in fact, doing his duty by refusing to charge the £490, but his inflexibility won him few friends in Northampton. When his parsimony is examined in the context of his determination to keep a tight control of the militia accounts, however, his dutifulness looks like a determination to maintain the power of the militia and enhance the unqualified power of his own office.⁵⁰ To have given in to a deputy-lieutenant, Lord Cullen and to have allowed £490 to go out of his own control would have detracted from the power of the militia and the lieutenancy. It is not surprising that Peterborough was once more denied the Recordership of the town in 1676 in favour of the Earl of Northampton.⁵¹

Such old rivalries as between the Earls of Northampton and Peterborough were soon augmented by younger ambitions in conflict. The elevation of John Lord Burleigh to the peerage on his father, the Earl of Exeter's death occasioned a further by-election for the knight of the shire in March, 1678.⁵² Unlike the collusive election of 1675 which had put John Lord

47. C.S.P.D., 1677-78, p. 120.

48. ibid., 1676-77, pp. 5, 66, 72, 150-1.

49. ibid., 1675-76, p. 582.

50. ibid., 1678, p. 496, 1679-80, p. 168.

51. ibid., 1676-177, p. 491.

52. Return of Members of Parliament, I, 1879.

Burleigh into Parliament unopposed, this election was contested. The candidates were Sir Roger Norwich of Brampton and Miles Fleetwood of Aldwinkle All Saints. Fleetwood had the support of the Hatton, the Montagu and probably the Westmorland interest.⁵³ Who Norwich's patrons were cannot be discovered but from his deputy-lieutenancy, his militia commission and his later political associations, it might be supposed that his support came from the militia; from such like-minded colleagues in the lieutenancy as Lord Cullen and Sir Edward Griffin; and from those same Tory gentlemen of Rockingham Forest who had supported his father.⁵⁴ Fleetwood's support, however, must also have come from Forest residents, for his patrons exercised most of their influence within its boundaries and he was himself residing on its borders. Nevertheless, the contest attracted most of the county's 4,000 strong electorate.⁵⁵ The poll was so protracted and closely-fought that it took three days to count and ended in a victory for Fleetwood by the narrow margin of 190 votes.⁵⁶ Such were these circumstances and Northampton's memorialist's unusual formula of mentioning the name of the sheriff, Charles Neale, who declared Fleetwood's victory, that a suspicion of collusion between Fleetwood and Neale should be raised. This speculation seems less idle when Neale's readiness to return

53. B.L., Add. MSS. 29556, ff. 384, 431.

54. P.R.O., S.P. 44/35, f. 3v; H.M.C. XI, App. Pt. II. MSS. of the House of Lords, 1778-88, p. ; N.R.O., I.C. 1323, 1354.

55. H.M.C., Buccleuch, I, p. 328; N.R.O., I.C. 2571.

56. N.R.O., I.C. 1091, X.4478/712; H.M.C., I, p.22.

a false indenture after the Northampton election of October 1678 is remembered.⁵⁷

The reasons for the competitive nature of the election must also be sought in conjecture. After all, neither Popish Plot nor Exclusion had yet been heard of in March 1678. Both of those events, however, tend to obscure the fact that since the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, the relationship between Crown and Parliament had become increasingly strained. The daily business of both houses had been punctuated by successive debates led by a growing Country opposition party critical of the Court's administration. To describe Norwich and Fleetwood, therefore, as already respective proponents of Court and Country would not be premature. Furthermore, with the prospect of imminent war with France in the spring of 1678, the election would have involved national issues. That the freeholders of Northamptonshire were conscious of them is clear from the quality and quantity of their number who were enlisting under Lord O'Brien for service in Flanders in March 1678 - although it must also be pointed out that the Lent Assizes at Northampton released condemned felons if they enlisted in the army.⁵⁸

A further reason for the severity of the contest can be found in the personalities and backgrounds of the two candidates. Curiously, they both had much in common. They were both of about the same age, in their mid-forties, and they had grown to maturity towards the end of the civil wars and the beginning of the Interregnum; during which time they had both been

57. C.J., IX, pp. 533, 537.

58. F.P. and M. M. Verney, eds., The Verney Memoirs, II, 1907, p. 327;
M. Lee's History of Northampton, Journal of the Northamptonshire
Natural History Society and Field Club, XXVI, 1932, p. 146.

educated at Cambridge University and one of the Inns of Court.⁵⁹ The political background of their families was in both cases mixed. Norwich's father had taken the side of Parliament in 1642, but had opposed Cromwell and furthered the Restoration of Charles II. Fleetwood's father had been sequestered for his Royalism but his uncle had been the celebrated Parliamentary general, Charles Fleetwood.⁶⁰ Both of them must have had Presbyterian upbringings; the incumbent of Brampton was the Presbyterian minister, William Addison, although, after his death, he was replaced in 1659 with the Conformist, Richard Cumberland; and the minister at Aldwinkle was the Presbyterian, Nathaniel Whiting who extolled the Fleetwood's patronage in 1659.⁶¹ Again, both Norwich and Fleetwood were well connected in the county; Norwich married Catherine, daughter of Hatton Fermor of Easton Neston; and Fleetwood married the widow of Sir Oliver St John of Woodford.⁶²

They were also both politically ambitious. Their different financial circumstances, however, probably determined the individual paths they took. The Norwich family is one of the few for which even an approximation of their income is impossible. With estates in Brampton, Desborough, Rothwell and Islip, however, they were substantial landowners, and Sir Roger Norwich was able to maintain a house of twenty-three hearths.⁶³ Norwich's

59. Al. Cant., Part 1, II, p. 148; III, p. 270.

60. Cal. Comm. Comp., II, p. 1403; N. N. and Q., N.S., I, p. 115.

61. Barber, p. 72; Bridges, II, p. 283; V.C.H., Northants, III, p. 165.

62. Bridges, II, p. 282; N.N. and Q., New Series, I, p. 115; N.R.O., St John (Woodford), 65-66.

63. Bridges, II, pp. 25, 62, 239, 282; P.R.O., E.179/254/14.

ascendancy to local political prominence took the form of accumulating office: by 1673 he was a J.P., a captain of militia, a deputy-lieutenant and a commissioner for assessment.⁶⁴ He must have had the haughty aggression to exploit the prestige these offices gave him, with his hasty temperament he was capable of killing both men and dogs.⁶⁵ He was not, however, a particularly assiduous J.P. and rarely made more than two annual appearances on the bench until 1679/80. He seems instead to have concentrated on the lieutenancy and militia, until, by the early 1680s, he was one of the government's most active and reliable agents in the county.⁶⁶

Fleetwood, on the other hand, was hardly a substantial landowner; his patrimony in Aldwinkle was worth between £140 and £240 a year, and the other £600 of his income came from his wife's jointure.⁶⁷ Despite this, his residence in Aldwinkle was a considerable one of nineteen hearths.⁶⁸ Perhaps because of his modest background, or perhaps because he had compromised himself by accepting a place on the bench in 1657, he was denied any important office in the county except the continuation of his magistracy.⁶⁹ Yet he had entertained political ambitions from an early age and had won a place in the Parliament of 1658 for New Woodstock, where his father had been comptroller for Charles I.⁷⁰ During the early 1660s he

64. P.R.O., C.231/7, f.158; S.P. 44/35.A.f.3v; S.P. 29/334, f.226; S.P. 29/76, f. 75.

65. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 110; The Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 185.

66. P.R.O., E.372/507 - 525, Sheriffs' Quietus Rolls for Northamptonshire.

67. Cal. Comm. Comp., II, p. 1403; N.R.O., St John (Woodford) 65-66; P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt.3, f. 216.

68. P.R.O., E.179/254/14.

69. P.R.O., C.193/13/5; C.220/9/4.

70. N.N. and Q., New Series, I, p. 115.

played no part in the administration of the county community, but from 1668 he began to attend the Quarter Sessions regularly; never frequently enough to make himself indispensable, but frequently enough for self-advertisement.⁷¹ He also ingratiated himself with several noble houses: notably those of Hatton and Montagu.⁷² The curiously close relationship between the staunch Whig, Fleetwood, and the ardent Tory, Hatton, is an indication of Fleetwood's determination to find aristocratic patronage to help him in his political ambitions. That relationship is also an indication that the terms, Whig and Tory, in the confused political flux of the late 1670s are not hard and fast definitions but could be overruled by personal loyalties.

The election of March 1678 can therefore be described as containing three ingredients: rival personal political ambitions; a conflict, in seventeenth century terms of "in" and "out"; and a popular awareness of impending national crisis.

After that crisis had resolved itself, in a way few contemporaries would have foreseen, into the Popish Plot, the other factors were brought into sharper focus by the Cavalier Parliament's last by-election: that for Northampton in October 1678. The career of Ralph Montagu, the Lord of Boughton's son, is already well known and does not need repeating. He had already failed once, at East Grinstead, to get the Parliamentary seat which would have allowed him to disclose his secret correspondence with Danby with the greatest amount of publicity, together with the greatest amount of security.⁷³ The death of Lord O'Brien in August

71. P.R.O., E.372/507-525.

72. B.L., Add. MSS. 29556, ff. 400, 406, 431; Add. MSS. 29557, f. 75; Add. MSS. 29558, f. 22; Add. MSS. 29560, ff. 70, 79.

73. J. R. Jones, The First Whigs, 1961, p. 27.

fortuitously left vacant the place where the Montagus' political influence was greatest: Northampton.

Ralph Montagu arrived in the town in September and started canvassing, spending £100 a week; his father followed shortly and began to exert his considerable influence. At the end of September, the Earl of Northampton arrived with 150 gentlemen on horseback led by Lord Cullen and they were met with the customary deference by the mayor and corporation.⁷⁴ The mayor Richard White, was dominated by Montagu's ancient opponents in the borough, aldermen Brafieid and Freind, who persuaded him to incite a contest between the Montagu and Compton interests by suggesting the Earl's son as a worthy candidate.⁷⁵ The Earl declined the favour on the grounds that his son was too young for the honour. The following day the Earl received a letter from the Lord Treasurer, Danby, which led him to change his mind by proposing Henry Lord O'Brien's son as the next member.⁷⁶ O'Brien was not only the son of the previous incumbent; he was also Danby's son-in-law.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Earl of Northampton was a supporter of Danby's party in Parliament.⁷⁸ Neither the Earl nor the mayor required any further prompting, but resolved to follow the Court's recommendation and press for the election of O'Brien.⁷⁹

74. Bodley, MS. Carte, 103, f. 236; H.M.C., Egmont, II, p. 76.

75. N.R.O., X.4478/712; Bodley, MS. Carte, 103, f. 236. Brafieid must have both persuaded the Privy Council to lift its ban on his holding office and buried his differences with Freind.

76. H.M.C., VII, p. 471.

77. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XI, Pt. 1, p. 711.

78. A. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, III, 1951, pp. 131, 140, 144.

79. Bodley, MS. Carte, 103, f. 236; H.M.C. Egmont MSS., II, p. 76.

Lord Montagu thereupon said that he would rather spend £10,000 than see his son thwarted in the election. Such a promise of financial commitment possibly deterred the Court interest because the first choice of candidate, O'Brien, was dropped in favour of Sir William Temple, who was brought back from Holland to buttress Danby's attempt to keep Montagu out of Parliament.

Temple brought with him a recommendation from the King himself.⁸⁰

None the less, Ralph Montagu and his father continued to spend freely and, perhaps because of this or because of Temple's failure to put in an appearance, the Earl of Northampton remained discouraged and spent little money.⁸¹ At a cost of £2,000, Ralph Montagu won the poll at the end of October by 482 votes to 155.⁸² The mayor accepted defeat gracefully and returned Montagu's name on his indenture; but alderman Brafield refused to accept defeat and conspired with the sheriff, Sir Charles Neale, to have Temple returned. Why Neale co-operated with Brafield it is difficult to discover. He was not a Tory, nor was he a Whig, but a weakness of character is indicated by his refusal to act as a magistrate during the Exclusion crisis.⁸³ The most likely explanation is that he was browbeaten by Brafield's domineering personality and intimidated by the knowledge that Temple was the government's candidate. The House of Commons, however, refused to be thus intimidated. They ordered Neale's arrest and unseated Temple, "with so united a cry as made it very legible what inclination they bear to his patron".⁸⁴

80. ibid., p. 76.

81. N.R.O., I.C. 1141.

82. N.R.O., X.4478/712; I.C. 1143, 1147.

83. P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt.3, f. 216.

84. C.J., IX, pp. 533, 537, 546; H.M.C., Ormonde MSS., IV, p. 471.

The election for Northampton was the last one of the Cavalier Parliament. It was characterised by the overweening political ambition of Ralph Montagu backed by a strong family interest in the constituency; by the Court's manipulation of rival local interests, which themselves had a longstanding alliance with the government; by the use of local officials by the Court to keep out the Country candidates; and all this against a background of mounting popular political consciousness. Yet in the elections of February 1679, the dissolution of Parliament and the increasing national hysteria did not polarise local politics in Northamptonshire. Instead of confrontation, there is evidence of collusion in the county and county town.

The county election was decided a few days before the poll. At first all seemed set for a contest between Tory and Whig interests, but the extra Whig candidate, Lewis Watson of Rockingham seems to have been warned off, a compromise was reached, and the freeholders returned one Tory, Sir John Norwich, and one Whig, John Parkhurst of Catesby.⁸⁵ The names of Whigs and Tories are to be found side by side on the election indenture.⁸⁶ Although a Tory, Norwich's politics were considered by the Earl of Shaftesbury to be "honest".⁸⁷ Parkhurst was a newcomer to the county: he was the third son of a Parliamentarian Surrey knight and had acquired his estate from Edward Onley in the early 1660s.⁸⁸ He had

85. N.R.O., I.C. 1076a; H.M.C., MSS. Var. Coll., II, p. 393.

86. P.R.O., C.219/56.

87. J.R. Jones, 'Shaftesbury's Worthy Men: A Whig View of Parliament,' 1679, B.I.H.R., XXX, 1957, p. 232.

88. Al. Oxon., 1500-1714, III, p. 1117; Acts and Ord., I and II, passim., Sir Robert Parkhurst of Pirford or Burford, Surrey. Bridges, I, p. 35.

parliamentary experience, having been member for Durham City since the age of seventeen in 1661, during which time he had won Shaftesbury's note of minimum approbation, "worthy".⁸⁹ Despite his past record, and despite the fact that he was listed as an Exclusionist by the Grand Jury of Northamptonshire in 1683, in 1682 he was merely considered as one who refused to act or take the oath of a justice of the peace.⁹⁰ As such, both he and Sir John Norwich were considered to be moderate enough to be compromise candidates.

A similar but not so complete compromise was reached in the town of Northampton. Ralph Montagu sought re-election for the borough and began his canvassing by providing forty hogs heads of ale for the constituents.⁹¹ The voters were not swayed by Montagu's gift: perhaps they were of the same opinion as the town's historian, that "nothing could make him an honest man".⁹² Instead they chose, apparently without contest, the Earl of Northampton's brother-in-law, Hugh Cholmley of West Newton Grange in Yorkshire, and the previous incumbent, Sir William Fermor. Cholmley's election was a victory for the Court-inclined Compton and Hatton interests. He also had, with the recommendation of the Earl of Manchester, some support from the Montagu clan.⁹³ Fermor had his own interest and was usually considered to be a "vile" Tory, but in early 1679 Shaftesbury considered him to be one of his own supporters.⁹⁴ Once again, the voters

89. K.H.D., Haley, 'Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-78', B.I.H.R., XLIII, 1970, p. 97.

90. P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt.3, f. 216; S.P. 9/39, f.6.

91. N.R.O., I.C. 1161.

92. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

93. B.L., Add. MSS. 29557, f. 94.

94. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, VII, p. 614; H.M.C., Portland MSS., V, p. 127; Haley, 'Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members of the Commons, 1677-78', loc. cit., p. 86, Jones, 'Shaftesbury's Worthy Men,' loc. cit., p. 232.

had decided on moderation.

Unanimity of another kind was reached in the other three boroughs. Peterborough returned without opposition two Whigs, William Lord Fitzwilliam, one of the previous members, and Francis St John of Longthorpe, son of Cromwell's Lord Chief Justice.⁹⁵ The return of two Whigs was hardly surprising considering that of the four interests in the town, Fane, Fitzwilliam, St John and Orme, only the latter was Tory. By a unanimous vote the mayor and thirty-two burgesses of Brackley also returned two Whigs, Sir Thomas Crewe of Steane and William Lisle of Evenley.⁹⁶ Crewe and Lisle had sat together for the town in the Convention Parliament and Crewe had continued to sit in the Cavalier Parliament.

Of the three boroughs, only Higham Ferrers returned a candidate who was not unequivocally Whig. He was Sir Rice Rudd, baronet of Aberglasney, Carmarthenshire, and grandson of one of Higham Ferrers' most illustrious townsmen, Thomas Rudd, engineer to Charles I and an ex-mayor.⁹⁷ He was also the step-son of Goddard Pemberton of Rushden. Pemberton was an ex-Royalist colonel and one of the Crown's most loyal servants in the county.⁹⁸ He was also the town's most important alderman and was made a life-magistrate for the borough in 1684.⁹⁹ As his step-father was the town's most influential citizen, and as the manor was held in the queen's jointure, it is not surprising that Sir Rice Rudd was unanimously elected by the mayor, seven aldermen and thirteen chief burgesses, the other householders probably following their lead.¹⁰⁰ Even so, Sir Rice was not considered,

95. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 536.

96. P.R.O., C. 219/56.

97. D.N.B., Xvii, p. 380; G.L. Cherry, The Convention Parliament, 1689: A Biographical Study of its Members, 1966, p. 154.

98. Bridges, II, pp. 187-7.

99. V.C.H., Northants., III, p. 270.

100. P.R.O., C. 219/56.

"vile" or "base" by Shaftesbury but merely "doubtful".¹⁰¹

One other thing is notable about the elections of spring, 1679: two of those elected were from outside the county and one was a complete newcomer. Perhaps this is the best sign of the county's search for compromise.

The dissolution of Parliament in July, 1679, changed that attitude. The county electorate returned two Whigs, Miles Fleetwood and John Parkhurst, and Northampton also returned two Whigs, Ralph Montagu and Sir William Langham. The electors of Northampton, indeed, were so ardently Whig that they spurned the gift of fifty hogs heads of ale sent by an unnamed and presumably Tory candidate.¹⁰² Peterborough returned one Whig, Francis St John, and one Tory, Charles Orme; but here there may have been a four-sided contest, for Lord Fitzwilliam and Lord Brudenell are also known to have put themselves up for election.¹⁰³ The result at the poll might have been collusive, but the fact that there were four candidates is an indication of increasingly severe political competition. Higham Ferrers returned Sir Rice Rudd again.

Brackley returned Sir Richard Wenman of Carswell in Oxfordshire and Sir William Egerton, K.B. Wenman was a Tory and Egerton was the brother of the town's lord of the manor, the Earl of Bridgewater, who in

101. J.R. Jones, Shaftesbury's Worthy Men, loc. cit., p. 232.

102. J. R. Jones, The First Whigs, p. 98.

103. B.L., Add. MSS. 29557, f. 27. There is doubt about the date of this letter, whether it is of 30th January or 30 July 1679. It must have been written in July because Brudenell was in gaol until June 1679: L.J., XIII, p. 396.

that capacity had the right to nominate the mayor.¹⁰⁴ Why Wenman was elected it is impossible to say: perhaps he was chosen, like his colleague, Egerton, at the Earl of Bridgwater's suggestion. This hypothesis could be correct because, although Egerton's politics are unknown, he was certainly not a Whig and, as a Knight of the Bath, he must at some time in his life have served the government. The two men could, therefore, have stood for election as partners. The Earl of Bridgwater, however, was one of Shaftesbury's supporters, and speculation must be taken one stage further in supposing that family influence was exerted by the younger on the elder brother on behalf of a Court candidate from outside the county.¹⁰⁵

What is perfectly clear is that, inclined to Whiggery though the town's corporation undoubtedly was, it could be suborned by external influences which were not necessarily Whig.

By the time the second Parliament of 1679 was dissolved and a new one called to meet at Oxford in March, 1681, the county had become to all appearances fervently Whig. Eight out of the nine members elected for the county and its boroughs were Whigs: Miles Fleetwood and John Parkhurst for Northamptonshire; Ralph Montagu and Sir William Langham for Northampton; William Lord Fitzwilliam and Francis St John for Peterborough; and William Lisle for Brackley. Only Sir Richard Wenman for Brackley was a Tory. There is little evidence in fact of any genuine opposition to the Whig candidates. Sir Thomas Isham of Lamport was tempted to stand for Northampton, but wisely did not appear at the poll.¹⁰⁶

104. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XII, Pt.2, pp. 492-3; Bridges, I, pp. 143-9.

