COVENTRY AND
COUNTY HERITAGE

20

COVENTRY'S CIVIL WAR 1642 - 1660

TREVOR JOHN

Coventry and County Heritage Series
Booklet No. 20

COVENTRY'S CIVIL WAR 1642 - 1660

Trevor John

Published by
The Coventry Branch of the
Historical Association 1994

Series Editor - Mary Montes

The publication of a pamphlet by the Historical Association
does not necessarily imply the Association's official
approbation of the opinions therein.

COPYRIGHT
Coventry Branch of the Historical Association
ISBN No. 1 873206 20 8

COVENTRY'S CIVIL WAR

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Publications Committee of the Coventry Branch of the Historical Association for agreeing to publish this work and for their advice on improving it. Particularly Mr. Phillip Willcox has put his knowledge of the second Coventry Leet Book at my disposal, and has saved me from some serious errors. The general editor of the series, Mary Montes, has worked very hard to improve the clarity of my text, and has, literally, put a full stop to my obsession with the colon. In preparing this study I have been encouraged by the courtesy and assistance of the staff of the Coventry City Record Office. Pam Charlton of the Department of Arts Education has grappled with my appalling handwriting and shown the patience of a saint and martyr at my changes of mind after she had set up the text. The portraits of King Charles 1 and of Oliver Cromwell, on the front cover, and of Colonel William Purefoy, within the text, are the work of Tony Clench.

Trevor John,
University of Warwick.

Introduction

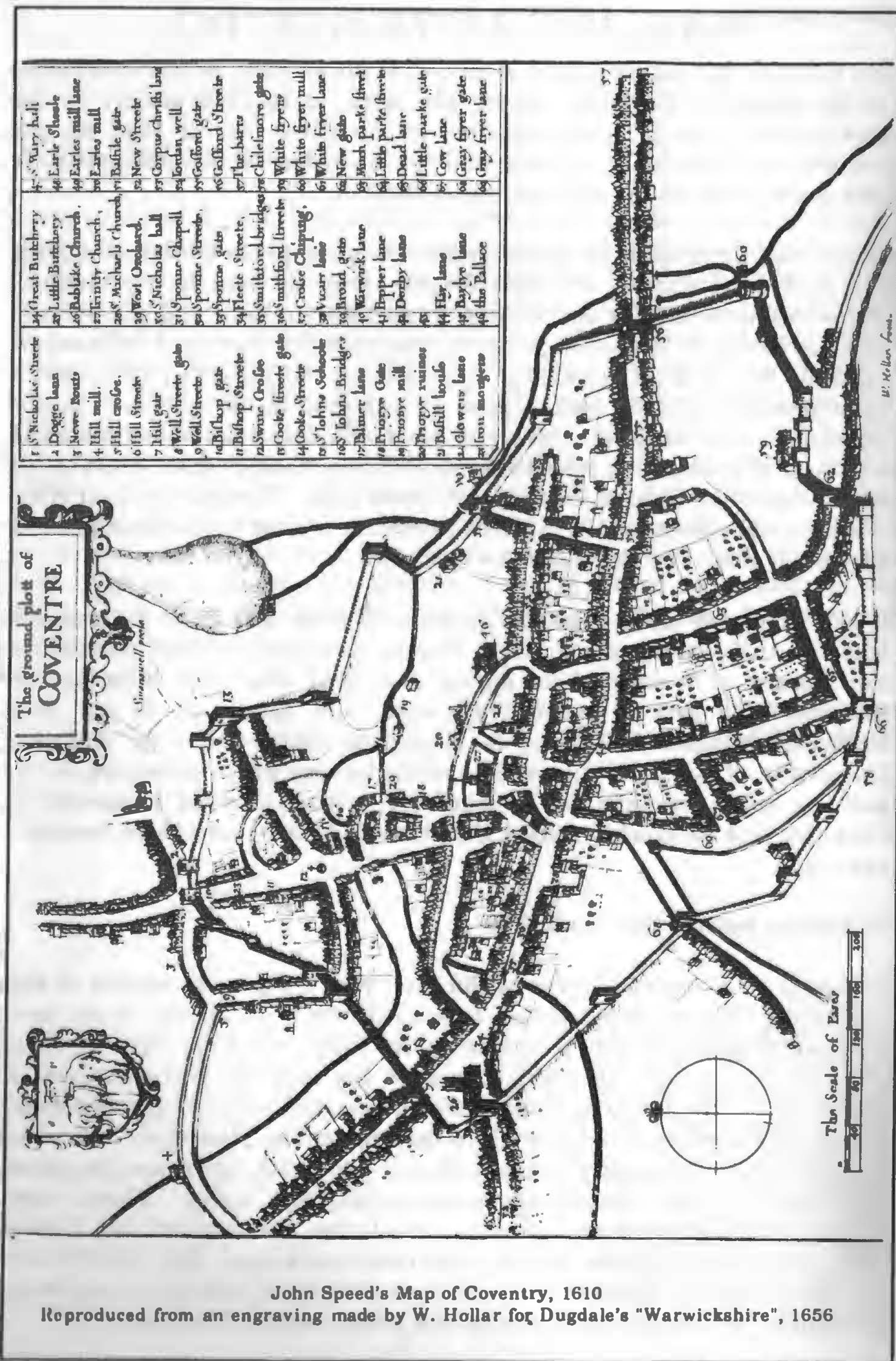
My purpose in this pamphlet is to tell a story: that of the experience of the people of Coventry during the crisis of English society in the seventeenth century which resulted in the Civil War of 1642-46, the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the abolition of the monarchy for over a decade until the Restoration of 1660.

There has already been some excellent writing on Coventry during this period, notably by Dr. Ann Hughes, and my debt to her study of Warwickshire's politics and society (1620-1660) in book and article form and her essay on Coventry (* See Bibliography) is immense. However, much of the work is not easily accessible to the general public, and I have always believed that history is too good to be left just to the historians, so I have tried to write for a different readership from the scholars. If I whet any appetites, then the serious readers must go to the works of the academics to satisfy them fully. "Coventry's Civil War" is a big and complex topic, difficult to confine within the limitations of a pamphlet: this is by no means the last word.

I was honoured to be asked to give the Shelton Memorial Lecture for 1992 on the coming of the Civil War to Coventry. I had worked on the history of Warwickshire during the Civil War and Interregnum spasmodically over a number of years, and taught it to my long suffering students in the Arts Education Department of Warwick University. It was the spur of the public lecture which prompted me to pull my notes together and present my version of what happened to Coventry and its locality during that turbulent time over three hundred years ago.

Coventry before the Civil War

Coventry as it was on the eve of the Civil War is easier to picture in the mind's eye than at any previous time in its history. To aid us we have William Smyth's sketch of the town in 1576 and John Speed's plan of Coventry in the top right corner of his map of Warwickshire of about 1610. The latter is 'beautifully drawn and surprisingly accurate' though there are some errors. Two features of the plan stand out: the completeness of Coventry's late medieval wall with its numerous gates and bastions; and the empty spaces within the walls. These were largely the result of the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. The Benedictine priory, the Greyfriars and the Whitefriars had gone: only fragments of their once extensive building complexes remained. Where the west end of the priory church had been the



John Speed's Map of Coventry, 1610
Reproduced from an engraving made by W. Hollar for Dugdale's "Warwickshire", 1656

Coventry butchers made use of the space 'to lay their ordure in and keep hogs'. Also Coventry had undergone a severe economic crisis early in the sixteenth century, and, although it had recovered somewhat in the latter part of that century, it had been displaced from its former eminence among English towns. There were, however, suburbs along the main highways, leading from the city. The total population was probably in the region of 8000[1].

It was the wall which impressed the London apprentice and parliamentary soldier, Nehemiah Wharton, when he came to Coventry with the Earl of Essex's army in 1642. In his letter to his London master he wrote:

> [Coventry is] 'a City with a wall co-equal, if not exceeding that of London for breadth and height. The compass of it is near three miles, all of freestone. It has four strong gates, strong battlements stored with towers, bulwarks, courts of guard and other necessaries. The city has magnificent churches and stately streets; within it there are also several sweete and pleasant springs of water [the wells] built of freestone, very large, sufficient to supply many thousand men ..... It is also very sweetly situate.'[2]

Coventry's generally healthy location on rising ground above the River Sherbourne had been commented upon by another soldier, Lieutenant Hammond, an East Anglian, on a visit in 1634. He found many 'fayre streets and buildings' and was impressed by the cross, the three hospitals and especially St. Mary's Hall:

> 'with a stately ascending entrance, the upper end adorn'd with rich hangings, and all about with fayre pictures, one more especially of a noble lady, whose memory they have cause not to forget.... Heere the Mayors annuall and sumptuous feasts are kept upon All Saints Day.'

He also noted that the two main city churches 'with another little one seldome used' (St. John Bablake) were sufficient to serve the needs of the whole city. A further feature was the predominance of timber framed buildings in its domestic architecture. 'Most of the city is built the old wooden way' one visitor commented, and Defoe was to describe Coventry as 'the very picture of the capital city of London on the south side of Cheapside before the Great Fire'.[3]

The Ruling Élite

The economy of the city was dominated, as it had been since the later middle ages, by the cloth industry and trade, though these were not as prosperous as formerly. The craft of making round woollen caps was in decline, but Coventry's famous blue thread still enjoyed a national reputation. The importance of the cloth trade was clearly reflected in the government of the city: of the 35 mayors between 1626 and 1660 twenty seven were either mercers, clothiers or drapers. It was men such as these who constituted the self-perpetuating oligarchy which ran the city. They had often served as apprentices in the city, they were inter-related, they were on the ladder of office and status within the city: councillor, chamberlain, sheriff, mayor, alderman, master of one's company, possibly member of parliament. Many, though not all, would have similar political, social and religious attitudes. Most élites, however, no matter how tight and self-conscious, have their mavericks, the result of individual character, personality clashes or circumstance. Such men formed the Grand Council, led by the mayor and the ten aldermen, whose self-election was confirmed by royal charter in 1621. The aldermen, once elected, held office for life. The mayor and aldermen chose the 31 members of the Court Leet, which had in the later middle ages virtually governed the city, but which now met only twice a year, to appoint the officers of the corporation, the mayor, recorder, sheriffs and bailiffs, coroner, steward, chamberlains and wardens, and to approve regulations for the better governing of the community. The mayor and aldermen nominated the Common Council of 25. This body only met to discuss matters which the Grand Council thought fit to refer to it; it met infrequently. Any popular element which may have existed earlier had been effectively eliminated. This was very much approved of by men of rank and status. As Lieutenant Hammond remarked:

> 'The Civill Government is discreetly order'd and wisely administered by a generous prudent Mayor with his 12 discreet Bretheren, 2 Sheriffs and 10 aldermen, clad in scarlet, with a fayre sword and Cap of Maintenance, 5 Maces and other Officers, and an Honourable, grave and Learned Recorder, to grace and persue her Liberties.'[4]

The 'liberties' of Coventry extended far beyond the boundaries of the city. From 1451 Coventry had been a separate county from Warwickshire, known as 'the County of the City of Coventry', with jurisdiction over some 17 villages and hamlets in the surrounding countryside plus parts of Stivichall and Sowe. In this area, the mayor,

aldermen and recorder were the justices of the peace. The ruling oligarchy was intensely conscious, proud and jealous of its separateness from the older county in which Coventry formed a distinct enclave. Friction between the two could easily develop.[5]

Taxation was one area of conflict. Charles I's first levy of Ship Money in 1635-6 was resented in Coventry not only because of its allegedly unconstitutional nature, but because the sheriff of Warwickshire decided on the proportions of the tax to be levied on the two counties. He accentuated this infringement of the city's liberties by assessing Coventry's contribution at one eighth of the joint total (£500 out of £4000) when one fifteenth had been the normal proportion paid by Coventry. 'No man alive ever knew or heard the like', was the city's comment. The city appealed to the Privy Council. Arbitration between Warwickshire and Coventry followed, the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield acting as arbitrator, and he decided in favour of the city which rewarded him with a silver-gilt bowl costing £19.10s for the trouble he had taken. Even then the city refused to pay its share through the sheriff of Warwickshire, but sent its payment direct to London through its own officials. The resentment of the city was almost as great against Warwickshire as against the actions of the king.[6]

Another royal levy in 1639 called Coat and Conduct money (to pay for the army which Charles was raising to fight the Scots) was refused payment by a leading Coventry citizen, William Jesson, on the grounds that the sheriff of Warwickshire had been ordered to levy it, and his authority did not extend to Coventry. Jesson, a former mayor and an alderman, justified himself on the grounds that he was 'a member of the City of Coventry sworn to maintain the customs, liberties, franchises and privileges of the same', and that Coventry was 'a distinct City and County in itself .... and no part or parcel of the said county of Warwickshire'.

Jesson, a dyer, was a typical member of the ruling oligarchy, and he may well have been expressing an attitude common among them. Not surprisingly many of the families were related. Jesson's will shows him to have at least five other aldermanic families among his relatives, and there was a tendency for sons to follow fathers on the city councils and into the offices of mayor and alderman. John Barker, a draper, became a member of the Grand Council while his alderman father was still alive. He was elected mayor for 1635 shortly before his father's death and was soon after his mayoralty to be appointed an alderman. Humphrey Burton, Coventry's town clerk and relation of William Jesson, took great pains in documenting the city's rights and

privileges to establish its position as a legal entity and autonomous city, fully independent of Warwickshire. For 'Humphrey Burton's Book', as the compilation is called, a grateful corporation awarded him £50.[7]

The People

So much for those who ruled Coventry: what about the vast majority of the population whom they ruled? The people of Coventry were engaged in a great variety of trades and occupations, but perhaps the largest employment was the production of cloth and thread. This was the trade which was controlled by so many members of the ruling oligarchy. Of course it was in their interest to keep the cost of production and therefore wages down. To do this they on occasion would import cloth from another area, as for example from Gloucester in 1628, undercutting the price of cloth produced in Coventry itself. Only the finishing processes, like dyeing, would be carried out in the city. The Coventry spinners, weavers and fullers protested against this practice, even going so far as to petition the Privy Council. Although the Privy Council attempted to arrange a compromise, their intervention was ignored by the ruling oligarchy and they got away with it. The issue was still alive in 1640. Two dyers were elected M.P.s for Coventry to the Short Parliament (William Jesson and Simon Norton), but a Coventry weaver, Anthony Ashmore, by-passed them and petitioned parliament directly against the importation of Gloucester cloth. The city's M.P.s presented a counter-petition and read to the Commons letters from the mayor maligning Ashmore's character. He was described as 'a contentious fellow and idle person', 'busy in other men's matters', 'untrustworthy' 'much given to drink and at times quite distracted'. On 30th April 1640 the city's justices committed him to prison for misdemeanour.[8]

Another source of tension was the common lands of Coventry. The pasture rights on these should have been available for all the inhabitants of Coventry, rich and poor alike, the waste land throughout the year, the Lammas and Michaelmas lands after the harvest of hay and grain respectively. After the Restoration, and therefore possibly at this time, it was asserted that nearly 1000 poor families pastured their cattle on them. But many believed, correctly, that often members of the corporation used the common lands for their own private profit, particularly by enclosing off areas of them. This frequently produced rioting, especially when the fields should have been thrown open for common pasture. A serious riot occurred on Lammas Day 1639. The city annals record:

> 'The Commons of Coven(try) rose and Spoyled a field of oats called Barnsfield and threw down a wall att Newgate att Harbors Quarry, 5 of the Rabble was putt in Goale (sic), but the same night 3 or 400 with Clubbs and Crows of Iron came to Break down the Goal whereupon they were lett out'.

