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The attack on Lord Chandos: popular politics in Cirencester in 1642

Abstract:

On 15 August 1642, Lord Chandos attempted to execute Charles I's Commission of Array in Cirencester. He was met by a large crowd who demanded that he sign an oath that he would not execute the Commission. After doing so, Chandos fled and the crowd destroyed his coach. This incident has traditionally been interpreted as an attack by cloth workers motivated by economic distress, rather than more ideological motives. This article suggests a different interpretation. It argues that the social and cultural ecology of Cirencester supported the development of a popular parliamentarianism in the early 1640s. It suggests that the Protestation provided an ideological, parliamentarian language which united working people, middling sort and gentry to oppose Chandos. While the attack on Chandos was violent, it was a targeted use of violence through which the crowd was able to discredit Chandos and exercise significant political agency.

Key words:

Cirencester, cloth trade, gentry, Gloucestershire, Giffard, Chandos, middling sort, popular politics, Protestation

On 15 August 1642 George Brydges, the sixth Baron Chandos, set out for the Gloucestershire town of Cirencester with about thirty companions.¹ His intention was to execute Charles I's Commission of Array: an order to Lords Lieutenant to assemble troops for the king's service. Arriving at Cirencester, Chandos was confronted by an armed crowd. Fearing for his life, he was forced to sign an affirmation that he would not execute the Commission. He was smuggled out of the

¹ I am grateful to Dr Laura Stewart and the judges of the Midland History Prize for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

town that night by one of his supporters. Finding Chandos gone the next morning, the crowd dragged his coach to the marketplace and smashed it to pieces.²

The incident at Cirencester was one of a number of crowd actions triggered by attempts to execute the Commission of Array during the summer of 1642. On 5 August the Marquess of Hertford was prevented from carrying out the Commission of Array in Somerset by a crowd which assembled in Wells.³ On 22 August Sir John Lucas was attacked by a crowd in Colchester, triggering further attacks on gentry households across Essex and Suffolk.⁴ In early September a crowd at South Molton in Devon attacked the Earl of Bath as he tried to execute the Commission.⁵ Typically, these and other crowd actions of the mid-seventeenth century have not been seen as being explicitly politically motivated. For S. R. Gardiner, writing in the late 1890s, 'labourers and the small handicraftsmen of the country-side... wanted to be let alone that they might be allowed to earn their daily bread in peace'.⁶ A post-war generation of historians agreed that seventeenth-century working people were motivated by economic class rather than by political ideology. Brian Manning, for example, argued that the attacks of the summer of 1642 'revealed an underlying rebelliousness against the ruling order', and that the crowds 'would not have become so involved if the crisis had been concerned purely with political and religious questions' rather

² This paragraph is drawn from John Giffard, *A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons* (London, 1642), British Library (hereafter BL), Thomason Tracts (hereafter TT), E.113[6].

³ Joseph Prowd, *A true and sad relation of divers passages in Somersetshire* (1642), BL, TT, E.109[34]; David Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum* (Newton Abbot, 1973), 1-40.

⁴ Bruno Ryves, *Mercurius rusticus, or, The countries complaint of the murthers, robberies, plunderings, and other outrages committed by the rebells on His Majesties faithfull subjects* (1642), BL, TT, E.103[3], 1-5; John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: the Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), 31-68.

⁵ *A declaration made by the right Honourable the Earle of Bath* (1642), BL, TT, E.119[11]; Mark Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon During the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994), 39-40.

⁶ S.R. Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War 1603-1642*, 10 vols. (London, 1899), IX, 158.

than economic issues.⁷ A subsequent generation of historians, reacting principally against Manning's Marxian framework, repudiated his class-based analysis but still agreed that the motives of civil war crowds 'are devoid of political consciousness and their writings or utterances do not employ a political vocabulary'.⁸

More recently, however, historians have begun to reassess the extent to which working people in mid-seventeenth century England possessed political agency. Significant common ground has been found between 'elite' and 'popular' political ideologies.⁹ Work on the social and administrative structures of early modern England has also questioned the extent to which there was a divide between 'local' and 'national' during this period.¹⁰ A growing literature has seen the social order in early modern England as both culturally and materially constructed. Just as important as economic status were symbolic, normative vocabularies and how they were deployed. These vocabularies could be used and potentially subverted by subordinates as well as by elites.¹¹ With limited physical means of enforcing its will, the English monarchy and in turn its representatives in the localities relied on popular acceptance of its authority in order to exercise power. It also relied on a system of civic participation by social ranks below the level of the gentry in order for parish and

⁷ Brian Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (London, 1976), 180, 102.

⁸ The quote is from Roger Manning, *Village revolts: social protest and popular disturbance in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1988), 2. See also Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980); Keith Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (London, 1982).

⁹ David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 1996); Andy Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country, 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹⁰ John Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies": The Voices of Radwinter and Popular Opposition to Laudianism', *English Historical Review*, 122, 495 (2007), 35-60.

¹¹ Michael Braddick and John Walter, 'Grids of Power: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Early Modern Society', in Braddick and Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 1-42.

county politics to function effectively.¹² This negotiated system of authority – where every power transaction had the possibility, at least in theory, to be subverted – has been seen as providing a space for active popular participation in both local and national politics. Historians have seen the secular and confessional politics of the 1620s and 1630s as expanding this space.¹³ Conflicts over sacred space, for example, allowed popular iconoclasts in eastern England to claim authority for their actions.¹⁴ Crowds in Essex who acted to prevent the Commission of Array from being executed drew on a political vocabulary of anti-popery to justify their actions.¹⁵ Similarly, it has been argued that the Protestation gave a comparable sense of legitimation to groups siding with Parliament.¹⁶

This essay seeks to contribute to this growing historiography through a detailed analysis of the incident at Cirencester in August 1642. It seeks first of all to reconstruct the incident: not just what happened, but also as far as possible the composition of the crowd and their potential motives. This reconstruction of the event is inevitably speculative, given that few sources directly relevant to the incident survive. What can be reconstructed of the event comes from printed sources and must be carefully contextualised. In addition to these evidential issues, there is the wider problem, faced by any historian of popular politics, that ‘the crowd’ is not a single entity. Historians can never fully reconstruct the motivation of every member,

¹² Keith Wrightson, ‘The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England’, in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), 10-46; Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640* (London, 2000); John Walter, ‘The English People and the English Revolution Revisited’, *History Workshop Journal*, 61, 1 (2006), 171-182.

¹³ David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640-1642* (Oxford, 2006).

¹⁴ John Walter, ‘Popular iconoclasm and the politics of the parish in eastern England, 1640-1642’, *Historical Journal*, 47, 2 (2004), 261-90; John Walter, ‘“Abolishing Superstition with Sedition”? The Politics of Popular Iconoclasm in England 1640-1642’, *Past & Present*, 183 (2004), 79-123

¹⁵ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 201-236.

¹⁶ Cressy, ‘The Protestation Protested, 1641 and 1642’, *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), 251-279.

and although crowd actions are one of the most visible manifestations of popular politics, they are not necessarily its most representative manifestation. Nevertheless, by setting the incident within the wider social, economic and political context of seventeenth-century Gloucestershire, and by drawing inferences from events in other parts of contemporary England, some suggestive conclusions can be drawn about what happened on 15 August and why. Using this reconstruction, the paper argues that the evidence from Cirencester confirms the existence, in at least some parts of England in the 1640s, of a sophisticated and parliamentary popular political culture. It seeks to demonstrate that the crowd at Cirencester drew on a variety of symbolic and legal vocabularies to articulate their own demands. These vocabularies were not just capable of mobilising popular parliamentarianism: they were also sufficiently powerful to be able to cross and unite different social groups.

I

Charles I's Commissions of Array were a reaction to the Long Parliament's Militia Ordinance of March 1642. The Ordinance required Lords Lieutenant in the counties to check muster rolls and inspect the trained bands in readiness for possible conflict.¹⁷ In response, in June Charles issued Commissions of Array – an archaic mechanism for mustering officers and troops – requiring Lords Lieutenant to muster and train county militias, and to ensure the officers were persons of quality.¹⁸ Under the Militia Ordinance, the 22-year old Chandos had been made the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire by Parliament. However, when the Commission of

¹⁷ 'March 1642: An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons in Parliament, for the Safety and Defence of the Kingdom of England, and Dominion of Wales', *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (1911), 1-5. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=55727> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁸ Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), 347-368.

Array was issued he chose to side with the king.¹⁹ As a first step, on 11 August Chandos wrote to members of the Gloucestershire gentry, in light of ‘the whole kingdome labouring at this time under one common distemper’, asking them to assemble at the Ram inn at the centre of Cirencester at ten o’clock on 15 August to ‘putt an end to those distractions, which doo now threaten us with common distruction’.²⁰ News of Chandos’s meeting seems to have spread very quickly. The inhabitants of Cirencester fortified the town with posts and chains in order to prevent horses entering.²¹ A mix of people – perhaps a thousand in all – from the surrounding countryside and from the county’s parliamentary volunteers came to the town to defend it. On the morning of 15 August, Chandos set out with thirty companions from his seat at Sudeley Castle, about twenty miles north of Cirencester. He was intercepted in the hills of Rendcomb Downs, a few miles north of the town, by a delegation of both gentry and townspeople. After establishing that Chandos and his party were only armed with swords – signifying social rank rather than hostile intentions – the delegation decided that it was safe to let them enter the town.²²

Once Chandos was allowed into Cirencester, he met with the assembled gentry for dinner in the Ram, a large inn at the west end of the marketplace. They were interrupted by a crowd of volunteers, townspeople and country people, who demanded that he surrender his Commission of Array to them, otherwise they would

¹⁹ Andrew Warmington, ‘Brydges, George, sixth Baron Chandos (1620-1655)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3802> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

²⁰ Gloucestershire Archives (hereafter GA), D2510/18: letter from Chandos to Thomas Veale, 11 August 1642.

²¹ Giffard, *A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

hand him over to Parliament. Chandos protested that he was only there to meet with the county gentry, but under duress he, Sir Robert Tracy and a number of others were forced to sign an oath that they would never execute the Commission. The volunteers continued to threaten Chandos, but were eventually calmed by his promises and by the intervention of some of the townspeople. At about eleven o'clock in the evening, the crowd finally dispersed. During the night, Chandos was smuggled out of the inn by Sir William Master, through Master's house (just north of the Ram) and then onwards out of the town.²³ In his haste, he was forced to leave behind his coach and other possessions. Reassembling the next morning, the crowd became extremely angry when they found out Chandos had fled. They dragged the coach from the yard of the Ram into the marketplace and destroyed it.²⁴

The first account of the Cirencester incident was in a letter sent to an anonymous Member of Parliament on 16 August by John Giffard. It was read in the House of Commons on 20 August and subsequently ordered to be printed.²⁵ The printed version appeared in a single-sheet quarto pamphlet on 22 August.²⁶ The letter was also summarised in another official parliamentary publication.²⁷ Separately, the House of Lords had also been informed of the incident on 19 August in a letter (no longer extant) from Sir Robert Cooke of Highnam to Viscount Saye and Sele.²⁸ Three years later, the event was retold in 1645 by John Corbet in his history

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5; John Corbet, *An historicall relation of the military government of Gloucester* (1645), Wing / C6248, 8-9.

²⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 2: 1640-1643* (1802), 728-730. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=10530> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

²⁶ Giffard, A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons.

²⁷ *His Majesties proceedings in Northamptonshire, Glocestershire, Wilshire, and Warwickshire, from the 16. of August to the 23* (London, 1642), BL, TT, E.113[14], 6.

²⁸ *Journal of the House of Lords: volume 5: 1642-1643* (1802), 305-307. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=34879> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

of the first civil war in Gloucestershire.²⁹ Giffard's letter is hence the only surviving eyewitness account. Establishing his social status and political allegiance is thus of vital importance in analysing his interpretation of the incident. However, pinpointing Giffard's origins with any certainty is difficult. W. R. Williams identified him in his parliamentary history of Gloucestershire as the son of John Giffard of Weston-under-Edge, and hence the younger brother of Sir George Gifford.³⁰ However, this younger John Giffard appears to have been born in 1553, and hence would probably not have been alive in 1642.³¹ No descendants of his called John can be traced to appropriate dates of birth.³² Nevertheless, Giffard's later years can be established with more certainty, and it is possible to work back from what is known of the end of his life to uncover something of its beginning.

Giffard owned property in Cirencester at this time that was near to the site of the confrontation with Chandos. In the royalist siege of Cirencester in 1643, a house known as 'the Barton House, then called Giffard's' formed part of the garrison's defensive lines.³³ During the siege, 'the Barton ferme with very much buildings in it, and all the corne, hay, and other goods and cattle of one gentleman's, which

²⁹ Corbet, *An historicall relation*, 8-9.

³⁰ W. R. Williams, *The parliamentary history of the county of Gloucester* (Hereford, 1898), 158-159.

³¹ Sir George Giffard, the elder John's first son, was born in 1552. William Giffard, third son and later Archbishop of Rheims, was born in 1554. The younger John Giffard was the second son. See Simon Adams (ed.), *Household accounts and disbursement books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586* (Cambridge, 1995), 181; Peter Guilday, *The English Catholic refugees on the continent 1558-1795* (1914), I, 230.

³² The *International Genealogical Index* has a record of a John Giffard baptised at Chesham in Buckinghamshire on 10 October 1596, which the index claims is the grandson of the John Gifford born in 1546. The Chesham parish registers do record the baptism of 'John sonne of Thomas & Anne Gifford' on 10 October 1596. Thomas Gifford in turn was baptised in Chesham on 7 August 1569, 'sonne of John Gifford'. The record of the death of this John Gifford in 1605 records his occupation as 'bricklaier'. This makes it unlikely that he was the same man as John Giffard of Weston-under-Edge, who came from gentry stock. See J. W. Garrett-Pegge, *A transcript of the first volume, 1538-1636, of the parish register of Chesham, in the county of Buckingham* (London, 1904), 28, 76, 292; J. Maclean and W. C. Heane (eds.), *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester, taken in the year 1623* (London, 1885), 250.

³³ K. J. Beecham, *History of Cirencester and the Roman city Corinium* (1886), 289.

amounted to three thousand pounds and upwards, was burnt to the ground'.³⁴ Giffard subsequently pressed for compensation of £3,000 for losses in the siege, suggesting the house was his.³⁵ It seems likely, then, that when Giffard stressed that 'this is a true relation, I was an eye and ear witness of it', he was telling the truth.³⁶ While his letter still needs to be approached with caution, this suggests that to a certain extent the details within it can be trusted.

In 1647 Giffard went on to stand for election as one of the two MPs for Cirencester, alongside Isaac Bromwich. Standing against them was the army interest of Sir Thomas Fairfax and Colonel Nathaniel Rich. Disputes broke out amongst the voters on election day, as a result of which the bailiff refused to let the election go ahead. When Fairfax's supporters threatened to report him to the Commons, the latter is alleged to have replied 'do it when you will we have as strong a party in the Commons as ye'. The matter then remained with the Committee of Privileges until 14 February 1649, when Fairfax and Rich were finally appointed to their seats in the Commons.³⁷ The bailiff's comments, and the fact that the matter was settled only after Pride's Purge had removed the Presbyterian faction from the Commons, suggest that Giffard's political allegiance was staunchly Presbyterian. In the same year as the abortive election, Giffard leased from Colonel Edward Massey iron works in the Forest of Dean which had been confiscated from the royalist Sir John Wintour.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 298.

³⁵ *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding of Delinquents* (1889), III, 2142-2143; *Certain reasons (by way of reply to some objections generally urged and in more particular to a paper styled the case of John Giffard gentleman, presented to the members of Parliament)* (1650), Wing / C1749, 7; John Giffard, *A modest vindication of the case of John Giffard gent.* (1650), Wing / 2723:09, 9 (misdated by Wing to 1646).

³⁶ Giffard, *A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons*, 6.

³⁷ *Perfect occurrences of every dayes journall in Parliament*, 2 (8-15 January 1647), BL, TT, E.371[5], 13; David Underdown, 'Party management in the recruiter elections, 1645-1648', *English Historical Review*, 83 (1968), 246.

Gifford's operation seems to have destroyed significant amounts of timber earmarked for shipbuilding.³⁸ At the end of 1649, Giffard's former ally Isaac Bromwich reported him to the Council of State, and on 1 January 1650 the Commons ordered that the works be pulled down.³⁹ Giffard petitioned the Commons for compensation, prompting a short-lived pamphlet exchange between Giffard, Bromwich, and a number of Commons-appointed preservators of the Forest.⁴⁰ Giffard's lobbying was to no avail, leaving his iron works suppressed and relationships with erstwhile friends in tatters.

It was the probably the fallout from this incident that prompted Giffard's decision in the early 1650s to move to Norfolk, where he bought an estate at Wiveton from Edmund Britiffe.⁴¹ In his will, Giffard left this estate to his wife Frances.⁴² She seems to have been Frances Poyntz, daughter of Sir John Poyntz by his fourth wife Grissell Roberts, who married a Giffard in Gloucester around 1624.⁴³ This ties Giffard to Gloucestershire in the 1620s, when a man of the same name was beginning to take on commissions from the Admiralty for extracting saltpetre from Gloucestershire and a number of other counties in the south-west. By 1629, for

³⁸ *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 5: Bledisloe Hundred, St. Briavels Hundred, The Forest of Dean* (1996), pp. 354-377. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=23268> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

³⁹ *CSPD: Interregnum, 1649-50* (1875), 447. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=54030> Date accessed: 10 December 2009. *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 6: 1648-1651* (1802), 342. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=25812> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 350. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=25829> Date accessed: 10 December 2009; *Certain reasons (by way of reply to some objections generally urged and in more particular to a paper styled the case of John Giffard gentleman)*; Giffard, *A modest vindication*; Isaac Bromwich, *The spoiles of the forest of Deane asserted* (London, 1650), Wing / B4892.

⁴¹ Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *Architecture without kings: the rise of Puritan classicism under Cromwell* (Manchester, 1995), 189.

⁴² Will of John Giffard of Wiveton (1658), Prerogative Court of Canterbury, National Archives, PROB 11/30.

⁴³ J. Maclean, *Historical and genealogical memoir of the family of Poyntz* (Exeter, 1886), 96.

example, he was in charge of production in Gloucestershire, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire.⁴⁴ One of the major saltpetre works for the south-west was at Thornbury, five miles north-west of the seat of Sir John Poyntz at Iron Acton.⁴⁵ On balance, it seems plausible that the John Giffard who was present in Cirencester in 1642 and the saltpetre man of the 1620s and 1630s were one and the same.

Giffard's biography is important in understanding his gloss on the Cirencester incident. He is careful to distinguish between social ranks, stating that the delegation that met Chandos on Rendcomb Downs was composed of both gentry and townspeople. He also makes clear differences in the origins and role of members of the crowd, stating that it was composed of 'townsmen', 'Country-men', and 'Voluntiers'.⁴⁶ The volunteers would have been those raised from April 1642 in response to the Militia Ordinance. It is likely that they came from in and around Gloucester, since this was one of the only areas of Gloucestershire where active efforts were made to exercise volunteer regiments.⁴⁷ However, Giffard is silent on the social make-up of the crowd that threatened Chandos. This was probably a tactical decision on his part. By 1642 an effective royalist critique of Parliament had developed, drawing on traditional language of the 'many-headed monster' to

⁴⁴ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1628-29* (1859), 386. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52034> Date accessed: 10 December 2009; *CSPD: Charles I, 1629-31* (1860), 95. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52082> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

⁴⁵ Brenda Buchanan, 'The Africa trade and the Bristol gunpowder industry', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 118 (2000), 138.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴⁷ Andrew Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire, 1640-1672* (Woodbridge, 1997), 32.

emphasise the low social origins of those participating in protests and petitions.⁴⁸ As a moderate parliamentarian, like many of his contemporaries he seems to have been keen to play down in his letter any hint that Parliament's cause was associated with unruly members of the lower classes – particularly given that he was writing to an MP, and could expect that the letter might have been read out in the Commons. Giffard's gloss on the social origins of the crowd thus may reflect his own prejudices rather than its real make-up.

The other surviving contemporary account of the incident is by John Corbet in his *Historicall Relation*. Corbet was the son of a shoemaker made good, who had matriculated at Oxford in 1636 and gone on to be rector of St Mary de Crypt in Gloucester.⁴⁹ His analysis of the social origins of the crowd at Cirencester was rather different to that of Giffard. For Corbet, the crowd at Cirencester consisted of 'the rude hand of the multitude' and 'the meanest of the people', motivated by a desire for revenge against the gentry.⁵⁰ He contrasted members of the crowd with the 'middle ranke', who had an 'inbred propensity to freedome'.⁵¹ The middling sort of people were 'Yeomen, Farmers, petty Free-holders, and such as use Manufactures that enrich the Country'. This group were motivated by 'a knowledge of things pertaining to Divine Worship, according to the maine principles of the Christian profession'. In other words, they were industrious puritans who had risen to take positions of responsibility within their communities.⁵² The rabble, by contrast, were the 'multitude'

⁴⁸ Christopher Hill, 'The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking', in Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, 1991), 181-204; Manning, *English People and the English Revolution*, 105-130.

⁴⁹ N. H. Keeble, 'Corbet, John (ba 1619, d. 1680)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6289> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

⁵⁰ Corbet, *An historicall relation*, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10.

and 'needy' involved in the manufacturing industry in Gloucestershire.⁵³ Corbet's sociological analysis is undoubtedly influenced by a political and moral framework that should lead us to question its accuracy. It formed the basis of generalised conclusions about popular allegiance in the civil wars by some historians that have since been disproved by more detailed empirical research.⁵⁴ And yet in other respects, Corbet's understanding of the specific population of Gloucestershire in the 1640s is very acute. By the mid-seventeenth century, clothmaking was still the most significant industry within the county, particularly in the Stroudwater valley to the west of Cirencester. Nearly half of the able-bodied men listed in the muster list for Gloucestershire for 1608 were involved in clothmaking professions.⁵⁵ Cirencester acted as a regional entrepôt, finishing woollen products and selling them to buyers in London for distribution elsewhere in England and abroad.⁵⁶ The structure of the cloth trade, with women usually spinning the cloth and men weaving it in their homes before it was sent on to urban centres, meant that Cirencester was surrounded to the west by a series of large rural parishes. Strong lines of communication would have been in place between Cirencester and these parishes, whether through kinship networks or through workers and apprentices travelling back and forth.⁵⁷ It was also a poorly paid workforce, which would have been particularly badly hit by the crisis in the cloth trade during the 1630s. It seems likely that clothworkers, alongside Cirencester's townspeople and the soldiers and volunteers mentioned by Giffard, made up a significant proportion of the crowd on 15 August.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁴ Manning, *English People and the English Revolution*, 181-241; Christopher Hill, 'A Bourgeois Revolution?', in J. G.A. Pocock (ed.), *Three British Revolutions* (Princeton, 1980), 109-139.

⁵⁵ John Smyth, *Men & Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* (Gloucester, 1980); David Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London and New York, 1992), 22.

⁵⁶ Rollison, *Local Origins*, 21-44, 49-51.

⁵⁷ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 243-246.

It is difficult to reconstruct the political allegiance of working people from the clothmaking parishes. The gentry in these areas would go on to be firmly parliamentary.⁵⁸ It can also be assumed that the military volunteers involved in the incident were already firmly committed to Parliament's cause at this stage. About 250 to 300 of Gloucester's volunteers had previously crossed the county boundary to help stop the Marquess of Hertford execute the Commission of Array in Somerset.⁵⁹ For Corbet, however, these parliamentary politics were not shared by working people in the same region. Instead, it was the economic distress this group were suffering from which led them to attack Chandos. There is no direct evidence for Corbet's argument. It does not explain why Chandos in particular was singled out, or why there were not more attacks on gentry across Gloucestershire during this period. However, Corbet's focus on the economic character of the clothmaking parishes may still yield clues about popular allegiance in Cirencester and its environs. Such parishes were mainly located in wood-pasture and dairying areas. Compared to arable parishes, they tended to be larger, with non-nucleated settlement patterns. Without strong manorial control, such parishes were more open to immigration and the influence of outsiders.⁶⁰ David Underdown has argued that wood-pasture regions tended to have different cultures to arable areas: individualist, open to puritanism, increasingly populated by a middling sort with an agenda of moral reform. For Underdown, such areas were more likely to provide popular

⁵⁸ Warmington, *Civil Wars*, 40.

⁵⁹ *A perfect relation of all the passages and proceedings of the Marquesse Hartford* (1642), BL, TT, E.111[5], 5.

⁶⁰ Joan Thirsk, 'The farming regions of England', in Joan Thirsk (ed.) *The agrarian history of England and Wales vol. IV, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967), 1-15.

support for Parliament.⁶¹ While Underdown has been criticised for making an overly schematic and binary distinction between these two regional cultures, Cirencester and its surrounding parishes do fit his description of an individualistic, puritan culture.⁶² In Minchinhampton, church ales and the collection of 'hogging money' (a levy on newborn lambs) were removed in the 1590s and replaced with parish rates and payments to lecturers. In Gloucester, travelling players were banned in the 1630s as part of a crackdown by civic leaders on idleness and moral laxity.⁶³ Cirencester's position on the road to and from London would have made it easily accessible to travelling preachers and lecturers. The close networks of communication between Cirencester and its neighbouring parishes would have allowed news of Chandos's meeting to spread quickly, resulting in the mixture of people present in the crowd on 15 August. However, if Underdown's argument is correct, the social and cultural ecology of the clothmaking parishes may also have predisposed their inhabitants to sympathise with Parliament's agenda in 1642.

II

A way to put this hypothesis to the test lies in the reminder at the close of Giffard's letter that 'the main body of our County resolve to keep their Protestation'.⁶⁴ The Protestation originated in May 1641 as a covenant made by MPs in the wake of

⁶¹ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), 73-105; David Underdown, 'The Chalk and the Cheese: contrasts among the English clubmen', *Past & Present*, 85 (1979), 25-48.

⁶² John Morrill, 'The Ecology of Allegiance in the English Revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, 26 (1987), 451-467.

⁶³ Warmington, *Civil Wars*, 139-140; Peter Clark, 'The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good': urban change and political radicalism at Gloucester 1540-1640', in Peter Clark, Alan Smith, and Nicholas Tyacke (eds.), *The English Commonwealth 1547-1640: essays in politics and society presented to Joel Hurstfield* (Leicester, 1979), 167-187.

⁶⁴ Giffard, *A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons*, 6.

the crisis over the Army Plot.⁶⁵ It was not technically an oath, which were normally prefaced with 'I swear' and were an individual engagement with God. Drawing on the influence of federal theology, the Protestation was described as a national covenant, binding its subscribers to 'promise, vow and protest' in association with God.⁶⁶ It was subsequently extended to all adult males, with some women signing too. Country-wide signing of the Protestation began in the summer of 1641, with a second push for signatures in January 1642. Historians have seen the Protestation as a 'talisman' and 'shibboleth' that 'significantly widened the arena for political and religious involvement in the opening stages of the English revolution'.⁶⁷

The Protestation returns for Gloucestershire do not survive. However, some limited evidence of how returns were organised in Gloucestershire exists. It is known that 400 people subscribed at Tewkesbury, thirty miles north of Cirencester.⁶⁸ In 1603, there were an estimated 2,640 people in Tewkesbury.⁶⁹ There could have been around 3,000 inhabitants by 1642, about two-thirds of whom would have been adults.⁷⁰ Assuming the 400 subscribers were all male, they might have represented around a third of the adult male population. In Cirencester, evidence survives that Francis Creswicke, the sheriff of Gloucestershire, called a meeting at the Ram for 15

⁶⁵ Conrad Russell, *The fall of the British monarchies, 1637-1642* (Oxford, 1991), 294-5; John Adamson, *The Noble Revolt: the Overthrow of Charles I* (London, 2007), 289-292.

⁶⁶ Cressy, 'The Protestation Protested', 256; Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the national covenant: state oaths, Protestantism, and the political nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge, 2005), 1-6, 51-60.

⁶⁷ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 292-6, 304-5; Cressy, 'The Protestation Protested', 251.

⁶⁸ John Gere, *Iudahs ioy at the oath* (1641), BL, TT, E.170[8], sig. A3.

⁶⁹ Alicia Percival, 'Gloucestershire Village Populations', *Local Population Studies*, 8 (1972), 39-47.

⁷⁰ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981), 157-178, 192-215.

February 1642 to take and publish the Protestation.⁷¹ A significant number of those living in and around Cirencester thus could have subscribed to it.

This context is important given Giffard's insistence that a large proportion of the county had taken the Protestation. Giffard also gives a very detailed account of the oath the crowd forced Chandos to swear:

'At length upon meditation and intreat of the Gentlemen, the Souldiers were content to depart; if my Lord would put it under his hand that he would never execute the said Commission, nor any others for him in any part of this County, but would oppose and hinder it to his power, and that he would maintaine the Power and Priviledge of Parliament, and the Laws and Liberties of the Subjects, with his Life and Fortune, all which, being in extreme fear, he condescended unto, and a note being drawn to that purpose, My Lord, Sir Robert Tracy, and some others put their hands to it'.⁷²

The reported speech in Giffard's account is very similar to the actual wording of the Protestation oath:

'I, A. B., do in the presence of Almighty God, promise, vow and protest, to maintain and defend, as far as lawfully I may, *with my life, power and estate*, the true reformed protestant religion, expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England, against all popery and popish innovations within this realm, contrary to the same doctrine, and according to the duty of my allegiance, his

⁷¹ GA, D2510/15: letter from Francis Creswicke to John Smyth, 7 February 1642.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

majesty's royal person, honour and estate; as also the *power and privileges of Parliament, the lawful rights and liberties of the subject*, and every person that maketh this Protestation, in whatsoever he shall do in the lawful pursuance of the same'.⁷³

It seems very likely, then, that the Cirencester crowd forced Chandos and his supporters to sign the Protestation or a version of it, not just a promise put together from scratch. This is extremely significant for understanding the motives of the crowd. From 1640 onwards, members of the Long Parliament took steps to secure popular backing for their grievances. Factions within the Lords and Commons used sermons and pamphlets to stir up popular support for the removal of Strafford and others of the king's counsellors.⁷⁴ With the imprisonment of Laud in December 1640 and the subsequent collapse of episcopal authority, and the abolition of Star Chamber in August 1641, traditional licensing mechanisms broke down. Although Parliament produced legislation to fill the gap, MPs and peers breached it in order to publish their own speeches or commission sympathetic works.⁷⁵ Printed and manuscript copies of such works would almost certainly have circulated to provincial towns like Cirencester, with their commercial, political and religious links to London. John Smyth of North Nibley, for example, collected a number of manuscript copies of speeches and other news about the rapid developments in national politics in the early 1640s.⁷⁶ Parliament's desire to address and engage with the political nation

⁷³ *Die Mercurii 5 Maii 1641: it is this day ordered* (London, 1641), BL, TT, 669.f.3[5] (my emphasis).

⁷⁴ Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, 67-70, 265-266.

⁷⁵ Allan D. T. Cromartie, 'The Printing of Parliamentary Speeches November 1640-July 1642', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), 23-44; Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 1996), 101-102, 114-115.

⁷⁶ See for example GA, D7115/1 56: Charles I's speech to the Lords at York, 24 September 1640; GA, D7115/1 57: Charles I's speech at the opening of Parliament, 3 November 1640; GA, D7115/1 58: *Diurnall occurrences or the heads of proceedings in Parliamt from the first to the eight of March*

was expressed most clearly in the Grand Remonstrance of November 1641, which the king's party identified very clearly as a popular document. Sir Edward Dering, for example, objected 'I did not dream that we should remonstrate downward', with Sir John Culpeper stating that 'this is a Remonstrance to the people. Remonstrances ought to be to the king for redress.... Wee [are] not sent to please the people'.⁷⁷ The effect of Parliament's search for popular legitimacy was to give a public relatively deprived of domestic news during the 1630s a swift political education. The Protestation formed an important part of justifying this popular participation in politics. For Nehemiah Wallington, a London puritan and wood turner, the Protestation was a way of binding the people together in moral discipline.⁷⁸ Wallington noted in his diary that in early January 1642, the City's trained bands went to Westminster with copies of the Protestation stuck on their pikes.⁷⁹ Ministers preached sermons on its implications.⁸⁰ It seems likely that members of the Cirencester crowd would have taken the Protestation just as seriously.

Use of the Protestation seems to have given members of the crowd a symbolic vocabulary to deploy. It originated as an affirmation by MPs, and as such it defined a prescribed set of beliefs and behaviours for those of sufficient social standing to become MPs. In forcing Chandos and those accompanying him to sign the Protestation, the crowd locked them into a particular definition of gentlemanly

1640. For John Smyth, see Jan Broadway, 'John Smyth of Nibley: a Jacobean man-of-business and his service to the Berkeley family', *Midland History*, 24 (1999), 79-97.

⁷⁷ Edward Dering, *A collection of speeches made by Sir Edward Dering Knight and Baronet, in matter of religion* (London, 1642), BL, TT, E.197[1], 109; Culpeper quoted in Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, 435.

⁷⁸ Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, 1985), 147.

⁷⁹ David Booy, *The notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: a selection* (Aldershot, 2007), 139-140.

⁸⁰ William Bridge, *A sermon preached unto the voluntiers of the city of Norwich and also to the voluntiers of Great Yarmouth in Norfolke* (1642), Wing / B4466, 11-12; Thomas Mocket, *The nationall covenant. Or, A discourse on the covenant* (London, 1642), BL, TT, E.113[3].

behaviour. When Chandos subsequently broke his promise, he forfeited his honour and gentility. It is this which explains the crowd's decision to drag Chandos's coach from the courtyard of the Ram into the market square. They could have chosen to destroy it *in situ* at the Ram. Instead, they chose to move it to a site that was more symbolically powerful. Marketplaces were a site in which authority managed the supply of information to the people. Sermons were preached there, scandalous books were burned there, and town criers announced important news there.⁸¹ But marketplaces could also be a site where authority was negotiated or contested. In 1400, Cirencester's market square had been the site of the execution of John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury, and Thomas Holland, the fifth earl of Kent. Both had plotted to overthrow Henry IV and restore Richard II, but their conspiracy was betrayed. After fleeing to Cirencester, they were captured by the townspeople and beheaded.⁸² The story of Salisbury and Kent appears to have still been in circulation during the seventeenth century. In Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Henry mentions events at Cirencester and Northumberland outlines the fate of the two earls, whose heads were sent to London to be placed on London Bridge.⁸³ In Cirencester itself, a more imposing reminder of the earls' execution remained in the form of the great tower of the Church of St John the Baptist in the market square. Construction of the tower began in 1400, shortly after the execution, funded by a share of prize money

⁸¹ Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002), 119; J. Barry, 'Popular culture in seventeenth-century Bristol', in Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1985), 69.

⁸² Anthony Goodman, 'Montagu, John, third earl of Salisbury (c.1350–1400)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18995> Date accessed: 10 December 2009; James L. Gillespie, 'Holland, Thomas, sixth earl of Kent and duke of Surrey (c.1374–1400)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13545>

Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

⁸³ *Richard II*, V. vi 1-10.

confiscated from the earls' captured baggage train and granted to the town by Henry IV.⁸⁴

As a physical site, then, Cirencester's market square had a prior association with members of the nobility receiving justice at the hands of the people. The decision to take Chandos's coach there was probably not accidental. The nobility and gentry defined themselves in opposition to the rest of society: they were men of honour, whose status derived from powerful symbols of identity such as what they wore and the houses they lived in.⁸⁵ Coaches, too, were part of how the gentry constructed their identity in opposition to the rest of the people. They had been introduced to England around the middle of the sixteenth century, and quickly became popular amongst the rich. They were often richly decorated with coats of arms and furnished with lavishly embroidered cushions, with liveried coachmen to drive them.⁸⁶ Their role in delineating social status was not lost on contemporaries: Henry Peacham, for example, thought that they marked 'a publique difference, between *Nobilitie*, and the *Multitude*'.⁸⁷ The Cirencester crowd's decision to destroy Chandos's coach was thus not an act of random violence. It was the targeted destruction of a symbol of Chandos's gentility, appropriation of which – like the use of the Protestation – allowed the crowd to exercise significant personal and political agency.

⁸⁴ Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580* (Cambridge, 2002), 26.

⁸⁵ John Adamson, 'The aristocracy and their mental world', in John Morrill (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Oxford, 2001), 173-190; John Adamson, 'Chivalry and political culture in Caroline England', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, 1993), 161-198; Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1988), 308-415.

⁸⁶ J. F. Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community, 1525-1640* (Manchester, 2005), 169-173.

⁸⁷ Henry Peacham, *Coach and sedan, pleasantly disputing for place and precedence* (1636), STC / 1111:09, sig. Dr.

III

And yet the evidence that survives of the Cirencester incident suggests that it was not a straightforward conflict between 'people' and 'gentry'. Giffard's account specifies that gentlemen as well as townspeople met Chandos at Rendcomb. He also specifies that Chandos was accompanied by supporters, at least some of whom are likely to have been gentry who had answered his letter requesting that they assemble at the Ram. The likelihood that gentry were involved on both sides can be illustrated through analysis of Gloucestershire county politics prior to the outbreak of civil war. Gloucestershire was one of the areas of strongest resistance to the forced loan of 1626-1628. Similarly, the imposition of ship money in 1635 provoked resistance from many of the county gentry. While some did try conscientiously to enforce it, these divisions do not necessarily map across to future allegiance during the civil wars.⁸⁸ And yet by 1640, the gentry had more or less divided into two opposing groups. The election of the shire MPs to the Short Parliament in March 1640 proved a touchstone for this process. At the assizes, the gentry had chosen Sir Robert Tracy of Toddington and Sir Robert Cooke of Highnam as candidates. It had been agreed that Cooke's supporters would use their second vote for Tracy, and vice versa. However, on election day, popular support emerged for Nathaniel Stephens, a radical puritan from Eastington whose wealth derived from the cloth-making industry. Many of Cooke's supporters ended up voting for Cooke and Stephens instead of Tracy.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Warmington, *Civil War*, 22.

⁸⁹ GA, D2510/10: letter from Sir Robert Cooke to John Smyth [February 1642?]; Rollison, *Local Origins*, 136-148; Warmington, *Civil War*, 24-27.

During 1641 and 1642 these two groups of gentry began building networks that would ultimately evolve into royalist and parliamentarian factions. Joining Tracy on one side were gentlemen like Sir Robert Poyntz, Sir Henry Poole, Sir Maurice Berkeley, Richard Berkeley, Sir William Master, John Smyth and Thomas Veale. All had met in December 1641 to draft a petition in defence of episcopacy, and were signatories to a letter in the same month requesting cooperation of the county gentry.⁹⁰ All had promised to try to mobilise popular support, 'each gentleman promising his best furtherance by giving out copies and collecting subscriptions in their severall neighbourhoods'. Those joining Cooke and Stephens on the other side included John and Edward Stephens, John George, and Francis Creswicke. Creswicke, as High Sheriff, had called a meeting of the gentry at the Ram in February 1642 to discuss mobilising popular signatures to the Protestation.⁹¹ The two groups all lived in and around Gloucester, Cirencester and the Vale of Berkeley. However, a remark made by Nathaniel Stephens at the 1640 election is revealing about the social and cultural differences between them. Stephens accused Tracy and his party of splitting the county into 'Cotteswold Shepherds and Vale Weavers'.⁹² Stephens and his supporters were associated with clothworking districts; some had made their wealth as clothiers. A number are known to have been puritans and to have provoked disagreement because of it. Cooke, for example, was dismissed by opponents because he 'wore his hair shorter than his ears'.⁹³ The significance of Cooke sending a letter about the Cirencester incident to Viscount Saye and Sele may go further than the fact that Saye was Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire. Saye

⁹⁰ GA, D2510/13; letter from Committee of Justices to John Smyth, 15 December 1641.

⁹¹ GA, D2510/15: letter from Francis Creswicke to John Smyth, 7 February 1642.

⁹² Rollison, *Local Origins*, 142.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 139.

was part of a network of godly critics of the personal rule of Charles I centred around the Earl of Warwick.⁹⁴ Cooke seems to have been linked to Saye in their opposition to the imposition of ship money in the mid-1630s. Saye, who had an estate in Gloucestershire at Norton, was suspected of collusion with his tenants to avoid payment of ship money, and in 1636 sued local officers for distraining his goods.⁹⁵ Meanwhile in the same year Cooke was named to Secretaries Coke and Windebank as one of the ring-leaders behind non-payment.⁹⁶ A year later, the future royalist Sir John Wintour informed Windebank that there had been 'great opposition made for the place [of Verderer of the Forest of Dean] by Sir Robert Cook, assisted by many of this county that deny payment of ship-money'.⁹⁷

By contrast, Tracy and his party were associated with more pastoral parishes, part of a network focused around the Brydges family at Sudeley Castle. These political, religious and cultural differences are what seem to have split the county gentry into two key groups. Members of both groups can be detected in the Cirencester incident. Sir William Master was the gentleman who helped Chandos escape from Cirencester overnight. It seems very likely that he and others who rallied around Tracy were amongst those who accompanied Chandos to Cirencester. John George was one of Cirencester's two MPs. His seat was at Baunton, just north of Cirencester, and it is possible that he was amongst those who rode out to meet

⁹⁴ Christopher Thompson, 'The origins of the politics of the parliamentary middle group, 1625-9', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 22 (1972), 71-86; Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford, 1987), 157-158, 198-201, 225-226, 229-234; Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, 25-32.

⁹⁵ Alison Gill, 'Ship Money during the Personal Rule of Charles I: Politics, Ideology and the Law 1634 to 1640' (University of Sheffield Ph.D. dissertation, 1990), 150, 443.

⁹⁶ *CSPD: Charles I, 1636-7* (1867), 210. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52699> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

⁹⁷ *CSPD: Charles I, 1637* (1868), 412. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52750> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

Chandos on Rendcomb Downs. Chandos's letter of 11 August calling the meeting at the Ram appears to have been sent to gentry throughout Gloucestershire. This would have given George and his colleagues early warning of the meeting, allowing them time to assemble the Gloucester volunteers and get the message out to others, as news of Chandos's summons radiated out into the clothworking parishes and beyond. This is not to suggest a top-down model of the nobility and gentry pulling the crowd's strings on 15 August. Rather, it is to suggest that some of the Gloucestershire gentry, Cirencester's population, and the inhabitants of the clothworking parishes around the town shared a sophisticated political worldview, and that they cooperated to make a reality of their political beliefs.

The unifying power of the Protestation appears to have been a significant factor in uniting these groups across often sharply defined social boundaries. In the 1630s, gentry who would go on to provide support Parliament were not necessarily instinctive supporters of the middling sort, as the example of John Giffard illustrates. Giffard appears to have been amongst the minor gentry of Gloucestershire. Although he may not have descended from John Giffard of Weston-under-Edge, he certainly described himself as a gentleman: for example, in the defence he published in 1650 in response to a printed attack by foresters from the Forest of Dean, and on his tombstone in the chancel of St Mary's, Wiveton (which also displayed his coat of arms).⁹⁸ His role in the saltpetre industry was very much a business venture rather than actual collection of raw materials: he employed a clerk, Toby Adkins, to administer collection in Gloucestershire, as well as at least two other servants called

⁹⁸ Notes 31 and 32, above; Giffard, *A modest vindication*, title page; Farrer, *Church Heraldry of Norfolk*, II, 409. The coat of arms on Giffard's tombstone is 'three lions passant in pale', the arms of the Giffards of Middle Claydon in Buckinghamshire. However, no John Giffard of the relevant period can be linked to this family, suggesting he may not have had the right to use them.

John Roberts and John May.⁹⁹ By 1653 Giffard had amassed sufficient fortune to build a grand new hall at Wiveton, made of flint and brick in the Artisan Mannerist style.¹⁰⁰ At his death he left substantial lands in Gloucestershire and Norfolk to his wife Frances and son Thomas.¹⁰¹

Giffard's role as a saltpetre deputy was one that could be particularly disruptive to local communities. Saltpetre was typically generated by collecting vegetable and animal waste into heaps and mixing it with limestone, mortar, earth and ashes. These heaps were kept moist from time to time with urine or other waste from stables. Digging for ingredients in outbuildings such as dovecotes and stables was thus an important part of ensuring adequate supplies of gunpowder for the navy. From the reign of Elizabeth I onwards, official saltpetre men were deputised to requisition any suitable deposits they came across.¹⁰² This was the source of their potential for alienating communities. In 1630, for example, Sir Francis Seymour complained to Sir John Coke that 'the saltpetre men care not in whose houses they dig... they dig up the entries and halls of divers men. If any oppose them they break up men's houses and dig by force. They make men carry their saltpetre at a goat a mile, and take their carriages in sowing time and harvest, with many other oppressions'.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 305. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52296> Date accessed: 10 December 2009; *CSPD: Charles I, 1637* (1868), 124. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52737> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Maurice Barley, 'Rural building in England', in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales, 5: 1640-1750* (Cambridge, 1985), II, 590-598.

¹⁰¹ Will of John Giffard of Wiveton, PROB 11/30.

¹⁰² Charles Edelman, *Shakespeare's military language: a dictionary* (London and New York, 2000), 295-297.

¹⁰³ *CSPD: Charles I, 1629-31* (1860), 188. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52094> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

The surviving evidence suggests that Giffard was amongst the more bullying of the saltpetre deputies. In 1634, he petitioned the Lords of the Admiralty about the difficulties he was having with a William Browne of Westerleigh. Browne had refused to let his ploughing team be requisitioned by Giffard to carry a load of coals.¹⁰⁴ Browne appears to have been the same William Browne who is listed as a carpenter on the 1608 muster roll for Westerleigh.¹⁰⁵ In other words, he was a craftsman from amongst the middling sort of people, with enough land in 1635 to have earned some money from it. Browne was imprisoned in Marshalsea prison while the case was heard, but mobilised his own support to put his case to the Lords of the Admiralty. He enlisted Sir Thomas Roe, whose mother had remarried into the Berkeley family in Gloucestershire, to put his case, and gathered letters testifying to his good character from the inhabitants of surrounding villages.¹⁰⁶ In the end, however, Browne decided discretion was the better part of valour, and wrote again to the Lords of the Admiralty 'express[ing] sorrow for any offence and pray[ing] enlargement'.¹⁰⁷ They in turn ruled in Giffard's favour, releasing him from prison but requiring him to pay Giffard £6 plus fees.¹⁰⁸ Giffard was clearly not a natural ally of Gloucestershire's middling sort. During the 1630s, he had a reputation as what Sir Thomas Roe called 'such as would reign over poormen in their office'.¹⁰⁹ And yet by 1642, he was part of a coalition of working people, middling sort and gentry united against the execution of the Commission of Array. Giffard's insistence in his letter that the county continued

¹⁰⁴ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 339. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52298> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Smyth, *Men & Armour*, 185.

¹⁰⁶ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 479. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52306> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁷ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 480. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52306> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁸ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 485. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52306> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁹ *CSPD: Charles I, 1634-5* (1864), 479. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=52306> Date accessed: 10 December 2009.

to uphold the pledges it had made under the Protestation oath suggests, perhaps, that the Protestation was one of the factors which helped to bind these groups together.

IV

On 20 August, the House of Commons ordered Giffard's account of the Cirencester incident to be published. Edward Husband and John Frank, the Commons' printers, turned it into a quarto pamphlet, of which anything between 250 and 1,500 copies might have been produced.¹¹⁰ As well being read in London, copies would no doubt have circulated throughout England. Giffard's letter is the reason so much of what happened 15 August can be reconstructed. But the fact that it was then published to a wider, national audience also highlights one of the conclusions that can be drawn from this reconstruction. The attack on Chandos did not happen in isolation from the wider political events of the summer of 1642. Many members of the crowd would have been well-informed, whether through printed, manuscript or oral sources, about the direction of events at Westminster. In turn, the Gloucestershire gentry were communicating their hopes and fears back to Parliament. Through the Protestation and the confrontation with Chandos, other social ranks were also able to articulate their political views back to the centre.

Nor was the incident was a mindless uprising, carried out solely by the 'rude hand of the multitude'.¹¹¹ It is important not to underestimate the violence of the

¹¹⁰ Giffard, *A letter sent to a worthy member of the House of Commons*, title page; Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), 80.

¹¹¹ Corbet, *An historicall relation*, 8.

attack: Chandos would presumably not have fled unless he was in fear of his life. However, the crowd's decision to destroy his coach at a particular location points to a deliberate and targeted type of violence. This paper has been careful to avoid describing the incident as a riot, deploying the more neutral description of 'crowd action'. Instead the incident saw the destruction by the crowd of a potent symbol of Chandos's gentility, which allowed clothworkers and members of the middling sort to punish and discredit him. As John Walter has argued, 'shaming by reference to standards more widely held... might also have purchase higher up the social order'. The Cirencester incident is an example of how working people were able to draw on the public transcript defining acceptable relationships between 'popular' and 'elite' as a weapon for their own ends.¹¹²

In their use of the Protestation, too, the crowd found a powerful weapon. The Protestation appears to have provided a conceptual vocabulary legitimating the actions of 15 August, in the same way as the rhetoric of anti-popery did in Colchester a week later. As David Cressy has put it, the Protestation 'represented a significant opening and remodelling of the political nation'.¹¹³ Like petitions, pamphlets and newsbooks, it further broke down barriers between the centre and the localities, inviting wider popular participation in matters of state. However, events at Cirencester suggest that its power was not just in breaking down administrative boundaries. It also seems to have had the power to break down social boundaries. The Protestation allowed those who took part in the attack on Chandos to justify and express themselves through a shared political language. It appears to have united a

¹¹² John Walter, 'Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England', in Braddick and Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*, 123-148.

¹¹³ Cressy, 'The Protestation Protested', 256.

diverse coalition of interests to reach the conclusion that their cause was under immediate threat from Charles I's order to muster military forces. In such circumstances, it was only to be expected that clothworker and gentleman alike worked with each other to defend their particular worldview.