

The ‘Great Blow’ and the Politics of Popular Royalism in Civil War Norwich*

The British Civil Wars are no longer considered a conflict driven solely by the social elite. In recent years, John Walter has demonstrated how the politics of popular parliamentarianism operated among sub-gentry groups, drawing together social and political history to embrace the politics of the parish and the everyday concerns of ordinary people.¹ Alongside this, there has been a fruitful rekindling of interest in royalist studies, presenting a convincing challenge to Gerald Aylmer’s scepticism about researching royalism at lower social levels.² Close readings of legal evidence from courts of assizes and quarter sessions have revealed that even the poorer sorts engaged with high politics. National issues influenced the behaviour of non-

* I would like to thank the Godly Government conference held at the University of York and the Cities and Citizens conference held at the University of Durham, where earlier versions of this article were delivered in 2014 and 2015. I am also grateful to the research seminar at Trinity College, Dublin, and to James Sharpe, Chris King and Joel Halcomb for reading the paper at draft stage, as well as Mandy de Belin for her expertise with Figure 1.

¹ J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006); J. Walter, ‘Crowds and Popular Politics in the English Revolution’, in M.J. Braddick, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 330–46.

² J. McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007); J. McElligott and D.L. Smith, eds., *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2007); L. Bowen, ‘Seditious Speech and Popular Royalism’, in J. McElligott and D.L. Smith, eds., *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 44–66; G.E. Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England, II: Royalist Attitudes’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xxxvii (1987), p. 29.

elites, shaping their politics and identities. Even in the provinces, popular politics extended beyond the negotiation of authority in the parish or locality to embrace national events.³ This was especially the case in incorporated towns and cities, where merchants, craftsmen and retailers became participants in government. In recent years, a rich historiography on early modern urban citizenship has emerged, taking the influential works of Patrick Collinson, John Walter and Phil Withington as its inspiration.⁴ The divisions of the 1640s made citizens particularly susceptible to factional conflicts over the apparatus of municipal self-government, while their experience of Civil War politicised them more broadly. The military capacity of early modern citizens, meanwhile, as Phil Withington has recently stressed, has been largely overlooked in mainstream historiography.⁵ Building on these insights, this article provides a micro-historical reading of events surrounding the Norwich ‘Great Blow’ of April 1648. It supports recent suggestions that crowds were knowledgeable and sophisticated. It applies social history ‘with the politics put back’ to a local Civil War context, and it refines

³ I. Peck, ‘Collaborators not Cavaliers: Popular Politics in the Northern Counties of England, 1647–1659’, *Northern History*, 1 (2013), pp. 42, 49, 50, 53; A. Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 105–8.

⁴ In particular, see P. Collinson, ‘*De Republica Anglorum*’, or, History with the Politics Put Back’, and ‘The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I’, in his *Elizabethan Essays* (London, 1994), pp. 1–29, 31–57; J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999); P. Withington, *The Politics of the Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁵ P. Withington, ‘Introduction—Citizens and Soldiers: The Renaissance Context’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, xv (2011), pp. 12, 14, 16, 24; P. Withington, ‘Urban Citizens and England’s Civil Wars’, in Braddick, ed., *Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, pp. 312–29.

these approaches to reveal how popular political culture mobilised urban citizens, not just in parliamentary directions, but in royalist ones too.

On 24 April 1648 a rioting crowd in Norwich unwittingly unleashed the largest explosion recorded in seventeenth-century England, detonating ninety-eight barrels of powder in the house rented to Norfolk's County Committee. The city magistrates' subsequent investigation made the 'mutiny', 'blow' or 'crack', as contemporaries variously called it, the best documented riot of the century. No fewer than 278 informations and examinations taken in the wake of the 'Great Blow' survive in the Norwich City Records, itself the largest archive for an early modern English provincial city. These testimonies, together with indictments and other records drawn from the city quarter sessions and assembly books, form the most substantial archival collection for the study of popular royalist insurgency in England.

Unsurprisingly, this episode has not passed unnoticed by historians. R.W. Ketton-Cremer considered it a popular reaction against the city's puritan regime, born out of 'years of frustration and boredom'.⁶ John T. Evans neglected the informations and examinations, but regarded the affair as a royalist rebellion spawned from an ongoing, deep-seated ideological conflict within Norwich.⁷ Matthew Reynolds supported this view with an emphasis on the depth of religious divisions in Norwich even before war broke out.⁸ Robert Ashton acknowledged that the causes of the riot were 'numerous and complex', but agreed

⁶ R.W. Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War: A Portrait of a Society in Conflict* (London, 1969), p. 331.

⁷ J.T. Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich: Politics, Religion, and Government, 1620–1690* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 174–82.

⁸ M. Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and their Opponents in Early Modern England: Religion in Norwich, c.1560–1643* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 256.

with Evans that it might have developed into a full-blown uprising. Despite this, Ashton concluded that participants were more obviously anti-parliamentarian than actively royalist.⁹ This article, by contrast, will argue that closer attention to the informations and examinations allows us to identify an emerging popular politics whose character was vigorously royalist.

Norwich and London are usually considered parliamentary heartlands, but neither city lacked royalist sympathisers ready to act should the opportunity arise. By 1648 both cities were deeply divided. Ian Gentles has demonstrated how popular royalism became prevalent among particular occupations and in specific parts of the metropolis.¹⁰ This article will propose a similar case for Norwich; that of a city divided by topography and occupations, with royalist sentiment gaining in political strength in the months preceding the insurrection. Rioting Norvicians were butchers, lesser tradesmen, labourers and apprentices drawn from the city's Mancroft and Conesford wards, the neighbourhoods first identified by Evans as areas of royalist strength.

With the testimonies now fully transcribed for the first time, a thorough investigation into the rioters' motivations, and the means of their mobilisation, has become possible.¹¹ The

⁹ R. Ashton, *Counter-Revolution: The Second Civil War and its Origins, 1646–8* (New Haven, CT, 1994), pp. 368–9, 374.

¹⁰ I. Gentles, 'The Struggle for London during the Second Civil War', *Historical Journal*, xxvi (1983), p. 282.

¹¹ The informations and examinations have now been transcribed for publication: A. Hopper, ed., *'The Late Great Mutiny': Informations and Examinations Relating to the Great Blow, 1648*, Norfolk Record Society, lxxxii (forthcoming in 2018). The great majority are to be found in Norfolk Record Office [hereafter NRO], Norwich City Records [hereafter NCR] Case 12c/1, depositions about the 'Great Blow', 1648. Three additional informations, numbered 146, 164 and 168, can be found in NRO, NCR Case 16a/47/1.

article's first section will present a narrative account of the 'Great Blow'. Subsequent sections will discuss how the urban landscape, and the social profile of the rioters, influenced the insurgents' ability to rally support at street level. Evidence of seditious speech and gesture will enrich this understanding, adding weight to recent challenges to the old orthodoxy that popular royalism was necessarily unthinking, conservative and deferential.¹² The final section will examine the aftermath of the riot and its political consequences.

I

Norwich during the Civil War was a walled city of some twenty thousand inhabitants, about a fifth of whom were Dutch or Walloon in origin.¹³ Although far from the front line, it was hardly untouched by hostilities. By March 1643 the royalist-sympathising mayor, William Gostlin, had been arrested, and his aldermen supporters hounded out of the corporation.¹⁴ Recruits were mustered for Parliament, initially as volunteers and then through impressment. Norwich's churches and cathedral experienced a wave of popular and officially sanctioned

¹² L. Bowen, 'David Underdown, Royalist Conspirators and the Character of English Politics', *History Compass*, ix (2013), pp. 341–51; A. Hughes, 'The "Chalk" and the "Cheese": David Underdown, Regional Cultures and Popular Allegiance in the English Revolution', *History Compass*, ix (2013), pp. 373–80.

¹³ P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1985), p. 132.

¹⁴ C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (London, 1974), pp. 62, 66–7; Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 125–7; NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books, 1642–68, fo. 15r. It appears Gostlin was released by June 1643: British Library [hereafter BL], Add. MS 22619, fo. 78, Richard Harman to John Thacker, 27 June 1643.

iconoclasm.¹⁵ An attack on guild days and festivals followed, with stricter Sabbath observation demanded, including an order that Christmas Day 1645 should not be observed as a festival.¹⁶ Then, in 1646, Norwich's godly fell out among themselves in a vicious pamphlet war between Presbyterians and Independents over issues of church government.¹⁷

Meanwhile, in order to fund Parliament's war effort, taxes were increased to record levels. Over and above 'voluntary' contributions (in which refusers' names were recorded) came the monthly assessment to support Fairfax's army.¹⁸ From July 1643, Parliament

¹⁵ Joseph Hall, *The Works of Joseph Hall, D.D., Successively Bishop of Exeter and Norwich: With some Account of his Life and Sufferings written by Himself*, ed. Peter Hall (new edn., 12 vols., Oxford, 1837–9), i. 54; Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, p. 129; J. Blatchly, 'Iconoclasm in Norfolk, 1644', in *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*, ed. T. Cooper (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 120–21; NRO, NCR Case 16a/20, Mayor's Court Book, 1634–46, fos. 411r, 415r, 445v.

¹⁶ NRO, NCR Case 16a/20, Mayor's Court Book, 1634–46, fos. 454r, 465v, 474v; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, III: *The History of the City and County of Norwich, Part I* (London, 1806) [hereafter Blomefield, *Norwich I*], pp. 391–2; L.G. Bolingbroke, 'Players in Norwich from the Accession of Queen Elizabeth until their Suppression in 1642', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xiii (1898), p. 19.

¹⁷ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books, 1642–68, fo. 45r; *Vox Populi; or, The Peoples Cry against the Clergy* (London, 1646; Thomason E.351(7)); *An Hue-and-Cry after Vox Populi; or, An Answer to Vox Diaboli, or a Libellous Pamphlet falsely styled Vox Populi; reviling the Magistracy and Ministry of Norwich* (Norwich, 1646; Thomason E.355(13)).

¹⁸ NRO, NCR Case 13a/45, List of rates under ordinance for Fairfax's army, 15 Feb. 1645; Blomefield, *Norwich I*, p. 388; NRO, NCR Case 16a/20, Mayor's Court Book, 1634–46, fo.

argued that it was driven by necessity to impose the Excise, a value-added tax on groceries and foodstuffs, which soon became widely unpopular and hit the poor particularly hard.¹⁹ On top of this, in November 1646, Norwich endured a plague epidemic, along with floods in the riverside parishes, heavy snowfall and thunderstorms. By December that year, the Excise on meat and beer had provoked the city's butchers into riots.²⁰ These disorders in Norwich marketplace played out under the very noses of the city's magistrates, seated in the adjacent Guildhall. Their violence rekindled magisterial nightmares about a recurrence of the commotions of 1549. Kett's Rebellion was fresh in the memory, commemorated in the early 1640s by annual thanksgiving days in the very parishes that witnessed the worst of the rioting in 1648.²¹ Magistrates' anxieties about angry butchers were darkened by the memory of Lord

399v; Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War*, pp. 265, 284; NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fo. 30v.

¹⁹ M.J. Braddick, 'Popular Politics and Public Policy: The Excise Riot at Smithfield in February 1647 and its Aftermath', *Historical Journal*, xxxiv (1991), pp. 597–626; D. Coffman, 'Towards a New Jerusalem: The Committee for Regulating the Excise, 1649–1653', *English Historical Review*, cxxviii (2013), pp. 1420–23.

²⁰ Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 132; Blomefield, *Norwich I*, p. 392; R. Beatniffe, *The Norfolk Tour; or, the Traveller's Pocket Companion* (6th edn., Norwich, 1808), p. 232. The floods were a serious concern for Norwich brewers, who were also refusing to pay the Excise duty by January 1647: Bodleian Library, Oxford [hereafter Bodleian], MS Tanner 59b, fo. 649, Richard Wenman to the Commissioners of Excise, 8 Jan. 1647.

²¹ Wood, *1549 Rebellions*, p. 248; NRO, PD 484/118, Churchwardens' account book, St Stephen's parish, 1598–1688, fo. 342; NRO, PD 26/71, Churchwardens' account book, St Peter Mancroft parish, 1580–1652, fos. 334, 393.

Sheffield's clubbing to death in Norwich by the butcher Fulks in 1549, and by the cultural stereotyping of butchers as brutish plebeians who naturally loathed those of noble blood.²²

The Excise riots were an important prelude to the Great Blow sixteen months later and involved many of the same participants. Michael Braddick has cautioned us not to inflate the extent of resistance during these Excise riots, and not to take alarmist contemporary accounts at face value. He argues that the Excise on meat and domestic salt production was removed in June 1647, not owing to popular pressure from rioting, but more likely because Parliament's Presbyterians were anxious to court popular support against an increasingly aggressive New Model Army. Yet anti-Excise feeling was mentioned in dozens of the Great Blow informations and examinations of 1648, suggesting that it was still of great concern to Norwich's magistrates, so a brief account of the Norwich Excise riots is necessary here.²³

In December 1646, Excise officers became too scared to collect the tax in Norwich after several butchers refused to pay.²⁴ With Excise receipts already in substantial arrears, Parliament was forced to act. A messenger was sent to Norwich with Parliament's order of 26 November to arrest four butchers: James and William Sheringham, William Gaywood and

²² Raphael Holinshed et al., *The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles, comprising 1. The Description and Historie of England. 2. The Description and Historie of Ireland. 3. The Description and Historie of Scotland* (3 vols., London, 1587), iii. 1034. The 'Battell of Worcester' ballad depicting the clash at Powick Bridge in 1642 recalled how Prince Maurice was surrounded by nine rebel butchers from Eastcheap, all striking at his head 'As if they had been at work at their Trade': Alexander Brome, *Rump; or, An Exact Collection of the Choycest Poems and Songs Relating to the Late Times* (London, 1662), p. 156.

²³ Braddick, 'Popular Politics and Public Policy', pp. 600, 602, 615–17.

²⁴ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books, 1642–68, fo. 47r.

John Phillips.²⁵ On 12 December, James Sheringham was apprehended, but word reached the butchers in the market who then rescued him, assaulting Parliament's messenger and the sheriff's assistants in the process. On 14 December, another crowd came to the marketplace, armed with clubs and staves. They were warned by the magistrates in the Guildhall to return to their houses upon pain of death, whereupon one butcher called out 'A pox of god upon those that begun this worke'. Another 'rode about the Citty Crieinge along the streets as he rode Arme, Arme, Arme: if you intend to save your lives & estates'.²⁶ Before all were dispersed, some rioters threatened the Excise office and were only turned back by women interposing themselves between the crowd and the building. The trained bands having failed to turn out, the mayor, Henry Watts, commanded John Cruso, the captain of the militia company of the Dutch and French Congregations, to suppress further tumults. After much mediation, the Sheringhams, Gaywood and Phillips entered their bonds at the Guildhall to answer for their delinquency before a parliamentary committee on 19 January 1647. Norwich's magistrates were clearly rattled; Sheriff Richard Wenman and Alderman Adrian Parmenter—at whose house on Hogg Hill the Excise office was located—wrote to Parliament's Excise commissioners on 17 December that 'ourselves are threatened to bee chopt in peeces'.²⁷

²⁵ Coffman, 'Towards a New Jerusalem', p. 1433; BL, Add. MS 22620, fo. 96, parliamentary order to arrest four Norwich butchers, 26 Nov. 1646.

²⁶ Bodleian, MS Tanner 59b, fo. 610, Adrian Parmenter to the Commissioners of Excise, 17 Dec. 1646.

²⁷ Ibid.; *Journal of the House of Commons* [hereafter *CJ*], V: 1646–1648 (London, 1802), p. 58; B. Cozens-Hardy and E.A. Kent, *The Mayors of Norwich, 1403–1835: Being Biographical Notes on the Mayors of the Old Corporation* (Norwich, 1938), p. 81.

The following week Norwich's butchers abused the Excise officers further, while the refusal to pay the duty spread to other butchers and brewers in the surrounding region.²⁸ Similar resistance occurred at Beccles in Suffolk on 26 December 1646, and a major riot broke out in London on 15 February 1647. The capital's butchers burnt the Excise office (and its record books) in Smithfield. The sheriffs charged with quashing the Smithfield riot reported to the House of Commons that 'This Business sprung, and took Encouragement, from the Business of like Nature, which was at Norwich, and passed unpunished'²⁹—where Alderman Parmenter himself lamented that he could expect 'no redresse' from Norwich's magistrates. Consequently, some at Westminster, including Thomas Atkin, MP for Norwich, suspected that Norwich's Justices of the Peace were failing in their duties, and that the mayor, Henry Watts, was guilty of 'some remissness'. The city was threatened with having to quarter troopers if the magistrates failed to quell the crisis.³⁰ It seems this threat was enacted because, during spring 1647, several inhabitants testified to having been abused, threatened and maimed by troopers.³¹

²⁸ Bodleian, MS Tanner 59b, fo. 623, Adrian Parmenter to the Commissioners of Excise, 28 Dec. 1646.

²⁹ NRO, HMN 7/172/5, Thomas Atkin to Henry Watts, 1647; D. Coffman, *Excise Taxation and the Origins of Public Debt* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 55–8; *CJ, 1646–1648*, pp. 58, 89.

³⁰ BL, Add. MS 22620, fos. 45, 54, 56, 96, Thomas Atkin to Henry Watts, mayor of Norwich, 25 Jan. 1647; Bodleian, MS Tanner 59b, fo. 623, Adrian Parmenter to the Commissioners of Excise, 28 Dec. 1646, and fo. 649, Richard Wenman to the Commissioners for Excise, 8 Jan. 1647.

³¹ BL, Add. MS 22620, fos. 106–8, information of John Margeson to Henry Watts, concerning troopers, 1647.

The tumults over the Excise were part of a reaction in Norwich against puritan rule and the burden of the parliamentary war effort. In September 1646, the freemen elected a royalist sympathiser, Robert Holmes, as sheriff and in March 1648, another, Roger Mingay, as alderman for Mancroft ward. Norwich puritans were concerned at the continued presence of unreformed worship in the city; the guild day sermon of 22 June 1647, delivered by John Carter, the Presbyterian minister of St Peter Mancroft, upbraided magistrates for attempting to silence godly ministers and for having supported Bishop Wren during the 1630s.³² In August 1647, Henry Drury was indicted for using the Book of Common Prayer in neighbouring St Giles's parish church, in contempt of parliament's authority.³³ On 1 December 1647, apprentices gathered in the Castle yard and petitioned the mayor, John Utting, for the observance of Christmas Day; in February 1648, Utting allowed a bonfire and feasts on Charles I's coronation day.³⁴ Utting was a churchwarden of St Peter's, and John Carter's ministry there was marred by many parishioners refusing to contribute to his maintenance.³⁵

On 18 April 1648, Sheriff Thomas Ashwell and Alderman Thomas Baret presented a petition to the House of Commons against Mayor Utting. It accused him of allowing royalist clergy to preach in Norwich, and permitting delinquents to vote in municipal elections.³⁶ On 22 April, a messenger arrived to convey Utting to Parliament, with orders that Alderman

³² John Carter, *The Nail and the Wheel. The Nail fastned by a Hand from Heaven. The Wheel turned by a Voyce from the Throne of Glory. Both described in two several sermons in the Green-yard at Norwich* (London, 1647), pp. 85–6.

³³ NRO, NCR Case 11a/54, Quarter Sessions, Indictments and Recognizances, 1647, no. 13.

³⁴ Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, p. 174.

³⁵ BL, Add. MS 22620, fo. 48, Thomas Atkin to Henry Watts, 28 Jan. 1647.

³⁶ *CJ, 1646–1648*, pp. 534–5.

Christopher Baret (Thomas's father) should replace Utting as mayor. Remembering Mayor Gostlin's downfall in 1643,³⁷ Utting's friends, including six aldermen, on 22 April approved a counter-petition to keep him in Norwich, testifying to his good government. This petition was later blamed for the mutiny that followed. As further signatures were solicited, support for Utting grew riotous.³⁸ Papers inciting the inhabitants to arm themselves to protect the mayor were set upon walls and posts on the night of 23 April, and those attempting to remove them faced violent intimidation.³⁹

In the early hours of 24 April, two gunshots were let off as signals. By 9 a.m. a large crowd, estimated by onlookers at up to a thousand, gathered at the Market Cross, overlooking the gate of the King's Head Inn.⁴⁰ Concerned to prevent Mayor Utting's departure, the crowd pressed to get inside the inn, where Utting and Parliament's messenger were lodged, but were inhibited by the narrow, guarded gateway into the long yard. At around 10 a.m. Felix Forby made a speech calling on the crowd to depart. Soon after, the messenger left, trailed by onlookers to St Stephen's gate.⁴¹ As with the earlier Excise riots, the sheriff was unable to disperse the crowds and the trained bands were not mobilised, their colonel refusing to send

³⁷ Utting had been lectured on Gostlin's fate as recently as December 1647 by the minister, Thomas Ramsey, who reminded him that 'the Citye was not well kept, when the keeper of it, could not keepe himselfe': NRO, MC 98/1/16, Thomas Ramsey to John Utting, 17 Dec. 1647.

³⁸ *A True Relation of the Late Great Mutiny which was in the City and County of Norwich, April 24* (London, 1648; Thomason E.438(6)), p. 2.

³⁹ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 143a.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 95, 200, 206, 245.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 61, 133, 136, 176, 187, 203.

out the warrants.⁴² Further crowds converged on the houses of the leading parliamentarians Alderman Parmenter and, first, Sheriff Ashwell.⁴³ Some in the crowd suspected that Ashwell had been stockpiling arms, Thomas Bullard allegedly saying they were to ‘kill his neighbours’. He further implied that Ashwell was a coward, mocking his captaincy with the jibe ‘what under a bush?’ Others proclaimed they would eat of Ashwell’s meat and drink his beer, commodities that were costly precisely because of the Excise. The house, which had been used for meetings by Norwich’s Congregationalists, was thoroughly looted; a drum and weaponry taken inside were distributed among the rioters.⁴⁴

⁴² *True Relation of the Late Great Mutiny*, p. 2.

⁴³ These large, elite residences adorned prime sites on central streets, symbols of the public status and reputation of these members of the corporation: C. King, ‘The Interpretation of Urban Buildings: Power, Memory and Appropriation in Norwich Merchants’ Houses, c.1400–1660’, *World Archaeology*, xli (2009), pp. 483–5. According to Blomefield, Ashwell’s house was the corner house against the south side of St Michael at Plea Church by the Red-wall, and according to the examination of William Symonds it was opposite the churchyard: Blomefield, *Norwich I*, p. 395; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 23; F. Bateman and W. Rye, *The History of the Bethel Hospital at Norwich: Built by Mrs. Mary Chapman in the Year 1713* (Norwich, 1906), p. 89.

⁴⁴ Helmets, armour, half pikes, muskets, swords, bandoliers, gunpowder, a buff coat, drum and swede’s feathers (stakes used to hamper cavalry attacks) were thrown from the broken windows. Several pikes were found concealed in a false roof and distributed among the crowd: NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 24, 28, 61, 79, 81, 104, 110, 127, 216, 222–4, 247, 249, 259–60, 270. Captain Ashwell’s company, including recruits pressed in Norwich, served in Colonel Hogan’s regiment: BL, Add. MS 15903, fo. 58, ‘Souldjers imprest out of the City of Norwiche, for a recreute to Captain Thomas Ashwell, in Collonell Hogan's Regiment’.

The next target was Alderman Parmenter's house, which was also the site of the Excise office on Hogg Hill, close to the butchers on Ber Street, and had been threatened by the Excise riots sixteen months earlier. Around noon, William True was heard to say in the White Lion, 'come boyes lett us drinke & be merry for we will have 1000^{li} out of Mr Parmenters house which he have had for excise'. Another deponent added that True proposed to use this money to 'pay his souldgers'.⁴⁵ Martial intent among the rioters was signalled by the striking of drums, and military passwords, such as 'for god & kinge Charles', were employed on Ber Street.⁴⁶ At around 2 p.m., crowds converged on the Committee House, a symbol of Parliament's power over the city, and the arsenal containing the 3,000 arms of the county magazine.⁴⁷ Breaking through bolted doors, the rioters ascended to the armoury, where Samuel Cawthorne, the armourer, was assaulted for having shot a boy in the scuffle. Like the Smithfield rioters of the preceding year, the mob destroyed sequestration and taxation records. In scenes that were also reminiscent of the 1549 commotions, they 'cast out great bundles of writings att the wyndowes'.⁴⁸ This act expressed contempt for the County Committee, and was particularly inflammatory given the sensitivity of Norwich's corporation about access to records that maintained municipal authority.⁴⁹

Thomas Garret's shop was also attacked, with stones thrown at the windows. Garret himself carried word of the tumult to East Dereham, where part of Colonel Charles

⁴⁵ NRO, NCR, Case 12c/1, nos. 252, 264, 271.

⁴⁶ Ibid., nos. 60, 175, 273.

⁴⁷ NRO, NCR, Case 17b/6, Mayor's Book, fo. 37.

⁴⁸ NRO, NCR, Case 12c/1, nos. 66, 175, 195–7, 212, 227, 250a, 259.

⁴⁹ A. Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 262.

Fleetwood's regiment was quartered.⁵⁰ Groups from three of Fleetwood's troops converged on Norwich later that day, from 4 p.m., entering through several gates that had been left unsecured by the rioters.⁵¹ The troopers charged the crowds, sending many scurrying indoors. Under pouring rain, a firefight developed around the Committee House. In the excitement, the rioters were careless with the gunpowder. One swept it from the stairs; another took a hatful home.⁵² The result was a massive explosion. The precise cause remains unknown, but it seems most probable that a cord dropped from a matchlock musket ignited spilt gunpowder close to the barrel store. The flint-and-brick rubble, mixed-masonry and timber-framed buildings typical of the city could have done little to stifle the blast.⁵³ Joseph Paine, an onlooker, estimated in a letter that day that eighty were slain and more wounded. The following day, three men were buried in St Peter Mancroft parish, 'slaine by gunpowder',

⁵⁰ Garret also testified against speakers of seditious words in the city in September 1648 and was elected as a new common councillor for Mancroft in the purges that followed the 'Blow': NRO, NCR Case 11a/56, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1648, no. 42; NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books, 1642–68, fo. 60v. For the actions of the crowd outside his house, see NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 19, 56, 203, 235, 244.

⁵¹ The troops were those of Captains Richard Sankey, Stephen White and Griffith Lloyd: John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliaments* (8 vols., London, 1721–2), vii. 1071–2; I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645–1653* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 151, 241; C.H. Firth and G. Davies, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army* (2 vols., Oxford, 1940), i. 93–9.

⁵² NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 189–90.

⁵³ C. King, "'Closure" and the Urban Great Rebuilding in Early Modern Norwich', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, xlv (2010), p. 54; King, 'Interpretation of Urban Buildings', p. 475.

four in St Lawrence's, three in St John's, Timberhill, including one 'killed by a trooper', and seven more in St Stephen's.⁵⁴ Within days, tracts printed in London claimed that 120 people were missing and mortally wounded, or that '200 rioters perished'.⁵⁵ Joseph Paine dolefully commented, 'they are now pulling the mangled bodys out of the rubbish'.⁵⁶ Forty houses were destroyed, and the windows were blown out of buildings in the marketplace. As far off as St Gregory's parish windows were shattered, and had to be boarded up to prevent looting. The churches of St Stephen and St Peter Mancroft also lost their windows; the total damage was estimated at £20,000.⁵⁷ St Stephen's churchwardens' accounts detail many payments for

⁵⁴ Bodleian, MS Tanner 311, fo. 36, Joseph Paine to Richard Bensly, 24 Apr. 1648, and fo. 38, Justinian Lewin to John Hobart, 27 Apr. 1648 NRO, PD 26/16, Burials in St Peter Mancroft, 1554–1736; NRO, PD 58/1, Burials in St Lawrence's, 1559–1764; NRO, PD 74/1, Baptisms and burials in St John's, Timberhill, 1559–1768; NRO, PD 484/1, Marriages and burials in St Stephen's, 1538–1653, fo. 63v.

⁵⁵ *The True Answer of the Parliament to the Petition of the Lord Mayor* (London, 27 Apr. 1648; Thomason E.437(12)), pp. 2–3; *True Relation of the Late Great Mutiny*, p. 4; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vii. 1071–2. Sir Jacob Astley mourned 'the Losse of so many men' in his letter to Sir John Potts of 28 April 1648: W. and M. Vaughan-Lewis, *See You in Court: The Potts Family of Mannington, Norfolk* (Lavenham, 2009), p. 314.

⁵⁶ Bodleian, MS Tanner 311, fo. 36, Joseph Paine to Richard Bensly, 24 Apr. 1648. The painting of a similar explosion at Delft in 1654 gives an impression of the devastation that must have been wrought: National Gallery, NG1061, Egbert van der Poel, 'A View of Delft after the Explosion of 1654': <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/egbert-van-der-poel-a-view-of-delft-after-the-explosion-of-1654> (accessed 19 Feb. 2016).

⁵⁷ R.W. Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk Assembly* (London, 1957), p. 144; Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 371.

repairs to the church funded by a parish rate, including glazing, plumbing, masonry and ironwork.⁵⁸ In St Peter Mancroft parish, where the repairs were still more expensive, the parish rate to repair the church was settled by ordinance of Parliament, levied especially upon the butchers' stalls and shops—another link to the preceding Excise riots and a clear indication of where MPs perceived culpability to lie.⁵⁹

II

The testimonies taken after the 'Great Blow' were described as 'informations and examinations'. The informations provided intelligence, often of an incriminating kind, against those under suspicion of involvement. The examinations were the pre-trial statements of the accused in response to questioning from the Norwich magistrates. Most are drafted in a neat, uniform secretary hand, probably that of the clerk of the city quarter sessions. They were numbered and written in a coverless volume of bound paper, and appear to be the originals because all the deponents signed their name or left their mark. They comprise over 55,000 words of testimony. In them, deponents answered interrogatories from Norwich's Justices of the Peace while trying to put the least damaging spin upon their actions on 24 April. Their testimonies were crafted into a narrative by the clerk. In the light of this process of compilation, it might be argued that much of the content reveals more about the justices' anxieties than what was actually said or done. Here, the process of gathering evidence might

⁵⁸ NRO, PD 484/118, Churchwardens' account book, St Stephen's parish, 1598–1688, fos. 350–51, 355.

⁵⁹ NRO, PD 26/71, Churchwardens' account book, St Peter Mancroft parish, 1580–1652, fos. 363–4, 368–71. This rate included three of the four butchers arrested for their earlier role in the Excise riots.

usefully be compared to the taking of the 1641 depositions in Ireland. Unfortunately, Norwich's testimonies rarely give as much biographical detail about the deponents, and the interrogatories themselves do not survive; but the testimonies do appear to have been shaped by similar magisterial concerns. In establishing culpability, both the commissioners in Ireland in 1642 and the Norwich justices in 1648 were more interested in recording inflammatory words, gestures, oaths and the signing of documents than they were in acts of violence.⁶⁰ This was about identifying the insurgents and establishing how they had mobilised support, so that steps could be taken to prevent any future recurrence. The Norwich magistrates lacked the workload of the commissioners in Ireland, but their industry remains impressive; they took 123 informations and examinations within a week of the explosion, without pausing for the Sabbath. Over 90 per cent of the total of 281 were gathered between 25 April and 30 May 1648, with the final sixteen being taken during July, August and October.

These examinations and informations were surrendered to Mr Gerard, clerk of the Norfolk Assizes, who on 7 December 1648 was ordered by the House of Commons to return these records to Norwich to be used 'for the Tryal of the late Rioters'.⁶¹ Afterwards, they remained in the custody of the corporation at the Guildhall. The Anglican clergyman Francis Blomefield clearly had access to them in the 1740s, as he quoted from them in his history of the city.⁶² In 1894, they were moved to Norwich Castle Muniment Room. There, in 1906, Sir

⁶⁰ A. Clarke, 'The Commission for the Despoiled Subject, 1641–7', in B. Mac Cuarta, ed., *Reshaping Ireland: Colonization and its Consequences. Essays Presented to Nicholas Canny* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 241–60; J. Cunningham, 'Anatomising Irish Rebellion: The Cromwellian Delinquency Commissions, the Books of Discrimination and the 1641 Depositions', *Irish Historical Studies*, xl (2016), pp. 22–42.

⁶¹ *CJ*, VI: 1648–1651 (London, 1802), pp. 92, 94.

⁶² Blomefield, *Norwich I*, pp. 395–8.

Frederic Bateman and Walter Rye made partial transcriptions of them, as well as the official calendar of the December 1648 quarter sessions.⁶³

III

Close reading of the informations and examinations reveals much about how the politics of popular royalism operated, and the aspects of it that the parliamentary magistrates found so threatening. This section will explore these testimonies to seek to understand how popular royalism interacted with spaces in the urban environment, and then address how royalist sentiment was voiced through speech and gesture.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

The city's landscape was more than a backdrop to the events of April 1648. Rather, it did much to shape them. The informations and examinations reveal how most of the crowds' actions occurred in Mancroft and Conesford wards, south and west of the castle, and largely in the parishes of St Stephen's and St Peter Mancroft. The crowds mustered in the open spaces of Chapel Field and the market (see fig. 1). Many participants joined the crowds from the outlying poorer parishes to the south and west, which had higher concentrations of poor-quality housing (later exempted from the Hearth Tax).⁶⁴ The informations and examinations give a strong sense of those districts, down to specific streets, alleys and alehouses, where the magistrates were most anxious about disaffection. Central to their concerns was control of the marketplace. Described by Andy Wood as 'the most significant place in the social and

⁶³ Bateman and Rye, *History of the Bethel Hospital*, pp. 105, 108. Ashton held that their transcription of the testimonies 'abounds in inaccuracies and omits much significant detail': Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 372.

⁶⁴ King, "'Closure" and the Urban Great Rebuilding', p. 67.

political geography of the town', the marketplace was a critical ground where popular politics was contested, and a 'theatre for the everyday performance of domination, subversion, confrontation and resistance'.⁶⁵ Crowds could mobilise there with frightening speed, as was the case during the Excise riot at Smithfield market. A Norwich mercer, Leonard Spurgeon, declared that once a shout was given at 8 a.m., 500 armed men would appear.⁶⁶ Predictions of large and sudden turnouts were quite common in earlier episodes of riot and particularly unnerving for the magistrates.⁶⁷

In addition to the open space of the market, the doorstep interface between houses and the open street was a site particularly susceptible to violent scuffles, exchanges of threats and inflammatory words. Victims were isolated and intimidated on their very thresholds. For example, Mrs Warnes was standing with Heath Andrews in her shop door in Tombland, when Edmund Corby approached them armed with a sword and cudgel, crying 'you rounde heads goe digge, goe digge such as you I will knock downe'.⁶⁸

The informations and examinations also demonstrate how alehouse conversations could be reported to magistrates by witnesses and informers. They underline how inns, taverns and alehouses played leading roles as the venues in which armed support was mustered. Alehouse conversations reported in the testimonies suggest a politically informed clientele from a wide cross-section of society, operating in an atmosphere charged with bluster and intimidation. Particular establishments held reputations for partisan drinking,

⁶⁵ A. Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 117–19.

⁶⁶ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 274.

⁶⁷ I am grateful to James Sharpe for discussion of this point.

⁶⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 10. Other examples include NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 139, 152, 170, 205.

foreshadowing how the alehouse became a venue for Tory and Jacobite sympathies in subsequent generations.⁶⁹

The petition for Utting circulated in the streets and domestic households too, accompanied by rituals of bonding such as the sharing of food, drinking and toasts.⁷⁰ James Sheringham, one of the four butchers arrested during Norwich's Excise riots of 1646, collected signatures on doorsteps in Conesford, with a crowd of the poor behind him. A company of butchers at his house's entrance on Timberhill called on passers-by to enter and sign.⁷¹ Sheringham was also seen riding through Ber Street Gates, urging 'every one bringe out his armes', while his pitchfork-wielding confederate Thomas Balden declared that though the troopers were here 'we will have the gates shut up & take them alive'.⁷²

Parish churches were another important focal point for mobilising support. In order to solicit signatures, the petition to defend Mayor Utting was carried around the city's churches. On Sunday 23 April it was read aloud to congregations after divine worship. In St Stephen's, signatures were taken on the communion table. This was exactly how the Protestation and the Solemn League and Covenant had previously been subscribed.⁷³ It was later reported that 'to get hands to it, some were so bold, as to stay the people in Church upon the lords day, to

⁶⁹ M. Hailwood, 'Alehouses, Popular Politics and Plebeian Agency in Early Modern England', in F. Williamson, ed., *Locating Agency: Space, Power and Popular Politics* (Newcastle, 2010), pp. 58–60; M. Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 66–73.

⁷⁰ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 85–6, 207.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 90, 95, 112, 158, 256.

⁷² *Ibid.*, no. 83.

⁷³ *CJ, 1648–1651*, p. 294; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 10–13, 59.

subscribe it: by this meanes the rude multitude were all possessed of the businesse'.⁷⁴

Although the petition for Utting does not appear to have survived, rumours circulated about what it actually contained: one deponent heard there had been a stand at St Mary's 'to take hands to see who would be for the kinge', and that over eighty had subscribed.⁷⁵

It is scarcely surprising that the movement to protect Utting turned to the parish as a means to orchestrate support. During the 1640s, congregations had proved useful fora in which to identify and isolate opposition. Ministers had been ordered to send lists of Covenant refusers to Parliament, which survive for numerous Norwich parishes.⁷⁶ They tend to confirm a pattern of allegiance among Norvicians already hinted at by the voluntary subscriptions for regaining Newcastle upon Tyne for Parliament in 1643. For this, there were 229 contributors and 275 refusers. The evidence must be treated cautiously, as refusals may have been non-ideological and contributors may merely have desired renewed access to Newcastle's coal, which had been cut off by the royalists. Yet the contributors included nearly all the corporation's known parliamentarians. While 69 per cent of common councillors in Wymer and Ultra Aquam wards contributed readily, only 18 per cent did so in Conesford and Mancroft.⁷⁷ This impression of division is reinforced by statistics relating to the Solemn

⁷⁴ *True Relation of the Late Great Mutiny*, p. 2.

⁷⁵ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 171.

⁷⁶ D.M. Jones, *Conscience and Allegiance in Seventeenth-Century England: The Political Significance of Oaths and Engagements* (New York, 1999), p. 130.

⁷⁷ Refusers included many who would later lose their places on the corporation after the 'Great Blow', such as the aldermen John Utting, William Gostlin, Roger Mingay and John Croshold, the common councillors Richard Thacker and Matthew Marcon, and a William True, possibly one of the eight men hanged for their role in the riot: F.R. Beecheno, 'The

League and Covenant in 1644 (see tables 1 and 2). Those taking this oath swore to adhere to a Presbyterian church settlement, something which adherents of a non-puritan Church of England would find distasteful. The patterns of refusal may reflect attachment to the Caroline Church, or at least hostility to Parliament's drive for further reformation. Once again the largest numbers of refusers were located in Mancroft and Conesford wards, the scene of the riots of 1646 and 1648, and particularly in St Peter Mancroft parish itself, where the marketplace was situated. Mancroft parish church had anticipated Laudian ritual through beautification with images and crucifixes in the 1620s, much of which remained in 1642.⁷⁸ Thereafter, the Presbyterian minister, John Carter, had attacked Independents and sectarians but divided his congregation further by withholding communion from the 'ignorant' and 'scandalous', which only fuelled anti-puritan feeling further.⁷⁹ In neighbouring St Stephen's, the organ had been 'broken & taken away by Mr Lynsey, Mr Kett & others', while the minister's hood had been removed by Thomas Toft, the sheriff prominent in iconoclasm at Norwich Cathedral.⁸⁰ Statistical analysis of taxation records by John Evans has also

Norwich Subscription for the Regaining of Newcastle', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xviii (1914), pp. 149–60; Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 132–4.

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, pp. 134–5; Bodleian, MS Tanner 220, fo. 118, articles of grievance of the City of Norwich against Matthew Wren, bishop of Norwich.

⁷⁹ C. Wilkins-Jones, "'He Makes our Cheeks to Blush, and our very Eares to Tingle": John Carter, the St Peter Mancroft Feoffees and the Limits of Compromise in Early Modern Norwich'. I am grateful to Clive Wilkins-Jones for a copy of this unpublished paper.

⁸⁰ NRO, PD 484/118, Churchwardens' account book, St Stephen's parish, 1598–1688, fos. 346, 348.

suggested parliamentary enthusiasm in Wymer and Ultra Aquam wards, with a strong royalist presence in Mancroft and Conesford.⁸¹

[INSERT TABLE 1 AND 2 HERE]

The rioters tended to be lesser tradesmen, journeymen, labourers, apprentices and servants, although some freemen were implicated. Women and boys in the crowd participated in violence against the soldiers: the trooper John Cornelius testified that John Secker struck him with a watch-bill in St Stephen's Street, while Secker's wife Margaret thrust a spit through the ribs of his horse.⁸² The rioters were well armed, having taken weapons from Sheriff Ashwell's house and emptied the magazine at the Committee House. Indeed, the corporation, anxious about arms in private households during the taking of the Covenant in 1644, had listed weaponry in private custody in some city parishes. This exercise revealed the existence of a heavily armed citizenry, with access to muskets, bills, swords and halberds, 'over and above the armes pertaininge to the Trained Bande'.⁸³ After the riots ended, much of the weaponry looted from Ashwell's dwelling and the Committee House was secreted in hiding places in houses across the city. The corporation proclaimed that all arms taken during the mutiny should be returned to the Guildhall immediately, and questions relating to possession of arms as proof of culpability shaped much of the evidence given in the informations and examinations.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 133–50.

⁸² NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 77, 142.

⁸³ NRO, NCR Case 13a/43–4, list of armed civilians and Covenant refusers in St Andrew's and St John Maddermarket, July 1644.

⁸⁴ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 33, 89.

The magistrates undoubtedly made a connection between opposition to godly reformation and support for the riot, and they paid much attention to speech and gesture as evidence of royalist leanings. For example, Richard Turrell was charged with uttering that ‘if Sermons were done it would be a better world then it is’.⁸⁵ Thomas Palgrave, a hosier of St Peter Mancroft parish, was charged with having declared on 4 December 1647 ‘that those men that shall open their shops upon Christmas day, if he did meet with them in the streets he would cut their throates’.⁸⁶ Palgrave later played a leading role in the mutiny. The taking of informations also enabled the playing out of personal grudges; one witness against the mutineers claimed that one of them had accused him of abusing the king’s picture during the last guild day.⁸⁷ Norwich’s Independents appear to have been particularly targeted for abuse in the riots. One butcher pledged that he ‘would have Captaine Ashwell hanged upon the Castle hill upon Gardiners mare’.⁸⁸ Alice Hansell complained that she and Mary Burman ‘made haste away’ after having been traduced in the marketplace as ‘independent bitches, whoares & jades’, an onlooker having ‘sayde it were a blessed turne to knocke them on the head’.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, p. 163; Cozens-Hardy and Kent, *Mayors of Norwich*, pp. 83–4; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 70.

⁸⁶ NRO, NCR Case 11a/55, Quarter Sessions, Indictments and Recognizances, 1647, no. 24.

⁸⁷ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 235.

⁸⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 256. This is likely to be a reference to the Catholics hanged after the failed Norfolk Rising of 1570. George Gardiner was dean of Norwich during the 1570s and had been responsible for a public act of iconoclasm in Norwich Cathedral: Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, pp. 43–4, 54.

⁸⁹ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 278.

Some in the crowd justified their resort to arms by presenting themselves as freemen safeguarding their city's honour and liberties. Thomas Barker was accused of exclaiming to the crowd in the marketplace that the freemen were bound by their oaths to keep the mayor in the city. When an onlooker challenged Barker 'doe not other men understand their oathes as well as you', the crowd called out 'rounde headed rogue ... knocke him downe'.⁹⁰ On the evening of 23 April Christopher Bransby led a company around the city gates, demanding the watchmen keep them locked so that the mayor could not be taken away that night, and obtaining the keys to several of them. That Bransby managed to obtain the keys, items of huge symbolic importance, suggests strong support for Mayor Utting among both the city's elite and the officers of the watch.⁹¹ Bransby exhorted the watchmen that, if the mayor was carried off,

all thinges should be tryed by Martiall lawe & that we had as good be free of Catton as free of the Citty [and] it would be a dishonor to the Citty to have two Maiors caryed awaye & that Lynn would not suffer their Maiors to be caryed awaye nor Yarmouth their bayliff.⁹²

Robert Ashton's summary of the informations and examinations concluded cautiously that 'on the whole, anti-Roundhead, and especially anti-Independent, sentiments were much

⁹⁰ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 46.

⁹¹ Orders to Norwich's deputy lieutenants stipulated that at night the keys were to be held only by the Captain of the Watch, until the clock on Mancroft's tower struck five to herald the arrival of the day watch: BL, Add. MS 22620, fo. 2, order for watches to be set in Norwich, 1644.

⁹² NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 273.

more in evidence than straightforwardly royalist ones'.⁹³ Yet accusations were levelled at those with known royalist reputations, while deponents used the vocabulary of national politics to construct narratives of accusation or exculpation. Lloyd Bowen has recently argued that to call someone a 'roundheaded rogue' was an 'act of self-definition as well as a means of defining the other'. Frequently uttered after drinking, the term 'Roundhead' appears in twenty-two Norwich informations, often accompanied by violent and murderous words. Bowen has also reminded us that drinking itself became an 'oppositional discourse of royalism'. In February 1648, the royalist newsbook *Mercurius Elencticus* suggested mockingly that drinking the king's health had become an 'Infallible Symptome of Malignancy'.⁹⁴ Barbara Donagan has demonstrated that heavy drinking was a key facet of

⁹³ Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 374.

⁹⁴ Bowen, 'Seditious Speech and Popular Royalism', pp. 56–7; Samuel Sheppard, *Mercurius Elencticus*, no. 10, 26 Jan.–2 Feb. 1648 (Thomason E.425(7)), p. 71. See also William Symonds, who admitted to being in Chapel Field during the explosion, and among the crowd at Ashwell's, Parmenter's and the Committee House. He may have been the William Symonds who drank a health to the king and confusion to 'factious Pym' at the Turkey Cock tavern in August 1642, a gathering at which the king's beheading was predicted if war broke out. NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 22–3; *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, Preserved at Welbeck Abbey* (Historical Manuscripts Commission; 10 vols., London, 1891–1931), i. 53; *CJ*, II: 1640–1643 (London, 1802), p. 771; A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), p. 295; Holmes, *Eastern Association*, p. 56; NRO, NCR Case 20a/11, Quarter Sessions Minute Book, 1639–54, fo. 38r.

royalist military culture, with a tendency to escalate quarrels.⁹⁵ More recently, Angela McShane has established how the Civil Wars popularised health-drinking rituals, which were most strongly, though not exclusively, associated with royalism, and often combined a prayer and a curse.⁹⁶

These observations are amply evidenced in the Norwich informations, where drinking frequently prefaced or accompanied inflammatory words and acts of violence. Thomas Turner was accused of taunting one trooper to ‘have a care this night for all your throats will be cutt’, before calling for beer to ‘drinke a health to kinge Charles & to the confusion of all the roundheads’.⁹⁷ Drinking such healths was a means of identifying and mobilising support, as well as of isolating and challenging perceived enemies. References to throat-cutting were frequent among royalist seditious words of the 1650s; Bowen considers that the notion lowered roundheads to a bestial state in their enemies’ perceptions.⁹⁸ For instance, George Gainsford maintained that Elias Hobson had threatened him that ‘your throat shalbe one of the first that shalbe cut’.⁹⁹ Nicholas Dawes accused Andrew Borman of declaring at his shop window that he wished Mr Kett, Thomas Baret and Sheriff Ashwell might be ‘cutt in a

⁹⁵ B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642–1649* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 242, 245, 248–9; B.

Donagan, ‘The Web of Honour: Soldiers, Christians, and Gentlemen in the English Civil War’, *Historical Journal*, xlv (2001), p. 371.

⁹⁶ A. McShane, ‘Material Culture and “Political Drinking” in Seventeenth-Century England’, in P. Withington and A. McShane, eds., *Cultures of Intoxication, Past and Present* supplement ix (2014), pp. 248–9, 260–61.

⁹⁷ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 147.

⁹⁸ Bowen, ‘Seditious Speech and Popular Royalism’, p. 56.

⁹⁹ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 235.

thousand pieces'.¹⁰⁰ Others entertained revenge fantasies in which roundheads met the shameful ends of felons. Richard Buddery allegedly hoped to see one hundred 'roundheaded rogues' and troopers hanged.¹⁰¹ It was feared that Norwich butchers would exercise the skills of their trade upon their parliamentary neighbours. George Gainsford accused the butcher John Wade of calling him 'Roundheaded Rogue' and threatening to dismember him. Thomas Toly, another butcher, was accused of having said he 'would hamstring some of them that should carry Mr Maior away'.¹⁰² Such was the perceived prominence of butchers in the riot that one deponent testified to being set upon by troopers who exclaimed 'here is one of ye Rebell Butchers'.¹⁰³

John Walter has recently reminded us that the people of early modern England 'spoke with their bodies', and suggested that historians should pay more attention to the 'performative role of gesture'.¹⁰⁴ Norwich's justices were clearly concerned to record the incriminating signs and motions that so often accompanied inflammatory speech. Among the gestures that the justices evidently considered dangerous were laughing, clapping, smirking, throwing stones, brandishing weapons and drinking healths. John Wright was accused of laughing and clapping when stones were thrown against Alderman Parmenter's windows,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., no. 30.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., no. 108.

¹⁰² Ibid., nos. 137, 162.

¹⁰³ Ibid., no. 121.

¹⁰⁴ J. Walter, 'Gesturing at Authority: Deciphering the Gestural Code of Early Modern England', in M.J. Braddick, ed., *The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives, Past and Present* supplement iv (2009), p. 100; J. Walter, 'Body Politics in the English Revolution', in S. Taylor and G. Tapsell, eds., *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 83.

while William Dawes was charged with clapping his hands and saying he would make Alderman Baret ‘a poore Tom Barret’.¹⁰⁵ Elias Browne denied that he laughed or smiled when present among the tumult at the Committee House, while Edmund Whitehead was accused of smiling when asked what he was doing armed among the crowd.¹⁰⁶ In numerous cases, seditious words and inflammatory gestures were combined. Edmond Mortimer supposedly ‘vapered’ with a pistol taken from Ashwell’s house while saying he would cut roundhead throats, and Richard Rising flourished a sword upon his oath ‘that if all were of his mynde they would beate the troopers out of towne’.¹⁰⁷ In a Gunn Lane alehouse, on the evening of 23 April, Leonard Spurgeon loaded a pistol with broken tobacco pipes, declaring to the company that he ‘hoped they were all for the kinge’.¹⁰⁸ Such gestures accompanying seditious words served to embolden or daunt onlookers, making the words more memorable for those present.

The deputy mayor, Christopher Baret, who heard many of the testimonies, used them to defame both petitioners and rioters as royalists and malignants. He informed Speaker Lenthall on 4 May that ‘I have four petitions brought in, wherein, as far as I can gain information, all the agitators for hands, and those that handed it, are all or most disaffected

¹⁰⁵ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 181, 192, 262.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., nos. 41, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., nos. 250–51. ‘Vapered’, from to vapour, meaning ‘to talk fantastically, grandiloquently, or boastingly; to brag or bluster’: *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. ‘vapour | vapor, v.’, available online at <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/221470> (accessed 11 Sept. 2015).

¹⁰⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 274.

persons, not one that I can hear of otherwise'.¹⁰⁹ Evidently, recriminations were levelled at individuals with pre-existing royalist reputations. For example, Leonard Spurgeon had refused to take the Solemn League and Covenant when it was tendered in his parish, alongside Alderman William Gostlin.¹¹⁰ The mason Martin Morley was accused of running down St Stephen's Street armed with a spit, and one trooper testified that, after he had been unhorsed by a blow from a club, Morley had assaulted him with a staff. Morley had previously been fined £20 by Norwich quarter sessions 'for sayeing they were all for sworn that had taken the Covenant'.¹¹¹ William Hardingham, who admitted taking names for Utting's petition in his parish, had in December 1642, along with Robert Holmes, been charged with abusing the city watch at St Benedict's Gate, calling them 'jackanapes', and insisting that he, Holmes and their companions were the king's watch.¹¹²

The importance of speech and gesture is underlined by the example of the eight men hanged for their role in the mutiny. Evidence of their speech and gestures was particularly concentrated around the three flashpoints about which the magistrates were most concerned: the riots at Ashwell's, Parmenter's and the Committee House. These were spaces representative of Parliament's and the corporation's authority—sites worthy of exemplary protection. At the Committee House, Edward Gray, sword in hand, allegedly held the magazine keeper Samuel Cawthorne by the throat while exclaiming 'you roundheadly rogue

¹⁰⁹ By 'agitators for hands', Baret meant those who had urged others to sign: Bodleian, MS Tanner 57, fo. 35, Christopher Baret to William Lenthall, 4 May 1648.

¹¹⁰ NRO, NCR Case 13c/2/17, Refusers of the Covenant in St Simon and Jude.

¹¹¹ NRO, NCR Case 20a/11, Quarter Sessions Minute Book, 1639–54, fos. 47r, 60v, 63r; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 114, 157.