It may be that the corporation then took no further action against the rioters, hoping that the matter would drop, but the poor freemen petitioned the Privy Council complaining that the city lands were being ploughed up and used for private profit rather than their customary use as common pasture. The Court Leet then ordered that no ploughing was to be done on the common lands for two years, and thereafter only with the permission of the corporation. Thus for a time the 'divers discontents' were defused.[9]

There were tensions within Coventry up to the very eve of the Civil War between rulers and ruled, rich and poor. In poverty, as in so many other cities in England, there was a considerable and fluctuating number in Coventry which frequently caused the ruling élite anxiety. In times of rising prices, caused by bad harvests or other natural disasters, the city government would intervene to lessen the effects of market forces on the poor. In 1631 'Corne being very Dear' the corporation bought up stocks of grain and sold them cheaply to the poor 'for their reliefe'. Any wealthy Coventrian who gave gifts or legacies to the poor was commended by the city annals: Sampson Hopkins, twice mayor and a draper, for £20 for 20 poor men and a similar sum for 20 poor women; Dr. Hinton who during his lifetime every year clothed as many poor children as his son was years old; Thomas Jesson, brother to William, who had made his fortune in London and left £2,000 to buy land for charitable uses. At the same time measures were taken to keep the poor, for whom synonyms were 'disorderly persons' and 'unthrifty persons' in order. Thomas Potter, mayor in 1623, 'being of a very charitable disposition' not only did all he could to relieve the poor at a time of high grain prices, but also enforced the laws against drunkenness and debauchery. The city's alehouses were strongly suspected of encouraging these. The poor, the Grand Council decided in 1625, spent too much time in them profaning 'the name of God and of his Sabbath' and wasting their means of subsistence 'to the great burden of this city'. A committee was set up to consider the condition of the poor and what provision could be made for them. The Bridewell or 'house of correction' was kept in repair to deal with vagrants among others.[10]

A final, unpredictable but always imminent, feature of life in the city

was the plague. A visitation in 1603 killed 494 people, including nearly all the inhabitants of St. John's Street. It raged again in 1605. In 1626 John Barker and Thomas Barker, the city chamberlains, did not provide the usual feast at Lammas 'by reason of the infection': instead £20 was distributed among the poor. To avoid the plague some Coventrians decamped to houses in Greyfriars orchard or near Quinton Pool in Cheylesmore Park. However, the decade or so preceding the Civil War seems to have been unusually plague free. But the plague was only one of a number of epidemic diseases which could produce years of exceptional mortality.[11]

The Approach of War

As the crisis of the collapse of Charles I's personal rule (the so called Eleven Years' Tyranny 1629-40, the king's rule without parliament) developed towards civil war, one version of the city annals in a contemporary hand shows an interest in national affairs as well as in just the concerns of Coventry. The punishment in 1637 of those critics of Charles's government, especially of his ecclesiastical policy, Burton, Bastwick and Prynne, is recorded as well as the riot in Edinburgh caused by the use of the English Book of Common Prayer in St. Giles Cathedral which sparked off the Scottish rebellion. A mention of the Scots' Solemn League and Covenant 'to preserve their Religion' is followed by a long account of the momentous events of 1640: the Scottish occupation of Newcastle; the failure of the Short Parliament in April to unite king and country; the riot in London provoked by Archbishop Laud; continued actions against Puritans; the meeting of the Long Parliament in November; the imprisonment of Laud and the trial of the Earl of Stafford. The earl's execution is noted under 1641, and also 'a horrid massacre was in Ireland where the papists by all manner of unheard of torments barbarously murdered two hundred thousand English men, women and children'. It was after news of this massacre, wildly exaggerated, that the city began to take measures for its own defence.[12]

This catalogue shows what national events were considered important in the city, and how they were received and understood. Certainly it shows little sympathy with Charles's government. In 1642 the nation was to divide over the powers of the monarchy, many both in towns and country feeling that parliament was beginning to infringe the king's authority too much, taking away his power to raise and control the army and his right to choose his own ministers for example. Thus a royalist party was created among the aristocracy and gentry sufficient for the king to attempt to resolve the issue by force. So England drifted

into a civil war which until 1642 few, if any, had expected or wanted.

ROBERT GREVILLE, LORD BROOKE.
PARLIAMENTARY LORD LIEUTENANT OF WARWICKSHIRE.
1642

Coventry could not avoid being caught up in these events. It was to be where some of the first shots of the Civil War were fired, well before the official outbreak of hostilities. The city had no choice: both sides wanted it because of its strategic importance. It was at the centre of a road network: in 1635 it was described as 'a great thorough fare town'. Indeed Coventry was at the very cross-roads of England, and whoever possessed it had a vital link with their outposts in the other side's territory. (In very rough terms the royalists at first predominated in the north and west, parliament in the south-east). Then there were the city's fortifications: a circuit of walls 3.6 kilometres in length, over 6 metres high and 2 metres thick with 20 flanking towers and 12 turrets preceded by a ditch 2-3 metres deep. This was a formidable defence by English standards, a country which, unlike so much of continental Europe, had enjoyed a century of internal peace. The Coventrians were immensely proud of their town wall: it was symbolic of their civic pride and independence. As recently as 1636 the section of the wall by Whitefriars had been restored. Militarily too it was a prize worth having.[13]

Choosing sides

Coventry became a parliamentary stronghold, but could it have gone the other way? Like the country as a whole the ruling class split: there was a royalist party within the city government. In Warwickshire the gentry were dividing behind Spencer Compton, Earl of Northampton for the king and Robert Greville, Lord Brooke of Warwick Castle for parliament. The Civil War brought about a situation which Coventry

had tried to avoid: its entanglement in the affairs of the rural county. Generally, as has been seen, Coventry tried to stand aloof from Warwickshire, and assert its distinction and independence, but now two aldermen - Henry Million and John Clarke - were made deputy lieutenants by the Earl of Northampton who by authority of the king's commission of array was raising forces in Warwickshire. Million and Clarke distributed the Earls' colours, green ribbons, to be worn in the hats of their supporters. Two other aldermen, John Barker and Thomas Basnet, supported parliament: they gave out purple ribbons, the colours of Lord Brooke. 'Men were in great fear of their next Neighbour'. Barker defied Northampton to his face when the Earl tried to put into force the commission of array in Coventry on 25th June 1642, asserting the authority given to him by parliament to levy forces under the militia ordinance. The allegiance of the mayor, Christopher Davenport, and the other six aldermen, including William Jesson, was not made explicit, but it may well be that there was an element of neutralism among the city élite as there was among the county gentry at large. It was also perhaps convenient for the city to have a foot in both camps at this time so that, whoever won, there was someone in the favour of the victor to speak for the city. The election of the Earl of Northampton as the city's Recorder in 1640 may have been part of the same policy, as he was a committed royalist and influential at Charles's Court.Both Northampton and Brooke were treated with equal courtesy when they, separately, sought meetings with the corporation, and the mayor at first refused to respond to parliament's militia ordinance.[14]

To the Long Parliament in November 1640 Coventry had sent John Barker, the enthusiastic parliamentarian and Simon Norton, probably royalist in sympathy. On the latter's death the cautious William Jesson, who had been defeated at the first election, took his place. Jesson tried not to commit the city even after war had been officially declared. In the Commons in September 1642 he was asked if he (and presumably by implication his city) would hazard life and fortune with the Earl of Essex, the parliamentary commander in chief. He requested more time to give his answer, but this was refused. When further pressed he said, 'No', and a great uproar followed in the Commons. Alarmed, Jesson asked the House if he might change his decision, but this too was refused. Nevertheless, Jesson was to remain a member of the Long Parliament for many years yet, and was to work hard to ensure that his City was on the winning side. Jesson advanced a loan of £1000 out of his own money for Coventry's defence in October 1642. Parliament promised him repayment out of 'plate' collected for the parliamentary cause in Coventry and sent up to London to be coined. He had been given the responsibility of purchasing four cannons in

London in March, and during the summer he arranged the transport of arms (40 muskets and bandoleers and 40 pikes) to Coventry. He continued to arrange the supply of weapons to the city in 1643.

In July 1642 Charles summoned the mayor and sheriffs of Coventry to attend him at Leicester, but just as they were taking horse to do so on Sunday 24th July, 'some that favoured Parliament ... compelled them to stay at home'. This may well have been a charade to protect this city's interests from both sides.[15]

What of the ordinary inhabitants of Coventry? Who enjoyed most support among them? One version of the city annals claims that Northampton's followers, the royalists, were the more numerous (Whitley gives the figure 500), but goes on to say that Brooke's was 'the more active partie'. The supporters of parliament also received help from Birmingham and Walsall, as many as 400 men. That is why they prevailed: outside help was crucial. When Million and Clarke tried to secure the county magazine (weapons, powder and shot) stored in Spon Tower their guards were beaten off by Barker and Basnet and their supporters who then handed it over to Lord Brooke. Northampton lurked powerlessly in the Bull Tavern watching events, and then made a sharp exit from the city through a postern. It is perhaps significant that Brooke then carried the magazine off to Warwick Castle. In July 1642 Coventry was not yet considered a secure parliamentary stronghold.[16]

However, the evidence of the city annals must be treated with caution. Some versions appear to be not nearly contemporary with the events they describe: they were written long after, with the advantage of hindsight, and were probably trying to excuse the city's opting for the parliamentary cause. Other evidence suggests considerable popular support for parliament in Coventry. When Brooke held musters of parliamentary forces in Warwickshire at the end of June and beginning of July 1642 of 2,850 volunteers 800 were said to come from Coventry. As will be seen the city held solidly for parliament during the first Civil War, though this is not to deny the persistence of a royalist faction, albeit small, within Coventry, particularly among the ruling élite, and some neutralism as well.[17]

The Siege of Coventry

The City was forced to take a stand and made its allegiance clear probably earlier than most of the corporation would have preferred. A royal herald had come to the city on 13th August 1642 and informed the

mayor and aldermen that the King would soon require admittance. On 17th August King Charles with the nucleus of the royal army, some 800 cavalry and 300 foot, approached Coventry and demanded entry. Thus the corporation was forced to make its loyalty plain, though it still struggled to avoid it. The mayor and aldermen offered to admit the King and 200 of his followers, but no more. They were willing to spend £200 on his entertainment and £100 on his nephew, Prince Rupert: the money was raised on 17th August. The £200 was borrowed from John Whitwick, the city's steward, who was in the king's entourage. He appealed by letter from Kenilworth on 20th August to the city fathers to allow the king in 'for God's sake, your own sakes and your wives' children's and mine and your sevants' sakes, with whom we are trusted'. He begged them 'not to be misled by ill counsel but embrace peace and quyett.... speedily whilest it may be had'. The limited offer may not have reflected the city's loyalty to parliament, but more the fear for the citizens' property if a large force of disorderly soldiers was admitted within the walls. One account states that Brooke's colours were hung out over the walls. But if so, this was unlikely to have been the act of the corporation but of a faction within the city supported by reinforcements from Birmingham. Charles was determined to gain possession of Coventry. He indignantly refused the conditions, and on 19th August his artillery began a bombardment of the city from Park Hill. Charles declared, 'he would lay the city in a ruined heap of rubbish ere he left it'.[18]

Few lived through the war without strong partisanships, but this cartoonist at least shows both sides in equal terms.

There are a number of versions of the siege of Coventry. One (the annals) reports that the king's 'great guns' did very little damage to the walls, and, on hearing of the approach of a parliamentary force under the command of Lord Brooke and John Hampden with 11 troops of horse and 4800 foot, the assault was abandoned. The king withdrew, first to Leicester and then to Nottingham where on 22nd August he raised his standard, thus formally declaring war. John Vicar's "Parliamentary Chronicle" has a more colourful account. According to him the cannon blew a breach in the walls, but the citizens threw up a barricade and 'with impregnable and invincible courage' beat off all the royalists' attempts to enter. Then they counter-attacked, sallied out, and 'behaved in such a valiant and undaunted manner' that the king's men were forced to retreat 'with more than ordinary pace', leaving 70 dead and two guns to be captured. The annals' version is more likely to be true. Vicars was a fanatical Puritan and partisan whose prime intention was to boost the morale of the parliamentary cause rather than report the truth. Almost the only casualties appear to have been the bedridden Lady Hales and an old woman attending her when a stray shot hit 'The Tower', part of John Hales' residence in the former Whitefriars. Brooke on his arrival sent some of Northampton's followers within Coventry as prisoners to Warwick Castle and sequestrated some royalist property. From then onwards Coventry had no choice but to be a parliamentary stronghold. On 1st October the money borrowed from Whitwick to entertain Charles was sequestrated with the sanction of parliament. It probably formed the basis of the £200 allocated to Barker as governor of Coventry 'for better advancement of the public cause'.[19]

Coventry's Defences

Nevertheless it would be wrong to give the impression that overall Coventry was not enthusiastic for the parliamentary cause. The reception of the Earl of Essex with the main parliamentary army at the end of August 1642 was warm. The troops were given 'good quarter both for horse and foot', and, as Nehemiah Wharton reports:

> Tuesday morning we officers wet our halberds with a barrel of strong beer, called old hum, which we gave our solidiers.

The following day they were treated to a fast and three sermons. Though royalism was not extinct, the city held firm throughout the war. It prepared itself for further royal attacks, accepting sacrifices and increasing the effectiveness of its fortifications. Houses were pulled down outside the city walls so that they would give no cover to an

attacker. This was done at Bishop Gate, Well Street Gate, Hill Street Gate, Spon Gate, New Gate and Gosford Gate. New accommodation for those made homeless was provided in some of the intra-mural open spaces: in the Priory, Agnes Lane and Greyfriars churchyard. All except the main gates were blocked: only New Gate, Spon Gate, Bishop Gate and Gosford Gate remained open to traffic. Earthworks were erected before these (half-moons with drawbridges), trenches dug outside the walls, cannon kept ready charged within the gates, and preparations made to flood the ground where the rivers entered the city. Barr's Hill was fortified for a time until it was decided that its distance from the city would make it untenable in the event of a siege. In 1644 a new tower was built between New Gate and Little Park Street 'at the turning of the wall' with great guns in it at two levels. The most striking image of the people responding to the situation is provided by the women of Coventry filling in the quarries in the Great Park. The annals for 1643:

> 'The women went in companies to fill the quarries in the Great Park, that they might not harbour an enemie, being called together by a drum they marched together into the Park with matlocks (?mattocks) and spades, being led by one goodwife Adderley with a Hercules Club on her shoulder and drew off from work by one Mary Herbert with a pistol in her hand that she shot off when they were dismissed'.

To expedite the 'plucking down' of houses and and levelling of hedges the council ordered all shops to be shut for a short period except on market days.[20]

Coventry was an embattled city. The Council ordered the purchase of new cannons at the end of 1641 since some of the existing ones were found to be defective, 'some of them being broken in theire triall'. Every householder 'of abilitie' was to provide a musket or muskets 'so this citie maie have in a readyness upon any sudden occasion at least five hundred muskets for its defence and safeguard'. This was over and above the store of arms already in the city. The order on muskets was re-iterated in July 1642, and the aldermen were charged to make a house to house check in their wards to ensure that it was being acted upon. Coventry was also a parliamentary safe-haven in the frontier zone of the West Midlands. The county committee for Warwickshire which ran parliament's local war effort sat in Coventry. In May 1645 the sheriff of Warwickshire was given permission to reside in Coventry as it was the only town in the county safe from royalists. There is an irony in the war causing the rural county to be governed from the urban

county in view of the former friction between them. Royalist prisoners of war were sent to Coventry; hence perhaps the origin of the expression because of the coldness, hostility even, of the citizens towards them. Prisoners of the meaner sort were accommodated in the St. Nicholas Hall and 'men of note' were lodged in the Head Marshal's house in Much Park Street near the end of Whitefriars Lane. Coventry was also a place of refuge for parliamentary supporters from predominantly royalist areas, particularly puritan clergy, who were likely to be victimized by marauding royalist troops, 'pillaged to the skin' as Nehemiah Wharton put it, left their parishes and sought sanctuary here. Richard Baxter of Kidderminster is one of the most famous of many eminent puritan divines who were to have a great impact on the life of the city.[21]

Puritan Coventry

It is religion which more than any other factor explains why ultimately Coventry went parliamentarian and stood fast in the cause. It is the one issue which would bind the majority of the corporation and the ordinary Coventrians together; as has been seen in other areas their interests were often opposed. The corporation had a tradition of puritan tendencies long before the outbreak of the Civil War, dating back even to the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Thomas Lever, a reformer of the Edwardian Protestant era, had no sooner returned from exile in Zurich in 1559 than he was invited 'to proclaim the gospel to them at Coventry'. Puritan clergy were holding 'prophesyings' in Coventry in the 1570's; these were an attempt to reform the clergy within the Established Church. Humphrey Fenn, vicar of Holy Trinity from 1578 was twice suspended and finally deprived and summonsed before the Star Chamber for his association with Thomas Cartwright, the Presbyterian and client of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Some of the 'Martin Marprelate' tracts were printed in John Hales' residence, the Whitefriars. After Fenn's release from prison he returned to Coventry, and continued to teach and preach there both unofficially and officially as a lecturer (appointed 1624) up to his death in 1634. His will shows a devotion to the Presbyterian form of church government.[22]

Along with the general patronage of Puritan/Presbyterian views by the corporation the culture of Coventry developed a puritan ethos. The famous Corpus Christi plays were last performed in 1579; the Hock Tuesday play was suppressed sometime later; in 1591 maypoles were removed; in 1585 football was banned from the streets.[23]

In 1609 the corporation was sponsoring Saturday afternoon lectures

in a repaired Bablake church in preparation for the sabbath. Two years later there was resentment in the city when communicants were ordered by King James to receive the sacrament kneeling instead of standing or sitting as formerly. James was suspicious that his order was being ignored in the city, and in 1621 he withheld the grant of the new charter to Coventry until he received assurances in this respect. Isaak Walden, the mayor for that year, gave money for two sermons to be preached annually. The corporation sponsored further lectures in Bablake church by preachers well-known for their opposition to the High Church reforms of William Laud. One of the preachers was Samuel Clarke who was invited to come from Cheshire in 1628 by a letter from 'the Mayor, Aldermen, Old Mr. Fen and some other godly people in Coventry, importuning [him] to come to preach and lecture in that great city'. He and Humphrey Fenn were banned from the pulpits of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity by the vicar of Coventry, Samuel Buggs, a crown appointee uniquely holding both livings. Still even then sermons in the two main city churches were suspect. In 1635 it was ordered that the Sunday sermons in both churches were to take place at the same time so that no one could hear both. Lectures continued throughout the 1630s every Wednesday and Friday as well as on Sunday. When in 1636 the city annalist recorded the setting up of a high altar in place of the communion table in Holy Trinity church he added 'God grant it continueth not long'. The corporation strenuously opposed the removal of pews blocking the chancel of St. Michael's (the trading companies' special pews were amongst them), and took legal advice to prevent it. This was regarded not only as religiously unsound, but also an attack on 'the most visible representation of the social and political hierarchy of the city'. Fortunately the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield was a moderate and willing to compromise. Indications that the two leading parliamentary aldermen were puritans are that Richard Baxter during his stay in Coventry lodged in the house of John Barker, and Thomas Basnet's son, Samuel, became the leader of an Independent congregation. Barker and Basnet were unlikely to have been trusted by Lord Brooke if they did not have puritan leanings.[24]

Generally the populace of Coventry seems to have had an insatiable appetite for sermons, and popular sympathy was shown for a particular victim of the Laudian regime. William Prynne, having had his ears clipped in the pillory for criticizing the bishops, passed through Coventry on his way to exile in the Isle of Man. He was so rapturously received by the people and respectfully by the corporation that the royal government was informed, and the city threatened with 'quo warranto' proceedings, that is the confiscation of its charter. When in August 1642 Nehemiah Wharton arrived in Coventry he found the city in a high

religious excitment: rousing and violently anti-royalist sermons were being preached, a royalist's house was looted causing Lord Brooke to threaten the imposition of martial law, an old Catholic priest was being paraded 'ridiculously about the city', and a prostitute who had followed the army up from London was seized by the soldiers and 'first led about the city, then set in the pillory, after in the cage, then ducked in a river, and at last banished from the city'. Such actions would be seen as befitting a city intent on a godly reformation, and give an insight into what has been called the 'raw, popular puritanism' of the time. Corporation and populace alike saw a popish conspiracy in the Laudian reforms, which they failed to distinguish from Catholicism, and in other events like the massacre of protestants in Ireland. The city sent up a petition against popery to the Long Parliament in February 1641.[25]

Richard Montague, the High Church supporter, described Coventry as 'a second Geneva'. He, of course, did not mean this as a compliment, though some puritans would have taken it as such. His description was even more apt after the outbreak of the war, when, as will be seen, Coventry became dominated by its great puritan ministers. The term 'puritan' covered a great variety of protestant opinions, but this was largely obscured before the war by a united opposition to the Laudian church. The strains of war were to reveal the disparate views of puritans on doctrine, church government and religious toleration and many other issues. But in Coventry the tensions produced by the differences between puritans were to be much less than in many other areas.[26]

The Embattled City.

Unlike the rural county, the established government of Coventry did not break down during the first Civil War: the annual elections of mayors, sheriffs and other officers continued though the Grand Council tended to meet less regularly. Remarkably there was no purge of royalists from the governing body of the city; aldermen Clarke and Million remained in office and they were not finally removed until 1651. Even then they were feted in the Mayor's Parlour in the following year. The persistence of a spirit of independence, if not royalism, among some leading citizens is suggested by the Court Leet's choice of George Monk, described as 'disaffected to the parliament' to be mayor for 1645. This was going too far, and John Barker, now military governor of Coventry and Colonel of a foot regiment, removed Monk from office and assumed the mayoralty himself for Monk's term, though after that normal procedures were resumed. Barker, a draper had been mayor before, but he did not attempt to disguise his military as well as civil authority. It is recorded

that as mayor he:

> 'wore a sword and Buff Coat under his gown, and was attended on by military as well as Civil Officers with trumpets and drums and when he went to proclaim the Fair he had a Troop of horse to attend him'.

Barker was energetic in keeping the city on the alert against surprise attack and in improving the defenses. Elaborate regulations for Watch and Ward had been enacted by the Council as early as January 1642 'taking into consideration the present troubles and dangerous times'. The Watch was to be performed by 'able men both of estate and person' from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. The 'barr-gates' were to be chained every night until 4 a.m., and all gates in the city were to be either manned or shut. There were to be patrols. Barker had 60 men on the walls every night, with sentries also posted in Broadgate and the main guard at Cross Cheaping. Barker occasionally gave out false alarms to keep the guards on their toes and 'to try the affections of the city'. The latter phrase may indicate that internal subversion was considered a possibility. It was under Barker's orders that the houses in the suburbs were pulled down and the other improvements in the city's fortifications mentioned earlier were carried out. From 1643 the parliamentary commander in the West Midlands was Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh, and Barker was involved in a whole series of conflicts with him over the command of troops and resources. This however, was part of a larger dispute between Denbigh and the Warwickshire County Committee of which Barker was also a member.[27]

In Warwickshire, as in other counties more or less controlled by Parliament, an 'ad hoc' committee was at first set up to organize the local war effort. Initially this consisted of Lord Brooke's deputy-lieutenants: Sir Edward Peyto, William Combe, John Temple, William Purefoy, Peter Wentworth, Godfrey Bosvile, all country gentry, and John Barker and Thomas Basnet of Coventry. Other members were added when the committee was formally constituted on 31st December 1642, and still more later on, eventually amounting to 34 in all. As with the commission of the peace not all members were active or regular in attendance, and only three members were needed to form a quorum. Coventry's representation was increased by the addition of William Jesson, Barker's fellow M.P., and the current mayor. John Hales of Whitefriars was also on the committee, but he was really a member of the country gentry. The most significant group within the committee were friends and relations of Lord Brooke. Godfrey Bosvile was Brooke's half-brother and a son-in-law of William Purefoy; they were

the M.P.s for Warwick. George Abbot (M.P. for Tamworth) was the son-in-law of Purefoy's wife and John Hales was Purefoy's grandson. Sir Edward Peyto's closeness to Lord Brooke is shown by his appointment as custodian of Warwick Castle in Brooke's absence in 1642, and he held it when it was besieged by the Earl of Northampton. The control of these men over county and city was threatened when Brooke was killed attacking Lichfield Close on 2nd March 1643, and in his place as commander in chief of the forces of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, governor of Coventry and Lichfield, and Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, parliament appointed Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh.[28]

Internal Strife

Basil Feilding was a renegade courtier who had chosen the parliamentary side while his father, the first earl, had remained loyal to Charles I. Father and son fought on opposite sides at Edgehill, and the father was killed during the royalist attack on Birmingham in 1643. Basil Feilding's new rank meant that parliament had little choice but to appoint him commander in chief in the West Midlands in succession to Brooke, but the county committee had no personal loyalty to him in the way they had had to the former commander. Indeed Denbigh's loyalty to the cause was suspect: his mother was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta Maria, and was

Bafil Fielding Earl of Denbigh

Your faithfull frend
and humble servant
B Denbigh.
Coventre 23 March 1643

constantly writing to her son urging him to desert the parliamentary side and return to his 'natural allegiance'. At least one of these letters was intercepted by the county committee. Also Denbigh was autocratic and behaved in a high-handed fashion towards the county committee, regarding it, as one of his officers is alleged to have said, as having 'nothing to do but provide money and carriages' for his forces. Thus Barker and Purefoy, a colonel of a regiment of horse and dragoons, co-operated to protect local interests. Barker also made it clear that Coventry's forces were not just at the disposal of the parliamentary cause, to be used whenever the overall commander in the West Midlands though fit.[29]

When late in 1643 Denbigh proposed to march into Shropshire to meet a joint royalist-Irish force (the latter recently arrived in England), and wished to take the Coventry and Warwickshire forces with him he was met with blank refusal. Barker excused himself on the ground that he had received his commission from the Earl of Essex, and was therefore not obliged to obey Denbigh. He also added that his troops would have mutinied had he done so. The Commons supported Barker in his stance against Denbigh and explicitly confirmed him as govenor of Coventry on 2nd December 1643. By August 1644 Denbigh could list a whole series of occasions on which the county committee had thwarted him. The committee had refused to hand over to him any share of the money raised in Warwickshire for the war by the Weekly Pay or sequestrations. Colonel Archer was hampered when he tried to equip a troop of foot soldiers from the city's store of arms. The committee would not help Denbigh garrison Hartlebury Castle (Worcestershire), or besiege Dudley Castle, or intercept Prince Rupert as he marched towards Newark. Members of the committee made 'discouraging speeches' and Denbigh ended by demanding the removal of Purefoy and Abbot.[30]

The county committee for its part complained to the House of Commons of Denbigh's autocratic attitude and disrespect for the committee. He called them 'neither gentlemen nor honest men' and went on 'all the committee were knaves and had cheated the country, and that he would cudgel them also, if he met them out of their command, and this he threatened to do with many oaths'. The committee accused him of favouring delinquents (i.e. royalists) and of 'a design to raise a third party' which amounted to neutralism. Denbigh was not without his supporters in Coventry and Warwickshire: a petition in his favour was signed by 2000 men and presented to the Commons in August 1644. The petition was headed by county gentry, such as Sir Simon Archer, William Combes and Thomas Boughton, but it was also signed by

William Jesson, to whom Denbigh's 'neutralism' would have appealed, and seven Coventry aldermen and former sheriffs. When Denbigh was in Coventry it was in Jesson's house that he lodged. The petition objected to the Weekly Pay, the free quartering of troops, the overlap of military command with membership of the county committee and the meeting of the committee in Coventry rather than in the county town of Warwick. It was consistent of Jesson to try to get the county committee out of Coventry and to regard this issue as important as the national struggle. The war was not over, yet already fissures were appearing in the parliamentary cause and one of them was the old division between the rural and urban counties. Had Brooke survived such a division might not have occurred, at least not at this time.[31]

It was the county committee at Coventry which won this dispute. Though the Lords supported Denbigh, on 9th November 1644 the Commons voted that he should not be sent back to his command in the West Midlands. It was probably the parliamentary tactics and friends of William Purefoy which secured this victory. Baxter describes Purefoy as 'a confidant of Cromwell's', and in some respects the Denbigh-Purefoy contest parallels the more famous one between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell. The difference would appear to be that in one the commoner (Purefoy) stood for localism and was against unifying the command and prosecuting the war vigorously, while in the other Cromwell was for just these things. This, however, is an illusion: Purefoy was very much for winning the war first and then negotiating with the king, as Cromwell was. The difference is that Purefoy and the Warwickshire committee at Coventry had no confidence in the man whose status entitled him to the command of the parliamentary forces in the West Midlands.[32]

Coventry's 'good war'

When necessary Purefoy could act energetically as when he commanded the local forces which took Compton Wyniates on 9th June 1644. This residence of the Earl of Northampton was then garrisoned by parliamentary troops under the command of Major George Purefoy, William's kinsman, who imposed a harsh regime on the surrounding countryside, particularly on Northampton's royalist tenants and neighbours. This was important from Coventry's viewpoint since it pushed the frontier zone between royalist and parliamentary territory still further to the south from the city. It meant that Coventry itself was now protected by a series of fortified outposts - Compton Wyniates, Warwick, Kenilworth, Maxstoke, Astley, with Coughton, Edgbaston and Tamworth further out - which made it much less vulnerable to royalist

WILLIAM PUREFOY

attack, unlike Birmingham which suffered badly in 1643. Its greatly improved defences were never put to the test after the siege of 1642. The citizens of course were not to know this. Further sieges were expected as royalist armies moved through the Midlands in 1643, 1644 (quantities of Hercules Clubs were produced during this year in anticipation of a siege) and in 1645. There was particular panic in the latter year when news arrived of the brutal sack of Leicester by Charles's army, less than 30 miles away. On Sunday morning 'all the city was called to make a strong outwork without Gosford gate compassed round with a river'. Only the victory at Naseby on 14th June lifted the shadow of fear from the city.[33]

If any city can be said to have had a good war, then it is Coventry during the English Civil War. It did not have to endure the horrors of Bristol, twice taken by assault, once by the royalists, once by parliament; of Oxford, the overcrowded and finally besieged royalist headquarters; of Stamford the open town, periodically suffering the passage of armies of both sides; of the prolonged sieges of Gloucester, York, Plymouth and Hull; of the sacks of Leicester and Birmingham. Coventry's population had increased to over 9000; the city was 'filled with people'. The refugees came from Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton, Hinckley and Rugby. If they could not ply their trades in the city, they joined the garrison forces, forming perhaps half of their number. According to Richard Baxter the refugees were 'the most religious men of the parts round about....., men of great sobriety and soundness of understanding'. The Council was more suspicious. In 1644 it was alarmed that among the 'strangers' as they termed the

immigrants were separatists who 'refuse to come to the church and divers of them singlewomen that work at theire owne hands'. The aldermen, their deputies and constables were to enquire in their wards how many 'strangers' there were, where they lived, how they were employed and who were separatists. The purpose was to discover undesireables and expel them from the city. The increased numbers might have created problems of food supply but Coventry's fairs and markets continued to function, and its immediate hinterland was relatively unscathed. The Feldon, still the granary of Warwickshire would be able to supply it with grain as would the adjacent parts of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Coal was available from the area immediately to the north of the city: Coventry would not have the winter problems of London during the war. Inevitably some disruption to trade resulted: a mercer lost £248 worth of goods through their interception in the road 'at several times', and a threadmaker £69 through royalist plundering. Rupert in 1643 seized horses and carriages with goods belonging to Coventry merchants. In retaliation Coventry forces arrested wagons with merchandise on the way to Shrewsbury to which the prince had given licence to pass. Unfortunately it was found that these belonged to citizens of London, and parliament ordered that they be restored to their owners. The import of cloth from the Gloucester area would have been much more difficult, but this possibly made for better industrial relations within the city. Supplying the parliamentary armies may well have stimulated employment: later Cromwell was to order quantities of stockings for his troops. Communications with London, an important market for Coventry cloth, were kept open: in 1643 fire-fighting equipment (50 leather buckets and 10 brass squirts or spouts) could be ordered from the capital. There were no serious fires, though there was a near miss on the night of 29th August 1642 when a fire broke out in a baker's house near St. Mary's Hall where the city's magazine was lodged. Nehemiah Wharton and his soldiers spotted it while on guard on the walls at New Gate:

> 'and in three or four hours was quenched, and no great harm done, but the citizens were much affrighted'.

No outbreak of the plague occurred. Even the common lands apparently gave no trouble during these years. However, taxation was higher than it had ever been, one alderman, John Rogerson, paying £40 in three and a half years, and leading merchants were often paying more than 4s a week. Even artisans of very modest means were expected to make some contribution. There were times when troops had to be given free quarter, though generally the Coventry garrison was regularly paid.

Denbigh's soldiers wintering in the city in 1643-44 were especially disorderly and brawled with the garrison troops. Overall there were certainly many worse places to spend the Civil War than Coventry. Richard Baxter could write of the war years there:

'We that lived quietly in Coventry did keep to our old principles, and thought all others had done so too, except a few inconsiderable persons ....'[34]

The Godly City - another Geneva

Among the refugees in Coventry were at least thirty puritan ministers. They were a 'sober, wise, religious company' according to Richard Baxter who was one of the most eminent of them. Baxter preached once a week to the soldiers of the garrison and on Sunday to the people generally. When in 1645 he decided to become a chaplain to a regiment in the New Model Army, the county committee tried to persuade him to stay fearing that the garrison would mutiny without his spiritual administrations, or so he tells us. As eminent was Richard Vines, who Purefoy had presented to the church of Caldecote in 1630. In 1644 the mayor and corporation offered him the parish of St. Michael's, the royalist vicar having fled at the outbreak of hostilities, but by then Vines' activities had already become centred on London. He was chosen to preach before parliament, and became a member of the Assembly of Divines, the body set up to determine the government and doctrine of the future national church. In 1645 he was elected Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge.[35]

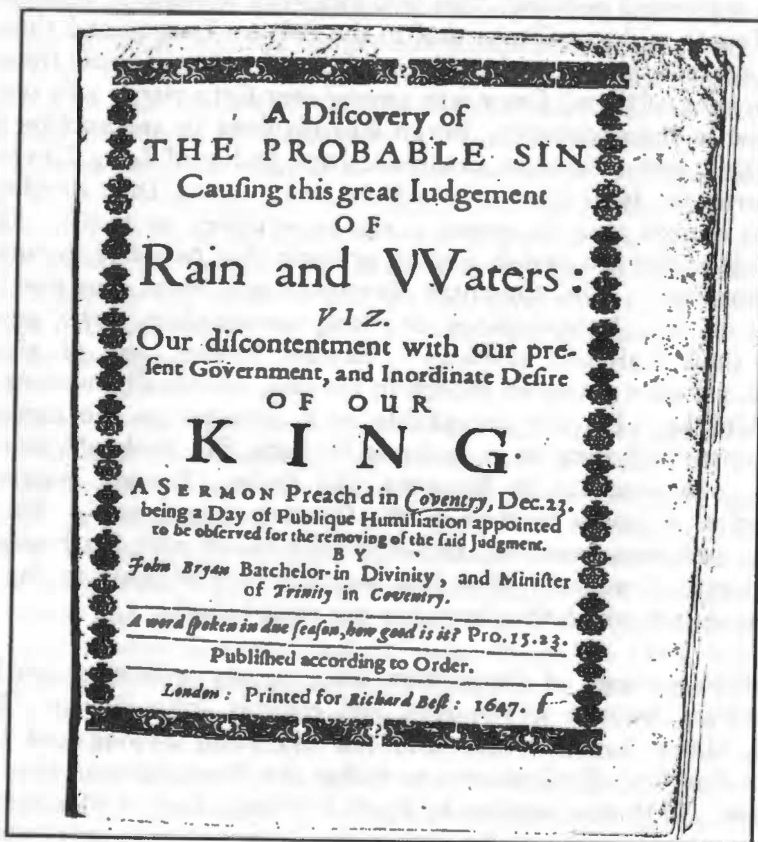
In default of Vines, the corporation chose another refugee from the north of the county, Obediah Grew, master of the grammar school at Atherstone and lecturer in the parish church there. He was appointed lecturer at St. Michael's in 1642 and given the vicarage in 1644. As minister of the main city church Grew wielded enormous influence. He administered to something like 4000 communicants in his parish as well as to visitors and strangers to the city. The other city church, Holy Trinity, was placed in the charge of John Bryan in 1644. He was a protégé of Lord Brooke through whose influence he had been presented to Barford in 1632. In the early months of the war he had acted as treasurer to the parliamentary forces in Warwickshire. His start at Holy Trinity was much less happy than Grew's at St. Michael's: Bryan was appointed by the authority of parliament overriding the wishes of the city. By sheer force of personality he overcame the unpopularity of violating local interests, and like Grew became a much respected minister.[36]

From their pulpits these men were the opinion formers in Coventry during and after the war. Baxter, Vines, Grew and Bryan were puritans of the moderate Presbyterian variety. Grew and Bryan were members of the Kenilworth 'classis', a body of ministers and elders attempting to impose discipline in belief and practice in the area. They were in favour of the retention of a national church, preferably without bishops, and they were opposed to any broad religious toleration which would include the many sects which the dislocation of government by the Civil War was allowing to develop. For example, a Baptist church was formed in Coventry as early as 1643 with Benjamin Cox as its minister. Richard Baxter confronted him in a public debate, and got him imprisoned for disobeying the county committee's order to leave the city. In 1646 Grew and Bryan together opposed the two leading London Baptists, Hansard Knollys and William Kiffin, in another public disputation on infant baptism held in Holy Trinity. In 1648 Bryan wrote a statement entitled, 'The Warwickshire Ministers' Testimony as to the Trueth of Jesus Christ and to the Solemn League and Covenant; as also against the errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times, and the toleration of them'. Grew was among over forty clergy who put their signature to the document. Bryan was involved in yet another public disputation with a Baptist preacher, John Onley of Long Lawford, at Kenilworth in 1655 during which he maintained that dividing the national church was 'as great a sin as adultery or theft'. He also strictly defended the parish system, arguing that parishes 'generally be true churches'. The Coventry Presbyterians were, however, more tolerant of the Independents or Congregationalists, who generally shared their Calvinist theology. Samuel Basnet, son of alderman Thomas, set up a gathered church in the city, eventually meeting in St. John Bablake. He was acceptable as a minister to the corporation which appointed him as a lecturer in both St. Michael's and Holy Trinity. In contrast to Baptists like Onley, Samuel Basnet was regarded as a 'godly brother of the Congregational way'. 'He was a weighty, judicious preacher, perfectly concordant with his brethren as to all doctrinal points'. But this was the sort of limit to the broad national church which they hoped to see established.[37]

The religious views of these men were at one with the opinions of the political leaders of the city and county: John Barker, Thomas Basnet, Major Robert Beake and the late Lord Brooke and Colonel William Purefoy, all of whom are within the Presbyterian/Independent spectrum. This also applies to Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh, who, after an initial reluctance, had taken the Covenant with great ceremony in St. Michael's in 1644, and had ordered his officers to do likewise, 'being resolved none shall serve under me but those who will take that

covenante'. Denbigh then had a list of orders to his rank and file soldiers read out. The first was that they were to attend the Sunday morning sermon, the monthly fast and other spiritual exercises; the second that they were to 'Refraine swearing, excessive drunkenisse and do noe thing that which is offensive to God for now they are employed in a service that tends to God's glory. Now they are carreinge on a work of reformation'. Though the other leaders had their disagreements with Denbigh, they would have been at one with him on this; they wanted the parliamentary forces, local or national, to be a godly army. The respect in which the city clergy were held further helps to explain the general unity of Coventry during the Civil War. It was both an embattled and godly city.[38]

It also helps to explain the political conservatism of the city after the war. Grew and Bryan wanted a military victory to be followed by a negotiated settlement with the king. Bryan at first warned against a reaction in favour of Charles now that he was defeated and against too hasty a settlement. In December 1646 he preached a sermon (shortly afterward published) on the theme: 'A Discovery of the probable Sin causing this great Judgement of Rain and Water viz. our Discontentant with our present Government [the victorious parliament] and inordinate desire of our king'. He also defended the heavy taxation imposed by parliament against critics who argued that it was as bad or worse than that levied during Charles' personal rule. During the second Civil War in 1648 Grew was worried by the course of events, and opposed the most startling outcome of the war, the public trial and execution of the king. He spoke to Cromwell who was on his way to London to attend the trial and claimed that he received assurances that Charles would not die. He was to send a strong letter of protest after the event on the 30th January 1649. Grew was eventually to be in favour of the Restoration.[39]


A Diſcovery of
THE PROBABLE SIN
Cauſing this great Iudgement
OF
Rain and VVaters:
VIZ.
Our diſcontentment with our preſent Government, and Inordinate Deſire
OF OUR
KING.
A SERMON Preach'd in *Coventry*, Dec.23.
being a Day of Publique Humiliation appointed to be obſerved for the removing of the ſaid Judgment.
BY
John Bryan Batchelor in Divinity, and Miniſter of *Trinity* in *Coventry*.
A word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it? Pro.15.23.
Publiſhed according to Order.
London: Printed for *Richard Beſt*: 1647.

Reproduced by kind permission of
THE LOCAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT, COVENTRY CITY LIBRARY
(From the original book)

The political conservatism of these men was partly a response to the fear of religious anarchy. Their opposition to the Baptists and other sectaries has already been noted. Coventry after the Civil War did not become a hot bed of religious dissent, but there was sufficient of it in the city to alarm the ministers. A small Baptist church survived in spite of their efforts, but they were not the most threatening group. George Fox visited Coventry three times between 1646 and 1655. On his first visit he found 'many tender people', and the Quakers were established here by 1655, when the mayor, Major Robert Beake, punished ('set in a cage') three Quakers for travelling on Sunday. 'This poor deluded people', Beake termed them. Fox on his third visit to Coventry, however, was not satisfied with the progress of the Quaker community. He found the Coventrians 'closed up in darkness' and the 'professor' (i.e. of the Quaker beliefs) with whom he had formerly stayed was drunk. Fox 'felt the power of the Lord God was over the town'. His dissatisfaction is another tribute to the hold which the orthodox (Presbyterian and Independent) ministers generally had over the city.[40] On his visit in 1650 Fox learnt that a number of people were in gaol because of their religious views, and he decided to visit them. But he found they were Ranters, the first he had met:

> 'When I came into the jail, where the prisoners were, a great power of darkness struck at me, and I sate still, having my spirit gathered into the love of God. At last these prisoners began to rant and blaspheme, at which my soul was greatly grieved. They said they were God ...'

Fox claims that he confounded the Ranters with his superior knowledge of the Scripture and this argument:

> 'Seeing they said they were God I asked them if they knew it would rain tomorrow. They said they could not tell. I told them God could tell'.

Joseph Salmon, one of the prisoners later recanted, and Fox implies a claim to the credit for this, but Salmon himself attributed his recantation to the influence of two godly magistrates who had interrogated him, William Purefoy and Robert Beake. Salmon had originally been arrested for preaching, 'That it was God which did swear in them [the Ranters], and that it was their Liberty to keep company with Women, for their lust'. Another Ranter preacher in Coventry, Andrew Wyke, kissed a soldier three times and told him, 'I breath the Spirit of God into thee'. He too was arrested. While in prison both Wyke and Salmon continued to preach to passers-by through the prison grating. Both were eventually fined 2s for common blasphemy by the corporation magistrates.[41]

The most spectacular demonstration that those with God in them were above the moral law was made by Abeizer Coppe, orginally from Warwick and one-time preacher to the garrison at Compton Wyniates:

> 'He took two of his she-Disciples and went to the Citie of Coventrie, where it was soon dispersed abroad, that he commonly lay in bed with two women at a time'.

This allegation comes from an anti-Ranter tract, and should be treated with caution. Coppe himself denied it. He was arrested in Warwick but transferred to prison in Coventry early in 1650, and Salmon initially came to Coventry to visit him in goal. Coppe's writing, especially 'A Fiery Flying Roll' and 'A Second Fiery Flying Roll', had so alarmed parliament, that unlike Salmon and Wyke, he could not be dealt with locally, and William Purefoy was ordered to bring him to London for trial. It can be argued that the Ranters as an organised movement existed only in the mind of the authorities. In fact they were merely a number of individuals who rejected all formal religion, and believed in universal salvation here and now on this earth. They sometimes expressed their belief that, infused with God's spirit, they were saved and thus above the moral law, in outlandish ways, which caused the authorities to fear for the social order. Most of the Ranters under pressure from either local or central authority recanted their extreme views, as Salmon, Wyke and Coppe did, but their activities undoubtedly

determined the ministers and magistrates of Coventry to keep a tight discipline over the city's religious and social life.[42]

Certainly the two most active magistrates in county and city, Purefoy and Beake, appreciated the importance of Bryan, Grew and Samuel Basnet, and complained to the corporation on their behalf when it was slow to augment Bryan's and Grew's incomes to bring them up to the minimum fixed by an act of parliament 'for frequent Preaching of the Gospel and better maintenance of the Ministers in the City of Coventry' which Purefoy had seen through the Commons. Purefoy wrote to the Council:

> 'I will be bolde to say that never was a cittye in England less charged in their payments to their ministers, nor any that I know with more eminent and deserving men'.

This though he and Grew politically did not see eye to eye: Grew opposed the King's execution, while Purefoy was one of the judges at Charles' trial and a signatory of the king's death warrant. Purefoy also came to the aid of Samuel Basnet's congregation meeting in St. John Bablake by offering to give up his fee as recorder of Coventry in order to repair the glass in the church's windows. Beake was a member of Basnet's 'gathered church', though politically he was more conservative than the Presbyterian Purefoy. He collaborated with all three ministers during his mayoralty. The corporation's lack of financial support for its ministers ('a sinn, a robbing of God') almost caused Bryan to leave Holy Trinity for a parish in Shropshire in 1652. The town clerk, Humphrey Burton, sought Richard Baxter's help in persuading Bryan not to go, instancing Bryan's great service to the city in reconciling the Presbyterians and the Independents, and forecasting religious strife should he depart:

> 'it will upon the point set us all together by the ears and produce scandal and shame to the gospel and the true professors therefor'.

A petition from Coventry signed by eleven hundred men was presented to Cromwell as Lord Protector, supporting his government's broad, though limited, religious toleration. It requested Cromwell to:

> 'curb and restrain more and more all profaneness and ungodliness on the one hand, so also discriminate a true stated Christian liberty from the practice of damnable errors and blasphemy'.

As before the war, so in 1658 Coventry was compared with, and as a model of Geneva, although this time the witness was not hostile.[43]

Post-war Troubles

Conservatism was the keynote of the city's policy after the end of the first Civil War. There was a feeling among many of the leading citizens that Coventry's independence had been infringed by the presence of the county committee and a garrison of troops. Resentment at the latter was increased when John Barker was forced by the Self-Denying Ordinance to give up his military Governorship of Coventry in spite of the Council petitioning parliament for his continuation of office, and was replaced by Colonel Thomas Willoughby, a county gentleman, a county committee man and officer, under Purefoy, of the Warwickshire forces. As early as March 1647 William Jesson was asking the House of Commons for Coventry to be degarrisoned, and by 91 votes to 79 this was agreed, as was the proposal that the 'new works' (the additional defences to the walls) should be 'slighted', that is rendered useless. However, this was overturned when the Warwickshire County Committee requested that a garrison of 200 troops under Colonel Willoughby should be continued, and the Commons agreed to a garrison of 150 until the end of May while a Commons' Committee considered the situation. The committee included Jesson, Barker, Bosvile and Purefoy, so both sides, corporation and county, were represented. The corporation then tried to get exclusive control of the garrison but the Commons' Committee would agree only if Mr. Christopher Yelverton and 'old Mr. Hales', both members of the county committee were joined with the citizens in its control. Yelverton was a rank outsider (his main estates were in Northamptonshire) and Hales, though resident in Coventry, was also gentry. Jesson protested that this would look as if the citizens were not to be trusted. To admit outsiders to a governing body of the city would be 'against our oathes that were Freemen of the City and would breake upon the Charter and priviledges'. Therefore he could not agree. The Commons' Committee then insisted upon Mr. Hales as he was one of the deputy lieutenants of Warwickshire. Jesson returned to one of his favourite themes, protesting that Warwickshire was 'a distinct county from us', and that Hales could not be relied upon to be impartial in the event of any dispute between the city and the county over the payments to the militia. He would, so Jesson alleged, 'always be leaning to the greater place' (i.e. Warwickshire). The Commons' Committee had a point, however: there were still some pro-royalist members of the corporation, notably Clarke, Million and Monk, and it demanded that they now be permanently excluded from office. Jesson would have none of this. It was more interference with the autonomy of the city and he regarded it as the most unreasonable demand. In a letter dated 29th April 1647 he urged the mayor to stand firm, and he promised as the city's M.P. to 'never cease to doe the best service I may for that sufferinge City of Coventry'. A compromise was eventually reached with Hales, Thomas Basnet and the current mayor being members of the Militia Committee, and the slighting was postponed.[44]

The Commons' Committee's suspicions were well-founded. An attempt to proclaim Charles II at Coventry was to be made in 1650. William Purefoy was sent by the Council of State, of which he was a member, to deal with this ripple of disaffection against the English Republic. It was only after this, in July 1651 that the royalists were removed from office in the city on the direct order of Parliament. Even in the mid-fifties there were still some members of the corporation whom the Cromwellian, Major General Whalley, regarded as 'wicked magistrates'. The garrison which caused so much resentment in the city was removed after the second Civil War was over in November 1648.[45]

The Suffering City

Suffering city Coventry certainly was in the years following the first Civil War. Nationwide there were a series of bad harvests, and therefore rising prices, which meant hardship for the poor. Under the year 1647 the city annals recorded 'such a wet time and such great Floads in October that Corn could not be saved that in a Months time Wheat Rose from 3s 6d to 8s a strike' (a strike was a level bushel). The following year wheat had risen to 12s a strike, and butter was 17d a quart. The city's problems were accentuated by the arrival of many prisoners of war, mostly Scottish, after Cromwell's victory over the Duke of Hamilton at the battle of Preston. They were lodged in Leather Hall, Bablake church, Spon Tower, Greyfriars Tower and elsewhere. The city's fortifications were again put in a state of readiness when the second royalist-Scottish invasion occurred in 1651, and a regiment of foot was recruited within Coventry. However, the royalist army avoided Coventry, and the only other effect of this campaign was that the city received yet more prisoners after Charles II's defeat at Worcester. The high taxation of the war years was not abated. According to the corporation national taxation in 1648 was 18d for every £1. of rent, 'an unsupportable burden' when added to the 'many thousands of poor' who were in urgent need of relief, and to the depression of trade within the city. In the same year the wardens' payments of charity moneys were more than they received in rents. Denbigh gave his fee of £14 per annum as the city's recorder to Alderman Clarke 'his verie loveing

Freind' to be used to help the poor. The collection of the Excise in 1649 produced a riot on Christmas Eve led by the butchers of the city. One of their leaders, Howes, killed a tax-collecting soldier. He was tried for murder, but was found guilty of manslaughter, presumably by a Coventry jury. The annals note that he lived for forty years after this, 'and died an old man in Bablake Hospital, but never prospered after the aforesaid fact'.[46]

The weather and harvests improved during the early fifties. 1652 was 'a very dry summer'. By 1654 corn was 'very cheape' being sold at under 2s a strike, and this price held in the following year. The city was returning to a degree of normality, and the corporation found the money to purchase the fee farm of the city (rents which had been paid to the king which were now being sold off, privatised one might say, by the Commonwealth government). The corporation had to act with some urgency as 'divers gentleman' were about to purchase them, and consistently the city was anxious to exclude the possibility of any outside influence over its affairs. The cost to the corporation was £1,443.19s.5d, plus £27.13s.10d for a silver cup given to William Purefoy, now the city's recorder, for his good offices in procuring the purchase. A new mace was bought in 1653, and a treble to make a peel of six bells in St. Michael's. Holy Trinity's treble was purchased in 1658. When St. Michael's was struck by lightning in July 1655, its spire, tower and roof were damaged and repaired at the cost of over £200. Two more wells were made available for the use of the general public through the generosity of private citizens, one superseding Jordan Well. The mess of the priory site began to be cleared. At the west end dwelling houses were built by John Bryan, one between the two churchyards and two at the old entrance of the priory from Butcher Row. Bryan cleared the grounds of ruins there and converted the area to gardens. Much of the east side (over the foundations of the chancel) was made into orchards and gardens by Humphrey Burton and John Brownell, and for a time there was a bowling alley there. A new clock was put up over the Mayor's Parlour, and another 'the quarter clock,' at the Cross. Civic pride was fast recovering. Normality was further signalled by a riot in 1657 over the commoners' rights in the Great Park, which resulted in a number of fines being imposed on individuals by the J.P.s. [47]

A Godly Magistrate

There is a unique insight into Coventry of the 1650s provided by the diary kept by Robert Beake during part of his term as mayor 1655-56. Beake, a draper by trade, an Independent in religion and a supporter of

the Protectorate in politics, was in many ways the quintessential godly magistrate, at this time urged on and supported by Major-General Whalley within whose jurisdiction Coventry was. The setting-up of the Rule of the Major Generals was not only to prevent and suppress royalist conspiracy, but also to encourage a godly society by a 'reformation of manners' (morals). Whalley and Beake were certainly at one on the latter. The only friction between them was when Whalley unintentionally infringed the dignity of the city by not giving Beake as mayor the precedence in church to which he was entitled:

> '2nd December (1655): Major General Whaley, being first in the Church, sate above me upon a mistake, supposing he had given me the right hand.'

Otherwise they were in full agreement, sometimes consulting in private, on the suppression of alehouses, tippling and drunkeness:

> '27th February (1656): The Aldermen all met at [Mayor's] parlour and haveing a letter directed from Major General Whaley about alehouses and a house of correction did thereupon view the ould house and appointed the repaire of. Also did order that about 27 alehouses more should be putt downe at the next licensing'.

Beake required the constables to keep him informed of unlicensed alehouses that continued to function. Persistent offenders were sent to the 'house of correction' or to the gaol, the justices (of which Beake was one) sending six or seven there at one sitting on 13th December 1655, 'for terror to others'. Those unbailed might be imprisoned for a month or until they saw the error of their ways, as did one Bretford. Gaoled on 25th January 1656 he was released on 15th February following having 'ingaged never to sell ale more and profesid that it did him good that he was put downe for he was undone by it before'. His wife, Goody, however, had continued the business while he was in prison, and he was again gaoled for the same offence on 5th May, 1656. Beake sometimes inspected the supposedly closed alehouses himself, as he did on 25th January 1656 in the wards of Much Park Street, Gosford and Jordan Well. He found 'most of their barels full notwithstanding their promises to give over'. The policy may have been unpopular. It was on this occasion that Bretford 'raysed all the streete' against Beake. The mayor, however, outfaced the mob, and Bretford was packed off to gaol. Drunkenness was severely punished. The standard fine was 3s 4d a time although sometimes it was higher (5s), and even more for the householder who permitted it to occur on his premises. Licensed

alehouses were to close at 9 o'clock, and were to charge 1d for a quart of ale.[48]

As prominent in Beake's diary are the actions he took to enforce Sabbatarianism and the law against blasphemy. He was particularly severe on those who travelled on Sunday unless it was to attend church service or hear a sermon. On March 2nd and 9th 1656 he sent two groups of soldiers to watch for and detain travellers on the main highways to the east (towards Dunchurch) and to the west (towards Meriden) of Coventry, though in this he was enforcing government policy. The standard punishment was to be put in the stocks, though occasionally, as in the case of a soldier from Scotland, it was to be sent to the house of correction. A man travelling to be a godfather was fined 10s, and the same fine was to be imposed on one Brisco, if it was found that he had lied that he was coming to Coventry because there was no sermon in his native Corley. (He was in fact a debtor on the run from Warwick gaol.) If Beake had doubts about the enforcement of the Sabbath Law he consulted the puritan ministers of the city, as he did in the case of the servant of Lady Archer who was sent to buy torches for her son's funeral. He had died of smallpox and 'his body could not be kept longer than [Sunday] night'. Also punished for Sabbath breaking were a man for working, a miller for grinding, a barber and his assistant for cutting hair, an apprentice for playing and a group of carriers for loitering at an inn during time of public worship. Tippling on the Lord's Day was of course an offence, and so too a group of young men and women 'brawling' (24th March 1656). Beake's personal vigilance is attested by his entry for 25th April 1656: 'Being Lord's Day, I went to the parke and observed who idly walked there'.

Swearing and cursing were quite common and often associated with drunkenness. The fine is seldom stated, but there is an exception in the case of Elizabeth Webster whose two oaths cost her 10s for the payment of which she had to leave 'some cloathes in pawn'. Only in one case is the oath specified: R. Hil was reported to have said, 'as God shall judge his soule'.

Idleness and sexual immorality were very much the concern of the puritan magistrate. Beake required all constables in Coventry and its county to draw up lists of all 'idle, negligent and lewd persons', and he issued warrants to search for and arrest all 'idle rogues and vagrants' in the hamlets and bring them before him. From the rural communities he met with little response. Idleness could lead to imprisonment in the house of correction, as with Goody Pywell. To the late twentieth century reader the cases of serious immorality appear to be remarkably

few. A couple who had 'carnal knowledge' of each other were sent to separate detention centres, he to prison, she to the house of correction. To prison also went Joseph Hues for being 'about companiately with a loose woman' who was already pregnant as a result of her liaison with Captain Clark of Grandborough. Eliza Fox and John Right were examined about their pretended marriage. Right confessed to having two wives and was prosecuted. Beake summoned a woman of 'ill-report' to appear before him, and Austin and Stife gave assurances to him that each would 'leade a good life'. That is the sum total of the sexual misdemeanours which came before Coventry's mayor according to his diary in six month's magistracy.

Beake showed his humanity as a magistrate by releasing Goody Pywell from the Bridewell because her legs had swollen making her unable to work, and Bretford's first release was not only because he claimed to be a reformed character, but also because he had 'the falling sickness' (epilepsy). Beake attempted conciliation in some disputes as when Goody Naylor complained that Goody Wilding had called her a witch: 'upon hearing both sides I advised them to be friends or to bring better proofe of the words'. Two other brawling women were given the same advice. He was responsible for the administration of the system of poor relief in the city and county of Coventry, and he supervised the churchwardens and overseers of the poor in the parishes. On the advice of the churchwardens of St. Michael's he ordered Obediah Grew to make a collection for the poor, and non-payers of the poor rate in this parish were summonsed before him. Fines for Sabbath breaking were sometimes assigned to churchwardens to be used for poor relief. On 15th February 1656 he issued a warrant against one Pryor who was 'loose and starving his children'.

Beake's other responsibilities included the maintenance of law and order, and the regulation of the city's economic life and health. Breaches of the peace were particularly likely to arise from 'abusing' or 'ill-words', and petty officials were often the objects of abuse: churchwardens, watchmen, constables, tax collectors for collecting 'the armys tax'. The most serious abuse Beake recorded was Bowater calling Mr. Hil's wife 'a Presbyterian hoore', and Rotton called Mr. Porter ' a hipocrite'. Robinson the herdsman abused a Frenchman, presumably for being French. Violence was usually minor and more often threatened than actual: a servant beat one Guilliver and was sent to gaol; one man threatened to cleave another with a hatchet; Thomas Moore the younger was convicted of drawing his sword on two men (as well as swearing two oaths), and he opposed the constable who presumably tried to arrest him. Beake then took a posse of constables

to Spon Street to effect the arrest, but Moore had fled. He heard that there was to be an disturbance in Dead Lane on 12th February 1656. He hastened down there at midnight, but nothing happened. The informer had 'been moved therto by discontent'. The most serious case which came before Beake 'the venting of counterfeit coyne', the suspect, Mrs. Rose, being brought to him by the constable at midnight on 15th January, was dismissed by him and other justices two days later for lack of evidence to send the case before the assizes.

Beake had the authority to supervise some of the vital trades of the city. He was concerned about the bakers for some were not keeping to the statutory size and weight of the loaf. He intervened to prevent stocks of corn being held back from the market in order to force up the price, listened to complaints about interlopers selling corn in the market and appointed officials to maintain standards in the leather industry. Beake himself was a draper, and was chosen master of the drapers' company for 1656. Cases of servants or employers not keeping to the terms of hiring were dealt with as was the case of a master 'turning off' his boy. Beake took definite steps to clean up Coventry. The day after his election as mayor he ordered the removal of a muckhill near St. Michael's churchyard, and within his first week he was walking the streets to observe what state they were in. He issued orders then for the removal of further dung heaps from Butcher Row, Well Street, and Spon Street. On January 16th 1656 the beadle was sent to cry that everyone should sweep their streets, and 'this was don universaly throughout the citty'. In the autumn of 1655 smallpox and other diseases were raging in Coventry. On 20th November Beake and the other magistrates ordered a fast to be kept (to appease God's judgement was the theory), and this was done by many from all sections of the city's society.

How do we interpret Beake's diary and the image it presents of puritan Coventry? Unfortunately we have nothing to compare it with: the records of the city's quarter sessions, unlike those of the county for this time, do not survive, so it is uncertain how full a record, how representative the diary is. Apart from possibly the Sabbatarianism, the diary does not present a picture of a particularly oppressive puritan regime. Much of what Beake did was merely implementing the policies of central government, albeit zealously, and was a continuation of Coventry's traditional puritan culture. Many of the cases brought before Beake were on the initiative of ordinary Coventrians. Sometimes, as has been seen, the informants were unreliable. Sometimes the action back-fired on the informant, as in the case of John Curtis:

> 'December 17th (1655): John Curtis informed against John Marshall for drunkenness and upon examination it appeared that Curtis was with him tippling so they both paid 3s 4d.'

What does emerge is the portrait of a conscientious and sincere man, trying to fulfil the role in society to which he has been called, the chief magistracy of his native city. And to help him to do this is probably the reason he kept his diary. It shows him as incorruptible: he pays 7s for a gift of four turkeys from Bott in case it might be used as a bribe to permit Bott to sell ale without a licence. Later he proceeds against Bott for just this offence. Beake returns a sack of oats he received from the former royalist, Captain Hickman, in case it should be seen as a bribe. Hickman was being forced to pay the decimation tax for which Beake was an assessor. It is a pity that we have Beake's diary for only six months. The second part of 1656 he was mostly in London, partly because he was becoming a figure of some national importance.[49]

Coventry, Commonwealth and Cromwell

The city's relationship to the momentous national events from 1647 onwards is perhaps best indicated by its parliamentary representation. John Barker and William Jesson were Coventry's representatives in the Long Parliament. Barker had been enthusiastic for the struggle with Charles; Jesson was much less so, though he was active liaising between parliament and the city throughout the war. His religious views were as conservative as his politics: he was a moderate Episcopalian. Once in a debate on religion in the Commons he had asked whether 'Bishops were not far more visibly mentioned in Holy Writ than in the form proposed to set up' (Presbyterian). He was anxious after the war for a quick settlement with the king on moderate terms. When a reactionary London mob invaded the palace of Westminster on 26th July 1647 Jesson did not flee to the army for protection as did the Speaker of the House of Commons and many M.P.s and peers.

Barker's military governorship of Coventry until 1645 must have meant that he had less time in Westminster than Jesson. Both men were unhappy at the turn of events in 1648 when the Army decided to put the king on trial. This was largely as a result of Charles plunging England into a second Civil War. The Army was forced to overawe parliament in order to secure its cooperation in setting up a High Court of Justice. At Pride's Purge on 6th December 1648 when M.P.s opposed to this were excluded from the House Barker was refused admittance and imprisoned for a time, though this may have been a mistake by the

officers in charge of the purge. The news of Barker's exclusion evoked protests in Coventry, and a regiment had to be sent to keep order. Jesson characteristically apparently withdrew from the proceedings of his own volition. Barker was willing to accept the new republic as a 'fait accompli' and was allowed back in the House, though he then rarely attended. Jesson took no further part in the Long Parliament, or Rump as it was now derisorily called. Between them they probably represented the majority of opinion within Coventry. Certainly one version of the city annals takes a clearly anti-Army standpoint:

> [1648] 'a part of the Parliament driving on an interest contrary to Peace turned all such members out of the House of Commons as they thought would not comply with their designes, and then conveyed the King to Windsor'.

> [1649] 'Now things are come to that Height that they presume to bring the King to tryall, but he disowning their authority he is sentenced to be beheaded which was done January 30 before Whitehall ... A while after the parliament makes an Act abolishing all Kingly Government, but in Scotland Charles, eldest son of the late king, was solemnly proclaimed king'.

The King's execution, a contempory woodcut

Another city annalist recorded the execution as 'A Cruell and inhumaine pece of Tirany'. However these entries may have been written or doctored much later.[50]

Coventry had no separate representation in the Barebones or Nominated Parliament of 1653, though Warwickshire had two men, both gentry, John St. Nicholas and Richard Lucy, summoned to represent it. The annals are scornful of this unelected assembly:

> 'Ol. calls a Juncto, called the Little Parliament, who sate a short time, and then delivered their power to him'.

The city felt more comfortable with the more traditional, more conservative government set up at the end of 1653 with Oliver Cromwell as head of state as Lord Protector. The city presented a petition to Cromwell (difficult to date precisely) supporting the Lord Protector's position against 'old or new enemies', and commending his rule as 'a safe path to walk in' in both religious and secular affairs. It was signed by 1100 men, including the three puritan ministers and Thomas Basnet, William Purefoy and Robert Beake.[61]

To the three parliaments of the Protectorate (two of Oliver in 1654 and 1656, one of his son, Richard, in 1659) on each occasion Coventry eturned William Purefoy and Robert Beake, one gentleman non-resident, one citizen. Purefoy had first represented Coventry back in 1627, at a time of dispute between the corporation and the people of Coventry over the common lands, and had been the candidate of the popular party. Through his friendship and kinship with Lord Brooke, and through the accidents of war, he had become the most powerful man in Warwickshire. After Brooke's death in 1643, Purefoy and the county committee (many of whom were also Brooke's clients and relatives) had won the struggle for control of the local forces with Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh. In the Long Parliament Purefoy, who was M.P. for Warwick, was among the faction led by Sir Henry Vane the Younger and Oliver Cromwell, who were determined to prosecute the war vigorously, and after victory, he, though Presbyterian in religion, sided with the Army in its dispute with a reactionary element in parliament who wished to restore the king at almost any cost. Purefoy was not a victim of Pride's Purge: he accepted the need for the trial and execution of the king. He was one of the commissioners of the High Court of Justice; he attended it sessions fairly regularly; he was present on the day of the sentence and he signed the king's death warrant. He was then nominated to the Council of the State set up as the executive of the new republic, and continued as a member until the republic was

overthrown. He took a turn as president of the Council of State in August 1652, and served on dozens of its committees as well as those of the House of Commons. Locally Purefoy, together with former members of the county committee and Brooke circle, simply ran Warwickshire on behalf of the republic. Denbigh, his national and local rival, had opposed the trial of the king, but after the execution he was willing to become a member of the Council of State. The republic was pleased to secure the allegiance of Denbigh: his title helped to give it respectability, but he was never trusted with any major responsibility. His attendances soon dwindled dramatically, and he was dropped from the third Council set up in February 1651. His local influence, never very great, declined too, and he drifted into the royalist faction. Purefoy, though nationally not so influential under Cromwell's regimes, no longer a member of the Council of State and turned out of his lodgings in Whitehall Palace in June 1653, continued to be a pillar of the anti-monarchists in Warwickshire.[52]

It is not surprising therefore that Coventry courted the friendship of William Purefoy, and it is also a tribute to his growing influence that the city replaced Denbigh with him as their recorder in 1651. Purefoy held this office until his death in 1659. He returned the city's confidence in him by choosing to represent Coventry in 1654 when he could have sat for Warwickshire, having been elected one of the county M.P.s as well. Purefoy seems to have had a very similar outlook to the men who dominated the city during the Interregnum. Though a republican and a regicide, in fact conservatism is more characteristic of his politics than radicalism. Though not excluded from the Commons by Pride's Purge he was opposed to it, and he and his son-in-law, Godfrey Bosvile, were among the first M.P.s to register formally their dissent from the Army's action. He was in favour of the immediate readmission of members against whom the Army had no charge, and he later opposed the abolition of the House of Lords. He regarded the execution of the king as necessary and just; the real revolutionary step which he opposed was the action of the Army in purging parliament. This was certainly the attitude of a number of well-born English republicans, like the Nottinghamshire squire, John Hutchinson, for example, as well as the Coventry ministers like John Bryan and Obediah Grew, with whom Purefoy was in broad religious agreement. They felt that they must serve the new regime to prevent further revolutionary change spear-headed by the army.[53]

Certainly conservatism characterizes the politics of Purefoy's companion to the three Protectorate parliaments, Robert Beake. In Oliver Cromwell's second parliament of 1656-57 Beake strongly supported the Humble Petition and Advice, which urged Cromwell to take the title of king and return to a two chamber parliament. Though a contemporary described Beake's speeches in the Commons as 'dark', he showed a considerable grasp of the theoretical justifications for political action in his day. He rejected the argument of 'providence', beloved of many puritans like Cromwell himself. Beake pointed out that if God had 'poured contempt' on the king and House of Lords, he had also done so on the Commonwealth (the English republic) which no one had lifted a finger to defend in 1653. The realists' argument of force giving justification and the radicals' (like the Levellers) argument from the Law of Nature giving rights to every man were also rejected. To return to traditional forms of government and procedures Beake believed would restore order and security: 'the rule to bring us to stability is to have recourse to the ancient constitution', he argued. And again he said, 'Usage is a good right if ancient'. In Richard Cromwell's parliament Beake called for the restoration of the old House of Lords, not merely the nominated chamber of the 'Humble Petition and Advice'. He saw the Lords giving stability to the constitution by acting as a balance between king and Commons: 'We have been tumbling ever since they were taken away'. If parliament could abolish an ancient institution like the Lords, why could it not go on to abolish all property? Beake was expressing one of the fears which eventually was to be a vital force in the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. In 1656 his loyalty to the Protectorate and its aims both locally as Whalley testified, and in parliament was to win him appointment to the governmental post of Admiralty Commissioner, and this is one reason why he was absent from Coventry for the second half of his mayoralty.[54]

There was little hostility in Coventry to the Protectorate, but the political uncertainty which followed its collapse, the conflicts between the restored Rump and the Army, and the rivalries within the Army itself, as elsewhere produced the belief among many that political and religious anarchy could only be avoided by restoring the monarchy and with it the old social and political order. Religiously, however, it was by no means clear that the full Anglican church would be necessary: a 'moderate Presbyterian government with a sufficient liberty for tender consciences' was considered a distinct possibility. This had been, with limits, what prevailed in Coventry during the 1650s.

When Sir George Booth led a premature royalist rising in Cheshire in 1659, Coventry was again garrisoned for Parliament with five companies of infantry and two of cavalry. Obediah Grew was asked to read the proclamation against Booth from his pulpit in St. Michael's but he refused on the grounds that it was the Sabbath. This was probably

an excuse: even this powerful puritan minister was looking to the return of the Stuart monarch. However, the city was kept in obedience to parliament by the intervention of William Purefoy. Though now eighty years old, and, as Edmund Ludlow tells us, 'with one foot in the grave', he came out of retirement and 'employed such diligence that he kept the City of Coventry, of which he was governor, and the adjacent county in obedience to Parliament'. It was the old regicide's last fling. Mercifully for him he did not live long after this to see the destruction of what he had fought for.[55]

Restoration

The crucial move leading to the Restoration came on 30th December 1659 when General Monk crossed the border at the head of the English Army which had been occupying Scotland. No one knew precisely Monk's intentions, but Major-General John Lambert saw a threat to his influence in English politics. He was attempting to organize a force to check Monk's threatened advance, but eventually most of his troops deserted him. In Coventry Lambert's moves produced panic when it was rumoured he would make the city his headquarters. Coventry would be caught up in civil war again. It was on 26th September 1659 according to one version of the city annals that the mayor, Richard Hicks, ordered the magazine in St. Mary's Hall to be opened and the citizens of Coventry armed. One hundred and sixty citizens mustered in St. Michael's churchyard, then under the command of Major Alderman Robert Beake they marched to Cross Cheaping by way of Hay Lane and Broadgate to confront the garrison guard there. The Coventrians demanded in the name of parliament that guarding the city be handed over to them. 'Whereupon a Company of Redcoats having no orders to oppose them marched away'. Coventry was committing itself to the restored Rump and its temporary backer, General Monk, and shortly afterwards a force under Colonel Hacker arrived to secure Coventry for parliament. Many of the leading citizens must have at least guessed that Monk would require the Rump to admit the secluded members (both anti-republican and die-hard royalist, reconstituting what remained of the Long Parliament) which would produce a majority in favour of the election of a new 'free' parliament. This in turn would favour the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Between the final and voluntary dissolution of the Long Parliament on 16th March 1660 and the election of the free or 'Convention' parliament Coventry received another bad scare. Lambert, who had been imprisoned in the Tower, escaped and some troops joined him. He once more approached Coventry, reaching Daventry and writing to Nathaniel Hobson to enlist men for him in the city. Some of his soldiers penetrated as far as

Whitley 'which gave this Citty a very great Allarum'. It was market day, but shops were hastily shut up. Fortunately for Coventry Lambert was re-arrested the following day on the road between Daventry and the city.[56]

To make it easy for the Convention to invite him to return, Charles II issued a manifesto, the Declaration of Breda, in which he offered a general pardon and liberty of conscience in religion, though both dependent on what parliament should decide. Parliament was also to settle claims to property which had exchanged hands during the Interregnum and the arrears of the Army's pay. It was the former county committee man, Thomas Basnet, mayor as the result of the death of Richard Hicks in office, who, together with the aldermen dressed in scarlet and other members of the corporation, proclaimed the Declaration at Cross Cheaping. After that there were 'several vollies of shott' fired by the companies of cavalry and foot assembled there. The authorities need not have worried. The announcement was received 'with great joy and acclamations by the people', so the annals tell us, and the mayor and city fathers then proceded to the mayor's house for a 'Rich and Plentifull Banquet'.[57]

The election of members for Coventry to the Convention was fiercely contested, indicating that there was less unity than appeared on the surface. At first on 30th March 1660 Robert Beake and Richard Hopkins were returned. Hopkins, though the son of a former mayor and draper and resident in Coventry, was a gentleman and a barrister and the city's steward. Though he had served as a J.P. in Warwickshire from 1649 onwards, he was to be highly regarded by the Restoration government. He led the city's delegation, of which Beake was also a member, to welcome Charles II back to England and to present him with a silver basin and ewer (costing 150 guineas) and a purse containing 50 gold pieces. Hopkins also returned the king's fee farm rents, acquired by the city at great expense some nine years earlier, but requested that the city might lease them again. Hopkin's request was backed by a petition from Coventry in September 1660 with 882 signatures, and in January two prominent Warwickshire peers, Northampton and Conway, and over 30 gentry were persuaded to intercede with the king on the same issue. Charles accepted the gift, knighted Hopkins, but retained the fee farm, and in spite of all pleadings to the contrary in 1661 the cavalier, Sir Robert Townsend, was granted the lease. Townsend then denied the citizens pasture in Cheylesmore park and began to put up enclosures. When these were broken down, the mayor and aldermen were summonsed before the Privy Council and threatened with personal prosecution and

PALACE YARD
COVENTRY HOME OF SIR RICHARD HOPKINS

confiscation of the city's charter. In 1666 the corporation had to agree to Townsend's 'quiet enjoyment' of the park during the term of his lease.[58]

The refusal of the fee farm lease was the first sign that there were limits to royal favour towards Coventry. The validity of the election to the Convention was challenged, and the Commons Committee for Privileges and Elections examined the Coventry Sheriffs and many witnesses at great expense to the city. It was alleged that a great number had attended the poll, some persons had voted twice, some voters had been outsiders, and some were disqualified to vote because they were almoners or had not paid Scot and Lot. The Committee expressed itself perplexed, and the complainants declared they would be content if the result were quashed. So a fresh election was ordered. This time William Jesson, son of the very moderate M.P. in the Long Parliament, was chosen along with Hopkins, whose brother-in-law he was. Beake because of his former loyalty to the Protectorate may have been considered unacceptable to the new regime. Hopkins and Jesson were described as 'loyal to the king, but not friends to the Bishops, turning out godly Ministers and the like'.[59]

Coventry hastened to make other demonstrations of its loyalty: St. Mary's Hall 'was all whited within and without' and the royal arms set up. An attempt was made to heal any ill-feeling there had been with the county of Warwickshire. In October James Compton, Earl of Northampton, (the son of the earl at the beginning of the Civil War) and almost all the county nobility and gentry were entertained and feasted by the mayor. The earl was soon appointed to the recordership of the city which his father had held. The city's militia was put under the charge of Sir Arthur Caley, another gentleman resident in Coventry: 'the best in the city trailed a pike with him'. Charles II's coronation on St. George's Day 1661 was celebrated enthusiastically. Two fountains in the city, in High Street (or by the Black Bull inn) and Cross Cheaping, ran with claret wine. The militia shot off three or four volleys, bonfires were lighted that night, and the corporation held 'a great feast' in St. Mary's Hall. There were, however, limits to how far the city would abandon its puritanism. On May Day a Maypole was set up at Gosford Gate, but was soon removed by the mayor 'and others aiding and assisting him'. In the city's churches Bryan, Grew and Basnet still preached and administered to their congregations.[60]

Reaction

The city may have thought that it had 'got great credit with his Majesty' by its demonstrations of loyalty. However in November 1661 there were rumours of co-ordinated plots against the king, and Coventry was named as one of the centres. The king despatched a force under Sir Henry Jones to Coventry, and the mayor loyally handed the city's keys over to him. Charles wrote to the mayor thanking him for this and his help in suppressing the disturbances, though it is not clear that any trouble actually occurred. Charles also told Jones to retain the keys. Coventry's Civil War past was rapidly catching up with it.[61]

A new parliament had been summoned for May 1661, and in the Coventry elections the Earl of Northampton intervened directly to nominate one of the members. The corporation, intending to secure the election of Sir Richard Hopkins again, resisted, but although the earl's nominee was rejected, two royalist gentry outsiders under pressure from the Court had to be accepted. They were Clement Fisher of Packington and Thomas Flynt, a lawyer of Allesley. This was the first clear sign that the city's independence was under threat. A second was the royal order quashing the election of Thomas Hobson as mayor. The choice was remarkably tactless: his father, Nathaniel was associated with John Lambert. Also Thomas was a Baptist and had openly criticized the proceedings of the now royalist dominated parliament. Possibly to placate the royal government Thomas Pidgeon, an apothecary (not the

usual textile merchant) was elected mayor for 1662. He, the annals tell us, demonstrated his sympathy with the new anti-puritan tone of the national government by setting up a Maypole at Cross Cheaping near his own house, and he ordered that the weekly lectures on Wednesday and Friday should stop. The annals continue:

> 'He frowned upon good pious ministers and used much severity towards them. He thought by these and such like carriage to get into great favour. But it proved the contrary for he was greatly slighted of all persons both rich and poor; and shortly after dyed being deeply melancholly some time before and he was heard to say when dying that he would he had never been mayor'.[62]

The city annalist took some consolation in this for 1662 was a very black year for the city. It began with the county gentry trying to shift a greater proportion of taxation from Warwickshire to Coventry. A solemn declaration was made at the Epiphany quarter sessions held at Warwick claiming that Coventry had 'anciently' paid one seventh or one eighth of the joint taxation, but during the war the sitting of the county committee at Coventry was used to reduce the rate to a mere fifteenth or sixteenth part. The court claimed this was 'unreasonable' and referred their allegation to the commissioners for taxes to call witnesses, 'ancient men of both sides', and to decide what proportion was to be paid by Coventry in future. As Hughes points out, some of the J.P.s present must have known that the accusation was untrue. The corporation tried desperately to avert the coming royalist-Anglican fury associated with the Cavalier Parliament, which was introducing the Clarendon Code, a series of acts designed to destroy the power of puritans of all shades, particularly in the cities and towns. Dr. Hacket, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, was warmly welcomed by the corporation and citizens, and he preached in St. Michael's on Sunday. The powerful James, Duke of Ormond and Lord Deputy of Ireland, was met at Newgate by the mayor, aldermen and all the companies in full robes, together with two troops of horse and the militia. He and his large entourage were given an expensive banquet in St. Mary's Hall. All to no avail. Charles had determined on the destruction of Coventry's walls, that symbol of its pride and independence. Charles in his letter to the Earl of Northampton, his Lord Lieutenant in Warwickshire, ordering him to carry out the work, justified the action on the grounds of Coventry's strength, the possibility that it might be seized by 'mutinous and turbulent spirits', and that destruction would be cheaper than keeping a garrison in the city and less oppressive to the inhabitants. These are rational grounds, but it is impossible not to

believe that it gave both men satisfaction: the city had humiliated both their fathers in 1642. Other parliamentary strongholds were treated similarly. It was a deliberate act of revenge.[63]

Northampton arrived on the 22nd July 1662 with a large retinue of county gentry and troops, a further humiliation for the city, and the work of destruction began. It took three weeks, during which time the corporation had to give the earl at least one dinner in St. Mary's Hall (26th July) and liberal quantities of alcohol: for example twenty quarts of sack and twenty bottles of wine at the Bull Inn on 22nd July (presumably shared with his retinue); a bottle of Canary and a quart of sack when he visited the Council House on 30th July; two quarts of white wine and two cakes in the Mayor's Parlour on 15th August. Citizens who took away the stone had to pay 12d for each cartload. The gates appear to have been left intact.[64]

On 24th August 1662 the Act of Uniformity was enforced in Coventry. It demanded ministers to accept episcopal ordination and the Book of Common Prayer, and to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant. Thus Obediah Grew and John Bryan, those 'pious good ministers', were forced out of their parish churches, despite Bishop Hacket's urging them to conform. The Corporation Act (1661) requiring members of corporate town councils to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant and to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England had already caused the dismissal of an alderman, a sheriff and an assistant clerk. Robert Beake and Thomas Basnet, now well aware of the direction affairs had taken, had not waited to be dismissed but had resigned their offices in February 1662. However, four aldermen of distinctly puritan views managed to avoid the Act at least initially, and there were always in Coventry members of the corporation with Dissenting sympathies who managed to conform.[65]

A strange incident occurred in 1662. Nathaniel Hobson and Alexander Lapworth were called to be members of the Grand Council. Whether this was an act of malice by royalist members of the corporation, or recruits for office were difficult to find, as the Council itself alleged, is not clear. Hobson as a Baptist was unable to take the required oaths, and he was politically suspect having been associated with John Lambert. Lapworth's political and religious allegiances are not known, but both men refused to appear at the Council. Warrants for the arrest of both were issued, and for their commital to the common gaol until they conformed or paid a fine of £100. Lapworth after some resistance caved in and took the oath without going to prison. Hobson was in prison from 1st October until 9th November when he offered to pay his

£100 fine and 'humbly referred himself to the censure of the Council'. Upon this the Council took pity on him, and because he was 'a decayed man in his body and by reason of his old and decrepit age' excused him service, and, at his son's request, he was given back £85 of his fine. The Council then celebrated its triumph by sending for wine, sugar and cakes. Hobson was later given very favourable leases of a field called Little Crampers and his house in the Butchery, worth £300 to him the annals claim. Hobson is later found serving as a member of the council. Quite what this was all about is a mystery, but there is an impression of a charade, of the corporation making a show of its enforcement of obedience to the Clarendon Code.[66]

What became of them

Grew and Bryan stayed in Coventry and continued privately to administer to those who wished to come to them. This was made illegal by the Conventicle Act (1664), and Grew, Bryan and Samuel Basnet were forced to leave Coventry when the Five Mile Act of the following year prohibited non-conformist clergy living within five miles of any corporate town in which they had preached. They returned to the city in 1672 when Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgence, and, though the toleration granted by this was short-lived, they quietly continued their pastoral work. Bryan died in 1675, and the respect with which he was still held in Coventry is shown by the funeral sermon preached by the Rev. Nathaniel Wanley, vicar of Holy Trinity, Bryan's old church. Grew was denounced to the authorities in 1682, and, although blind by this time, he was imprisoned in Coventry for six months. On his release he was forced to

PEACE and REST
FOR
The Upright.
BEING A
SERMON
PREACHED
At the FUNERAL of the REVEREND
Dr. John Bryan, sometime Minister of Trinity in Coventry,

By that Worthy Preacher of Gods Word,
Mr. NATH. WANLEY,
Master of Arts, Deceased, and Successor to the said Doctor in the aforesaid Parish.

LONDON,
Printed for John Smith, Bookseller in Coventry, 1681.

REPRODUCED FROM ORIGINAL BOOK
BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE LOCAL STUDIES DEPT.
COVENTRY CITY LIBRARY

leave the city once again, but he dictated his weekly sermons, and then copies were made and sent to Coventry to be read to small groups, thus avoiding the terms of the Conventicle Act. With the Revolution of 1688 he came back to Coventry and resumed preaching to congregations of perhaps 1000 up to a month before his death in October 1689. He was buried in his former church of St. Michael's.[67]

The impact of Bryan and Grew, who had been brought to Coventry by the Civil War, was long-lasting. When Celia Fiennes visited Coventry in 1697 (and therefore after the Toleration Act of 1689) she commented:

> 'of their Magistrates and Companies, the majority of the heads are now in the sober men's hands, so it is esteemed a Fanatick town; there is indeed the largest Chapple and the greatest number I have ever seen of the Presbyterian way, there is another meeting place in the town of the Independents which is not so bigg, but tho' they may differ in some small things in the maine they agree and seeme to love one another which was no small satisfaction to me.'

The already existing puritan tendency had been strengthened by the events of the two mid-century decades. This meant that at the Restoration a large proportion of the population, at least 25%, would become Dissenters, non-conformists to the Established Church, rising to 40% by 1724. They were especially to be found among the powerful trading companies - the mercers, weavers and clothiers - and the majority were Presbyterians, 'almost 1000' at the Great Meeting in 1669. Dissent was probably not the religion of the Coventry poor, and there were of course those among all sections of the urban society who supported the Stuart dynasty and the Anglican church. Thus the basis was laid for the bitter political divisions of the latter part of Charles II's reign until the triumph of the Whigs in Coventry politics.[68]

Robert Beake, very out of sympathy with the outcome of the Restoration, retired from active politics though he became a leader of the Presbyterian Great Meeting. The Exclusion Crisis brought him to prominence once again, and he was elected one of Coventry's M.P.s to the first parliament of 1679. He voted for the exclusion of the Catholic, James Duke of York, from succession to the English throne. He was even suspected of being involved in the Rye House Plot of 1683 to assassinate Charles II while the king was returning from Newmarket, and his house was searched for concealed arms. He was opposed to the Stuarts to the end of his days, and when going to the poll in 1701 Coventry Tories pelted him with stones and turnips.[69]

John Barker survived the Restoration, and was to die in some degree of poverty. As early as July 1662 he was in a 'lowe condition', and the Council gave him and his wife £5 'in theire necessitie'. He claimed to have spent hundreds of pounds of his own money for the good of the city when he was its M.P. and military governor. He therefore petitioned the corporation in 1670 when he was 79 years old for a pension of 50s every three months to support him. He lamented that he had lived so long.[70]

Conclusion

In 1982 Roger Howell published an essay surveying the reactions of English cities and towns to the Civil War, and he concluded that far from playing a positive part in the parliamentary cause, as had been alleged by contemporaries like Thomas Hobbes and Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, neutralism and conservatism were more characteristic of their role. 'They were not the natural spawning grounds of the Parliamentary or popular cause', he argued. They were more likely to act under duress from outside pressures or factions within. Their main concern was to preserve their privileges and to keep order in their boundaries. These considerations were much more influential than ideological commitment. Howell also commented on the capacity of the ruling élites, 'the older political structures', to survive and absorb the Revolution. He called for more individual local studies to test this view.[71]

Coventry's experience certainly had elements of neutralism and defence of privilege, notably expressed by William Jesson; the corporation undoubtedly feared for the social order; there were outside pressures, from Lord Brooke and possibly Birmingham, and a pro-parliament inside faction led by Barker and Basnet. But there can be no doubting the hostility of the city to Charles's government, the general popularity of the parliamentary cause, and the determination, once the choice was made, to see the matter through, though Coventry was never put to the ultimate test of a really serious siege. The key-factor seems to have been religion: hostility to Catholicism and puritan sympathies gave Barker and Basnet the support they needed to secure the city for parliament and hold it with the help of the Warwickshire county committee. The sense of a godly, embattled city was re-inforced by the city's great Presbyterian ministers, Bryan and Grew. Conservatism was much more a feature of Coventry's attitude after the Civil War. This was why the city felt most happy with Cromwell's Protectorate rather than the republican experiments or the threat of military rule. Again the city's ministers seem to have been influential in putting the brake on any radicalism, political or religious, within the city. This was the period when the city wished to return to its autonomy, and in a large measure it succeeded. The Rule of the Major Generals, though it provoked some resentment was coped with without great difficulty. Where Coventry does fit the Howell thesis is in the capacity of the ruling élite to survive until the Restoration. Oddly perhaps the threat was greater after the Restoration when the monarchy and the Anglican church divided both the oligarchy and the people of Coventry more deeply than before by the Clarendon Code's creation of the formal, legal distinction of Conformists and Non-Conformists among Protestants. The puritan tone of the city's culture was still strong. Finally the restored monarchy and the county gentry interfered in the city's internal affairs more than they had been able to do before the Civil War. The culmination of this was to be the loss of the city's charter in 1683. The overall outcome cannot be better expressed than in the words of Ann Hughes:

> 'The Coventry of the Restoration period was a diminished, threatened city in comparison with the regional stronghold of the 1640s or the aloof, independent city of the pre-war years'.[72]

SOURCE NOTES

1. P.D.A. Harvey and H. Thorpe: *The Printed Maps of Warwickshire 1576-1900,* Warwick 1959, p.8, pl.3; C. Phythian -Adams: *Desolation of a City - Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages,* Cambridge 1979; W. G. Hoskins: *Local History in England,* 2nd Edition, London 1972, pp.238-239; Coventry Record Office (hereafter C.R.O.) Acc. 531/1 p.24.

2. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* (hereafter C.S.P.D.) 1641-43, p.382.

3. D. J. Smith: *Coventry through the Ages,* Coventry and Warwickshire Pamphlet No. 19, Coventry 1993, pp.5, 6; D. Defoe: *A Tour through England and Wales,* London 1928, vol. II, p.83,

4. *Victorian County History of Warwickshire* (hereafter V.C.H., Warks) Vol II, London 1908 repr. 1965, pp.255, 266; VIII London, 1969, pp.167, 168; A. A. Dibben: *Coventry City Charters,* Coventry 1969, pp.31-32; A. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* in R. C. Richards (Ed.): *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution,* Manchester 1992, pp.71-72; Smith: op. et loc. cit. Another four mayors were either dyers or cappers.

5. Dibben: op. cit. pp.27-28.

6. Ann Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire 1620-1660,* Cambridge 1987, pp. 16-17, 104; and *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.73 on whose work this and the two succeeding paragraphs are based; F. Bliss Burbidge: *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva,* Birmingham 1952, p.244.

7. Bliss Burbidge: op. et loc. cit.; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.105.

8. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.74; T. W. Whitley: *The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry from the Earliest Times to the Present Date,* Coventry 1894, p.79.

9. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp.74- 75; Bliss Burbidge: op. et loc. cit.; *V.C.H. Warks* VIII pp. 203-204; C.S.P.D. 1640-41, p.371 and on information from Mr. Phillip Willcox.

10. Much of this paragraph is based on versions of the city annals in Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. pp. 241- 244; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.15.

11. Bliss Burbidge: op et loc. cit.

12. Ibid pp.244-245.

13. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War p.115; E. Gooder: Coventry's Town Wall* Coventry and North Warwickshire History Pamphlet No. 4, Coventry 1971, pp.3, 40.

14. Whitley: op. cit. p.82; Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution,* p.78; Bliss Burbidge: op cit. p.246; C.R.O. Acc. 531/1 p.21.

15 Whitley: op. cit. pp.80, 84. Jesson's loan was 'as testimony of his affection to the Town'. *Journals of the House of Commons* (hereafter CJ) II 1640-42, pp.688, 811; III 1643-44, p.29, 146; Bliss Burbidge: op cit. p.246.

16. Whitley: op cit. p.82; C.R.O. Acc. 531/1 p.21.

17. S. C. Ratcliff and H. C. Johnson: *Warwick County Records* Vol II, Warwick 1936, p xxxii.

18. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.79; C.R.O. BA/H/A/A79/208 and BA/H/C/17/2 p.30. Not even the friendly Scottish army was allowed into the city in 1646, but was kept in the fields near Gosford Green and provisions were sent out to it (C.R.O. Acc 531/1 p.23v).

19. Annals from Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.246; John Vicars: *Parliamentary Chronicle* - extract from *Coventry, Civil War 1642-1651.* Exhibition to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Civil War at the Whitefriars Museum, June 6th - July 19th 1992; C.J. II p.731; C.R.O. BA/H/C/17/2 pp.31, 34, 34v; Whitley: op cit. pp.82-83, an equally colourful version. One version of the annals gives Brooke's force as 600 horse and 3,600 foot (C.R.O. 531/1 p.21v). There is also a contemporary tract: *A True Relation of his Majesties coming to Coventry,* 1642.

20. Bliss Burbidge: op cit. pp.246, 247; E. Gooder: op. cit pp.42-43.

21. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.208; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.247; N. H. Keeble (ed): *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter,* London 1974, p.42 et seq.

22. P. S. Seaver: *The Puritan Lectureships - The Politics of Religious Dissent,* Stanford 1970, p.38; *V.C.H. Warks* VIII pp.372-373; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.65.

23. C. Phythian-Adams: Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550, reprinted in R. Holt and G. Rosser: *The Medieval Town - A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540,* London p.262-3.

24. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.82, 85, 86; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.244; *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* p.43. For Samuel Basnet see below.

25. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.80; C.P.S.D. 1641-43, p.382; B. Manning: *The English People and the English Revolution,* Harmondsworth 1978, p.272.

26. P. Zagorin: *The Court and the Country,* London 1969, p.185.

27. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp. 84, 85; C.R.O. BA/H/C/17/2 pp.24v, 29, 30, 32. Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.247; for the dispute with Denbigh see below. Coventry raised 10 companies of foot and 2 troops of horse (C.R.O. Acc. 531/1 p.22).

28. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait: *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660,* London 1911, Vol. I, pp.54-48; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.170 et seq.

29. For Denbigh see *The Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *DNB*); also F. L. Colville: *The Worthies of Warwickshire,* London, 1869, pp. 275-279; *C.P.S.D.* 1649-50, p.444.

30. *Journals of the House of Lords* (hereafter *LJ*) VI pp.320, 325, 326, 652-654; *CJ* III 1643-44 pp.327- 328.

31. *C.S.P.D.* 1649-50, pp.444-447; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.233-235.

32. *LJ* VII p.51; *CJ* III p.700; *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* p.51.

33. P. E. Tennant: Parish and People - South Warwickshire in the Civil War, *Warwickshire History* Vol. VII No. 6, p.161 et seq. A map of the Civil War garrisons is in Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.209. Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. pp.246, 247; *CJ* IV 1644-46, p.202. Later in 1645 the county committee was still reluctant to send its cavalry north to serve under General Pointz (*CJ* IV p.267).

34. Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.247; Manning: op. cit. p.269 quoting from *'Reliquiae Baxterianae' (The Autobiography* is an abridged but more easily available edition of this); Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp.82, 83; *CJ* III pp.160, 193; A Woolrych: *Battles of the English Civil War,* London 1966, pp.162; C.R.O. BA/H/C/17/2 pp.34v, 35, 40; *C.P.S.D.* 1641-43 p.383; *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* p.49. Baxter's fondness for Coventry continued after he had left the city: see C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/226.

35. *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* pp.43, 51; Colville: op. cit. pp.777-781.

36. *DNB* entries for both and Colville: op. cit. pp.354-357 for Grew and pp.63-66 for Bryan; P. Styles (ed): 'The Genealogie, Life and Death of the Right Honourable Robert Lorde Brooke .....' in R. Bearman: *Miscellany I,* The Dugdale Society Vol. XXXI, Oxford 1977, p.173.

37. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp.90-91; and *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.309-311; *V.C.H. Warks* VIII pp.373, 374.

38. Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts: *Earl of Denbigh* V 1911, p.263.

39. DNB sub Bryan and Grew; A. Hughes: *Godly Reformation and its Opponents in Warwickshire 1640-1662,* Dugdale Society Occasional Paper no. 35 1993 pp.1-2.

40. G. Fox: *Journal,* ed. J. L. Nickall, Cambridge 1952, pp.5, 227; L. Fox (ed.): The Diary of Robert Beake, Mayor of Coventry 1655-56, in R. Bearman: op. cit. p.115.

41. G. Fox: op. cit. pp.46, 47; N. Smith (ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings,* London 1983, pp.13, 15, 205.

42. Smith: op. cit. pp. 11, 12. 15; A. L. Morton: *The World of the Ranters,* London 1970, p.81, quoting *'The Routing of the Ranters'* p.3.

43. C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/227, 228, 230, 238; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.311, 312; and *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.92.

44. C.R.O. BA/H/2/17/2 p.44; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.176; *CJ* V 1646-48 pp.104, 110, 122, 250; C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/214 (Jesson's letter).

45. *C.S.P.D.* 1649-50, p.6; 1650, p.359; Hughes *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.85. Jesson was removed on direct order of the Commons on 20th March 1651, (*CJ* VI 1648-51 p.551); *CJ* VI p.60; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.289.

46. C.R.O. Acc 531/1 p. 23v. A strike was a bushel measure levelled at the top, not left heaped (I am indebted to Mr. Phillip Willcox for this information). Bliss Burbidge: op.cit. pp.248, 249; Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp. 82, 92; C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/217.

47. Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. pp.249, 250; C.R.O. Acc. 531/1 pp. 24, 24v, 25.

48. L. Fox: op. cit. pp.114-137, with index pp.201- 205.

49. For Hughes' interpretation of the diary see her *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.283, 284; and *Coventry and the English Revolution* pp.91, 92.

50. Whitley: op. cit. p.90; D. Underdown: *Pride's Purge - Politics in the Puritan Revolution,* Oxford 1971, p.377; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.248; A. Blair Worden: *The Rump Parliament,* Cambridge 1975, pp.24, 389; C.R.O. 2/3 p.81.

51. Whitley: op. cit. p.94; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.249; Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.92 and *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.313.

52. Whitley: op. cit. pp.94-97. These summaries of the careers of Purefoy and Denbigh are based on their *DNB* entries and references in the Journals of the Lords and the Commons, in *The Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660,* (eds. Firth and Rait) and *C.S.P.D.* 1641-1661.

53. Blair Worden: op. cit. pp. 38, 46, 49, 126, 207; *V.C.H. Warks* VIII p. 250.

54. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.292- 294. For Beake's views on the Humble Petition and Advice see Whitley: op. cit. p.116, incorrectly dated by Whitley to 1689 (*V.C.H. Warks* VIII p.250 n 35).

55. I. Roots: *The Great Rebellion,* London 1971, p.252; Whitley: op. cit. p.98; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.250; E. Ludlow: *Memoirs* (Ed. C. H. Firth), Oxford, 1894, II p. 109.

56. C.R.O. Acc 531/1 p.25v; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.251; Whitley: op. cit. p.100.

57. Bliss Burbidge: op. et. loc. cit.

58. Ibid: pp.251-252; Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.95; C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/240; *V.C.H. Warks* VIII p.204.

59. *CJ* VIII 1660 p.106; Whitley: op. cit. p.101.

60. Bliss Burbidge: op. et. loc. cit.; C.R.O. 2/5 p.48.

61. E. Gooder: op. cit. pp.44, 45.

62. Whitley: op cit. pp.102, 103; J. J. Hurwich: 'A Fanatick Town': the Political Influence of Dissenters in Coventry, 1660-1720, *Midland History* IV no.1 1977, p.19; C.R.O. 2/3 p.84.

63. Ratcliff and Johnson: *Warwick County Records* Vol. IV, Warwick 1938, p.175; Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* pp.338-339; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. pp.252-253; E. Gooder: op. cit. p.45.

64. C.R.O. Acc. 531/1 p.26v; E. Gooder op. cit. p.46.

65. Hurwich: op. cit. pp.19, 20; C.R.O. BA/H/2/17/2 p.143; C.R.O. 2/5 p.49; Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.94.

66. C.R.O. BA/H/2/17/2 pp.143, 146, 146v, 147v, 148, 152; Bliss Burbidge: op. cit. p.253.

67. J. Sibree and M. Caston: *Independency in Warwickshire,* Coventry and London 1855, pp.26-30.

68. C. Morris (ed.): *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* 2nd Edition, London, 1949, p.113; Hurwich: op cit. p.17.

69. Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War* p.342; Hurwich: op. cit. pp.21, 23.

70. C.R.O. BA/H/C/17/2 p.145v; C.R.O. BA/H/Q/A79/249.

71. R. Howell: Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment in the English Revolution: the case of the Towns 1642-49, in J. Morrill (ed.): *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642-1649* London, 1982, p.67-87.

72. Hughes: *Coventry and the English Revolution* p.96.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

1. In the Coventry City Record Office:

   a). City Annals: CRO 2/3
CRO 2/5
Acc 531/1

   b). Corporation Correspondence: BA/H/Q/A79

   c). Council Minute Book 1640-96: BA/H/C/17/2

   d). Chamberlains' and Wardens' Accounts: BA/A/A/26/3

   (The handwriting of these documents presents varying degrees of difficulty, but there is nothing which so well captures the 'flavour' of the city during this period).

2. Frederick Bliss Burbidge: *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* Birmingham, 1952 (for the only extensive printed versions of the City Annals).

3. Academic Studies:

   Ann Hughes: *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire 1620-1660,* Cambridge, 1987. (Her bibliography gives a full list of contemporary sources both manuscript and printed, in both national and local depositories).

   Ann Hughes: *'Coventry and the English Revolution'* in R. C. Richardson (ed.): *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution,* Manchester, 1992. (This book contains chapters on other towns by other authors with which to compare the experience of Coventry).

   Judith J. Hurwich: "'A Fantick Town': The Political Influence of Dissenters in Coventry, 1660-1720" in *Midland History* IV, no.1, 1977 (for the aftermath of the Interregnum in Coventry).

4. Best introductions to the national situation:

   Ivan Roots: *The Great Rebellion 1642-1660,* 3rd impression, London, 1971

   G.E. Aylmer: *Rebellion or Revolution - England from Civil War to Restoration,* Oxford, 1986.