

NEWMARKET IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES II

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IN AN ARTICLE some years ago in the *Suffolk Review*, Frank Grace gave a ranking, in order of their relative importance, of Suffolk towns for the years 1327, 1524, 1674, 1801 and 1901, and drew attention to 'the rise of Newmarket after 1674' (Grace 1982, 105–13). Newmarket does not appear among the top twenty-five Suffolk towns in the lists for either 1327 or 1524, and comes into the list for the first time – in twenty-second place – in 1674, ranking below such places as East Bergholt, Stoke by Nayland and Mendlesham. From that date however Newmarket rises steadily up the scale of importance, ranking sixteenth in 1801, fifteenth in 1901 and fifth in 1971. By 1674 King Charles II had built his palace and established horse racing there; this article attempts to assess the social composition of the town resulting from this royal interest. No doubt Frank Grace examined the Hearth Tax return (on which he based his ranking for 1674) only for the *Suffolk* parish of St Mary's, and did not include the *Cambridgeshire* parish of All Saints'.¹ An analysis of the Hearth Tax return for *both* parishes appears below in the Appendix;² the reader should refer to this analysis in what follows.

The following conclusions may be tentatively drawn. First, it is clear that the population of St Mary's was more than twice that of All Saints'; 72 per cent of the 639 inhabitants lived in the former, only 28 per cent in the latter. Secondly, it is also clear from the number of households exempt from the tax that St Mary's was much the poorer relation of the two. Forty-five per cent of the 102 households in that parish were exempt, compared with only 22 per cent in All Saints'. More than 38 per cent of all households in both parishes were exempt, suggesting that well over a third of Newmarket's population lived in sub-standard accommodation. Thirdly, it will be noticed that All Saints' parish had four houses with eleven or more hearths, while St Mary's had only two. This in fact is not a true picture, for the All Saints' Hearth Tax return expressly states: 'The King's Majesty's houses are not returned.' As we know that in 1669 King Charles bought a house with sixteen hearths from the Earl of Thomond and built an extension to this on the site of an inn called the Greyhound, which had nineteen hearths (*C.S.P.D. 1667–68*, 326, 597), it will be clear that All Saints' had more than its share of large houses. In effect it could be said that St Mary's, with its market, was the tradesmen's entrance to the town, while All Saints' represented the front door through which the gentry entered.

OCCUPATIONS OF HEARTH TAX PAYERS

Sources other than the Hearth Tax returns, for example wills, inventories and court rolls, enable us to establish the occupations of sixty-six of the eighty-seven tax payers, grouped by kindred occupations:

TABLE I: OCCUPATIONS OF HEARTH TAX PAYERS

Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Group E		Group F		Group G	
Innkeepers	10	Women	14	Gentlemen	10	Glaziers	3	Yeomen	8	Clothier	1	Unknown	21
Maltsters	2					Carpenters	3			Mercer	1		
Poulterers	2					Brazier	1			Tailor	1		
Alehouse-keeper	1					Farrier	1			Currier	1		
Baker	1					Bricklayer	1			Leather-worker	1		
Grocer	1									Hairweaver	1		
Victualler	1												
Apothecary	1												
	19		14		10		9		8		6		21
	(21.8%)		(16.1%)		(11.5%)		(10.3%)		(9.2%)		(6.9%)		(24.2%)

What do these occupations tell us about Newmarket and its social composition?

First of all, the Hearth Tax returns are concerned only with those who actually lived in Newmarket. Assessments for rates in St Mary's for 1670 and 1672³ include three other categories, namely landholders, 'Bury and other Shopps' and 'The Butchers', the two latter consisting almost entirely of traders from Bury and elsewhere (to be examined in more detail later).

