

‘AN HORRID POPIISH PLOT’: THE FAILURE OF CATHOLIC ASPIRATIONS IN BURY ST. EDMUNDS, 1685–88

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OUTSIDE LONDON, there is no better example than Bury St. Edmunds of a town where James II's administration attempted, by legal means, to normalise the status of Catholics within English society. The town had a small but socially significant Catholic minority in the 1670s and '80s, and the borough's close links with Henry Jermyn, Lord Dover, ensured that a Catholic administration in local government was established under the leadership of John Stafford in readiness for the 1688 elections. Bury was also a place of bold religious experiment. At the start of James's reign, a Jesuit College and school had been established in the Abbey ruins. By the time of the Revolution in 1688 the town had both a Catholic mayor and was the headquarters of the Jesuit mission in East Anglia.

While the number of Catholics on the Corporation remained tiny, and it would be an exaggeration to say that a 'Catholic revolution' took place in Bury in 1687–88, the combination of a Catholic mayor and a significant Jesuit educational establishment is indicative of a confident Catholic population during this period. Nevertheless, Bury reflects James's policy of using Catholics to fill the most important positions in a new political elite that, on account of the small number of Catholics in most parts of the country, was bound to consist largely of Protestant Dissenters (Callow 2005, 67). There was no chance that the Catholic population could gain the upper hand in any Suffolk town unless James and his agents tapped into the anti-Anglican feeling of the strong Dissenter communities.

While previous studies of Stafford's administration, such as P. E. Murrell's article of 1981, have treated the efforts of Lord Dover to 'purge' the Bury Corporation in the context of the national activity of James II's electoral agents, I intend to address the effect of this transfer of power on the religious balance in the town. The installation of a Catholic mayor was an act of electoral rather than ecclesiastical politics on James's part, but the presence of the Jesuits in the town, occupying so prominent a location as the old Abbot's Palace, gave the town's Anglican population the impression that a Catholic ascendancy was in progress. The perception of the Anglican gentry, as well as of the uneducated mob, was that a religious revolution was underway – however little James's regime actually had to do with directly encouraging the growth of Catholic proselytism.

I shall argue that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, on the whole, the relations between Bury's Catholics and their non-Catholic neighbours were cordial. The attacks of late 1688 were an aberration rather than the boiling over of longstanding anti-Catholic sentiment. The position of Catholics and of the Jesuit mission after the Revolution shows clearly that the destruction of the public chapel in Bury had little or no effect on core Jesuit missionary activity – celebrating mass in the homes of local recusants. Fortunately, we are in possession of a detailed autobiography of a Catholic laywoman who was born near Bury in 1668 and lived through the 1680s. Although Catharine Burton's autobiography was primarily spiritual in intent, it has a great deal to tell us of the lives of recusant families in the Bury area and the activities of the Jesuits around the time of the Revolution.

In order to understand the complexities of attitudes to Catholics in and around Bury in 1688 it is necessary to examine the position of Catholicism in the borough in the preceding decade. Relatively little is known of the Catholic community in Bury in the reign of Charles II. The town was ringed with the seats of Catholic gentry. The Rookwoods at Coldham (Stanningfield), the Drurys at Lawshall and the Gages at Hengrave were all within walking distance of the town. The Suffolk gentry, in contrast to the artisan class, was noted for its religious conservatism and staunch recusancy. Insofar as

the market town fell within the orbit of influence of these families, it was under the economic and political influence of Catholics long before James's political experiment. Such influence did not, of course, translate into religious toleration. The Elizabethan penal laws remained in force in the reign of Charles II, and local JPs were obliged to enforce them. While they may have been able to absorb the fines, families like the Rookwoods could not remain immune from anti-Catholic legislation.

In 1674 fifty people were indicted by the Grand Jury at the Quarter Sessions held at Bury Guildhall on 15 January 'For that they and every of them have absented themselves from divine service for Christ Lords dayes Comonly Called Sundayes last past.' (SRO(W) 558/1) Since the basic definition of a recusant was an individual who regularly failed to attend Anglican services, it is likely that many of the fifty were Dissenters, whose representation in the town was considerable. The Compton Census of 1676 recorded 18 Catholics in the parish of St. James and 22 Catholics in the parish of St. Mary, making Catholics less than two percent of a total recorded population of 3,693 (Dymond 1966, 115). If these figures are to be taken at face value the representation of Catholics was less significant in Bury in 1676 than it was nearly a century later in the Returns of Papists in 1767. In 1681 the authorities compiled *A List of the Names of Papist & reputed Papist in the County of Suffolk* (EANQ 1885-1886, 345). Six of these are listed as 'of St. Edmundsbury': a widow, Katherin Guilford, her son Thomas Guilford, gentleman, Dr. Thomas Short, Richard Short, gentleman, Stephen (sic) Stafford, mercer and Walter Hilyard, vintner. 'Madam Gilford,' 'Mr. Gilford,' 'Richard Short, Dr.,' 'Perry Short, Dr.,' 'Walter Hylyard' and 'John Stafford' appear alongside Ambrose Rookwood in the 1674 presentments for recusancy.

The accession of the Catholic James II on 6 February 1685 did not bring about sudden change for the town. For one local notable, however, the new regime brought about a significant advancement. On 17 July 1685 Henry Jermyn, who had recently been ennobled as 1st Baron Dover (on 13 May 1685) was appointed to the Privy Council. Prior to this open appointment there is reason to suspect that he was 'one of James's secret conclave of Roman Catholic advisors' (Murrell 1981, 189). Dover (1636-1708), a longstanding friend of the former Duke of York, had been ejected from the court in the last years of Charles II for his affair with the King's mistress, Barbara Palmer, Lady Castlemaine. He was the second son of Sir Thomas Jermyn, Bart. of Rushbrook Hall not far to the south of Bury, and the younger brother of the Earl of St. Albans. While the Jermyns had a long history of influence in the town, theirs was not a Catholic family: Dover had converted at some point in the 1670s (Hervey 1903, 318). Nevertheless, Dover took an especially close interest in changing Bury's political leadership and was determined that the Corporation of such an important market town should wholeheartedly support the King.

Dover's rather heavy handed tactics were possible only because Charles II had substituted the town's Charter of 1668 for a new one in 1684. The new Charter allowed the Crown to appoint the mayor and other officials directly (Bishop 1998, 69). Furthermore, the town was one of only nineteen boroughs in which the right to vote in elections rested solely with the mayor, twelve aldermen and twenty-four common councilmen. The combination of complete royal power over the appointment of borough officials and the fact that voting rights were restricted to those officials made Bury the ideal testing ground for James's project to ensure a favourable Parliament at the election of 1688 (Murrell 1981, 188).

It was at the discretion of James's electoral agents to whom they tendered the 'three questions' asking officials whether they would vote for the repeal of the Penal Laws and Test Acts, and whether they would vote for candidates who pledged to do so (Miller 2000, 178). Dover did not make use of these questions straight away; he clearly believed that his family's influence might be enough to secure a loyal and amenable Corporation. Since the Corporation held the franchise on the election of MPs, it was not necessary for Dover to question all of the freeholders as happened in some localities (Miller 2000, 178). James had made a conscious decision to concentrate his efforts at electoral manipulation on the boroughs, many of which retained Charters issued by Charles II for a similar purpose in 1684-85. Bury's Charter fell into this category, although attempts were made to obtain the Charter in order to change it in the last desperate weeks of Dover's campaign. In John Miller's view the

electorate of the towns was more open to James's promise of toleration for Dissenters (Miller 2000, 179). Bury was no exception: the Compton Census had recorded 167 Dissenters in the two parishes, 4.5% of the total population and probably an underestimate (Dymond 1966, 115). Congregationalist chapels had strong followings in the surrounding villages whose inhabitants came into Bury twice a week for the important market.