¹¹² BL, Add. MS 22619, fo. 40, information of William Puckle, 3 Dec. 1642; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 12–13.

you are against the king'.¹¹³ Christopher Hill confessed to being at the Committee House armoury and at Ashwell's. Anthony Wilson admitted only to passing through the market and by Ashwell's, but witnesses accused him of breaking into the Committee House armoury and threatening Cawthorne with a sword.¹¹⁴ Charles Emerson confessed to drinking in Ashwell's yard and standing outside the Committee House, but was accused of breaking into the latter and assaulting one of the occupants.¹¹⁵ John Bidwell admitted to being in the marketplace, and Thomas Bidwell to being in the Committee yard only briefly. But both were accused of encouraging martial activity in Chapel Field and the Committee yard, and, particularly damagingly, Bidwell was charged with tearing up and stamping on papers of the County Committee.¹¹⁶ Henry Goward stood accused by two witnesses of inciting the crowd to go to the Committee House, and declaring it would be a 'good turne to goe & blowe up the Committee howse upon the Rowndheads'.¹¹⁷ Many witnesses placed William True at Kett's, Ashwell's and Parmenter's as well as taking a prominent role in arming the crowd at the Committee House. John Elliot testified that True had said that 'he or they would purge the bench & Common Counsell also & plucke the roundheads out & put in honest men in their roomes who would goe to Church & serve god'.¹¹⁸

As well as demonstrating how and from whom the rioters mustered support, these testimonies have much to tell us about how parliamentarians perceived royalist popular

¹¹³ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 169. Gray's own testimony claimed he fled from the Committee House after being struck by a trooper: *ibid.*, no. 171.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 75, 259.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 48, 50, 255.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, nos. 65–6, 80, 107, 236, 243.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, nos. 9, 140–41, 170, 175.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 23, 32, 129, 212, 236, 252, 258, 258a, 264–6, 271–2.

politics, marking out what they felt was most threatening. Not only do they afford us insights into the sentiments and motivations of the rioters, they also reveal how both justices and other contemporaries made judgements about the loyalties of individuals. In taking the informations and examinations, Ashwell, the Barets, Parmenter and their allies aimed to revenge themselves upon their rivals in the corporation, and to increase their power over royalist sympathisers across the city.

IV

For the city of Norwich, the political consequences of the Great Blow were momentous. During the Civil Wars, explosions were often read as conspiratorial and subsequently turned to political purposes by their supposed intended victims. This was partly a consequence of ongoing commemorations of the Gunpowder Plot, but also of wartime anxieties around the sustaining of loyalties and uncovering of treachery. In January 1642, the story of a popish plot to detonate thirty-four barrels of powder in the crypt of a Derbyshire church was manufactured to boost support for Pym at Westminster.¹¹⁹ The detonation of five barrels of powder in the Town House at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1643 was attributed to a plot to blow up Lord Brooke and his officers while they sat in council.¹²⁰ During the siege of Hull, when a careless gunner ignited forty cartridges in the North Blockhouse, it was conspiracy, not

¹¹⁹ *A Bloody Plot, Practised by some Papists in Darbyshire* (London, 18 Jan. 1642; Thomason E.134(8)); M.J. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (London, 2008), pp. 197–200.

¹²⁰ *The Last Weeks Proceedings of the Lord Brooke*, (London, 1 Mar. 1643; Thomason E.91(19)), p. 4.

negligence, that was immediately suspected.¹²¹ Treachery was feared during the storming of Torrington in 1646, when a royalist magazine of eighty barrels of powder exploded in the church.¹²² Such episodes were uniformly presented as providential deliverances in order to bolster demands for further reformation and renewed action against God's enemies. For example, after the Great Blow, on 17 May 1648, William Bridge, an Independent minister at Great Yarmouth, preached a thanksgiving sermon before the House of Commons. He rejoiced that two or three godly families inside the Committee House had emerged unscathed, 'not a bone of them broken', despite the demise of two or three hundred rioters 'who flew up into the aire, as spectacles of divine anger, as if God should speak from Heaven'.¹²³

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Very much in the same vein, the Norwich Assembly ordered a thanksgiving day on 2 May 1648, with cathedral sermons by John Carter and John Collings, the Presbyterian-inclined ministers of St Peter Mancroft and St Stephen's, at which the aldermen were to attend in scarlet. Ordnance was to be discharged, and churchwardens were to arrange a city-wide collection for the poor. The bells of St Peter Mancroft rang out in thanksgiving. The following year, on 6 April 1649, the Assembly ordered that these activities should continue as

¹²¹ Thomas May, *A True Relation from Hull of the Present State and Condition it is in* (London, 30 Sept. 1643; Thomason E.69(13)), pp. 4–5.

¹²² *A Fuller Relation of Sir Thomas Fairfax's routing all the Kings Armies in the West, under Prince Charles, the Lord Hopton, the Lord Goring, and all the Rest at Torrington* (London, 21 Feb. 1646; Thomason E.324(6)), pp. 11–12.

¹²³ William Bridge, *Christs Coming Opened in a Sermon before the House of Commons* (London, 17 May 1648; Thomason E.471(3)), p. 11; *CJ, 1646–1648*, p. 562.

an annual event.¹²⁴ The London tract reporting the blow (see fig. 2) was produced by George Whittington, the man entrusted with printing many of General Fairfax's declarations and the Army's *Heads of Proposals* in 1647.¹²⁵ Its frontispiece, illustrated by an eye-catching woodcut,¹²⁶ warned that the mutineers intended to murder the godly, and celebrated God's judgement in stifling the mutiny. The tract purported to be a letter from Norwich and its author may have been Christopher Baret, as its details accord strongly with his version of events in his letter to Lenthall of 4 May. It blamed Utting and his supporters for countenancing the riot, and warned they 'would have proved a farre greater Rebellion then *Poyers*; for they had voyced through the rout, *For God, King Charles, and the Mayor*'.¹²⁷ Baret was at the forefront of taking informations and examinations, testimonies which substantiated many of the claims in the tract. For example, one female witness testified on 3 May that Henry Goward led a group of twenty men to drink in her alehouse after midnight on 24 April, Goward claiming they were 'watchmen for kinge Charles & Mr Maior'.¹²⁸ Whittington's role as printer might suggest that the Norwich Independents headed by the

¹²⁴ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fos. 62r, 77r; NRO, PD 26/71, Churchwardens' account book, St Peter Mancroft parish, 1580–1652, fo. 368.

¹²⁵ J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 45.

¹²⁶ The woodcut was subsequently recycled to illustrate Fairfax's failed assault on Colchester on 18 July 1648, in which another powder magazine was ignited: *A Great and Bloudy Fight at Colchester* (London, 1648; Thomason E.453(18)).

¹²⁷ Thomason marked the tract 3 May: *True Relation of the Late Great Mutiny* (BL, Thomason E.438(6)), p. 5. Colonel John Poyer was the parliamentary governor of Pembroke Castle, but revolted to the king in March 1648.

¹²⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 170.

Barets and Ashwell had links with pro-Army publishers in London. A second tract, printed by another friend of the Army, Gilbert Mabbott, and signed off from Norwich by one T.S., implied that backsliding Presbyterians may have been complicit in the mutiny. It exhorted that ‘others may be warned by our harms, and that when there is no enemy abroad, we may not find him at home, and by private dissensions bring inevitable ruine and distractions upon our selves’.¹²⁹

Such fears need to be located in the wider context of the eve of the Second Civil War, when the parliamentary cause suffered loss of support and insurgency in a number of localities in its East Anglian heartlands that had been safely held during the First Civil War. At Bury St Edmunds, on 12 May 1648, a riot over a maypole led to fatalities as New Model Army soldiers took back the town. Shouts of ‘for God and King Charles’ accompanied the riot, and, as at Norwich, witness statements were taken in the ensuing months to identify those responsible. There were further alarms at Thetford and Stowmarket, which, had they not been quickly suppressed, might have stimulated more insurgency. In Kent, petitioning for a personal treaty with the king and for the restoration of traditional forms of government degenerated into violence, with a mass uprising that was bloodily suppressed at Maidstone on 1 June.¹³⁰ Ian Gentles has shown how Londoners, like Norvicians, engaged in petitioning, royal health-drinking and cries of ‘Now for King Charles’ as precursors to an armed rising of over three thousand people who seized Leadenhall Magazine on 9–10 April 1648. Considerable numbers of insurgents were recruited in the metropolis for royalist actions elsewhere in the south-east, and the city was only held for Parliament through the tenacious efforts of Major-General Philip Skippon.¹³¹

¹²⁹ *True Answer of the Parliament*, pp. 2–3.

¹³⁰ Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, pp. 368, 376–7.

¹³¹ Gentles, ‘Struggle for London’, pp. 282–3, 287–90.

In the face of such uncertainty across the nation, the failure of the Norwich mutiny provided local parliamentarians still loyal to the regime with a golden opportunity to identify and remove their opponents in the corporation and convince Westminster that they were back in control. Within weeks, a handful of city Justices of the Peace had taken the witness testimonies.¹³² Those disaffected with the puritan corporation were cowed. Only three days after the explosion, Justinian Lewyn commented that ‘The Tumult is over, but the evill consequents thereof (I feare) are of longer date, for now an inquisition is on foote *nodum in scirpoquerere* and God knows what will bee the issue of it’.¹³³ Christopher Baret, now deputy mayor, wrote to Speaker Lenthall on 4 May:

the petition was carried about by some in the very time of the height of the tumult, so that we conceive they were both birds of the same feather ... I doubt not time will evince there was a greater plot in it, and a design further off than we are yet aware of.¹³⁴

¹³² The Justices of the Peace taking the informations and examinations on 25 April–12 May and again on 16–30 May comprised Christopher Baret (Deputy Mayor), William Gostlin, Adrian Parmenter, Samuel Smith (Recorder), John Thacker, John Toly and Henry Watts. Edmund Burman (Mayor), Gostlin, Parmenter and Toly were involved with taking a further dozen testimonies on 8 and 21 July, 11 August and 4–5 October. Apart from Smith, all had previously served as mayor.

¹³³ Bodleian, MS Tanner 311, fo. 38, Justinian Lewin to John Hobart, 27 Apr. 1648. The Latin proverb ‘*nodum in scirpo quaerere*’ means to seek a knot in a bulrush, or see a difficulty where there is none. I am grateful to this article’s anonymous reviewer for clarification of this point.

¹³⁴ Bodleian, MS Tanner 57, fo. 35, Christopher Baret to Speaker Lenthall, 4 May 1648.

Baret sought to implicate Utting and his other enemies among the aldermen, having heard Nicholas Dawes's testimony that several Committee men 'had sayde to the people doe you the work, as for us we have estates to lose you have none & we will assist you'.¹³⁵

The troopers, who made many of the arrests on the Tuesday morning, were paid a £250 gratuity and given money for quartering. Three troops remained in Norwich for the municipal elections that May, and the city watch was doubled at night. With insurrection scares igniting across the region in June 1648, the Norwich Assembly pledged itself to Parliament and by September parliamentary forces were back in full control of East Anglia. When Lord Fairfax visited Norwich that month, he pointedly stayed in the former Excise office at Alderman Parmenter's house.¹³⁶ Suspects from the mutiny, mostly lesser tradesmen, were imprisoned in the Guildhall. Robert Ashton claimed that 'hardly any of the convicted or accused were freemen of Norwich', but in fact eleven freemen were convicted of riot, theft or petty larceny, while a further twenty of those who signed the petition can be traced in the freemen's register. Given that only about one in five male inhabitants was a freeman, these numbers are far from insignificant.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 36.

¹³⁶ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books, 1642–68, fos. 62r, 64r, 65r; Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 173, 182; *A Bloudy Fight in Essex* (London, 12 June 1648; Thomason E.447(2)), p. 3; *The Prince of Wales His Coming to Yarmouth* (London, 27 July 1648; Thomason E.454(18)), p. 4.

¹³⁷ Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 373 n.; *The Register of the Freemen of Norwich, 1548–1713: A Transcript*, ed. P. Millican (Norwich, 1934); F. Williamson, 'Space and the City: Gender Identities in Seventeenth-Century Norwich', *Cultural and Social History*, ix (2012), p. 176.

Those gentlemen complicit in fomenting the riot appear to have escaped largely unpunished. Most had refrained from collaboration with crowds during daylight, restricting themselves to incitement indoors. Rather than naming him directly, three informations remembered the mercer Leonard Spurgeon from his relatively high-status apparel; despite being seen at the Committee House during the riot, he was referred to as a ‘younge gent in blacke who dwelt in the White Lion lane’.¹³⁸ At the White Lion it was said there were ‘several men of quality who said they had lost nere two parts of their estate & would now win the horse or lose the saddle’. These ‘men of quality’ probably included Spurgeon, who bought drinks for the rioters, as well as Christopher Bransby and Thomas Palgrave, who also undertook leadership roles.¹³⁹

The Norfolk Assizes were held in October 1648, but on 26 October the Norwich Assembly agreed to procure trials of the ‘mutineers’ by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. On 8 November, the Assembly sent a letter of instruction to the Norwich MP, Thomas Atkin, desiring that the Clerk of the Assize be excluded from the commission.¹⁴⁰ Erasmus Earle, recently appointed Sergeant at Law and Steward of Norwich, was sent to preside. On 18 December 1648, 108 people stood trial in Norwich Guildhall before Earle and Samuel Smith, the Recorder, assisted by the city Justices of the Peace (and former mayors) John Toly, Christopher Baret, Adrian Parmenter, William Gostlin, John Thacker and Henry Watts. The quarter sessions minute book records that eight were convicted and hanged for murder, being held culpable for having instigated the events that led to the explosion. Two were convicted of felony for stealing arms from Ashwell’s house and were branded. A further

¹³⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 112, 170, 197.

¹³⁹ Ibid., no. 94; Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 373 n.

¹⁴⁰ NRO, NCR Case 17b/6, Mayor’s Book, fo. 37; NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fos. 69v, 71v.

twenty-six were convicted for riot and imprisoned until they paid a fine of £30. Many more were bound to good behaviour for sums as large as £60. To render the mutineers the more odious, those executed were hanged alongside two witches in the castle ditches on 2 January 1649. Although Thomas Palgrave was named in the original indictment as a gentleman, his name was struck out as the jury returned an *ignoramus* verdict on his involvement.¹⁴¹

Bransby and Spurgeon also escaped execution. Only one of the eight hanged may have been a freeman of the city, suggesting that those who paid with their lives were drawn from among the poorer sorts.¹⁴² The chamberlain's account book mentions the subsequent thanksgiving day 'for the great & wonderfull deliverance of this Citty from Brannsbys & his confederates'. In a textual act symbolising the failure to enact violent retribution upon those gentry involved, the last four words were subsequently crossed out and 'the muteny or insurrection' inserted instead.¹⁴³

By January 1649, all those tainted with involvement had been ejected or proscribed from office. Roger Mingay's election as alderman for Mancroft was declared void. Everyone who had signed or circulated the petition for Mayor Utting, along with all those involved in

¹⁴¹ NRO, NCR Case 20a/11, City Quarter Sessions 'Waste' Minute Book, 1639–54, fos. 109r–110v; NRO, NCR Case 20a/12, City Quarter Sessions Minute Book 1637–64, fo. 195r; NRO, NCR Case 11a/56, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1648, no. 1.

Bateman and Rye, *History of the Bethel Hospital*, pp. 105–8.

¹⁴² A William True was registered as a worsted weaver, but the informations refer to the William True who was executed as a dyer and his indictment described him as a labourer: *Register of the Freemen of Norwich*, ed. Millican, p. 167; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 32, 128–9, 212, 236, 252, 258, 265–6, 270, 272; NRO, NCR Case 11a/56, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1648, no. 1.

¹⁴³ NRO, NCR Case 18a, Chamberlain's Account Book, 1625–48, fo. 487v.

the riot, were ‘made incapable to be choosers or be chosen into any office in this Citty’. John Utting, William Gostlin, John Toly, John Croshold, John Thacker and Mathias Sotherton lost their places as city aldermen, a deep affront to their families’ status in the city. The latter four had all voted to uphold Mingay’s election two days after the mutiny.¹⁴⁴ Ironically, among those ejected, Toly, Thacker and Gostlin had been active in taking the informations and examinations during the investigation, a process from which Utting was deliberately excluded.¹⁴⁵ Thacker was a resident of St Peter Mancroft, and owned property near the Black Swan, where William True had incited the mutineers, and to where many had fled from the troopers.¹⁴⁶ As we have seen, Gostlin had been imprisoned for royalist sympathies in 1643 and refused the Covenant the following year.

Ultimately, Utting was declared a ‘Grand Delinquent’ by Parliament’s Committee of Complaints on 12 September 1649, and the Norwich Assembly refused to pay his expenses for attending the consequent summons. Utting and Toly were deemed to have ordered the town clerk to draw up the petition to keep the mayor in Norwich. On 9 October 1649, Utting was fined £500 (later reduced to £200) and sentenced to six months in the Fleet. Likewise, Toly was fined £1,000 by Parliament and imprisoned for three months, yet the Norwich

¹⁴⁴ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fos. 62v, 74r.

¹⁴⁵ John Utting’s name among the justices had been crossed through in an information taken on 25 April and an examination taken on 27 April 1648: NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 15, 169.

¹⁴⁶ Cozens-Hardy and Kent, *Mayors of Norwich*, p. 82; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 205–6, 214.

Assembly later voted to accept his offer of £400 in full discharge, on account of ‘the urgent occasions of this citty for money’.¹⁴⁷

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

The statistics in Table 3 demonstrate that a full third of the common council was removed, even if it remains unclear whether all those dismissed were engaged in the mutiny. Some ejected councillors were certainly involved. Richard Thacker, a councillor for Wymer and the son of the ejected alderman, John Thacker, admitted circulating a petition for Utting; his servant Charles Porter was seen amongst the mutineers armed with a firelock. He surrendered the petition to the magistrates during his examination.¹⁴⁸ Thomas Norris, councillor for Ultra Aquam, was also accused of circulating the petition.¹⁴⁹ Matthew Marcon, another Ultra Aquam councillor, admitted that he had seen Utting’s petition being signed at an alehouse in St Augustine’s, while another accused him of signing and actively circulating it.¹⁵⁰

Ministers as well as aldermen and councillors were held culpable for inciting the mutiny. In April 1649, Norwich Assembly established a committee to recommend clergymen

¹⁴⁷ *CJ, 1648–1651*, pp. 294, 304; NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fos. 65v, 81r, 99r, 100v.

¹⁴⁸ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 154–6, 220, 273. For more detail on Porter’s subsequent illustrious legal career and the tall stories he told of his involvement in the riot, see Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk Assembly*, p. 142; C.I. McGrath, ‘Porter, Sir Charles (1631–1696)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁴⁹ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, no. 122.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 86, 207.

for ejection. By 25 May they had prepared charges against William Lock, Foulke Robartes, William Barwick, Anthony Halliburton and Christopher Hatley, warning them to forbear from exercising their ministries in the city.¹⁵¹ Since 1647 Lock had officiated at St Stephen's, where three of those hanged were buried and many other parishioners were incriminated.¹⁵² The church had been served by a succession of Laudian and royalist clergy since the 1630s.¹⁵³ After the Great Blow, parliamentarians were anxious to appoint a more reliable minister, and so on 2 February 1650 John Collings was installed by the Committee for Plundered Ministers, or 'put in by the Parliament', as the churchwardens' accounts termed it.¹⁵⁴ Robartes was an elderly Laudian cathedral prebendary, who had refused communion to those who would not kneel, and preached that refusers of Ship Money were rebels.¹⁵⁵ Hatley was rector of All Saints, Timberhill, one of three Ber Street parishes with anti-puritan clergy

¹⁵¹ NRO, NCR Case 16d/6, Assembly Books 1642–68, fos. 78r, 82r.

¹⁵² NRO, PD 484/1, Marriages and burials in St Stephen's, 1538–1653, fo. 64r; NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 10–13, 59; A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised: Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion, 1642–60* (Oxford, 1948), p. 270.

¹⁵³ Bodleian, MS Tanner 220, fo. 120, articles of grievance of the City of Norwich against Matthew Wren, bishop of Norwich; Blomefield, *Norwich I*, p. 149; Matthew, *Walker Revised*, p. 268.

¹⁵⁴ NRO, PD 484/118, Churchwardens' account book, St Stephen's parish, 1598–1688, fos. 355–6.

¹⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, pp. 233, 249; I. Atherton, 'Robartes, Foulke (1578/9–1650)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Bodleian, MS Tanner 220, fo. 122, articles of grievance of the City of Norwich against Matthew Wren, bishop of Norwich; Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p. 272.

which was also home to many butchers. Along with Robartes, Hatley had signed a certificate in support of Bishop Wren, and had recently been sequestered for pluralism and disaffection from Parliament.¹⁵⁶ Barwick had been ejected from Hempnall in 1644 for being ‘a great maintainer’ of Wren’s injunctions and a supporter of the Commission of Array, who, when Parliament voted down bishops, had declared ‘the Curse of God be upon them that were the occasion of it’.¹⁵⁷

In 1646, Thomas Atkin, MP for Norwich, had foreseen trouble in the Ber Street parishes and urged the mayor to settle a godly preaching minister there.¹⁵⁸ Measures against royalist clergy were accompanied by a renewed drive against tippling houses, and prosecutions in the city quarter sessions for seditious words against the Parliament.¹⁵⁹ As the Second Civil War intensified, William Ansell, a London wine cooper, was indicted for having said on 8 June 1648 that Fairfax’s forces in Kent had been defeated, ‘that Kent are wholly upp for the kinge & that Collonell Whaley is slayne’, and that ‘there are fortye

¹⁵⁶ The minister of St Michael at Thorn, midway down Ber Street, had been complained of for being ‘a drinker of healths to Bishop Wren and saying that all that would not pledge him were Rebels & Traytors’. At the southern end of Ber Street, St John Sepulchre had been served by another of Wren’s supporters, noted for not preaching and for alehouse haunting: Bodleian, MS Tanner 68, fo. 167 List of clergy pledging support for Bishop of Norwich, and MS Tanner 220, fos. 118, 121, articles of grievance of the City of Norwich against Matthew Wren, bishop of Norwich; Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p. 268.

¹⁵⁷ Matthews, *Walker Revised*, pp. 37, 264.

¹⁵⁸ BL, Add. MS 22620, fo. 91, Thomas Atkin to Henry Watts, 15 Oct. 1646.

¹⁵⁹ NRO, NCR Case 11a/56–61, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances.

thousand in Essex up for the kinge'.¹⁶⁰ Another royalist minister, Charles Davill at St Lawrence's, was indicted for this striking outburst on 21 July 1648:

that eightene sayle of shippes have hovered on the Kentish coast & landed 1500 they are in a body but have done little only rayzed the sidges of deale & Sandwich Castells expecting my Lord Hoptons speedy arrival. Coulchester is for certain in a very good condicon, they in the town having lately given a great defeate to the besiegers taken many prisoners & two peces of ordinance, The personall treaty is quite broke of by the Independent party who have listed 15000 resolute men to do the worke, 1000 of which shalbe sent to Colchester (when Sir Tho: is drawn of) who is now advanceinge to the North to fight the Scotts & Langdale who are certayne 16000 & this you may believe for certayne that Langdale hath very lately given a very greate defeate to Lambert, Portsmouth is revolted & declare for the king, & ten of the shippes more are for certayne revolted.¹⁶¹

The detail, quite extraordinary in an indictment, suggests that Davill was heard reading a royalist newsbook at the height of the Second Civil War, possibly to his congregation at St Lawrence's. Many of the particulars in this passage are present in Samuel Sheppard's royalist serial *Mercurius Elencticus*, but the indictment suggests that the promulgated writing may have been Davill's own.¹⁶² Royalist pamphlets seem to have been readily available in

¹⁶⁰ NRO, NCR, Case 11a/56, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1648, no. 42.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., no. 50.

¹⁶² *Mercurius Elencticus*, no. 34, 12–19 July 1648 (Thomason E.453(23)), p. 268.

Norwich.¹⁶³ Davill's fast day sermon of January 1644 had condemned parliamentary iconoclasts. His churchwardens had been slow to dismantle the altar rails and he does not appear to have taken the Covenant, although he was required to be present when his parishioners did. His chancel was levelled, while St Lawrence's crucifixes were pulled down and its painted glass defaced.¹⁶⁴ Among his leading parishioners were the royalist-sympathising sheriff, Robert Holmes, and Felix Forby, who delivered the speech at the Market Cross to calm the crowd.¹⁶⁵ Further evidence of royalist feeling in St Lawrence's is found in the burial register, where Charles Emerson was described on 2 January as 'executed in the Castle Ditches as one of the pretended mutineers when the then Committee House was blowne upp'.¹⁶⁶

With the Assembly so recently purged, the parliamentary magistracy remained vigilant against expressions of royalist opinion that undermined their authority. In August 1649, Mary Symonds was indicted for having said that 'the Maior is a lopp Eare with a Redd nose'; that 'Mr Parmenter is a skulker & hath more Ruffe then witt' and 'that there are fower and twenty Aldermen & not halfe of them wise & not fit to come upon the bench'.¹⁶⁷ In

¹⁶³ J. Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 62–3.

¹⁶⁴ Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, pp. 240–41; BL, Add. MS 15903, fo. 75, information against Charles Davill; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, IV: *The History of the City and County of Norwich, Part II* (London, 1806), p. 264; NRO, NCR Case 13c/2/8, Subscribers of the Solemn League and Covenant in St Lawrence's parish.

¹⁶⁵ NRO, NCR Case 12c/1, nos. 61, 133, 136, 203; Blomefield, *Norwich I*, p. 394.

¹⁶⁶ NRO, PD 58/1, Burials in St Lawrence's parish, 1559–1764.

¹⁶⁷ NRO, NCR Case 11a/57, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1649, no. 69.

February 1650, John Lewys, a Norwich labourer, was indicted for questioning mayoral authority, having said ‘no kinge, no maior’, and ‘for ought I know, master maior (Johem Rayley) hath no power’.¹⁶⁸ In March 1650, John Denny, a Norwich chapman, was charged with having said that ‘Cromewell is routed in Ireland, fifteen thousand men slain and himself circumvented & taken prisoner’. Denny’s circulation of dark rumours from the capital carried echoes of the Passover in Exodus:

in London the men went with black Lanthornes & troopers followed them, they that went with the Lanthornes sett markes on doors & the troopers killed all the men in the marked houses & that this had proceeded further but that one who had his house marked removed the marke to a roundheads dore & six of them were thereupon slayne.¹⁶⁹

In 1650, fears of conspiracy moved from the city to the county, with aborted royalist uprisings across Norfolk. This time Norwich’s crowds stayed at home. Philip Jermyn and John Pulleston presided over the resulting trials at the shire house: there were executions in towns across Norfolk, but a further eight men were hanged in Norwich marketplace on 23 December 1650, one allegedly crying out ‘God save the king’ upon the gallows.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ NRO, NCR Case 11a/59, Quarter Sessions Indictments and Recognizances, 1650, no. 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 13.

¹⁷⁰ These men were Major Francis Roberts, Lieutenant John Barber, David Purslew, William Wilson, Nathaniel Bennet, Robert Betts, William Trot and Edmund Brady: NRO, MS 2,994, James Paston’s narrative of the suppression of a royalist uprising at Easton; NRO, MC 482/2–4, papers relating to the execution of Thomas Cooper, 1649; NRO, HMN 7/190/11, order for pardons, 1651; NRO, MS 79, typescript copy of Benjamin Mackerell, *History of the*

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The experience of the Great Blow stained discord in Norwich with blood, and its cultural and political consequences were long lasting. How far the riot was related to the local divisions within the godly between Independents and Presbyterians remains unclear. Independents such as Ashwell and the Barets were among the crowd's targets and took a leading part in driving the subsequent prosecutions and purges, but the rioters do not appear to have been acting in a Presbyterian interest. Rather, Evans argues that the riot seems to have split the Presbyterians, with many not knowing how to react.¹⁷¹ After the Restoration, it was puritans who were blamed for the explosion, with claims that the 'Great Blow' gave them a pretext to subjugate royalists in the city. Mr Wease blamed the armourer, Samuel Cawthorne, 'a great toole to the Committee-men and an abhorrer of the Church', for deliberately igniting the powder.¹⁷² The affair shored up rival religious and political topographies within the city for generations. Parliamentary, and later Whig, support was most pronounced in Ultra Aquam and some Wymer parishes, spaces less directly engaged by the 1648 crowds. Seven out of eight councillors who voted for Roger Mingay to retain his office were from Conesford and Mancroft wards, while nineteen out of twenty-eight who opposed him were from Ultra Aquam and Wymer parishes.¹⁷³ Most crowd actions occurred in Mancroft and Conesford, especially in St Peter Mancroft, the parish with the largest number of Covenant-refusers in

City of Norwich Both Ancient and Modern, II (London, 1737), p. 249; NRO, NCR Case 17b/6, Mayor's Book, 'Book of Oaths', fo. 38.

¹⁷¹ Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 374; Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, p. 179.

¹⁷² NRO, DCN 107/3, Mr Wease's reminiscences of the Civil War in Norwich.

¹⁷³ Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, p. 181.

the city. In subsequent years, the parish became ‘the headquarters of Norwich Toryism’. The royalist topography of the 1640s maps well onto places that became Tory and Jacobite strongholds during the following century: city parishes of butchers, tradesmen and retailers, such as St Stephen and St John Timberhill.¹⁷⁴ The Blue Bell on Hogg Hill and the White Lion Inn, where the inebriated insurgents of 1648 mustered their courage, later became venues for the Hellfire Club and Tory mobs to plot attacks on the Methodists. Nicholas Rogers has reflected that these eighteenth-century crowds remained ‘locked in the sectarian world of an earlier era’.¹⁷⁵ By 1696, the street from which the Great Blow shook the city had been renamed Committee Street on the Tory Thomas Cleer’s map.¹⁷⁶ Memories of why, where and how the crowds of 1648 had assembled were not easily forgotten, even when the orientation of popular insurrection had shifted. Chapel Field, where the 1648 crowds mustered in arms, was the rallying point named in a seditious handbill printed in the *Norwich Mercury* on 2 November 1793 for an uprising of Norvicians ‘to begin a Glorious Revolution’.¹⁷⁷

The Great Blow was unprecedented because no previous riot, even in wartime, had incurred such a horrific human cost. Royalist sentiment was notably present in parts of pre-war Norwich, but it proved unable to muster in armed force until Norvicians had been aggravated by five years of godly reformation and escalating wartime burdens. It emerged in

¹⁷⁴ N. Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 333–4; K. Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 383–5, 391–2.

¹⁷⁵ F. Holmes and M. Holmes, *Norwich Pubs and Breweries Past and Present* (Norwich, 2011), p. 181; Rogers, *Whigs and Cities*, p. 342.

¹⁷⁶ NRO, MC 2594, John Kirkpatrick’s annotated copy of Cleer’s 1696 map of Norwich.

¹⁷⁷ C.B. Jewson, *The Jacobin City: A Portrait of Norwich in its Reaction to the French Revolution, 1788–1802* (London, 1975), p. 44.

predictable parts of the city, but in the unique circumstances of April 1648. We should not take at face value Christopher Baret's convenient assessment that all participants were royalists at heart, but neither should we play down the outbursts of royalist sentiment found in the informations, particularly when they were allegedly voiced by individuals already known for refusing the Covenant or speaking out against Parliament. Such individuals felt compelled to protect the mayor when their corporation failed them. They were mobilised through similar means to John Walter's politics of popular parliamentarianism, but with anti-puritanism rather than anti-catholicism legitimising their protest. The crowds' selected targets are suggestive of their politics, comprising the buildings, property and persons of those they associated with the parliamentary regime, at all social levels. The Committee House was a part of that regime's exercising of authority, while the homes of Parmenter and Ashwell symbolised the Excise, the sectarian congregations and the betrayal of their mayor.

Norwich's crowds of 1648 were more dangerous than the Excise rioters of 1646 because of their access to firearms, their overtly royalist language and their supporters among the city's elite. They assaulted and threatened the lives of reputed parliamentarians, and those who interfered with their control of Chapel Field and the marketplace. Municipal politics moved outdoors from its usual arenas such as the Common Hall and the Guildhall. Crowds mobilised themselves through coercive petitioning, print, preaching, papers on posts in the streets, health-drinking, hospitality, rumour, alehouse sociability and intimidation on doorsteps. While armed outdoor activism was left to those of lower status, the cautious royalist elite were involved in more underhand ways. The seizure and deployment of arms, the beating of drums to articulate commands, the military watchwords, along with talk of 'captains' and pay, reveal how wartime practices and experiences blurred the boundaries between riot and insurrection. Influenced by the religious identities of their home parishes, the middling and poorer sorts acted on their own understandings of national and local

politics. Much has been written on how such activism could lead in a parliamentary direction, but this article has sought to demonstrate that it could also manifest itself as popular royalism. The Second Civil War was especially marked by pro-royalist urban insurgencies of this nature, during which the bloody street-fighting in London, Maidstone and Norwich proved decisive episodes. Historians might fruitfully pay closer attention to how the Civil Wars were physically fought out in these settings, far removed from the more famous rural battlefields.

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