Secondly, the provision of food and accommodation was clearly a major concern of Newmarket residents (see Table I, Group A). Inns played a prominent part, notably three on the All Saints' side – the Star (twenty hearths), on the site of Peatling and Cawdron's off-licence shop; the Cock (?the Ram) with fifteen hearths; and the Red Lion, also with fifteen hearths. The Red Lion was behind what is now Jane's shop (formerly the cockpit for cockfighting) and was the first meeting place of the Jockey Club before it acquired its present site in the High Street. There were however some smaller inns on the St Mary's side, notably the King's Head, probably on the site of what is now Ennion's the solicitors; this seems to have been the scene of an abortive rising in favour of King Charles I in 1645.⁴

This provision of food and accommodation was essential for the economy of Newmarket for two reasons. When King Charles II was in residence he brought with him a large band of courtiers, all of whom had to be both fed and housed; also Newmarket was a staging post on the great London to Norwich road, and travellers, like courtiers, needed food and shelter.

Thirdly, the list of gentlemen makes interesting reading. Three peers of the realm had houses on the All Saints' side of the town, namely the Duke of Ormonde and the Earls of Suffolk and Oxford. These were not, as one might expect from the King's mode of life in Newmarket, playboys of the Court. They were in fact all politicians who had been strong supporters of Charles in exile, had taken a prominent part in recalling him to the throne in 1660 and were still playing an important rôle in the politics of the time – the Duke of Ormonde was Lord Lieutenant in Ireland. It was to the Earl of Suffolk's house that King Charles went in 1683 when a great fire destroyed a large part of St Mary's side of the town and he was in danger of being smoked out of his palace on the High Street (*L.G.*, 22/26 Mar. 1683). Because of the fire Charles returned to London earlier than expected and so escaped assassination in the Rye House Plot. We must not imagine that any of the peers mentioned lived permanently in Newmarket; rather they came to the town when the Court

was there, at other times maintaining their houses with a skeleton staff, much as happens even today with some race horse owners. Another of those who had a large house on All Saints' side was Thomas Ellyott, Groom of the King's Bedchamber; according to Sir Christopher Wren, in 1676 he applied for (and obtained?) permission to build a house for himself on the site of King James's palace (now the site of the Marlborough Club and Moon's toy and bicycle shop).⁵ Nell Gwyn does not appear among the list of Hearth Tax payers, so presumably the house which now bears her name in Palace House Street was where she lodged when she came with the King to Newmarket.

In the fourth place, the number of glaziers and carpenters in category D may perhaps be explained by the fact that there was a large increase in population in the fifty years between 1660 and 1710;⁶ the manor court books for the same period also record the leasing of 'waste' land for building purposes. Both factors imply a demand for new housing and consequently the expertise of carpenters and glaziers.

Fifthly, the term 'yeoman' seems to have described both a social class and an occupation. Usually it means a freeholder farming his own land, but according to the assessment of rates in 1670, Newmarket had only 156 acres of assessable land, distributed among thirteen landholders. The largest of these was Walter Poulter, a baker and miller (he had the mill on the Exning road), with forty acres; the others were clearly small farmers, for the most part with eight acres or less in the Newmarket field. Those who did so farm might well be called yeomen; in practice we suspect that their farming was subsidiary to their other interests. For example, Richard Nelson, described as 'gentleman', farmed twenty-four acres, but was in fact a man of many parts, for when he died he left his son James 'eight coach horses and one coach on the stage between Bury and London'.⁷ Richard Bedingfield was another who had his finger in many pies. He is described as 'maltster', occupying the Two Lions (the Two Limes?), on the site of the present Cabaret Club; he also farmed fourteen acres and rented from the lord of the manor four shops on the Cornhill, which he sublet. All of these shops were destroyed in the great fire of 1683.⁸

One family, the Bryants, supplied three of the yeomen – a fourth is described as 'maltster'; between them they farmed twenty-three acres in the Newmarket field, but they also had arable land elsewhere in the neighbourhood. They were clearly yeomen by occupation. Their descendants were farming over 1,000 acres in Exning in 1810.⁹