If, as Miller suggests, 'All depended on the attitude of the Dissenters' at the national level, what was the local reaction of Dissenters in Bury? This is hard to gauge with any accuracy, but Murrell has identified eight of the thirty-one members of the Corporation dissolved in October 1688 as Dissenters – the majority Congregationalists. Stafford and Dover had a Congregationalist in mind as MP for the borough, in the form of Samuel Baker, the leader of the Dissenting congregation at Wattisfield.

Dover was one agent in a project administered by an unofficial committee, made up of members of the Privy Council, set up in October 1687. Two informal sub-committees reported to this committee, one with the task of locating suitable Catholic officers to replace those displaced by the three questions, and the other with the task of locating suitable Dissenters (Miller 2000, 179–180). Henry Jermyn, however, was not only a Privy Councillor himself but also a personal friend of the King. He may have by-passed this administrative structure in his dealings with James. The appointment of so important an individual as the electoral agent for Bury was certainly an indication of the significance of the borough in James's plans.

On 23 January 1688 the Corporation was informed that Lord Dover was dissatisfied with their conduct. Aware of the extent of Jermyn patronage over the last hundred years, the aldermen agreed that something should be done to restore Dover's good opinion. They wrote to him, pointing out that the candidates recommended by the Jermyn family had always been returned to the Commons by the borough (Hervey 1903, 320). The sting in the tail of their letter, however, was to ask Dover to recommend two men as MPs who were members of the Church of England, when even at this early stage they must have been aware of Dover's intention to enhance Catholic and Dissenter influence in the town and in Parliament. Dover's response was to tender the three questions. Having received negative or equivocal responses from them he removed the mayor, Richard Pryme, together with a number of aldermen and common councilmen by Orders in Council.

Lord Dover's replacement for the mayor was John Stafford (1633–1717), a Catholic silk mercer who owned a fairly large property with six hearths in Cook Row, now known as Abbeygate Street (*Suffolk in 1674* 1905, 56). After Stafford's appointment Dover's priority was to ensure that the Corporation was loyal to James II. On 22 March 1688 he wrote to Stafford (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 37), suggesting that his appointment had not been accepted easily:

I have yours of the 17;th and am very glad you are maior let the difficulty have been what it will in your being so; I suppose you know by this time what ill members you have remaining; and you are not ignorant what is to be done to be rid of them, therefore pray make no ceremony in this matter but as fast as may be let us out with them, and gett so good ons in that for this time to come Bury Corporation may have another sorte of reputation then heitherto it has had. if you want good men the two Doctor Shorts must not be spared, let me heare from you as soone as you please about this matter.

The 'two Doctor Shorts' whom Dover mentioned as 'good men' were probably Richard and Thomas Short, successful physicians who both owned large properties in Risbygate Street on the west side of the town'. In his letter of 17 March Stafford had evidently mentioned the idea of presenting a letter, professing the loyalty of the Corporation, to the King but Dover insisted that no formal 'address' would be required. A letter to Dover 'from your self, and Bretheren' expressing thanks to the King and pledging loyal service would be enough.

When Stafford came to produce this letter, however, his 'Bretheren' of the Corporation proved less effusive in their loyalty than he would have hoped and the resulting 'address' (presumably the letter

of 29 March mentioned in Hervey 1903, 320) was one Dover declared (on 10 April) he would be ashamed to show the King (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 39). On 12 May he suggested that Stafford should model the Corporation's letter on 'the Cambridge adrese' (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 41). By the time Dover wrote again on 31 May the letter had come to assume much greater importance as a guarantee of the Corporation's favourable disposition to James. These 'addresses' were originally sought as a thankful indication of loyalty from Dissenter communities in the aftermath of the first Declaration of Indulgence on 4 April 1687 (Miller 2000, 172). The change that had taken place in Dover's attitude was obviously brought about by James's renewal of the Declaration of Indulgence on 27 April 1688. Dover was keen to gratify James's desire for reassurance concerning the loyalty of his grateful subjects.

The aldermen, the common councilmen, the Deputy Recorder and the Town Clerk were expected to sign. Dover added that Thomas Hervey and Mr. Holland, the two assistant justices, were not to be an exception, suggesting that these men were considered particularly untrustworthy. Dover wrote that he expected some to refuse to put their names to the document, but pointed out that 'the sooner such are perfectly known the better; that they may be put out and others chosen in thier roome by degrees to your own liking and election' (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 44).

On 7 June Stafford wrote to Dover reporting that some members of the Corporation had refused to sign the letter on the grounds that no reference to James's Declaration of Indulgence had been included. Murrell suggests that these were Dissenters, anxious that the promises made to them in the Declaration would be upheld by a Catholic king (Murrell 1981, 195). Stafford asked Dover if a reference to the Declaration could be inserted in the wording of the letter, which Dover had presumably approved already (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 45). In his reply of 9 June Dover saw no reason why this could not be done, but on 19 June the assistant justices Hervey and Holland, together with the Deputy Recorder and the Town Clerk, still refused to sign. Dover suggested Edward Coleman as a suitable candidate for one of these positions (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 46). In addition, he recommended Jonathan Perry as Town Clerk and the Catholic Sir Henry Audley of Great Barton (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 47).

On 26 June Dover wrote to the whole Corporation reporting that James had read the letter and was satisfied with its contents. Matters then moved fast; the Corporation wrote to Dover on 7 July 'promising to elect such members for parliament as shall comply with his Majesty in all his gracious intentions,' and on 11 July the burgesses wrote again, asking for the next Suffolk assizes to be held at Bury as evidence of the King's favour to the borough. Already on 6 July, an Order in Council had commanded the removal of John Sotheby as Deputy Recorder and Thomas Hustler as Town Clerk (although it was not implemented until 19 July). Not surprisingly, the new Deputy Recorder and Clerk were Edward Coleman and Jonathan Perry². On 19 July the new Corporation consisted of a probable thirteen religious dissenters out of a total of thirty-one members. Five of these were Catholics (Murrell 1981, 205–6).

Dover's purge of the Corporation was not yet total. Sir Robert Davers of Rougham, Dover's brother in law and the inheritor of an enormous fortune from his father's estates in Barbados, had absented himself from the meeting at which the letter was signed on the grounds that his house was being pulled down and he needed to be present. In his letter of 4 September Dover prodded Stafford by questioning the honesty of this excuse (SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 50). Sir Robert received the reward of his non-co-operation when the borough returned him, with Sir Thomas Hervey, as MP to the Convention Parliament of 1689 (Pitt 1997, 3).

On 23 August Dover wrote to Stafford about the appointment of a new postmaster for the town, but Stafford was already in correspondence with the court about his anxiety that someone 'who would be firm to the King's interest' should be elected MP (SRO(W) 942.64 BUR, 93). He suggested the Congregationalist Samuel Baker of Wattisfield. It is unclear whether Baker was aware of the high regard in which he was held by the new regime in Bury. Although an account of his life survives, preserved in manuscript by his son Robert (SRO(W) HD 799), it dwells exclusively on his religious testimony and gives no hint of any involvement in politics. The plan was for Baker to stand for Parliament together with William Bridgeman of Combs, under secretary and clerk of the Privy

Council (Murrell 1981, 201).