105. Haley, Shaftesbury's List, loc. cit., p. 86.

106. N.R.O., I.C. 1125, 1242.

What had happened in the county between 1679 and 1681 to produce such widespread Whig support is not clear. There is no evidence that Whig magistrates dominated the bench in 1680. At the Epiphany Sessions there were five Whigs to six Tories; at Easter, six Whigs to four Tories; at Trinity, two Whigs to three Tories; and at Michaelmas, seven Whigs to five Tories. Nor is there any evidence that Whig justices were more active in examining witnesses or taking recognizances. In 1680 the Earl of Northampton, a Tory, took seven depositions, and Francis Morgan of Kingsthorpe, a Whig and an Attorney, also took seven.¹⁰⁷ If one party was more industrious, it was the Tories, with Lord Hatton, Sir William Haslewood, Goddard Pemberton, Sir Richard Rainsford and John Willoughby, taking sixteen recognizances between them. But the difference was only marginal as the more active Whigs took almost as many: Sir Samuel Clarke, Henry Edmonds the Earl of Exeter, Edward Harby and Sir Thomas Samwell took ten recognizances between them. The Grand Juries were also roughly equally divided.¹⁰⁸ This even division is reflected in the Sessions' nomination of three from each party to have the power to summon or adjourn the bench.¹⁰⁹

107. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/96-99.

108. This analysis is based on the poll-book for 1702. Although the comparison is inadequate (for neither individuals nor political allegiances stay the same over twenty-two years), thirty-one of the fifty-four jurors sworn in 1680 can be traced: fourteen voted Whig and seventeen, Tory.

109. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/98: The Tories were, Sir Roger Norwich, Sir Lewis Palmer and Richard Saltonstall; the Whigs, Sir William Langham, John Creswell and Edward Harby.

The government tried to alter this balance in 1680 by removing Miles Fleetwood from the bench, and replacing him by Philip Lord Wenman, Sir Thomas Isham, Knightley Purefoy and William Alston.¹¹⁰ It also unwittingly put out two Tories, Thomas Elmes and Edmund Sawyer and put in a Whig, Thomas Andrew of Harlestone.¹¹¹ The effect on the operation of the bench was negligible. Fleetwood, although a regular attender, was not assiduous; Wenman, Alston, Purefoy and Andrew never appeared; and Isham died shortly after his appointment.¹¹² Only Sawyer was what might be called a working justice, having attended three out of four Sessions since his appointment in 1671.¹¹³ There is no evidence that he was missed on the bench.

The Whig party in Northamptonshire was not a well-integrated political machine in the modern sense. Instead its "cadres" were zealots like Henry Rushton of Floore, who read out scandalous news-sheets to his assembled neighbours.¹¹⁴ Its orators were gentlemen like Sir Samuel Clarke of West Haddon, who publicly poured scorn on a Northamptonshire Address printed in the Gazette, and at other times lectured his neighbouring freeholders on "the power of parliament and the great privileges of the people".¹¹⁵ Another publicist was

110. H.M.C., XI, Appendix, Pt. II, MSS of the House of Lords 1678-88, p. 187.

111. P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt.3, f. 216; B.L. Add. MSS. 25302, f. 156; H. Horwitz, Parliament Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III, 1977, p. 341; Bridges, I, pp. 513, 562, C.S.P.D., 1680-1, p. 535.

112. PRO., E.372/525-530.

113. P.R.O., C.231/7, f.405; E.372/516-524.

114. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, p. 535.

115. ibid., p. 533; P.R.O., S.P. 29/419, f. 43.

Dr. John Conant, vicar of All Saints in Northampton who in front of the sheriff and the assembled county gentlemen at the election dinner in March, 1681, thanked God for giving them such a Parliament as would uphold their liberties and properties.¹¹⁶ The Whig party headquarters and meeting-halls were inns, like the Swan or Freind's coffee-house, both in Northampton, where the Whig gentry would dine every Saturday night and entice the "floating voters" to attend with the offer of free liquid hospitality.¹¹⁷ Its "cells" were the homes, especially the town houses, of the Whig gentry where private discourses could be held during dinner or public meetings adjourned for greater security.¹¹⁸ The party hierarchical structure was based on the natural order of rank and prestige within the county and in society at large.

The Whigs' organisation was rudimentary and conformed more closely to the precedents of "interest", of freeholders' petitions, and of post-prandial political discourse in country houses than to any later pattern of political party. Nevertheless, it was effective. One of the government's informants, John Whitfield, the rector of Bugbrooke, wrote that the anti-monarchists' principles were so diffused in Northamptonshire that he believed that no part of the nation was more deeply tainted and that they had influenced the generality of the gentry as well as the commonalty.¹¹⁹ Edward Griffin wrote to the King that the freeholders who went to the Swan in Northampton every Saturday from a love of drinking, sucked in so much propaganda from the discourse they heard against the monarchy that their

116. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, p. 603.

117. ibid., pp. 535, 543, 563.

118. ibid., pp. 535, 563, 641.

119. ibid., p. 528.

hearts were alienated from the Crown.¹²⁰ Such was the support the Whigs raised in the county that not only were eight Whig members elected in March, 1681, those returned for the county, Fleetwood and Parkhurst, were elected with a clear exclusionist mandate. In an address to their representatives, the electors of Northamptonshire asked that they be secured against a Popish successor, and that the King's Protestant subjects should be united against the common enemy. In pursuit of **these ends** the freeholders of the county promised to stand by the knights of the shire with their lives and fortunes.¹²¹ It would not be an **exaggeration** to call the address a mandate for rebellion.

One question remains to be answered: who were the Whigs? A list of Northamptonshire Whigs and their estates compiled by the government in 1683, has fortunately survived.¹²² The list contains the names of eighty-three Whigs of gentle birth, plus the names of a further eight magistrates who without good reason declined to act. There is another list of the disaffected party presented by the Northamptonshire Grand Jury in 1683 which contained fifty-one names, all of which can be found in the longer compilation.¹²³

Of the aristocracy, six of the fourteen peers resident in the county were listed as Whigs. They were the Earls of Exeter and Westmorland, and Lords Crewe, Fitzwilliam, Montagu and Rockingham. . . . The Earl of Exeter, was supposed, with an income assessed at around £8,000 a year, to be as wealthy as the leading Tory lord, The Earl of Northampton, but this

120. ibid., p. 643.

121. ibid., p. 203.

122. P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt. 3, f. 216.

123. B L., Add. MSS. 25302, f. 156.

was probably a little of an exaggeration.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, Exeter and all the other lords, except for Crewe, were amongst the wealthier peers in Northamptonshire with incomes over £3,000 a year. It is noteworthy that all of the poorer peers, except for Crewe, were Tories: Cardigan, Cullen and Peterborough, Newport and Stanhope.¹²⁵

Of the Whig lords, only Crewe and Montagu had supported Parliament in the Civil War. All the other Whig lords had been too young to take sides, but their parental background was either Royalist or neutral. The Tory lords, except for Peterborough, who had himself supported Charles I, and his son, were also too young to have fought, but their backgrounds without exception were Royalist sympathy.

Of the gentry on the 1683 list, twenty were worth more than £1,000 a year and they comprised exactly half of the number of greater gentry, whose incomes have survived, with this amount. There were a further seventeen middling gentry with yearly incomes of between £500 and £999 a year, and another thirteen lesser gentry with incomes between £200 and £499 a year. The remaining twenty-seven were obscure parochial figures. Between them all they had a total income of £79,350 and had an average income of £979 p.a. There does not, therefore, seem to be any reason to suppose the Whigs were financially inferior to the gentry community as a whole. Nor does it seem that their leaders (those who were J.P.s) with £1,320 p.a. were any worse off than Tory J.P.s.

124. H. Habakkuk, *Landowners and the Civil War*, Economic History Review, 2nd Ser., XVIII, 1965, p. 135; *English Land ownership, 1680-1740*, Economic History Review, X, 1939-40, pp. 3-4; N.R.O., Ex. (B) 66/1-28.

125. These figures are based on the valuations for militia assessment in 1661: B.L. Add. MSS. 34222, f. 38, supplemented by the many entries in Cal. Comm. Adv. Mon.; Cal. Comm. Comp.; N.R.O., Fermor Hesketh Baker, 719.

Besides Crewe and Montagu there were another thirteen Whigs who can themselves or their families be shown to have actively supported Parliament in the Civil War: Henry Benson of Towcester, Arthur Brooke of Oakley, John Browne of Eydon, William Catesby of Ecton, Edward Harby of Adstone, Robert Haslerigge of Northampton, John Maunsell of Thorpe Malsor, Sir Edward Nicholls of Faxton, Sir John Pickering of Titchmarsh, Sir Andrew St John of Woodford, Francis St John of Longthorpe, Sir Thomas Samwell and John Thornton of Brockhall. On the other hand there were seven gentry whose families had professed Royalist sympathies: Tobias Chauncey of Edgcote, Henry Edmonds of Preston, Charles and Miles Fleetwood of Aldwinkle, Sir John Robinson of Cranley, William Tate of Delapré and William Wilmer of Sywell. Many of these allegiances were not hard and fast: Haslerigge and Nicholls had been equivocal supporters of the Protectorate; Tate, although his father had been a Parliamentarian, had worked for the Restoration; and half of the Parliamentarians had been acceptable to the restored monarchy as Justices of the Peace. The presence on the list of thirteen parliamentary families is just about sufficient to indicate a continuity of political belief or allegiance between the Good Old Cause of the 1640s and the Whig Exclusionists of the 1680s. But it needs to be stressed that six families changed from Cavalier to Whig and another sixty-four seem to have had no traceable antecedents in either the Parliamentarian or Royalist camps. It certainly would be rash to assert that Whiggery in Northamptonshire was a direct descendant of the Good Old Cause.

There are, however, some generalisations that can be made about the composition of the Whig party in Northamptonshire. Except for the Whig Members of Parliament, the most active Whigs tended to come from the less affluent gentry. Those whose activities attracted the attention of the government, or who had the epithets, "violent", "dangerous", "ill" or "cunning" attached to their names, included Sir Samuel Clarke of West Haddon, Richard Butler of Preston, John Thornton of Brockhall, Henry

Rushton of Floore, Mr Ekins of Caldecote, Mr Saunders of Moulton, and Francis Ives of Wellingborough. All of these except Clarke and Thornton were worth less than £300 a year, and even Clarke's income of £580 was made up largely of his wife's jointure.

Although the Whigs might be found in all parts of the county, most of them were concentrated in clearly defined areas. Seventeen came from Northampton itself or from an area within five miles of the town. A further eleven lived within five miles of the Montagu estates in Weekley parish. Three were neighbours of Fleetwood's in Aldwinkle, and two of Clarke's in West Haddon. Four lived in the adjacent villages of Everdon, Preston Capes, Adstone and Maidford. Five lived near Sir William Langham's home at Culworth.

This geographical distribution of Whig supporters is not altogether easy to explain; but three dominant influences entered into it. In the first place it was clearly affected by the proximity of Northampton with its history of political and religious dissent; with a corporation which offered the Whigs a political arena, and with its inns and town houses where the Whigs might forgather. Secondly the country houses of prominent Whigs clearly acted as focal points of their party organisation. Lord Montagu was known to "govern" his neighbour, Thomas Maidwell of Geddington. Fleetwood held sway over Sir John Robinson of Grafton Underwood, and also over his step-son, Sir St Andrew St John of Woodford - both were less than three miles from Aldwinkle.¹²⁶ Sir William Langham of Culworth, who was worth £1,500 a year, had four lesser Whig gentlemen within two miles of him.

126. N.R.O., St John (Woodford) 65-66.

Thirdly the pattern of Whiggery also followed closely the spread of religious dissent.¹²⁷ Sir John Pickering's parish of Titchmarsh had a congregation of forty dissenters. In Cranford St John, where the very active Whig, John Freeman, lived, there was a congregation of seventy dissenters. In the adjacent parishes of Overstone and Moulton, where Edward Stratford and Mr Saunders lived, of whom the latter was said to have "led his town", there were seventy Nonconformists. In Henry Rushton's parish of Floore there were forty. Around Bugbrooke and East Haddon, where there were more than 150 dissenters drawn from the countryside west of Northampton, there were a dozen resident Whig gentry. John Hill of Rothwell came from a market town where up to 300 dissenters congregated for worship every week. Francis Ives of Wellingborough, a "very ill /disposed/ man" to the government, also came from a place known for its large congregations. No less than twenty-three gentry came from the heart-land of Northamptonshire dissent between Northampton, Wellingborough, Kettering and Rothwell. It would seem that the great majority of large dissenting congregations was associated with the Whig gentry. Furthermore, many of the Whig gentry would appear to have been practising Nonconformists. Between 1673 and 1688, 381 Northamptonshire gentry took the Test Act and the Oaths of Supremacy, and their names were recorded on the Oath Rolls.¹²⁸ But forty-four of the eighty-three Whig gentry, most of them quite prominent, either did not take the oaths or did not have them tendered to them. Presumably the majority were conscientious Nonconformists. The connection, therefore, between dissent and Whiggery would seem to have been very close indeed.

127. This section is based on: N.R.O., Baker, 708, ff. 73-6, 85-92; and see Map. 5.

128. N.R.O., Names of those persons taking the Oaths of Supremacy.

The close alliance between Whiggery and Nonconformity; the organisation and activity of the Whig party; the widespread diffusion of Whig principles in the county; the number of influential local magnates who were Whigs; and the presence on the bench of seventeen Whig J.P.s, one-third of all magistrates, all meant that Whiggery in Northamptonshire was a force with which the government had to reckon.

The Stuart Revenge, 1681-1685

The government's counter attack on the Whigs in Northamptonshire began with a Loyal Address of the Northamptonshire Grand Jury, signed by 6,000 of the county's inhabitants in July 1681.¹²⁹ The Whigs in Northamptonshire had continued to be "insolent and troublesome" despite the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament after sitting for only one week. A month later in April 1681, the Duke of Monmouth had been rapturously received by the townspeople of Northampton on his way from Oxford.¹³⁰ Sir Leoline Jenkins, the Secretary of State, was after that determined not to let one opportunity slip to boost popular support for the Crown and deflate Whig power.

The Loyal Address was the first occasion to do so. The Tory bench had already been reinforced by the addition of two government supporters, Edmund Bacon of Burton Latimer and Captain Henry Benson of Dodford, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber.¹³¹ When Sir Samuel Clarke described subscribers of the Loyal Address, "6,000 innkeepers, tapsters and ostlers", Captain Benson proved his utility by gathering evidence to further

129. The London Gazette, No. 1645, 12 July 1681.

130. N.N. and Q., VI, p. 16

131. P.R.O., C.231/8, ff. 43, 54. Penal Laws, II, p. 89.

Secretary Jenkins retaliation.¹³² Clarke was eventually forced to sue for the King's pardon.¹³³ When John Thornton's son-in-law and Edward Stratford put up Henry Rushton of Floore to mock the Address by subscribing the name of a lunatic, it was another militia-man, Captain John Needham, who intimidated Rushton to confess.¹³⁴ It was also the colonel of militia, Sir Roger Norwich, who browbeat the timid curate of Floore to inform on Rushton.¹³⁵

The militia, indeed, were extremely important in teaching the Whigs to be more cautious. The meeting of the Earl of Manchester with the Whigs William Tate, Gerard Gore, Thomas Andrew, and Sir Thomas Samwell in Northampton, was frightened into breaking up by the arrival of Sir Roger Norwich and the militia.¹³⁶ The militia also proved useful as a clearing-house of information.¹³⁷ Moreover, if the militia is looked on not as a government tool but as a force of loyal, like-minded gentlemen, it can be said that it was useful in giving its leaders rank and authority to interfere in local government.

The gentleman who put his many civil and military ranks to the best use was Sir Roger Norwich. Secretary Jenkins had several obvious agents in Northampton, such as John Whitfield, the Tory rector of Bugbrooke, the meeting-place, as we have seen, of over 100 Nonconformists, but the most useful was that "well-affected magistrate", Sir Roger Norwich.¹³⁸ In his

132. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, pp. 528, 533.

133. ibid., p. 596.

134. ibid., pp. 528, 536, 541.

135. ibid., p. 536.

136. ibid., p. 535.

137. ibid., p. 528.

138. ibid., pp. 520, 528, 535, 536, 643.

care of the militia and his vigilance Norwich was joined by Colonel Edward Griffin, Major John Willoughby, and the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Peterborough.¹³⁹ The government acknowledged the importance of a Tory controlled militia by augmenting the deputy-lieutenancy in the autumn of 1681, with three loyalists, Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport, Thomas Ward of Houghton Parva and William Washbourne of Pytchley.¹⁴⁰ None the less, Norwich remained the most active and important Tory in Northamptonshire.

Norwich was the agent instrumental in the suppression of the Corporation of Northampton. After the death of the town's Recorder, the Earl of Northampton, a letter from Norwich warned the Assembly to leave the choice of a successor to the King.¹⁴¹ The mayor, William Else, urged the Assembly to concur but the majority were swayed by the interests of privilege, the influence of the Whig gentry and the offer of £500 to the town by Ralph Montagu if they should elect his father. In a tumultuous meeting in which the mayor was struck, and Major John Willoughby and others were locked up, the Assembly, including all the Forty-Eight, voted by 52 to 25 to choose Lord Montagu. Willoughby and the mayor reacted by refusing to ratify the Assembly's decision and by imprisoning some of the burgesses and binding over some others to appear at the Assizes for riot. Willoughby informed Colonel Edward Griffin of Dingley of these events so that Griffin in turn could inform the King. Willoughby, however, seems to have played down his retaliation, for he said he had imprisoned only one and bound over three of the burgesses; whereas the

139. ibid., pp. 557, 647-8.

140. ibid., pp. 474, 447.

141. This paragraph is based: N.R.O., X.4478/712; C.S.P.D., 1680-1, pp. 633, 641.

town's memorialist names five councillors imprisoned and three bound over. All of these were found not guilty at the Assizes, and so, to prevent Montagu's induction, the mayor claimed that Sergeant William Buckby had been elected Recorder, although he had in fact only been elected deputy-recorder.

The King refused to accept the false return and instead nominated his bastard son, the Duke of Grafton. Sir Roger Norwich intervened as an apparent mediator and suggested to the reconvened Assembly that they elect the Earl of Peterborough. The Brafield-Freind-Whiston caucus were won over to Willoughby and the mayor, and in another heated debate, turned out fourteen of the Forty-Eight and elected Peterborough. The King was pleased to give his assent.¹⁴²

The King, however, had not finished with Northampton. At the election of the new mayor, in 1682, Sir Roger Norwich consulted with the loyal party and Thomas Sargeant was decided upon as their candidate. Norwich's efforts were unfortunately confounded by the attempt of a splinter group to have Robert Ives elected, and thus divided, the Tories were defeated and the Whig candidate Thomas Atterbury chosen.¹⁴³ Atterbury was not a Whig but neither was he a King's man. Whilst the office remained with him, the outgoing mayor, William Else, had the Corporation meet with Sir Roger Norwich in the Tory hostelry, the George Inn, where Norwich entertained them so lavishly that many burgesses were induced to agree to a voluntary surrender of the town's charter. Atterbury, who wanted the town to retain its privileges, intended to accept the mandamuses of the excluded fourteen

142. C.S.P.D., 1682, pp. 244, 271, 284; N.R.O. X.4478/712.

143. C.S.P.D., 1682, pp. 558-9; N.R.O. X.4478/712.

Burgesses; but before he could be sworn in as mayor, Norwich had him bound over for good behaviour and sent up to London. Between Atterbury's imprisonment and his securing sureties for his release, Norwich, Willoughby, Brafield, Else and the other loyalists met at the Rose and Crown, and there and then regulated the Corporation, turning out three aldermen and thirty of the Forty-Eight. When Atterbury returned, the Assembly had been packed by Tory nominees and a vote for the surrender of the town's charter was a foregone conclusion. In Northampton's case, the surrender to the King of the right to nominate or remove town officials was a formality: the loyalists already clearly exercised that right de facto.

On 25th September 1683, the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses of Northampton walked to the town boundary where the Earl of Peterborough, surrounded by the nobility and gentry of the county, presented the borough with its new charter. After Peterborough had delivered a laudatory speech on the King's favour to the town, the mayor received the document on his knees. Then followed another speech by the (temporary) deputy-recorder in which he criticised the conduct of the evil men recently in authority, and commended the sagacity of the Corporation in surrendering its charter in time: " Is there any among you have been tainted with ill principles? . . . Now there is an eye upon you which will have respect to justice as well as mercy".¹⁴⁴

During this period, the burgesses of Northampton were not the only ones to be subject to a harsher justice. From November, 1681, there had been systematic government intervention in local administration. The

144. An Account of the old Charter of Northampton, and the manner of their receiving the new . . . Together with an eloquent speech made by R. Clarke, esq., 1686, B.L., 816.m.16.(18).

choice of Harvey Ekins as sheriff gave cause for rejoicing to Northamptonshire Tories.¹⁴⁵ After a list containing both Whigs and Tories had been rejected, all the following sheriffs of the reign were drawn from a list compiled solely of loyalists: John Briscoe, Sir Matthew Dudley, and Henry Benson.¹⁴⁶ There were other local appointments to be strengthened. The Earl of Northampton's death had also left the office of custos rotulorum void; the government filled it with an ardent Tory, Lord Hatton.¹⁴⁷ The deputy-lieutenancy was reinforced by the addition of Sir Charles Shuckburgh and Sir Matthew Dudley.¹⁴⁸ This policy even went so far as to interfere with ecclesiastical appointments. There is a hint amongst Secretary Jenkins' notes that Dr. John Conant was translated to the canonry of Worcester from All Saints in Northampton in order to remove his influence from the county.¹⁴⁹

The most consistent Crown intervention in local government between 1681 and 1685 was the virtual remodelling of the bench. The removal of disaffected magistrates and their replacement by loyalists was not carried out all at once. The process gathered momentum from March 1682 when Sir William Langham was removed and Sir Matthew Dudley, Thomas Pinfold, John Briscoe, Captain John Needham and Brian Janson, were put in. It is interesting to note that three of these were also considered as possible sheriffs, and it is an indication that the government were keen on fresh blood to re-invigorate the magistracy. Nine months later, the Bishop of

145. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, pp. 463, 583.