EXEMPT HOUSEHOLDERS

The eighty-seven householders who paid the Hearth Tax represented 61 per cent of all householders in Newmarket; what of the remaining 39 per cent, that is the fifty-five householders who were exempted from the tax? They were exempted because their houses were of less value than 20s., they themselves had goods or property worth less than £20, and 'the said houses have not above two chimneys, stoves or fireherths respectfully'.¹⁰ Of the occupations of these exempt householders we know very little except that twelve out of the forty-six in St Mary's were women (?widows). We may surmise that some of the men worked as servants in the inns, stables and larger houses; others were no doubt unskilled labourers working for the craftsmen (carpenters etc.); others perhaps were only casual workers, picking up the odd shilling when King Charles and the Court were in Newmarket; and no doubt some were elderly and no longer employable. That many of these were poor and 'living on the parish' seems clear from the accounts of the overseers of the poor; these survive for the years 1670, 1671, 1677, 1678 and 1680; an average of just under £70 was collected each year by a rate for the relief of the poor. Details of disbursements are not

given, but later accounts show that the poor were helped by a weekly payment in cash, or by gifts in kind such as clothes, or by payment of medical and funeral expenses, or by a payment of rent to their landlords. Seventy pounds was a large sum of money in the 1670s and suggests that many of the householders exempt from the Hearth Tax were indeed 'living on the parish'.

ASSESSMENTS FOR RATES

Those paying the Hearth Tax and those exempt do not however complete the picture of Newmarket in the 1670s. There survive two assessments for rates made on the parishioners of St Mary's in 1670 and 1672 – none survives for All Saints'. Rates were normally assessed on two categories, moveable goods (*bona*) and lands (*terre*); both categories are included in our two assessments. So far as the assessment of goods is concerned, the assessed wealth of the householders with moveable goods corresponds fairly closely with the number of hearths recorded in the Hearth Tax returns. Thus Henry Funston with the largest number of hearths (twelve), was assessed at 1s. a month, Walter Poulter (nine hearths) at 9d. a month, Richard Bedingfield (five hearths) at 6d. a month and George Hayward (one hearth) at 2d. a month. Surprisingly, Richard Nelson (above, p. 300), with only seven hearths, was assessed at 2s. 3d. a month, more than twice the charge on Henry Funston. Evidently the size of his house was not an absolutely decisive factor in assessing the value of a householder's goods. The 156 acres of assessable land, distributed among thirteen landholders, to which we have already referred, were assessed at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre.

What is significant about these assessments is that they add two other categories to 'goods' and 'lands', namely 'Bury and Other Shops' and 'The Butchers', an indication that the fourteen townsmen responsible for making the assessment were now requiring occupiers of shops and stalls in the market to contribute to the rates. From our point of view the addition of these two categories significantly extends our knowledge of Newmarket in the 1670s.

I have quite deliberately written 'occupiers' of shops and stalls in the market, because very few of the names listed as either 'Bury and other shops' or 'the Butchers' correspond with names in the Hearth Tax returns. The court books suggest two reasons for this. First, occasionally residents in Newmarket such as Richard Bedingfield took over shops and stalls at the court baron and sublet them to others (their names being recorded among 'Bury and other shops' and 'the Butchers'). Possibly the reason for this subletting was that the fee charged on entry into a lease was beyond the means of the ordinary small shopkeeper who would however have little difficulty in paying a small annual rent. Clearly people like Richard Bedingfield regarded the subletting of their shops as a business investment. Secondly, for the most part those who leased shops or stalls were non-residents of Newmarket. For example Thomas Lanseter, a milliner from Bury St Edmunds, surrendered his shop in the Mercery Row at the court baron in 1674, and it was transferred to Samuel Levold, a draper from Ely, at an entry fee of £2 15s. and an annual rent of only 8d.¹¹ Samuel in fact occupied the shop until his death in 1705, when he left it to his son-in-law William Martindale.¹²

'Bury and Other Shops'

There are forty-seven names in the list of those occupying 'Bury and other shops'; as the word 'Bury' suggests, many of them were traders from Bury St Edmunds who had seen an outlet for their goods in Newmarket. In fact research into the Hearth Tax returns for Bury

and elsewhere, wills and inventories, confirms that twenty-one out of the forty-seven came from Bury, five from Exning, two each from Newmarket itself, Ely, Burwell and Cambridge, one from Mildenhall and twelve from unknown places of origin.