Between August and October the chief interest of Stafford's party was in obtaining possession of the town's charter in case the King might wish to alter it as a final guarantee of his control of the Corporation. In the event, such an alteration never took place. Embattled by criticism, James issued his 'Proclamation for Restoring Corporations to their Antient Charters, Liberties, Rights and Franchises' on 17 October and on 22 October those members of the Corporation of 1684 still remaining met at the Guildhall as a 'rump Corporation' in order to eject from their offices all those appointed under the Charter of 1684.

The influence of Bury's Catholic minority was over, and retribution was soon to follow. However, the 'Catholic revival' of James's reign was not only political. The years 1685–88 saw the expansion of Catholic religious influence in Bury through the establishment of a permanent headquarters for the Jesuit mission in East Anglia. This took place well before Dover and Stafford began their campaign for control of the borough, and it can be surmised that both were emboldened by this example of *de facto* religious toleration.

Bury had been a Jesuit mission since at least the 1670s. The town was served from 1674 by a priest called George Cotton (Foley 1882, 176), but his ministry was interrupted by the Titus Oates conspiracy in 1679, when he fled to the continent with two other priests, possibly Anthony and Francis Bruning (Foley 1882, 98–99). A longstanding tradition asserts that a Jesuit College was established in the Abbey ruins in 1685. If so, where was the College, and what evidence is there for its existence?

On 14 February 1560 Queen Elizabeth made a grant of lands within the enclosure of St. Edmund's Abbey to John Eyre. The buildings specified in the grant give some clues as to which monastic structures still remained standing twenty-one years after the dissolution. Eyre was given 'the Mansion House...the Dorter to the said house adjoining, and two houses and buildings called Garners, on the East part of the said mansion house, and one stable, called the Abbot's Stable; and one house, called the Hey House, to the said stable annexed' (Gillingwater 1804, 157–158). Eyre was also given the Gate House of the Monastery. It seems almost certain that the 'Mansion House,' which adjoined 'the Abbot's Stable' and 'the Polly's (Palace?) Garden,' was the Abbot's Palace. Like other houses constructed from the remains of conventual buildings, the 'mansion house' was known as 'the old Abbey' or simply 'the Abbey.'

The Abbey precincts passed through the hands of several owners until, on 10 December 1675, they came into the possession of John Halls through the will of Samuel Halls (Yates 1805, 249). On the accession of James II in February 1685, John Halls was apparently concerned that the crown might confiscate it from him and return it to the monks, without compensation. Dom Benet Weldon, the annalist of the English Benedictine monastery of St. Edmund in Paris, records that the Benedictines were contacted by the owner, who offered to sell them the site (Mackinlay 1893, 405–406).

When the king (James II) was on the crown, as our house here in Paris bare the name of the Holy Martyr, St. Edmund, king of the East Angles; those who had the land of our old great abbey of St. Edmund's in England, frivolously and vainly apprehensive that we should again re-enter into all, they proposed to our the sale of 'em; but his majesty acquainted therewith advised our fathers not to undertake the affair that they might not give occasion to publick clamours and noises that the monks were a going to be put into possession of all again; wherefore our fathers humbly submitting to his majesty's sentiment let fall the affair.

In the absence of a bid from the monks, the Jesuit College of the Holy Apostles purchased the old Abbot's Palace as a residence for the Superior, apparently 'at a great price.'³ The College of the Holy Apostles was a *collegium inchoatum* or 'invisible college,' rather than a religious organisation with any real conventual life. Established in 1633, the 'College,' whose members were the Jesuit missionary priests operating within East Anglia, would have met only a few times a year in the house of a Catholic family. Each year, the Superior would write a letter to the Provincial Superior (normally

resident in France at the English Jesuit College at St. Omer). These Annual Letters, together with the accounts of the District, are the chief sources of evidence for Jesuit activity in East Anglia in the 17th century. However, owing to the risk of interception and the secretive nature of the mission, information in the Letters was often vague or minimal.

The Bury property at last gave the College a permanent headquarters. At some point after 1685 the Superior was joined by other fathers and Bury became the location of a school and chapel. The evidence for the presence of the Jesuits in the Abbey ruins is drawn almost entirely from the District Accounts of the College, which begin in 1667. In 1685, the Superior of the College spent £3 15s. 4d. 'For several of Ours all this year coming to Bury to me, and staying there, more or less, with their horses' (Foley 1877–1883, V, 537–538). This entry demonstrates that the Superior was already living in Bury in 1685, and the purchase of 'a cupboard at Bury for the district service' in the same year suggests that Bury was the College's administrative centre.

Is there any evidence that the Jesuits owned the old Abbot's Palace? The District's Annual Letters describe a *Sacellum publicum valde celebre* ('a public and well-known chapel') at Bury, and in 1688 the Superior spent £1 2s. 0d. on 'Accommodation for my chamber at the Abbey.' According to Henry Foley, 'The Abbey' should be taken as a reference to Eyer's house, the old Abbot's Palace, since this was the only remaining domestic building of the old monastery (Foley 1877–1883, VII.2, 1390–1391). The chapel was located in the same building, since 'Disbursements for the chapel there' are also recorded. The Abbot's Palace was a long range of buildings stretching from north to south on the north side of the Abbey Church. The principal building was the great hall, with a turret in the northwest corner. A. B. Whittingham's 1951 conjectural plan of the Abbey complex (reproduced on the endpapers of Meeres 2002) labels this building as the 'Queen's Chamber with larder and wardrobe.'

The depredations of the later 18th century were such that only the remains of the undercroft of the great hall survive, together with the base of the turret. An engraving of 1720,⁴ shows the Palace as it appeared not long after the destruction of the Jesuit College. Joseph Lazenby, a Jesuit priest and antiquary who served at Bury in the 1870s, thought the chapel was located to the south of the great hall, since a roofless building is shown in this position in the 1720 engraving. Lazenby thought that if the chapel had been sacked and burnt at the time of the Revolution it would have appeared as derelict. If this is true then a small tumulus crowned by a large tree, presumably planted as part of the development of the 'Botanic Garden' in the early 19th century, now stands where the chapel might have been. The reality, however, is that we have no certain way of knowing the chapel's precise location.

It seems likely that the school at the Abbot's Palace followed the pattern of Jesuit schools set up in the reign of James II. It was a free and public school accepting both Catholic and Protestant pupils. *The Rules of the Schools at the Jesuits in Fanchurch-Street* is the only prospectus to survive for one of these schools. The Fenchurch Street school, established in 1687, is described as 'common to all.' There is a guarantee against 'any tampering or meddling to persuade any one from the Profession of his own Religion' and an assurance that religious liberty will be respected (Whitehead 2005). In this way the Jesuit schools modelled James's Declaration of Indulgence as well as instantiating broader Jesuit principles, which stressed the harmonisation of the Society's educational work with the surrounding culture as a necessary preparative to proselytism. Little is known of the school at Bury except that it took eighteen boarders, in addition to an unspecified number of day pupils from the town (Foley 1877–1883, V, 526).