146. P.R.O., S.P. 9/39, f.5; S.P., 29/491, f- 161.

147. P.R.O., C.231/8, f.58.

148. C.S.P.D., 1683, p. 2

149. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, p. 557; P.R.O., S.P. 29/419, f. 161.

Peterborough, Sir Justinian Isham (already a deputy-lieutenant), Henry Longueville and Major Walter Littleton were appointed.¹⁵⁰ Other appointments followed at six monthly intervals: Geoffrey Palmer of Stoke Doyle, Moses Bathurst, Sir John Robinson and Charles Kirkham.¹⁵¹ Other additions would also seem to have been made which did not find their way in to the docquet books: Harvey Ekins of Weston Favell, Henry Freeman of Higham Ferrers, Charles Orme of Peterborough, George Tresham of Pitton, James Tryon of Bulwick and Thomas Ward of Houghton. All in all, between 1681 and 1685, eighteen new justices of the peace were appointed.¹⁵² In the interval between March 1682 and July 1683, it is clear from the deletions in the liber pacis, if not from the docquet books, that eleven Whigs and one "non-juror" magistrate were removed from the bench.¹⁵³

The effect on the functioning of the bench must have been salutary. In the session 1681-2, twenty-one justices, of whom fourteen were Tory and seven Whig, attended at least one Quarter Session. Amongst those who attended more than half of the Quarter Sessions, however, five were Tory and three Whig. By the last year of the reign the number of working magistrates had decreased to twelve, but all of them attended every Quarter Session.¹⁵⁴ Four of these, Ekins, Needham, Palmer and Ward were new men and five, Norwich, Willoughby, Ekins, Clarke and Ward had been entrusted by the government with a special office or duty. Another member, Christopher Thursby of Castor, was such an active J.P. that he usually attended the Northampton and Peterborough sessions on consecutive days.¹⁵⁵

150. P.R.O., C.231/8, f. 75.

151. P.R.O., C.231/8, ff. 90, 98, 111.

152. S.N. esq., A Catalogue of the Names of all . . . Justices of the Peace, 1680. P.R.O., C. 193/12/4.

153. P.R.O., C. 193/12.4.

154. P.R.O., E.372/526-9.

155. B.L., Add. MSS. 29558. f. 162

The new Tory élite were not, for the most part, from the top ranks of county society. As far as is known, only Isham, with an income of £2,300 had more than £2,000 a year.¹⁵⁶ Norwich's income is hard to estimate and Dudley, who was also a baronet, was known to be "in very hard circumstances".¹⁵⁷ As for the others, the only guide to their social standing is the Hearth Tax. Bacon of Burton Latimer, Bathurst of Hothorpe, Briscoe of Harrowden Magna, Ekinsof Weston Favell, Tryon of Bulwick, and Thursby of Castor had less than ten hearths. Benson of Dodford, Clarke of Long Buckby, Freeman of Higham Ferrers, Janson of Ashby Legers, Longueville of Cosgrave, Needham of Litchborough, Ward of Houghton Parva, Willoughby of Newbottle, had ten to twelve hearths, and Tresham of Pilton had fifteen.¹⁵⁸ As a generalisation (and no more than that) it would be safe to say that the new Tory élite were recruited in roughly equal parts from the lesser and middling gentry. Any social shortcomings were made up by their obvious diligence.

Although Whig power in the county was being undermined, the Whigs continued buoyant. The Duke of Monmouth's second visit to Northampton, in April, 1682, was an occasion for open celebration, and even when he was being taken through Towcester while in custody in September, 1682, he was greeted with full ceremonial.¹⁵⁹ The event which finally brought about the Whigs' downfall was the discovery of the Rye House Plot in 1683. The revelation of the plot caused great public alarm in the county and even, for a short while, put an end to market trading. The deputy-lieutenants acted swiftly and thoroughly. Sir John Norwich, Sir John Egerton and Sir Charles Shuckburgh

156. N.R.O., I.C. 1003.

157. P.R.O., S.P. 29/419, f. 161.

158. P.R.O., E.179/254/14.

159. N. N. and Q., VI, p. 20.

and others met at Northampton and issued warrants for the search and seizure of arms in the houses of suspected persons. Robert Haslerigge's, Charles Fleetwood's, Francis Morgan's and Sir John Holman's homes were all searched.¹⁶⁰ The castle ruins were examined and declared defensible by Lord Cullen who requested that the site be taken out of the possession of Robert Haslerigge.¹⁶¹

The searches for arms were the excuse for some Tory vindictiveness. Sir William Langham warily told his servants to watch that the militia troopers searching his house did not drop forged treasonable correspondence.¹⁶² Captain Needham, searching Gerard Gore's house in Towcester, broke open a strong chest containing plate, which ~~only~~ a short time before had been examined by Captain Gardiner.¹⁶³ Gore also complained that the troopers had threatened to billet themselves on him for one month if he did not tell them the whereabouts of his suspected cache of arms.¹⁶⁴ Captain Saunders' three searches of William Harbord's house on Grafton Park gave Harbord cause to complain to the Secretary of State, Leoline Jenkins, of the soldiers foul language and threatening behaviour.¹⁶⁵

A month later, at the July Quarter Sessions, the Northamptonshire Grand Jury presented its second accusation of sedition against the disaffected party.¹⁶⁶ The first had taken place in October, 1681, but nothing had come of the presentment; the second was a definite attempt to stigmatise the Whig gentry.¹⁶⁷ The jury was packed, not only with Tory

160. B.L., Add. MSS. 29560, f. 54.

161. C.S.P.D., 1683, p. 375.

162. ibid., 1683, p. 300.

163. ibid., 1683, p. 299.

164. ibid., 1683, p. 301.

165. ibid., 1683, pp. 266, 292, 300, 400.

166. B.L. Add. MSS. 29560, p. 70.

167. C.S.P.D., 1680-1, p. 543; B.L., Add. 25302, f. 756.

supporters, but also with Tory leaders. Those Tories who can be identified included: Sir John Egerton, Sir Lewis Palmer, Thomas Elmes, Goddard Pemberton, Nicholas Steward, Edmund Bacon, Randolph Wykes, Henry Benson, Moses Bathurst, Edward Ladkins and William Washbourne. Two of their number, Bacon and Washbourne, were fair-minded enough to refuse to sign the presentment. All of them, however, were or became, magistrates and not once in the previous twenty-four years had a Justice of the Peace sat on the Grand Jury.¹⁶⁸ They presented fifty-one Whig gentry as unfit to possess arms of any kind and ordered them to be bound over for good behaviour. The Whigs were broken, dispirited and frightened. Fleetwood sought protection from Lord Hatton.¹⁶⁹ Salathiel Lovell wrote a cringing letter to the Earl of Arlington, denying all knowledge of a scheme to spread Whig propaganda before any charges had even been made against him.¹⁷⁰

The presentment did not end the Tory vendetta. A servant called John Goodladd was convicted of a felony for saying that when the times turned, Sir Roger Norwich would be the first man to be killed.¹⁷¹ Richard Butler of Preston Capes was fined £500 for presenting and reading out the seditious exclusionist address to Fleetwood and Parkhurst in March, 1681.¹⁷² The political climate had certainly changed: the Corporation of Daventry presented an "Address to the King, in abhorrence of the late conspiracy".¹⁷³

168. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/15-110.

169. B.L., Add. MSS., 29560, f. 79.

170. C.S.P.D., 1683-4, pp. 205-6.

171. ibid., pp. 253, 345.

172. ibid., pp. 224, 345.

173. N. Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, 1678-1704, I, 1857, p. 273.

The power of the Whigs, indeed seemed broken.

The Reign of James II, 1685-88.

Soon after Charles II fell into his final illness, Northamptonshire's deputy-lieutenants met at Lord Cullen's house to arrange the military security of the county.¹⁷⁴ When the news of Charles II's death reached them, the deputy-lieutenants had his brother proclaimed King in Northampton; but apparently because the initial response to the news was so poor, a second proclamation was arranged to which the deputy-lieutenants brought large followings.¹⁷⁵ The day afterwards, Richard Rainsford of Dallington, son of the former Lord Chief Justice, informed the Corporation of Northampton that an election for a new Parliament would follow shortly, and ensured that that message would be passed on to the deputies.¹⁷⁶

Canvassing began at the beginning of March 1685; Sir Roger Norwich demurely declined to stand for the county but was pressed to do so by the Tory gentry.¹⁷⁷ He was joined by Sir John Egerton as his fellow candidate.¹⁷⁸ Norwich was able to gain much support through the interest of Lord Cullen, Richard Rainsford and Sir Justinian Isham, who were his most active agents.¹⁷⁹ Yet the prospect of a new Parliament revived the flagging Whig cause in Northamptonshire. Sir William Langham put his extensive influence at the service of the two Whig candidates, Edward Mountague, son of the Earl of Sandwich, and Edward Harby of Adstone, an old Cromwellian turned Whig.¹⁸⁰

174. N.R.O., I.C. 354

175. N.R.O., I.C. 1357, 1377-79.

176. N.R.O., I.C. 1358

177. N.R.O., I.C. 1360.

178. C.S.P.D., 1685, p. 115; H.M.C., I, p. 23.

179. N.R.O., I.C. 1361, 3329.

180. N.R.O., I.C. 1361.

Miles Fleetwood had declared his intention to stand but withdrew in favour of Mountague and Harby.¹⁸¹ Undeterred by a letter to Mountague from the Earl of Sunderland warning him to withdraw, and by the government's removal of Harby from the Commission of the Peace on 1st April, the Whig campaign gathered pace.¹⁸² As the Tory Norwich's and Egerton's support began to fall off amongst the gentry, the Whigs also began to pick up support from the lesser freeholders and the commonalty.¹⁸³ This popular support grew, especially after the Whigs put around the rumour that the Pope, or at least two cardinals, would attend James II's coronation.¹⁸⁴ The involvement of the mob in politics culminated in a demonstration outside the Northampton town house of the sheriff, Captain Henry Benson, protesting against Benson's postponement of the election.¹⁸⁵ Benson called in the militia, who were ordered to load with ball, and before the riot was dispersed, at least one man had been killed.¹⁸⁶ The use of the militia at election time was such a shock that the Lord-Lieutenant forbade Benson to call it out again.¹⁸⁷ The sheriff again resorted to delaying tactics, and after ordering the election to be at Oundle at the instigation of Sir Justinian Isham's steward, suddenly switched the venue to Rothwell.¹⁸⁸ None the less, the poll went too slowly

181. H.M.C., I, pp. 23-4.

182. C.S.P.D., 1685, p. 115; P.R.O., C.231/8, p. 125.

183. N.R.O., I.C. 3329.

184. N.R.O., I.C. 1384.

185. N.R.O., I.C. 1383.

186. N.R.O., I.C. 1383; Lord Macaulay, History of England from the Accession of James II, I, 1913, p. 473.

187. H.M.C., X, p. 185.

188. N.R.O., I.C. 1384-5.

to catch the Whigs unawares.¹⁸⁹ The result was a clear victory for Edward Mountague for one seat and a disputed return between Edward Harby and Sir Roger Norwich for the other. Owing to the political temperament of James II's Parliament, Norwich won.¹⁹⁰

The elections elsewhere in the county were more encouraging for the Tories. In Northampton the mayor, Robert Styles, was able to return the Tory candidates, Richard Rainsford and Sir Justinian Isham, without any protests, although the Whigs of the town claimed that their candidate, Francis Morgan of Kingsthorpe, had had five votes to one of the Tories' in the poll.¹⁹¹ The Corporation of Brackley unanimously returned Sir Richard Wenman for a second time, and James Griffin, son of Sir Edward Griffin of Dingley.¹⁹² There was a contest between two Tories for Higham Ferrers's single seat, namely Sir Lewis Palmer of Carlton and Sir Matthew Dudley of Clopton, both of whom were recently appointed deputy-lieutenants. The election was won by Palmer, no doubt because of his family's close ties with the town.¹⁹³

Except for the obligatory mustering of the militia, Monmouth's rebellion seems to have passed by without serious incident in Northamptonshire.¹⁹⁴ The apprehension and imprisonment of Northamptonshire's aged Parliamentarians was ordered by the government but does not appear to have been carried out,¹⁹⁵ except in the town of Northampton itself where a cart

189. N.R.O., I.C. 1386.

190. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 554; C.J., IX, pp. 715, 728, 738.

191. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

192. P.R.O., C.219/68.

193. C.J., IX, p. 416, C.S.P.D., 1685, p. 206.

194. C.S.P.D., 1685, p. 199.

195. ibid., 1685, p. 212; Borough Records, II, p. 476.

had to be hired to transport the prisoners to Oxford. There was, however, widespread persecution of Nonconformists in the county during the summer of 1685 and many were arrested for non-attendance at church.¹⁹⁶ Gone were such excuses as poverty which had served only six months before, instead magistrates like Henry Sawyer of Kettering were given their head to press their persecutions, and the dissenters of Rothwell could write of "a sore persecution and scattering . . . that we hardly got together".¹⁹⁷ Such harassment had reverberations as late as February 1686, when a rebellion, "headed by one Smith" was reported in a newsletter to Oxford.¹⁹⁸ Whether it was a rising, a riot or merely an overblown rumour, Northamptonshire had clearly become notorious for popular discontent.

The reaction of James II's government to the Monmouth rebellion was to strengthen the deputy-lieutenancy and the magistracy. Sir Roger Cave, Sir Matthew Dudley, Sir John Egerton, Colonel Edward Griffin, Sir Justinian Isham, Charles Montagu of Horton, Sir Roger Norwich, and Sir Lewis Palmer were either appointed or re-appointed as deputies in June, 1685.¹⁹⁹ The government was very discriminating about its deputy-lieutenants; for Sir Charles Shuckburgh, William Washbourne (who had objected to the Grand Jury's

196. Macaulay, History of England, II, p. 585. N.R.O., Q.S.R., 1/114, Constables' Bills.

197. N.R.O., Sacrament Certificates, 1683-85, f. 1; N.N. and Q., N.S. V, p. 82; T. Coleman, Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire, 1853, pp. 51, 81.

198. A. Clark, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary of Oxford, 1732-1795, described by himself, III, 1892, p. 180.

199. C.S.P.D., 1685.

presentment in 1683) and Thomas Ward, although good enough for Charles II, were not good enough for his brother. The magistracy was also strengthened by the addition of seven loyal minor gentry and the dismissal of Edmund Bacon between 1685 and 1686.²⁰⁰ Here again, loyalty was an insufficient virtue and did not guarantee the government's protection. John Willoughby was dismissed from the Commission of the Peace in June, 1686, for actually furthering the work of government. In the absence of the town's mayor, Willoughby took on himself the task of finding quarters in Northampton for an army regiment en route for the north.²⁰¹ He even requisitioned five carts to help them on their way. This was contrary to the letter of the law and led to his prosecution and conviction. A royal pardon was not forthcoming until July, 1687, and Willoughby was not reinstated until as late as April, 1688.²⁰²

By the time of Willoughby's dismissal James II was already beginning to warm to the Nonconformists and the Whigs. Between April and June, 1686 pardons for their Grand Jury presentments were given to the leading Whigs, Miles Fleetwood, Sir Thomas Samwell and William Tate.²⁰³

In the summer of 1686, the Commission of the Peace was suddenly reformed.²⁰⁴ Five justices who had not been notable for their attendance at the Sessions, one of whom William Smyth, had been appointed less than

200. P.R.O., C.231/8, ff.126, 135. N.R.O., F-H. 989, 2228; Bacon had been on the grand jury of 1683 but had protested against its presentment.

201. C.S.P.D., 1687-9, p. 21.

202. P.R.O., C.231/8, f. 191.

203. C.S.P.D., 1686-7, pp. 110, 186.

204. N.R.O., F-H. 989, 1271.

twelve months before, were dismissed.²⁰⁵ Ten other county gentlemen were brought on to the commission. They included a government informant and Roman Catholic, Henry Hind of Moulton and two further Catholics, the Earl of Cardigan and George Holman of Warkworth, or rather of Paris, where he had been living intermittently for over thirty years.²⁰⁶ Again it would seem, efficiency and service were to the government of James II as important criteria for judging a magistrate as his loyalty.

James II's determination that the penal laws and the Test Act should be repealed by a Parliament packed with his own supporters led to further remodelling of local government in the autumn of 1687. Prior to this, much testing of public opinion had been undertaken. In April, 1687, Thomas Cartwright, the Bishop of Chester, had visited Northampton and other places in the county to test the feelings of leading Whigs about a rapprochement between their party and the King.²⁰⁷ Although he met many prominent Whig gentry like Sir William Langham and the Fleetwoods, he seems to have struck a greater rapport with the lesser Whig gentry and Nonconformists on the Corporation of Northampton, many of whom, like Gardner, Ives and Whalley were his cousins. Despite some objections, from a few hardline Nonconformists to celebrating a Holy Communion for occasional conformists his mission would seem to have been quite successful.

Six months later, James ordered his Lord Lieutenants to make enquiries of all magistrates regarding three questions. Would they support

205. P.R.O., E.372/526-530.

206. N.R.O., I.C. 1403, 1423; X.4478/712; H.M.C., XI, Appendix, Pt. II, MSS. of the House of Lords, 1678-88, p. 228.

207. The Diary of Thomas Cartwright, Bishop of Chester, Camden Soc., XXII, 1843, pp. 41-2.

a Parliamentary candidate in favour of repealing the Test Act and penal laws? Would they put themselves up as such a candidate? Would they support a royal declaration for liberty of conscience?²⁰⁸

The Northamptonshire Justices of the Peace and deputy lieutenants gave more forthright answers than the polite evasions often given elsewhere. Only seven tried to avoid giving a clear answer or giving any answer at all. Two of these, William Mountague and Major Walter Littleton, seem to have been genuinely unavailable to give answers, for their approval must have been known to the government which put them both into the Commission of the Peace at the end of 1687. Another two, Sir Charles Shuckburgh and William Alston, were dismissed. Twelve gave answers to the effect that they would consent to a declaration for liberty of conscience but would not support parliamentary candidates determined to repeal the Test Act. Six of these gave firmer answers than the others and were dismissed from the commission. Two of them, Henry Fermor, and John Lynn, had been appointed by James II himself.

Twenty-one justices gave direct refusals. Twelve of these were dismissed from the magistracy, two of them because they refused to serve as justices. Of the other ten, Moses Bathurst, Henry Benson, the ex-

208. D. Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William II, 1969, pp. 188-9. This section is based on G. Duckett, Penal Laws and Test Act, 1687-88, II, 1882. The changes in the Commission of the Peace have been deduced by comparing the following libri pacis: N.R.O. F-H., 986, 989, 1271, 2228, 2703, 2997; P.R.O., C.193/12/4; C.193/12/5; C.234/27. Not P.R.O., P.C. 2/71, ff. 363-79, which is incomplete.

sheriff, Charles Kirkham and Geoffrey Palmer were Tories who had been appointed by Charles II's government, and another four, Thomas Cox, William Hastings, Francis Lane and Edward Saunders, by James II. Of the remaining nine justices who gave refusals but retained their posts three, Gilbert Dolben, Harvey Ekins, and Thomas Pinfold were recent appointments. At least one of those who were allowed to keep their positions after giving a refusal, the Tory Knight of the Shire, Sir Roger Norwich, resigned all his offices, including the prestigious verderership of Rockingham Forest, rather than serve James II.²⁰⁹ All in all, twenty magistrates were dismissed: thirteen of them recent appointments.

Eleven justices, including the Earl of Peterborough, consented to the three proposals. All of them were noted for their faithful service to the Stuarts; two had been appointed between 1681 and 1685 and four between 1685 and 1686. They included two members of parliament, Charles Orme and Sir Lewis Palmer; an ex-clerk of the Crown in Chancery, Sir Robert Clarke; a government agent and Catholic, Henry Hinde; and the permanent justice for Higham Ferrers, alderman Goddard Pemberton. The commission, however, required augmentation to function, especially as literally half of the active bench, Henry Benson, John Gardiner, William Hastings, Brian Janson, Richard Rainsford and Edward Saunders had been dismissed.²¹⁰ To replace these, the government appointed or re-appointed seventeen new justices in October, 1687. Thirteen of them were Whigs; one, Walter Littleton, was a militia officer, three, George son of Holman, Ferdinando Poulton, and Henry Hind were Roman Catholics; and one Bernard Walcott cannot be identified.

209. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, p. 110.

210. P.R.O., E. 372/530-32.

Of the Catholics, two, Poulton and Hind, actually served on the bench in 1688.²¹¹ Of the Whigs, the five most important did not serve, Thomas Andrew, Sir William Craven, Edward Harby, Edward Mountague and Sir Thomas Samwell. But three of the less important Whigs, Thomas Colthurst, Gerard Gore and Francis Morgan were joined on the bench by two individuals who can be identified as Jacobites in the 1690s: Francis Arundell and Charles Fleetwood. These comprised nearly half the number who acted as magistrates in 1688. These, however, were not enough; for in early 1688 the government had to re-appoint William Hastings, John Needham, William Washbourne and John Willoughby, and to create two more justices, Thomas Elmes of Lilford, and Bartholemew Elwes of Brackley. At least two, Needham and Willoughby, served in 1688.

Other aspects of local government were similarly reorganised. The Whig, Thomas Andrew, was chosen as sheriff, and if James II had stayed on the throne, the re-instated justice William Hastings would have succeeded Andrew. James II had not sufficient confidence to appoint one of the other proposals for sheriff, the Catholic Ferdinando Poulton. Amongst the deputy-lieutenants, Egerton, Isham and Norwich were dropped, and only Sir Matthew Dudley and Sir Lewis Palmer retained.²¹² They were supplemented by the four most important Whigs mentioned in the last paragraph, by the Catholic, George Holman and by Edward Griffin of Dingley.²¹³ There was a ninth addition, Thomas Elmes of Lilford in August 1688. Griffin was an unusual figure, "un vieux milord, fort protestant mais fort fidele".²¹⁴

211. P.R.O., E.372/533.

212. C.S.P.D., 1687-9, p. 116.

213. ibid., 1687-9, p. 231.

214. Memoires du Duc de Saint-Simon, VI, 1856, p. 194.

The Corporation of Northampton was strongly Protestant but not at all obedient to James II. The Assembly, when the Lord Lieutenant proposed to put the three questions to it, resolved not to answer them and the Earl of Peterborough was unusually tactful in not pressing the point, but he did insist that the burgesses should not engage their votes in the proposed Parliamentary election until they had heard from him again.²¹⁵ Early in 1688, in a letter to the mayor, the Earl proposed, not, as he had promised, two Anglicans, but a Nonconformist Whig, Charles Fleetwood, and a militia officer of dubious religious persuasions, Major Walter Littleton. The Assembly was again summoned after some canvassing, during which the electorate revealed their dislike of Fleetwood and Littleton, who were in favour of repealing the Test Act. Only one of the Forty-Eight would promise his vote to the government candidates, and so James II exercised his right and expelled the mayor, four aldermen, twenty bailiffs, and forty of the Forty-Eight. Those turned out included aldermen Brafeld, Whiston and their associates.²¹⁶ The appointment of John Willoughby as mayor, and Henry Hind and Charles Fleetwood as aldermen, did nothing to make the Corporation amenable, for the Assembly met for a second time and again refused to comply with the three proposals. Consequently, in April, 1688, there was a second regulation of the Corporation whereby three more aldermen, two bailiffs and eleven of the newly appointed burgesses were dismissed. Another alderman and six burgesses were removed in May, and two more burgesses in September.²¹⁸

215. N.R.O., X.4478/712.

216. P.R.O., P.C. 2/72, f. 616.

217. P.R.O., P.C. 2/72, f. 640.

218. P.R.O., P.C. 2/72, ff. 672, 730.

Popular feeling was clearly on the side of the excluded councillors. When the news that the seven bishops had been freed reached Northampton, bonfires were lit all over the town.²¹⁹ A grand jury that was convened to find a true bill against those who had started the bonfires responded to a diatribe against the seven bishops by throwing it out of court.²²⁰ On the day the Assembly met to decide on a new mayor, 25th September, 1688, the Earl of Peterborough decided to hold the parliamentary election, the writ for which had just arrived. So apprehensive was he of popular disturbance that, contrary to his own injunction of April, 1685, he called out the militia to prevent any that would not vote for Fleetwood and Littleton from coming to the poll.²²¹ He was not, however, challenged by the mob, but thwarted by Thomas Andrew the Whig sheriff, who refused to open the writ and fled with it into hiding. In the meantime, by a majority vote, Henry Flexney was chosen as mayor by the Assembly. He was unacceptable to the Court and was replaced by royal proclamation by Thomas Atterbury, the ex-mayor who had presided over the surrender of the town's charter.²²² Flexney, like the sheriff with the writ (and like James II too, with the Great Seal) fled with his badge of office, the mayoral mace. The Earl of Peterborough brought more militia men from Wellingborough in his determination to find the two absconders; but the day after he returned to Northampton he was summoned to join James II's army at Salisbury.

219. F. P. and M. M. Verney, eds., The Verney Memoirs, II, 1907, p. 45i.

220. J. Miller, James II, A Study in Kingship, 1978, p. 188.

221. H.M.C., X, p. 185; N.R.O., X.4478/712.

222. Borough Records, II, p. 477.

The news of William of Orange's landing brought the Earl of Northampton to the county town with a large retinue of armed men on about 26th November. There he was met by the Earl of Manchester, escorted by many other gentlemen from all over the south-east Midlands, and between them they issued a declaration for the defence of the Protestant religion, the liberty and property of the subject and called for the assistance of the Prince of Orange.²²³ On the advice of the two earls, the mayor sent this declaration to James II. The earls clearly had a reformation of government in mind and not a revolution, but armed protest has a way of developing its own momentum. A rumour that James's army was on its way, no doubt started by the skirmish between Captain Henry Bertie's troop and the King's dragoons near Brackley on 25th November, frightened the earls and their gentry escort into leaving the town; but the townsmen showed more courage and with the help of the men from the surrounding countryside appeared in arms to defend it. At the beginning of December 1688, an armed mob stormed the Earl of Peterborough's house at Drayton, spoiled the chapel, and tortured the family steward almost to death in their attempts to discover the whereabouts of the militia magazine.²²⁴ The gentry could do nothing to prevent the sack: sixty-five of them, at the head of five hundred horse from the county, were on their way north as part of Princess Anne's escort.²²⁵

This escort included the Tories, Sir Justinian Isham, Sir Roger Cave, William Adams, Harvey Ekins, Brian Janson, Edward Saunders, Erasmus, son of Sir Roger Norwich, Richard and Henry Benson.²²⁶ The Whigs included, Lord

223. N.R.O., X.4478/712; H.M.C., VII, p. 418.

224. H.M.C., XII, Pt. VII, Le Fleming, 25, p. 230; Wood's Life and Times, III, p. 84.

225. H.M.C., V, p. 198; H.M.C., IX, Pt. II, p. 460; N.R.O., I.L. 3982.

226. N.R.O., I.L. 3982.

Rockingham's son, Lewis Watson, Sir Thomas Samwell, Christopher and Edward Mountague, Edward Harby, Robert Haslerigge and his son, John Parkhurst, Tobias Chauncéy, Salathiel Lovell, Richard Butler, John Whalley and Thomas Andrew. The escort was thus made up from all the groups James had antagonised in the previous three years; it even included four of the magistrates he had appointed twelve months before. Why they joined forces it is impossible to say. Perhaps a clue can be found in the behaviour of Thomas Andrew of Harlestone. As a substantial Whig landowner, he was chosen as magistrate, deputy-lieutenant and sheriff; but his only known action in any of those capacities was to obstruct the forced election of Charles Fleetwood, a relatively insignificant Whig collaborator on the bench. Perhaps, in the end it was the sight of Whig lesser gentry and lawyers side by side with Roman Catholics sitting in their own rightful places at the Quarter Sessions that drove the substantial Whigs and the outraged Tories into rebellion.

CHAPTER VII

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND THE STRIFE OF PARTY, 1689 - 1714

The County After The Glorious Revolution, 1689 - 1695

The events of the winter of 1688 - 89 were greeted in Northamptonshire with considerable circumspection by the county gentry. Although the general populace would seem to have celebrated every stage in the overthrow of James II and the accession of William and Mary with bonfires and ale, the county's governors were much more guarded in their reaction. Nothing was said or done about the state of the nation at the Epiphany Quarter Session in January 1689, and although the Justices met at Easter, they would seem to have taken advantage of the Act not then being passed for settling the Oath of Allegiance to say or do equally little.¹ It was not until June 1689 when the first and only mention of a change of monarchs was made, with the ardent Whig magistrates, Sir Thomas Samwell, Francis Morgan and John Parkhurst being commissioned to procure two portraits of the new king and queen to adorn the Sessions House walls.² The Corporation of Northampton was equally tardy; it did not formally acknowledge William and Mary until May 1689.³

In part, no doubt, the county's governors prevaricated because they were uncertain about their authority and probably apprehensive about further changes in the government of the country, but also they might have been fearful of stirring up the passions of the multitude by precipitate action.

1. N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/128-129; H.M.C., I, p.17.

2. N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/130

3. Borough Records., II, p. 478.

The county's lower orders had not merely been content to carouse around bonfires in the winter of 1688-89, but had carried their enthusiasm as far as sacking the Catholic Earl of Peterborough's mansion at Drayton and in the absence of the county's governors who were escorting Princess Anne on her way to Nottingham, rushing with equal vigour to defend in arms the town of Northampton against a rumoured onslaught by James II's army. Exhorted to action by the Protestant seventh Duke of Norfolk, who had a material interest in the property of his father-in-law, the Earl of Peterborough, the Northamptonshire Justices had taken alarm at the spoliation of Drayton Park, and they could hardly have felt differently about the ominous, though short-lived, armed occupation of the county town.⁴ There is little evidence for the size and extent of popular unrest in the county, but clearly the problem persisted well into 1689, for as late as April popular feeling and religious bigotry got out of hand and turned to mob violence when the family of the Catholic Earl of Cardigan was threatened and abused in his native parish of Deene.⁵ In the face of such insolence the county's governors found it in their own best interest to maintain a semblance of unity in their own ranks. Of course Jacobite extremists had to be kept in check, sometimes by harsh measures, but Whig agitators were also suppressed, and many Tories and Whigs who had supported James II found themselves welcomed back into the ranks of the county's magistrates.

This impression of concurrence amongst the county gentry to prevent their disputes becoming too factious is borne out by the elections to the Convention Parliament in January and February 1689. There is no evidence of a contested election in any of the county's constituencies, although

4. N.R.O., I.C. 1530.

5. C.S.P.D., 1689-90, p. 54.

contrary to what Professor Horwitz suggests, there is some evidence that both Tories and Whigs tentatively canvassed the county's freeholders before reaching a compromise between themselves.⁶ Sir Justinian Isham, the old Tory M.P. for Northampton, was urged to stand with his fellow Tory, Edward Mountague, for Knight of the Shire, by the Jacobites, Sir Pope Danvers, Sir William Fermor and Sir Roger Norwich and by the clerical agent of Bishop Compton of London, Thomas Whitfield, the Anglican Rector of Bugbrooke, who wanted Isham to stand "for the sake of the Church of England". Despite the favourable reports of his popularity in the county they had gained from an informal canvass of the western side of the county, Isham decided not to run with Mountague but to stand instead for his old borough of Northampton.⁷ Whether it was his withdrawal which made the old Whig partnership of Sir St Andrew St John and John Parkhurst cease canvassing, or their joint withdrawal which induced Isham to stand down, it is impossible to say, but the effect was to divide the county's representation between a Tory, Edward Mountague, and a Whig, Edward Harby. Such was the degree of collusion, in fact, that the Whig, Lord Rockingham, was prepared to canvass on behalf of Mountague to discourage Whig interlopers.⁸ The other parliamentary constituencies in Northamptonshire were similarly divided. Northampton went to Isham and to a Whig with long-established family connections with the town, Sir William Langham. Sir William, at least, had been on intimate personal terms with

6. H. Horwitz, Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III, 1977, p. 331; N.R.O., I.C. 1435.

7. B.L., Add. M.S.S. 29587, f. 81; N.R.O., I.C. 1434-1436 A.

8. Return of Members of Parliament, I, 1879, p. 560; N.R.O., I.C. 1435.

the Isham family until the dissensions brought about the Exclusion Crisis.⁹ Peterborough was divided between Charles Fitzwilliam of Stamford, a relation of the Whig ex-member for the town, William Lord Fitzwilliam, and Gilbert Dolben of Finedon, a staunch High Tory Anglican. The Fitzwilliam interest in the town has already been discussed; in 1689 it was so deeply entrenched as to ensure both candidates were returned unopposed for the paltry outlay of a mere £60.¹⁰ Dolben, however, was a comparative newcomer to the county with an estate in the adjoining parishes of Finedon and Burton Latimer acquired by his marriage to one of the Mulshoe heiresses and which he inherited on the death of his father-in-law, Tanfield Mulshoe in 1673. These properties are nearly twenty-five miles from Peterborough, and it is unknown whether he owned any tenements in the town, so it is likely that he owed his seat not to any territorial interest but to the fact that his father had been Archbishop of York, and this ecclesiastical connection, together with his strong High Tory Anglican principles, had led to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral actively supporting his candidature.¹¹ The town of Brackley also returned one Tory and one Whig to Parliament: the old Tory member for the borough, Richard Lord Wenman and the Whig activist, John Parkhurst. The single seat borough of Higham Ferrers returned a moderate Whig, with strong local ties, who had served the town in Parliament on three other occasions, Sir Rice Rudd.¹²

9. Diary of Thomas Isham, pp. 63, 91, 105, 115, 129, 139, 143, 175, 195, 209.

10. N.R.O., F.(M.)C. 670, 677, 678, 680.

11. Bridges, II, pp. 223-5, 258-9; D.N.B., V, p. 1094; Horwitz, Parliament, Policy and Politics, p. 345; A. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, III, pp. 164, 194.

12. Return of Members of Parliament, I, pp. 536, 543, 560

Even when, in the course of 1689, four of these members were lost, the county's parliamentary representation remained divided in this same even-handed manner. When Rudd chose to serve for Carmarthenshire, for which he had also been elected, the electors of Higham Ferrers chose in his place Lewis Watson, the eldest son of the Whig, Edward Lord Rockingham, who had served as the Whig member for Canterbury in the Oxford Parliament of 1681.

This was the first occasion when the Rockingham interest in the borough, formed when Lord Rockingham's brother bought thirty houses in 1684, was exerted to elect a Watson. Lewis Watson owed his election as much to his uncle, his brother-in-law, the Earl of Feversham and his mother's family, the Wentworths, who between them owned most of the town, as to his Whig politics.¹³ When Watson, in his turn, had to resign his seat in June 1689 to take his father's place in the House of Lords, he was replaced by another Whig, Thomas Andrewes of Harlestone.¹⁴ Similarly, in Peterborough, when Charles Fitzwilliam died at the end of the year, another Whig, William Brownlowe, stepped into his place.¹⁵ Finally, this pattern was also repeated when one of the county seats became vacant on the death of Edward Harby in May 1689 and he was replaced by Sir Thomas Samwell, another Whig.¹⁶

13. C.J. X p. 19; G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XI, pp. 57-8; Bridges, II, p. 173; V.C.H., Northants., III pp. 270-2; J. Tyler, 'Elections at Higham Ferrers, N.P. and P., I, Pt. 6, 1953, p. 45.

14. C.J. X, p. 202; Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 560; Horwitz, op. cit., p. 341.

15. C.J. X, p. 307; Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 560; Horwitz, op. cit., p. 343.

16. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 560.

There might have been, however, another factor in the election of a Whig at each of the four by-elections of 1689 besides a desire on behalf of the electorate to maintain the balance of party in the county. This other element is harder to discern, but is revealed by the election results of March 1690 when the county showed a marked preference for Whig candidates, and perhaps this trend was anticipated by the by-elections. Aided by evident confusion in the Tory ranks, with Isham stigmatised for associating with Lord Griffin, a known Jacobite, and for absenting himself too frequently from the House of Commons, and both Isham and Mountague unsure where to stand, or whether to stand for elections at all, the Whigs won both of the county and both of the Northampton seats.¹⁷ John Parkhurst of Catesby was joined by Sir St Andrew St John, the step son of his old exclusionist partner, Miles Fleetwood, and together they were returned for the county.¹⁸ Two other well respected Whigs, Sir William Langham and Sir Thomas Samwell were returned for the county town. Higham Ferrers chose Thomas Andrewes for a second time, as did Peterborough elect Dolben and Brownlowe.¹⁹ The precise political persuasions of the two new members for Brackley are difficult to ascertain, but they were clearly not rabidly Tory. Sir William Egerton's politics were equivocal: as a Knight of the Bath in the last years of Charles II he must have been well regarded by the Stuarts, but as the brother of the Whig Earl of Bridgwater it is unlikely that the Earl would have

17. N.R.O., I.C. 1440, 1443; T. Wotton, The English Baronetage, II, 1741, p. 43.

18. N. N. and Q., New Series, I, p. 115.

19. Return of Members of Parliament, I, p. 567.

exercised his preponderant interest in the borough on his behalf if his politics had been anathema.²⁰ The other member for the town, John Blencowe of Marston St Lawrence, two miles away from Brackley, was a sergeant-at-law who was later knighted and made a judge. In 1702 he split his votes in the county election of that year between one of the Tory candidates, Sir Justinian Isham and one of the Whigs, Lord Spencer, and in 1705 he voted wholly Whig.²¹ It is therefore much more likely that he was a Whig than an out-and-out Tory.

Even though this swing to the Whigs would seem to reveal a polarisation of politics in the county after 1689, there is evidence to indicate that throughout the early 1690s the division between the parties was blurred by personal collaboration and collusion between the partisans of both sides. The death of Sir Thomas Samwell from smallpox early in 1694 necessitated a by-election for the county town which could have led to a bitter party conflict between the two candidates for the seat, Sir Justinian Isham and Christopher Montague of Horton, a Whig and an elder brother of Charles Montague who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Whig Junto and the future Earl of Halifax.²² With the added fuel of the family name of Montague being at stake in their own borough of Northampton it may be supposed that a hotly fought contest would have taken place, but instead the other powerful influence in the town, the Earl of Northampton, intervened to defuse the

20. Bridges, I, p. 143; Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 21.

21. Bridges, I, pp. 181-184; Poll Book 1702, 1705, p. 40.

22. C.S.P.D., 1695, p. 241; Wood, Life and Times, III, p. 267;
Bridges, I, p. 368; G.E.C., Complete Peerage, VI, p. 245;
Horwitz, op. cit., p. 351.

issue by offering his otherwise Tory interest to Montague. As the Earl's prestige and territorial interest in the town were considerable - he was made Recorder of Northampton in 1689 and had twice been called upon to solve the town's problems since then - Montague should have gone on to win the election. But no sooner had the Earl shown his favour for Montague than he recollected he had offered his support to Isham some time before and appropriately re-assigned the interest he had absentmindedly forgotten. The consequence was not for the contest to be reinvigorated, but for Montague to allow himself to be persuaded by the Earl to stand down. That Montague did so less than grudgingly is perhaps because he was also the brother-in-law of the old Tory Knight of the Shire, Edward Montague, now the Earl of Sandwich. Having been persuaded, Montague transferred his interest in the corporation to Isham, so that no other Whig would stand against him, and Isham was duly elected without opposition.²³

23. N.R.O., I.C. 1473, 1512; Bridges, I, p. 368; W. Bingham Compton, A History of the Comptons of Compton-Winyates, 1930, pp. 148-155; and Tobias Coldwell's History of Northampton, Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club, XXVIII, 1934, p. 82, for the disputed election to the Vicarage of All Saints which led to increasing numbers of the town's burgesses being discharged by the mayor until the Earl of Northampton and his uncle, the Bishop of London, intervened to settle the argument.

Both Whigs and Tories proved somewhat less than conciliatory on the Commission of the Peace between 1689 and 1695, but even so, both sides seemed willing to reach a rough and ready accommodation with each other to prevent county society being completely split asunder by their factious disputes. In March 1689 a new list of names was drawn up of county gentlemen acceptable to the government as Justices of the Peace, and this list was ratified in full by a commitis pacis issued in September.²⁴ As would be expected, most of James II's appointments were left out of the new commission. All seven of his Roman Catholic magistrates were naturally dismissed; the Earl of Cardigan, Sir Robert Clarke of Long Buckby, Henry Hinde of Moulton Park, George Holman senior and George Holman junior of Warkworth, Thomas Manning of Brigstock, and Ferdinando Poulton of Desborough. The half-dozen additions James II made to the bench in the summer of 1688 were also removed: Sir Thomas Elmes of Lilford, Bartholemew Elwes of Blakesley, William Hastings of Hinton in Woodford, John Needham of Litchborough, William Washbourne of Pytchley and John Willoughby of Purston. Five other royal nominees appointed earlier in James's reign again failed to inspire the trust of the new régime: Henry Fermor of Easton Neston, Charles Fleetwood of Northampton, Henry Neville of Holt, Ralph Sheldon, an intruder from James's court, and Bernard Walcott of Oundle.

In addition, however, to these inevitable dismissals, there were over thirty other Justices and ex-Justices, survivors of Charles II's bench, maintained or eventually removed from the magistracy by James II, who were not re-appointed in 1689. A few, like William Alston, Knightley Purefoy, Richard Saltonstall and Thomas Ward had died, or were too old and infirm to

24. P.R.O., C. 234/27, 23 March 1689; N.R.O., F-H. 2226.

perform their duties. Some others, like Edward Lord Griffin of Dingley, Sir Matthew Dudley of Clapton, Sir Charles Neale of Wollaston, Sir John Robinson of Farming Woods, Henry Freeman of Higham Ferrers, Walter Littleton of Northampton, Charles Orme of Peterborough and Goddard Pemberton also of Higham, had co-operated with the old king's policies to the extent of agreeing, in whole or in part, to the lifting of the Penal and Test Laws, that they were clearly untrustworthy. But the rest had proven more recalcitrant in their dealings with James II's government, and at least fourteen of them had preferred to be dismissed from the bench rather than assist James in bringing Roman Catholics and Non-conformists into the offices of the state. Amongst the more prominent of these were John Gardiner of Croughton, Bryan Janson of Ashby St Ledger, Charles Kirkham of Cotterstock, John Lynn of Southwick, Geoffrey Palmer of Stoke Doyle and Edward Saunders of Brixworth: they were all Tories. Besides these fourteen were another half-dozen, who although they had refused to aid James II in his designs to repeal the Test Act, had kept their positions in local government under James, but were dismissed in 1689. They were, like Sir Roger Norwich of Brompton Ash, Sir Lewis Palmer of Carlston and Henry Longvile of Cosgrove (cousin of the Barons Grey de Ruthin), men of such local prestige, that no doubt James's government was loth to dismiss them even though Norwich resigned every one of his offices in protest against James's proposals, neither he nor any of the others was appointed to the bench by the new régime since they were, of course, Tories.

On the other hand, there was a large number of Justices of the Peace, both Tories and Whigs, who had been appointed in the time of James II and

who were re-appointed by the new régime.²⁵ This group can be divided into three categories: those who had appeared at the Quarter Sessions in James's reign, and thus given at least tacit approval to James's policies; those who, although appointed to the bench, never served in their full capacity as magistrates; and those who, whether or not they had served the old régime, were dismissed by James II, but were more logically brought back onto the bench by William III's ministers. Amongst the first group were: the Tories, Francis Arundell of Stoke Bruerne, Henry Benson of Dodford and Christopher and William Thursby of Abington; and the Whigs, John Browne of Eydon, Gerrard Gore of Church Brampton and Sir Thomas Samwell of Upton and Gayton. In the second group were: the Tories, Sir William Fermor of Easton Neston, Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport and Edward Mountague of Hinchinbrooke in Huntingdonshire; and the Whigs, Thomas Andrewes of Harlestone, John Bridges of Barton Seagrave, Sir William Craven of Winwick, Thomas Colthurst of Northampton, William Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton, and Edward Harby of Adstone. The last group was comprised of: the Tories, William Adams of Charwelton, George Clarke of Watford, Sir Rodger Cave of Stanford, Gilbert Dolben of Finedon, Harvey Ekins of Weston Favell, Francis Lane of Glendon, Richard Rainsford of Dallington, and John Wodhull of Thenford; and the Whigs, John Creswell of Purston, Edward Ladkins of Hellidon, William

25. The political identifications made in this, and subsequent paragraphs, are based on the 1683 lists of Whigs, P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt. 3, f. 216, and B.L., Add. MSS 25302, f. 156; on the votes cast by Northamptonshire gentlemen in the elections of 1695, 1702, and 1705, N.R.O., C.(A.) 7513/1, 7513/2, and Copies of the Polls taken at the Several Elections for Members to represent the County of Northampton in Parliament, 1832.

Montague of Oakley Parva, half-brother of the late Edward Lord Montague, and Francis Morgan of Kingsthorpe. To these three groups can be added a fourth: those Justices who had been dismissed during the purge of local government in the last years of Charles II and who had not been re-appointed at any time in the reign of James II. They were all Whigs: Henry Edmond of Preston, Sir James Langham of Culworth, his brother, Sir William Langham of Walgrave, William Lisle of Evenley, John Parkhurst of Catesby, and William Tate of Delapré Abbey in Hardingstone.

Although fifteen Tories with experience of local government found their way back onto the bench in 1689, and even though their number was augmented by four inexperienced Tory Justices, they were greatly outnumbered by the addition of a further twenty-three identifiable Whigs to the other nineteen who had been put back into the Commission. In a magistracy of sixty-seven local gentry, less six whose politics are unidentifiable, the Whigs had a majority of forty-two to nineteen.

This disparity requires further examination. In 1689 William III relied on a balanced administration of both Whigs and Tories for his government, and it would have been reasonable to have expected that balance to be reflected in the composition of the Northamptonshire bench. Instead William III's first ministry would seem to have relied on the Whigs for the government of the country. It has been said that party labels obscure rather than illuminate the political divisions of England after the Glorious Revolution, but in the case of Northamptonshire, the terms Whig and Tory still had some meaning in the aftermath of the Revolution if only because central government showed a marked preference for the county's old Exclusionists. No less than thirty-four of the forty-two "Whig" Justices were men who had been "abhorred" in the early 1680s.²⁶ Whatever their aims were after

26. B.L., Add. MSS. 25302, f. 156; P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt 3, f. 216.

the Revolution, the Whigs were still the same men they had been ten years before. Whether or not they had succumbed to James II's inducements, those who had been the more strenuous in support of a Bill of Exclusion were those whom the government had chosen.

This bias is at least a partial explanation for the political weighting of the Northamptonshire bench, but it does not explain the presence of nineteen Tories, some of whom had supported James II, and some of whom had proven more critical of his rule than a few of their Whig opponents and later colleagues on the Commission. Nor does it explain the absence of a good number of Tories, many of whom had been far less co-operative than the likes of Sir Thomas Samwell or Gerrard Gore. What is more, it does not explain why the Tory Marquis of Carmarthen and Earl of Nottingham, both powerful ministers, did not succeed in redressing the balance when they clearly had such intentions. In May 1689 Nottingham was instrumental in getting the Tory Earls of Northampton and Westmorland appointed to the Commission of the Peace.²⁷ He was even more active in having the Whig's choice as Custos Rotulorum, the Earl of Monmouth, removed from this additional new dignity, and having him replaced by the old keeper of the office, the Tory, Lord Hatton.²⁸ Nottingham had strong local connections; he had estates around Daventry and Guilsborough and had at least one other contact in the county besides Lord Hatton, his Under-Secretary, John, the

27. C.S.P.D., 1689-90, p. 102.

28. ibid., pp. 46, 50; H.M.C., I, pp. 17, 21; P.R.O., C. 231/8, ff. 211, 240.

younger brother of Sir Justinian Isham.²⁹ He was, therefore, well placed to find, and influential enough, to nominate, a sufficient number of Tory recruits to counter the Whig domination of the Northamptonshire bench. His failure to do so probably reveals less about the extent of his powers than it does about the difficulty of finding Tory gentlemen that the Revolution government could trust.

A partial explanation of why only some Tories were trusted enough to be chosen can be found in the rôle certain Tory gentlemen played in the Revolution itself. At least seven of the fourteen Tory Justices with previous experience, Adams, Benson, Cave, Ekins, Isham, Mountague, and Wodhull, had joined Princess Anne's armed escort to Nottingham - as near to an act of open rebellion as any English gentleman came in 1688.³⁰ However much a gesture, such involvement at least betokened some commitment of life and fortune to changing the old régime which the new government was bound to look on favourably and reward. But this is not a complete explanation, because two prominent Tory Justices who rendered service in the escort, Bryan Janson and Sir Roger Norwich (who was represented by his son, Erasmus), were not re-instated in 1689. The reason why is that by March 1689 the new government had information which identified them, at least by association, as Jacobites still loyal to the Stuart dynasty of James II and thus disaffected to the new régime, patently untrustworthy and potentially traitorous. They were linked, along with eighteen other of James II's magistrates, some twenty other gentlemen, ten

29. Bridges, I, pp. 43-8, 569; E. Forrester, Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering, 1695-1832, 1941, pp. 18-19; Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 253; N.R.O., I.C. 1484, 1487, 1499, 1529, 1591, 1746.

30. N.R.O., I.L. 3982.

Anglican clergy, and twenty assorted innkeepers, excise officers and Catholic chaplains, as persons "disaffected to the present government".³¹ Clearly the government was privy to detailed political information about these individuals which is now lost to the historian; and the administration's reliance on this knowledge, for it issued the list, name for name, with monotonous regularity between 1689 and 1696 when summoning those registered to take the Oath of Allegiance, is another partial explanation of why so many Tories were not picked for William III's Northamptonshire magistracy.³² This is not a complete explanation because two of the listed Jacobites, Sir William Fermor and Lionel Lord Huntingtower, were chosen as Justices, but usually the merest hint of Jacobitism was enough to incur the government's displeasure. In December 1689, for example, Sir Justinian Isham "stood as fair for preferment as most, and had even good offers, particularly ... that of a commission to raise a regiment of foot", but his standing bail for the Jacobite, Lord Griffin of Dingley, ennobled the year before James II and gaoled for keeping in touch with his old master, was enough for Isham to lose the government's confidence, and the Northampton election.³³

The extreme apprehension felt throughout the 1690's by all branches of government about the potential for treachery from a Jacobite fifth column is often overlooked by modern historians. Regarding Northamptonshire, William III's ministers displayed a nervous concern that bordered on the hysterical. In May 1693 the government accepted a secret agent's report that named as disaffected, not only the aged Earl of Peterborough and Lord Griffin, presumably now out of the Tower, both known Jacobites, but also the Earls

31. B.L., Add. MSS. 29587, f. 81.

32. N.R.O., F-H 3313; Q.S.M. 2, 28 April, 1696.

33. T. Wotton, The English Baronetage, II p. 43, N. Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, 1678-1704, I, 1857, p. 615.

of Exeter and Cardigan, Lords Grey and Hatton, and even Ralph, Earl of Montague, one of William III's most loyal supporters.³⁴ In 1694 the Lord Lieutenant of the county the high Whig, Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Monmouth, had his name linked with the exiled Stuart court, and when rumour implicated him in the violent bread riots in Northampton that year; it needed the unflappable commonsense of the Duke of Shrewsbury, a man who knew Northamptonshire society very well from frequent visits to Boughton, to dispel the suspicions.³⁵ Again in 1697 another spy produced a list of disaffected persons in Northamptonshire which caused great consternation because it purported to show many hitherto loyal gentry to be traitors.³⁶ The Lord Justices who investigated these claims were probably right to be sceptical.

The reaction of the Northamptonshire magistrates to persons proclaimed as disaffected was somewhat mixed. During the first three years of the new reign the number of Whig Justices attending the Quarter Sessions outnumbered the Tories by never less than two to one, and sometimes by as many as three to one.³⁷ Although their marked absence from the Quarter Sessions was probably due to a natural hesitancy or even reluctance to oblige the Whigs by participating in local government, Tory non-attendance can also be partly explained by a high mortality rate in their own ranks. Between

34. Bodley., M.S. Carte 181, f. 540; L.J. XIV, pp. 332, 362-3,

G.E.C., Complete Peerage, IX, pp. 106-7; Bridges, II, p. 351.

35. C.S.P.D., 1694-5, p. 228; G.E.C., Complete Peerage, IX, pp. 198-99; X, pp. 500-502; Bodley, MS. Carte 233, ff. 81, 256.

36. C.S.P.D., 1697, p. 202; H.M.C., Downshire MSS, I, Part 2, p. 756.

37. N.R.O., Q.S.M. 2, Michaelmas 1690- Michaelmas 1691; Q.S.R. 1/128-139.

Out of a total complement of active magistrates of twenty-four, seventeen were Whigs. The yearly ratio of attendance of Whigs to Tories in 1689 was 12:5; 1690, 12:6, and 1691, 15:4.

1689 and 1690, four prominent Tories, George Clarke of Watford, Francis Lane of Glendon, Christopher Thursby of Abington and Richard Lord Wenman of Witney, Oxfordshire, died.³⁸ The Whigs would seem to have used their majority to exercise what vindictiveness they could for being persecuted in the aftermaths of the Exclusion Crisis. In the summer of 1690, when the country was in the throes of an invasion scare, the Northamptonshire Whig magistrates, no doubt with their revengeful designs complicated by acute insecurity, used every opportunity to lord themselves over the ousted Tories, now proclaimed as Jacobites. Sir Roger Norwich, who had once called the Whigs "an untoward and viperous generation", was threatened with imprisonment and with having his house searched and plundered in much the same way as his militia had ransacked Whig homes after the discovery of the Rye House Plot. Nonetheless Norwich was lucky to still have some influence with the Tories on the bench and Sir Justinian Isham was able to intercede on his behalf to obtain bail. In the end Norwich escaped lightly with a recognizance for good behaviour and the surrender of all his arms. Similarly the Tory Justices would seem to have been able to moderate their Whig colleagues' excesses regarding other prominent Jacobites in the county such as Bryan Janson and William Washbourne.³⁹ Less important Jacobites, however, were not so lucky. Bartholemew Elwes of Blakesley, an insignificant figure chosen as a Justice of the Peace in the last months of James II's reign, was imprisoned for some time.⁴⁰ William Cuffe, the Anglican Minister at Wicken, was brought before the Assizes at Northampton and convicted for saying that William and

38. Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 53, 217; Bridges, II, p. 65;

G.E.C. Complete Peerage, XII, p. 493.

39. N.R.O., I.C. 1383, 1450-53.

40. N.R.O., I.C. 1453.

Mary were not the lawful king and queen, that the Convention Parliament was illegal and for praying for the exiled Stuarts. He was fined £200, bound over for good behaviour for a year and condemned to stand in the pillory - a harsh punishment for a clergyman. He was still, inexplicably, in gaol a year later.⁴¹ Even after the invasion scare had subsided the Whig magistrates continued to bully the Jacobites and behave insolently to Tories who were sometimes their betters in social rank. In April 1691 Lord Hatton, himself Custos Rotulorum for the county, reported that "the so-called Justices are so violent against the clergy and laity with whom the oaths do not go down glib as to threaten them with the hangman".⁴² Only as the number of Tory magistrates appearing at the Quarter Sessions increased, and the number of active Whigs lessened, so that by 1693 the margin was so small that the parties were in rough equality, did this persecution of Jacobites come to an end. Even so, the magistracy continued to be energetic in the work of the Whig Junto. Despite the economic dislocation it caused, which added to the general misery of the 1690s, and despite considerable local opposition, which led to a petition being sent to the House of Commons to moderate the scheme, the Justices furthered the work of recoinage by ordering to be bound over those who refused to turn in their half-pence and farthings. When the Fenwick plot was revealed in 1696, however, the Northamptonshire Jacobites were once again ordered to appear and take the oaths, but this time apparently without the obloquies that accompanied their summons in 1690.⁴³

41. Wood, Life and Times, III, p. 328; C.S.P.D. 1689-90, p. 518; N.R.O., F-H 3313.

42. Bodley, M.S. Smith. 50, ff. 31-34.

43. N.R.O., Q.S.M. 2, 1690-1708, especially the Epiphany and Easter Sessions, 1696; C.J., X, p. 585.

On the other hand, the Whig majority could show themselves to be only too careful of Tory susceptibilities. The Whigs had, after all, shown a grudging leniency to some Jacobites who had fallen into their clutches by responding to Tory intercessions on their behalf. The Whigs were even prepared to suppress the more virulent anti-Tory sentiments being propagated by their own radicals. In the spring of 1690 the Northamptonshire Grand Jury brought in an indictment against one John Collis, the brother-in-law of James Green, the Whig Mayor of Northampton, and himself a future Whig Mayor, for the seditious libel of spreading about a pamphlet which named those Members of Parliament, including Gilbert Dolben, Sir Justinian Isham, Edward Mountague and Lord Wenman, who had been against making William and Mary, king and queen.⁴⁴ By the mid-1690s, after the political storm had subsided, and thanks to a more evenly balanced Commission of the Peace, cases like that of sedition brought against the Catholic, Richard Paulet, farrier of Deane, were laughed out of the Quarter Sessions because he was a well-known drunk as well as recusant.⁴⁵ The Tory magistrates, for their part, remained loyal to the Crown. As far as can be discovered only one magistrate refused to take the Oath of Association in 1696, the Member of Parliament for Peterborough, Gilbert Dolben, who was dismissed from the bench in August 1696.⁴⁶ It is possible, because the records are far from clear on this matter, that one or two other Tory Justices, Samuel Tryon and John Wodhull, were also dismissed for

44. N.R.O., I.C. 1447; I.L. 2959; A Letter to a Friend, upon the Dissolution of the late Parliament, and the calling of a new one. Together with a List of those that were against making the Prince and Princess of Orange King and Queen, 1690, B.L., 816. m. 4/23; Borough Records, II, p. 553

45. N.R.O., F-H. 2573

46. P.R.O., C.231/8, f. 357; P.C. 2/76, ff. 417, 470, 481; Horwitz, op. cit., p. 345.

refusing to take the Association, but their absence from the Quarter Sessions after 1696 could as easily be explained by infirmity, age or even death, as by their political principles. What is certain is that all of the active Tory Justices, Francis Arundell, Henry Benson, Harvey Ekins, Richard Rainsford, Edward Stratford and William Thursby, continued in their work of magistracy long after 1696.⁴⁷

It has already been intimated that as the 1690s wore on there was a gradual evening out of the Whig preponderance at the Quarter Sessions. From a majority of twelve Whigs to six Tories attending the Quarter Sessions in 1690, and fifteen to four in 1691, the Whig domination of the bench was gradually eroded away, until by 1696 there were only seven Whigs to seven Tories. Despite the addition of two new Whig Justices, Sir James Robinson and John Creede, and a third, the more pragmatic, Sir Matthew Dudley, in the mid-1690s, this trend continued so that in the last years of William III's reign there was usually a majority of as many as nine Tories to six Whigs at the Quarter Sessions. The decline of Whig superiority owed as much to the disappearance from the Quarter Sessions of several previously active Whigs, as it did to the re-emergence of the aforementioned clique of assiduous Tory magistrates who steadfastly attended the court throughout the 1690s. The deaths of Edward Harby of Adstone in 1689 had, in the midst of their victory, deprived the Northamptonshire Whigs of one of their central figures and the deaths or retirement, in the following years, of William Benson of Towcester, Thomas Colthurst of Northampton, John Combes of Daventry, John Glendon of Farndon, Thomas Jackson of Duddington, John Thornton of Brockhall and Samuel Tryst of Culworth deprived the Whigs of some of their most

47. N.R.O., Q.S.M. 2, 1690-1708; Bridges, II, p. 319; Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 246

stalwart supporters.⁴⁸ In particular the death of Sir Thomas Samwell in 1694, and the retirement of Henry Edmonds of Preston Deanery and Salathiel Lovell of Harlestone, both of whom were over sixty years of age, must have been a great blow to Whig predominance on the bench, for they were amongst the more energetic of the Whig magistrates.⁴⁹ By 1696 the Whigs had lost ten of their old guard and were left dependent on the industry of a much smaller group led by Gerrard Gore of Church Brampton, Francis Morgan of Kingsthorpe and John Parkhurst of Catesby. In fine, Whig decline in Northamptonshire owed a great deal to the accidents of mortality.

There was, however, one additional reason which compelled the Whigs to be more accommodating and stimulated Tory gentlemen to participate in the work of the bench. To return to the original theme of this section, popular unrest remained a serious problem in the county throughout the 1690s, mainly because all the harvests of the decade after 1691 were uniformly poor. From 31 shillings in 1691 the price of a quarter of wheat rose to 42 shillings and 8 pence in 1692, then to nearly 62 shillings in 1693, and remained at or near that level until 1700.⁵⁰ High food prices, together with evident distress amongst the Northamptonshire wool combing and yarn making workers, led the county's poor to take matters into their own hands in three successive years.⁵¹ During the autumn of 1693 the poor men and women, especially the women, of Northampton, by a combination of theft and physical intimidation, succeeded in forcing down the price of wheat from seven shillings a bushel to five. Similar scenes and disorders occurred at Daventry, Kettering and

48. N.R.O., Q.S.M. 2; Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 18, 22, 58, 86.

49. ibid., p. 188; Bridges, I, pp. 381, 515

50. R.E. Prothero, English Farming Past and Present, 1912, p. 440;

Bodley, M.S. Carte 240, ff. 349-50.

Wellingborough.⁵² By the end of the year the price of wheat stood at nine shillings and six pence a bushel, and at the Epiphany Quarter Session in 1694, the Northamptonshire magistrates were forced to order the Assize of Bread to be set up in every market town in the county, but to no avail, for in June the Northampton mob once again took to the streets.⁵³ In the tumult that followed a seizure of two cart loads of corn, at least two people were killed and sixty injured before the magistrates succeeded in quelling the rioters. Similar riots would also seem to have taken place at Kettering and Peterborough.⁵⁴ There was a third year of rioting in 1695 when the Northampton crowd apparently succeeded in fomenting a mutiny amongst the troops of the town garrison.⁵⁵

Except for the last disturbance, with its dangerous implications, these commotions, however violent, were not a threat to the political order of the county. The mob was not trying to overthrow society, it was merely intent on securing bread at a modest price by direct action. Although it would be a gross exaggeration to suggest that a fear of the multitude drove Northamptonshire magistrates of all persuasions to close ranks, their duty to maintain law and order would have been felt more keenly by the Justices in the economic conditions of the 1690s than if harvests had been good and the people at least content. A place on the Commission of the Peace was not only a mark of personal esteem and political favour, but also an office of

52. Borough Records., II, p. 65; N. Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, III, 1857, p. 213; C.S.P.D., 1693, p. 397.

53. Wood, Life and Times, III, p. 437; N.R.O., Q.S.R. 1/144.

54. C.S.P.D., 1694-95, pp. 227-3; C.S.P.D., 1695, pp. 262-3; P.R.O., P.C. 2/75, ff. 438-41.

55. C.S.P.D., 1694-95, p. 470.

local government; the Quarter Sessions were not only a political arena they were also a court of law; the county had to be governed and, although the position of Justice of the Peace had many political overtones, the magistrate's first duty was to maintain order in his locality.⁵⁶ In this respect it was better that the bench had as broad a political base as possible and that every possible shade of political complexion be represented at the Quarter Sessions. One faction or the other was bound to dominate the bench, but it should not be allowed to monopolise local power. During the Interregnum and the last two years of the reign of James II the composition of the magistracy had been too narrow and selective. In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution it was important, even for the most partisan of local Whigs, to implicate as broad a consensus of opinion as possible in the change of régime. It was also important that as many as possible of the county's "natural" governors be allowed to continue in the accustomed rôle, and very necessary that they be allowed to function for the sake of sound local government. For many gentlemen it was just as important that they fulfilled their duties and participated in the government of their county, even though the central administration and many of their colleagues were not of their choice. That the Revolution ministries of both Danby and the Whig Junto succeeded in combining these aspirations and needs is greatly to their credit.

56. J. Bond, A Complete Guide for Justices of the Peace, 1695, pp. 195-8.

The County Community and Party Politics, 1695-1714

The problem that faces an historian of late-Stuart Northamptonshire is that twenty years of political narrative have been more than adequately covered by E. G. Forrester in his, Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering, 1695-1832 (published in 1941). There is little that can be discovered to alter substantially what Forrester has written about the evolution of party politics at the polls of the early eighteenth century. In the last forty years, only two authors have had the opportunity given them, by the discovery of previously unknown documents, to venture any refinement of what Forrester has written.⁵⁷ In overall terms as well, all the significant general observations have been drawn about elections and electioneering by such as Professors Holmes and Speck.⁵⁸ The task must be therefore to abandon the straightforward narrative of the previous four chapters and, at the risk of any imbalance in both content and length, look

-
57. R. N. Swanson, The Second Northamptonshire Election of 1701, N. P. and P., VI, No 1, p. 29, makes use of two letters now in the Borthwick Institute, York. J. Alsop, The Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace (1702) and Parliamentary Polls (1702, 1705), N. P. and P., VI, No. 5, p. 257, makes use of Sunderland Papers now in the British Library especially, B. L., Add. MSS. 61611, and Add. MSS. 61496.
58. G. Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, 1967;
W. Speck, Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1702-1714, 1971.

at three factors that have had little attention paid them. Firstly, in this section, to examine the rôle of family in Northamptonshire party politics. Then to examine the composition and working of the Commission of the Peace. Finally, to adopt a more psephological approach to the county elections of 1702 and 1705 than has hitherto been attempted.

The impact of party on Northamptonshire society, as has already been pointed out, was shaped by the experience of the 1680's. The party alignments of the reigns of William III and Queen Anne by and large followed the pattern that had been set by the Exclusionists and Tories, Whigs and Jacobites of the previous decades.⁵⁹ Although the ranks of the Northamptonshire Whigs had been thinned by death, nearly half of those squires who voted Whig in 1702 and 1705 were old Exclusionists. All but a handful of those squires who voted Tory in those two years came from families which had supported the Stuart monarchy from the Great Rebellion to the Glorious Revolution. There were some notable exceptions: Francis Arundell, the Tory squire of Stoke Bruerne had had a Whig father; and the Tory, Thomas Thornton of Brockhall's uncle and benefactor, John Thornton had also been a Whig.⁶⁰ The Tory, Henry Stratford of Overstone's father had also been an Exclusionist in the 1680s.⁶¹ In the main, whatever the ramifications of the wider cousinhood, the two parties tended to divide the county community not just politically but often family by family.

59. Party affiliations are based on voting behaviour in 1702 and 1705 recorded in Copies of the Polls taken at the Several Elections for ... the County of Northampton, 1832; and on the list of Whigs in 1683, P.R.O., S.P. 29/421, Pt. 3, f. 216.

60. Bridges, I., pp. 325-8; Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 212-4

61. Bridges, I., p. 459.

This tendency was the most marked amongst the extreme Tories, most of whom were labelled Jacobites by the government in the early 1690s, who were related, more often than not to other Jacobite and Tory families of the county, rather than Whig. Sir Roger Norwich, the undisputed Jacobite leader of the county at the time of the Revolution, was the uncle of another Jacobite, Sir William Fermor. He was also the uncle of Charles Kirkham of Fineshead Abbey, a Tory and was closely connected to the Kirkham branch of Cotterstock and the Tory Shuckburghs of Farthinghoe and Shuckburgh in Warwickshire.⁶² Norwich's son, Erasmus, who succeeded to the baronetcy in 1691, was also a Tory. Neither father nor son had any close Whig blood ties. Sir William Fermor, similarly had no close Whig connections. In 1692 he married Sophia, the widow of one of James Stuart's attendants, Donogh Lord O'Brien of Great Billing, and daughter of Thomas Osborne, then Earl of Carmarthen and William III's chief minister. Although Osborne's Tory credentials were not impeccable - he had been one of the "famous seven" who had invited William of Orange to England - he was still a leader of his party and good enough to his son-in-law to give him £10,000 and raise him to the peerage as Lord Leominster a month after his marriage.⁶³ It was probably Carmarthen's influence which kept Fermor in the Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace even though he was listed amongst those persons disaffected to the government.⁶⁴

Sir Robert Clarke of Long Buckby, another Jacobite, had also had a powerful friend at court, although this time in the reign of James II: his sister Mary had been a maid of honour to Mary of Modena, and it was she, no doubt, who had persuaded James to confer a knighthood and act as god father

62. Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 101, 106, 291

63. G.E.C., Complete Peerage, VII, pp. 613-14; XII, Pt. 1, p. 711

64. B.L., Add. MSS. 29597, f. 81; P.R.O., G. 234/27.

to his second son. He was also well connected amongst the Northamptonshire Tories; his uncle was George Clarke of Watford who had represented the county in the Cavalier Parliament; and through him he was related to the Catholic Jacobite, George Holman of Warkworth.⁶⁵ Clarke's neighbour in Long Buckby, the Tory gentleman, Robin Bradley, was the son-in-law of a conspicuous Jacobite Tory, Bryan Janson of Ashby St. Ledgers. Janson was also linked to a strong Tory family by his marriage to Hesther, the sister of Edward Saunders of Brixworth and aunt of Edward's Tory son and successor, Francis.⁶⁶ Janson was another Jacobite Tory to have a Roman Catholic skeleton in the family cupboard, his uncle Henry.⁶⁷

Another distinct group amongst the Jacobite Tories was formed by the alliance of Nicholas Steward of Pattishall with Susanna, sister of Sir Thomas Elmes of Lilford, who had received his knighthood from James II in July 1688, and thus must be considered an ardent supporter of the Stuarts. Susanna was also the grand-daughter of Grace Bevill of Chesterton in Huntingdonshire and thus a cousin of the Jacobite Tory, Sir Robert Dryden of Canons Ashby.⁶⁸ The Drydens, like the Jansons and the Holmans, had Catholics in the family; and in fact Sir Robert's, cousin and heir, Sir John Dryden, was himself succeeded at Canons Ashby by a Catholic priest, Sir Erasmus Dryden.⁶⁹

65. Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 52-56; W. A. Shaw, ed., The Knights of England, II, 1906, p. 260.

66. ibid., p. 94; Bridges, II, p. 82; Diary of Thomas Isham, p. 69, n.4.

67. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, p. 13.

68. Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 211; Bridges, I, p. 226; II, pp. 242-44; Al. Cant., II, p. 99

69. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, I, p. 129.

It is illuminating to note that Nicholas Steward's son, Elmes Steward, who married outside the Tory cousinhood by taking to wife, Elizabeth, daughter of the Whig, John Creed of Oundle, was so equivocal in his politics that he voted Tory in 1702 and Whig in 1705.⁷⁰ There were one or two other exceptions to the general rule of Jacobite-Tory marriages within the county being endogamous (Sir Robert Clarke's Holman connection for instance not only led to George Holman but also to his Presbyterian, and presumably, Whig brother Sir John Holman, Member of Parliament for Banbury between 1660 and 1681) but in the main their web of lineage within Northamptonshire remained limited to good Tory families.⁷¹

The more moderate Tory families also often tended to keep their marriage alliances in the locality restricted to like-minded gentlemen and women. There is the interesting example of the Tory, Thomas Thornton of Brockhall, heir to a Whig fortune, who married the daughter of a Tory near neighbour, William Lee of Cold Ashby.⁷² The Tories William Adams of Charwelton, Henry Benson of Dodford, and Lucy Knightley of Fawsley were linked by a loose but definable cousinage, and they were more distantly connected with the Clarkes of Watford and Long Buckby.⁷³ There were other close alliances between Tories and Tories, and between Tories and Jacobites. Thomas Cartwright of Aynho, seven times a Knight of the Shire in this period, was the brother-in-law of Nathaniel Lord Crewe of nearby Stene and Bishop of Durham.⁷⁴ Crewe's politics were those of "as abject a tool as possible"; Anthony Wood called him,

70. Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 211; Copies of the Polls taken at the Several Elections for Members to represent the County of Northampton in Parliament, 1832, p. 73.

71. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, p. 277; J. Gibson, Three Lost Northamptonshire Houses and their Owners, N. P. and P., V, 1976, p. 320.

72. Visitation of Northants., 1681, p. 214

73. ibid., pp. 3-4, 16, 105, 109

74. Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Report 345, I, 1878, pp. 575, 596, 603; II, 1878, pp. 4, 12, 22, 32.

"a vain Prelate, subservient to the men and religion of those times;" but as the protégé of James II he had had a great deal of difficulty being accepted by the new régime and was for a time excepted from the general amnesty on the accession of William and Mary. When he was finally restored to his bishopric he was shorn of many of his accustomed powers. A careerist first, he was also no friend to the Whigs, and as such his sister, Armyne, was the perfect match for his neighbour, Thomas Cartwright.⁷⁵

Another family connection that can be mentioned here is the circle of blood relationships that tied the Arundells of Stoke, the Caves of Stanford, the Comptons of Castle Ashby, the Doves of Upton, the Fermors of Easton Neston, the Norwiches of Brampton Ash, the Thursbys of Abington and the Wilmers of Sywell together. Members of the Compton and Norwich families, and also of the Tory Shuckburgh's of Warwickshire, had married Fermor aunts. The Thursbys were therefore related to this circle because one of the aunts of Christopher Thursby's father-in-law, Sir William Dove, was the grandmother of Sir John Shuckburgh. The Comptons were distantly related to the Caves through the Wilmers while none other than Francis Arundell was the grandson of William Wilmer.⁷⁶ As tenuous as this circle is, it is much harder to establish the same kind of interlinked relationship between Tories and Whigs.

75. Baker, P. 685; Bridges, I, pp. 137-8, 198; G.E.C., Complete Peerage, III, p. 534; C. Whiting, Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham (1674-1721) and his Diocese, 1940, passim.

76. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, II, pp. 93-4; III, p. 62; Bridges, I, p. 291, p. 328; Visitation of Northants, 1681, pp. 217, 245...

Whigs showed a similar preference for marrying into other Whig families. The most notable examples of intermarriages are as follows. Edward Harby's son, Francis, married the daughter of Samuel Tryst of Culworth, and he was also a cousin of the Freemans of Higham Ferrers. John Creed of Oundle married Sir Gilbert Pickering's aunt, Elizabeth. Sir John Humble of Thorpe Underwood married the daughter of Andrew Lant. Sir Thomas Samwell's daughter, Elizabeth, married Sir John Langham of Cottesbrooke and his sister married Thomas Catesby of Ecton. John Thornton's grand-daughter married John Combes of Daventry. Sir John Langham's brother, Sir James, married Mary, the daughter of Sir Edward Alston. Tobias Chauncey married Elizabeth, the daughter of John Browne of Eydon. George Montague of Horton married Ricarda, the daughter of Richard Saltonstall.⁷⁸

There is one other point that needs to be made about the nature of family alliances in Northamptonshire at the end of the seventeenth century. Although there was a pronounced tendency for intermarriage amongst the separate parties it is open to doubt whether such political endogamy disrupted the county community. Outside the bilateral relationship of marriage there were the multi-lateral relationships of the Northamptonshire community. As was pointed out in Chapter II about half each of the Jacobites and Whigs could lay claim, if they so chose, to some sort of kinship with families at the other end of the political spectrum. Occupying the middle ground were the Tories who, in political terms, by 1702, had encompassed all but the most fanatical Jacobites. The Northamptonshire Tories should therefore have been

78. *ibid.*, pp. 46, 58, 83, 116, 118, 172, 188; Bridges, I, p. 368;

G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, p. 49

anathema to the county's Whigs. In political terms, of course, this was frequently the case, but just as in politics the Tories seem to have been more broadly based than the Whigs, in social terms they also had wider connections. For whereas up to half of the extremist poles of county politics could have made some sort of claim to kinship with a Jacobite-Tory or a Whig, just about every middle-ground Tory could have established family ties with at least one Jacobite or one Whig and vice-versa. Matters would be simpler to describe if individual Tories and their families had been channels connecting Jacobites to Whigs but this was usually not the case. Rather, Tories were either related to Jacobites or to Whigs and then to other Tories as well. It was in this sense then that, not as individual families but as a very broad based social group, the Tories formed the keystone in the arch of the county community.

It is, of course, too easy to imbue political differences with the force to split society asunder. In social terms just about every Northamptonshire gentleman would have shared much the same bucolic tastes and social outlook, with some variations in refinement, as the typical Tory squire. On the other hand it is also too easy to regard the family as monolithic and think of it as having a never varying unity of political purpose. The Holman brothers of Warkworth, one a Catholic Jacobite and one a Presbyterian Whig, would contradict this.⁷⁹ So would the Fleetwood family with one, Charles of Northampton, an ex-Whig but now a Jacobite; one, Miles of Aldwinkle, a

79. J. Gibson, *Three Lost Northamptonshire Houses and their Owners*,
N. P. and P., V, 1976, p. 320.

Whig; and their uncle, William, steward to Lord Hatton, a Tory.⁸⁰ The Elmes family of Warmington and the Spinckes of Greens Norton were both sympathetic to the Non-Jurors and gave shelter to loyalist local clergy, but the product of their families' union, Elmes Spinckes of Aldwinkle was a Whig.⁸¹ In such circumstances it is perhaps wrong to hang too much significance on individual instances of kinship ties as political alliances unless fuller details are known. The more ardent disciples of the Jacobite wing of the Tory party and of the Whig party do seem to have made what family ties that could be made out of choice with likeminded heads of other families, but this was not enough to disrupt the wider cousinhood. The ten Whig leaders mentioned earlier were, for instance, also quite well connected with Tories. Harby was related to the Elmes; Humble's father-in-law had married his other daughter to Francis Lane of Glendon; Samwell was a near cousin of the Wenmans of Kirtlington in Oxfordshire; Combes's mother was a Palmer; Chauncey was the brother-in-law by marriage of Sir Roger Cave; the Langhams, through the extinct Haslewoods, were closely related to the Hattons and the Wilmers; John Thornton had a Tory nephew, Thomas Thornton; and the Pickerings were related to the Tory Earls of Sandwich, as were the Montagues of Horton.⁸² There were other interesting Tory-Whig matches like that between William Thursby's daughter and Thomas Jackson of Duddington and the marriage between Francis Arundell and Isabella, the daughter of Sir William Wentworth, which

80. N. N. and Q., N.S. I, p. 115.

81. H. Isham Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, VI, p. 3.

82. q.v. n. 78.

thus linked him with the Whig Watsons of Rockingham.⁸³ All that can be said, therefore, is that although the "strife of party" was indeed politically divisive it was not socially. What differences in political ideals there were, were essentially between the Whigs and the Jacobite-Tories and in social terms they were insulated from each other by the large cross-section of Tory gentility into which they both shaded, but through which they hardly met. In this respect the Tories with their more pragmatic secular, as well as religious, Anglican outlook were the consensus party of the Northamptonshire gentry.

83. Visitation of Northants, 1681, p. 218; Bridges, I, p. 327; II, p. 173;

G.E.C., Complete Peerage, XI, pp. 57-8

84. J. Alsop, The Northampton Commission of the Peace (1702),

N. P. and P., V1, No 5, p.258. The political affiliations of these JPs

has been worked out from the way they voted in 1702 and 1705.

The Commission of the Peace in the Reign of Queen Anne

As has already been pointed out, the Tory party during the last years of the reign of William III first of all reached a rough parity and then achieved an ascendancy on the Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace. According to the Commission of the Peace drawn up in April 1702, out of 78 listed magistrates, 34 were identifiable Tories and 32 were recognisable Whigs.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it was a precarious majority which had not always been maintained at the Quarter Sessions. In 1699, nine Tories had put in at least one appearance at a Quarter Session while only six Whigs had done so. In 1700, the gap was narrowed down to seven Tories and six Whigs, and, in 1701, the Whigs had had a majority of seven to five.⁸⁵ Again both parties' reliance on a small group of highly diligent Justices led through natural wastage to a point where the numbers attending the Quarter Sessions were so low that the absence of one or two could mean the difference between a majority or a minority. In the Tories' case it was probably the death of their Quarter Sessions' chairman William Thursby that resulted in their being outnumbered on the bench in 1701.⁸⁶ Thursby had also been the Tory M.P. for Northampton along with the Whig Christopher Montague since 1698. Unlike Montague, he had been a long-serving magistrate, but to add insult to injury, just at the time Thursby was dying, Montague, the brother of the Junto leader, was put into the Commission.⁸⁷

Alarmed by such changes on the Quarter Sessions' bench, and concerned about the forthcoming election in 1702, local Tories suggested to the Lord Keeper that the Commission be revised. Sir Justinian Isham and his

85. N.R.O., Q.S.M.2, 1699-1701.

86. Bridges, I. pp. 400-1; Visitation of Northants., 1681, p.218.

87. Members of Parliament, I, pp.582, 589; A. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, III, p.213.

election manager, Griffin, thought that it would be a good idea to leave out two Whig Justices and replace them with Tories to "keep the rest in proper awe".⁸⁸ The Commission was in fact remodelled, and Sir Justinian got five times as many as he asked for, but the commission itself was sealed too late to affect the election campaign.⁸⁹ Most of those Whigs who were ejected were comparatively minor figures like John Winston of Everdon and Thomas Maydwell of Geddington, but one or two quite important Whigs were thrown out including Francis Morgan of Kingsthorpe, Sir James Robinson^{of} Cran-sley and none other than John Bridges of Barton Seagrave, the later author of the History.....of Northamptonshire. As a result of this purge and as a consequence of natural wastage, local petty malice and governmental incompetence the Commission of the Peace in Northamptonshire became much reduced. Tories as well as Whigs were also dismissed for the most ingenuous of reasons. The Lord Keeper, Sir Nathaniel Wright had to apologise to the Earl of Nottingham for leaving a local Tory J.P. out of the Commission in 1702 because, although he bore the gentleman no ill will, he knew nothing whatsoever about him, had been advised by a local source to dismiss him and had done so.⁹⁰ By 1705 there were only 59 local aristocrats and gentry left on the Commission of the Peace.⁹¹

The curious fact is that despite the purge of 1702 the balance between Tory and Whig Justices on the Commission was almost equal at 27 identifiable Tories to 23 Whigs. Even after five Tory magistrates were dismissed for refusing to act: Edward Bagshaw, Henry Benson, John Hastings, William Lee and Henry Sawyer, and nine new Justices added, the balance had only changed to 30 Whigs to 23 Tories.⁹² The Tories should in fact have been

88. B. L. Add. MSS. 29568, ff.67-8.

89. P.R.O., C.231/9, f.68.

90. B.L., Add. MSS.29588, f.135.

91. P.R.O., C.234/27, Northants. 27. Oct. 1705, 12. Feb. 1706.

92. P.R.O., C.231/9, f.135; C.234/27, Northants. 26. Feb. 1706.

reduced to only 22 but their number was augmented by the odd addition of Lucy Knightley of Fawsley in 1706.⁹³ It is interesting to note that five of the new Whigs came from well-established Northamptonshire families: Robert Andrewes, Robert Breton, Thomas Mulshoe, Sir Edward Nicholls, and Nathaniel Parkhurst. Further intrusions followed during the next four years of Whig ascendancy but the scale was small and carried out piecemeal. At the beginning of 1707 the Whigs had to call upon two of their stalwarts from the 1690s, Edmund Bateman and John Winston, neither of whom was a natural leader of Northamptonshire society, but at the end of the same year two more prestigious gentlemen were added to the bench, Sir John Humble and Sir Gilbert Pickering. Humble, however, was not a native of the country but had entered its society by marrying one of the last heiresses of Thorpe Underwood. In all likelihood he owed his appointment to the fact that he was also Paymaster to the Lottery.⁹⁴ The Whigs would seem to have been so short of recruits to the bench that, perhaps because his views had changed, they re-appointed Henry Sawyer of Kettering.

After the Tories returned to power in 1710 the balance was restored by the addition at one go of no less than nineteen new Tory magistrates and the dismissal of six Whigs.⁹⁵ Two of the Whigs were of the first rank in the county community, Sir Robert Haslerigge and Christopher Montague, but the other four were from the very bottom of the commission list, Edmund Bateman, John Clendon, John Weaver and John Winston. The balance that had been more or less maintained on the Northamptonshire bench had been completely overturned: it now stood

93. ibid.

94. G.E.C., Complete Baronetage, III, p.49.

95. P.R.O., C.234/27, Northants., 16 Feb. 1711.

at 43 Tories to 28 Whigs. The gap widened with a further 11 Tory additions and the dismissal of three Whigs, John Ekins, Sir James Robinson and Elmes Spinckes.⁹⁶ Not all of the new appointments were wholly Tory. In 1712 James Brudenell was included in the Commission but a year later, as M.P. for Chichester, he voted with the Whigs against the expulsion of Richard Steele. But, despite such curiosities, by 1714 the Tories outnumbered the Whigs on the Northamptonshire bench by almost three to one. The balance was only restored after the end of the queen's reign. On the Commission of the Peace of October, 1714, there were over 100 magistrates, of whom 42 were identifiable Tories and 45 Whigs.⁹⁷ Once more, as in 1689-90 enlargement and balance would seem to have been the keynotes of the Commission. But it has also to be pointed out that this balance was one of numbers and not quality. As in the 1700s the Whigs had a great deal of trouble filling out their membership of the Commission and had to rely on at least fifteen gentry supporters of no real standing in the county. On the whole, after more than a dozen years of party strife, the Commission was back where it had started at the end of William III's reign if only because two-thirds of their number had themselves, or their families, served on the bench in the 1690s.

If, as was the case, the minority on the bench had never numbered less than twenty, then it would be open to doubt if the tinkering and readjustments of central government to the Commission would have had any significant local political effect. After all, with at least twenty magistrate supporters the local party managers needed only to mobilise half of them four times a year to swamp the opposition, for there were rarely more than a dozen Justices in attendance at each Quarter Session. But it is very interesting that the attendance figures very much reflect the political ups and downs of the period.⁹⁸ In the

96. P.R.O., 234/27, Northants. 30 June, 1711. 24 Feb. 1712; 30 June 1713.

97. P.R.O., C.234/27, 7 Oct. 1714.

98. This section is based on N.R.O. Q.S.M. 2, 1702-14.

first years of Anne's reign the Tories went to at least one Quarter Session in 1702 and they put in 35 working sessions to the Whigs' 14. In 1704 there were 14 Tories to 8 Whigs, and they attended a total of 27 sessions to the latter's 17. After this the figures for Tory J.P.s attending went into decline: 1705-12; 1706-8; 1707-10; 1708-4, 1709-5. During their nadir the average number of sessions they attended a year was only eleven. The Whigs celebrated their ascendancy by putting in a great many more appearances: in 1705, 15 Whigs attended at least one session; 1706-16; 1707-12; 1708-12; 1709-10; and 1710-16. Only in one of these years did the number of sessions attended fall below 25. After 1710 these positions were once more reversed. Individual Tory attendance figures rose from 10 in 1710 to 17 in 1714 while the Whigs fell from 16 to 3. The number of sessions attended by Tories similarly increased from 17 to 38, and the Whigs declined from 29 to 7.

Why there was this extraordinary echo of national politics in attendance figures at Quarter Sessions is difficult to say. It was probably because of a combination of a statistical function of ordinary human indolence - fewer J.P.s in the party will mean, on average, fewer sessions attended - and a desire to assert the party's political superiority after an electoral victory. One of the perquisites of office was, after all, to throw one's weight around, as Lord Hatton had insinuated when he said that local partisans out of favour needed protection to safeguard them "from so many commissioners, both in the peace and the militia who could crush them at pleasure."⁹⁹ It does seem that the crowing Whig J.P.s were doing exactly this in the autumn of 1705.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, an electoral defeat could lead to prolonged absences from the Quarter Sessions out of a sense of hopeless frustration

99. B.L. Add. MSS. 29579, f.400.

100. G. Healey. ed. The Letters of Daniel Defoe, 1955, p.113.

and also in order to avoid the scorn of victorious rivals, just as the Duke of Sunderland had slinked away from Northampton on the eve of his protégés electoral defeat in 1710.¹⁰¹ The presence of an ambitious party manager on the bench could also act as a driving force. During the period of the Whigs' zenith, Robert Breton of Norton, "a young gent. half mad" with "a great interest with the common people by an extravagant expense amongst them", attended no less than sixteen out of nineteen Quarter Sessions and was chairman of thirteen of them.¹⁰² Such exemplary leadership must have motivated a good many Whigs to attend. It would, therefore, seem that Justices of the Peace took a victory at the polls as an unwritten mandate to govern their county. But, like most other political institutions, although the Quarter Sessions were an arena for conflict, they were also very much representative bodies which kept the level of debate within bounds by giving some official power and some voice to the minority. Between 1689 and 1714 the minority party in Parliament was never less than one-quarter of all Justices of the Peace and was rarely less than one-third of those attending the Quarter Sessions.

Elections and the Electorate in Northamptonshire

So much has been written about the Northamptonshire elections of the early eighteenth century that the only major problem left for the county historian is to try and shed some light on what helped determine the forty-shilling freeholders' voting behaviour. E. G. Forrester and W. A. Speck together with J. Alsop and R. M. Swanson have done a great deal to describe the methods of electioneering available and used to turn out a somet imes

101. M. M. Verney, ed., Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century from the Manuscripts at Claydon House, I, 1930, p.323.

102. H.M.C., VII, pp.18-19.

reluctant vote. A great deal has also been said about party organisation and management, together with the variety of internecine rivalry that shaped the nature of politics in Northamptonshire in this period. What has perhaps not been brought out fully is the personalisation of political issues in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. It is noteworthy that in perhaps the most issue-bound election of the time, the "Tacking Election" of 1705, the candidates for the Northamptonshire poll made direct personal appeals to the electorate and vilified their opponents not over matters of principle, but in the most personal of terms. The election squibs of that year are very well known. The Tories called Sir Justinian Isham and Thomas Cartwright, their candidates, the "Just and the Right" and, in terms the county community would readily understand, made much of the independent means they had at their disposal. Their opponents, Sir St. Andrew St. John and Lord Mordaunt were castigated as "a double saint and a lord" with "pensions and pretensions".¹⁰³ The Whigs reply, though slightly less well known, is even more entertaining but, in brief, it made much of both the Tory Knights of the Shire's lack of political courage for "sneaking" (avoiding) the tacking vote of November, 1704; called their intelligence into question; and commended the bravery of their "Soldier" and the worthiness of their "Saint".¹⁰⁴ Nowhere is there a mention of occasional conformity!

There is also in existence a detailed memorandum to voters explaining why they should not vote for Lord Mordaunt.¹⁰⁵ This has hitherto been supposed to refer to an election of the early 1680s. In

103. N. N. and P., I. p.150.

104. Bodley, MS. Eng. Pet e. 87; I. Burton et al., eds. Voting Records of Members of Parliament under Queen Anne, Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Special Supplement 7, 1968, Appendix B.

105. N.R.O., I.L. 2525.

fact its many references to a lordling Colonel who had recently lost an arm in action, must mean it belongs to the 1705 election and is about Lord Mordaunt who had lost an arm at the head of his regiment at Blenheim the year before.¹⁰⁶ It is a very long political critique which runs to seventeen points of criticism and it can only be summarized here, but either the seventeen articles are of a personal nature or they make reference to the fundamental heart of "country" attitudes. Mordaunt was the son of a lord, a soldier, and a pensioner and thus unworthy to be a Knight of the Shire representing the county's freeholders. The only reference to party was to the old Whig party colour, green, and the only reference to religion was not to Nonconformist dissent but to the old bogeyman, Popery. The country mentality had not changed since 1660.

The poll of 1705, and its predecessor of 1702, gives some interesting insights into voting behaviour in the early eighteenth century. Although the contests of 1702 and 1705, had been close ones, on both occasions Sir Justinian Isham and Thomas Cartwright had each won by less than 200 votes out of the 8-9,000 cast, amongst the gentry the Tories were clearly in the majority. In 1705 a total of 111 gentlemen had attended the hustings out of whom 69 had voted Tory, 40 Whig and 2 between the parties. Of those who had cast their votes in the election of 1702 only five had changed their political allegiance during the interval. Four Tories had converted to Whig and one Whig to Tory. Such consistency is a measure of the strength of Tory and "Country" opinion in the early eighteenth century. During the last years of the reign of William III it had been more prudent or more convenient to accommodate moderate Whig feeling in the county by dividing the two Northamptonshire county seats between the two parties in

106. G.E.C. Complete Peerage, X, p.503.

107. This section is based on Copies of the Polls for...the County of Northampton...1702, 1705...,1832.

1695, 1698 and 1701. It is noteworthy that in the election of 1695 all but four of the fifty-six gentry who voted Tory in 1702 and 1705 split their votes between the Tory and the moderate Whig candidates.¹⁰⁸ The pattern of votes in the election result of 1698 seems to indicate the same tendency.¹⁰⁹ After the war election of 1701, with its 600 vote majority for both Isham and Cartwright over Mordaunt and St. John, country Toryism would seem to have become the consensus opinion of the gentry community. After 1705 it would seem to have become the consensus of the county at large, for both candidates continued to sit together in Parliament, frequently unopposed, until 1730. As has been seen, Whig administrations of the period had some difficulty finding local Whig gentry suitable for the office of Justice of the Peace, mainly because they were in a minority. The local Whigs would seem to have accepted the state of things as they were, with the compensation of places on the bench, for after 1705 the Whigs never seriously opposed the incumbent Tories until 1715.¹¹⁰ In this sense, the county community of the early eighteenth century was, therefore, Tory.

The Northamptonshire Anglican clergy naturally exhibited an even greater propensity for Toryism. In 1705, seventy-five parsons voted Tory and only eight Whig. The presence of a Tory rector or vicar would seem to have been substantial but not great for fifty-one of their parishes turned in a Tory majority. It is notable, however, that in the parish of Welford, where there was a thriving Nonconformist congregation at this time, the Tories won twenty-three votes to the Whigs' thirteen and it is possible that the vicar, John Peck, could have been the decisive influence

108. N.R.O., C(A).7513/1-2.

109. Forrester, Northamptonshire County Elections, p.19.

110. ibid., passim.

in swaying the freeholders' views.¹¹¹ The Payne family, however, who favoured and sheltered Nonconformists, voted Whig.¹¹²

The presence of Nonconformist congregations would also seem to have had some effect. It was not, however, as great as might be expected. A comparison of the poll-books with the Archdeacon's returns of 1669, the Compton Census, and later works on Dissent shows that in many places of Nonconformist activity, like the south-west around the Boddingtons; the district of Floore and Bugbrooke; and the Daventry region, the Whig vote was stronger than the Tory. In the market towns it also tended to be stronger. Both Rothwell and Wellingborough returned Whig majorities, but Towester, where there had also been a conventicle, was very Tory. In hardly any of these regions, however, did the Whigs gain more than a 60% majority. It could have been that a Nonconformist chapel, rather than enlisting their support, incensed the substantial freeholders of the neighbourhood.

The influence of the gentry is rather difficult to gauge without a good collection of estate records and rent-rolls. The proximity of a lordly or other large estate clearly had some sort of effect. The vicinities of such aristocratic domains as the Earl of Exeter's and Lord Fitzwilliam's in the Soke of Peterborough, Lord Hatton's in Rockingham Forest, and the Earls of Northampton's and Leominster's in the south of the county all returned Tory majorities. The areas of the Rockingham, Montagu Mordaunt, Sunderland and Halifax estates all produced Whig majorities. The one great exception to this general rule was the north end of Rockingham Forest where the presence of the Earl of Westmorland's lands would seem to have had no effect on voting behaviour for all the parishes

111. T. Coleman, Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire, 1853 p.158.

112. ibid., p.162.

in the region voted Tory.

Attachment to local candidates would also seem to have played a part. Around the Isham's home of Lamport the only islands of Whiggery were Sir Edward Nicholl's estate at Faxton and Sir John Langham's at Cottesbrooke. In the south-west the family alliance of Cartwright and Crewe, plus the influence of families like the Bensons and the Fermors, meant that only ten parishes west of Watling Street had Whig majorities. The combination of St. John and Mordaunt estates, coupled with like-minded Whigs such as the Pickerings, meant that the region of the Nene Valley between Wellingborough and Oundle was an almost exclusively Whig preserve. Just about the only Tory parish was Finedon which belonged to Gilbert Dolben, Member of Parliament for Peterborough.

By and large the gentry would seem to have been the most influential in parishes with a small number of freeholders. It was in partly or wholly enclosed parishes that the gentry could command a greater proportion of votes. In the larger, more populous and usually open parishes, the influence they exercised was much smaller. In enclosed parishes like Henry Benson's Dodford or Harvey Ekins's Weston Favell it was, it would seem, much easier to command the votes of the handful of resident freeholders than for example, in Wollaston where twenty-four out of fifty-six freeholders voted against the interest of Sir Charles Neale. Never the less, one-half of the Tory gentry and about one-third of the Whig, had their parishes of residence for the main part vote along with them at the hustings.

There was also a pronounced tendency for parishes with few, presumably large, freeholders to vote Tory and for populous open parishes to vote Whig. Fifty-nine parishes with less than ten freeholders voted Tory and only twenty-four Whig. Most large open parishes like Long Buckby, Crick and Guilsborough in the west or Irthlingborough and Rushden produced extremely large Whig

majorities. But, overall, there does not seem to have been a great difference in the wealth of the freeholders of both parties. Curiously enough, if anything, the Whig forty-shilling freeholders were slightly better off. An examination of the probate inventories of 170 freeholders who voted in either 1702 or 1705, and who died between 1706 and 1710, shows that the 78 Whigs in the sample had an average wealth in goods and chattels of £147, whereas the 92 Tories had £132.¹¹³ Both parties, however, had their fair share of both rich and poor alike.

If differences in wealth played no part, and that played by religion was secondary, then the greatest single influence was likely to have been the leadership provided by the gentry. But this factor must not be overstressed. In 1702 the parish of Everdon, home of the much abused Whig J.P., John Winston, had voted overwhelmingly along with its squire. Three years later, when the whole village was paid court to (a modern politician would say, "targetted") by the Tory interest, the position was reversed.¹¹⁴ Personal appeals and local attachments would seem to have played the greater part.

113. Probate inventories in the Administrations of the Archdeaconry Court of Northampton, 1706-1710.

114. N.R.O., I.C. 2736B.

Conclusion

By 1714 the county community of Northamptonshire had undergone many crises. The Civil War, the Exclusion crisis, the Glorious Revolution and the polarised party politics of the 1690s and 1700s all divided county society, sometimes bitterly, and all had the potential to create a permanent breach. The composition of the gentry community also underwent many changes during this period, the most important of which were traced in Chapter II. With so many factious disputes within the community and with such a high rate of turnover amongst gentry society, it could be suggested that there was such little continuity that the county community failed to survive into the eighteenth century. In some ways there is a little truth in this. On the "cross-bench" Commission of the Peace in 1714 well over half of the ninety-six local gentry Justices came from families either not resident in the county in the Restoration period or thought unworthy of the office at the time. But, perhaps it was this continual flux that gave the county community its strength. In a small, stagnant community political differences and family feuds would have had time to fester, whereas in a large and vital community like Northamptonshire they usually did not. There were always enough gentlemen ready to serve their county acceptable to the rest of the community as magistrates, deputy-lieutenants or Members of Parliament, and there were enough well-established families to lend them tone. It is a measure of cohesion with community that at those times, like the 1650s and the late 1680s when the government went beyond the bounds of what was acceptable to the overall community, the Protectorate and James II had great difficulty finding men to serve the narrow ends of the state. Those men who were found, who were not renegade men of substance, by and large never served the county community again.

Provided the religious and political divisions of the day remained differences of opinion only amongst the county gentry, as between Presbyterian and Anglican or even Whig and Tory, they could be accommodated on the county's various commissions and parliamentary seats. It was these institutions which provided the thread of continuity that held the county community together. They were political forums and in some ways representative bodies, but above all else they were the organs of local government staffed by native worthies intent on no more than administering their own community. There were no real intendants or bashaws, commissars or blockwarts in seventeenth century England - systems like them, when tried, failed.

BIBLIOGRAPHYPRIMARY SOURCESManuscript CollectionsBodleian Library, Oxford.

MS. Add. C. 305.

MS. Carte, 103, 181, 219, 223, 233, 240.

MS. Don e. 6.

MS. Eng. Lett. c. 210.

MS. Eng poet e. 87.

MS. Rawl A 63.

MS. Rawl. B. 517.

MS. Rawl. C. 336.

MS. Smith. 50.

Top.MS. Northants. C.9.

British Library, London

Add.MSS. 5508.

Add.Mss. 14030.

Add.MSS. 15889.

Add.MSS. 18779.

Add.MSS. 20739.

Add.MSS. 25302.

Add.MSS. 29550-29588.

Add.Mss. 34013.

Add.MSS. 34217.

Add.MSS. 34222.

Add.MSS. 34326.

Add. MSS. 37344.

Add. MSS. 61496.

Add MSS. 61611.

Eg. MSS. 2542.

Harl MSS. 164.

Harl MSS. 166.

Stowe MSS. 577.

House of Lords Record Office, London.

Petitions of Robert Lord Brudenell and
annexed papers. 23. Dec. 1645, 3 Aug. 1647.

Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln.

Probate Administrations in the Prebendal Court
of Nassington, I, II.

Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton.

Archdeaconry of Northampton: Probate Administrations.

Brudenell ASR.

Brudenell Papers.

Brudenell Maps.

Cartwright of Aynho Collection.

Consistory Court of Peterborough: Probate Administration.

Dryden of Canons Ashby Collection.

Ellesmere of Brackley Collection.

Exter of Burleigh Collection.

Fermor - Hesketh-Baker Papers.

Fitzwilliam of Milton Collection.

Fitzwilliam of Milton Miscellaneous Papers.

Isham Correspondence.

Isham Letters.

Knightley Collection.

Maunsell of Thorpe Malsor Collection.

Montagu of Boughton Collection.

Names of those Persons taking the Oaths, 1673-1687.

Parish Registers of: Claycoton.

Daventry

East Haddon

Great Oakley

Gretton

Guilsborough

Kettering

Old

Paulerspury

Stoke Albany

Wellingborough

Wilbarston.

Quarter Sessions Minute Books, 1690-1714

Quarter Sessions Rolls 1/15-144, 1660-1690.

Robinson of Cranford MSS.

Sacrament Certificates 1683-85.

St John of Woodford Collection.

(plus copy of Bedfordshire Record Office, DD.J. Coll.)

Westmorland of Apethorpe Collection.

Wykes of Yarwell Collection.

MS. History of Northampton, X4478/712.

Nottinghamshire Record Office

P.R.S.W.87-89.

Public Record Office, London .

C. 66/2986.

C. 193/12/3-5.

C. 193/13/4-6.

C. 219/56.

C. 220/9/4.

C. 231/6-9.
C. 234/27.
E. 179/160/320-322.
E. 179/254/9.
E. 179/254/11.
E. 179/254/14.
E. 179/254/28.
E. 179/254/30-31.
E. 372/488-540.
P.C. 2/55.
P.C. 2/58-61.
P.C. 2/72.
P.C. 2/75.
P.C. 2/76.
S.P. 16/405.
S.P. 19 passim.
S.P. 22/F2.
S.P. 23. passim.
S.P. 29/1.
S.P. 29/11.
S.P. 29/26.
S.P. 29/39.
S.P. 29/76.
S.P. 29/334.
S.P. 29/419.
S.P. 29/421.Pt. 3.
S.P. 34/12.
S.P. 44/35.

222

Contemporary Sources in Print, Published in the Seventeenth
Century or Later.

J.Arlott, ed., England: a coloured facsimile of the maps
and text from the Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain
by John Speed, 1953.

W.Abbott, Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,
1937-47.

J.Aubrey, The Natural History of Wiltshire, 1685.

T.Ball. Pastorum Propagaculum, Or, the Pulpit's
Patronage Against the Force of Unordained Usurpation and
Invasion, 1656, B.L., E. 863.(10).

R.Baillie, Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A.M.,
Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637-62 II, 1841.

Sir Richard Baker, The History of the Kings of England, 1674.

W.Barlee, Predestination defended against Post-destination
in a Corremptorie Correction given in by way of an answer
to..some notes concerning God's degrees, especially
reprobation by Mr T.P.(Thomas Pierce) to which are prefixed
the epistles of Dr. Edward Reynolds, Mr Daniel Cawdry (and of
Thomas Whitfield), 1656, B.L., 904.(1).

E.S. De Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, 1955.

J.Bentham, The Christian Conflict, showing the difficulties
and duties of this conflict Preached in the Lecture
of Kettering, 1635, B.L., 4479. BB. 41.

J.Besse, An Abstract of the Sufferings of....the Quakers,
1933.

T. Birch, ed., A Collection of the State Papers of
John Thurloe Esq., 1742.

W.Blith, The English Improver Improved, 1652.

J.Bond, A Complete Guide for Justices of the Peace, 1695.

Z.Breedon, The Humble Advice and Earnest Desires of
certain well affected Ministers, Lecturers of Banbury...
and Brackley...to His Excellency, Thomas Lord Fairfax
and to the General Council of War: presented
January 25, 1649..., B.L., 103 b. 29.

J.Bridges, The History and Antiquities of Northampshire,
ed., P Whalley, 1791.

T.Burnet, Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, 1818.

Various editors, Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers,
1872.

Calendar of the Committee for the Advance of Money.

Calendar of the Committee for Compounding.

Calendar of State Papers, Domestic 1649-1702.

Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1647-52.

The Diary of Thomas Cartwright,

Bishop of Chester, Camden Soc., XII, 1843.

F.Cheynell, The Rise, Growth and Danger of Socinianism,
1643, B.L., E. 103 (14).

F.Cheynell, Truth Triumphant over Error and Heresy, 1646.

B. L., E. 371 (7).

F.Cheynell, The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son and

Holy Spirit, 1650, B.L. 4225 a. 15.

State Papers collected by Edward Earl of Clarendon, 1736.

A.Clarke, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary

of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by himself, 1892.

M.Coate, The Letter Book of John Viscount Mordaunt, Camden Soc.,

3rd Ser. LXIX. 1945.

Tobias Coldwell's History of Northampton, Journal of the

Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club,

XXVIII, 1934.

T.Coleman, Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire,

1853.

T.Cox. Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua et nova, Or, a

New Survey of Great Britain wherein to the topographical

account given by Mr Camden and the late editors of his Britannia

is added a more large history, III, 1724.

D.Defoe, A Tour Through The Whole Island of Great Britain,

ed., G.DH. Cole, II, 1928.

G.Duckett, Penal Laws and Test Act 1687-88, 1882.

T.Edwards, Gangraena, 1646.

J.Fetherston, Ed., The Visitation of the County of Leicester in

the year, 1619, taken by William Camden, Harleian Soc., II, 1870.

J.Fido, T. Jeanes, W.Shaw, The Parliament justified in their late proceedings v.Charles Stuart...an answer to....the humble advice of the Lecturers of Banbury....and Brackley, 1648 (old style), B.L., E.545.(14).

The Journeys of Celia Fiennes, ed. C. Morris, 1949.

C.H.Firth,Ed., Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson...
by his widow Lucy, 1906 .

H.Foley, Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, VII, 1883.

S.Ford, The Loyal Subject's Exultation for the Royal Exile's Restoration, 1660, B.L., E. 103B. (5).

S.Ford, A Christian's Acquiescence in all the Products of Divine Providence, 1665, B.L., 1418. a. 12.

The Fall and Funeral of Northampton in an Elegy late published in Latin (by Simon Ford, D.D.) Since made English by F.A. (Ferdinando Archer) M.A. a Sad Spectator of the frightful scene, 1677, B.L., 11626 bb. 56.

T.Fuller, The Worthies of England,ed., J Freeman,1952.

E.Gibson, ed., Camden's Britannia, Newly Translated into English, 1695.

G.Groos, ed., The Diary of Baron Waldstein, 1981.

J.Gutch,ed., Collecteana Curiosa, I, 1781 :

Mr Fuller's Observations of the Shires, c. 1633.

K. H. D. Haley, Shaftesbury's List of Lay Peers and Members
of the Commons, 1677-78,
Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XLIII, 1970.

G Healey, ed., The Letters of Daniel Defoe, 1955.

J W Hellsell, ed., Poly-Olbion by Michael Drayton, Being the
Fourth Volume of his Works, 1933.

Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports:

H.M.C. I

H.M.C. II.

H.M.C. VI

H.M.C. VII

H.M.C. VIII, pt. 2.

H.M.C. IX.

H.M.C. X.

H.M.C.XI, Appendix, Pt. II, MSS. of the House of Lords, 1678-88.

H.M.C., XII, Pt. VII, Le Fleming, 25.

H.M.C. XIII.

H.M.C. XIII, Pt. I, Hastings II.

H.M.C. XIV.

H.M.C. Buccleuch, I.

H.M.C. Buccleuch, III.

H.M.C. Downshire MSS., I, Part 2.

H.M.C. Egmont, II.

H.M.C. Montagu.

H.M.C. MSS. of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, 1900.

H M C Ormonde MSS., IV.

H.M.C. XII, Portland MSS. I, II, V.

H.M.C. Rutland MSS., I.

H.M.C. MSS. Var. Coll. II.

J.Howes, Christ God-Man 1657, B.L., 114 d. 23.

J.Howes, Real Comforts Extracted from Moral and Spiritual Principles....in a Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Thomas Ball, 1660, B.L., E. 988.(29).

J.Howes, A Sermon Preached at the Assizes at Northampton Aug. 9, 1669, 1669 B.L. 226. J. 19.(2).

Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham, 1650-1660, N.R.S. XVII, 1955.

Sir Gyles Isham, ed., The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport, 1658-81, 1971.

J.R. Jones, "Shaftesbury's Worthy Men: A Whig View of Parliament, 1679, B.I.H.R., XXX, 1957.

Journals of the House of Commons, III - XVIII.

H. Isham Longden, The Diaries (Home and Foreign) of Sir Justinian Isham, 1704-1736, T.R.H.S., 3rd Series, I, 1907.

H.Isham Longden, Visitation of the County of Northampton in the Year, 1681, Harleian Soc., LXXXVII, 1935.

R.Latham and W.Matthews, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 1970-1982.

W.Dunn Macray, ed., The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, begun in the year 1641, by Edward, Earl of Clarendon 1888.

M.Lee's History of Northampton, Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club, XXVI, 1932.

N.Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, 1678-1704, 1857.

C.A. Markham, ed., Tracts Relating to Northamptonshire, 3rd series, 1885.

G.Marshall, ed., Visitations of Nottinghamshire in the Years, 1569 and 1614, Harleian Society, 1871.

G.Marshall, ed., Le Neve's Pedigrees of Knights made by King Charles II, King James II, King William and Queen Mary, King William alone and Queen Anne, Harleian Soc., VII, 1873.

A. G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, 1934.

L.Meager, The English Gardener, c. 1670, B.L. 41 a.5.

W.Mellows, Peterborough Local Administrations: Parochial Government from the Reformation to the Revolution, 1541-1689: Minutes and Accounts of the Feoffees and Governors of City Lands, N.R.S. X, 1937.

W. C. Metcalfe, ed., The Visitations of Northamptonshire made in 1564 and 1618-19 with Northamptonshire pedigrees from various Harleian MSS., 1887.

"A Letter from the Right Honourable Edward Lord Montague, one of the Commissioners attending His Majesty, with a perfect Narration of all the Passages betwixt his Majesty and those forces that brought him from Holdenby, being resident now at Newmarket," 1647, B.L., E.392 (10).

Edward Montagu, 2nd Baron Montagu of Boughton, "The Copie of a letter from the Commissioners with the King: concerning the manner of the Souldiers, fetching His Majestie to the Army" (Signed E-M), 1647, B.L. E. 391 (1).

J. Moore, A Scripture Word against Enclosure, 1659, quoted in J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, eds., Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, 1972.

J. Morton, Natural History of Northamptonshire with an account of Antiquities, 1712.

S. N. Esq., A Catalogue of the Names of All... Justices of the Peace, 1680.

J. Nalson, A true copy of the Journal of the High Court of Justice for the tyral of King Charles I, 1684.

J. Norden, Speculi Britannia Pars Altea, or a Delineation of Northamptonshire, 1720 (originally 1591).

The State of Northamptonshire from the beginning of the Fire, 20th September, 1675, to 5th November. Represented in a letter to a Friend in London.. By A Country Minister (Edward Pierce). 1675, B.L., 1303, e. 14.

E. Pierce, The Conformist's Plea for the Nonconformist. 1681 B.L., 698.i. 1.(4).

E. Pierce, The Conformist's Second Plea for the th Nonconformist, 1682 B.L., 701. J. 24.

E. Pierce, The Conformist's Third Plea for the Nonconformist, 1683, B.L. 698.i.1.(5).

E. Pierce The Conformist's Fourth Plea for the Nonconformist, 1683, B.L., 698.i.1.(6).

E.Pierce Christ alone over Life, 1691, B.L., 4474. a. 40

J.Raithsby, ed., Statutes of the Realm, V, 1819,

E.Reynolds, Death's Advantage, opened in a Sermon...preached...
at the Funeral of Peter Whalley esq., 1657, B.L., E. 192(6).

E.Reynolds, The Church's Triumph over Death... a sermon preached..
at the Funeral of Lady Langham, 1662, B.L., 1417.d.8.

J.Rushworth, Historical Collections, VII, 1680.

J. T. Rutt, ed., The Diary of Thomas Burton esq., Member in
the Parliament of Oliver and Richard Cromwell from
1656 to 1659, IV, 1828.

B.Ryves, Angliae Ruina, 1647.

B.Ryves, Mercurius Rusticus: or the countries complaint of the
barbarous outrages committed by the sectaries of the late
flourishing Kingdom, I, 1646

Memoires du Duc de Saint Simon, 1856.

W.Scott, ed., "A collection of scarce and Valuable Tracts..
particularly that of the late Lord Somers.", 1811.

L.T.Smith, ed., The Itinerary of John Leland, in or about the
years 1535-1543, IV, 1964.

J.Speed, The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, 1614.

The Case of Oliver St. John, 1660,

B.L. E. 1035.5.

R.Thornton, The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire, with additions
by J.Throsby, 1970.

K.Train, ed., The Nottinghamshire Visitation, 1662-1664,

Thoroton Record Series, XIII, 1950.

G.Lyon Turner, ed., Original Records of Early Nonconformity
under Persecution and Indulgence, II, 1911.

F.P. and M. M . Verney, eds., The Verney Memoirs, 1907.

M. M. Verney, ed., Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century
from the Manuscripts at Claydon House, I, 1930.

J.Wake, ed., Quarter Sessions Records of the County of
Northampton, N.R.S. I, 1924.

J.Wake, ed., The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S. VII, 1935.

J.Walker, An attempt towards recovering an Account of Numbers
and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England, 1714.

G.Warner, ed., The Nicholas Papers, Camden Society, 3rd Series,
LVII, III, 1897.

Sir Philip Warwick, Memoires of the reigne of King Charles I, 1701.

Bulstrode Whitelocke,

Memorials of English Affairs, 1853.

T.Wotton, The English Baronetage, 1741.

H.Yelverton, A Short Discourse on the Truth and Reasonableness
of the Religion Delivered by Jesus Christ, 1662, B.L. 4014.aaa.20.

Anonymous Pamphlets.

An account of the late dreadful fire at Northampton, with the
manner how it began, and the lamentable destruction it made,
1675, B.L., 1302. a. 18.

An account of the old Charter of Northampton, and the manner
of their receiving the new...Together with an eloquent speech
made by R. Clarke, esq., 1686, B.L. 816 m. 16(18).

Address of the County of Northampton to General Monck,
27 Jan. 1659/60, B.L., c.11.(69).

By an Act of this present Parliament (1657) entitled "An Act
and Declaration touching several Acts and Ordinances made
since 20th April, 1653 and before September, 1654": Additional
Commissioners for Ejecting Scandalous Ignorant and Insufficient
Ministers and Schoolmasters, 1657, Birmingham Public Library,
Q. 942.008.F32.

Copies of the Polls taken at the Several Elections for the
Members to represent the County of Northampton in Parliament, 1832.

Declaration of the Inhabitants of Wellingborough 1650, B.L., 669.

The King's Majesty's Propositions to the Lords and Commons
assembled in Parliament concerning His Majesty's coming to Whitehall,
1647, B.L. E. 377(16).

A Letter to a Friend, upon the Dissolution of the late Parliament,
and the calling of a new one. Together with a list of those
that were against making the Prince and Princess of Orange, King and
Queen, 1690, B.L. , 816 M.4./23.

A List of the Imprisoned and Secluded Members, 1648, B.L., 669.

The Names of the Justices of the Peace in England and Wales,
printed for Thomas Walkley, 1650, B.L., E.1238.

Northampton in Flames: or, a poem on the dreadful fire that
happened there on Monday, the 20th September, 1675, 1675,
 B.L. Lutt.II. 152.

Northamptonshire Poll Books and Election Pamphlets, n.d.
 (a copy is in the Library of the University of Leicester).

A perfect List of all such Persons as by Commission...are
now confirmed....Justices of the Peace, T Leach, 1660.

A Remonstrance from the Army to the Citizens of London,
 1648, B.L., E. 472 (9).

Three Speeches spoken at a Common Hall, Thursday, the
3rd July 1645, By Mr Lisle, Mr Tate, Mr Brown, continuing
many observations upon the King's letters found in his
own cabinet at Naseby fight, 1645, B.L., E. 292.(29).

A true and faithful relation of the late fire at Northampton,
 1675, B.L. 10803, aa.16.(9).

A true testimony of what was done concerning the servants
of the Lord at the assizes at Northampton.1655,B.L.,E. 852(21).

Contemporary Newspapers

Mercurius Academicus, 12 January, 1646. B.L.,E.316.

Mercurius Elencticus, 22-29 November, 1648, B.L.,E. 473(39).

Mercurius Politicus, 7-14 February, 1656.

A moderate intelligence Impartially Communicating Martial Affairs
to the Kingdom of England - 24-31 May 1649, B.L.,E. 557.

A Perfect Diurnall, 1650 B.L., E. 534.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Works of Reference

Various editors,

Dictionary of National Biography.

J.Foster, ed., Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714, 1891.

Various editors, The Complete Peerage by G.E.C., 1910-59.

M.F. Keeler, The Long Parliament:

A Biographical Study of its Members - 1954.

Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Report 345, I, 1878.

The Parliamentary of Constitutional History of England from the
Earliest Times to the Restoration of Charles II...by several
hands, XX, 1763.

P.R.O. Lists and Indexes, IX, Lists of Sheriffs for England and
Wales, 1898.

W. A. Shaw, The Knights of England, II, 1906.

Sir Edgar Stephens, The Clerks of the Counties, 1360-1960, 1961.

J. A. Venn, ed., Alumni Cantabrigienses, Pt. 1, 1922.

Victoria History of the Counties of England,
Northamptonshire, I-IV, 1902-37.

T.Wotton, The English Baronetage, II, 1741.

Books and Articles

K. J. Allison, M. W. Beresford, J. G. Hurst, The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, XVIII, 1966.

J. Alsop, The Northamptonshire Commission of the Peace (1702) and Parliamentary Polls (1702,-705), N.P. and P., VI. no.5., 1982.

G. Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden, 1953.

M. Ashley, Cromwell's Generals, 1954

R. Ashton, The English Civil War, Conservatism and Revolution, 1603-1649, 1978.

G. Baker, History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton, 1822-41.

H. Barber, A Forgotten Chapter in English Church History, A.D. 1642 to 1662, The Diocese of Peterborough, 1898.

H. Belgion, Titchmarsh Past and Present, 1979 .

W. C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism , 1912 .

H. Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, 1951 .

I. Burton, et al. ed., Voting Records of Members of Parliament under Queen Anne, Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Special Supplement 7, 1968, Appendix B.

G. L. Cherry, The Convention Parliament, 1689: A Biographical Study of its Members, 1966.

P. Clark and P. Slack, English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700, 1976.

211
T. Coleman, Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire,
1853.

W. B. Compton, 6th Marquess of Northampton,
A History of the Comptons of Compton Winyates, 1930.

J. Cox and R. Serjeantson, History of the Church of The Holy
Sepulchre, 1897.

J Damien, These Be But Women, in C.H. Carter, ed., From the Renaissance
to the Counter-Reformation, 1966.

G.Davies, The Election of Richard Cromwell's Parliament, English
Historical Review, LVIII , 1948.

A.Dyer, Northampton in 1524, N.P. and P., VI, No. 2, 1979.

F . G. Emmison, Jacobean Household Inventories, Bedfordshire
Historical Record Society, XX, 1938.

A. M. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion
1640-60, 1966.

A. M. Everitt, The Marketing of Argicultural Produce, in Thirsk, ed.,
Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640, 1967.

A. M. Everitt, Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century, Depart-
ment of English Local History Occasional Papers, 2nd Series, I, 1969.

A. M . Everitt, The Local Community and the Great Rebellion, 1969.

A. M . Everitt, Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional
Evolution in England, T.R.H.S., 5th Series, XXIX, 1979.

M.E. Finch, The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S. XIX, 1956,

Sir Charles Firth, Regimental History of Cromwell's Army, 1940.

E. Forrester, Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering, 1695-1832, 1941.

E. F. Gay, the Inquisitions of Depopulation in 1517 and the "Domesday of Inclosures", T.R.H.S., N.S. XIV, 1900.

E. F. Gay, Inclosures in England, Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1903.

E. F. Gay, The Midland Revolt and the Inquisition of Depopulation of 1607, T.R.H.S., N.S. XVIII, 1904.

I. Gentles, The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, 1649-60, Midland History, III, (3), 1976.

J. Gibson, Three Lost Northamptonshire Houses and their owners, N.P. and P., V., 1976.

N. Glass, The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell, 1871.

J. A. Gotch, Old Halls and Manor Houses of Northamptonshire, 1936.

J. A. Gotch, Squires' Homes and other Old Buildings of Northamptonshire, 1936.

R. Greenall, A History of Northamptonshire, 1979.

H. Habakkuk, English Landownership, 1680-1740, Economic History Review, X, 1939-40.

- H. J . Habakkuk, Landowners and the Civil War, Economic History Review, 2nd Series, XVIII, 1965.
- H. J . Habakkuk, The Rise and Fall of English Landed Families 1600-1800, T.R.H.S., 5th Series, XXIX, 1979.
- H. Rider Haggard, Rural England, II, 1906.
- C.Holmes. Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire, History of Lincolnshire Committee, XVI, 1980.
- G.Holmes , British Politics in the Age of Anne, 1967.
- H.Horwitz, Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III, 1977.
- W. G. Hoskins, Provincial England.
- G.Isham, Two Local Biographies. N.P. and P., III. No. 3.
- J. R. Jones, The First Whigs, 1961.
- R.Wood-Jones, Traditional Domestic Architecture of The Banbury Region, 1963.
- J. P. Kenyon, The Popish Plot, 1972.
- D. Lacey, Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689, 1969.
- E. M. Leonard, The Inclosure of the Common Fields in the Seventeenth Century, T.R.H.S., N.S. XIX, 1905.
- H. Isham Longden, Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500, I-XV, 1932-43.
- T. Macaulay, History of England from the Accession of James II, 1913.

- C.A. Markham, The County Buildings of Northamptonshire, 1885.
- C.A. Markham and J.C. Cox, eds., Records of the Borough of Northampton, 1898.
- J. Miller. James II; A Study in Kingship, 1978.
- D. Ogg. England in the Reign of Charles II, 1967.
- D. Ogg. England in the Reigns of James II and William III, 1969.
- V. Pearl, Oliver St. John and the Middle Group in the Long Parliament. - English Historical Review, LXXXI, 1966.
- P.A.J. Pettit, Charles I and the Revival of Forest Law in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., III, No. 2, 1962.
- P.A.J. Pettit, The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714, N.R.S., XXIII, 1968.
- R. E. Prothero, English Farming, Past and Present, 1912.
- M. Seaborne, Small Stone Houses in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., III, 1963.
- M. Seaborne, Small Stone Houses in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., III, 1964.
- M. Seaborne, Small Stone Houses in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., IV, 1972.
- R. Serjeantson, History of All Saints, Northampton, 1901.
- W. J. Sheils, The Puritans in Church and Politics in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1570-1610, London University Ph.D. thesis, 1974.
- W. A. Speck, Tory and Whig, the Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701-1715, 1970.

- M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 1974.
- L. D. Stamp, The Land of Britain, The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, parts 58-59, Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough, 1943.
- R. N. Swanson, The Second Northamptonshire Election of 1701, N.P. and P., VI, no. 1.
- W. E. Tate, The Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards, ed, M. E. Turner, 1978.
- W. E. Tate, Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire, N.P. and P., I. 1950.
- J. Thirsk, ed., Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640, 1967.
- J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, eds., Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, 1972.
- H. Thorpe, The Lord and the Landscape, in D. Mills, ed., English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy, 1973.
- J. Tyler, Elections of Higham Ferrers, N.P. and P., I. Pt. 6, 1953.
- D. Underdown, Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660, 1960.
- D. Underdown, Pride's Purge, Politics in the Puritan Revolution, 1971.
- J. Wake, The Brudenells of Deene, 1954.
- J. Western. The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century, 1965.
- A. P. White, The Story of Northampton, 1914.

C. Whiting, Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham (1674-1721)
and his Diocese, 1940.

C. Wise, The Montagus of Boughton and their Northamptonshire
Homes, 1888.

E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, The Population History of England
1541-1871: A Reconstruction, 1981.

J. A. Yelling, Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850, 1977.

This thesis is intended to illustrate political and social developments in Northamptonshire between the execution of Charles I and the death of Queen Anne. Chapter I outlines the physical and human geography of the county. In so doing it draws attention to the regional variety to be found in the patterns of settlement, agriculture, industry and poverty but asserts that the county did have an overall identity in the seventeenth century. Chapter II examines the gentry community: their number, distribution, period of settlement and wealth. It makes the case that the county community best expressed its identity through the political and administrative institutions of local government. Chapter III covers the years 1649-59. It examines the changing composition of the Commission of the Peace in these years and the failure to reach a political settlement in the county. It also attempts to trace the emergence of radical dissent at this time. Chapter IV narrates the political developments that led up to the Restoration and examines the more accommodating settlement of the Commission of the Peace, and the importance the government laid on the militia. Chapter V examines local elections and electioneering methods between 1661 and 1678 and analyses two manuscript poll-books for Northampton and Peterborough. Chapter VI examines Catholicism in Northamptonshire and the effects of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. It goes on to trace the conflict between Whig and Tory interests, the attempts by the governments of Charles II and James II to subdue the independence of the county community and the events of the Revolution of 1688. Chapter VII covers the Revolution Settlement in some detail and then goes on to examine the effect party politics had on Northamptonshire gentry families, on the Commission of the Peace and on the electorate between 1695-1714.