What was sold in these shops? We know the trades of twenty-eight of these forty-seven shopkeepers, as follows (listed by kindred commodities sold):

TABLE II: TRADES OF OCCUPIERS OF SHOPS AND STALLS

<i>Group A</i>		<i>Group B</i>		<i>Group C</i>		<i>Group D</i>
Mercers (milliners)	6	Grocers	2	Brazier	1	[3 of these shopkeepers are listed as 'gents' (i.e., Mr) – perhaps they had not sublet their shops to traders.]
Haberdashers		Maltsters	2	Upholsterer	1	
(hatters)	2	Oatmeal shop	1	Locksmith	1	
Drapers	2	Tallow-chandler	1			
Shoemakers	2					
Linen-weaver	1					
Collar-maker	1					
Glover	1					
	16		6		3	
					3	

If we compare this list with that of the occupations of Newmarket residents in Table I, we shall notice immediately that the commodities most adequately catered for by 'Bury and other shops' in category A are those which are least adequately catered for by Newmarket residents (see Table I, category F). There was now in fact a market for what we may call luxury goods, made up and sold by mercers, haberdashers and the like; this new market can surely only be due to the fact that the aristocracy were now, under the encouragement of King Charles, having their establishments in the town, and bringing their fashions with them, to be emulated no doubt by the wealthier Newmarket families. Clearly traders from Bury and elsewhere were coming in to supply such goods as were beyond the capacity of Newmarket folk. One of the more interesting inventories is that of Daniel Thornton, a haberdasher, containing a minutely detailed list of his stock (threads, needles, cloth etc.).¹³ In other words, by 1674 Newmarket had become much more than a market town for the neighbouring villages and a wayside halt for travellers on the London-Norwich road, which had been its twofold rôle up to the 1660s.

'The Butchers'

According to the assessments for rates there were twenty-one butchers in 1670 and twenty-two in 1672; each of them was assessed at a fixed rate of 3d. a month – the shopkeepers in 'Bury and other shops' were assessed at rates ranging from 2d. to 12d. a month, the average for all forty-seven being just under 5d. As we might expect from the title 'the Butchers' and the goods sold by 'Bury' traders, their places of origin are very different. Of the eighteen butchers named (one had four shops), research gives us the place of origin of eleven, as follows: Wickhambrook three, Burwell two and Swaffham Bulbeck, Wicken, Mildenhall, Stradishall, Thurlow and Gazeley one each. These are all villages within ten miles of Newmarket, presumably where the butchers or graziers had their sources of supply in cattle, sheep and pigs. We assume that for hygienic reasons all these butchers would have had their shops in the Butchery. If we remember the predominance among Hearth Tax payers held by innkeepers and others supplying food and drink, the number of twenty-one to twenty-two butchers shows how important the provision trade was for the economy of Newmarket.

CONCLUSIONS

While the provision of food, drink and accommodation played a major rôle in the economy of Newmarket in the 1670s, the town was clearly drawing to itself trades in what we have called luxury goods, implying a rise in the standard of living and the social strata. This becomes much more noticeable in the mid-18th century when professional men like attorneys begin to appear in the town.

We have already drawn attention to the difference between the parishes in the town, either side of the High Street. All Saints', on the Cambridgeshire side, represents the residential element (using the word in its modern sense), and St Mary's, with a much larger population, on the Suffolk side, the commercial and trading element. There was clearly much more poverty in St Mary's.