The Superior who moved into the Abbot's Palace in 1685 was Alexander Keynes (1641–1713), a secular priest who had become a Jesuit late in life. He succeeded Charles Poulton (1616–1690) as Superior or Rector of the College of the Holy Apostles in 1683 (Foley 1882, 415). Poulton was later appointed Rector of the College in the Savoy, on 24 May 1687. Keynes was expelled from England in 1688. His successor as Superior, Nathaniel Stafford (1635–1697) was the brother of the mayor. Nathaniel had joined the Jesuits at Watten in the Netherlands in 1656 and was sent to East Anglia in 1667. In 1680 he was appointed Vice-Rector of the College. It seems likely that his appointment to

succeed Keynes owed something to his local background, which was needed in order to negotiate the survival of the Jesuit mission (Foley 1882, 729). Had the name of Stafford been thoroughly hated it seems unlikely that Nathaniel would have been assigned this difficult task. Indeed, Stafford's appointment may have been an attempt to salvage the situation if, as Joy Rowe suggests, 'the support of the people of Bury would seem to have been won by the Jesuits' (Rowe 1959, 10).

There is no clear evidence for the number of priests and brothers resident at the College's headquarters in Bury during the 1680s. We gain an intimate picture of the College's work, however, from the autobiography of Catharine Burton (1668–1714).

Catharine Burton was born on 4 November 1668, the third surviving daughter of a Catholic gentleman, Thomas Burton, who had settled in Suffolk from Yorkshire. She is known to have had one brother – Christopher Burton (1671–1744) was a Jesuit who served the Lancashire missions and died at Watten in the Netherlands. Catharine's youngest sister Margaret entered the Hoegstraat Carmelites in Antwerp and became Superior, whilst her eldest sister Margaret Burton joined the English Augustinian Canonesses at Bruges. Finally, her sister Anne Woolmer joined Catharine's own convent after her husband's death (Hunter 1876, 3).

Catharine's autobiography was compiled in the early 18th century by the Jesuit Thomas Hunter who incorrectly spelt the name of the village of Catharine's birth as 'Bayton.' Hunter's lack of local knowledge has been the cause of much confusion, but fortunately Catharine herself (despite her unwillingness to give the names of persons or places) is unflinchingly precise in her descriptions. Foley calls the village 'Great Burton' in his *Collectanea English Province S.J.* (Foley 1882, 662), and then 'Barton' in his *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (Foley 1877–1883, V, 527). In the latter form he appears to be quoting from the Annual Letter of the College of the Holy Apostles of 1693. There are two villages, Beyton and Great Barton, both within a very short distance of Bury, that might qualify as Catharine's place of birth. It is, in fact, certain that Catharine lived at Beyton, six miles due east of Bury. Catharine states that the holy well dedicated to the Virgin Mary to which she made several pilgrimages was two miles from her village (Hunter 1876, 78). This well was almost certainly the holy well of Our Lady at Woolpit, which is about two miles from Beyton, but further from Great Barton. Furthermore, when on pilgrimage Catharine's brother commented that 'If I should go two miles further we should come to a place to hear Mass' (Hunter 1876, 85). Two miles from Woolpit was Sir Edward Sulyard's house at Haughley, a known mass centre. From these geographical considerations, therefore, Beyton seems a far more likely location for the Burton mass centre than Great Barton, as some scholars have suggested (Dymond and Martin 1988, 88). The house occupied by the Burtons was probably the long 15th century hall known as the 'manor house' on the north side of the eastern end of Beyton Green. The manor of Beyton was crown land in 1764 but its ownership prior to that date is unclear (Coppinger 1910, VI, 254). Another possibility is that the Burtons lived at Brook Farm, a substantial moated farmhouse to the east of the church.

The final piece of evidence to confirm Beyton as the home of the Burton family is found in the Beyton parish registers. Although recusants do not usually appear in the register of baptisms – they were baptised privately by Catholic priests – Catholics were buried in the same churchyards as anyone else and they are, therefore, identifiable in the registers. There is an entry for the burial of a Thomas Burton on 8 January 1695. This agrees with Catharine's narrative, in which her father dies shortly after her departure for the Continent. Furthermore, an annotation was placed beside Burton's name by the rector or parish clerk, which is highly unusual for this register: Burton is described as 'generosus hommo' – 'a good man' (SRO(W) FL 528/4/1).

Catharine's family was a very devout one. Her mother died when she was eight years old. Her father, who became a Jesuit laybrother on his deathbed, insisted that the family say morning and evening prayers and 'litanies' together. He promised his children money if they learnt their catechism (Hunter 1876, 22). Mass was apparently celebrated once a month by a visiting Jesuit (Hunter 1876, 25). The Burtons seem to have been on good terms with their non-Catholic neighbours, and Catharine's account repeatedly mentions an altar being set up in her sick room. Rather than the attic chapels of Elizabethan times, the Burtons felt safe enough to worship in an ordinary room of the

house even after the Revolution. In 1684, when she was sixteen years old, Catharine contracted smallpox from her elder brother. When she recovered she became increasingly preoccupied with religion and began to pray in public places in order to mortify herself through embarrassment. No one commented 'except a Protestant neighbour' and no consequences resulted (Hunter 1876, 29). Catharine's devotions – presumably those taught her by the Jesuits – were the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Litanies of St. Joseph (Hunter 1876, 31).

In August 1686 Catharine contracted a mysterious illness that tormented her for a year. She recovered on 3 August 1687, but she continued to suffer and was bedridden. During this time Nathaniel Stafford became her confessor. This 'virtuous man of the Society of Jesus' did not encourage Catharine to become a nun – Catharine comments, with some irony, that she met him in Antwerp after her profession (Hunter 1876, 32). Catharine states – wrongly – that Stafford was 'at that time Superior of the Society in those parts' (Hunter 1876, 37). He was in fact Vice-Rector of the College. When doctors failed to bring Catharine any relief Stafford brought her a relic of the true cross (Hunter 1876, 43), and about this time Catharine's condition became known in the locality, presumably because it was so extraordinary for someone to continue to live whilst suffering so severe an illness. Stafford 'was now taken up in the Chapel of Bury, in King James' time.' Nevertheless, he continued to visit Catharine once or twice a week (Hunter, 1876, 44).

In February 1688 Francis Rockley (born 1656) became Catharine's confessor, although she knew him under his alias of Fr. Ireland. The College accounts record that Rockley was at Bury from 1687, although he appears to have fallen ill at first. He was given £7 12s. 0d. 'in his sickness' and given money 'for wood and necessaries in his chamber at Bury' (Foley 1882, 662). Rockley was still Catharine's confessor as late as 8 September 1691, and Catharine records that, in addition to the Burton household, he said mass for 'Lady Audley.' Hunter identifies this lady as Mary Touchet, youngest daughter of John Talbot, 9th Earl of Shrewsbury and widow of John Arundell (Hunter 1876, 89–90). However, it seems far more likely that she was the wife of Sir Henry Audley of Great Barton Hall, who was a member of the Bury Corporation (Coppinger 1910, VI, 252). A direct road connected Beyton and Great Barton and the priest could easily have served both mass centres within a day. There is some evidence to suggest that Rockley was a resident chaplain at Beyton – Catharine records that 'Mass was said every day in my room when the priest was at home' (Hunter 1876, 61).

In addition to arranging medical care for his daughter, Thomas Burton also encouraged priests to visit. In 1690, when Lewis Sabran was in England, Burton went to meet him and invited him to Beyton. In 1691 Catharine received a visit from the Jesuit William Collins (1650–1704). Foley is wrong in thinking that this happened in 1693, although it is recorded in the Annual Letter for that year. Catharine herself tells us what happened next (Hunter 1876, 65–66):

Though he was a stranger, he had heard of me, and after a short time desired to see me. He was touched with compassion at my condition, and spoke very fervently to me, encouraging me to suffer, adding that I should be walking above the stars when others that did not suffer in this world would be in the fire of Purgatory. These words, and his way of uttering them, gave me great comfort, remembering, ever since I was a child, I had prayed to God to send me my purgatory in this life, with grace and patience to bear it; and even in the extremity of my suffering, I could not give over this prayer, but I neither told this to him nor anybody else. When this Father had heard my sisters relate some particulars of my sickness, he was mighty earnest that I should begin a devotion of Ten Fridays to St. Xaverius, which I willingly consented to. He promised me a book of instructions for the devotion, which he sent me with a pious letter promising to join with me. I found myself strongly moved with a more than ordinary devotion to this Saint, though I had never specially prayed to him before. I felt a kind of endearing affection, more than I had ever experienced to any saint before, with a great confidence that he would help me. I was very willing to begin the devotion, which my confessor approved of, thinking nothing but a miracle would cure me.

In May 1691 Catharine recovered completely. She ascribed her miraculous cure to the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, and the cure became famous in the area. Catharine was by this time determined to become a nun. She began to see visions of angels who instructed her, among other things, 'to offer up my sufferings for the public good of the nation and for the King who was banished' (Hunter 1876, 57). On Burton's instructions, Sabran began to look for a convent that would be willing to take Catharine. Ironically, Catharine's place at the English Carmelite convent in Antwerp was secured, without her knowledge, by 'a Protestant gentleman' whose daughter had entered the Hoegstraat convent (Hunter 1876, 11, 98). Meanwhile Catharine related that 'The longer I stayed the more came to visit me, and though the parson of the place had declared from the pulpit, not long before, that miracles were ceased, yet the Protestants themselves looked on my cure as miraculous' (Hunter 1876, 83–84). 'The parson of the place' was Richard Nesling, Rector of Beyton 1682–1724, who, judging from his annotation in the parish register, admired Catharine's father despite his determined recusancy. Catharine noted that at least one of the neighbours she astounded by visiting her was converted to the Catholic faith on account of the miracle (Hunter 1876, 84).

The Jesuits, too, were anxious to make much of this cure by the intercession of a Jesuit saint. The Annual Letter of 1693 recorded Catharine's recovery. In November 1691, accompanied by Rockley, Catharine left England. She entered the English Carmelite convent at Antwerp, where she was professed on 9 December 1693. She probably wrote her spiritual autobiography in about 1698 (Hallett 2002, 1–30).

Catharine Burton's autobiography is a rare document of great value, giving an intimate insight into the lives of Catholic recusants in Suffolk at the end of the 17th century. The account suggests a quietly confident Catholic community that received thorough and regular pastoral care from the local Jesuit clergy. The Burtons had good relations with their neighbours and were admired by them. The account shows that the Jesuits even revived the practice of pilgrimage to local shrines. It seems unlikely that Catharine thought of making a pilgrimage to the well at Woolpit entirely on her own, and unless some residual devotion to the holy well had survived among the local people it was probably the Jesuits who encouraged the pilgrimage. Until now the earliest reference to local people resorting to the well has been a letter of 1826 (Paine 1996, 10). However, the shrine of Our Lady of Woolpit was patronised by royalty in the Middle Ages and, among East Anglian people, it approached Walsingham in significance. Camden mentions it in his *Britannia* (Paine 1996, 9). When the holy well was all that remained of the devotion it seems likely that the Jesuits encouraged discreet private pilgrimages to it rather like the famous pilgrimage to Holywell in Flintshire.

Apart from the light it sheds on the nature of the pastoral care provided by the Bury Jesuits, Catharine's account proves that the Jesuit mission outlasted the end of the chapel in the Abbot's Palace. Indeed, the evidence of wholesale destruction seems notably absent. The library of the College was evidently intact even after the building passed out of Jesuit hands. In 1689 £1 1s. 6d. was spent 'Securing goods at Bury,' and as late as 1728 Fr. Shirburne, the Superior, went 'To Bury, to inquire about books and other effects, left there ever since the demolition of that school' (Foley 1877–1883, V, 538). Nathaniel Stafford was in England until he left to take up the appointment of spiritual director at the College in St. Omer in 1695, and he remained Superior of the College of the Holy Apostles until that point (Foley 1882, 729). One can reasonably assume that he remained within the vicinity of Bury. William Collins began his mission at Bury in 1690, after the supposed destruction (Foley 1882, 150).

Shirburne refers to the *demolition* of the school. The Abbot's Palace was certainly still standing in 1720. Mackinlay (1893 n. 358) claims that the Palace was used as a house until 1720. It may have been demolished, therefore, at some time between 1720 and 1728. In 1720 the building was sold to Major Richardson Pack, who soon passed it on to Jermyn Davers. The title deed prepared for Richardson Pack is almost identical in its wording to Elizabeth's original grant, and no mention is made of any parts of the building being derelict (Yates 1805, 68). The nature of Shirburne's enquiry suggests that the building had contained some of the possessions of the Jesuits until the year of its demolition. The survival of Jesuit effects at Bury strongly suggests that the expulsion of the Jesuits was

a peaceful affair compared to the treatment of their brethren at the Savoy and Fenchurch Street chapels in London. The only direct evidence for the destruction of the Jesuit mission, the Annual Letter for 1688, mentions only the 'chapel and schools,' which were 'nearly destroyed by a riotous mob' (Foley 1877–1883, VII.1, clii). If the chapel was burnt, as Foley and Lazenby suggest (Foley 1877–1883, VII.2, 1389), then the fire must have been confined to this part of the building. However, the Annual Letter confirms only that the school and chapel were 'nearly destroyed.' There is no evidence whatsoever that they were actually destroyed.

A propaganda broadside dated 30 November 1688 gives a dramatic, and very probably false, account of events in the town at the time of the Revolution. The pamphlet is in the form of a letter written from Braintree (a town, like Bury, on the post route to Norwich) to a friend in London, describing 'an horrid Popish Plot' in Bury to blow up the town with gunpowder. The anonymous author breathlessly records that a thirty-yard fuse was laid the length of the town and the Protestants had made a search of the houses of prominent Catholics. The Catholics resisted and three Protestants were killed, but a 'Letter sent from one Papist to another' was discovered, thus proving the reality of the plot.

The supposed letter, from John Daniel of Acton to John Stafford, encouraging the mayor to make preparations to destroy the town with all speed, is reproduced at the end of the pamphlet. It contains the elements a Protestant of the time would have expected to read in a secret letter between Catholics – Protestants are referred to as 'Hereticks,' and a virtually unintelligible reference to the intercession of Mary is thrown in for good measure. Although no original of this pamphlet survives it is preserved in an unattributed magazine cutting of the late 19th century entitled *A "Gunpowder Plot" at Bury St. Edmund's* by 'A. J. B.' in J. C. Ford's *Aldermen & Mayors of Bury St. Edmund's 1302–1896*, a manuscript compendium of material relating to the mayors and aldermen of the borough (SRO(W) 942.64 BUR, 94–95). Notwithstanding the 'whiggish' tone of his article, 'A. J. B.' (who claims to be the owner of the original of the pamphlet) is sceptical of the pamphlet's version of events, not to mention the supposed letter from John Daniel, on the grounds that neither the plot nor the deaths of 'Protestants' are recorded in the Assizes or parish records. The major anti-Catholic riots in London did not take place until 10–11 December 1688 (Callow 2004, 8) and the Bury pamphlet was one of many distributed by opponents of James that led to increased tensions in the capital.

If we assume that there were indeed attacks on the property of Catholics in Bury between 26 and 30 November 1688, the mob turned its attention next to Lord Dover. On 15 December a London newspaper, *The Universal Intelligence*, reported that on the previous Wednesday (12 December) 'The mobile of this Town (Cambridge) being up, are gone to meet their Brethren of *Berry* upon *New-Market* Heath, with design to visit the Lord Dover's house at *Cheveley*' (CUL Sel.3.235 fo. 173). Another newspaper, *The London Courant*, described the subsequent attack on 18 December (CUL Sel.3.235 fo. 182):

They write from *Cambridge*, that the Rabble trooped from thence to *Newmarket* where being met by the Rabble of *St Edmunds Bury*, they resolved to attack the Lord *Dover's* house not far from thence; There they pull'd down the Popish Chapell, but through much intreaty were prevailed upon to spare the House. Thence they seized Dr. *Watson*, Bishop of *St David's*, whom they mounted on a poor Jade, putting a Halter on the Horse's head, so leading him in triumph to the Castle at *Cambridge* where he is now a prisoner.

The attack at Cheveley did not mark the end of the disturbances. The mob returned to Bury and a weekly newspaper, *The London Mercury or Orange Intelligence* for 31 December 1688 to 3 January 1689 (CUL Syn. 6.87.32 fo. 5) reported that on 27 December a rumour had spread in the town that part of James's Irish army was approaching 'with Fire and Sword.' The local gentry apparently gathered together 500 men and, by sending out scouts, they quickly learnt that there was no real danger. However, rather than standing down, the poorer citizens banded together 'stiling themselves the Protestant Reformers' and moved around Bury and the surrounding countryside intimidating former supporters of James's regime as well as some unconnected individuals. They extorted money, searched

and looted properties and, in one case, pulled down the house of a suspected Papist. It is possible that this is a garbled reference to the incident at Cheveley where the chapel was demolished.

The first action taken by the Corporation was to order the militia, under the command of 'C.H.,' to threaten the mob on Angel Hill by aiming muskets into the crowd. The strategy turned into a farce when the militiamen lowered their firearms, letting the musket balls fall out, and joined the looters. The commanding Colonel, to save face, declared a 'Free Booty.' Matters were only brought under control by Sir Robert Davers and Captain Henry Goldwell (presumably a junior officer in the same militia that had just failed to suppress the mob). Davers gathered a troop of horse consisting of some of the leading gentlemen of the town, while Goldwell was apparently appointed by the Corporation or a temporary convention of tradesmen as the commander of 200 men. The newspaper recorded the speeches of Davers and Goldwell, exhorting the inhabitants of the town to declare 'for a free Parliament.'

Although no one targeted by the mob is mentioned by name in *The London Mercury's* report, 'the House of an Alderman' may be John Stafford's house. The house of 'another eminent Person' may be Ambrose Rookwood's house and the 'two others that were Roman Catholicicks' may be Richard and Thomas Short. There is no suggestion that the 'Lady' whose house was plundered and demolished was a Catholic. The Burton family home was attacked at this time. According to Catharine Burton (Hunter 1876, 47),

In the Revolution in which King James was cast out of his kingdom, the storm which threatened all Catholics fell very heavy upon us, and our house was pillaged to that degree they left us not so much as a chair or bed, excepting one which escaped their knowledge.

Strikingly, there is no mention of the Jesuits and their property in any of these accounts, although since Nathaniel Stafford was appointed Superior before the end of 1688 and Alexander Keynes, the previous Superior, was expelled in that year it seems likely that an earlier disturbance had displaced the Jesuits from Bury. This may have been the disturbance of November to which the 'Popish Plot' pamphlet refers.

Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons to believe that the backlash against Bury's Catholics was not severe compared to the revolutionary violence in some towns. The Superior was expelled, but the books and effects of the Jesuit school survived until 1728. A new Superior was appointed without delay and he was a local man. The Jesuits remained in the area immediately after the Revolution, as Catharine Burton attests in her autobiography, probably written only five years after the event. The surrounding Protestant population remained sympathetic to Catholics into the early 18th century: Thomas Hunter received a very favourable response from both Catholics and Protestants in the local area when he asked them to confirm the story of Catharine's miraculous cure (Hunter 1876, 5). Finally, there is evidence that the prominent members of the discredited regime remained in, or at least returned to the town. John Stafford died in Bury on 23 March 1717, aged eighty-four, and was buried in St. Mary's churchyard (SRO(W) 942.64 BUR, 94–95). His daughter Catherine married John Tyldesley, the son of another prominent Catholic family whose estate was at Fornham St. Genevieve, just to the north of Bury. However, whilst Tyldesley appears in the list of Non-Jurors of 1715 John Stafford does not, although any number of reasons (including ill-health) could have excused him from being tendered the oath. Only one member of the local Catholic establishment, Dr. Richard Short, is known to have left the country.

The personal diary of Isaac Archer, the vicar of Mildenhall, is one of few to describe events in West Suffolk in this period. Archer makes no reference to disturbances in Bury, although on 2 September 1688 he prays against 'seducers...let loose upon us,' (Storey 1994, 176), possibly a reference to Jesuits now free to operate under James's Declaration of Indulgence. Archer passes from unease at James's policy of toleration to rejoicing at the arrival of William of Orange, without any hint at local disturbances. There is evidence for persecution in other parts of Suffolk. Francis Rockley was in Ipswich by December 1688, where the College gave him £5 towards setting up a chapel, but

shortly thereafter he was arrested and imprisoned. The College bailed him for £32 1s. 6d. (Foley 1882, 662) However, as we have seen, Rockley remained in England, possibly as domestic chaplain to the Burtons. It seems probable that the missionary priests, such as John Sadler, who arrived in Bury in 1697 (Holt 1984, 218) and Ignatius Stafford who arrived in 1698 (Holt 1984, 235) were replacements for priests exiled or imprisoned as a result of the Revolution.

Any judgement of the severity of the persecution in Catholics in Bury St. Edmunds after 1688 must be made in the light of what appears to have been a conscious effort by subsequent generations to forget that the attempted revival of Catholic fortunes and its suppression at the Revolution ever happened. John Stafford is missing from later lists of mayors of Bury on the grounds that his appointment, under the Charter of 1684, was illegal, and William Yates omits the Jesuits in his list of owners of the monastic precincts since the dissolution, presumably because his sources did the same. Before the end of 1688, the church bells of St. Mary's were ringing out to celebrate the restoration of the Charter of 1668 (Tymms 1854, 150). The Protestant agitators were as unsuccessful in creating Protestant martyrs for Bury as the Catholics were in keeping control of the Corporation.

A second Williamite purge of the Corporation occurred on 9 April 1696, following the failure of an assassination attempt on William of Orange. The Corporation of Bury was presented with an 'Association' declaring William to be 'the rightful and lawful King of these realms.' One of the burgesses, Gascoigne Young, refused to sign and on 5 September 1696 he was fined £50 and declared incapable of exercising the functions of a burgess (Tymms 1854, n. 151–152). Ironically, Young had been one of the first sixteen common councilmen to be removed from the Corporation by James II on 16 March 1688 (Murrell 1981, n. 190). Although a member of the 'rump Corporation' of 1684 that reconvened to throw out the members forced upon it by James, Young was presumably an Anglican 'Non-Juror' unable to accept William's claim to be King.

Catharine Burton records that 'My father, though times were troublesome, never used to refuse the Fathers of the Society, who resorted much to our house' (Hunter 1876, 23–24). It is possible that Beyton was one of the bases from which the Jesuits operated after the Revolution. Possibly as a result of Thomas Burton's death, in the late 1690s the religious focus of Bury's Catholic community shifted to the Short family's properties in Risbygate Street. These were owned by Dr. Richard Short and Dr. Thomas Short. The family was a large one and several of its members joined the Dominican and Benedictine orders. For nearly seventy years to come, the mission run from their home was the only Catholic chapel within the town of Bury St. Edmunds.

The Short family had played a prominent role in Bury's Catholic community since the late 16th century. In the early 17th century three Short brothers are recorded: Thomas, a doctor in Bury; Peregrine (also a doctor), recorded as a recusant at Babingley in 1655 and William, the vicar of Euston. There were, therefore, both conformist and recusant branches of the Short family. Thomas and William Short both had sons called Thomas. Thomas, son of Thomas the Elder, was born in Bury in 1616 and was admitted a pensioner at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1634. He left for the English College in Lisbon in 1636, was ordained priest in 1641 and sent on the English mission in 1644, where he sometimes went under the name of Peregrine (Anstruther 1975, 295). He must be distinguished from Thomas Peregrine, alias Short, who returned to England from the English College at Douai in 1704.

Thomas, son of William Short, was born in 1635. Thomas sprang from the conformist branch of the Shorts; his father was an Anglican clergyman (albeit in a living in the gift of the Catholic Rookwood family). He attended the Bury Grammar School and went up to St. John's College, Cambridge at the age of fourteen where he was admitted a sizar on 25 February 1650, graduating BA three years later. By royal mandate he received his MD on 26 June 1668, and in December of the same year he was admitted to the Royal College of Physicians, becoming a fellow on 26 July 1675. At some point during the 1670s Thomas became a recusant – on 14 April 1679, at the height of the Oates conspiracy, the Royal College of Physicians responded to an order from the House of Lords to examine their members by summoning Thomas to appear before them, but the meeting was not quorate and no action was taken. Thomas died on 28 September 1685 and was buried at the entrance

to the chapel in St. James's Palace (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*, 1897, LII, 154). The Thomas Short recorded as a Nonjuror in 1715 was probably his son. He was also probably the Thomas Short who became an alderman on 14 May 1688. This Thomas Short married Ursula, daughter of John Daniel of Acton (the author of the supposed 'Letter sent from one Papist to another' of 1688).

According to Charles Dodd, the equally celebrated Richard Short was 'near a kin' to Thomas, and he may have been his cousin (Dodd 1742, III, 460). Richard was born in London in 1642, the son of Richard Short and Elisabeth Cresner. Unlike his cousin, he appears to have been a Catholic from an early age. According to Dodd he studied the Humanities at the English College in Douai at the age of twelve, although Dodd makes him twenty eight years younger than the inscription on his gravestone. Assuming the monumental inscription to be the more accurate, Short may have gone to the English College at Douai in 1654. We next hear of him when he was imposed by James II on Magdalen College, Oxford as a fellow by Letters Patent dated 14 March 1688. These excused him from the usual oaths guaranteeing conformity to the Church of England. By 16 November of the same year, however, Richard had returned to Douai where he studied philosophy for two years. He subsequently took degrees in Montpellier, Italy and Paris before returning to London where he was as famous for his care for the poor as for his excellent medical practice. He died on 14 December 1708, aged sixty-six, and was buried in St. Mary's churchyard in Bury.⁶ It is unclear how much time Richard spent in Bury from his return to England until his death in 1708. He certainly never ceased to own property, and he was an enthusiastic attendee of Corporation meetings or 'Halls' from his appointment on 14 May 1688 to the last gathering of Stafford's government on 12 October, missing only one meeting.

A third Short, Peregrine, who may have been the brother either to Richard or to Thomas, died in 1719 aged seventy-seven, as an inscription that survived the destruction of the church of Fornham St. Genevieve attested (Estcourt and Payne 1911, 259). It is likely that Peregrine was the 'Dr. Perry Short' mentioned in the hearth tax returns of 1674.

In 1715 Thomas, son of the Thomas Short born in 1635, was renting a house from Peregrine (Estcourt and Payne 1911, 259). It is known that Phillip, the son of this Thomas Short, was also a physician. He is mentioned as such in the will of Ursula, his mother, dated 3 September 1728 (Estcourt and Payne 1911, 264), and the Dr. Henry Short mentioned in 1715 may be another of Thomas's sons. Henry and Phillip Short may be the sons of Thomas Short referred to in the will of Rebecka Jermyn in 1694 (Hervey 1903, 321). The date of Thomas's death is unknown because the church at Fornham St. Genevieve where most family members were buried was destroyed by fire in 1782, but we know that he died some time before 1728 because his wife Ursula survived him and wrote her will in that year.

Both Shorts (Richard and Thomas) were co-opted onto the Corporation as aldermen on 14 May 1688 (Murrell 1981, 206). They joined fellow Catholics Henry Audley (co-opted 18 September 1688) and Ambrose Rookwood (co-opted 16 March 1688). Richard Short attended ten out of the twelve meetings of the Corporation from his taking of the oath of office, and Thomas attended seven (Murrell 1981, 204). Despite their association with John Stafford's short-lived 'Dissenting' Corporation of 1688 the Shorts were evidently able to sustain the local Catholic community, quietly and unobtrusively, in the uncertain years of the early 18th century. The same sprawling networks of family, patronage and property ownership that seem to have protected John Stafford from imprisonment or exile safeguarded the survival of the Catholic community in the post-Revolutionary years.

Dover's Catholic political experiment at Bury had failed. The Anglican Protestant establishment, represented by such individuals as Sir Robert Davers, was too entrenched to cede its privileges, although it adopted a policy of stubborn intransigence rather than open defiance. Similarly, the Jesuits' attempt to normalise their secret mission to East Anglia ended in the exile of their Superior and the confiscation of their property. Missing from Bury, however, were the violently anti-Catholic preachers and the mobs that destroyed the schools and chapels in London. Indeed, the Anglican clergy of the period were not renowned for their anti-Catholic attitude. Nicholas Clagett, preacher at

St. Mary's Church during the period, was most famous for a sermon preached to the Bishop of Norwich entitled 'A Persuasive to Peaceableness and Obedience' in 1686 (Tymms 1854, 129–130), and his predecessor John Battely, judging from his later works, probably devoted his time to antiquarian research. The limited violence of December 1688 was suppressed by the Anglican gentry themselves. This suggests a Catholic community sufficiently large to command respect, rather than a tiny, feared minority as may have been the case in Ipswich. Furthermore, the leading figures of the community – the Staffords, Burtons and Shorts – were tradesmen and professionals, not gentry. As such, they were in no sense outsiders. In this way, the Catholic community in 17th century Bury contradicts the stereotype that recusancy was restricted to the gentry and those immediately dependent upon them. In the years 1685–88 we glimpse a small but confident urban community of Catholics, sadly frustrated in its hopes of toleration.

APPENDIX I: THE LONDON MERCURY OR THE ORANGE INTELLIGENCE, 31
DECEMBER 1688 TO 3 JANUARY 1689 (No. 5)

St Edmonds Bury December 27. Last week the rumour of some Irish approaching with Fire and Sword, gave such an Alarm to the Inhabitants of this Place; as also the Nieghbourhood, that in an instant, above 500 of good account, appeared in arms, fortifying and barricadoing the Town Gates and Avenues leading thereto, and then sent out scouts to descry whereabouts the Enemy were, who in a short time returning, quickly discovered the falsity thereof; however, the poor Mobile that had nothing to hazard or loose, stiling themselves the Protestant reformers, seemed not secure in their property, but rambling about Town and Country, and sometimes in Parties, imposing on some Taxes, rifling both Papists and Protestants, *Testmen* and *Anti-Testmen*, without any Distinction, plundered a Lady's House, she escaping with great difficulty; as also the House of an Alderman and another eminent Person, with two others that were *Roman Catholicks*, and finding the sweet morsels of Plunder, resolved to proceed in a Ravening or rather Ruining Method, without any distinction of Persons or Parties, had they not been suppressed by the Civil Magistrate, and reduced to their Quondam plebeian Estate; many of which are committed to the Common Goal (which is strongly guarded), being first divested of their purloyn'd Goods.

But that which was most pleasant and observable was that before the Gentlemen and Inhabitants had formed themselves into a Body, a Company of the Militia or Trained-bands under the command of *C.H.* were ordered to disperse a party of the Rabble (who had the Impudence to Demolish the aforesaid Lady's House, after they had plundered it) and accordingly being drawn up on *Angel-Hill* in view of the Rout, and the usual words of 'Make ready and Present' being given, which they instead of doing turned their Musquets, knocked out their Ball, and forced the Colonel to declare for a free Booty, and so joyned with the Rabble.

The speech of Sir *Robert Davers* knt to some of the chief inhabitants of *Bury St Edmonds* being a party of horse under his command, by vertue of the *Posse Comitatus* of the said county assembled:

'Gentlemen, we have been daily disturbed with the approaching Evils of *Irish* and *French*; I may take the boldness to say, being at the Head of so good a Troop, you shall not need to fear, being resolv'd to spend the last drop of my blood before the *Irish* or *French* shall ever hurt a Hair of your Heads; and so you may peaceably depart and take your Rest, after you have declared for a free Parliament.'

Captain *Henry Goldwell's* speech to the Chief Inhabitants and Tradesmen of *Bury St Edmonds* in the county of *Suffolk*, having listed themselves under his command, to the number of 200.

'Gentlemen, since you have pass'd by many worthier and Fitter Persons amongst you, and appointed me for your leader, at a Juncture, when the warm Transport of a zealous Rabble, have carried them so far, as not to distinguish between Papists and Protestants, and the Rumours of a much more threatening Nature, hourly Alarm us, which requires the Address and Conduct of a more able and experienced Commander, to Allay and suppress, you shall, at least Gentlemen, expect this from me, that according to my utmost Ability, assisted with your Advice and Direction, I will act with a Forward and Affectionate Zeal, becoming the present Occasion, your real Friend, and this Honorable Employment.

Let us therefore Unanimously Bless God and Honour the very Name of His Highness the *Prince of Orange*, for preserving to us, this Opportunity of asserting the Defence of our Religion, Rights, and Properties, which for ought I know, e'er this time might have been sacrificed to the unjust Pretences and illegal Usurpation.

It's now, Gentlemen, our own Faults, if by Dis-uniting again, we seem to be one entire Body, should give our Enemies another opportunity of Disturbing, if not quite Destroying of us. Therefore, for Establishing of the general Peace and Tranquility which will be the greatest Glory of our English and Reformed Kingdom, we ought with one Heart and Voice, to declare ourselves for His Highness, the Prince of Orange, and unquestionable Free-Parliament, without which effectual Remedy, all Diseases may be a little Paleated, but never thoroughly cured.'

APPENDIX II: PAMPHLET WARNING OF A PLOT TO BLOW UP BURY ST. EDMUNDS,
NOVEMBER 1688 (TAKEN FROM SRO(W) 942.64 BUR)

A copy of a LETTER out of the Country to one in London, discovering a Conspiracy of the Roman Catholics at St. Edmund's Bury in Suffolk.

Braintree, Nov. 30, 1688

Loving Brother,

As you are full of Commotions in *London*, so are we here with us; for on *Tuesday* Night last, it pleased God to discover in *Bury* an horrid Popish Plot for the burning, blowing up, and destroying of that Town: The Train was laid half the length of your Alley (which is about thirty yards.) The Inhabitants are now up in Arms, though they had resistance made them by the Papists; and in searching their Houses, three Protestants were killed, and nine wounded.

At *Sudbury*, about twelve Miles from us, three or four hundred of the Inhabitants have armed themselves in their own defence, and have searched several Papists' Houses: What will be the effect of these things, God only knows.

The indorsed is a true Copy of a Letter sent from one Papist to another, and was found in one of their Houses in *Bury*

The Letter inclosed.

Aston (sic), Nov. 26, 1688.

Sir *These are to desire you to be very careful and speedy in getting all things ready, and let nothing be wanting for it. We are fearful that the Hereticks will have their Work done at once: Our Lady Mary hath made Intercession with God to suffer their work to go on, if we be not betrayed, your Town being public, and so many eyes about, therefore I pray you be careful and encourage all our Friends in this great and meritorious Work, that they provide for this great and fatal blow, and I shall ever remain,*

Your Faithful Friend to serve you,
John Daniel

To Mr. *John Stafford*,
Mercer in *Bury*

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NOTES

- 1 In 1674, the houses of 'Dr. Perry Short' and 'Doctor Short jun.' each had seven hearths; see *Suffolk in 1674*, 54. See also Rowe 1959, 11.
- 2 SRO(W) 942.64 BUR, 95. See also SRO(W) E2/41/5 fo. 49.
- 3 Foley 1877–1883, VII.2, 1389. When it was sold in 1720 the building fetched £2800, which gives some indication of its price in 1685. See Yates 1805, 249.
- 4 Battely 1745, Tablet III, engraved by Sir James Burrough. Another, less stylised engraving, showing the Abbot's Palace in around 1720, can be found in Yates 1805. Given the late date of Yates's work it is probable that he based his drawing on Burrough's earlier engraving. The Palace was certainly not standing in 1805, as another engraving in Yates's book (of the ruins seen through the Abbey Gateway) demonstrates. Yates's engraving can be found in Bishop 1998, 53.
- 5 His assertion is accurate. A. B. Bevan and Samuel Tymms, who edited the parish registers of St. James's and St. Mary's respectively, make no mention of the incident. See Bevan 1878, 89–103 and Tymms 1854, 140–155.
- 6 Estcourt and Payne 1911, 265. The inscription on Richard Short's headstone, no longer visible, read 'Richard Short medico bene merenti qui vixit Ann. LXVI., et postquam artem medicam laudem. prope domesticam longe lateque summo enim honore exercisset triste apud Florentissimas quasque familias sui desiderium reliquit die xiv. Dec. MDCCVIII., filii Patri in comparabili cum dolore nostro insculpi jussimus indicamus publico.'

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