If we remember what Newmarket was like at the beginning of the 17th century (a small market town on a busy main road) and what it became by the 1750s (a flourishing centre for horse racing and stables), the 1670s show us something of the transition from the first period to the second. Surprisingly there is no mention of racing and the training of the horse in the Hearth Tax returns, the assessments for rates or the court books in the 1670s, but the aristocratic establishments and the 'Bury' shops make it clear that the town was developing from its humble status of the beginning of the 17th century.

APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF THE HEARTH TAX RETURNS FOR THE PARISHES OF ST MARY'S AND ALL SAINTS'
NEWMARKET FOR THE YEAR 1674

	<i>St Mary's</i>	<i>All Saints'</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Number of tax paying households	56	31	87
2. Number of exempt households	46	9*	55
3. Total number of households	102	40	142
4. Estimated population (multiplier 4.5)	459	180	639
5. Social status indicated:			
(a) Mr	6	2	8
(b) Esquire	0	1	1
(c) Peers	0	3	3
6. Number of women	26	6	32
(a) Widows	16	3	19
(b) called Mrs	4	2	6
(c) called Goodwife	0	3	3
7. Number of separate houses	57	41	98
8. Number of tenements for 2 or 3 households	22	0	22
9. Empty houses	4	0	4
10. Total number of dwelling units	81	41	122
11. Total number of hearths	304	190	494
12. Size of houses:			
with 1 hearth	5 (6.2%)	9 (22.0%)	14 (11.5%)
with 2 hearths	24 (29.6%)	10 (24.5%)	34 (27.9%)
with 3 hearths	17 (21.0%)	1 (2.4%)	18 (14.7%)
with 4 hearths	10 (12.3%)	6 (14.6%)	16 (13.1%)
with 5 hearths	9 (11.1%)	2 (4.9%)	11 (9.0%)
with 6 hearths	4 (4.9%)	6 (14.6%)	10 (8.2%)
with 7 hearths	5 (6.2%)	1 (2.4%)	6 (4.9%)

Appendix (cont'd.).

	<i>St Mary's</i>	<i>All Saints'</i>	<i>Total</i>
with 8 hearths	3 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.5%)
with 9 hearths	1 (1.25%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (1.6%)
with 10 hearths	1 (1.25%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (1.6%)
with 11-15 hearths	2 (2.5%)	3 (7.4%)	5 (4.1%)
with 16-20 hearths	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (0.9%)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	81 (100%)	41 (100%)	122 (100%)

*The list of exemptions is missing from the All Saints' return for 1674; that from the return for 1662 has been used instead.

NOTES

- 1 For St Mary's, see P.R.O., E 179/257/14 (reproduced in Hervey 1905, 220; for All Saints', see P.R.O., E 179/244/33, m. 51v.
- 2 Based on David Dymond's draft (Dymond 1974, 71).
- 3 In St Mary's vestry book, S.R.O.B., FL 610/1/1.
- 4 B.L., *Thomason Tracts*, E448, 10.
- 5 Court Orders 1676, Wren Soc. xviii (1941), 46.
- 6 Decennial means for baptisms in the two parish registers show a steady rise in population, viz.: 1661-70, 24.7; 1671-80, 30.8; 1681-90, 31.2; 1691-1700, 32.4; 1701-10, 40.8.
- 7 S.R.O.B., IC 500/1/156 (102).
- 8 S.R.O.B., Acc. 359/10.
- 9 C.U.L., Doc. 632, 522ff., listing the claims for freehold lands at Exning for the Enclosure Award Commission.
- 10 St Mary's vestry book, S.R.O.B., FL 610/1/1.
- 11 S.R.O.B., Acc. 359/9.
- 12 C.U.L., Probate WRC 37-142.
- 13 S.R.O.B., IC 500/3/13(176).

REFERENCES

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Abbreviations

B.L.	British Library.
C.U.L.	Cambridge University Library.
C.S.P.D.	<i>Calendars of State Papers Domestic</i> .
L.G.	<i>London Gazette</i> .
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
S.R.O.B.	Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch.