

# **Presbyterianism, Urban Politics, and Division: The 1645 Great Yarmouth Witch-Hunt in Context**

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## Abstract

A series of witch-hunts occurred in politically and religiously divided puritan towns across East Anglia between 1645 and 1647. Previous studies have examined the patterns of witch-hunts across East Anglia but have not provided in-depth studies of what lay behind an urban community's support for witch-hunting. This study of Great Yarmouth shows how the witch-hunt had meaning to the town's political elite through the lens of a longer historical context of puritan governance over a quarter of a century. This thesis builds on work that re-evaluates the religious and political meaning of witch-hunts and puritan and Presbyterian politics during the seventeenth century to show how the witch-hunt was part of the crisis of urban government during the English Civil War.

This thesis argues that the witch-hunt was contingent on Great Yarmouth's puritan aldermen developing into a powerful political faction within the town during the 1620s and 30s. Puritan members of the corporation used purgative violence to criticise Laudianism during the Caroline period, including a witchcraft accusation. With the collapse of royal government after 1638 the puritan faction on the town's corporation established their control over the town and sought to build a comprehensive puritan settlement. War exhaustion and the growth of nonconformity challenged puritan control and cohesion in the corporation during the First Civil War. In 1645, members of the corporation supported the witch-hunt as part of a wider attempt to unite the town's puritans against fissiparous forces. The failure of a second witch-hunt was the result of the weakness of the town's oligarchy as the town's Congregationalist church became a practical political force and war time strain undermined puritan authority. Discontent caused by poverty weakened support for a comprehensive puritan settlement, while a Royalist rising in 1648 and the subsequent Parliamentary purge shattered the conservative puritan majority among members of the corporation.

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## Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic</i>
DWL	Dr Williams's Library, London
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
NRO	Norfolk Record Office, Norwich
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew

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## Chapter 1: Witch-Hunting, Urban Politics, and Nonconformity

### i. Introduction

This thesis shows how the rise and fall in support for puritanism within Great Yarmouth during the second quarter of the seventeenth century connected urban politics and religious division to support for witch-hunting. At the end of the first millennium, settlers had founded Great Yarmouth around a natural haven created by the confluence of three rivers, providing a safe harbour along the east coast for fishermen and merchants. The town's divide between merchants and fishermen defined the town's politics due to the self-selecting merchant oligarchy which ran Great Yarmouth's governing corporation. In August 1645, members of Great Yarmouth's corporation invited the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins 'to make search for such wicked p[er]sons if any be here'. Hopkins was involved in uncovering alleged 'Hellish invention', leading to the conviction of six women as witches at the town's September borough sessions.<sup>1</sup> The fear of witchcraft amongst the members of the town's corporation was rooted in the town's puritan politics that had brought together the political and religious elite since the beginning of the Caroline period. Opposition to Laudianism and episcopacy had branched out into witchcraft accusations and public violence in the late 1630s, providing the organisational and ideological context that made the witch-hunt possible. The witch-hunt was also part of response of the town's puritan oligarchy to the threat of congregationalism, radical nonconformity, and popular discontent to comprehensive puritanism during the Civil Wars. A decline in political will to enforce puritan conformity and a lack of political support for witchcraft accusations meant the second witch-hunt in 1646 did not successfully convict any of those accused

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<sup>1</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 71; John Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1648), p. 54.



of witchcraft. When puritan members of the corporation led a royalist rising during the Second Civil War, it was Congregationalist councillors who took their places, entrenching religious and political divisions, making future witch-hunts politically impossible.

This thesis emerges from three distinct but interlinked historiographical areas of research: witch-hunting, religious divisions, and local political power during the early modern period. It responds to the questions raised by the historiography to argue that elite support for witchcraft fears was a symptom of the political and religious decline of puritan conformity caused by the challenges of governing Great Yarmouth through the First Civil War. This chapter then explains the primary sources that allow insight into Great Yarmouth's politics, religious divisions, and the witch-hunts. The chapter then organises the rich primary and secondary sources that guide the thesis and provides the narrative methodology utilised by the thesis. Finally, this chapter outlines how the story of the town's politics informs the witch-hunt by showing the ideological and institutional context that underpinned the hunt.

## ii. Historiography

Three wider historiographies provide the intellectual background for this thesis's study of the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt. The first is the study of the politics of witchcraft and witch-hunting; the second is the literature discussing the development of urban politics during the early modern period, and the third is the debate over religious allegiance during the Civil War and its effect on politics. From these three interconnected historical discussions, it is possible to see that there is a

space in the historiography for a new study that examines witch-hunting in the context of the formation of political and religious factions within the urban government.

This thesis's exploration of the politics of witch-hunting builds on previous close analyses of witchcraft's political meaning and show how that meaning affected early modern society by examining both individual accusations and how accusations spread out into witch-hunts. This section begins by looking at how understanding the personal politics of witchcraft accusations defined the early study of witchcraft. Then, it moves to show how studies of the intellectual framework for witchcraft belief provide the formative background to witchcraft's political meanings. The present thesis then examines some of the microstudies of witchcraft accusations that draw upon individual cases to illuminate their political significance. The examination then expands to look at how historians have studied witch-hunts as political events, both as responses to the weakness of the central government and divisions within urban governments.

The emergence of academic interest in witchcraft during the 1970s built upon earlier antiquarian interests by deploying the tools of anthropological research to analyse the dynamics of accusations within communities. Academic witchcraft studies originated in the thorough research of Cecil L'Estrange Ewen who meticulously recorded the evidence of trials, although the academics who followed Ewen were diverted towards recovering alleged pagan connections to witchcraft.<sup>2</sup> The serious academic study of witchcraft epitomised by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* in 1971 and Erik Midelfort in *Witch-hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562–1684* in 1972

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<sup>2</sup> C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonism: A Concise Account Derived from Sworn Depositions and Confessions Obtained in the Courts of England and Wales* (London, 1933); Gerald Brosseau Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (London, 1954).

helped kickstart a revolution in witchcraft studies.<sup>3</sup> Thomas and Midelfort deployed anthropological methodologies when studying witchcraft accusations to conduct community-level analyses. The unpacking of the personal politics of 'village dynamics' remains the core of understanding witchcraft accusations through the interactions that led to accusations.<sup>4</sup> The academic study of witchcraft originated in studying the causes of accusations but has now diversified into myriad academic fields that have allowed increasingly complex approaches to understanding witchcraft's place in early modern society.

Literary theorists and cultural historians have researched the intellectual underpinnings of the fears of social and political inversion expressed through witchcraft, which connects village level accusations to the politics of witch-hunting. Deborah Willis has shown how witches in early modern theatre worked to reaffirm the importance of neighbourly relationships and the social expectations of women's conduct.<sup>5</sup> Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons* is the most persuasive work of

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction: Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft,' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, eds Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge, 1996), p. 2; H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch-hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562-1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford CA, 1972); Keith Thomas, *Religion and Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in 16th and 17th Century England* (London, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Hildred Geertz, 'An Anthropology of Religion and magic', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (1975), pp. 71–89; Ronald Hutton, 'Anthropological and Historical Approaches to Witchcraft: Potential for a New Collaboration?', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), pp. 413–34; Richard Jenkins, 'Continuity and Change: Social Science Perspectives on European Witchcraft', in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 203–24; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970); William E. Monter, 'The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (1972), pp. 435–53; Idem, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: the Borderlands during the Reformation* (London, 1976); Keith Thomas, 'The Relevance of Social Anthropology to the Historical Study of English Witchcraft', in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London, 1970), pp. 47–81.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Briggs, "'By the Strength of Fancie": Witchcraft and the Early Modern Imagination', *Folklore*, 115 (2004), pp. 259–72; Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London, 1999); Idem, 'Thinking Witchcraft: Language, Literature and Intellectual History', in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 164–81; Marvin Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars & Witches: The Riddles of Culture* (New York, 1972); Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations* (London, 1996); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994); Idem, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville VA, 2010); Idem, 'Witchcraft and the Western Imagination', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 16 (2006), pp. 117–41; Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca NY, 1995).

witchcraft's intellectual history, in which he demonstrates how the conception of witchcraft infused trials with political meaning. Clark showed how in literate culture 'the devil became an evangelical enemy, and witchcraft a branch of idolatry', which put an onus on magistrates to hunt witches as part of their duty to godly reformation. Clark argued that the magistrate's authority manifested his authority as God's representative during witchcraft trials. The trial became an act of exorcism, whose success legitimated the political authority of the magistrates.<sup>6</sup> The connection between the magistrate as a political actor and reformer and his role in pursuing the witch-hunt meant that the personal politics of the trial were also an expression of the role of the magistrate as a restorer of divine order. Contemporary writers drew upon the imagery of rebellion against God and infection of the body politic that aligned rebellion, heresy, and witchcraft that justified witchcraft trials as a form of moral cleansing.<sup>7</sup> This imagery had political resonance. Parliamentary sermons stressed that the godly were protected against Royalists' use of magic, while Royalist propagandists argued that rebellion was a form of witchcraft and the Parliamentarians had bewitched the nation.<sup>8</sup> The literary approach helps root the political fears and tensions raised by a witch-hunt in the intellectual mental world this thesis responds to.

Recent research into the fraught and uncertain role of cunning folk, astrologers, and other practitioners of white magic has led to discussions on whether white magic was a challenge to early modern religious and political reformers who sought to purge magic as a dangerous superstition.

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<sup>6</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 443, 575.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The "Malleus Maleficarum" and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester, 2003); G. R. Quaife, *Godly Zeal and Furious Rage: The Witch in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1987); Frances Timbers, 'Witches' Sect or Prayer Meeting?: Matthew Hopkins Revisited,' *Women's History Review*, 17 (2008), pp. 21–37; David Wootton, "Reginald Scot/Abraham Fleming/The Family of Love," in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Stuart Clark (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 119–38.

<sup>8</sup> Nathaniel Bernard, *Esoptron Tēs Antimachias, or a Looking-Glasse for Rebellion* (Oxford, 1644); Thomas Coleman, *Hopes Deferred and Dashed* (London, 1645), p. 32; Paul Gosnold, *A Sermon Preached at the Publique Fast* (Oxford, 1644), pp. 23–4; Edmund Staunton, *Rupes Israelis: The Rock of Israel, a Little Part of Its Glory Laid Forth in a Sermon* (London, 1644), pp. 10–1.

Historians have used the example of cunning folk to interrogate the role of magic and when it became unacceptable.<sup>9</sup> The work of Gregory and Lumby has shown how the position of astrologers and healers became vulnerable during periods of political instability as reforming elites sought to cleanse their society and in the process recast white magic-users as witches.<sup>10</sup> Stuart Clark argues that the 'churches were probably correct to think they were being challenged by a rival institution' due to the professionalisation of popular magic such as healing, divination, and counter-witchcraft, standing in the way of 'complete pastoral hegemony'.<sup>11</sup> Clark was responding to the work of contemporary demonological writers such as John Gaule, Reginald Scot, William Perkins, Giovanni Alberghini and Fransico De Toledo who argued that superstition was demonic, and the successes of so-called white magic still came from communication with demons.<sup>12</sup> However, the English Civil War was also a golden age for astrologers, including the puritan minister John Booker, the botanist Nicholas Culpeper, the physicians Richard Saunders and John Tanner, the royalist poet George Wharton, and the professional astrologers William Lilly and Vincent Wing. Both sides in the Civil War produced their rival almanacs and the leading generals of the New Model Army consulted astrological predictions to inform their military strategy.<sup>13</sup> The complexity of the position of astrologers is important for the present thesis in unpicking the story of Mark Prynn, an amateur astrologer accused of witchcraft in Great Yarmouth in 1637 and 1645. Despite demonologists' fears

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<sup>9</sup> Owen Davies, 'A Comparative Perspective on Scottish Cunning-Folk and Charmers', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, eds Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 185–205; Idem, *Cunning Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London, 2003); Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Annabel Gregory, 'Witchcraft, Politics and "Good Neighbourhood" in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye', *Past & Present*, 133 (1991), pp. 31–66; Jonathan Lumby, *The Lancashire Witch Craze: Jennet Preston and the Lancashire Witches, 1612* (Preston, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 458–9.

<sup>12</sup> Stuart Clark, 'The Rational Witchfinder: Conscience, Demonological Naturalism and Popular Superstitions', in *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe*, eds Stephen Pumfrey, Paolo L. Rossi, and Maurice Slawinski (Manchester, 1991), pp. 234–5; idem, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 244, 281, 478; Ryan J. Stark, 'The Decline of Astrology in the Jonathan Dove Almanac Series', *Renaissance and Reformation* 30 (2006), p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Alison A. Chapman, 'Marking Time: Astrology, Almanacs, and English Protestantism', *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007), pp. 1257–90; Paul Kléber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven CT, 2013), p. 53.

that white magic came from the devil, astrologers and other practitioners of the occult provided for their customers' needs for an interpretation of divine providence.

Micro-studies of witchcraft accusations have shown the place of theoretical ideas within the personal politics of witchcraft accusations. Annabel Gregory discussed accusations in Rye against the context of decades of political and religious turmoil caused by a factional conflict between richer merchants and the declining middling sort of merchants to deduce the reasoning behind the accusations.<sup>14</sup> Similar studies of the impact of witchcraft accusations on village communities have outlined how accusations emerged from both deeply personal relationships and local political concerns.<sup>15</sup> James Sharpe's analysis of the 1604 Anne Gunter case integrates the village politics that lay behind the accusations with the national political attention the case received as part of King James I's campaign to regulate exorcism and dispossession of those afflicted by witchcraft.<sup>16</sup> These have been complemented by detailed studies of witchcraft accusations which were tied to national politics. Malcolm Gaskill's study of Anne Bodenham identified how the dangerous reputation of Dr Lambe, the Duke of Buckingham's so-called wizard, still tainted Bodenham over a quarter of a century after Lambe's death.<sup>17</sup> Mark Stoyle and John Callow articulated how English Civil War atrocities were understood as symbolic exorcisms.<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Barry argued for the complexity of the meaning witchcraft could take in the Bovet family's work *Pandemonium*, showing how the

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<sup>14</sup> Annabel Gregory, *Rye Spirits: Faith, Faction and Fairies in a Seventeenth-Century English Town* (London, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Anne Reiber DeWindt, 'Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions of the Ideal Village Community', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), pp. 427-63; Paul Kléber Monod, *The Murder of Mr. Grebell: Madness and Civility in an English Town* (New Haven CT, 2003); David Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Football, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (London, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory in Seventeenth-Century England', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), pp. 289-308.

<sup>18</sup> John Callow, 'These Familiar Things? Witchcraft, War Crimes and Prince Rupert "the Devil"', *The Seventeenth Century*, 29 (2014), pp. 197-210; Mark Stoyle, 'The Road to Farndon Field: Explaining the Massacre of the Royalist Women at Naseby', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), pp. 895-927.

literary and political context shaped their understanding of witchcraft.<sup>19</sup> These works all stress the relationship between the individuals involved in witchcraft accusations and the importance of understanding the context of the accusations, be they local political dynamics, personal rivalries, or national conflict, to untangle their contemporary meaning.

Historians have yet to apply the model of microstudies of accusations to the East Anglian witch-hunt in-depth to look at the political and religious divisions that inspired the hunt. Historians have not attempted this in-depth approach because they have been writing about the witch-hunt to show the much larger story of the regional hunt, allowing only briefer sketches of the communities affected.<sup>20</sup> Only Frances Timbers' article on the prayer group around Elizabeth Clarke has delved deeply into a community affected by the Hopkins witch-hunt looking at the relationship between the first women accused to show how religious nonconformity could lead to witchcraft accusations.<sup>21</sup> Micro-studies of British witchcraft have shown that an in-depth study into the specific context and circumstance of an accusation can provide a richer understanding of witchcraft accusations. The present thesis applies the lessons of the microstudies to show the temporal depth and background to the witch-hunt in Great Yarmouth through the context of the town's changing political and religious context.

The study of witch-hunts requires a look beyond the accusations themselves to also study the local political authorities and ministry that supported and promoted the hunt. As there was only one major witch-hunt in England scholars have relied upon the wider historiography from across the

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Barry, 'The Politics of Pandaemonium' in *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604*, eds John Newton and Jo Bath (Leiden, 2008), pp. 181-206.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), appendix 2; Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (London, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Timbers, 'Witches' Sect or Prayer Meeting?', pp. 29-33.

early modern European World to compare to the Hopkins witch-hunt, but the political and religious differences limit the usefulness of this approach. For example, Russia's witchcraft traditions were markedly different from those of the rest of Europe as they were concerned with male witches who were not thought to draw upon demonic power.<sup>22</sup> Spain and Italy were tightly controlled by the Catholic Inquisition who prevented the emergence of witch-hunts and concentrated on stamping out folk magic.<sup>23</sup> But, witch-hunts in Germany, France, and the British colonies in the New World provide examples of similar problems of political and confessional division during the periods of civil strife that fed into witch-hunting.

French and German witchcraft panics occurred against the backdrop of brutal wars of religion and the political context of the wars of religion has animated research into witch-hunts. The connections between contested reformation, political division, and witch-hunts have provided the basis for political studies of witch-hunting in France.<sup>24</sup> Germany's witch panics have been studied in a context of confessional conflicts and fragmenting states, as the Holy Roman Empire was made up of a multitude of independent urban communities.<sup>25</sup> Plentiful urban records have allowed historians to understand the development of hunts within towns and cities allowing an

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<sup>22</sup> W. F. Ryan, 'The Witchcraft Hysteria in Early Modern Europe: Was Russia an Exception?', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 76 (1998), pp. 49-84; Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb IL, 2001); Russell Zguta, 'Witchcraft Trials in Seventeenth-Century Russia', *American Historical Review*, 82 (1977), pp. 1187-1207.

<sup>23</sup> Francisco Bethencourt, 'Portugal: A Scrupulous Inquisition' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, eds Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford, 1990), pp. 403-22; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore, 1983); Geoffrey Parker, 'Some Recent Work on the Inquisition in Spain and Italy', *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982), pp. 519-32.

<sup>24</sup> Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1988); Idem, *The Witches of Lorraine* (Oxford, 2007); Idem, 'Witchcraft and Popular Mentality in Lorraine, 1580-1630', in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 337-50; Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*; Jonathan L. Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1540-1620* (Waterloo ON, 1998); Alfred Soman, 'The Parlement of Paris and the Great Witch-hunt (1565-1640)', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9 (1978), pp. 31-44; Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997); Hartmut Lehmann, 'The Persecution of Witches as Restoration of Order: The Case of Germany, 1590s-1650s', *Central European History*, 21 (1988), pp. 107-21; Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London, 2009).



interpretation of the political and religious concerns that lay behind witch-hunting.<sup>26</sup> Alison Rowlands has drawn attention to the need to understand how unity within urban politics acted as a brake to witch panics, as social harmony remained more important than purgation. Her work discusses 'the web of legal, social and cultural factors at popular and elite levels which operated and interacted to deter the inhabitants of the area from accusing their neighbours of witchcraft' and offers a template of how to uncover the mechanics of witch-hunting through a close reading of urban records.<sup>27</sup> The study of French and German witch-hunts has illustrated how witch-hunting became permissible due to confessional conflicts affecting the political elite within autonomous towns and cities, rooting witch-hunts in the particularity of urban politics.

England's colonies in the New World shared the mother countries cultural beliefs, politics, and justice systems. This meant that witch-hunts in New England and Bermuda shared the English focus on the diabolical and sexual aspects of witchcraft providing a comparison to English witch panics.<sup>28</sup> New England saw a period of intense witchcraft fears between 1647-1663 marked by rigorous prosecution by local elites, followed by increasing scepticism about witchcraft accusations between 1663-1687, and a final period of prosecutions during the years 1688-1692.<sup>29</sup> To understand the Salem witch-hunt historians have examined the effects of war exhaustion, fraying bonds within the

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<sup>26</sup> Johannes Dillinger, *"Evil People": A Comparative Study of Witch-hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, trans. Laura Stokes (Charlottesville VA, 2009); Midelfort, *Witch-hunting in Southwestern Germany*; Alison Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany: Rothenburg, 1561-1652* (Manchester, 2003); Sabean, *Power in the Blood*; Charles Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2003); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven CT, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Fernando Cervantes, 'The Devil's Encounter with America', in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, eds Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 119-44; Alexandra Walsham, 'Review Article: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Colonization in the Early Modern World', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999) pp. 269-76.

<sup>29</sup> David D. Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693* (New York, 1991), p. 4; Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987), pp. 19-45; Walter W. Woodward, 'New England's Other Witch-Hunt: The Hartford Witch-Hunt of the 1660s and Changing Patterns in Witchcraft Prosecution,' *OAH Magazine of History*, 17 (2003), pp. 16-20.

polity, and disease on colonial society.<sup>30</sup> John Demos worked to understand the psychology of those involved in the Salem witch-hunt by discussing the 'function' of witches, relating how the richness of witchcraft material could illuminate the inner lives of those involved enough to 'diagnose' witchcraft fears.<sup>31</sup> Virginia Bernhard's work on Bermuda is of crucial importance to this thesis because it identified how attempts to counter Congregationalist political influence on the island became entwined with the pursuit of witchcraft accusations. This work not only analyses the religious context of a witch-hunt which is comparable to that of Great Yarmouth, but individuals in Bernhard's work were also involved in the Norfolk town.<sup>32</sup> Research on the American colonies has outlined various approaches to understanding witch-hunting, from the intensely personal psychology of individuals involved in the context of the larger political and religious conflicts that threatened community cohesion. They also stress how the specific political context defined periods of active witch-hunting, defined by local power structures.

There were multiple witch-panics in Scotland and one major period of witch-hunting in England during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms which emerged from periods of intense political and religious turmoil. Christine Lerner and Brian Levack have debated whether the state accelerated or retarded the growth of witch-panics in Scotland. Lerner argued that the Scottish witch-hunt was

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge MA, 1974); Laurie Winn Carlson, *A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials* (Chicago, 1999); John Putnam Demos, 'John Godfrey and His Neighbors: Witchcraft and the Social Web in Colonial Massachusetts', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 33 (1976) pp. 242-65; Philip Gould, 'New England Witch-Hunting and the Politics of Reason in the Early Republic', *New England Quarterly*, 68 (1995), pp. 58-82; James Kences, 'Some Unexplored Relationships of Essex County Witchcraft to the Indian Wars of 1675 and 1689', *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 120 (1984), pp. 179-212; Dennis E. Owen, 'Spectral Evidence: The Witchcraft Cosmology of Salem Village in 1692' in *Essays in the Sociology of Perception*, ed. Mary Douglas (London, 1982), pp. 275-30; Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York, 1996); John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (Oxford, 1982); David Harley, 'Explaining Salem: Calvinist Psychology and the Diagnosis of Possession', *American Historical Review*, 101 (1996), pp. 307-33.

<sup>32</sup> Virginia Bernhard, 'Religion, Politics, and Witchcraft in Bermuda, 1651-55', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 67 (2010), pp. 677-708; Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Amherst MA, 1984).

an attempt to educate the population into religious conformity, allowing the state to develop an absolutist model of control.<sup>33</sup> However, Levack points out that the 'state found itself regulating over-zealous local authorities who exceeded the bounds of royal justice'.<sup>34</sup> He proposed that witch-hunts were a reaction to the fragility of the central state, rather than a proof of its strength. This is relevant to England, where throughout the Tudor and Stuart period the government in Westminster was more intent on the regulation than on the pursuit of witchcraft accusations by supporting sceptical judges and magistrates, rather than licencing witchfinders.<sup>35</sup>

Studies of witch-hunting have demonstrated how it was usually urban communities which were the motor of witch-hunting. Historians of the political basis of witch-hunting have shown that witch-hunts often emerged during periods of political instability and in areas with weak central government control, but where local governmental structures had not disintegrated or been destroyed.<sup>36</sup> It was the weakness of central authorities that empowered local elites to rebuild their communities along the principles laid down by godly preachers and God-fearing magistrates.<sup>37</sup> The 'social depth' of early modern English government meant that there was a range of politically influential officers, from justices of the peace to constables, who remained largely unregulated due to their 'enormous discretionary powers'.<sup>38</sup> In East Anglia, some magistrates used their legal

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<sup>33</sup> Julian Goodare, 'Introduction' in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester, 2002), p. 8; Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Baltimore MD, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Brian P. Levack, 'State-Building and Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe,' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, eds Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 96-116.

<sup>35</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Elmer, 'Towards a Politics of Witchcraft in Early Modern England,' in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Stuart Clark (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 101-18; Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 7; Brian P. Levack, *Witch-hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (London, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 115; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, pp. 19-20, 39-40; James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (London, 1996); Idem, 'Witch-hunting and Witch Historiography: Some Anglo-Scottish Comparisons' in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester, 2002), pp. 182-97.

<sup>38</sup> Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c.1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 12, 22.

authority to push forward godly reform of society and their discretion could promote or retard witch-hunting as an extension of that campaign of reform.<sup>39</sup> Peter Elmer has proposed that it was the political authorities who had to be convinced of the need for purgation before they would actively promote witch-hunting, a necessary precondition for a hunt.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it was the magistrate and the urban governor who were a vital element to the success of the English witch-hunt.

The literature discussing the East Anglian witch-hunt reinforces the focus on local communities. Malcolm Gaskill's account of Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne's role in the great witch-hunt of 1645-7 focused on the role of the so-called 'witchfinders' as catalysts, whose presence encouraged those with accusations to come forward.<sup>41</sup> Gaskill's unique contribution was putting the witchfinders into the context of the communities that summoned them, and arguing that the witch-hunt aligned with economic strain, shifting expectations of charity, and local campaigns of reformation emerging during the Civil War.<sup>42</sup> However, Gaskill limited his work to the specifics of the crisis of 1645-7 and the towns affected by the witch-hunt. Peter Elmer's broader exploration of the politics of witchcraft provides an assessment of the national political and religious shifts which led to the intensification of witchcraft fears which blossomed into the witch-hunt, and how the uncertain politics of the Interregnum caused the decline in support. Elmer rooted the fear of

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<sup>39</sup> Gregory Durston, *Witchcraft and Witch Trials: A History of English Witchcraft and Its Legal Perspectives, 1542 to 1736* (Chichester, 2000); Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000); Idem, 'Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England', *Past & Present* 198 (2008), pp. 33-70; Cynthia B. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987); Christina Lerner, "'Crimen Exceptum'? The Crime of Witchcraft in Europe' in *Crime and the Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500*, eds V. A. C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker (London, 1980), pp. 49-75; Brian P. Levack, 'Crime and the Law' in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 146-63; Barbara Shapiro, 'Religion and the Law: Evidence, Proof and 'Matter of Fact', 1660-1700' in *Law, Crime and English Society, 1660-1830*, ed. Norma Landau (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 185-207. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 572-79 is strong on the intellectual underpinnings of the magistrate's role.

<sup>40</sup> Elmer, 'Towards a Politics of Witchcraft', p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 273; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, ch. 9; Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, ch. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 18-9, 77, 96.

witches in how witchcraft had become an active part of the national political discourse during the 1630s as part of the rhetoric of political criticism of Charles I's church.<sup>43</sup> Both Elmer and Gaskill identified that the East Anglian witch-hunt emerged from the specific circumstances of local politics within communities, but their focus on explaining the greater witch-hunt leaves room to explore urban case studies in detail.

Case studies of individual communities caught up in the East Anglian witch-hunt offer an opportunity to answer the question of what political circumstances led to support for persecuting alleged witches. The support for witchcraft accusations was rooted in urban communities' politics. By studying how the witch-hunt of the mid-1640s developed in one town, this thesis tests Elmer's claim that it was a process of politicisation of witchcraft fears from the 1620s onwards that fuelled witch-hunting.

To explore the origins and effects of witch-hunting within a single urban community between 1625 and 1650 we need to understand how the witch-hunt fits into the collapse of the ideal of consensual politics during the Caroline period and the rise of political factionalism unleashed by the Civil Wars. The historiography of seventeenth-century urban politics in England centres the debate on when exactly the shift from a consensual model of politics to the beginning of competitive party politics occurred in the seventeenth century. The role of newly emerging religious and cultural allegiances is also a debated element of the process of politicising urban governance.

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<sup>43</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, chs 3-4.

Incorporated urban communities had become complex self-governing polities by the seventeenth century and their rich civic records have allowed historians to debate how they changed during the 1640s and 1650s. Stuart towns provide rich resources for illustrating the development and radicalisation of local politics, sparking a historiographical debate on how and when urban politics changed from consensual governments based upon a self-selected elite working in concert to competing factions becoming the accepted norm.<sup>44</sup> Mark Kishlansky argued that the Wars of the Three Kingdoms were a watershed as the conflict destroyed the ability of councillors to pursue politics without factional interests due to the purges of local polities based upon political and religious allegiance entrenched competition and division.<sup>45</sup> However, Richard Cust has criticised this argument, claiming that urban politics were already competitive and factional in the 1620s and 30s.<sup>46</sup> Phil Withington and John T. Evans have produced studies that demonstrate that corporate politics were already in flux before the Interregnum.<sup>47</sup> The debate over the development of contested politics indicates the need to investigate the process of allegiance formation over the long seventeenth century.

Historians have attempted to pinpoint when consensual politics collapsed, and competing factions became the dominant form of politics have concentrated on the Civil War as the point of collapse. Revisionists such as Conrad Russell and Mark Kishlansky argued that the politicisation of local

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972); Peter Clark, 'Thomas Scott and the Growth of Urban Opposition to the Early Stuart Regime', *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), pp. 1-26; Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics, 1626-28* (Oxford, 1987); John T. Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich: Politics, Religion and Government, 1620-90* (Oxford, 1979).

<sup>45</sup> Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Perry Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth, 1660-1722* (Oxford, 1996); Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650-1730* (Cambridge, 1998); Mark A. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986); John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns, 1660-1722* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Richard Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics: Charles I and Great Yarmouth', *Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), pp. 126; Idem 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s: The Case of Great Yarmouth', *Parliamentary History*, 11 (1992), pp. 179-91.

<sup>47</sup> Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 318-26; Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000).

communities was caused by the binary choice of supporting King or Parliament at the outbreak of the Civil War which pulled apart the existing collaborative models of governance.<sup>48</sup> Post revisionists such as Michael Braddick proposed that the long term structural weaknesses of English early modern government were already eroding the unity of the urban body politic due to religious polarisation.<sup>49</sup> The depth of the divisions that emerged in the 1620s and 30s remains debated, but there is general agreement that the development of clear factional groupings in towns was sped up by the outbreak of war.

Historians initially understood the development of political allegiance as static and homogeneous based upon locality, but historical studies have challenged this interpretation by showing the fluid and shifting nature of early modern political loyalties. County communities have been treated as homogeneous polities, whose loyalties were determined by geography and economic activity.<sup>50</sup> This approach has been challenged by Andy Wood and Rachel Weil who have both proved the complexity of allegiance showing how the members of one community had varied response to demands for loyalty.<sup>51</sup> The war effort required county and urban communities to publicly affirm oaths of allegiance and to raise money and men, and Clive Holmes argued that these intensifying

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<sup>48</sup> Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, chs 4-5; Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford, 1979); Kevin Sharpe, *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History* (Oxford, 1978).

<sup>49</sup> Michael Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil War* (London, 2008); Patrick Collinson, *De Republica Anglorum or, History with the Politics Put Back* (Cambridge, 1990); David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640-1642* (Oxford, 2006); David Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms, 1637-1649* (Basingstoke, 2003); David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: The Godly and the Ungodly in Seventeenth-Century Dorchester* (London, 1992); Mark Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City* (Exeter, 1996); Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*.

<sup>50</sup> William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge MA, 1983); David Underdown, 'The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), pp. 69-94; Idem, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>51</sup> Ann Hughes, 'Local History and the Origins of the Civil War', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*, eds Ann Hughes and Richard Cust (London, 1989), pp. 224–53; Idem, 'The King, the Parliament, and the Localities during the English Civil War,' *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (1985), pp. 236–63; Rachel Weil, 'Thinking about Allegiance in the English Civil War', *History Workshop Journal*, 61 (2006), pp. 183-91; Andy Wood, 'Beyond Post-Revisionism? The Civil War Allegiances of the Miners of the Derbyshire "Peak Country"', *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 23-40.

demands fostered local political identities in opposition to military exactions.<sup>52</sup> While political allegiance at the beginning of the Civil Wars was influenced by religious concerns that reflected geography and economic interests, the conflict radicalised and polarised communities.

Political allegiance was complicated by the development of faction along religious lines. The role of puritan and especially Presbyterian identities in the formation of political factions during the Caroline period and the Civil Wars has been studied in both London and the provinces.<sup>53</sup> Local studies of urban politics show an alliance between elite and popular puritanism against an intransigent regime, the desire for puritan reform expressed through popular violence condoned by the elite against the symbols of Laudianism.<sup>54</sup> Puritanism provided a unifying ideology for urban elites which led many communities to support a reforming Parliament over a king perceived to have 'popish' tendencies.

The present thesis shows how politics in Great Yarmouth changed between 1625 and 1650. It approaches the politics of the town looking at extant factional divides that worsened over the period, notably as the Parliamentary alliance of puritans broke down over the period. Helpfully, Richard Cust has already stressed the complexity of Caroline political divisions within Great Yarmouth, and his work provides a basis for the study of the evolving factional politics that

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<sup>52</sup> Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War, 1630-1650* (London, 1976).

<sup>53</sup> Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, chs 7, 11; Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (London, 1986).

<sup>54</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 12; Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642*, eds Ann Hughes and Richard Cust (London, 1989), pp. 72-106; John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999); Idem, 'Popular Iconoclasm and the Politics of the Parish in Eastern England, 1640-42', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), pp. 261-90.



followed.<sup>55</sup> The shift in politics provides the organisational basis for the witch-hunt, but one made possible by the close relationship between magistrates and ministers.

Understanding the complexity of political allegiance in English towns during the Stuart period requires comprehending the role of religious identity. This thesis has already briefly mentioned the role of puritanism as a force for polarisation within urban communities and the historiography of the formation of politically influential religious factions shows how preferred church government influenced contemporary understandings of politics. Historians have argued that the imposition of a high church 'Laudian' settlement on the church in the 1630s radicalised puritans, stiffening their resistance to the government and helping to push some puritans into separatism. After the fall of high church episcopacy during the civil wars the Westminster Assembly sought to create a puritan conformist Church of England. Their failure showed that Presbyterianism in England lacked the popular support needed to enforce a new orthodoxy, too riven by the contradictions of the puritan coalition to form a comprehensive church settlement. Calvinist Congregationalists who rejected the concept of a national visible church and instead created autonomous puritan churches with an uncertain and porous boundary between conformity and separatism complicated puritanism and its place within communities.

Ever since Nicholas Tyacke declared in the 1970s that Charles I's promotion of 'high church' religious policies was an 'Arminian Revolution', historians have debated the reality of a so-called 'Laudian' policy and its radicalising effect on puritanism during Charles I's reign. Tyacke's 1973 essay 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Revolution' and his 1987 book *Anti-Calvinists* argued that radical

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<sup>55</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics'.

Arminianism was a central cause in triggering a religious war in the 1640s.<sup>56</sup> Tyacke argued that Charles I and Archbishop Laud's move to side-line the majority of the clergy who were doctrinally Calvinist at the beginning of the seventeenth century removed the common thread between conformists, nonconformists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians which led to puritans increasing militancy.<sup>57</sup> However, the reality of 'Laudianism' as a dominant programme for reform has been contested ever since. Peter Lake argued that Laudianism was a cohesive and radical programme of a small number of clerics based on the writing of Laud's supporters, whilst Anthony Milton argued that these authors were writing in response to Laud's conflict with puritans, rather than actively espousing an Arminian programme.<sup>58</sup> Julian Davies contended that while Charles I was not an Arminian revolutionary, his focus on discipline and the assertion of the royal prerogative destroyed the Jacobean accommodation and consensus, just as Tyacke had proposed.<sup>59</sup> More recently, Davies and Milton regarded Laudianism as a process that the king shaped to assert his prerogative rights over the church by offering preferment to those who criticised Calvinism, enhancing the power of the bishops and ministers who supported him.<sup>60</sup> According to Milton, the King's policies were grounded in fears that the puritans' irreverence was driving the conversion of Protestants to Catholicism. This justified the beautification of churches and a willingness to criticise Presbyterian sectaries and puritanism as a source of sedition.<sup>61</sup> Through preferment and royal patronage, a vision for an anti-Calvinist church focused on liturgy over preaching emerged, designed to offend puritan sensibilities.

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<sup>56</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,' in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. Conrad Russell (London, 1973), pp. 119–43; idem, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 245.

<sup>57</sup> Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,' pp. 120–1, 139, 143.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Lake, 'The Laudian Style,' in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford, CA, 1993), pp. 161–85; Anthony Milton, 'The Creation of Laudianism: A New Approach,' in *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart England: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell*, eds Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, Peter Lake, and Conrad Russell (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 162–84.

<sup>59</sup> Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625–1641* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 288, 290.

<sup>60</sup> Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, pp. 290, 292; Milton, 'Creation of Laudianism,' pp. 169, 183.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 1995).

Contemporary puritans and modern historians have argued that the Laudian reform of the Church of England broke apart the Jacobean consensus, turned moderate puritans into separatists, and puritan opponents portrayed Laudianism as leaving the country vulnerable to popery. Kevin Sharpe, Peter White, G. W. Bernard, and Christopher Hill have all argued that Charles's policies represented the defence of conformity rather than an imposition of Arminianism, and puritans were the threat to good order.<sup>62</sup> However, Davies argues that the concentration on discipline at the cost of puritan accommodation was radicalising and increased puritan nonconformity.<sup>63</sup> He saw the removal of lay influence over the clergy, the calls for the restoration of impropriated lands, titles and advowsons, and the threat to provincial elites of social downgrading by provocative clergy as part of Laudianism's antagonism of previous supporters of the Jacobean settlement.<sup>64</sup> The Laudian project was also feared because critics feared that it threatened to drag England towards Roman Catholicism. As Anthony Milton has shown, a series of high profile conversions at court were used to justify fears that Laudianism was a route to crypto-Catholicism, and Charles I's Catholic wife and his alliance with France were used as evidence that Charles was pushing the church towards Rome.<sup>65</sup> By moving away from the toleration of puritanism that had characterised the church under James I and promoting a vision of the church that was unacceptably close to Roman Catholicism, the Laudian church, 'violated the conscience, as it forced people to decide between the demands of the crown and the authority of God', therefore radicalising those opposed to Charles and his Church.<sup>66</sup> Laudianism was a radical and unpopular new strain of Protestantism whose leadership was ill-disposed towards Calvinism.

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<sup>62</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England* (1989); Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1993); G. W. Bernard, 'The Church of England c.1529–c.1642', *History*, 75 (1990), pp. 183–206.

<sup>63</sup> Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, pp. 291, 292.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 291, 308.

<sup>65</sup> Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 79, 81–2, 87.

<sup>66</sup> Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, p. 315.

Historians' accounts of English puritanism were shaped by hostile contemporary literature that defined puritanism in opposition to popery, episcopacy and the unregenerate masses, and so doomed to fail to build a lasting identity.<sup>67</sup> The debate on the nature of puritanism has been hard-fought precisely because puritanism was 'ever changing', 'context-dependent, pliable and necessarily mutable', responsive to and often oppositional to the wider society around them.<sup>68</sup> However, historians have used in-depth studies to show that there was popular engagement and involvement in puritanism, with a membership that sought to differentiate itself as a godly grouping.<sup>69</sup> This thesis looks at a specifically conformist strand of puritanism, defined by a desire to reform the Church of England yet opposed to the church's Laudian manifestation and seeking to bring the rest of their community into puritan conformity.

Presbyterianism was a mainstream part of English Protestantism, a presence between 1580 and 1650 with influence and following in the country. Polly Ha has demonstrated the survival of Presbyterian communities in England and the Netherlands, connected through sociability, lay patronage, and popular support.<sup>70</sup> There remains a debate over whether there was a distinct

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<sup>67</sup> J. T. Cliffe, *Puritans in Conflict: An Account of the Major Puritan Gentry during and after the Civil Wars* (London, 1988); Frank Grace 'Schismatical and Factious Humours': Opposition in Ipswich to Laudian Government in the 1630s', in *Religious Dissent in East Anglia III: Proceedings of the Third Symposium*, ed. David Chadd (Norwich, 1996), pp. 97-120; Lake, 'Anti-popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', pp. 72-106.

<sup>68</sup> John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 6; Tom Webster, 'Early Stuart Puritanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. by John Coffey and Paul Lim (Cambridge, 2008), p. 62.

<sup>69</sup> Ian Atherton and David Como, 'The Burning of Edward Wightman: Puritanism, Prelacy, and the Politics of Heresy in Early Modern England,' *English Historical Review* 120 (2005), pp. 1215-50; G. C. Browell, 'The Politics of Providence in England, 1640-1660', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2000; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, ch. 7; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven CT, 2002); Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford CA, 1985); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570-1625* (Oxford, 1988); Jacqueline Eales, 'A Road to Revolution: The Continuity of Puritanism, 1559-1642', in *The*

English Presbyterianism identity, and what form it took. Ha persuasively argues that 'English Presbyterianism was a process', and the recent historiography of Presbyterianism has shown how puritan identities were rooted in the consensual reforming of communities through alliances between Calvinist ministers and lay communities which emerged during the Caroline period.<sup>71</sup> Presbyterianism before the outbreak of the War of the Three Kingdoms was defined by both the community of believers and their opposition to the perceived corruption of the Laudian episcopal establishment that provided an ideological vision of godly comprehension compared to the more diffuse puritan desire for religious reform.

Puritan identity was complicated by the porous boundary between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Ha noted that 'membership of the Church of England was ultimately the line between nonconformity and schism'. David Como and Ha have argued that radical and more mainstream puritan identities developed in concert as debate solidified a range of beliefs.<sup>72</sup> Historians initially concentrated on debating whether Congregationalism emerged from the experience of the Civil Wars and the debates of the Westminster Assembly of Divines or was the result of an earlier separatism.<sup>73</sup> However, Polly Ha has shown how the development of less rigid separatist Congregationalism can be traced back to the minister Henry Jacob's Southwark

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*Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, eds Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke, 1996); Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640* (Stanford CA, 2011); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988); Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 18-20; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 183; Margaret Spufford 'Puritanism and Social Control?', in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge, 1987); Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*.

<sup>72</sup> David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford CA, 2004); Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, ch. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Rosemary Diane Bradley, 'Jacob and Esau Struggling in the Wombe', A Study of Presbyterian and Independent Religious Conflicts, 1640-1648', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Kent, 1975; Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints* (Ithaca NY, 1963); Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1626-1649* (Cambridge, 1977).

congregation in 1616, as he erected an independent gathered congregation.<sup>74</sup> Hunter Powell and Ann Hughes have shown how the formation of competing identities between Presbyterians and Congregationalists further developed in the 1640s. While both Presbyterians and Congregationalists could come closer together and collaborate, efforts to collaborate broke down from 1645 as a result of a campaign outside the Westminster Assembly of Divines conducted by Thomas Edwards and Robert Baillie that put pressure on the divines to support a Presbyterian settlement.<sup>75</sup> The debate over the emergence of rival Presbyterian and Congregationalist identities has concentrated on London and the Assembly of Divines which raises the question of how puritans in the localities continued to work in concert as they became divided.<sup>76</sup>

Laudianism's narrowing of the church radicalised and divided puritans, between those seeking to enforce conformity along Calvinist lines and those who sought to build pure independent gathered churches. Despite this, Congregationalist nonconformists tried to work with their fellow Calvinists despite their ecclesiological differences until the divides became too large to ignore. The connection between support for a comprehensive puritan settlement and the development of political allegiance during the Caroline period is important for understanding the reaction to Laudianism, Congregationalism, and more radical separatism from the authorities in Great Yarmouth. The town's puritan ministers gave evidence in the witch-hunt and the hunt occurred simultaneously with members of the town's corporation seeking to remove the town's separatist Congregationalist community. The struggle for puritan comprehension was influential in the organisation of the witch-hunt.

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<sup>74</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 6-7; Idem, *The Puritans on Independence: The First Examination, Defence, and Second Examination* (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004); Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, ch. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Joel Halcomb, 'A Social History of Congregational Religious Practice during the Puritan Revolution', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009; Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-44* (Manchester, 2017); Idem, 'The Dissenting Brethren and the Power of the Keys, 1640-44', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2011.

This thesis pulls down the artificial boundaries that have hitherto existed between studies of early modern urban politics, religious divisions, and witch-hunting to show how they were interrelated in the seventeenth-century mind. In Great Yarmouth, the religious divisions within the membership of the town's corporation between puritans and Laudian conformists during the Caroline period, and between conservative puritans and Congregationalists during the First Civil War, fed into the creation and conception of political factions and the resulting divisions. The religious concerns of these factions informed their politics and response to such divisions. The puritan religious-political mental framework connected division and unrest to the influence of the Devil and witches, their presence symptomatic of the dangers of wider religious and political divisions. This thesis explores these linkages, to show how the conception of political and religious division informed the witch-hunt.

### iii. Hypothesis

This thesis argues that members of the corporation supported the witch-hunt in Great Yarmouth in reaction to threats to the town's comprehensive puritan settlement during the First Civil War. Furthermore, the collapse in support for the town's puritan oligarchy, and the unwillingness of members of the corporation to enforce puritan comprehension, brought an end to support for the witch-hunt. This thesis uses Great Yarmouth as the geographical focus because this community had rich urban records that illuminate a series of witchcraft accusations culminating in two witch-hunts. The concentration on one town examines the deeper connection between witch-hunting and local politics by demonstrating that the fear of witchcraft stretched back into the Caroline

period and was part of a longer and deeper political story. By focusing on the period between 1625 and 1650 this work seeks to prove that the political context of the witch-hunt was not just in the immediate crisis of the witch-hunt but also the polarisation of politics during the Caroline period and reflected the shift in the town's politics seen during the Second Civil War.

The thesis seeks to root support for the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt in the politicisation of puritanism in opposing the encroaching of Laudianism in the 1620s and 1630s. The puritan members of the town's corporation and the town's new puritan minister John Brinsley formed a strong bond in their struggle against town's court-backed politicians between 1625 and 1630. Members of the corporation were unable to prevent the removal of John Brinsley as minister from the town and the Calvinist conformist to Laudianism Matthew Brooks replaced him as the town's minister in 1630. The puritans resisted Brooks's Laudian reforms through a campaign of intimidation and violence between 1630 and 1642 in which members of the town's elite supported popular violence, culminating in a mob attacking Brooks's household with the consent of the town's puritan governors. The struggle against the Laudian ministry brought puritan supporting members of the town's political elite into a closer alliance with the puritan ministry. This thesis proposes that the struggle built the ideological and organisational cohesion that allowed the puritan ministry and the town's government to work in co-ordination to unite the town's puritans during the 1640s. The present thesis argues that it was during the 1620s and 30s that ideologically and organisationally cohesive puritan politics emerged, which was necessary for members of the corporation to facilitate the witch-hunt.

The current thesis proposes that witchcraft accusations had support when puritan members of Great Yarmouth's corporation remained influential but faced challenges from within the polity to



their government of church and the town. The current thesis proposes that the Great Yarmouth corporation supported the 1645 witch-hunt because it reflected the fears that puritan conformity was now vulnerable to popular discontent and the emergence of separatism and nonconformity. Growing popular discontent from 1643 due to financial hardship caused by privateers preying on the town's herring fleet and the increased cost of poor relief that caused made the corporation unpopular. The gathered Congregational church in Great Yarmouth and the ministers William Bridge and John Oxenbridge preached alongside their Presbyterian brethren between 1642 and 1644, but in 1645 members of the corporation saw Bridge's separatist congregation as a source of disorder and sought to repress it in the spring before the witch-hunt. The current thesis proposes that the failure of the second hunt in 1646 was due to the entrenching of Congregationalism earlier that year as the corporation agreed to tolerate Bridge's congregation. Therefore, the corporation's acceptance of witchcraft fears provides a barometer for the power of the town's puritan elite. The puritans pursued accusations as they controlled the town and felt under threat, but as their control ebbed away so did the desire and ability to support witchcraft accusations.

The Wars of the Three kingdoms caused both economic malaise and the increasing influence of religious nonconformity which was the immediate context of the 1645 witch-hunt. The First Civil War was the cause of severe economic damage to Great Yarmouth, since the town's population was reliant on herring fishing that came under attack from Royalist privateers in the North Sea. Great Yarmouth's corporation failed to prevent the raiding and to protect the herring fleets, which undermined their authority as the resulting poverty increased discontent in the town. The demands of the war also required higher taxation and the threat of a military garrison whose governors threatened to overrule the town's corporation and containing troops who helped spread radical nonconformist religious ideas. Therefore, the current thesis argues the witch-hunt was possible when puritan power in Great Yarmouth came under politico-religious threat, but still retained its authority and influence over the town's corporation.

#### iv. Sources

This thesis draws primarily on Great Yarmouth's civic archives, augmented by the national government archives and various printed works. Great Yarmouth's records provide a rich and detailed account of local politics, tracing both the history of the corporation and its members. The thesis draws upon the minutes of the corporation's governing body, the trial records, and the town's contracts and official agreements which the corporation stored in St Nicholas's Church. Additionally, documents illustrating the town's corporation's interactions with church and state provide insight into the corporation's assertion of its independence and the town's rights to self-governance. There are a series of printed sermons by John Brinsley which he gave in Great Yarmouth and nearby communities that provide the background to the perceived threat to the town's puritan congregation during the 1640s. There are also contemporary accounts of the witchcraft accusations in Great Yarmouth recorded by the witchfinder John Stearne, the 'water-poet' John Taylor, and the jurist Matthew Hale which provide further context to the town's witch-hunt.

The records produced by Great Yarmouth's corporation stand at the core of the current thesis. The assembly book was a record of the debates, decisions, and officers of the corporation and provides the biggest insight into the workings of town's politics.<sup>77</sup> The Great Yarmouth borough sessions were presided over by the town's recorder and members of the Town's aldermanry and recorded

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<sup>77</sup> NRO, Y/C19 Great Yarmouth Assembly book, 5. 1598-1625, 6. 1625-1642, 7. 1642-1660.

in the court rolls, including the accusations of witchcraft.<sup>78</sup> The town's important agreements were stored in the hutch box, an iron box held in the church which contained the 'rights priuiledges p[re]scripc[i]ons customes liberties [and] ch[arter]es' of the town.<sup>79</sup> The agreements were recorded in the 'hutch book', allowing an insight into how the corporation defined the town's relationships with outside bodies such as the Bishopric of Norwich and the Eastern Association.<sup>80</sup> The parish church generated a variety of records of life in Great Yarmouth, as the parish register recorded the towns' baptisms, marriages and funerals, but the overseers of the poor generated frustratingly incomplete lists of those in need, and the Norfolk Diocese court registered wills.<sup>81</sup> More prestigious residents of the town, such as Edward Owner and Miles Corbet, had wills with a value of over £5 and including property across two counties, and so were recorded at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.<sup>82</sup> These official records are important for understanding the legal and political organisation of the town.

In addition to Great Yarmouth's records are regional records that reflect Great Yarmouth's political and strategic importance within East Anglia. The records of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich reveal the struggle between the episcopal authorities and the corporation over control of the town's ministry during the 1620s and 30s through the minutiae of visitations and communication over the town's ministry.<sup>83</sup> The Tanner manuscripts in the Bodleian Library throw further light on the town's

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<sup>78</sup> NRO, Y/C4 Borough Court Rolls; Y/S1/2/1 Sessions Book Great Yarmouth.

<sup>79</sup> Andy Wood, 'Tales from the 'Yarmouth Hutch': Civic Identities and Hidden Histories in an Urban Archive', *Past & Present*, 230 (2016), pp. 213-230

<sup>80</sup> NRO, Y/C20/1 Hutch Book, September 1632 – April 1675.

<sup>81</sup> NRO, Y/C39 Churchwardens account; NRO, Y/C41 Overseers of the Poor; NRO, PD 28/1 Baptisms, Marriages, Burials Apr 1558-Sep 1653; NRO PD 28/2 Baptisms, Feb 1643-Dec 1667, Marriages, Oct 1642-Aug 1677, Burials, Sep 1642-Sep 1659; NRO, DN/FCB 1 Faculty Book; NRO, Y/D 18 Wills, Letters of Marque and papers relating to the repair of Great Yarmouth Church.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

<sup>83</sup> NRO, Records of the Archdeaconry of Norwich; NRO, ANW 1 General Inquisitions (Visitation Books) 25-30; NRO, ANW 2, Visitation Act Books, 1566-1809, 71, Great Yarmouth 1634-5, 6, Visitation Presentments, 8, Verdicts exhibited at Yarmouth only 1637-40, 18, Benefices, 1643-1863 1. Clerical resignations 1643-9, 1653-98, 19, 1. Register of Inductions 1532-1650, ANW 22 Probate and Licences, 1584-1858, 4, Administration act book recording the granting of administrations and marriage licenses 1632-7;

religious struggles with a series of letters between Bishop Wren and the conformist minister of Great Yarmouth, Matthew Brooks, concerning the struggles of the 1630s.<sup>84</sup> During the Civil Wars, Great Yarmouth's role in the defence of the region required co-operation with the Norfolk committee and the committee of the Eastern Association, and their records place Great Yarmouth's military woes in a wider context.<sup>85</sup>

The sermons and records of the Congregational church in Great Yarmouth provide great insight into the religious life of the town. The Presbyterian minister John Brinsley had the sermons which he gave in Great Yarmouth published, and the sermons illuminate the puritan understanding of local divisions, some of which directly responded to the rise in nonconformity in the town.<sup>86</sup> William Bridge, a Congregationalist minister also based in Great Yarmouth, had a series of his sermons printed.<sup>87</sup> Bridge's Great Yarmouth Congregationalist's church produced a church book which recorded the membership and organisation of the congregation. While the original is no longer available to searchers, there is a microfilm of the book at the Norfolk Record Office, and there are fair copies with annotations at the Dr Williams's Library in London.<sup>88</sup> These records reveal the inner lives and religious experience of Great Yarmouth's citizenry that fed into the witch-hunt.

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DN/FCB 1 Faculty Book, DN/INV Inventories of the goods of deceased persons filed in the Norwich Consistory Court, DN/VIS/7/1 1636 visitation book.

<sup>84</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, ff. 133, 137, 290.

<sup>85</sup> Norfolk committee papers are in Bodl., MSS. Tanner 57-64, Eastern Association papers are in the Cambridge University Library, GBR/0012/MS Add.8072.

<sup>86</sup> John Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women* (London, 1645); Idem, *The Araignment of the Present Schism of New Separation in Old England* (London, 1646); Idem, *The Doctrine and Practice of Paedobaptisme, Asserted and Vindicated* (London, 1645); Idem, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches* (London, 1642); Idem, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie* (London 1645).

<sup>87</sup> William Bridge, *A Sermon Preached unto the Voluntiers of the City of Norwich and also of Great Yarmouth in Norfolke* (London, 1642).

<sup>88</sup> NRO, FC31/1, Great Yarmouth Independent Church assembly book 1642-1660, available as a photocopy MS2151; DWL, Harmer 76, 1 transcription of the Great Yarmouth Independent Church assembly book 1642-1660 by Joseph Davey 1848; Harmer 76. 20 Copy of Yarmouth Congregational Church Record. Made by J. Duncan 1960.

Three near-contemporary printed works discuss elements of the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt. The witch-finder and associate of Matthew Hopkins, John Stearne, briefly discusses the hunt in Great Yarmouth in his account of the wider hunt.<sup>89</sup> The most detailed account of the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt comes from the jurist Matthew Hale. Whilst it comes at second hand, based on the account of the son of a minister serving in Great Yarmouth and told to Hale a least a decade after the event, it tallies with other contemporary evidence and provides a Presbyterian perspective of the evidence gathering against one of the accused.<sup>90</sup> The 'water-poet' John Taylor gave an account of the accusations against the astrologer Mark Prynne as part of a poem criticising the recorder Miles Corbet.<sup>91</sup> These sources show how witchcraft was perceived as a spiritual threat within the town and how members of the corporation, the town's ministers, and the recorder worked together in an attempt to successfully prosecute the witch-hunt and where they failed.

The current thesis emerges from highly detailed political sources that trace the development of Great Yarmouth's polity between 1625 and 1650. The sources allow the thesis to examine the complex political and religious relationships that existed in Great Yarmouth and how they related to control over the process of the witch-hunt in the town. The survival of sermons and church books means that the work explores the development and refinement of religious identities and how they connected to witchcraft fears. By considering these sources together, this thesis provides a rich and vivid account of the witch-hunt and its place in early Stuart Great Yarmouth's history.

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<sup>89</sup> Stearne, *Confirmation*, p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> Sir Matthew Hale, *A Collection of Modern Relations of Matter of Fact, Concerning Witches & Witchcraft* (London, 1693).

<sup>91</sup> Anthony Roily [John Taylor], *A Briefe Relation of the Gleanings of The Idiotismes and Absurdities of Miles Corbet Esquire, Councillor at Law, Reorder and Burgesse for Great Yarmouth* (London, 1646).

## v. Methodology

This thesis explores the political and religious vicissitudes in Great Yarmouth between 1625 and 1650 through the town's corporation and the personal bonds that allowed the corporation to function. Tracing the history of the corporation and the desire of members of the corporation to enforce puritan conformity provides the spine to the thesis. Understanding what the power of the corporation meant for people in Great Yarmouth requires developing an understanding of how the town's oligarchic politics functioned. The corporation also reacted to concerns over religious allegiance, providing a means of gauging religious feeling within the town. The witch-hunt is contextualised by placing the accusations in the context of the much longer narrative of Great Yarmouth's puritan history. This justifies this thesis's chronological approach to the town's history.

## vi. Chapter plan

This thesis has begun with an introduction of the historiography and intellectual base of the work in chapter one. Chapter two is an introduction to Great Yarmouth describing the town's geography, economy, and government during the early Stuart period. The narrative then progresses forward chronologically. Chapter three begins the story in 1625, while chapters five and six depart from the chronology with a thematic discussion of the impact of the First Civil War on the town. Chapter seven then discusses the witch-hunt of 1645 in depth, before chapters eight and nine covers the second failed witch-hunt of 1646 and the Presbyterian backed insurrection in support of Prince

Charles in 1648. Chapter ten briefly touches on the fate of those involved in the 1660s before drawing together the thesis's conclusions.

Chapter three describes the period between 1625 and 1638, to explore the rise of the puritan faction on the Great Yarmouth corporation and their opposition to Laudianism, including a discussion of the two witchcraft accusations made in 1637 and 1638. Chapter four covers 1639 to 1642 to show how the collapse of royal power during that period allowed puritan members of the Great Yarmouth's corporation to conduct reform of the town, including supporting popular violence against the town's Laudian minister. Chapter five looks at the economic impact of the First Civil War on Great Yarmouth, especially the heavy damage done by royalist privateers to the town's vital herring trade, the political cost of supporting the war effort, and the role of military garrisons in subverting the corporation's authority. Chapter six examines the growth of separatist religious communities in Great Yarmouth between 1642 and 1645, showing how Congregationalism in the town straddled the line between acceptability and a threat to a comprehensive puritan settlement, and how Anabaptism was a challenge to the puritan ministry. It also explores how the town's puritans responded to the challenge of nonconformity and enforced a comprehensive puritan settlement. Chapter seven examines the detail of the 1645 witch-hunt, studying the accusers, accused, and the court to interrogate the evidence used in the witchcraft accusations to understand the political and religious meaning attached to the witch-hunt. Chapter eight shows how the second series of witchcraft accusations in 1646 were unsuccessful, understanding the failure of the through the changing political and religious dynamics within the corporation and popular discontent over the failure of charity. Chapter nine examines how a royalist insurrection in 1648 emerged from Great Yarmouth's economic distress, the failure of poor relief, and conservative puritans' discontent, and how the resulting purge of the corporation's membership entrenched political divisions, removing the impetus for witch-hunting. Chapter ten concludes the current thesis by showing how Great Yarmouth's political and religious divisions continued into the 1650s

and beyond, before showing how the current thesis has advanced our understanding of urban witch-hunts.

## vii. Conclusion

What makes the current thesis original is approaching the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt from the perspective of the town's urban government. This offers a unique insight into the East Anglian witch-hunt by rooting the hunt as part of the changing political landscape caused by the rise and fall of the puritanism as the dominant political force in Great Yarmouth. The existing historiography has concentrated on the story of the wider Hopkins witch-hunt rather than the political and religious circumstances that made witch-hunting especially appealing to the governors of urban communities. This thesis roots witch-hunting in the complexities of local political and religious divisions that made it acceptable as a means of healing the divides created by the Caroline period and the Civil Wars.



## Chapter 2: Introduction to Great Yarmouth

### i. Introduction

The town of Great Yarmouth lies at the centre of this thesis. This chapter discusses how geography determined the town's economic importance and how its economic life in turn shaped the town's politics, divisions, and factionalism that lay behind the town's witch-hunt. Great Yarmouth was defined by its connection to the sea as it was founded around a natural haven created by the confluence of three rivers, providing a safe harbour along the east coast of the North Sea.<sup>1</sup> The town's economy was divided between fishermen and the industries that supplied them, and merchants who traded across the North Sea and beyond.<sup>2</sup> The merchants made up the town's political elite as members of the town's corporation, meaning the governors had differing interests to the majority of the town's residents.<sup>3</sup> Membership of the corporation came with expectations of co-operation between councillors, but the corporation's assembly provided a space where faction and dissent developed over political, religious, and financial interests.<sup>4</sup> Members of the corporation sought to control the town's ministry but were challenged by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and the presence of nonconformist congregations.<sup>5</sup> The town's economic, political, and religious structures provide the contextual framework for understanding the town's divisions.

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, MR 487.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Tittler, 'The English Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century: The Case of Great Yarmouth', *Albion*, 9 (1977), pp. 40-60; A. R. Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth and Its Economic and Social relationships with Its Neighbours on Both Sides of the Seas, 1550-1714: An Essay in the History of the North Sea Economy', unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> NRO, Y/C2/12.

<sup>4</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. xii.

<sup>5</sup> John Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London, 1877), pp. 73-7, 122-32.

Great Yarmouth's civic records have informed historians' understanding of Great Yarmouth's polity since the late sixteenth century, including this chapter. Civic history was an asset to the town's early modern political elite because it demonstrated their rights and privileges. The town's earliest histories were Thomas Damet's 1594 manuscript and Henry Manship's 1619 account. Both Damet and Manship stressed the role of Great Yarmouth's corporation in protecting the town's economic interests from the Cinque Ports and Lowestoft, the town's traditional trading rivals.<sup>6</sup> Despite only being available in print in the nineteenth century, both works set the trend for the histories that followed by rooting their accounts in the town's civic records. Manship's account set the pattern for future histories as Henry Swinden in the 1770s and Charles Palmer in the 1870s actively sought to emulate or continue Manship's work.<sup>7</sup> The archivists Paul Rutledge and Frank Meeres were still producing civic histories in 1972 and 2007.<sup>8</sup> Great Yarmouth's records have lent themselves to local narratives that situate the corporation at the heart of Great Yarmouth's history.

The civic records have also provided material for in-depth studies of urban politics. In 1992 Richard Cust released two articles that used Great Yarmouth's Caroline politics to discuss how local politics interacted with the centre. 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s: The Case of Great Yarmouth' was a response to Mark Kishlansky's argument that 'election contests were anathema to local

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Damet, *A Booke of the Foundacion and Antiquitye of the Towne of Great Yarmouth*, ed. by Charles John Palmer (Great Yarmouth, 1847); Henry Manship and Charles John Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth* (London, 1847).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Tittler, *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540-1640* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 121-139; Henry Swinden, *The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Burgh of Great Yarmouth* (Norwich, 1772); Charles John Palmer, *The Perlustration of Great Yarmouth, with Gorleston and Southtown* (Great Yarmouth, 1872), iii; John Preston, *The Picture of Yarmouth: Being a Compendious History and Description of All the Public Establishments within That Borough: Together with a Concise Topographical Account of Ancient and Modern Yarmouth* (Great Yarmouth, 1819).

<sup>8</sup> Frank Meeres, *A History of Great Yarmouth* (Chichester, 2007); Paul Rutledge, *Guide to the Great Yarmouth Borough Records* (Norfolk, 1972).

communities in the early seventeenth century'.<sup>9</sup> Cust argued that political polarisation was already part of Great Yarmouth's 1625 Parliamentary elections and 'closely connected with the power struggle developing with Yarmouth corporation'.<sup>10</sup> Cust went into further depth in 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics: Charles I and Great Yarmouth' to show that the 'emergence of this rhetoric of division in public statements within the local arena' was part of local politics in the 1620s and 1630s rather than emerging during the interregnum and restoration.<sup>11</sup> Cust framed the town's contested politics around the struggle between the alderman Benjamin Cooper and later the minister Matthew Brooks against a puritan faction on the town's corporation. Perry Gauci's 1996 study of urban politics between 1660 and 1722, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, showed that 'Yarmouth's excellent corporate archive permitted the intricate workings of the assembly to be explored in detail'. Gauci argued for the importance of town's corporate government's effective governance post-restoration, its adaptability to internal divisions, and its members' real concern for the town's wellbeing.<sup>12</sup> Andy Wood's 'Tales from the 'Yarmouth Hutch'' showed the importance of the town's civic records as a legal defence of the town's rights and their use by Damets and Manship to define Great Yarmouth's identity through its history. Wood used the town's hutch collection as an example of how early modern communities curated their records for political purposes.<sup>13</sup> These studies reveal the strength of Great Yarmouth's civic records as a source for examining how the corporation functioned. This thesis argues that the witch-hunt was a symptom of the town's political and religious dysfunction in the 1640s. This thesis bridges Cust's work on the growing factionalism in the town's corporation during the 1620s and 30s and Gauci's work showing how factionalism became an acceptable part of politics after the restoration.

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<sup>9</sup> Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp. 186-7.

<sup>11</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, pp. 256, 262.

<sup>13</sup> Wood, 'Tales from the 'Yarmouth Hutch'', pp. 214, 215, 221.

## ii. Great Yarmouth: A Town on a Sandbank

Great Yarmouth was a vital port for North Sea fishing and trade, which made the town prosperous but divided the town's population between different economic pursuits. The wealth of Great Yarmouth was the result of its geographic advantages. It was located at the confluence of three rivers that crossed the fertile East Anglian countryside and was the most easterly haven in England making it key to both inland and maritime trading networks.<sup>14</sup> Trade brought with it threats to the town's unity as the nearby Netherlands was a sanctuary for those seeking refuge for their religious nonconformity and Great Yarmouth was the closest point of access for those seeking to bring those ideas into England.<sup>15</sup> The result of Great Yarmouth's geography was a citizenry divided between the wealthy and politically engaged merchant freemen on the one hand and the poorer herring fishermen who made up most of the town's population on the other.

The sandbank that became Great Yarmouth emerged around the end of the first millennium 'out of an hill or heape of sande, reared and enforced from the sea most miraculously', forming an island in the estuary of the River Yare facing out to the North Sea.<sup>16</sup> By Domesday, there were 70 households recorded on what was now a spit of sand.<sup>17</sup> The settlement was founded by fishermen preparing to fish the vast herring shoals that gathered in the North Sea just off Great Yarmouth every autumn. In the late 12<sup>th</sup> century the Cinque Ports were granted the right to appoint two bailiffs to control the town's burgeoning herring fair held yearly for forty days between Michaelmas

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<sup>14</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, p. 94

<sup>15</sup> Ole Grell, 'A Friendship Turned Sour: Puritans and Dutch Calvinists in East Anglia, 1603-1660', in *Religious Dissent in East Anglia* ed. E. S. Leedham-Green (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 63-4.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Nash, *Nash's Lenten Stuff Containing the Description and First Procreation and Increase of the Town of Great Yarmouth, in Norfolk: With a New Play, Never Played before, of the Praise of the Red-Herring* (London, 1599), p. 5; NRO, Y/C37/1.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, E31/1/3/925.

and Martinmas.<sup>18</sup> Great Yarmouth gained its charter from King John in 1209 and the 1277 charter gave the town's corporation joint control over the herring fair and the right to collect duties along the coast as far south as Lowestoft.<sup>19</sup> Great Yarmouth's provision of ships to the Royal Fleet at the Battle of Sluys in 1340 was larger than the rest of the Cinque Ports combined, making the town one of England's pre-eminent ports.<sup>20</sup> Despite the silting river estuary requiring seven new cuts to keep the haven open between 1340 and 1567, Great Yarmouth continued to prosper.<sup>21</sup> During the middle ages, Great Yarmouth developed into a prosperous port for herring fishing and trade along the East Coast.

Great Yarmouth was a vital entrepot because it dominated the nearby coast as a 'headport'. It was 'where the custom house was located and the main officials were resident' and acted as the major point of contact for merchants between Norwich, London, and the Netherlands.<sup>22</sup> A 1670 pamphlet argued this was due to the three rivers 'Wavenee, which parts the Counties of Norfolk, and Suffolk; Yare, which runs thorow the City of Norwich; the Bure, which comes from the North-parts of Norfolk' which all met by the Great Yarmouth haven. Thanks to these rivers 'all the Country-Growths and Manufactures are with little charge brought to Yarmouth: and up these streams, these Countries are furnished with Forrein and Domestick Commodities'.<sup>23</sup> The river Yare's silting meant that since 1550 Great Yarmouth had become the intermediary port for Norwich, then the second city of the kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Great Yarmouth's position on the east coast opposite Amsterdam meant it was the most convenient location for trade with the Netherlands and across the North Sea, but this

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<sup>18</sup> A. A. C. Hedges, *Yarmouth is an Antient Town*, ed. by Michael Boon and Frank Meeres (Great Yarmouth, 2001), pp. 16-7.

<sup>19</sup> NRO, Y/C2/1-4.

<sup>20</sup> Graham Cushway, *Edward III and the War at Sea: The English Navy, 1327-1377* (Woodbridge, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Hedges, *Yarmouth is an Antient Town*, pp. 23-7.

<sup>22</sup> David Harris Sacks and Michael Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700,' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge, 2000), p. 382.

<sup>23</sup> *Proposals Relating to Little Yarmouth, the Manner of the Situation of Great Yarmouth and of Its Trade and Buildings* (London, 1670), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Sacks and Lynch, 'Ports 1540-1700,' p. 381.

closeness meant that there were fears that Amsterdam and its religious radicalism influenced the town.<sup>25</sup> Great Yarmouth's merchants had a much wider trade network, going as far as 'Ireland, the Baltic, France, Italy and the American colony of Virginia'.<sup>26</sup> While Great Yarmouth sat astride the rich North Sea fishing grounds, the town's herring fleet also travelled as far as Iceland, despite this leaving the fleet vulnerable to privateering during wartime.<sup>27</sup> Great Yarmouth tied together trade routes across the interior of Norfolk and Suffolk to the wider world and had access to the North Sea's richest fishing grounds, giving the town the prosperity to support a vibrant urban community.

Merchant freemen dominated Great Yarmouth society as both the source of the town's wealth and the town's political elite. Trading in Great Yarmouth for longer than a year and day required becoming a freeman, something granted by birth, a completed apprenticeship, or purchase.<sup>28</sup> The merchants ranged from chandlers to grocers, brewers, and those selling the herring caught in the town.<sup>29</sup> Merchants, such as Edward Owner, could become immensely wealthy. Owner ran a shop by the Great Yarmouth market and imported rye, cloth, beer, rape oil, and sold herring. He was able to leave a portfolio of properties in his will in Great Yarmouth, Norwich, and Fritton in Suffolk and spent £1500 on the town's Bridewell.<sup>30</sup> The merchant Thomas Johnson imported 'pepper, prunes, almonds, spices, salt, wine, and occasionally 'Holland ropes' and barley' and exported herring.<sup>31</sup> While not as wealthy as Owner, Johnson was still amongst Great Yarmouth's elite and donated £50 towards recovering the Palatine and was charged £234 for

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<sup>25</sup> TNA, SPD 16/148/40; see below in chapters three and six for discussion of the Dutch connection to nonconformity.

<sup>26</sup> Penelope J. Corfield, 'England: East Anglia,' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge, 2000), p. 40, referencing TNA, E 190/493/5: Yarmouth Port Book, Overseas 1661/2.

<sup>27</sup> Tittler, 'The English Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century' pp. 41-2; See below chapter five for privateering pp. 158-64.

<sup>28</sup> Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth', pp. 234-5.

<sup>29</sup> Adrian Marsden, *17th Century Norfolk Tokens in Norwich Castle Museum* (Norwich, 2016), pp. 87-97.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/218, f. 296; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 79.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Kyle, 'Johnson, Thomas (1586-1660), of Great Yarmouth, Norf,' *History of Parliament Online*, ed. Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/johnson-thomas-1586-1660> (2010).

delinquency during the interregnum.<sup>32</sup> The accusers in the 1645 witch-hunt were largely freemen, in contrast to the accused who were generally spinsters or day labourers.<sup>33</sup> The merchants' wealth and influence in Great Yarmouth differed from the relative poverty of the town's fishermen.

The herring fleet dominated the lives of the majority of Great Yarmouth's residents, employing the fishermen and attendant trades, and additional income for citizens at the yearly herring fair. Herring fishing had been a part of Great Yarmouth's economy since the town's foundation and the connection was shown by the town's coat of arms: gold lions on the red of England dimidiated with three silver herrings on blue, which had been granted by Edward III in 1340.<sup>34</sup> The fleet left Great Yarmouth annually between mid-March and late August to travel up the North Sea as far as Iceland, before returning in autumn for the rich catches in the seas around Great Yarmouth.<sup>35</sup> The herring fleet supported a network of craftsmen in Great Yarmouth who equipped the vessels, built the casks to hold the preserved fish, and manned the smokehouses needed to preserve Great Yarmouth's famous red herring.<sup>36</sup> The industry was regulated by the town's corporation who determined the yearly price of salt, provided cure masters to oversee the process of preserving the fish, and inspected the quality of herring barrels.<sup>37</sup> The forty-day herring fair held each autumn enriched the town through the sale, transporting, and loading of herring. The right to trade the herring was restricted to the town's freemen, but the freemen were allowed to charge for hosting buyers and sellers, providing an additional income.<sup>38</sup> The corporation had the right to half doles and heyning from the herring catch. The half dole was a portion of any catch over two lasts, equal to twenty-

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<sup>32</sup> NRO, Y/C26/2, unfol.; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 124, 131, 148.

<sup>33</sup> *A Calendar of the Freemen of Great Yarmouth, 1429-1800: Compiled from the Records of the Corporation* (Norwich, 1910), pp. 60-82, NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 195-201.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Moule, *Heraldry of Fish: Notices of the Principal Families Bearing Fish in Their Arms* (London, 1842), pp. 150-3.

<sup>35</sup> Tittler, 'The English Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century', pp. 41-2.

<sup>36</sup> Nash, *Nash's Lenten Stuff*; Tittler, 'The English Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century', pp. 40-60.

<sup>37</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 43, 46, 17.

<sup>38</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 46; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 2, 73, 78.

four barrels, granted to the corporation.<sup>39</sup> Strangers paid the heyning rate for the right to sell herring in the town.<sup>40</sup> The money raised by half doles reached £334 10s 4d in 1642 and was used as a charitable fund by the corporation.<sup>41</sup> The herring fleet was vulnerable to privateering during the first civil war and the losses suffered led to the collapse of the town's poor relief system and popular unrest against the corporation.<sup>42</sup> The herring fleet supported most of the town's population as it provided employment, additional sources of income, and supported the town's poor relief.

Great Yarmouth's civic life centred around St Nicholas's church, the guildhall, and the tolhouse, all of which represented the power of the town's corporation.<sup>43</sup> Great Yarmouth had only one parish church, St Nicholas. It was in the northeast corner of Great Yarmouth, north of the marketplace and the churchyard edged on the north and east by the town's walls.<sup>44</sup> The church's interior was a contested space during the Caroline period. The conformist minister Matthew Brooks pulled down raised seating and brought in adornments, stained glass, and a chancel rail in 1635 after facing abuse from the corporation members seats, and the town's corporation agreed to remove these adornments in 1644.<sup>45</sup> The guildhall was to the south of the church and made up the arched entrance to the churchyard. It was the site of the yearly elections for corporation's officers and the corporation's civic events.<sup>46</sup> The tolhouse was situated to the south-west of Yarmouth, overlooking the haven and the main trading quays. It was a building that sought 'authority and control' and the control of space symbolised the power of the town's corporation.<sup>47</sup> The building itself was four

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<sup>39</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Manship and Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 84-5.

<sup>41</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 560.

<sup>42</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 116; 121; TNA, SP 21/24, f. 243, see below chapter five, pp. 168-64.

<sup>43</sup> See appendix one for a panoramic view of the town and a reproduction of 1619 map.

<sup>44</sup> BL, Cotton Augustus I.i, f. 74.

<sup>45</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 104; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Hedges, *Yarmouth Is an Antient Town*, p. 48; Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500 - 1640* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 89-128.



hundred years old in 1625 and had originally been a two-storey high merchant's house. The corporation had renovated the tolhouse between 1619 and 1622 in a more elegant Jacobean style, with a finely built flint frontage and limestone edging over brick. To make the building more suitable for the meetings of the assembly and for the borough sessions held there the corporation had installed a raised dais.<sup>48</sup> The tolhouse's ground floor acted as the town's gaol and on the officers of the court would transfer the accused to the court on the first floor. During the sessions, the recorder sat at the south end on the raised dais, surrounded by the benches of justices, and room for an audience of fifty.<sup>49</sup> These buildings represented the centre of political and religious power and their close interconnections within Great Yarmouth.

Great Yarmouth's traders and craftsmen surrounded the town's harbour and the marketplace, surrounded by the narrow rows of housing, and the town enclosed by its medieval walls. The haven stretched along the west side of the town, hugging the coastline where the rivers Bure and Yare met. There were a series of quays for landing goods, the oldest king's or lord's quay in the north divided from the south quay by a bridge across the haven.<sup>50</sup> The market was to the east of the town along the walls and south of the church, marked by the market cross in the centre. Outside the town walls, there were small plots and limited industry on the denes to the east and a salt pan over the river to the west with a landing quay for coal.<sup>51</sup> Further economic activity occurred on the bottom floor of housing, small plots and gardens within the walls, and a limekiln and yards immediately to the north of the bridge.<sup>52</sup> Henry Manship described the town as having seven score or 140 'rows' by the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> These rows were streets so narrow that they required the corporation to order all doors to open inwards to allow easy transit. Since

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<sup>48</sup> Manship and Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>49</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, MR 487.

<sup>51</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 28.

<sup>52</sup> William Faden, *Faden's Map of Norfolk* (Dereham, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> Manship and Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, p. 66.

1555, the corporation had made chimneys compulsory and in 1571 they banned homes built out of board or covered in reed leading to the reconstruction of the town in brick and flint.<sup>54</sup> The town was encircled by an impressive medieval wall, supplemented by Elizabethan artillery bastions.<sup>55</sup> The defences had been further modernised during the war with Spain in the 1620s with strengthened artillery towers designed to ward off a naval assault. During the Civil Wars, the corporation constructed a moat and further artillery mounts.<sup>56</sup> These were the physical restrictions that defined the realities of living in Great Yarmouth during the early modern period.

Great Yarmouth's position on the edge of the North Sea defined its economy. The town was a secure haven between the rich fishing grounds of the North Sea, the estuary of three major rivers that connected much of the rich farmlands of Norfolk and Suffolk, the connection between Amsterdam, London, and the coalfields of the north of England. The town's prosperity brought with both a rich civic life and a divided polity. The economic divides within the town between herring fishermen and wealthy merchants informed the town's politics. Freeman status designated not just the right to trade within the town but granted the right to be involved in the town's political and legal processes. A self-selecting group of freemen managed the town's political structures as members of the town's corporation. The corporation worked to defend the town's rights and privileges such as Great Yarmouth rights over duties and fishing imports. However, there was an expectation from central governments that the town's corporation would be able to handle internal dissension within Great Yarmouth, such as factionalism amongst its members and preventing the spread of religious separatism. The Caroline period and the civil wars tested the ideals of the corporation as the political and religious divides increased factionalism and religious conflict.

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<sup>54</sup> Colin Tooke, *The Rows of Great Yarmouth* (Norwich, 1987), pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> BL, Cotton Augustus I.i; John F. Potter, *The Medieval Town Wall of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk: A Geological Perlustration* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 11-9; see below chapter five for details of the Civil War fortifications, pp. 134-5, 138.

### iii. Great Yarmouth's Power Structures

Great Yarmouth's corporation was meant to provide a unified and stable government, but during the Caroline period, division and factionalism strained the town's political and religious structures. The corporation was built upon an oligarchic politics, governed by a self-selected group of forty-eight common councillors and twelve aldermen that served on the town's assembly with the support of paid officers who managed the town's bureaucracy.<sup>57</sup> However, factions developed amongst the councillors and aldermen, which were exacerbated by the involvement of the central government.<sup>58</sup> Members of the town's corporation also contended with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich over their opposing choices of lecturers for the town's ministry.<sup>59</sup> The conflict over the ministry was sharpened by the presence of religious nonconformists who sought to build separate congregations that threatened the town's religious unity.<sup>60</sup> The underlying tension within the corporation was how to maintain the unity and cohesion expected of an urban community despite the reality of factionalism.

Great Yarmouth's charters granted the power to the town's corporation to govern the town as a free borough, to sue and be sued as a legal body, hold lands in its name, use a common seal, and

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<sup>57</sup> William Finch-Crisp, *Chronological Retrospect of the History of Yarmouth and Neighbourhood from A.D. 46 to 1884* (Norwich, 1884), p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*', pp. 5, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, pp. 73-80; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena, or, A Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of This Time* (London, 1646), ii. p. 134; NRO, FC31/1; chapters three, six, and eight.

issue by-laws.<sup>61</sup> The town's charters and seal were protected in the hutch, mentioned above, a large iron-clad box of records held in St Nicholas church.<sup>62</sup> From 1494 the town was granted the right to hold borough sessions, giving the corporation control over the town's courts and the responsibility to staff them with the town's recorder and justices of the peace rather than circuit judges.<sup>63</sup> The original guild of merchants that managed the corporation was replaced by an assembly in the sixteenth century, shifting control to an overtly political body.<sup>64</sup> The charters were the legal basis for governing the town, but the corporation required the involvement of members of the citizenry to function.

The councillors and aldermen who made up the town's corporation were members of the town's merchant elite. The most basic rank of political involvement in the town was that of freemen, who were granted economic privileges and in return were expected to serve as a member of the assembly if elected.<sup>65</sup> The forty-eight common councillors were selected to join the common council on the death, dismissal or promotion of an existing councillor and were required to pay 20s in silver plate to the town's chamberlains to take up the role.<sup>66</sup> Councillors were expected to attend all meetings of the assembly, all the sessions of the peace, and to serve officer roles if elected or chosen.<sup>67</sup> Their rank was marked by special seating in St Nicholas's church and by scarlet gowns worn to services and the borough sessions.<sup>68</sup> The twelve aldermen had a more involved role in the governing of the town. On an alderman's death, dismissal or retirement, a new alderman was 'elected and chosen' by the remaining aldermen from amongst the common councillors and was expected to pay the corporation 40s in silver plate to take up the role.<sup>69</sup> The aldermen were paired

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<sup>61</sup> Martin Weinbaum, *British Borough Charters 1307-1660* (1943), pp. xxiii-iv; NRO, Y/C 2/1-12.

<sup>62</sup> Wood, 'Tales from the 'Yarmouth Hutch'', pp. 216-7.

<sup>63</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 6; NRO, Y/C 2/1.

<sup>64</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, 813-4.

<sup>65</sup> Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth', pp. 234-5 Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 10; NRO, Y/C4.

<sup>66</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 455.

<sup>67</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 151, 169, 195, 197, 221, 334, 449; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 4, 78.

<sup>68</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 26.

<sup>69</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 9, 10.

off to manage each of the town's six wards and were responsible for organising their ward's poor relief and night watch.<sup>70</sup> The corporation was organised to avoid divisions through the selection of a political class that was homogeneous and had the support of existing members, but this did not prevent divisions developing.

Early modern urban corporations were conceived of as one legal body, which acted 'collectively as a single body' and the decisions made were bound by a 'common accord', but the Great Yarmouth corporation was repeatedly divided by factional interests.<sup>71</sup> The Great Yarmouth assembly meetings began with a prayer asking councillors to act with 'civill verity [and] godly peace' rather than 'selflove, unfaithfulness, envye, private grudge, hatred, contention, quarrel vnkynde affecc[i]ons, vncharitable speeches, covengy, pryde of spirit, selfconceitednes, outrage of word[es] [and] affecc[i]ons'.<sup>72</sup> The prayer was part of the corporation's pressure to secure harmony in meetings through moral example, matched by fines for misconduct and insulting language, their necessity showing councillor's fears of factional conflict and misconduct.<sup>73</sup> In 1629 accusations of a faction within the corporation were used by a group of court-connected aldermen as part of an appeal to the privy council for wider reform of the town's corporation, but they were thwarted when their rivals successfully argued that the reform itself constituted factionalism.<sup>74</sup> During the first civil war puritans on the corporation pushed for godly reform, taking responsibility for the town's preaching in 1642, iconoclasm and enforced Sabbatarianism in 1644-5, and in 1645 they accused separatist churches of being the source of faction and division.<sup>75</sup> Members of the corporation invited Matthew Hopkins to come to Great Yarmouth after they had agreed to restrict

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<sup>70</sup> NRO, C/C19/6, f. 516; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 4, 26, 40, 76, 83.

<sup>71</sup> Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 8, 67.

<sup>72</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. xii.

<sup>73</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 125.

<sup>74</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 1-2, 10-1; see chapter three below p. 81.

<sup>75</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 1, 10, 69, 91; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, ed. Rev. Charles Parkin, 11 vols. (London, 1810), xi, pp. 11, 383.

Independency and nonconformity within the town.<sup>76</sup> The second civil war led to a small group of aldermen and councillors assuming power over the corporation in support of the king, but criticism of their 'malignancy' or royalism by their fellow councillors in the following year was still fined as factionalism.<sup>77</sup> The corporation sought to preserve unity despite factional politics through social pressure and expectation and allow its continuing function.

The corporation held annual elections every year on 29 August to pick the officers who allowed the corporation to function. The officers were chosen by twelve corporate electors, who were themselves chosen by a child who drew three names from each of four hats containing the names of nine common councillors each.<sup>78</sup> The two bailiffs chosen from amongst the aldermen were the equivalent of a mayor in other towns, representatives of the town's civic authority such as the expensive role of hosting dignitaries.<sup>79</sup> The chamberlain was also chosen at the same election, and the members of the corporation selected a second co-chamberlain in early September.<sup>80</sup> The chamberlains maintained the town's finances and were aided by a series of treasurers who managed separate funds for long-term expenses such as maintaining the haven, the poorhouse, and the funds to provide for orphans left to the town's care or to cover temporary demands for taxation. This could prove expensive, as overspending or unexpected costs were often initially covered from the treasurers' own pockets.<sup>81</sup> Other elected roles included constables, churchwardens, and collectors, which required members of the assembly to police their neighbours' behaviour or collect taxation from them but risked fragmenting the connection between governors and governed.<sup>82</sup> The corporation required the support of officers to conduct

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<sup>76</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 69, 71.

<sup>77</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 114-125; see below chapter nine, p. 273.

<sup>78</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, pp. 24-5; NRO, Y/C18/1, f. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Rutledge, *Great Yarmouth Assembly Minutes, 1538-1545* (Norwich, 1970), pp. 6-8, 15; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 104.

<sup>80</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 444, 446.

<sup>81</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 454-5, 516; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 7, 63, 65, 79, 99.

<sup>82</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 73.

policy and manage effective control over the town, and these voluntary officers were supplemented by trained professionals.

The town's bureaucracy and courts relied on paid officers: the recorder, the town clerk, the justices of the peace, and the MPs who represented the town in Parliament. The recorder was crucial to the town's government as 'one discrete man learned in the law of England' who acted as the town's chief legal adviser and magistrate in the borough sessions assisted by the town clerk.<sup>83</sup> These two made up a quarter of the town's eight justices of the peace, alongside the current and previous year's bailiffs, and two other aldermen. These made up the bench during the twice-yearly borough sessions held in the tolhouse in April and September, supporting a jury of eight freemen drawn from members of the corporation, who would try accusations made in the town, including witchcraft.<sup>84</sup> The town also had the right to choose two members of Parliament. The candidates were selected by the corporation with guidance from the town's patrons, but those proposed required the 'voice' of the freemen which proved divisive in contested elections, such as those of 1620, 1625 and 1626, where local political divisions and tension with the Westminster government was expressed through the popular choice of MP.<sup>85</sup> Miles Corbet, the town's recorder and frequently one of the town's MPs between 1629 and 1661, straddled the line between local representative and national figure. The ambiguity of his position allowed him to support religious nonconformity in the town and use the witch-hunt to pursue personal enmities.<sup>86</sup> The town's paid officers and MPs were agents of the corporation and took an active role in the town's politics.

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<sup>83</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, pp. 49-50; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 714.

<sup>84</sup> NRO, Y/S2/1, f. 191.

<sup>85</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 10; Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', pp. 180-1.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Barber, 'Corbett, Miles (1594/5–1662)', *ODNB*; see also chapters three and seven for Corbet's involvement in witchcraft trials, and chapters three and six for Corbet's support for religious nonconformity.

The positions of the town's ministers and lecturers were more ambiguous, as they were employed and paid for by the town but chosen by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, which the town's corporation contested. The lecturers were expected to provide Sunday sermons at 9.30 am and 2.30 pm and a Wednesday lecture at 10 am, which required the services of two lecturers.<sup>87</sup> The lecturers were supported in the administration of the parish church of St Nicholas by a parish clerk, another position that the corporation sought to control.<sup>88</sup> The corporation had sought the right to nominate the ministers and remove those they thought unfitting since Elizabeth's reign, but their nominations were dismissed by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich in 1576, 1582, 1590, 1607, 1619, 1623, 1627, 1632, and 1635 for being too puritan.<sup>89</sup> In 1624 Bishop Harsnett re-established the Dean and Chapter of Norwich's right to the nomination of Great Yarmouth's lecturers, which led to a prolonged legal battle that exacerbated the tension between puritans in the corporation and the conformist ministers they sought to remove.<sup>90</sup> The puritan members of the corporation and their supporters were accused of abusing and forcing out conformist ministers between 1625 and 1641.<sup>91</sup> When the corporation took over the choice of the lecturers after 1642 they chose to restore the Presbyterian John Brinsley, and bring in the puritan Thomas Whitfield, and the Congregationalists William Bridge and John Oxenbridge, but Bridge and Oxenbridge were removed in 1645 for supporting separatism in the town.<sup>92</sup> The corporation's desire to control the ministry was reflected in its support for the Calvinist Dutch church and its rejection of separatist communities.

The Dutch stranger church in Great Yarmouth was for a small community of between 28 to 48 residents out of the 100-200 Dutch speakers in the town, but its importance was as an alternative

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<sup>87</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 51.

<sup>88</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 475.

<sup>89</sup> Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, pp. 122-32.

<sup>90</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 3-4.

<sup>91</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102-11; Withington, *Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 234-42; see chapters three and four.

<sup>92</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 69, 78; see below in chapter six, p. 201.



Calvinist community.<sup>93</sup> By 1575 the Dutch presence in the town was large enough that the corporation granted them a room for their congregation in the Town House, a building at the top of the south quay. This space was licensed for the Dutch Sunday services, but between 1627 and 1632 the corporation attempted to use the space for early morning prayers by the town's puritan lecturer, John Brinsley, after his dismissal from St Nicholas's church.<sup>94</sup> Brinsley was licensed to preach from the chapel in 1631 by Bishop White, but in 1632 he was barred from the chapel as part of attempts to curb faction and unrest within the town.<sup>95</sup> The Dutch chapel provided a space for the town's godly to access a puritan ministry at a time when Laudian reforms were affecting the town's parish church without turning to separatist communities.

Despite reports of a recusant presence in Great Yarmouth in 1618 and the arrest of a Jesuit in 1620, it was protestant nonconformists who concerned the corporation during the Caroline period.<sup>96</sup> Great Yarmouth was seen as a bastion for the godly as the 'dissenting [in] East Anglia [looked] to Norwich or 'little Genevas' such as St Ives or Yarmouth'.<sup>97</sup> The earliest record of nonconformity in the town was a separatist congregation led by Thomas Cayme, which was variously described as Brownist or Anabaptist. Despite the corporation ordering Cayme and his followers to conform and arresting those that failed, the presence of the Cayme's separatists was used as part of a subpoena to criticise bailiff Trindle in 1625.<sup>98</sup> In 1636 a conventicle led jointly by a London glassmaker and a shoemaker from Great Yarmouth was discovered in Somerleyton, allegedly containing at least one alderman from Great Yarmouth.<sup>99</sup> In 1637 two disguised, excluded ministers from the

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<sup>93</sup> Christopher Joby, 'The Dutch Language in Early Modern Norfolk: A Social History', *Dutch Crossing* (2014), pp. 158-60.

<sup>94</sup> Colin Tooke, 'The Town House and Dutch Chapel (23 South Quay, Great Yarmouth)', *Yarmouth Archaeology* (1991), p. 25.

<sup>95</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 19-20.

<sup>96</sup> Manship and Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, p. 158.

<sup>97</sup> Corfield, 'England: East Anglia', p. 48.

<sup>98</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 307; TNA C.2/CHAS I/Y1/58; Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, pp. 73-80.

<sup>99</sup> Bodl., Tanner MS 68, ff. 89-90.

congregational community in Rotterdam visited Great Yarmouth to smuggle banned books and meet the recorder Miles Corbet.<sup>100</sup> The presence of nonconformity was a threat to the corporation's authority, but they remained a limited and sporadic presence before the outbreak of the civil wars.

From 1642 the presence of nonconformist and independent congregations in the town became a threat to the town's political and religious consensus as the initially blurred line between separatist and conformist congregations allowed a Congregational community to settle and provide cover for radical sectaries. In 1642 a group of Congregational emigres followed the minister William Bridge from Rotterdam to settle in Great Yarmouth, setting up a congregational church in the town a year later.<sup>101</sup> There were initially no complaints about the presence of Congregationalists in Great Yarmouth as Bridge and his assistant John Oxenbridge had been invited to preach in St Nicholas alongside the town's existing ministers.<sup>102</sup> However, members of the corporation sought to limit private preaching since 1643.<sup>103</sup> Following a tenfold increase in the membership of the Congregation and a series of conversions amongst the wives of common councillors in early 1645 members of the town's assembly sought to limit the influence of Bridge and his congregation.<sup>104</sup> There was pressure from members of the assembly to close the congregation from the summer of 1645 as the source of 'divisions and factions'.<sup>105</sup> After a conference in January 1646 between the town's leading conservative puritan and representatives of the Congregationalists a temporary forbearance in allowing new members into the congregational church was agreed.<sup>106</sup> The congregation continued to grow due to further conversions amongst the town's common

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<sup>100</sup> Bodl., Tanner MS 68, f. 283; also discussed below in chapter three, p. 94.

<sup>101</sup> NRO, FC31/1.

<sup>102</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 498.

<sup>103</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 511; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 31.

<sup>104</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-6; see below chapter six, pp. 173-9.

<sup>105</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 69, 82

<sup>106</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 6, 7.

councillors in 1646 and the promotion of those councillors to aldermen in the wake of the 1648 rising.<sup>107</sup> The antinomian John Boggis arrived in 1644, as a member of the town's garrison, and disputed with the town's ministers and publicly taunted the town's authorities until he was arrested in October 1645, was seen as a larger threat to good order.<sup>108</sup> Religious separatism was feared because it broke apart the unity of the parish. The radical sectarianism which emerged during the British civil Wars stretched the bonds of orthodoxy to their breaking point.

Other English urban communities during the second quarter of the seventeenth century faced the same structural problems as Great Yarmouth's corporation. Towns and cities' authorities sought to maintain unity as political and religious divisions bred factionalism. King's Lynn had a similar corporate structure to Great Yarmouth of commonalty, aldermen, and a mayor. Miles Corbet was their recorder and tried six accusations of witchcraft in 1646. However, there had been a royalist uprising in the town during the summer of 1643.<sup>109</sup> The Parliamentary garrison established in King's Lynn after the rising was alleged to be the last refuge for religious Independents if the war went poorly.<sup>110</sup> The smaller port villages of Southwold and Aldeburgh in Suffolk were visited by Hopkins in January 1646. They were run by corporations who supported godly ministers and Miles Corbet was also Aldeburgh's recorder.<sup>111</sup> Ipswich's corporation supported puritan violence against Laudianism during the 1630s along with the Hopkins witch-hunt.<sup>112</sup> However, while Colchester's corporation had resisted Laudian reformation in the 1630s, and was complicit in supporting the

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<sup>107</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 6; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 131; See chapters eight and nine.

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. 134, 161-2.

<sup>109</sup> Henry Hillen, *History of the Borough of King's Lynn*, 2 vols. (Norwich, 1907) i, pp. 362, 364; Paul Richards, *Kings Lynn* (Chichester, 1990), pp. 82, 127.

<sup>110</sup> C. H. Firth and Sean Kelsey, 'Walton, Valentine (1593/4–1661)', *ODNB*.

<sup>111</sup> Ed. Trevor Cooper, *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 220-1; Thomas Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich, Blythburgh, and Southwold*, (London, 1754), pp. 105-7; Nicholas Fenwick Hele, *Notes and Jottings about Aldeburgh, Suffolk: Relating to Matters Historical, Antiquarian, Ornithological and Entomological* (London, 1870), pp. 42-4; Robert Wake, *Southwold and Its Vicinity, Ancient and Modern* (Yarmouth, 1839), pp. 115, 117-8.

<sup>112</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 173-6; Frank Grace, "Schismatical and Factious Humours", pp. 97–120; Michael Read, 'Ipswich in the Seventeenth Century', unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 1978.

rioting in the early 1640s against the local royalist landowner sir John Lucas, there was no witch-hunting.<sup>113</sup> Gaskill has argued convincingly that Colchester's lack of support for witch-hunting resulted from divisions within the town's political elite between the religiously conservative aldermen led by the mayor and former Laudian Robert Buxton and the MP Harbottle Grimston and the radical reformers within the corporation.<sup>114</sup> Faversham in Kent was the 'second largest town of the region, and its chief port' and the town's corporation's key role was the control of the port, a similar position and role to Great Yarmouth in Norfolk.<sup>115</sup> After a decade where the town had been beset by 'epidemic disease, rioting, religious conflict, and mass emigration to the New World', there were four witchcraft accusations in the 1640s.<sup>116</sup> Newcastle was occupied first by Royalist and then Parliamentary forces during the first civil war, which had led to a 'decidedly limited' change to the town's corporation. However, in the later 1640s Parliament backed 'broadening the circle of those who enjoyed status and power beyond the narrow confines of the inner circle' of government which increased the influence of Presbyterians and Congregationalists on the town's corporation. In 1650, the corporation supported a witch-hunt with thirty accusations and fifteen people executed.<sup>117</sup> Great Yarmouth provides a case study of how the crisis of corporate government and religious division fed into the witch-hunt that illuminates a much wider world of urban division.

The reality of factional politics and a lack of religious conformity undermined the unity of Great Yarmouth's corporation. The town's incorporation was 'an intensely political process resting on the agency of people in both locality and metropolis' which could result in a 'divided and factional

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<sup>113</sup> Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution*.

<sup>114</sup> Christopher W. Brooks, 'Grimston, Sir Harbottle, second baronet (1603–1685)', *ODNB*; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 75–6.

<sup>115</sup> Paul Wilkinson, *The Historical Development of the Port of Faversham, 1580–1780* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 2, 90, 98–9.

<sup>116</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witches and Witchcraft Prosecutions, 1560–1660', in *Early Modern Kent, 1540–1640*, ed. Michael Zell (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 264–5; Richard L. Greaves, 'The Role of Women in Early English Nonconformity', *Church History* 52 (1983), p. 308.

<sup>117</sup> Roger Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 232–3; idem, *Puritans and Radicals in North England: Essays on the English Revolution* (Lanham MD, 1984), pp. 7–8.

body intent on using the charter as a political weapon'.<sup>118</sup> This was seen in attempts to wrestle control over the corporation through rewriting the town's charter with the support of the privy council.<sup>119</sup> The town's contested religious settlement fuelled the factionalism within the corporation as puritans on the assembly used their position to attack both Calvinist conformist and nonconformist ministers. This thesis argues that it was the factionalism within the assembly that made witch-hunting seem like a means of uniting the town. Great Yarmouth provides an example of a town that both exemplifies and illuminates the problems facing urban communities in the second quarter of the seventeenth century.

#### iv. Conclusion

The political and religious divisions within Great Yarmouth provide a context for understanding the 1645 witch-hunt. The fault lines between the prosperous merchants and poorer citizens, within the town's corporation between factional interests, and debates over the town's religious settlement had been part of the town's tempestuous politics since at least the 1620s. The oligarchic nature of the town's politics concentrated power into the self-selecting corporation made up solely of merchant freemen entrenched these divides. The corporation was supposed to seek unity and prevent factionalism but the puritans' desire to control the town's ministry was itself the root of further factionalism as they moved against conformists before 1642 and nonconformity in the mid-1640s. The next chapter begins the narrative in the 1620s to show how factional conflict and religious divisions within Great Yarmouth was already spilling over into witchcraft accusations before the First Civil War.

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<sup>118</sup> Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 11-3.

## Chapter 3: Puritan Ascendancy, 1625-38

### i. Introduction

This chapter shows how the development of puritan factionalism within Great Yarmouth between 1625 and 1638 provided the cultural context that made a witch-hunt possible. The arrival of the minister John Brinsley in 1625 strengthened the ties between the town's puritan merchants serving on the corporation, allowing the formation of a puritan political faction. Brinsley's charismatic preaching built popular support for his ministry. He and his fellow puritans stressed that he had popular consent and assent to preach, unlike the Dean and Chapter of Norwich's choice of conformist ministers forced on the community. A power shift within the town's corporation followed as a group of godly merchants led by the merchant Edward Owner displaced the previous generation of court-connected political operators. The Dean and Chapter of Norwich came into conflict with the town's corporation over who chose the town's ministers. Members of the corporation and other residents threatened the Dean and Chapter's choice of ministers with libels and violence in the streets. The witchcraft accusations made in 1637-8 show how the fraught political and religious divisions of the Caroline period were beginning to inflame witchcraft fears. The religious and political identity formation provided the ideological context to the 1645 witch-hunt.

This chapter responds to Great Yarmouth's civic records, the accounts of the minister Matthew Brooks, and owes a debt to the historian Richard Cust. As chapter one has discussed the Great Yarmouth assembly book provides the narrative core of the thesis, since it recorded the corporation's decision making.<sup>1</sup> The corporation's litigious struggles with aldermen and the Dean and Chapter of Norwich means that there are court records to draw upon.<sup>2</sup> Matthew Brooks provides a lively and informative voice as he recorded his place in the town's religious travails. In his letters to Bishop Wren, his visitation reports, and his 1641 petition to the House of Lords Brooks describes the hostility he faced in Great Yarmouth from the town's puritans.<sup>3</sup> Richard Cust draws upon the same records in his two articles discussing Great Yarmouth's Caroline politics. As chapter one discussed, his work shows the development of factional politics in the 1620s and 30s. This chapter draws upon the insights of his research into Great Yarmouth and his narrative of political and religious conflict between the town's puritan political elite and their rivals.<sup>4</sup> This work continues Cust's approach but expands from Cust's work by taking the narrative forward to 1638 and looking at how astrological interests and witchcraft accusations added to the political narrative. These sources provide the basis for showing how the development of puritan factionalism laid the groundwork for the witch-hunt.

This chapter starts by outlining the context and narrative of the changes within Great Yarmouth's polity between 1625-38. The chapter then shows how a puritan identity formed around the influence of the minister John Brinsley. It illustrates puritan political influence through factional conflict within Great Yarmouth's corporation. The chapter then looks at the development of opposition to puritan control

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<sup>1</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6.

<sup>2</sup> For example: TNA, SP 16/147/57; TNA, C 2/CHAS, 1/Y1/58.

<sup>3</sup> NRO, Diocese of Norwich, vis. 6/4; Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102-12.

<sup>4</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics: Charles I and Great Yarmouth', pp. 126; Idem 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s: The Case of Great Yarmouth', pp. 179-91

from court backed aldermen and later the Dean and Chapter's choice of conformist ministers. The expression of the antagonism toward the conformist ministry further cemented expressions of puritan identity through violence. Finally, the chapter discusses the witchcraft accusations in 1637 and 1638. This involves investigating the connection made by puritans between astrology, conformist politics, and witchcraft and how these accusations prefigured the 1645 witch-hunt. Through understanding the process of puritan faction formation during the Caroline period the thesis roots 1645 witch-hunt as a response to the political ambition of puritans.

## ii. Context

Between 1625 and 1638 power shifted within Great Yarmouth's corporation as a generation of court backed aldermen lost power in favour of a puritan grouping of aldermen. The power struggles within the corporation fall loosely into three periods: the formation and consolidation of puritan factional influence over the corporation (1625-1630), the town's ministry contested (1630-5), and puritan resistance to a conformist ministry (1635-8). To explain these changes, it is necessary to add further context by providing a timeline and introducing three of the leading figures in Great Yarmouth's politics for the following decades: Edward Owner, John Brinsley, and Miles Corbet. These provide the backbone for showing the political and religious changes over the period of Charles I's personal rule.



The establishment of Great Yarmouth's puritan faction was the product of the coalescing of three figures vital to Great Yarmouth's political and religious establishment for the next three decades. There was an established group of puritan aldermen with influence within the town, led by the wealthy merchant Edward Owner. This group was able to bring the minister John Brinsley to Great Yarmouth in 1625, and his presence helped solidify the puritan group. The corporation hired a new recorder, Miles Corbet, the brother of one of the town's MPs in 1625, Sir John Corbet. These three individuals played a significant role in Great Yarmouth's political and religious life throughout the period covered in the thesis and so require an outline biography.

Edward Owner was a leading supporter of Great Yarmouth's puritans, using his wealth and status to promote reform through both the town's corporation and personal philanthropy. Owner's influence stemmed from his wealth as a grocer.<sup>5</sup> He spent heavily to support the town's corporation, notably in reforming charitable foundations, such as the town's school and hospital.<sup>6</sup> Owner had been a member of the Common Council since 1606, promoted to alderman in 1614, and served as a bailiff in 1616, 1625, 1634, and 1646.<sup>7</sup> He had a reputation for defending the town's interests. In 1634, the bailiffs of the Cinque Ports accused him of being 'a turbulent spirit' for preventing their access to the town on terms he disagreed with.<sup>8</sup> He served the town as MP in 1621, 1625, and both the Short and Long Parliaments.<sup>9</sup> He was first identified with puritanism during the 1620s, and his connection was solidified when Owner's daughter Deborah married John Brinsley. Owner was one of the leading aldermen who sermon gadded to Lound during the 1630s to hear Brinsley, leading to the description

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<sup>5</sup> Marsden, *17th Century Norfolk Tokens*, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 490, 506; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 79, 81.

<sup>7</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 52, 122; Y/C18/1, ff. 102v, 107v, 112, 118.

<sup>8</sup> Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 348-9.

<sup>9</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 230, 331; NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 445, 469.

of the puritan leadership by their rivals as 'Edward Owner and associates'.<sup>10</sup> Owner's leadership was vital to the creation and development of puritan political influence in Great Yarmouth.

John Brinsley's role as Great Yarmouth's minister during 1625-31 and 1642-62 was vital to popular support for puritanism in Great Yarmouth. His father, the schoolmaster John Brinsley senior, was a 'strict puritan' according to his student and the future astrologer William Lilly.<sup>11</sup> Brinsley followed his father to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and matriculated in 1615, graduating with a BA in 1620, and an MA in 1623. Emmanuel was a Calvinist nursery where puritans developed lifelong networks and connections.<sup>12</sup> Brinsley's near contemporaries at Emmanuel included John Harvard and the later Great Yarmouth Congregational minister William Bridge.<sup>13</sup> In 1618 Brinsley served as secretary to his uncle Joseph Hall at the Synod of Dort.<sup>14</sup> After completing his MA, he spent two years as pastor to the Preston family in Essex, near enough to Great Yarmouth for his reputation to reach the town's aldermen leading to his invitation to the town.<sup>15</sup> Brinsley's orthodox Calvinism was enough to attract the interest of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, who sought to recruit him in 1638. Brinsley passed their rigorous screening of potential candidates showing their belief in his Presbyterian sympathies.<sup>16</sup> Brinsley's acceptability, popularity, and talent in preaching was shown in his sermons published from

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<sup>10</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 39; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 104.

<sup>11</sup> John Brinsley Sr, *The True Watch, and Rule of Life* (London, 1626); William Lilly, *Mr. William Lilly's History of His Life and Time* (London, 1715), p. 12; John Morgan, 'Brinsley, John (bap. 1566, d. in or after 1624)', *ODNB*.

<sup>12</sup> Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community 1610-1692* (Boston MA, 1994), pp. 17-40; Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Bendall, Christopher Brooke, Patrick Collinson, *A History of Emmanuel College, Cambridge* (Woodbridge, 1999), chs 7-8; Rebecca Seward Rolph, 'Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and the Puritan Movements of Old and New England', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Southern California, 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1983), p. 356.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of His Life and Times*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London, 1713), ii, pp. 477-80; Cust, 'Brinsley, John'; NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 319.

<sup>16</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 136.

1630. Brinsley's background meant that he was both well-educated and well-connected, with a firmly reformed background, and experience of ecclesiastical controversies.

Miles Corbet's role as town recorder and MP made him influential within Great Yarmouth's politics. Miles Corbet was the second son of Sir Thomas Corbet, a Sprowston baronet. He matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1612, attended Lincoln's Inn in 1615, and was called before the bar in 1623.<sup>17</sup> Corbet had become the town's Recorder in 1625, a role that encompassed that of town clerk, legal expert, and judge.<sup>18</sup> He also undertook the role of the recorder for the King's Lynn and Aldeburgh corporations.<sup>19</sup> The town's electors chose him as one of the town's MPs for Parliaments between 1628 and 1660. Corbet had a prominent role in the Long Parliament, resulting in him becoming one of the regicides of Charles I.<sup>20</sup> Corbet had highly reformed religious sensibilities and had supported both the town's puritan elite and Congregationalists in the Netherlands and Great Yarmouth, and joining William Bridge's Congregational church in 1649.<sup>21</sup> The Water Poet, John Taylor accused Corbet of being a 'most stiffe *Cathedrall* hater', a utopian of 'no religion', and whose 'fir'd zeal' lead to his cruelty to toothless, aged ministers in 1646.<sup>22</sup> Corbet's political and legal influence over the town became more pronounced as his power increased.

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<sup>17</sup> Chris Kyle, 'Corbet, Miles (1595-1662), of Lincoln's Inn, London and Great Yarmouth, Norf,' *History of Parliament Online*, eds Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/corbet-miles-1595-1662> (2010).

<sup>18</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 336; Barber, 'Corbett, Miles (1594/5-1662)'; DWL, Harmer 76.3, ff. 193-4; see chapter two for a description of the role of the recorder, pp. 54-5.

<sup>19</sup> Hele, *Notes and Jottings about Aldeburgh, Suffolk*, pp. 42-4; Harmon Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists from the Earliest Period to the Present Day* (Norwich, 1890), p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Kyle, 'Corbet, Miles'.

<sup>21</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 283; NRO, Y/C/19/7, f. 78; NRO, Y/FC31/1, f. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, *A Briefe Relation*, pp. 2, 7, 14.

The arrival of John Brinsley and the development of a puritan faction with influence over the corporation 1625-30 came from their pressure to maintain a godly ministry. Brinsley's popularity came from remaining in Great Yarmouth during an attack of plague in the summer of 1625, unlike the conformist minister Thomas Reeve who fled the town.<sup>23</sup> In the following January Reeve controversially preached at the parliamentary election against the puritan candidates. In February, he brought Brinsley before the high commission at Lambeth which required the corporation to send a certificate in support of Brinsley to the king. In response the corporation asked Reeve to leave the town.<sup>24</sup> The corporation continued to support Brinsley with certificates of his good behaviour when the Court of Chancery ordered Brinsley's removal in February 1627.<sup>25</sup> Brinsley subsequently married Edward Owner's daughter and the corporation allowed him to continue to minister at the town's Dutch chapel.<sup>26</sup> Despite attempts by the Archbishop of Canterbury in April 1627 and the Bishop of Norwich in February 1628 to discuss and recommend the choice of minister, in August 1628 the members of the corporation still argued it had the historic right to choose the town's minister.<sup>27</sup> The Dean and Chapter of Norwich's choice of minister, a Mr Barker, remained unpaid and was detained by the corporation in September 1628.<sup>28</sup> The arrival of a new bishop of Norwich, Francis White, meant that the corporation pushed for Brinsley to be reinstated as the town's minister in late 1629, but the Court of Chancery rejected his ministry again in early 1630, aided by hostile testimony from the aldermen Benjamin Cooper and George Hardware.<sup>29</sup> The corporation continued to support Brinsley's ministry and remove conformist ministers to defend the puritan's vision for the town between 1625-30.

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<sup>23</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 838; NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 334.

<sup>24</sup> Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', p. 187; TNA, S.P. 16/19/31; NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 15, 19.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, C 2/CHAS, 1/Y1/58; NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 46, 78, 116.

<sup>26</sup> John Brinsley, *The Preachers Charge, and Peoples Duty* (London, 1631), p. 1; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 847.

<sup>27</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 64, 86, 105.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, f. 107.

<sup>29</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 844-5, 502-3; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 147.

The puritans in Great Yarmouth united the members of the corporation in opposition to the court connected aldermen, Jeffrey Le Neve and Benjamin Cooper, and in the defence of the town's 'ancient government'. Following the 1625 Westminster elections, Benjamin Cooper lost his pre-eminence as he was removed as the town's man of business in London, ostensibly on the grounds of his ill health.<sup>30</sup> Members of the congregation investigated Cooper's previous conduct beginning in March 1626 with an audit of Cooper's spending, his papers retrieved by the corporation in May, and a bill of his debts presented in June.<sup>31</sup> Cooper's return to health in March 1627 led to auditing of his allowances and arrears by Edward Owner and Thomas Johnson which was resolved by Cooper paying off his debts to the town in December of that year.<sup>32</sup> Cooper's ally Jeffrey Le Neve was dismissed in September 1626 due to his long absence and alleged lack of service to the corporation, and despite a royal appeal for Neve's reinstatement in September 1627, he lost his status as a freeman of the town in January 1628.<sup>33</sup> There was an attempt at reconciliation when the bishop of Norwich offered to mediate between the bailiffs and Benjamin Cooper and his supporters in September 1627.<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Cooper was elected bailiff in September 1628 and used the role to present evidence of faction and disorder in the town to reduce the puritan's influence over the corporation.<sup>35</sup> However, Cooper's rivals successfully portrayed him as a source of faction as he sought to overthrow the town's ancient government, and in August 1629 the secretary of state Lord Dorchester confirmed the continuance of the current government and provided a balance of puritan and conformist bailiffs for the following year.<sup>36</sup> This broke Cooper's power within the corporation and allowed the puritans on the corporation to remove

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<sup>30</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, ff. 19, 24, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, ff. 59, 81.

<sup>33</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 39, 70, 71, 72; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 483, 510.

<sup>34</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 74.

<sup>35</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 127, 128, 156; TNA, SP 16/143/2; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 488.

<sup>36</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 132, 141; TNA, SP 16/148/88.

him and his ally George Hardware as aldermen. Cooper was restored as an alderman in June 1631 only due to a command from the privy council.<sup>37</sup> Edward Owner and his puritan allies now held political influence over the town after successfully outmanoeuvring their rivals.

Between 1630 and 1635 the town gained political stability, as Benjamin Cooper and George Hardware remained quiet, but the arrival of the strong-willed conformist minister Matthew Brooks meant that there was a challenge to the puritan ministry. Brooks arrived in Great Yarmouth in 1630, just as the corporation restored Brinsley to the town's pulpit. In December 1631, the supporters of Brinsley obtained a licence from the Bishop of Norwich to allow the corporation to choose the town's lecturer, and the corporation invited Brinsley back within days.<sup>38</sup> However, when Brinsley began preaching his first sermon after being reinstated in December 1631 Brooks marched into the church and read the 1627 injunctions against Brinsley, leading to Brooks's arrest.<sup>39</sup> In January 1632 Brooks sent a petition against Brinsley to King Charles I, supported by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich. When it was brought before the King in March, the king sided with Brooks. He ordered Brinsley's dismissal, the closing of the Dutch chapel, and the arrest of those who had arrested Brooks: Henry Davy, Thomas Greene, Ezekiel Harris and Miles Corbet.<sup>40</sup> However, the privy council mollified the corporation in July by allowing them to choose the next minister, and the corporation picked the 'well-liked' George Burdett in October.<sup>41</sup> The corporation sought compromise in February 1633 agreeing that when Burdett was leading the service Brooks would preach, and vice versa. However, allegations were made that Burdett was preaching inflammatory criticism of Laudian doctrine, and in July Brooks cited Burdett to the

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<sup>37</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 130, 131, 133, 162, 171, 199, 228.

<sup>38</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 223, 225; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 847.

<sup>39</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 849.

<sup>40</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 848-50; TNA, PC2/41, pp. 364-5, 379.

<sup>41</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 245-6, 254, 256.

chancellor of Norwich for not bowing at the name of Jesus.<sup>42</sup> This led to Burdett's suspension, though the bishop of Norwich overturned the suspension in August.<sup>43</sup> Despite the corporation sending two letters in support of Burdett in 1634, he was suspended by the high commission in April 1635 and promptly fled to America.<sup>44</sup> This left Brooks as the sole minister and the major stumbling block to puritan reformation in the town.

1635-8 was the peak of Matthew Brooks's influence in Great Yarmouth, as he received the support of the new bishop of Norwich. Some of the town's puritans chose to withdraw from St Nicholas's church in Great Yarmouth, turning instead to sermon gadding, attending banned conventicles, and smuggling in banned books from the Netherlands. Matthew Wren's arrival as bishop of Norwich on 10 December 1635 meant that Brooks had a patron who was willing to support pushing through Laudian reforms to Saint Nicholas's Church, which included moving the pulpit and adding stained glass to the church.<sup>45</sup> This resulted in the town's godly searching for alternative places to worship. Brooks reported that members of the town were sermon gadding to Lound, where John Brinsley preached from 1633, and a barn conventicle of non-conformists was discovered in 1636 in nearby Somerleyton, repeating Brinsley's sermon and attending a mechanical preacher called Isaac Knight.<sup>46</sup> Brooks tied the 1637 smuggling of seditious books into Great Yarmouth by the nonconformist Jeremiah Burroughs and William Greenhill to individuals linked to the conventicle and Miles Corbet.<sup>47</sup> Brooks's militant support for Laudianism

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<sup>42</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 262, 275; TNA, SP16/261, f. 156.

<sup>43</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 276, 277.

<sup>44</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 290, 308, 318-9, 327; TNA, SP 16/261, ff. 165-9.

<sup>45</sup> Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, 'Wren, Matthew (1585-1667)', *ODNB*; Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 359.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, SP 16/535, f. 52; NRO, Diocese of Norwich, vis. 6/4; Bodl., Tanner MS 68, ff. 88-90.

<sup>47</sup> Bodl., Tanner MS 68, f. 283.

polarised the town's citizenry, leading to tension between ministry and corporation that tipped over into violence.

In this atmosphere of religious tension, the corporation pursued two witchcraft accusations between 1637 and 1638. In April 1637, the corporation authorised sending Violet Smith to Norwich on suspicion of being a witch and in January 1638 accusations of witchcraft were made against the amateur astrologer Mark Prynn, showing the corporation's fear of demonic corruption within the town.<sup>48</sup>

This brief timeline of the political and religious conflict within Great Yarmouth from 1625-38 provides a display of the divisions within the town's political and religious identity during the Caroline period. However, understanding these changes requires untangling the detail of the debates and controversies to understand the meanings they had, and to unpick the web of connections. The next sections will explain the development of factional politics during the second half of the 1620s as political conflict within the corporation divided along confessional lines.

### iii. Bringing Together a Puritan Faction, 1625-1630

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<sup>48</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 381; DWL, Harmer MS 76.3, f. 277; NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 91-5.



Between 1625 and 1630 the puritans on the Great Yarmouth corporation became a cohesive political faction with popular support as they rallied around the minister John Brinsley. The puritans' influence meant that they could now solidify their political control over the town's corporation and defy attempts by the government in Westminster to balance the corporation. The puritans outmanoeuvred the previously dominant men of business in the town through evidence of corruption. Despite royal injunctions against the development of faction, there was a constitutional battle over the town's government that reinforced political divisions. The contest over the control of the ministry also allowed public expressions of discontent with Laudian conformists and the corporation to propose a puritan vision for the town. The development of the puritan faction brought together political power, religious authority, and popular support to create a resilient puritan identity.

Puritanism in Great Yarmouth preceded the arrival of John Brinsley. Great Yarmouth's puritan population had a long pedigree, going back to Bartimaeus Andrewes, a member of the Dedham classis, who served in the pulpit of St Nicholas's church between 1600 and 1615.<sup>49</sup> Richard Cust argues persuasively that puritan collaboration before the arrival of Brinsley, as Thomas Johnson, Edward Owner, and William Buttolph had worked together on schemes to provide work for the poor in the early 1620s.<sup>50</sup> This connection developed into a network of puritans made up of the aldermen Thomas Johnson, Edward Owner, Buttolph, Henry Davy, Nicholas Cutting, Ezekiel Harris, Thomas Greene, and John Lucas, and the common councillors: John Robbins, Anthony Speck, John Carter, Robert Gower, Ralph Owner and Robert Vivers. Puritan leadership of the town's ministry and the corporation was an established part of Great Yarmouth's polity.

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<sup>49</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Andrewes, Bartimaeus (1550/51–1616)', *ODNB*.

<sup>50</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 7; NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 226, 271.

Thomas Johnson was a leading puritan citizen of Great Yarmouth throughout the Caroline period and the first civil war, but his growing antipathy towards Congregationalism likely led Johnson to assume the leadership of the 1648 royalist revolt in Great Yarmouth. Johnson had a long civic career, becoming an alderman in January 1626 and serving as bailiff in 1635-6 and 1644-5. He was a faithful servant of the corporation, defending the town in the Court of Chancery, arguing for the corporation's rights against royal and ecclesiastical power, helped to find a new minister in 1628, and was amongst those at odds with Benjamin Cooper in 1629-30.<sup>51</sup> He also served the corporation during the First Civil War on the defence committees, had been one of the original captains of the trained bands, had travelled to London to secure artillery for the town, and led the negotiations against the imposition of a governor. Johnson was one of the bailiffs when Matthew Hopkins was invited to the town and he was a member of the delegation that attempted to persuade the Independent congregation to end 'church differences'. He was also a part of the committee for the workhouse, school, coal for the poor, and investigating suspected Sabbath-breakers.<sup>52</sup> Thomas Johnson was credited with swaying the corporation into an insurgency with a speech against allowing Parliamentary forces into the town, showing how his moral authority was used to support the insurgency. Thomas Johnson's other son, James Johnson, was given a warrant to supply the royal fleet.<sup>53</sup> Johnson provides a useful counterpoint to Edward Owner to show but puritan sympathies during the Caroline period didn't assure loyalty into the second civil war.

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<sup>51</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 10, 40, 79, 98, 112, 126, 128, 130, 131, 153, 170, 179, 229, 319, 335, 450, 475, 498, 502; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 45.

<sup>52</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 16, 31, 36, 37, 40, 45, 55, 82, 86, 89, 96, 112.

<sup>53</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, f. 115.

The existing court-connected elite within the corporation were on the wane during the 1620s, leaving a vacuum which the puritans filled. Benjamin Cooper was respected as a leader amongst the corporation, having joined the corporation as a common councillor in 1595, been elected an alderman in 1608, and first served as a bailiff the following year.<sup>54</sup> Cooper was influential due to his work on the town's behalf in London, such as obtaining the herring licence from the privy council in 1619, and the Admiralty judges referred to him as 'a person usually employed in all businesses and affaires' for Great Yarmouth.<sup>55</sup> Cooper's reputation as a man of business led to him serving twice as MP for the town, in 1620 alongside Edward Owner and again in 1624 with George Hardware, showing popular support for his work.<sup>56</sup> George Hardware was Cooper's ally, with a record of civic service starting in 1602 as a common councillor, joining the aldermanry in 1611 and serving as a bailiff in 1612 and 1621.<sup>57</sup> Hardware had previously served as an MP in 1614 and gained a similar reputation for handling the town's business, having successfully procured a new minister, organised the herring licence, consulted Norwich on weights and measures, and had cooperated in the corporation's certificate of Brinsley's conformity in 1625.<sup>58</sup> Cooper's other allies included John Dasset, a freeman with diverse London contacts, the alderman Leonard Holmes, and the common councillors Charles Gooch and Roger Wisse, and Cust notes that this same group showed sympathy for the conformist minister Matthew Brooks after 1630.<sup>59</sup> This grouping influenced the town as long as they could prove they were working in the interests of Great Yarmouth but allegations of corruption led to their declining influence.

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<sup>54</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 25, 66, 75.

<sup>55</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 212; *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. J. V. Lyle, 46 vols. (London, 1932) xxviii, pp. 489-90.

<sup>56</sup> NRO, Y/C39/1.

<sup>57</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 28, 93; Y/C18/1, ff. 100, 105.

<sup>58</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, ff. 95-6, 113, 149; Y/C19/6, f. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 6.

Alderman Jeffrey Le Neve's unreliability was part of the cause of the declining influence of court backed aldermen. While Le Neve had served as a Bailiff in 1620 and had access to court as a gentleman quarter waiter, his debts had begun to trouble members of the corporation in 1624.<sup>60</sup> In 1626, La Neve's absences in London were used to justify his dismissal from the corporation as his 'long absence [and] likely hood so to continue' made him 'so vnserveiseable for the gen[er]all good [and] government of this towne'.<sup>61</sup> Despite his dismissal, Le Neve was linked to abuses of the act to produce longbows in 1628.<sup>62</sup> Le Neve also abused the privileges of his court connections to gain a prescriptive and personally advantageous herring licence, driving a wedge between him and Cooper, while further discrediting Cooper and his allies.<sup>63</sup> The conformist aldermen had power and authority due to their connections to the court and relied upon their reputation as effective negotiators on the town's behalf which Le Neve's behaviour damaged.

Great Yarmouth's corporation had sought to balance powerful individuals serving the town's interests. In the 1620 Parliamentary election the members of the corporation chose both the puritan Edward Owner and the court-connected Benjamin Cooper as MPs, showing a willingness to co-operate.<sup>64</sup> Cooper and his allies George Hardware and Jeffrey La Neve had acted as an honest broker in the town's interest by defending the town's position in Parliament. This was shown through Cooper's work in funding the much-needed repairs to Great Yarmouth's haven from 1620 to 1625, working alongside Edward Owner's brother Ralph to raise £14,000 from Parliament, nearby landowners, and urban

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<sup>60</sup> John K. Gruenfelder, 'Jeffrey Neve, Charles I and Great Yarmouth', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 40 (1988), pp. 155-63; Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', pp. 188; NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 309.

<sup>61</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 39.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, SP 16/163, f. 56.

<sup>63</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 67, 70, 76, 87; *CSPD*, 1631-1633, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 228.

communities that made use of the port.<sup>65</sup> However, Cooper's eventual solution of a licence to export 4000 tuns of beer free of duties led to accusations that he was embezzling the sums involved, weakening his position after 1625.<sup>66</sup> The desire for effective civic agents meant that there was a tradition of cooperation within the corporation, but one that came under strain with accusations of corruption and was made worse by religious divisions.

Samuel Harsnett's arrival as the Bishop of Norwich in 1619, led to a deepening of religious divides within Great Yarmouth. Harsnett had long been openly critical of Puritanism, beginning with his 1585 sermon against predestination.<sup>67</sup> Harsnett had come to the fore at the turn of the seventeenth century when Bishop Richard Bancroft had employed him to debunk possessions alongside Catholic and puritan exorcisms. Harsnett published criticism of the puritan exorcist John Darrell and a series of Catholic exorcisms in the 1580s between 1599 and 1603, and had investigated Mary Glover and Anne Gunter's alleged possession as part of Bancroft's campaign against puritan and Catholic miracles in 1605, and he was alleged to have personally coerced Anne Gunter's confession.<sup>68</sup> As Bishop of Norwich, Harsnett moved to displace puritan lecturers and take control over stipendiary lectures, beginning in Norwich and Ipswich.<sup>69</sup> In 1625 he oversaw Yarmouth's choice of a minister after the corporation had removed

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<sup>65</sup> John K. Gruenfelder, 'Great Yarmouth, Its Haven and the Crown, 1603-1642', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 43 (1998), pp. 143-8.

<sup>66</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 19, 24, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Steward and Samuel Harsnett, *Three Sermons Preached by the Reverend, and Learned, Dr. Richard Stuart, Dean of St. Pauls, Afterwards Dean of Westminster, and Clerk of the Closet to the Late King Charles. To Which Is Added a Fourth Sermon, Preached by the Right Reverend Father in God Samuel Harsnett, Lord Archbishop of York* (London, 1658).

<sup>68</sup> Samuel Harsnett, *Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of John Darrell* (London, 1599); Idem, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603); Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and Their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 8-10; Brian P. Levack, 'Possession, Witchcraft, and the Law in Jacobean England,' *Washington and Lee Law Review*, 52 (1996), p. 1628; Michael MacDonald, 'Introduction' in *Witchcraft and hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London, 1991), pp. xxi-xxvi; Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, pp. 150-3, 182-3.

<sup>69</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 3.

the town's previous preacher due to his absence.<sup>70</sup> Harsnett took control over the stipendiary preachers to remove the corporation's authority to choose the minister of their choice, leading the corporation to become more defensive over its own choices.

John Brinsley's arrival as a minister in Great Yarmouth sped up the process of constructing a puritan identity for the town, as his presence strengthened ties within the town's godly merchant elite. The Caroline period saw urban communities develop a 'strategic alliance between the ministers, merchants, and lawyers' who sought to promulgate puritanism and in Great Yarmouth Brinsley was the centre of the alliance.<sup>71</sup> The continued development of a puritan network after Brinsley's arrival was shown in a series of wills and bequests witnessed by Brinsley, representing how he helped develop the ties between merchants who served on the town's corporation.<sup>72</sup> Brinsley's marriage to Deborah Owner in 1629 cemented his place amongst Great Yarmouth's puritan elite.<sup>73</sup> Brinsley was not alone in building connections with urban merchant elites, as the godly ministers, Thomas Case and George Hughes both made similar marriages into the 'heart of the lay puritan elite' in Salford and Coventry respectively.<sup>74</sup> Keith Wrightson and David Levine have shown that even in the village of Terling, puritan ministers had a role in connecting a group of individuals, consolidating them into a distinct group with a shared 'social position and a faith'.<sup>75</sup> Brinsley bolstered the vertical and horizontal links between the godly merchants and the rest of the town's population and allowed the puritans to unite in supporting further reform.

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<sup>70</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 307; TNA, C/2/CHAS Y1/58.

<sup>71</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 138.

<sup>72</sup> NRO, Norwich Consistory Court, 75 Barker (Greene, 1647); TNA, PROB 11/56 Seagar (Ralph Owner, 1634); Idem, n/52 Coventry (Robbins, 1640); Idem, n/66 Coventry (Thompson, 1640); Idem, 11/64 Cambell (Davy, 1642), both Davy and Greene left bequests to Brinsley.

<sup>73</sup> Brinsley, *The Preachers Charge, and Peoples Duty*, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 137-8; Michael Mullet, 'Case, Thomas (bap. 1598, d. 1682), clergyman and ejected minister', *ODNB*; Mary Wolffe, 'Hughes, George (1603/4–1667), clergyman and ejected minister', *ODNB*.

<sup>75</sup> Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (London, 1979), pp. 158-9.

The factional influence of puritans within the corporation translated into sustained and active support for Brinsley's ministry. In 1626 nine aldermen and nine common councillors from the corporation publicly certificated Brinsley's 'conformity to the doctrine [and] p[re]sente gov[er]nment of the church of England, his doctrine sufficiency [and] abillitye in preachyng [and] his peacable [and] vnblameable life'.<sup>76</sup> In 1627 the corporation declared that Brinsley was a conformable minister and 'well lyked of dislyked by none'.<sup>77</sup> Brinsley was protected by a close relationship with one of the town's MP, Sir John Wentworth, a gentleman with substantial holdings in Loathingland and Bradwell to the south of Great Yarmouth and puritan credentials shown by his foundation of a Hebrew lectureship at Christ College, Cambridge.<sup>78</sup> Through the support of members of the corporation, Brinsley established his acceptability as the town's choice of minister.

The success of the puritan faction rested on the fact that they, rather than Cooper and his allies, represented the town's interests and defended its independence. Thanks to the allegations of malfeasance the puritans on the corporation successfully dislodged Cooper in the 1625 election, replacing him with Edward Owner and Sir John Corbet, brother of the later recorder Miles, and employed Thomas Johnson as Great Yarmouth's London agent.<sup>79</sup> The 1626 election saw Cooper and his allies again defeated by Sir John Corbet and Thomas Johnson, despite attacks from the pulpit against

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<sup>76</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 15.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, f. 78.

<sup>78</sup> Chris Kyle, "Wentworth, Sir John (c.1578-1651), of Somerleyton, Suff.," eds Thrush and Ferris, *History of Parliament Online*, accessed 2019, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/wentworth-sir-john-1578-1651>; Shipps, 'Lay patronage', pp. 221-36; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 126, 153.

<sup>79</sup> NRO, Y/C19/5, f. 336; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 510; Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', p. 184.

them both from the minister Thomas Reeve.<sup>80</sup> The town's audit committee uncovered evidence of financial mismanagement by Cooper in his absence, undermining his role as the corporation's agent in London, leading to his recall and replacement by Edward Owner.<sup>81</sup> The presentation to the corporation of evidence of Cooper's corruption was how the puritans undermined Cooper and his role in the town.

Cooper waited until the autumn of 1628 when he was chosen one of the town's two bailiffs, to seek to restore his power and influence within the corporation and exclude his puritan rivals.<sup>82</sup> As a bailiff, he took control over the civic records in the Great Yarmouth hutch which were the legal basis for the corporation's government.<sup>83</sup> Cooper took the town's seal into his custody, thereby preventing the corporation from acting on its own and allowing Cooper to cancel the sessions and assembly meetings.<sup>84</sup> However, to maintain his control beyond his year as bailiff Cooper had to embark on a wholesale reform of Great Yarmouth's government. By organising a petition to the King through the freeman John Dasset, Cooper sought to avoid tipping off the puritans prematurely of his reform plans.<sup>85</sup> The Secretary of State Dudley Carleton, Viscount Dorchester, was concerned by the petition's allegations of 'disorder and factious governement' and demanded the presence of the 'commonalty of the burgh' to respond. He praised the 'zealouse' loyalty of Cooper as a contrast to the puritan factionalism.<sup>86</sup> Cooper adding to charges of factionalism by alleging that the religious views of the town were as 'hot as those of Amsterdam', a reformed émigré church.<sup>87</sup> Charles I was personally concerned

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<sup>80</sup> Cust, 'Parliamentary Elections in the 1620s', p. 187; TNA, S.P. 16/19/31.

<sup>81</sup> TNA, SP 16/147 ff. 57-58, NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 26, 59, 64, 67, 81.

<sup>82</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 106.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, f. 130.

<sup>84</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 510, 512; NRO, Y/C19/6, ff.119, 122-123, 166.

<sup>85</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 117.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, ff. 121, 126.

<sup>87</sup> TNA, SP 16/148/40; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 132, 136, Ha notes this church invited Brinsley to be its pastor in 1639.



there was 'much faction and distraction in the government of Yarmouth', and sought the restoration of Cooper's ally Hardware to the town's aldermanry as the start of the process of restoring unity and balance.<sup>88</sup> However, restoring balance meant that the King felt he needed to reject Cooper's new charter as likely to 'prove of very dangerous consequence and tend to the apparent and great detriment [and] destenss[i]on of the Towne'.<sup>89</sup> Cooper's plan to replace the two bailiffs with a mayor was delayed, and the King instead wrote to the corporation, asking them to nominate eight aldermen for him to choose two bailiffs from. Those picked were Thomas Meadowe, an ally of Cooper, and Robert Norgate, who was closer to the puritans.<sup>90</sup> The restoration of Great Yarmouth's charters swung power back towards the puritans. No ally of Cooper served as bailiff from 1629 until 1634, and the corporation dismissed both Cooper and Hardware as aldermen in 1629 and both men had to appeal to the King for reinstatement.<sup>91</sup> Despite Cooper's political influence at court, the king's need for a consensual approach meant that the puritans' support from within the corporation and the privy council was enough to prevent Cooper's attempt to limit their power.

This new status quo fits into a larger pattern of conciliation between corporations and central government, despite differences over religion. Some corporations, such as Newcastle and Gloucester, were alienated from Charles I's government due to internal divisions, and Northampton, Colchester, and Salisbury likely distanced themselves from the court due to their puritan polities.<sup>92</sup> However, most corporations needed to 'call upon the state to help it perform necessary services or cope with its own internal problems, including perhaps social rifts and political divisions', just as Great Yarmouth's

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<sup>88</sup> TNA, SP 16/148/88.

<sup>89</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 156.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, f. 250; TNA, SP 16/148/88.

<sup>91</sup> Francis Blomefield, 'East Flegg Hundred: Great Yarmouth, Bailiffs and Mayors', in *History of Norfolk*, xi, pp. 322-345.

<sup>92</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (London, 1992), p 634.

corporation required the privy council's help to resolve divisions in 1629.<sup>93</sup> Great Yarmouth, with its precarious haven and vital herring licences to protect, could not afford to alienate central government, but instead, members of the corporation sought the patronage of members of the privy council. In return for the town's settlement, the corporation first offered the Earl of Dorchester and then the Earl of Dorset the place of the town's high steward, and in return, Dorset helped to negotiate wastage and the town's herring licence.<sup>94</sup> Puritan members of Great Yarmouth's corporation sought to work with the court and seek further concessions, not least over the corporation's control over the ministry.

The members of the corporation were willing to accept a balanced ministry, but as the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and the corporation found each other's choice of minister unbearable, bitter rivalry emerged. Brinsley had been chosen minister in response to the Dean and Chapter of Norwich imposing the conformist preacher Richard Gammon on the town in 1624.<sup>95</sup> However, Bishop Harsnett's campaign to remove ministers 'not conformable to the discipline and government ecclesiasticall within the Church of England, but schismatically and phantastically affected to novelties and innovations' brought an end to the corporation's choice of stipendiary clerics like Brinsley.<sup>96</sup> Cooper and his allies were willing to pursue a legal case through the Court of Chancery to displace Brinsley from 1626.<sup>97</sup> In September 1627 the members of the corporation blamed 'M[aster] Beniamy[i]n Coopers company' for Bishop Harsnett's intransigence in removing Brinsley.<sup>98</sup> The choice of minister had become intertwined with the town's internal politics.

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<sup>93</sup> Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, p. 635; David Harris Sacks, 'The Corporate Town and the English State: Bristol's 'Little Business' 1625-1641', *Past and Present*, 110 (1986), p. 70.

<sup>94</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 141-2, 145, 155.

<sup>95</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 834; TNA, C/2/CHAS 1/Y1/58.

<sup>96</sup> *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, ed. Kenneth Fincham, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1994), i, p. 216.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, SP 16/147/57.

<sup>98</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 74.

The puritan members of the corporation argued that by supporting Brinsley they were defending the town's rights and privileges from abuse and abrogation. In the case brought before the Court of Chancery in February 1627, members of the corporation attested that they were defending the town's rights against the overweening authority of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich. The Dean and Chapter accused Brinsley's lecturing of being the means 'by which the people have byn distracted into schisms and error' and Archbishop Abbott demanded the removal of Brinsley.<sup>99</sup> Despite the archbishop's order, the members of the corporation granted Brinsley the right to preach from the town's Dutch chapel.<sup>100</sup> When the puritan hating Samuel Harsnett was translated to York in December 1628, his replacement Francis White was more open to restoring Brinsley to the pulpit of St Nicholas's church. To complete the process the corporation needed a certificate of conformity from the Dean and Chapter which George Hardware refused to sign, and Benjamin Cooper brought Brinsley's case before Chancery who rejected Brinsley's ministry.<sup>101</sup> Members of the corporation were willing to make 'an assertion of authority in local and national conflicts' by supporting Brinsley and opposing the Dean and Chapter of Norwich marking '<sup>102</sup>

Just as the Dean and Chapter and conformist aldermen sought to quash Brinsley's ministry, the puritans used their power on the corporation to suppress ministers they opposed. Thomas Reeve had criticised Brinsley and preached against puritans in the 1626 election.<sup>103</sup> This led the corporation to warn Reeve

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<sup>99</sup> TNA, C 2/CHAS, 1/Y1/58.

<sup>100</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 847.

<sup>101</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 502-3, 844-5; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 147.

<sup>102</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 122.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, SP 16/19/31

to depart as 'the Towne hath taken such dislike of hym'.<sup>104</sup> When George Barker arrived in 1627 to replace Brinsley the corporation challenged his right to preach, arguing 'he was [not] their lawfull minister because he came in by the Bi[shopp] and Deane and Chapter and not by the choyce of the people'.<sup>105</sup> Barker's imposition was a rejection of the 'cooperative efforts of magistrates and ministers' that defined the puritan vision of church government.<sup>106</sup> Barker's alleged illegitimacy was used by members of the corporation to justify withholding his maintenance and led the corporation to arrest Barker 'in the streets for collecting some offerings w[hich] were due vnto him'. Barker 'was straingly opposed by many of the Bailiffes and others who in there assemblies declaimed against him as a disturber (though w[ith]out any cause) and threatened him' and 'casused a citac[i]on to be served on him in the Chancell as he was goeing to read service'.<sup>107</sup> The puritan bailiff William Buttolph was reprimanded by the Dean and Chapter for disrupting Barker's sermon.<sup>108</sup> In May 1630, the puritan bailiff Thomas Greene broke down the pulpit door and installed a 'stranger' to preach instead of Barker.<sup>109</sup> The corporation's attacks on Barker were supported by a campaign of popular libels and slander. Defamatory libels attacked Barker and 'his freinds who toke his parte', meaning a series of scurrilous rumours taking the form of manuscript crude verse, a tool of puritan polemicists since the 1570s.<sup>110</sup> The libels alleged that Barker's children were 'priests bastards' connecting Barker's conformity to traditional anti-Catholic polemic. The campaign of intimidation was successful as Barker was 'discouraged and forced to leave'.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 19.

<sup>105</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 90; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 841-3.

<sup>106</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 103; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 42.

<sup>107</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 103; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 107.

<sup>108</sup> TNA, SP 16/178/48; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 129.

<sup>109</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 106.

<sup>110</sup> Pauline Croft, 'Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England', *Historical Research*, 68 (1995), pp. 266, 268; Alistair Bellany, 'Libels in Action: Ritual, Subversion and the English Literary Underground, 1603-42', in *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (London, 2001), pp. 99-124.

<sup>111</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 103.

This section has shown how the puritan politics of Great Yarmouth emerged between 1625-30 through a godly ministry and the influence of a group of puritan aldermen. The puritans' close-knit community allowed them to form a political faction that gained influence over corporation policy. The puritans on the corporation overcame Cooper and his allies by stressing their local credentials and role as champions of the rights and liberties of Great Yarmouth while bringing to light Cooper's corruption. In 1630 Charles I described the conflict between puritans and Benjamin Cooper as factional, but rather than quash the puritans he sought to restore the corporation's charter and structures.<sup>112</sup> Great Yarmouth was not alone in having religiously inspired factional conflict, as Norwich's contested 1627 election had a puritan faction seeking to change the city's government.<sup>113</sup> The puritan campaign to restore Brinsley and remove his conformist replacement as minister stressed the corporation's rights granted under Elizabeth, aligning the corporation with defending the common law establishment by de facto rights of time immemorial which were being challenged by a centralising government restoring its royal prerogative.<sup>114</sup> The puritans used their platform in the corporation to argue that their reforms was a defence of Yarmouth's spiritual and political liberty, unlike Cooper and his allies who had sought to innovate to defend their own interests.

#### iv. The Struggle for the Pulpit, 1630-5

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<sup>112</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Fiona Williamson, 'When 'Comoners Were Made Slaves by the Magistrates'', *Journal of Urban History*, 43 (2016), pp. 8-10.

<sup>114</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 4; Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (Houndsmills, 1992), pp. 213-4.

Brinsley's influence on Great Yarmouth did not wane following his arrival in Great Yarmouth, despite the orders of the Dean and Chapter that restricted his preaching to the Dutch Chapel, since the corporation supported him, and his replacements had left due to local hostility. This situation was upset by the arrival of the conformist minister Matthew Brooks in late 1630. Where previous conformist ministers had been unwilling to stay long in the town, Brooks doggedly remained in Great Yarmouth and used his connections to the Dean and Chapter of Norwich to remove Brinsley and the fiery puritan George Burdett from the pulpit. Brooks's combative resistance to puritan ministers and the corporation's attempts to overthrow him intensified the religious polarisation that undermined the possibility of cooperation. The promotion of conformist doctrine by the privy council and Norwich's Dean and Chapter was part of 'Charles I's Protestant counter-reformation' felt across the country.<sup>115</sup> However, Laud's reforms pulled apart the church, forcing polarisation and the corporations of Newcastle and Exeter, like Great Yarmouth, sought to defend puritan ministers and expunge conformist replacements.<sup>116</sup>

The Dean and Chapter's choice of minister to replace Barker, Matthew Brooks, would prove to be the puritans' nemesis in Great Yarmouth for over a decade. Brooks had attended Merton College, Oxford, and gave a sermon before St Paul's Cross in 1627.<sup>117</sup> While Brooks was no Arminian, holding orthodox Calvinist views on predestination, he understood ceremony and conformity as matters of obedience to

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<sup>115</sup> Michael P. Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (London, 2018), pp. 93-4.

<sup>116</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 140-1; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 323-4; Mark Stoye, *Witchcraft in Exeter, 1558-1660* (Exeter, 2017), pp. 42-53.

<sup>117</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 17-8

the king.<sup>118</sup> He did not hesitate to enforce the Book of Sports and promote the beautification of Saint Nicholas's church.<sup>119</sup> Brooks's muscular promotion of conformist policies aligned him with the Privy Council, Norwich's Dean and Chapter, and Bishop Wren. Brooks's alliance between the parochial ministry, the episcopate, and national state threatened the puritans' reformation of Great Yarmouth.

Brooks weathered the puritans' attempts to unseat him because he built a web of allies and supporters. Brooks cultivated a popular following, claiming to have reduced 'above 2000... [those] which before refrayned, and caused 200 to accept absolucon'.<sup>120</sup> He developed a close connection to Cooper's network of aldermen allies, such as Hardware and Dasset, who both identified themselves as friends of Brooks in their wills.<sup>121</sup> The value of this group was proven early in Brooks's tenure, as Cooper and Dasset's support proved crucial to the success of Brooks's 1631 petition against Brinsley.<sup>122</sup> Brooks's good relations with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich meant that he was responsible for the Bishop's visitation in 1633 and used the visitation to publicly upbraid the puritan aldermen for their absence on Sundays to attend Brinsley's preaching in Lound.<sup>123</sup> From 1635 Brooks had the backing of Matthew Wren, the new Bishop of Norwich, with whom Brooks regularly corresponded.<sup>124</sup> Brooks felt he had the support of the royal court, confidently reporting alderman Robbins to the privy council for 'seditious speeches' directed against Archbishop Neile and brought a chancery case against Miles Corbet.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Matthew Brookes, *The House of God: The Sure Foundation, the Stones, the Workmen and Order of the Building* (London, 1627); Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 262; Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford, 2008), p. 4, 32, arguing for a continued conformist Calvinist tradition.

<sup>119</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15.

<sup>120</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 134, f. 189.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, PROB N/64 Sadler (Hardware, 1635), N/43 Harvey (Dasset, 1639), N/141 Harvey (Wisse, 1639), 11/81 Evelyn (Holmes, 1641).

<sup>122</sup> TNA, SP16/533, f. 170.

<sup>123</sup> NRO, Diocese of Norwich, vis. 6/4; TNA, SP 16/261, f. 165-9.

<sup>124</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 290, f. 106.

<sup>125</sup> TNA, PC 2/43, pp. 405-6; TNA, C2/CHAS I/N30/104.

Brooks had successfully built a network of supporters within Great Yarmouth, the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, and with central government that outflanked the puritan members of the corporation during the 1630s.

Brooks continually challenged the corporation's attempt to restore John Brinsley to the town's pulpit.<sup>126</sup> In 1631, the corporation received a licence from the Bishop of Norwich and the permission of the Earl of Dorset to restore Brinsley. The corporation immediately removed Brooks's stipend of £10, seeking an agreement to pay Brinsley instead.<sup>127</sup> At Brinsley's first sermon on 9 December 1631 Brooks resisted Brinsley's return by reading the injunctions from the Archbishop of Canterbury that had banned Brinsley from the pulpit whilst Brinsley was lecturing. The leading puritan councillors Ezekiel Harris, Thomas Greene, Henry Davy, and the recorder Miles Corbet arrested Brooks for his act of defiance.<sup>128</sup> Brooks responded with a petition supported by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, John Dasset, and Benjamin Cooper, which brought Brinsley to the attention of the privy council.<sup>129</sup> The privy council sided with Brooks, arguing that Brinsley's preaching had caused this dissension within Great Yarmouth, and to restore peace the council ordered the arrest of those who had arrested Brooks and Brinsley was barred from preaching within the town.<sup>130</sup> Brooks had proved astute in using the corporation's behaviour to portray them as the cause of dissent, justifying the Privy Council's support for Brooks as a means of reasserting peace.

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<sup>126</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 843.

<sup>127</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 223.

<sup>128</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 849.

<sup>129</sup> TNA, SP16/533 f.170.

<sup>130</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 848-50; TNA, PC2/41, pp. 364-5, 379.



The members of the corporation attempted to balance Brooks's ministry by choosing a new puritan minister in early 1633. Despite the Privy Council offering the corporation two conformable ministers, members of the corporation decided on a third choice, George Burdett, to put forward to the Bishop of Norwich.<sup>131</sup> The assembly book records that Burdett had been heard by a 'full congregac[i]on of the inh[ab]itants... very well liked of [and] approved by all'.<sup>132</sup> At the Easter service, Burdett declared 'that the ministers of God ought to be called or chosen by the people'.<sup>133</sup> Members of the corporation and Burdett himself argued that he was a legitimate minister because he was chosen by the common consent of the populace and corporation, as opposed to Brooks's imposition by the episcopate.<sup>134</sup> However, members of the corporation agreed an accommodation where Brooks or his assistant Thomas Cheshire would preach when Burdett performed divine service, and Burdett would preach when Brooks or Cheshire were giving divine service.<sup>135</sup> Despite this attempt at cooperation Burdett criticised Laudian ceremonialist beliefs in his 1633 Easter ministry when he declared they 'that are the most forward to bow at the name of Jesus are the greatest hypocrites'. He also stated that he would not 'have God's people come and assemble themselves at the Holy Communion with the rout and rabble' promoting sermon gadding as criticism of the town's reprobates.<sup>136</sup> In July 1633 Brooks sent a letter to the chancellor of the bishopric of Norwich which condemned Burdett for failing to bow at the name of Jesus.<sup>137</sup> In 1634 the Privy Council investigated claims that Burdett was not just unwilling to conform to the Church of England but was also attacking Brooks's ministry, on occasion flatly contradicting in the afternoon what Brooks had said in the morning.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 245-6, 254.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, f. 256.

<sup>133</sup> TNA, SP16/261, f. 156.

<sup>134</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>135</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 262.

<sup>136</sup> TNA, SP16/261, f. 156.

<sup>137</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 275.

<sup>138</sup> TNA, SP16/261, ff. 165-9.

Burdett was consequently suspended by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and the corporation mounted his defence.<sup>139</sup> However, Burdett chose to flee to New England in 1635, leaving his wife and children in the care of Great Yarmouth's corporation.<sup>140</sup> Burdett had expressed his discontent at Brooks's continued ministry by contrasting his reformed godliness with Brooks's ceremonialism, but Burdett's intransigence meant he was vulnerable to removal by Brooks and his supporters. The result was that Brooks entrenched his position, with the favour of the bishopric and his rivals disposed of, and members of the corporation displeased but without a means to remove him.

#### v. Matthew Brooks's Control over the Ministry, 1635-8

Brooks's predominance following Burdett's removal polarised and radicalised Great Yarmouth. The new Bishop of Norwich, Matthew Wren provided the support for a much wider and deeper Laudian reformation of the town's church. Wren's suspensions of puritan ministers during his time in the bishopric of Norwich fed the flow of emigres to the Netherlands and the New World. This boosted the development of separatist and independent puritan communities and forced the remaining puritans to choose how to practise their faith outside of the Church of England.<sup>141</sup> With Wren's support Brooks was able to reform the town and its church to Laudian standards which offended puritan sensibilities.

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<sup>139</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 277, 290, 308.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, f. 327.

<sup>141</sup> Sprunger, *Dutch puritanism*, p. 168.

The response from puritans varied, which created new divides within the puritan community that would feed into the 1640s. For those loyal to Brinsley there was the option to sermon gad to hear him at Lound. Others turned to a barn conventicle in Somerleyton or smuggling in radical books and ministers from the Netherlands. Puritans also channelled their disquiet into campaigns of abuse against Brooks and his assistant Thomas Cheshire. The campaign against Brooks was an attempt to heal the divides within Great Yarmouth through purging the town of his presence.

Brooks's dominance as the town's minister after 1635 allowed him to impose Laudian worship and changes to the town's fabric within Saint Nicholas's Church. Laudian reforms 'represented the most dramatic transformation of cathedral and parish church interiors since the Elizabethan settlement of 1559', challenging puritan expectations of worship.<sup>142</sup> Brooks's main tool for beautifying Saint Nicholas's church were the Dean and Chapter's visitations. The visitors had the power to order immediate corrections such as in 1635 when the visitor Sir Nicholas Brent saw the need to remove one of Saint Nicholas's two pulpits, repair the roof and improve the churchyard. Brent reported to the Dean and Chapter that 'all these things I have put in order', despite plague being 'very hott' in the town.<sup>143</sup> Brooks reported to Wren in April 1635 that he intended 'the chancell to be comely beautified and adorned', rails set up in front of the communion table, and that the 'East windowe to be comely and decently glased with glasse' to bring the church into conformity.<sup>144</sup> Brooks also removed the raised seating for aldermen's wives in the west of the church, from where critics had previously spoken 'against the Doctrine w[hich] M[aster] Chesheire then preached', meaning that the process of

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<sup>142</sup> Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), p. 227.

<sup>143</sup> TNA, SP16/293, f. 264.

<sup>144</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15.

redcoration undermined puritan control of the church's space.<sup>145</sup> Brooks's success in transforming the fabric of the church represented how his power over religious life in Great Yarmouth allowed him to erode displays of puritan identity.

For some residents, the solution to Brooks's control over Saint Nicholas's Church was to 'gad' on Sundays to hear John Brinsley's lectures in Lound instead. Sir John Wentworth had granted Brinsley the living in Lound in 1631, a village only six and a half miles away from Great Yarmouth and accessible by foot.<sup>146</sup> George Burdett had already recommended gadding to Lound to avoid Brooks's ministry in 1633.<sup>147</sup> In December 1633 Brooks reported that thirteen members of the corporation were attending Brinsley's services, including the aldermen Edward Owner, Henry Davy and Thomas Greene.<sup>148</sup> Despite the punishment and upbraiding of those involved, Brooks remained concerned that the 'Bailiffes and Governo[urs]' would continue to gad to the 'contempt and disgrace of M[aster] Brookes and M[aster] Chesheire'.<sup>149</sup> The puritan leadership of the town made obvious their contempt for Brooks by seeking out a more godly ministry.

Those unable to reach Lound in the morning or seeking a more radical ministry were attending a conventicle in a barn outside Somerleyton, a mile from Lound, discovered in 1636. Those attending the conventicle did so 'uppon pretext of repeticion of M[aster] Brinslyes sermon'.<sup>150</sup> Sermon repetition

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<sup>145</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 15; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 359; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f.104.

<sup>146</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 255; Brinsley, *The Preachers Charge*, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> TNA, SP 16/261, f. 156.

<sup>148</sup> TNA, SP 16/535, f. 52; NRO, Diocese of Norwich, vis. 6/4.

<sup>149</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 104.

<sup>150</sup> Bodl., Tanner MS 68, f. 90.

was an 'essential part of the practice of godly piety and sociability' in which groups of zealous neighbours met for the purpose of repeating 'the substance and heads of the sermons that day made in the church'.<sup>151</sup> However, an investigation by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich revealed the conventiclars were listening to 'One Isaack knight a glasseman in the parish of St Christofer in the Pouley London' who was a 'great prophet' and 'one Gaule a shoemaker in yarmouth'. Knight and Gaule were giving their own sermons both morning and afternoon to between 60 and 100 people included 'one Alderman of yarmouth ther, if nott more, and others of goode name'.<sup>152</sup> The Dean and Chapter arrested Knight and Gaule and had them taken to Norwich Castle.<sup>153</sup> The barn conventicle shows how seemingly orthodox puritan sermon gadding could provide cover for more radical worship.

In 1637 Brooks found evidence of the town's connection to non-conformists on the continent as he reported that searchers had discovered 'certayne sedic[i]ons bookes in o[ur] port at Yarmouth'. The discovery led to the arrest of the importers and 'one Robinson a scholim[er] one of the barn conventiclars', who was employed to disperse the books. Brooks was frustrated 'that o[ur] Magistrates would not vouch safe at all to speake to ann[y] or to tell an[y] ann[y]thing of this buisynesse'. This led Brooks to investigate further by talking to the merchant captain who had imported the books. The captain revealed that he also brought 'two ministers in his ship in disguised habits who had theyr entertaym[ent] at the house of M[aster] Miles Corbett Recorder of Yarmouth'.<sup>154</sup> The two ministers were Jeremiah Burroughs and William Greenhill, both excluded by Bishop Wren for refusing to read

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<sup>151</sup> John Craig, 'Sermon Reception', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds Peter E. McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford, 2011), p. 189; Meredith Marie Neuman, *Jeremiah's Scribes: Creating Sermon Literature in Puritan New England* (Philadelphia PA, 2013), p. 63.

<sup>152</sup> Bodl., Tanner MS 68, f. 88, 90.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, f. 88.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, f. 283.

the Book of Sports who had joined the Rotterdam Congregational community.<sup>155</sup> Miles Corbet was already supporting religious dissent within Great Yarmouth and puritan members of the corporation were willing to turn a blind eye to it.

Brooks alleged that there was a campaign from members of the corporation to discredit him and to restrict his funding. The corporation continued to withhold from Brooks his expected rights as minister, including Burdett's vacated house, which members of the corporation justified as due to Brooks's illegitimacy as the Dean and Chapter's choice.<sup>156</sup> According to Brooks during his services common councillors spoke 'openly and audibly against the Doctrine', there was talking, jeering, and laughing in his and Thomas Cheshire's faces.<sup>157</sup> The bailiffs and governors accused Thomas Cheshire of having a 'debauched and disorderly life', and a leading puritan alderman, Henry Davy, accused Cheshire of being a scurvy or salty fellow. Members of the corporation read 'certayne scandalous writing' against Brooks at the assembly meeting, which Brooks felt was to make him 'odious' with the town.<sup>158</sup> The puritans on the corporation used their political position and the authority it granted to attack Brooks and Cheshire, showing how vocal discontent was an expression of local tensions.

Brooks also alleged that he had received a series of violent threats to his life from members of the town's puritan elite. John Ingram, the son of alderman John Ingram, declared that if Brooks were in

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<sup>155</sup> Tom Webster, 'Burroughes, Jeremiah (bap. 1601?, d. 1646), Independent minister', *ODNB*; Richard L. Greaves, 'Greenhill, William (1597/8–1671)', *ODNB*.

<sup>156</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 322, 404.

<sup>157</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 104.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 106.

the Dutch chapel Ingram would have 'throwne Brookes out of the Pulpitt and broke his necke'. Edward Owner's wife proclaimed that people 'wished him [Brooks] hanged' and threatened to blind Brooks by throwing lime and sand in his face herself. The alderman Robert Wakeman thought Brooks looked 'like a thief ready to be turned', ready to be 'turned over the ladder and be hanged'. Wakeman also described Brooks to be spiritually corrupt, a 'carnal pope like Judas', 'cursed and banned'.<sup>159</sup> The threats of violence were rooted in Brooks's perceived illegality as an imposed minister and which inspired anticlericalism amongst the town's puritan elite.

Threats of violence escalated to physical assaults on Brooks and Cheshire. Brooks was threatened by 'one Page w[ith] a sward drawne in the day time' for collecting the Easter offerings, and he received no redress from the corporation.<sup>160</sup> Townsfolk caught Cheshire in Great Yarmouth's narrow rows where they 'many tymes jostled him and runn their elbowes against his backe and spit'.<sup>161</sup> This intimidation campaign proved effective, as Cheshire was 'forced to desist' and leave Great Yarmouth.<sup>162</sup> The puritan leadership's unwillingness to curb violence against a conformist minister was similar to Ipswich where the town's ministers and corporation supported rioting in opposition to Bishop Wren's 1636 visitation.<sup>163</sup> The corporation's reluctance to prevent violence against Brooks and the willingness of puritan aldermen to threaten harm to Brooks shows how polarised and bitter the town's religious divides had become.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, f. 106.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, f. 105.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, f. 104, see chapter two for the description of the rows, p. 48-9.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, f. 105.

<sup>163</sup> Grace, "'Schismatical and Factious humours'", pp. 97-120.

Brooks's success as a conformist minister led the town's puritans to oppose him with increasing vehemence. Brooks diligently carried out Matthew Wren's visitations which had ordered the minister to seek out 'puritanicall recusants' who 'obstinately abstained, either from divine service, or from the communion'.<sup>164</sup> Brooks's opponents had differing ways to avoid his ministry; gadding to hear John Brinsley in Lound, attending mechanical preachers in conventicles, and communicating with the English Church in Rotterdam. However, to restore the town's puritan unity Great Yarmouth's puritans were willing to threaten Brooks and define him as a source of papist corruption, justifying Brooks's removal as a necessary pre-condition for godly reformation. Puritan identity had become oppositional, defined by an active resistance to the Laudian ministry.

## vi. Witchcraft Accusations

Between 1637 and 1638, there were two witchcraft accusations in Great Yarmouth. These were part of a longer history of witchcraft fears going back to the late Elizabethan period, briefly explored below. Of the two accusations there is little evidence on what happened to Violet Smith when she faced accusations of witchcraft. However, Mark Prynn was part of a tradition of astrologers in Great Yarmouth that went back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Prynn's position in Great Yarmouth also tied him to Matthew Brooks and his ministry. The witchcraft accusations show evidence

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<sup>164</sup> *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, i, p. 141.



of being part of the religious and political impasse in the town in the late 1630s and the accusations against Mark Prynn prefigured the 1645 witch-hunt.

There had been a series of witchcraft accusations in Great Yarmouth during the 1570s and 1580s. This was a period when the members of Great Yarmouth's corporation were struggling to re-establish control over local trade with the restoration of the town's haven.<sup>165</sup> The corporation's nominations for minister were dismissed by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich in 1576, and 1582 for being too puritan, showing how the period was also one of growing religious tension.<sup>166</sup> In 1575 Katherine Smythe was accused of 'using witchcraft and enchantment, whereby Mary Dogeon came by her death' but was acquitted.<sup>167</sup> In 1582 Elizabeth Butcher and Cecilia Atkin were both sentenced to stand in the pillories for witchcraft, Butcher was again sent to the pillory for witchcraft 1583, and in 1584 Butcher and Joan Lingwood were both hanged as witches.<sup>168</sup> In 1587, the widow Helena Gill was indicted for making the tongue, legs, and leg-bones of Katherine Smythe waste away and destroyed.<sup>169</sup> There had been a brief panic of witchcraft allegations during the later sixteenth century when town's authorities had been willing to punish those allegedly using harmful magic at the same time as the authority of the Great Yarmouth corporation over the haven and ministry was threatened.

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<sup>165</sup> David M. Dean, "Parliament, Privy Council, and Local Politics in Elizabethan England: The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Fishing Dispute," *Albion*, 22 (1990), pp. 43-4.

<sup>166</sup> Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, pp. 122-32.

<sup>167</sup> Henry Harrold, 'Notes on the Corporation of Great Yarmouth,' *Norfolk Archaeology*, 4 (1849), p. 248.

<sup>168</sup> Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 272-3.

<sup>169</sup> Harrold, 'Notes on the Corporation of Great Yarmouth', p. 248; Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, p. 273.

The corporation recorded an allegation of witchcraft made against Violet Smith in 1637, but the only reference to Smith is in the assembly book. Miles Corbet reported that Smith was in prison 'vpon suspic[i]on of being a witch' in April 1637. Miles Corbet, in his role as recorder, ordered Smith sent to Norwich Castle, but frustratingly no record of what happened to Smith in Norwich survives.<sup>170</sup> This case shows that members of the corporation were willing to treat witchcraft accusations seriously.

In January 1638, the tenant farmer and astrologer Prynn faced charges of using charms to locate the lost goods of one John Sparke.<sup>171</sup> Prynn was notable for his collection of 'Theologicall, Historicall, and Phylosophicall' books.<sup>172</sup> Prynn's skill in conjuring was ascribed to *Moulsons Almanack*, a 'breefe of the fam'd fabulous *Sheperds*', a fifteenth-century almanac that provided guidance on astrology.<sup>173</sup> Astrology had an uncertain place in early modern cosmology as contemporary thinkers debated whether it was an art, a form of white magic, or a form of demonology. During the 1620s and 30s the King and his allies were criticised for having connections to astrologers. Astrology was condemned as superstition by the puritan writers William Fulke, William Perkins and Thomas Gataker.<sup>174</sup> The influence of the astrologer and magician John Lambe over George Villiers was used as evidence of the court's corruption and fear of Lambe's diabolism remained potent over two decades later.<sup>175</sup> However, skilled puritan contemporary practitioners, such as William Lilly and Richard Napier, catered to a clientele that

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<sup>170</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 381.

<sup>171</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 91-5.

<sup>172</sup> Taylor, *A Brief Relation*, p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs, 1500-1800* (London, 1979).

<sup>174</sup> Diane Willen, 'The Case of Thomas Gataker: Confronting Superstition in Seventeenth-Century England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 43 (2012), pp. 727-49.

<sup>175</sup> Alastair Bellany, 'The Murder of John Lambe: Crowd Violence, Court Scandal and Popular Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,' *Past & Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 37-76; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics and Memory,' pp. 289-308.

included gentry and aristocratic clients.<sup>176</sup> Prynn's astrology meant that he was in danger of being seen as a user of black magic, despite astrology's longer history in Great Yarmouth

In 1604 Geoffrey Le Neve started compiling a series of annual almanacs which he published in Great Yarmouth. Geoffrey Le Neve described himself variously as physician, student in mathematics, and a gentleman. After his death in 1613, his nephew Jeffrey Le Neve continued to compile the yearly almanacs until the corporation dismissed him from the town in 1626, and a nephew, John Le Neve took over compiling from 1626-61.<sup>177</sup> Jeffrey La Neve continued his astrological practice in London, after studying for a medical degree in Leiden, and became part of London's astrological establishment.<sup>178</sup> Prynn was part of this astrological tradition, practising astrology as a tool for discovering lost items and using it as part of medical practice, such as being paid 30s by the corporation in 1645 for curing a 'distracted man' in the Bridewell.<sup>179</sup> However, despite astrology's pedigree in Great Yarmouth, Prynn was caught in the polarisation of Great Yarmouth's politics.

The recorder Miles Corbet sought to define conformity in contradistinction to witchcraft and the witchcraft accusation against Prynn gave another potential public arena for puritans to make allegations of conformist spiritual corruption. Witchcraft was a means of criticism of the Westminster government used by contemporary puritan authors such as John Milton in *Comus* and William Prynn

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<sup>176</sup> Patrick Curry, 'Lilly, William (1602–1681)', *ODNB*; Jonathan Andrews, 'Napier, Richard (1559–1634)', *ODNB*.

<sup>177</sup> Capp, 'Le Neve, Jeffrey (1579–1653)'; Bodl., MS. Ashmole 418.

<sup>178</sup> Capp, 'Le Neve, Jeffrey (1579–1653)'; Gruenfelder, 'Jeffrey Neve, Charles I and Great Yarmouth', p. 161.

<sup>179</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 61; NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 194-6.

who associated the crown with witchcraft.<sup>180</sup> Miles Corbet promoted accusations against Mark Prynne during a period when accusations had low levels of convictions, with only twenty-four percent of accusations succeeding in nearby Essex between 1560 and 1672.<sup>181</sup> This was due in part to Prynne's connections to Brooks's conformist network. Prynne was Brooks's tenant, renting church land from the minister and Prynne was defended in the 1645 witch-hunt by Thomas Cheshire, Brooks's assistant.<sup>182</sup> However, Brooks did not mention the case in his 1641 petition to the House of Lords, suggesting he did not see the accusations against Prynne as a personal threat to him or his position.<sup>183</sup> While witchcraft accusations provided a means of expressing godly fear and puritanism in opposition to conformist corruption, the failure of the accusations against Prynne shows that they had limited resonance in the 1630s.

Miles Corbet's role as recorder in the accusations against Prynne went beyond judging the case as Corbet presented evidence to the jury and sought to condemn Prynne. The poet John Taylor alleged that Corbet had 'no proof but a Book of Circles found in his Study, which Miles said was a Book of Conjuring'. This book of circles turned out to be 'an old almanac', likely *The Greater and Lesser Keys of Solomon* or *The Picatrix*.<sup>184</sup> Corbet used the almanac as evidence that Prynne was not just an amateur astrologer but demonically inspired. The contemporary astrologer John Gadbury blamed 'pretenders' for the connection made by critics between astrologers, and magicians and necromancers. William Lilly sought

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<sup>180</sup> John Milton, *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* (London, 1637); William Prynne, *A Looking-Glasse for All Lordly Prelates* (London, 1636).

<sup>181</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, (Harlow, 2006), pp. 37-38.

<sup>182</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 323; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 327.

<sup>183</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102-12.

<sup>184</sup> John Taylor, *Persecutio Undecima: The Churches Eleventh Persecution: Or, a Briefe of the Puritan Persecution of the Protestant Clergy of the Church of England: More Particularly within the City of London*, (London, 1648) p. 17.

to reject the 'darke Sentences of Oracles'.<sup>185</sup> Corbet argued that Prynne's power emerged not from the 'art' of reading the stars, but for 'conjuring' of spirits. However, Corbet was unable to move the jury after a 'Learned Clergy-man' spoke for Prynne.<sup>186</sup> Despite Corbet's role within Great Yarmouth's legal system, he was unable to persuade the jury of the demonic nature of Prynne's astrology.

Despite the failure of the witchcraft accusations against Prynne in the 1630s, they still prefigured the larger 1645 witch-hunt. The corporation's support for moving Violet Smith to Norwich Castle on Corbet's advice shows that there was already support for pursuing witchcraft accusations amongst the town's political elite. The accusations against Prynne shows how even influential members of the town's community could be brought to court. Miles Corbet and Mark Prynne faced off again in 1645 with Corbet seeking Prynne's conviction as a witch.<sup>187</sup> The removal of scandalous ministers preceded the witch-hunts across Essex and Suffolk, part of a rejection of Laudianism as a malign and demonic influence fuelling witchcraft accusations.<sup>188</sup> Witchcraft had already become a concern for the town's political elite.

## vii. Conclusion

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<sup>185</sup> Ann Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars* (Manchester, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>186</sup> Taylor, *Persecutio Undecima*, p. 17.

<sup>187</sup> Taylor, *Briefe Relation*, pp. 7-10, see below chapter seven, pp. 215-9.

<sup>188</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 35; Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting and Politics*, p. 104.

The puritans' influence over Great Yarmouth's political establishment after 1625 would define the town's political and religious status quo into the civil wars. John Brinsley expanded the existing puritan grouping on the town's corporation into a factional presence united by a conception of a popular godly polity supported by the consent of the corporation and the assent of the population. This contrasted with the Laudian conforming ministers who the puritans sought to portray as imposed from above and unsupported. The puritans took the lead in challenging conformist ministers from the corporation and leading popular resistance. The puritans' desire to defend their local minister and their fear of Laudian corruption brought them into conflict with conformists amongst the corporation. The imbalance between the puritans' influence over the town's corporation and their loss of control over the town's pulpit created the space for a violent expression of puritan identity through displays of rejecting Laudianism. Puritan anxiety may have provided the ideological underpinnings for Miles Corbet to support witchcraft prosecutions, in part as criticism of Laudian corruption.

The collapse of the Caroline regime and the episcopal system from 1638 onwards unleashed the puritan anger at Laudian reform that had built up during the preceding decades. The collapse of royal power allowed members of the corporation to push for a godly regime with John Brinsley restored to the pulpit. The resulting pressure put on Matthew Brooks brought to fruition the threats made in the years preceding 1638. Members of the corporation's desire to rebuild Great Yarmouth as the shining city on the hill was a response to puritan frustrations at Brooks restraining and thwarting puritanism throughout the 1630s. Godly reform and the purgation of the town's conformist ministers created the puritan organisational control of the town that allowed the witch-hunt to flourish.

## Chapter 4: Puritan Predominance and Purgation, 1639-42

### i. Introduction

Royal power waned in Britain between 1639 and 1642. The puritan members of the Great Yarmouth corporation used the power vacuum to solidify their control over the town. They did this by removing Laudian influence from the town and uniting the town's puritans to heal the town's divides. The calling of the Short and Long Parliaments following the disaster of the Bishops' Wars animated local politics as boroughs presented their grievances, heightening the tensions that had developed between the localities and the centre during Charles I's reign. Parliament's promises of further reform and fear of Catholic subversion gave an impetus to puritan communities to carry out their reforms. The collapse of royal power and the Parliament's attempts to reform the body politic inspired members of Great Yarmouth's corporation to purge and reform their community in campaigns that became the template for the politicised violence of the witch-hunt. This came in two parts: the purging of the remaining traces of Laudianism from the body politic and uniting the town's puritans in readiness for any future conflict.

This chapter looks at how the corporation used two means of unifying Great Yarmouth. First, the chapter outlines the timeline between 1639 and 1642 to show how the corporation's priorities changed

and national crisis influenced their decisions. The chapter then looks at the period 1639-41, culminating in a discussion of how the puritan leadership of the corporation directed popular violence against the minister Matthew Brooks. The chapter then moves to look at how the corporation's puritans sought to unite and heal the town's body politic in 1641-2 by seeking to employ John Brinsley and William Bridge as the town's ministers. Brinsley's sermon *Healing Israel's Breaches* helps explore the logic of the corporation's desire for healing and unity as he argued for a 'seamless' church and state, bringing together the ministry and magistrate through a godly reformation.<sup>1</sup> This chapter describes the high point of puritan authority before the outbreak of the First Civil War.

## ii. The Crises and Opportunities of 1639-42

This chapter covers three disruptive years in British history. Charles's failure to win the Bishops' Wars in 1639 and 1640 led him to call the abortive Short Parliament and the combative Long Parliament, leaving a power vacuum that puritan authorities sought to fill. The Bishops' Wars required the Great Yarmouth corporation to fortify the town and accommodate troops for transportation to the conflict. With the calling of the Short Parliament, Great Yarmouth's corporation started to flex its independence by ignoring their patron's choice of MPs and gathering grievances against the crown. After the calling of the Long Parliament, the Great Yarmouth corporation pushed for further reform, concentrating on removing Matthew Brooks and his allies from positions of power between 1640 and 1641. In 1642, the corporation sought to build a new religious settlement in the town by settling puritan ministers from

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<sup>1</sup> Brinsley, *Healing Israel's Breaches*, p. 6.



across the puritan spectrum. These developments played out against wider changes locally and nationally caused by Charles I's weakness.

The failure of the Bishops' Wars and the anger of the Short and Long Parliaments undermined royal control of the provinces. The calling of the Short Parliament in November 1639 stimulated attacks on the fabric of churches, as iconoclasts anticipated Parliament's desire for reform.<sup>2</sup> In 1640, the failure of the unpopular second Bishops' War and lack of pay led unruly soldiers in Hertfordshire and Essex to pull down communion railings and destroy stained glass windows, allegedly at the instigation of parishioners.<sup>3</sup> The severity of punishment for iconoclasts was an indicator of the magistrates' future allegiance during the Civil Wars. Later Parliamentarians, such as Sir Harbottle Grimston, dismissed the indictments of iconoclasm, whilst the future royalists Sir Benjamin Ayloffe, Sir Thomas Wiseman and Sir William Maxey showed no leniency.<sup>4</sup> Between the dismissal of the Short Parliament and May 1641, London's crowds became engaged with politics, expressing themselves through riots, demonstrations, and petitions aimed at lobbying both King and Parliament. Archbishop Laud was singled out for abuse, culminating in an attack on Lambeth palace involving hundreds of rioters.<sup>5</sup> A series of petitions responding to the Short and Long Parliaments' calls for grievances gave legitimacy to those seeking to remove 'popery' from the church. They provided 'not merely a vehicle of protest but also a detailed

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<sup>2</sup> John Rous, *Diary of John Rous, Incumbent of Santon Downham, Suffolk, from 1625 to 1642*, ed. M. A. E. Green (London, 1856), p. 99; Walter, 'Popular Iconoclasm and the Politics of the Parish,' pp. 261–90.

<sup>3</sup> Julie Spraggon, 'Puritan Iconoclasm in England, 1640-1660', unpub. PhD thesis, University of London, 2000, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> W. Cliftlands, 'The "Well-Affected" and the "Country": Politics and Religion in English Provincial Society, c.1640-1654', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1987, pp. 150-1; Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 4-6.

agenda for practical reform'.<sup>6</sup> The subsequent promotion and spread of calls for reform in East Anglia were spurred by proximity to London.<sup>7</sup> The fragility of national politics and the failure of Parliament to follow through on reform empowered local elites but raised the spectre of losing control of politics to popular uncontrollable forces.

The failure of Parliament to establish a stable new regime and fears of Catholic subversion led local governments and citizenry to take a lead in reforming their communities. Parliament gained early political capital by dismantling the universally unpopular elements of the Caroline regime, through a 'vast audit of misrule'.<sup>8</sup> The Grand Remonstrance put to the Long Parliament in November 1641 was 'encyclopaedic in its comprehensiveness' and did not make any distinction between Charles I's innovations in politics and religion, both needed unpicking.<sup>9</sup> Members of Parliament explained those opposing them as the product of a 'malignant conspiracy' holding back reform, blaming the Arminians around the King for the outbreak of a Catholic rebellion in Ireland in October 1641.<sup>10</sup> The violence that had begun in the localities with troops returning from the Bishops' Wars reached a new peak in 1642 with mobs attacking Catholics or those seeking to raise military support for the king in the West Country, Essex and Suffolk.<sup>11</sup> In those areas 'the Warre was begun in our streets before the King or Parliament had any Armies'.<sup>12</sup> This violence was the product of puritan fears of Catholic

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<sup>6</sup> John Morrill, 'The Attack on the Church of England in the Long Parliament, 1640-2', in *History, Society and the Churches: Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick*, eds Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 65-7; John Adamson, *The Noble Revolt: The Overthrow of Charles I* (London, 2007), p. 174.

<sup>7</sup> Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, pp. 123-4.

<sup>8</sup> Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Leng, 'The Meanings of "Malignancy": The Language of Enmity and the Construction of the Parliamentary Cause in the English Revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, 53 (2014), p. 846; Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution: 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002), p. 200.

<sup>11</sup> Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth* (London, 1659), p. 457.

subversion leading to a purge of local opponents to establish the stability of local regimes. In Colchester and the Stour Valley, anti-Catholic violence was used by Colchester's puritan government to resolve their conflict with the Lucas family and develop the population's 'political awareness'.<sup>13</sup> The plunderers in Colchester showed restraint by limiting their attacks to so-called 'malignants' and ceremonialist ministers, showing how violence was unleashed along political and religious lines.<sup>14</sup> Those affected reported these attacks, but the puritan corporation's support for rioters meant that little was done.<sup>15</sup> The collapse of royal government and the fear of Catholic subversion destabilised good order in the provinces and local elites sought to re-establish control through purgative violence.

During 1639 Great Yarmouth's corporation concerned itself with the preparation for the First Bishops' War. In their 5 April meeting, the corporation agreed to start a watch and locking the town gate due to billeting 1500 soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The corporation questioned whether the troops would remain armed whilst in Great Yarmouth. Additionally, the corporation requested the presence of ships from the navy to protect against Scottish raiders.<sup>17</sup> To gain the resources needed to support the war effort the corporation invited the Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk to the town to be entertained, before his appearance at the general muster on the 28 June.<sup>18</sup> However, the arrival of soldiers from service on Lindisfarne lacking officers and pay in July caused consternation for the bailiffs and their assistants.<sup>19</sup> The corporation's financial constraints led to the calling in the town's debts in April, and in August,

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<sup>13</sup> Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, p. 350.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 62, 151, 291, 344-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154.

<sup>16</sup> *CSPD*, 1639, pp. 56, 212.

<sup>17</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 433-4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, f. 441.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, f. 442.

Thomas Meadowe had to pay off the remainder of uncollected Ship Money himself.<sup>20</sup> The difficulties of the conflict eroded the relationship between Great Yarmouth and the crown.

The calling of the Short Parliament showed how the relationship between the crown and corporation had deteriorated. In December 1639, Great Yarmouth's high steward, the Earl of Dorset, notified the town of the coming election and requested the corporation choose Sir John Suckling as one of the town's MPs and the Earl of Northumberland suggested Sir Henry Marten. The corporation responded only that they would nominate and propound Suckling.<sup>21</sup> In March 1640, the town's electors chose Edward Owner and Miles Corbet, two godly and experienced candidates. The bailiffs needed to write to both the Earls of Dorset and Northumberland to explain that the corporation nominated their proposed candidates but not elected in a fair election.<sup>22</sup> On 4 May the corporation set up a committee of grievances to send to Parliament. The listed grievances included economic complaints about salt impositions and composition of the fish caught along with religious concerns over the lack of preaching and religious exercises in the town.<sup>23</sup> In the period between the dismissing of the Short Parliament and the calling of the Long Parliament, the corporation began the process of reformation. They moved against the grammar schoolmaster Mr Falkes as Brooks's choice and ended payment to Brooks for sermons on solemn days.<sup>24</sup> In their response to the Short Parliament, the members of the Great Yarmouth's corporation showed they no longer respected the town's patrons at court and instead looked inward for reform.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, ff. 434-5, 446.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, f. 450.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, f. 455.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, f. 460.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, ff. 462, 467, 468.

Members of the corporation acted with more independence following the calling of the Long Parliament as they concentrated on removing Brooks and his supporters. In October 1640, the corporation again chose Miles Corbet and Edward Owner as their MPs and swiftly revived the grievances committee.<sup>25</sup> In January 1641 the corporation ordered the collection of a benevolence for the cost of bringing Brooks to trial in London.<sup>26</sup> In February, during Brooks's absence in London for the trial, the town's bailiffs allegedly supported a mob attacking Brooks's household.<sup>27</sup> Members of the corporation began the process of choosing a new minister when they received confirmation from Miles Corbet on 2 February that the bishop of Norwich would accept their choice, trialling a Mr Franck in March.<sup>28</sup> The corporation confirmed an agreement with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and Robert Gostling the fee farmer for the parish in April. This granted the corporation the right to nominate for town's ministers and curates, but the corporation's first choice left the town in August seeking a 'more quiet' parish.<sup>29</sup> In August the corporation confirmed Robert Rush as parish clerk, despite the protestations of Miles Hull, Brooks's choice for the role.<sup>30</sup> The corporation established its independence from the authority of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and control over the ministry in Great Yarmouth in 1641.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, ff. 469, 470.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, f. 474

<sup>27</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 107.

<sup>28</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 475, 478.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, ff. 482, 488.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, f. 491.

From late 1641 until the outbreak of the civil war, Great Yarmouth's corporation moved to consolidate support for puritanism in the town by choosing godly unifying ministers. In October 1641 members of the corporation sought out a Mr Stanton to preach and when he was unavailable, they secured a Mr Archer to preach for three months after Christmas.<sup>31</sup> At the 10 November corporation meeting those present unanimously agreed to choose John Brinsley as the town preacher, and a group of distinguished aldermen, including the bailiffs and justices, were sent by the corporation to agree his salary and duties.<sup>32</sup> At the 7 December corporation meeting, a group of citizens proposed to invite the congregational ministers William Bridge and Jeremiah Burroughes, offering to pay for their maintenance.<sup>33</sup> The corporation invited Bridge to Great Yarmouth on 5 January 1642 and confirmed his position 4 March.<sup>34</sup> The bailiffs disavowed Brooks and agreed to find a new curate on 30 May 1642, choosing Thomas Whitfield on 17 June.<sup>35</sup> The corporation offered both Brinsley and Bridge £100 per annum and a house on 1 July to take up the position of minister.<sup>36</sup> When the rival proclamations from both the King and Parliament arrived on 9 July calling for the town to take up arms, Great Yarmouth's corporation was united in support for Parliament's declaration.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1639 and 1642 Great Yarmouth's political and religious status changed in response to the fluctuating national political situation. In 1639 the corporation was supporting the war effort in the Bishops' Wars and tolerating their conformist minister. However, with the calling of the Short Parliament and the crown's obvious weakness, the corporation was willing to ignore the privy council's

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, ff. 494, 495.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, f. 494.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, f. 496.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, ff. 498, 502.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, ff. 509, 510.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, f. 511.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, f. 512.

suggested choices for MP and instead joined the campaigns voicing grievances against the crown. The calling of the Long Parliament accelerated this process, as the vulnerability of the episcopate allowed the corporation to move against Matthew Brooks, support public protests, and begin lining up their preferred replacements to the minister. The next section shows how the changing political and religious situation began with the process of purging the town's establishment of Laudianism.

### iii. Taking Control of Great Yarmouth, 1639-41

As royal control weakened, the members of the Great Yarmouth corporation acted with more independence. Members of the corporation pushed for reform in the wake of the failure of the Bishops' Wars and the calling of the Short and Long Parliament. There was an obvious change between the displays of loyalty shown by the corporation's cooperation during the Bishops' Wars campaigns and members of the corporation's unwillingness to support the town's patron's choice of MPs. The members of the corporation successfully removed the schoolmaster and parish clerk imposed by Brooks and sought to expel Brooks from the ministry. The bailiffs supported a popular attack on Brooks in early 1641 without repercussion. As the royal government's control collapsed Great Yarmouth's puritans began the process of remodelling the town's politics and faith.

The collapse of royal authority weakened the power of the episcopate, allowing the puritan members of the Great Yarmouth corporation to push for the removal of Matthew Brooks. In January 1641, members of the corporation declared in their meeting that Brooks's 'scandalous life and exactions of undue fees for mariages [and] burials' and 'not executing the charge of his ministeriall function as he ought' were grounds for his dismissal. Members of the corporation used this to justify the collection of a benevolence from the town to pay for a court case against Brooks.<sup>38</sup> In February 1641, Corbet wrote to the town from Parliament that he believed the Dean and Chapter were likely 'to grant [and] confer their right of no[min]ation of curates [and] ministers upon the Towne'. In response, the corporation organised a delegation made up of Thomas Medowe, Thomas Johnson, Robert Gower, all three former bailiffs, to speak with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich.<sup>39</sup> The Dean and Chapter allowed the corporation to trial a replacement minister, a Mr Franck, and the corporation were willing to employ him once the populace had given their assent.<sup>40</sup> By the beginning of 1641 members of the corporation were confident that they were gaining control over the town's religious settlement.

The members of the corporation sought to bring the religious officers of the town back under corporate control. Members of the corporation agreed that the schoolmaster Mr Faulkes, who was likely installed by Brooks, was inadequate in September 1638, and told him to quit in July 1640.<sup>41</sup> The corporation assigned Brinsley's allies to choose Faulkes's replacement: Thomas Johnson, Giles Call, Thomas Crane, and Robert Gower.<sup>42</sup> They chose a Mr Dove who was ratified by the corporation with the 'full consent of the house; nominated elected chosen [and] established'.<sup>43</sup> In February 1641 Miles Corbet advised

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, f. 474

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, f. 475.

<sup>40</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 478; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>41</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 419, 462.

<sup>42</sup> Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 469, 483.



the corporation that they could resume the 'ancient right' to select a parish clerk and the members of the corporation chose the barber Robert Rush.<sup>44</sup> When the corporation started employing Rush in September 1641 they came into conflict with Miles Hull, whom Brooks had chosen for that position four years earlier, but members of the corporation claimed that Hull had been 'unduly put into that place [and] office w[ith]out the Townes approbation'.<sup>45</sup> The members of the corporation had their way, and Hull was dismissed. The corporation also sought to take control of charitable provision and in December 1640 'diverse persons in this town' proposed that the corporation should provide a fund for 'settling the poor in work' with a convenient poor house to keep the poor from 'idleness and begging'. The corporation took control over the collection for the fund, assigning the task to the town's waterbailiffs, their support for the poor house showing their desire to reform the town.<sup>46</sup> Members of the corporation reshaped the town, establishing control over the schoolmaster, parish clerk, and poor relief, isolating Brooks.

The centralising of power around the corporation became a point of contention that critics pointed to as evidence of the danger of the puritan faction's misrule. Brooks claimed in 1641 that the corporation had turned the town's surplus funds into a £4 000 debt. He alleged that the corporation had spent £13 000 since his arrival to remove him, while the town's haven and defences were neglected so 'that the said towne is in danger upon any sodaine enterprize to be lost unto an enemy'.<sup>47</sup> In August 1641 the corporation members ordered that repeating accusations that they had failed to maintain the church roof and harbour from the revenue of the heyning money warranted dismissal from the corporation

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, f. 475.

<sup>45</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 491; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 107.

<sup>46</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 473; Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 185-6.

<sup>47</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 102.

‘as an unworthy member’.<sup>48</sup> Accusations that the corporation had expended vast stores of the town’s wealth on puritan reform at the cost the town’s economic and military security had enough validity to be feared by the corporation.

Members of the corporation supported violence against the town’s conformist ministry, but by 1641, even the town’s bailiffs were openly harassing Brooks. During the Caroline period, the puritan campaign of harassment against conformist ministers escalated. What had begun as libels and insults from councillors’ wives during services against Brooks’s predecessor Thomas Barker in the late 1620s had become physical violence against Thomas Cheshire in 1638.<sup>49</sup> The puritan councillors who had been attacking Brooks in the 1630s continued to gain power within the town. Brooks identified the current bailiffs Thomas Green and Robert Wakeman, and the aldermen Robert Norgate, Henry Davy, and Nicholas Cutting as his chief opponents. Robert Wakeman had compared Brooks to a thief in the 1630s and John Ingram had threatened to throw Brooks out of the pulpit and break his neck. Brooks held them responsible for the disorders, discouragements, oppositions, reviling threatening, vexations, lawsuits, and imprisonments that had plagued Brooks and his assistant Cheshire for the preceding decade.<sup>50</sup> Brooks perceived the campaign of intimidation and violence against him as an orchestrated attempt by puritan aldermen to unseat him as minister of the town.

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<sup>48</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 488.

<sup>49</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102-12; See above chapter three pp. 95-6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, f. 106.

Brooks was vulnerable in 1641 because his network of supporters had unravelled since 1638, which had only emboldened Great Yarmouth's puritan leadership. Brooks had his biggest blow in 1638 when he lost his assistant Thomas Cheshire and Matthew Wren, Brooks's ally while bishop of Norwich, was translated to the Diocese of Ely.<sup>51</sup> Richard Montague, who replaced Wren as bishop, lacked Wren's firmness and inflexibility, and the size of the diocese strained Montague's already poor health.<sup>52</sup> Brooks's supporters amongst the corporation were reduced as Benjamin Cooper died in January 1640.<sup>53</sup> In February 1641 Brooks wrote to his old ally Matthew Wren, asking the Bishop to 'help me out of the furnace' of Great Yarmouth, showing Brooks's discomfort and sense of danger.<sup>54</sup> Without reliable support from within Great Yarmouth and Montague's more conciliatory approach giving Great Yarmouth's corporation leeway to attack Brooks, the minister was now in ever greater danger.

From 1638 onwards the corporation became bolder in its attempt to stigmatise and remove Brooks. In September 1640, the corporation's membership refused to pay Brooks for sermons on festival days after he would not allow strangers to preach in his stead and the corporation then removed Brooks's choice of parish clerk.<sup>55</sup> Despite the greater latitude given to members of the corporation, they still lacked the right to nominate a minister of their choosing. Instead, members of the corporation pursued Brooks through the courts, utilising what Brooks referred to as 'vexatious suites' to bring their grievances before Parliament. Defending against the corporation's suits required Brooks to take frequent absences from the town, which left him vulnerable and his household exposed.<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 105: Cranfield, 'Wren, Matthew (1585–1667)'.

<sup>52</sup> John S. Macauley, 'Mountague, Richard (1575-1642), *ODNB*.

<sup>53</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 454.

<sup>54</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 290, f. 106.

<sup>55</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 491, 468; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 107.

<sup>56</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 460.

corporation's antagonism towards Brooks meant that both the political elite and the citizenry saw him as an acceptable target for abuse.

In Brooks's 1641 petition to the House of Lords, he records that on 20 February 1641 a mob perpetrated a violent popular assault against his household. He alleged that the town's bailiffs guided the attack during Brooks's absence defending himself against the corporation's suits in London. Brooks alleged that before 9 pm 'divers of the said towne did in a riotous and tumultous manner assemble and gather themselves together', led by an Edmund Cammont, John Hartley, and Robert Ket. The mob descended on the town 'armed w[ith] staves and pitch forks and such like weapons'. The attackers went to the 'houses of both the Bailiffes of the town', and 'were ioyfully enterteyned and had much beere given them' during the hour they spent with Bailiff Thomas Green. Suitably 'inflamed' by drink, members of the mob said that Green had ordered them to 'directly goe vnto the house of M[aster] Brooks... [and] assaulted his doores w[ith] greate violence'. This involved 'threats and menaces' to Brooks's heavily pregnant wife and their eight children who 'were putt in great danger and feare of their lives'.<sup>57</sup> This event was a piece of street theatre meant to threaten Brooks by showing how vulnerable his wife and children were through a series of organised symbolic displays of power.

Before the assault on Brooks's house, the rioters gathered around a large bonfire in the street which deliberately evoked the rituals of civic celebration. Brooks recorded that the rioters gathered 'about a greate fire w[hich] they had made in the open street'.<sup>58</sup> Bonfires were 'expressions of honour and

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<sup>57</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102, 109.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, f. 109.

approbation', and a 'suspension of the social distances, disputes and discipline of the everyday world'.<sup>59</sup> For the mob attacking Brooks's house, the bonfire was a vital rallying point, a centre of warmth and brightness on an otherwise cold February night. The bonfire's position in the open road showed the rioters had claimed the right to the town's public space. The preparation for assaulting Brooks's house was comparable to a civic celebration, as the organisation of bonfires and street gatherings were usually the domain of the parish authorities at times of public rejoicing.<sup>60</sup> Celebrations around bonfires established social hierarchies as the wealthy 'provided food and drink for their less prosperous neighbours' and in Great Yarmouth, the rioters went to bailiff Green for beer and support.<sup>61</sup> The bonfire had the tacit support of the leadership of the town's corporation, allowing a civic gathering point for those seeking to protest against Brooks.

Matthew Brooks alleged that Thomas Green gave the command to assault Brooks's home and that the bailiff had provided the leadership for the riot.<sup>62</sup> Green had a history of supporting the puritan cause during his time on the town's corporation. He had defended George Burdett and been chosen to be part of the group choosing the corporation's choice of next minister in 1635, had been fined for failing to attend church in his gown in January 1636, and he was a member of the committee preparing grievances for Parliament in May 1640.<sup>63</sup> Brooks accused Green of having a history of violent confrontation with the town's conformists, going back to May 1630, when Green broke open the pulpit door to allow a stranger to preach in opposition to the curate. Brooks stated that Green had rejected

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<sup>59</sup> David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley CA, 1989), pp. 82-3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 80.

<sup>61</sup> Margo Todd, 'Profane Pastimes and the Reformed Community: The Persistence of Popular Festivities in Early Modern Scotland,' *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), p. 132.

<sup>62</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 109.

<sup>63</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 290, 318, 343, 460.

him as a minister and had laid 'violent hands vpon the said M[aster] Brookes and tugged and thrust him to and fro'.<sup>64</sup> Green's involvement in rallying the town's population against Brooks using his position as bailiff showed how he legitimated the rioters' violence.

The assault took on an air of politicised carnival with people disguised as major political figures play-acting in the street. According to expunged text in Brooks's account, three of the rioters were 'dressed in a disguised manner so to present three p[er]sons of greate place and quality' and carried on coull staves, a thick wooden handle, around a large bonfire.<sup>65</sup> The display of figures around the fire, held aloft on the staves was part of the public display seen in Chari Vari or Skimmingtons, usually of the victims held aloft for public ridicule. The mob's angry request that Brooks's household should give 'lodging there for the Bi[shop] of Canterbury' implies the presence of Laud amongst the disguised individuals since someone crossed out the request for lodging for the Archbishop as well. The demand for lodging for the Archbishop of Canterbury echoed the attacks on the palace of Lambeth and on St Paul's in 1640, the assaults on Archbishop Laud used as a threat to Brooks and his family.<sup>66</sup> These carnivalesque details show how the treatment of Brooks's household was comparable to rough music or skimmingtons, where disguised individuals were part of ritualistic shaming of hate figures within the community. As there were only three disguised people, the purpose was not to hide the identity of those involved, but instead to create an air of misrule that challenged Brooks's legitimacy.<sup>67</sup> According to Brooks a 'Robert Ket' was leading the protest, likely a pseudonym named after the legendary rebel Robert Kett, who had threatened Norwich and whose supporters had captured Great Yarmouth in the

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<sup>64</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 106.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, f. 109.

<sup>66</sup> Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, pp. 53, 91.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Pettitt, 'Here Comes I, Jack Straw:' English Folk Drama and Social Revolt', *Folklore*, 95 (1984), p. 14.

summer of 1549. This name was a controversial one, as 'after 1549, the town's support for the rebels was forgotten', official accounts stressing the town's loyalty.<sup>68</sup> The use of the name of the rebel hero Kett fits the pattern of riots led by folk figures such as 'Rebecca, King John, Lady Skimmington, or Captain Pouch'.<sup>69</sup> By cloaking the protest in these symbols of civic power and popular misrule, the puritans and the town's inhabitants in general shamed and humbled Brooks.

The assault on Brooks's house was a moment of purgative violence that united the interests of the town's puritan political elite with the popular theatre of misrule. While the assault was a failure since Brooks remained in post until July 1642, when he left to take up a ministry in Lowestoft, it reveals the extent of the puritans' influence over popular opinion. Without an effective opposition within Great Yarmouth's corporation or resistance from the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, Brooks's enemies could assault his home with impunity, and the House of Lords dismissed his petition.<sup>70</sup> The popular shaming of Brooks through ritual protest helped solidify relations between the town's leadership and the wider population, through building a consensus in opposition to Laudianism. It was also part of a wider campaign of anticlerical violence that began in the late 1630s and continued into the sequestrations of the 1640s, where 'violence against the clergy... became ubiquitous' as Parliamentary locals and soldiers alike encouraged 'malignants' to leave their posts by intimidation.<sup>71</sup> The puritans on the town's corporation solidified their power through colonising the town's civic offices, directing the

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<sup>68</sup> Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 232-6.

<sup>69</sup> Alun Howkins and Linda Merricks, "'Wee Be Black as Hell': Ritual, Disguise and Rebellion," *Rural History*, 4 (1993), pp. 45-7, 49; Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion*, pp. 110-1.

<sup>70</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 112.

<sup>71</sup> Fiona McCall, *Baal's Priests: The Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 158-60, Walter, *Popular violence*, pp. 40-1.

corporation's charity, and guiding popular violence against Matthew Brooks. With all this power and influence the puritans now had an opportunity to reunite and redefine Great Yarmouth.

#### iv. Healing Israel's Breaches, 1641-42

The members of the Great Yarmouth corporation sought to entrench puritanism in Great Yarmouth between 1641 and the outbreak of conflict between King and Parliament. The approaching war required the corporation to take greater control over the lives of Great Yarmouth's residents by establishing a curfew, ordering a night watch, assuring loyalty through oaths, and beginning the process of strengthening the town's defences. The corporation sought to develop unity and heal the fractures within puritanism, by inviting both John Brinsley, aligned with Presbyterianism and William Bridge, who was known for his role in the Congregational community in the Netherlands. John Brinsley's sermon *The Healing of Israel's Breaches* showed both the perceived causes of division and outlined the puritans' means of healing the body politic. The threat of division within the town was now a threat to its security, requiring the corporation to move carefully.

Faced with the prospect of civil strife the corporation began rearming and fortifying Great Yarmouth, requiring the members of the corporation to take more power and authority over the town's citizenry. Defending the town required a process of fortifying and mobilising the citizenry into the watch and militia regiment. The corporation had to militarise too as aldermen and councillors took on the role of



officers for the town's militia and watch. Members of the corporation needed to work closely with the town's MPs to secure resources from London. The construction of a puritan citadel was important for the town's politicians.

The corporation had to militarise to defend the town and started by mobilising the citizenry to watch over the walls. In January 1642, the corporation ordered the creation of a night watch. The corporation provided those watching the walls with a dozen muskets and required the watch to shut the gates nightly; those who failed to attend were to be fined and their names reported to the bailiffs.<sup>72</sup> In July the corporation ordered the enforcement of a strict watch and ward, requiring all the town's gates still open to be locked from 9 pm to 4 am with two men each guarding the gates and bridge. The keys to the town's gates were to be the responsibility of the aldermen Robert Wakeman and Thomas Johnson. Those failing to attend the day watch and unable to find a fit replacement faced a fine of 2s levied by the distraint of goods.<sup>73</sup> These measures were normal in wartime and show members of the corporation's fears in the first half of 1642, concerned about attacks from the surrounding country.

The other measure for the town's defence was strengthening the town's walls and outerworks. The corporation set up a committee of defence on 4 February, consisting of eleven aldermen, the chamberlains, the muringers who were responsible for the maintenance of the town's wall, and twelve common councillors. This committee sought to strengthen the town's physical defences by 'rampier[ing, in other words, blocking] up the gates of the towne', 'mounting the ordinance upon the

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<sup>72</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 498, 499.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, f. 513.

walls' and constructing 'the Bumme [boom] for the haven', a pair of defensive towers with a metal chain between them that could be raised to close off the haven to shipping.<sup>74</sup> In July groups of five or six members of the committee of defence were sent to raze homes outside Great Yarmouth's walls to prevent them giving cover for a force attacking the town.<sup>75</sup> The landscape of the town was being reshaped to make it more defensible.

Members of the corporation were not just concerned with defending the town from external threats but also sought to ensure the loyalty of the population from a possible internal rising. In February 1642, the corporation received orders from Parliament to have the town's citizenry swear allegiance to the *Protestation* and 'to live and die for the true Protestant religion, the liberties and rights of subjects and the privilege of Parliaments'.<sup>76</sup> The members of the corporation enforced the public swearing of this statement of Protestant identity by certifying the names of those supporting the protestation and the individuals refusing to swear. They thereby turned the swearing into a public test of loyalty to the parliamentary cause, though sadly the lists of subscribers and refusers did not survive.<sup>77</sup> In March members of the corporation ordered that the bailiffs and recorder should ensure that 'all suspicious p[er]sons resideing in or coming goeing or passing through the towne' would swear the oaths of supremacy and allegiance.<sup>78</sup> These tests of loyalty showed both a concern for the possibility of internal dissent and willingness to push for compliance through swearing oaths of loyalty to the puritan and parliamentary causes.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, f. 499.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, f. 513.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642*, 10 vols. (London, 1895), ix, p. 354.

<sup>77</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 499; David Cressy, 'The Protestation Protested, 1641 and 1642', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), pp. 373, 278.

<sup>78</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 501.

Members of the corporation also sought to stamp out internal divisions by finally taking control over the town's ministry and replacing Matthew Brooks with acceptable puritan replacements. In January 1642 members of the corporation called for a collection from the populace to fund a further court case against Brooks in the capital, the money being required to sponsor the 'diverse witnesses' along with legal costs.<sup>79</sup> These legal attempts to remove Brooks never came to fruition. Eventually, the corporation rejected Brooks and sought the approval of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich for their decision. The inner circle of the corporation, the assistants to bailiffs, declared that Brooks was disavowed as their curate on 30 May.<sup>80</sup> However, as late as August 1642 Brooks was still reporting to the Bishop of Norwich that the 'Sacrament of the Lords supper was celebrated by a stranger [and] in an unwarranted fashion', implying he continued in the role despite the corporation replacing him.<sup>81</sup> It was only in September 1642 that the grant of the nomination of ministers and curate for St Nicholas's Church was put into the hands of the corporation by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich.<sup>82</sup> While Brooks remained obstinate in protecting his position as minister, the members of the corporation had been seeking his replacement since late 1641.

In November 1641, the corporation was informed that John Brinsley was interested in returning to Saint Nicholas's church and this was 'agreed by this whole Assembly' and without a dissenting voice amongst

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, f. 474.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, f. 509.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, f. 517.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, f. 517.

the corporation.<sup>83</sup> In November, the corporation also secured a Mr Archer to minister for the following three months.<sup>84</sup> In July 1642, members of the corporation nominated Thomas Whitfield to be John Brinsley's assistant, stressing that Whitfield was 'very well liked [and] approved of by all here present'.<sup>85</sup> Members of the corporation sought to organise ministers that they thought legitimate having gained the backing of the corporation and popular support, most notably the popular Brinsley.

Just as members of the corporation were looking to install their choice of puritan ministers, private citizens had their own choice of godly ministers they sought to bring to the town. On 7 December 1641, the members of the corporation debated a proposition from unnamed 'private persons' in the town for 'an invitation to be given unto M[aster] Bridge [and] M[aster] Burroughes to bestow their paines and labour in preaching Gods worde in this Towne'.<sup>86</sup> These private persons remain unnamed, but the presumption is that these were citizens of Great Yarmouth outside the town's political elite. The Rotterdam community had become 'a model Congregational church of the 1630s' when Burroughs and Bridge had become the leading pastors of the congregation.<sup>87</sup> Both had previously been ministers in Norfolk before their dismissals and had remained connected to the county during their time in the Netherlands, such as when in 1637 Burroughs had travelled to Great Yarmouth in disguise smuggling in banned literature.<sup>88</sup> The smuggling incident shows that Miles Corbet was already in contact with Burroughs, and the wider Rotterdam church, and so would have known of William Bridge. In January 1642, the corporation agreed that Bridge 'be invited to come to Towne: to ioyne here w[ith] M[aster]

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, f. 494.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, ff. 494, 495.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, f. 510.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, f. 496.

<sup>87</sup> Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, p. 164; Richard L. Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671), Independent minister', *ODNB*.

<sup>88</sup> Discussed above in chapter three, p. 94.

Brinsley'.<sup>89</sup> Bridge had only recently returned from Rotterdam, where he had been part of the English congregation that had fled there to 'enjoy th[e] liberty of their consciences'.<sup>90</sup> Bridge's invitation was the beginning of his close connection to the town which lasted for the following twenty-five years.

William Bridge was influential in Great Yarmouth and an experienced minister who had a background of ministry in Norwich and the Congregational community in Rotterdam. Bridge was born in Cambridgeshire in 1601, matriculated at Emmanuel College in June 1619, receiving his BA in 1623, MA in 1626, and received his ordination as a minister in December 1627.<sup>91</sup> Bridge attended Emmanuel College, a centre of puritan education and network building, four years after Brinsley.<sup>92</sup> Bridge sought to pursue a rigorously puritan course and rejected the Laudian Church's ceremonialism as a minister. When Bridge became a lecturer in Saffron Walden in 1629, he refused to wear the surplice and hood until licensed by the bishop on 1 January 1631.<sup>93</sup> In December 1631 he accepted the living of St Peter Hungate, Norwich. On 12 April 1632, he was licensed as a curate and lecturer at St George Tombland, Norwich, a 'combination lectureship' that freed Bridge to lecture at St Andrew's Norwich.<sup>94</sup> In 1634 he was cited before the consistory court for attacking Arminianism and espousing only limited atonement.<sup>95</sup> In 1636 the bishop of Norwich, Matthew Wren, deprived and then excommunicated Bridge, and Bridge then headed into exile in the Netherlands.<sup>96</sup> Like John Brinsley, Bridge's commitment to a reformed faith inculcated into him at Emmanuel College made it impossible for him to tolerate

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<sup>89</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 498.

<sup>90</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.

<sup>92</sup> Webster, *Godly Clergy*, pp. 18–22.

<sup>93</sup> Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, MS D/ACA/47, ff. 70, 161.

<sup>94</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.

<sup>95</sup> NRO, MS CON/2/3a, f. 3.

<sup>96</sup> William Laud, Henry Wharton and William Prynne, *The History of the Troubles and Tryal of the Most Reverend Father in God, and Blessed Martyr, William Laud, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1695), p. 541.

Laudianism and led to his expulsion from his ministry in Norfolk. However, rather than finding a local patron and a smaller community to minister to like Brinsley, Bridge joined the English Congregational community in Rotterdam.

Bridge's experiences at Rotterdam helped him formulate a Congregational vision of worship. In May 1636 Bridge settled in Rotterdam, becoming re-ordained as a member of the Rotterdam English Church. In 1637 Bridge wrote to councillors in Norwich to criticise the episcopate, showing that he had not cut ties with the godly there.<sup>97</sup> Hugh Peter, a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, whom the Bishop of London suspended from the English Church in 1627, reformed the English church in Rotterdam in 1633. Peter reformed the Rotterdam church through a new covenant that the membership had to subscribe to, leading to the alleged unchurching of two-thirds of the congregation. The congregation 'called' Peter to minister in a ceremony that rejected his ordination in the English church.<sup>98</sup> The Congregationalist community in Rotterdam 'practiced a democratic church life with most decisions being made in the congregational meetings', without Presbyterian elders and with women included in congregational decision making.<sup>99</sup> By the end of the 1630s Bridge had become a leading member of this overtly Congregational community. Bridge was admitted into Leiden University in May 1639 *honoris gratis*, showing the approval of Dutch ministers for his ministry.<sup>100</sup> Bridge returned to England in Spring 1641, preaching a sermon on Revelations 14:8 to the House of Commons in April, published as *Babylons Downfall*.<sup>101</sup> Bridge was an attractive choice of minister, with local support and

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<sup>97</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'; NRO, MS CON/2/3a, f. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Carla Gardina Pestana, 'Peter [Peters], Hugh (bap. 1598, d. 1660), Independent minister', *ODNB*.

<sup>99</sup> Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, pp. 162-4, 168-9, 173.

<sup>100</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.

<sup>101</sup> William Bridge, *Babylons Downfall A Sermon Lately Preached at Westminster before Sundry of the Honourable House of Commons* (London, 1641).

international renown, and his presence as part of the acceptable wider puritan coalition in London meant he was ideally placed to offer respectability and unity to the town's ministry in 1642.

John Brinsley articulated his desire for a united godly community in early 1642 through 'Six Sermons at the Weekly Lecture in the Church of Great Yarmouth' later printed as *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*.<sup>102</sup> The sermons that made up this printed sermon Brinsley gave from the pulpit in St Nicholas's Church. The corporation had restored Brinsley to the pulpit even before he was officially re-established as the town's minister.<sup>103</sup> In the sermons, Brinsley declared that the threat to the kingdom was Israel's disease or internal divisions, argued that the cure was the restoration of godly ministry, and the role of ministers as state physicians to heal the wounds made during the previous decades.

Brinsley identified the biggest threat to the kingdom's unity as 'Israel's Disease', 'those Distractions, Divisions, Politicall Breaches, and Ruptures in the body of his Kingdome'.<sup>104</sup> Brinsley used the first sermon to outline the divisions that threatened the kingdom, working his way up in scale from divisions within families to the threat of foreign invasion. Brinsley divided the dangerous breaches into two parts, 'Foraigne, made by those who were open, and professed enemies to their kingdome, and Religion' and 'Homebred, intestine and civill Breaches made and caused by some of the Israelites themselves'.<sup>105</sup> It was internal divisions and distractions that had 'made Israel shake', and there was 'nothing more dangerous to a State, a Church, more ominous, and pernicious then these, Intestine

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<sup>102</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*, p. ii.

<sup>103</sup> Bridge, *Sermon Preached unto the Voluntiers of the City of Norwich*, p. ii; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 498.

<sup>104</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

Breaches'.<sup>106</sup> Brinsley identified three kinds of internal conflicts: between the prince and his subjects, between subjects, and religious conflicts that threatened to 'render the seamless coat of Christ with sects, schisms and heresy'.<sup>107</sup> Brinsley saw the cure for such divisions in the example of Ancient Jerusalem and the 'building up the Walls, the repairing the breaches thereof' which had led to 'Peace within her Walls, and Prosperity', part of the Calvinist tradition of aligning England with Israel.<sup>108</sup> Brinsley was not alone in identifying the threat of 'our foes being chiefly those of our owne household' as other puritan ministers, such as John Marston discussed the danger of internal subversion.<sup>109</sup> Brinsley's fear of internal division encompassed both civil and religious divides, but it was the divisions between the godly that concerned him most.

Brinsley argued there were two threats to Britain's body politic caused by religious division: a Catholic conspiracy to undermine true religion, and the nonconformists' rejection of communion. Brinsley stated that divisions within the church were 'like Breaches made in the walls of a Citie, which are an In-let to the Enemy' and thus 'in-lets to the Adversary', a weak point that allowed demonic influence to corrupt the kingdom.<sup>110</sup> The most overt threat to the body politic was the 'great and fearfull breach' caused by the 'open Rebellion of a Romish Confederacie'.<sup>111</sup> This referred to the contemporaneous Irish rebellion and Confederate wars which Brinsley claimed sought 'the extirpating, and rooting out the true Religion of God', and Brinsley was not alone in seeing the Irish rising as a threat to all

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 135.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*, pp. 29-30; Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp. 281-326.

<sup>109</sup> Jacqueline Eales, 'The Clergy and Allegiance at the Outbreak of the English Civil Wars: The Case of John Marston of Canterbury', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 132 (2012), p. 88

<sup>110</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*, p. 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 45.



protestants.<sup>112</sup> However, just as dangerous were ‘breach-makers’ who rejected communion and became ‘Schismaticks, and Sectaries’. Brinsley was concerned that the manifold sects of ‘Anabaptists, Familists,... Antinomians, Socinians, Arminians, Brownists’ and other non-conformists were the sources of a ‘great part’ of internal divisions.<sup>113</sup> However, Brinsley argued this had occurred because the Laudian church was sabotaging the nation. Brinsley compared Laudian churchmen to ‘unhappy and unfaithful Engineers’, who when trusted with the ‘Churches *Artillerie*’, turned their fire inwards on the citadel of the church itself. Brinsley accused the Laudians of beating the Church in England’s ‘*watchmen*’ from their *Watchtowers*, making *Breaches* in her Walls, driving out her Inhabitants’, leaving the church spiritually defenceless and vulnerable to divisions.<sup>114</sup> To counter the threats of Catholic and sectarian subversion meant healing a body politic left vulnerable by the Laudian church.

Brinsley’s conception of the role of the minister to heal the divisions within society was based upon the conception of a medicalised body politic. Brinsley called the political and religious divisions within the kingdom ‘Ruptures, Breaches’, ‘wounds’, which were ‘intestine’, using powerful medical imagery to show metaphorical damage to the body politic. Brinsley argued that God was the great physician needed to heal the body politic and that god ‘maketh use of Church-Physitians, State-Physitians’. The minister and magistrate had vital roles in healing society’s divisions through the ‘ministerie of man’, even if God was the prime curative agent.<sup>115</sup> The minister was already the ‘physician of the soul’, but Brinsley was extended that idea from individuals to the wider body politic, seeing his role as unifying

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<sup>112</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel’s Breaches*, p. 22; Jordan S. Downs, “The Curse of Meroz and the English Civil War,” *The Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), pp. 343-6.

<sup>113</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel’s Breaches*, p. 37

<sup>114</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel’s Breaches*, p. 38; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 79, 81-2, 87.

<sup>115</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel’s Breaches*, p. 120.

the distracted community.<sup>116</sup> Brinsley's proposed role for ministry was working hand in hand with the political authorities to bring political and religious healing to the afflicted community.

Brinsley used military symbolism throughout the sermons, using walls, breaches, and siege warfare as metaphors for divisions, dangers, and their healing.<sup>117</sup> Brinsley used the military imagery to heighten the threat of divisions, showing how the metaphorical wounds of division were as dangerous as physical breaches in a city wall. The use of siege-based terms reflected both the immediacy of warfare as fighting had broken out in Ireland and Great Yarmouth's vulnerable position as an isolated walled town that made the threat of a siege more immediate. Brinsley was not alone in using military metaphors, it was already a common theme for Calvinist preachers before the outbreak of the Civil Wars.<sup>118</sup> Contemporaneously Simeon Ashe preached that 'when we were baptized we took press money, and vowed to serve under the colors of Christ', while William Bridge preached before the trained bands in Norwich to warn of the danger of 'Cavalierism'.<sup>119</sup> The need to unite and reconcile the town was explained as repairing a weak point in the town's spiritual defences just as the town's corporation preoccupied itself with the town's physical defences.

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<sup>116</sup> Mary Ann Lund, 'Robert Burton the Spiritual Physician: Religion and Medicine in "The Anatomy of Melancholy"', *The Review of English Studies*, 57 (2006), p. 677.

<sup>117</sup> Brinsley, *The Healing of Israel's Breaches*, pp. 29-30, 33-4, 38, 43, 46, 80, 131

<sup>118</sup> Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia PA, 2007), pp. 21-2.

<sup>119</sup> Simeon Ashe, *Good Courage Discovered, and Encouraged: In a Sermon Preached before the Commanders of the Military Forces, of the Renowned Citie of London* (London, 1642); Bridge, *Sermon Preached unto the Voluntiers of the City of Norwich*, pp. 6, 9-11.

Brinsley's aim in giving the sermons that made up *Healing Israel's Breaches* was to explain the contemporary dangers to the body politic and the role of godly ministers' ministry as part of the process of healing the wounds. Brinsley's return to the pulpit showed the puritans overcoming the restrictions imposed on them by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, the corporation restoring Brinsley by their own will.<sup>120</sup> Brinsley saw an opportunity to rebuild a community left divided and fragile by Laudianism and to restore Great Yarmouth's godly unity. It was division, a breaking of community and communion that threatened the future of the town. To defend true religion required a sense of unity and healing that Brinsley argued godly ministers provided, free from the dictates of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich.

The period between the collapse of the Caroline regime in London and the raising of Charles I's banner at Nottingham saw the peak of puritan influence within Great Yarmouth as they took organisational and ideological control over the corporation and pulpit. The puritans sought to build a godly community, using their new power and authority to reform the town and supplant the Laudian ministry. The puritan aldermen now had authority over the corporation which allowed them to take control over the town's direction of travel free from the constraints of Westminster. The puritan minister John Brinsley argued for the need for puritan political and religious authority as the basis for healing the body politic from the breaches left by Laudianism, which had left the town vulnerable to spiritual and political enemies. However, the strain of the English Civil War tested the strength of the unity engendered by the corporation installing both the Presbyterian Brinsley and the Congregationalist William Bridge as ministers.

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<sup>120</sup> Bridge, *Sermon Preached unto the Voluntiers of the City of Norwich*, p. ii; NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 498.

## v. Conclusion

The Westminster government's failures in the Bishops' Wars and loss of authority in calling in the Short and Long Parliaments created a political vacuum which members of the Great Yarmouth corporation used to develop a political and religious puritan unity. Great Yarmouth's electorate rejected the town's patron's choice of MPs and members of the corporation helped draw up of a list of grievances, breaking the connections the corporation had made with the Privy Council. After the calling of the Long Parliament, the corporation supported popular riot, showing a desire to embrace the opportunities that political power offered for violence in the name of godly reform. There was a desire for puritan unity, as members of the corporation supported the ministries of both the Presbyterian John Brinsley and Congregationalist William Bridge. The desire to unify was more pressing as the threat of war loomed large.

## Chapter 5: The Strain of the Civil War, 1642-45

### i. Introduction

Great Yarmouth's involvement in the First English Civil War led to the imposition of costly demands, the influence of a military garrison in the town, and poverty caused by privateering which undermined the authority of the corporation. The power of the puritan aldermen had been rooted in their role as honest brokers with central government and their protection of the town's interests. However, the corporation now needed to demand that the town's citizenry provide manpower for town defence and provide ever greater sums of money for the war effort. The new local power structures created to support the war effort: the Norfolk county committee and the Eastern Association of Counties, had the power to direct Great Yarmouth's corporation to enforce demands for weekly assessments, levy troops, and install military governors over the town that threatened the corporation's independence. The failure to protect the town's herring fleet from Royalist privateering during the conflict and the consequent poverty exposed the weakness of charitable giving. The corporation's perceived political weakness informed the desire to pursue the witch-hunt which should be 'seen as a form of purgative medicine or healing', restoring the corporation's organisational authority which the war had undermined.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 119.

## ii. The Strains of War

This chapter covers the period between the beginning of the conflict in England in August 1642 to the witch-hunt in Great Yarmouth in September 1645. This period covers the height of the conflict between the King and Parliament in England and Wales. It is possible to crudely group the concerns of members of the Great Yarmouth corporation into three distinct periods. Great Yarmouth's location within relatively secure East Anglia meant that the town never came under direct assault, but from 1642 to the summer of 1643 members of the corporation occupied themselves in fortifying the town. Following risings in Kings Lynn and Lowestoft in the summer of 1643, the corporation's membership sought to prevent the imposition of a military governor and garrison in the town meant to prevent similar internal threats. During 1644 to 1645 the corporation's attention turned to two crises: the town's worsening finances and the need to provide guard ships for the town's herring fleet who were suffering heavy losses to privateers. This section will outline the timeline of the town's wartime experience and its place in the larger conflict.

Great Yarmouth's position on the East Coast within the securely Parliamentary East of England did not mean it was immune to the wider vicissitudes of the conflict waged across Britain. Initially, local leaders organised county committees to allow them to pool finances, act in mutual defence for the 'preserving of the peace of the county', and to prevent plundering.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Association of counties

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<sup>2</sup> Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp. 58-9.

was larger in scale, bringing together the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Essex in a pact of mutual defence. It was led by a Major General, originally Lord Grey of Warke, who was replaced by the Earl of Manchester in July 1643.<sup>3</sup> Great Yarmouth remained immune to a series of royalist risings that afflicted towns across East Anglia in early 1643, including Lowestoft, and Kings Lynn.<sup>4</sup> These risings meant the Eastern Association needed to take direct control over communities through garrisons meant to defend the association from invasion and rebellion. The prosecution of the war required the Eastern Association to professionalise its commanders and army and to leave the bounds of the Eastern counties. By 1644 the officers and men in the army of the Eastern Association were alleged to be forsaking church government, and local authorities were distrustful of the threat to puritanism the army represented.<sup>5</sup> In 1645, Parliament moved to secure the war effort into the New Model Army, using the Eastern Association's forces as the core to the new forces, further centralising power away from localities.<sup>6</sup> The Civil War transformed the relationship between towns and military authorities, and the army's relationship with the localities that funded them, creating an increasing power disparity that fed into war-weariness.

The support for the Parliamentary cause during the First Civil War was not unconditional even in loyal regions and the conflict was a catalyst for political discontent. The new assessments required to fund the war were particularly onerous and efficiently collected in East Anglia, reaching levels of exactions that dwarfed those under Charles I.<sup>7</sup> The result was war-weariness and fear of further radicalism as the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 95, 131; Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War: A Portrait of a Society in Conflict* (London, 1969), pp. 179-84, 206-18

<sup>5</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 189-90, 198-203; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 212

<sup>7</sup> Michael Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 95-6.

war dragged on, leading some puritan politicians to call for peace.<sup>8</sup> In contested regions, popular expressions of war exhaustion included Clubmen, local militias formed to remove troops from both sides as an expression of local identity and self-government that the militarised state was threatening.<sup>9</sup> Even in less war-ravaged areas, the demands of the war effort inspired local resistance. Clive Holmes persuasively argues that fear of the cost of the war spiralling beyond the control of local governments was expressed through communities' resistance to military garrisons and the centralising of local military governance to the Earl of Manchester and the New Model Army.<sup>10</sup> Great Yarmouth's government was not immune from the effects of war-weariness as it sought to manage a population afflicted with higher taxation, drafts for military service in the town's militia and watch, and impoverished by the plunder of the herring fleet.

At the outbreak of open conflict, the immediate response from the Great Yarmouth corporation was to organise the town's defence. At the end of August 1642, the MP Miles Corbet informed the town's corporation that he had received a parliamentary order 'for setting the towne into a posture of defence', giving the corporation the power to recruit and command a trained band regiment, and required the town to provide treasurers for the soldiers' pay.<sup>11</sup> On 18 November the members of the corporation agreed to hire the engineer Erasmus Sandes, his skills necessary for constructing a 60 foot wide and nine-foot deep ditch around the north of the town.<sup>12</sup> The corporation also rehired a Captain Henry Dengayne. Dengayne had previously served with the town's artillery company in the 1620s and 1630s and was recalled for service with the militia, clearing towers and arming the town's watch with

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<sup>8</sup> Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, pp. 356, 368.

<sup>9</sup> Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, pp. 421-6.

<sup>10</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 186-94, 421-6.

<sup>11</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 516; *Journal of the House of Commons* (London, 1802) ii, pp. 734-5; *Journal of the House of Lords* (London, 1767-1830) v, pp. 319-20.

<sup>12</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 4.



more muskets.<sup>13</sup> On 28 November the corporation ordered an initial levy of £400 to begin fortifying.<sup>14</sup> The town received £1000 of ordnance for the walls and the promise of further Parliamentary support from Thomas Johnson on 23 December.<sup>15</sup> The members of the corporation supported further fortifying in Spring 1643, agreeing to convert Harris tower into an artillery mount and hiring ten cannoneers on 3 March. They agreed to send out members of the town's defence committee to monitor the construction of the town's ditch on 24 March, and to clear the south tower mount for artillery on 10 April.<sup>16</sup> The town's initial investment was for the town's immediate defence, the corporation requiring experienced officers, the purchase of arms, and recruitment for the watch and militia.

Great Yarmouth's corporation was no longer able to concentrate solely on the town's defence after the spring of 1643. Failed risings in Lowestoft and Kings Lynn led to pressure from the Eastern Association to accept a military garrison that threatened the corporation's independence. Lowestoft rose for the king 13 March 1643 but submitted to Colonel Cromwell and a party of dragoons from Norwich that night, and King's Lynn rose 28 August and held out against the Earl of Manchester for a further three weeks.<sup>17</sup> Great Yarmouth's corporation was allowed to raise an additional hundred men for the town's defence on 14 August and a further 120 in September, but 29 August, the corporation received orders to reduce its defences by sending mortar pieces, grenades, and powder to support the siege of Kings's Lynn.<sup>18</sup> Members of the corporation discovered on 18 December that the commander of the Eastern

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<sup>13</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 4; David R. Lawrence, 'Great Yarmouth's Exercise: Honour, Masculinity and Civic Military Performance in Early Stuart England', in *Worth and Repute: Valuing Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Barbara Todd*, eds. Kim Kippen and Lori Woods (Toronto, 2011), pp. 368-9.

<sup>14</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, f. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, ff. 10, 11, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Oliver Cromwell and Thomas Carlyle, *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, with Elucidations*, 3 vols. (New York, 1904), ii, pp. 121-5; Bodl., MS. Tanner 62, f. 299; Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 95, 131.

<sup>18</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 20, 22, 24.

Association of Counties, the Earl of Manchester, had ordered a military garrison to be stationed in the town along with a governor, Colonel Francis Russell.<sup>19</sup> Despite protests, the members of the corporation found a middle way by agreeing 25 January 1644 to have five commanders-in-chief drawn from the corporation in addition to Colonel Russell.<sup>20</sup> When a new garrison led by Colonel Charles Fleetwood arrived 23 April, the members of the corporation were able to limit Fleetwood's authority as governor but found it necessary to protest their loyalty to the Parliamentary cause. The risings had shown the possibility of disloyalty within the Eastern Association and the military power meant to prevent future revolts threatened to curtail the independence of boroughs like Great Yarmouth.

The summer of 1644 brought news of heavy losses amongst the Great Yarmouth herring fleet due to privateers in the North Sea. This precipitated a struggle by the corporation to secure ships to guard the herring fleet and cover the financial burden of the war as income declined. At the 17 June meeting of the town's assembly, members of the corporation sought three ships from Parliament's fleet to defend the fishermen from privateers and they added the town's warship *Adventure* to the guard ships in September.<sup>21</sup> In March 1645 members of the corporation sought three guard ships for the summer fishing season and secured five ships in August for the autumn voyages.<sup>22</sup> The damage to the herring fleet was severe enough that members of the corporation sought to record the losses in February 1645 to persuade Parliament that the town could no longer bear the rates and taxes imposed upon it, though there is no evidence Parliament received it.<sup>23</sup> The Royalist privateers brought the conflict to Great Yarmouth's door, damaging the vital herring fishing fleet and impoverishing Great Yarmouth.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, ff. 28, 29

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, f. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, ff. 43, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, ff. 63, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, f. 60.

Great Yarmouth suffered due to the war, its corporation distrusted to maintain peace, its population impoverished by raiders at sea and reluctant to pay higher taxation unless forced to do so. While this account summarises the changing priorities of Great Yarmouth's government, the rest of the chapter shows how consistent the need to raise money and maintain the town's watch was. Even maintaining the fortifications continued to be an issue as the ditches, walls, and outerworks needed repairs. However, the changing priorities show the build-up of pressure on the corporation as political capital and financial resources were exhausted, and symptoms of war-weariness and discontent grew amongst the town's population.

### iii. The Cost of Defending Great Yarmouth

The prolonged conflict placed heavy demands on local governments to secure ever-greater exactions from their citizenry to support the war effort, damaging support from the wider population. Great Yarmouth corporation's military preparations required repairing and extending the town's fortifications, spending the town's reserves of silver plate on acquiring artillery and powder, and the conscription of the town's population into a workforce to extend the town's moat and construct further outerworks. Maintaining the town's security meant that members of the corporation served as officers for the town's watch and a trained band and to coerce the citizenry to serve. The Parliamentary war effort also demanded that the town pay assessments to the Eastern Association, Westminster

government, and later the New Model Army. The corporation's decision to use harsher collection efforts for domestic and national financial exactions showed the increased resistance to demands. However, the new powers and responsibilities provided an opportunity for members of the corporation to enforce Sabbatarianism and punish idleness. The war represented a sustained change in the relationship between the governors and governed.

Members of the corporation's immediate concerns were making sure Great Yarmouth was defensible against assault by reinforcing the town's existing fortifications. The town was encircled by an impressive medieval wall, supplemented by Elizabethan artillery bastions.<sup>24</sup> The defences had been further modernised during the war with Spain in the 1620s, with strengthened artillery towers that were designed to repel a naval assault rather than an attack by land.<sup>25</sup> In 1631 the town's military strength was a company of civic pikemen and musketeers, the artillery company, and cannons on the walls, artillery mounts, and at the quayside, and the artillery company fell into abeyance between 1631 and 1636.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of the defences before the Civil War was to defend the town primarily from naval assault, as Spanish ships had threatened the town's North Sea trade during the 1620s and 30s and had even raided ships inside the town's harbour.<sup>27</sup> The Civil War threatened the town from both land and sea, which necessitated the construction of additional outer works, including extending and deepening the moat and adding a drawbridge. The additional fortifications also required the seizure of land for the outer works and the conscription of manpower from the town to strengthen and man the town's defences.

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<sup>24</sup> BL, Cotton Augustus I.i, f. 74; John F. Potter, *The Medieval Town Wall of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk: A Geological Perustration* (Oxford, 2008), see Appendix one.

<sup>25</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 11-9.

<sup>26</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 213; Lawrence, 'Great Yarmouth's Exercise', pp. 367-9.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, SP 84/149, f. 1.

In November 1642 members of the corporation set an initial rate to raise £400 for the defences.<sup>28</sup> This was spent excavating a ditch '60 foote wide and 9 foote deepe from the narrow river to the townes closes' and from 'about the northe denes before north & the church wall as far as pudding gates'. The construction of the ditch required the procurement of scone baskets, barrows, and other tools. It was also necessary to hire overseers of the work, clerks, the engineer Erasmus Sand, and to rehire the professional soldier Captain Henry Dengayne who had drilled Great Yarmouth's artillery company since 1624.<sup>29</sup> In December 1642 alderman Thomas Johnson travelled to London and spent £1000 on 'greet peeces of ordinance', the cost of which was covered by contributions from members of the corporation and the corporation's reserves of silver plate.<sup>30</sup> In November 1643 Bailiff John Symond imported 25 barrels of gunpowder at £4 a barrel from Holland at a total cost of £100.<sup>31</sup> In November 1642 Miles Corbet sent up a 'lieutenant Knight' from London to serve as an officer of the town's trained band at a cost of £100 a year, but Knight was discharged a month later.<sup>32</sup> The renovation of Harris Tower by Jeffry Warde and Anthony Wyn pulling down St Nicholas's tower in the churchyard were both carried out at no cost to the corporation, but the councillors took the leftover materials in place of payment.<sup>33</sup> London's Civil War defences, the lines of communication, were a much more ambitious series of earthworks and ditches that strengthened the old city walls constructed over two months from March 1643. They were comparable to Great Yarmouth's outerworks but on a much grander scale; they cost the city nearly £7,000, ruinous even for the capital.<sup>34</sup> Great Yarmouth spent its entire financial reserve

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<sup>28</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 6.

<sup>29</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 3, 4, 5; NRO, Y/ C19/ 5, f. 298; Lawrence, 'Great Yarmouth's Exercise', p. 383.

<sup>30</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 7, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, ff. 23, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, ff. 5, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, ff. 6, 10.

<sup>34</sup> An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons for the Raising of Money, December 1644; Peter Harrington, *English Civil War Fortifications* (Oxford, 2003), p. 43.

and set further taxation to cover the immediate need to defend the town, leaving the corporation financially exposed when further demands for funds arrived from the Norfolk committee and Eastern Association.

The corporation's drive to fortify the town required the displacement of poorer citizens who lived outside the walls or within the town's towers and guardhouses. Homes outside the town's walls were razed in July 1642 to prevent cover being given to any possible attack.<sup>35</sup> In November members of the corporation agreed to convert the town's towers into courts of guard for the watch, requiring clearing out the poor who had settled there.<sup>36</sup> The conversion of the top of Mr Harris's Tower into a mount for artillery in March 1643 also necessitated the churchwardens and overseers of the poor dispersing the people living there.<sup>37</sup> Despite the destruction of property and dispossession of residents Great Yarmouth's corporation faced less resistance than the London authorities.<sup>38</sup> The displacement of the town's poorest residents imposed an additional burden on the town's poor relief and showed a willingness to disrupt the lives of the town's residents.

The corporation's ambitious fortification plans required the conscription of the town's residents to labour in the construction of the moat and outerworks. The corporation ordered the town's male population be either employed in the construction of a moat around the town by 'takeing earth [and]

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<sup>35</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 513.

<sup>36</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, f. 10.

<sup>38</sup> David Flinham, *Civil War London: A Military History of London under Charles I and Oliver Cromwell* (Solihull, 2017), p. 27.

breaking ground where they shall finde most convenient' or to send someone in their place. Conscription was enforced by the overseers of the works who were to 'present to M[aster] Bailiffs the names of those w[hich] make default in coming out or sending helpe to the worke'.<sup>39</sup> In March 1643 the members of the corporation found it necessary to send out a group made up of an alderman and three common councillors to monitor each of the northern and southern ditches construction daily from Monday to Saturday to ensure progress on excavating the moat.<sup>40</sup> In April 1644 the corporation sent the aldermen Giles Call, Thomas Johnson, Thomas Meadow, Thomas Manthorpe, Robert Gower, John Rowe, the chamberlains Thomas Goose and William Lucas, and the common councillors Thomas Barker, Jeffry Warde, William Freeman, Anthony Wyn, Walter Bullard and Thomas Copeman were sent fortnightly to check progress on the construction of a drawbridge over the north moat.<sup>41</sup> Volunteer labour was expected from urban populations especially in the event of a siege. The construction of London's lines of communication David Flintham has estimated to have required 20 000 volunteers daily.<sup>42</sup> The corporation took control over resident's labour to construct the defences, changing the dynamic between ruler and ruled.

The corporation was also responsible for organising the town's watch and maintaining attendance from the citizenry, a sustained and onerous duty. From November 1642, the corporation ordered that the watch be on duty from 9 pm until daylight, and all able-bodied men were to serve unless 'Bailiffes [and] justices, together w[ith] the Aldermen [and] constable of the warde shall thinke fit' to exempt them. The corporation hired a clerk to enforce fines of a shilling for defaulters from the watch and 2s. 6d. on

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<sup>39</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid f. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, f. 38.

<sup>42</sup> Flintham, *Civil War London*, p. 67.

those failing to guard the town gates. To ensure compliance the constables had to pay the fine for those whom they had failed to warn to serve on the watch and the Bailiffs were required to pay the fines of those they failed to bind over for non-attendance.<sup>43</sup> Even aldermen and common councillors were expected to attend the watch and their failure to do so required finding two replacements rather than one.<sup>44</sup> In April 1643 Parliament granted the corporation the power for the town's bailiffs, justices, and captains to seize the goods of those failing to attend the watch.<sup>45</sup> In February and October 1644, the members of the corporation authorised their officers to 'make [and] send forth warrants to bring such before them as shall offend against the saide orders[for watching and warding] [and] to levy the fines [and] forfeitures for not observing the saide orders by distresse [and] sale of the parties goods offending or defalting'.<sup>46</sup> In April 1645, the members of the corporation moved punishing defaulters from the constables to the bailiffs, justices, captains, and aldermen of the wards due to the watch's neglect and the failure of the constables to enforce attendance.<sup>47</sup> Constables, being drawn from amongst the citizenry, were unwilling or unable to carry out the enforcement of attendance at the watch, leading the leadership of the corporation to take direct control over pressing men into service. The need to impress men through ever harsher threats and fines shows the limits of support for the town's ruling class.

The wider conflict made demands on Great Yarmouth's manpower and military resources, as the Eastern Association sought to supplement its forces and the town's militia forces threatened to join them. In February 1643 it required the personal intervention of Captain Gower, Chamberlain Cutting,

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<sup>43</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 4-5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. f. 18.

<sup>45</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 13; *Journal of the House of Lords*, v, p. 715.

<sup>46</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 34, 50.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, f. 64.



and William Freeman to persuade the Eastern Association that the town could not raise eighty dragoons since the population was made up of predominantly fishermen.<sup>48</sup> The Earl of Manchester requisitioned powder, provisions, and artillery from the town to help subdue King's Lynn after its revolt in the summer of 1643. However, the town only received recompense in the form of wool belonging to Earl of Manchester to be sold to cover the debt.<sup>49</sup> On 10 April 1643 members of the corporation were concerned that Captain Thomas Johnson's company of volunteers wanted to leave to join the Eastern Association's forces, denuding the town of its trained troops, so they authorised weekly payments to the company to keep the soldiers in place.<sup>50</sup> The Eastern Association's need for men and materials was perceived as a possible threat to the town's security as increasing demands put more pressure on the corporation's resources.

The Norfolk county committee and the Eastern Association expected Great Yarmouth to pay its share towards the region's defence. When the war began the Norfolk County Committee was sympathetic towards Great Yarmouth and promised a 'supply of aide to be given to the Towne for their fortification [and] defence'.<sup>51</sup> However, the Eastern Association of Counties superseded the county committees in late 1642, and the Eastern Association showed less sympathy for the town's plight. The Eastern Association imposed a weekly assessment from 30 November 1643, of initially £34 15s, for the maintenance of the Association's army, with a warrant to distraint those unwilling to pay.<sup>52</sup> When a warrant for a further £208 18s 6d arrived in Great Yarmouth in July 1644 and Miles Corbet announced that he had promised payment of the first £200 by the next Tuesday members of the corporation

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, ff. 9, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, ff. 27, 29.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, f. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, f. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, ff. 16, 32.

rushed to have money 'brought in forthwith by the members of this house [and] other the ablest men according to their p[ro]portions'<sup>53</sup> The demands from the County Committee and the Eastern Association were more acceptable for local defence, something that was less obvious when funding was directed at national campaigns.

Parliament ordered assessments on the town to fund national campaigns and the centralised New Model Army after its creation in early 1645. In March 1643, a weekly assessment of £1250 was imposed on the county of Norfolk to pay for the Earl of Essex's Parliamentary army. This was on top of a subsidy of £400,000, requiring Great Yarmouth to pay a further £200 weekly.<sup>54</sup> In February 1644 the Mayor of Norwich wished to discuss a loan of £6000 to be raised in Norwich and Norfolk to support the brethren of Scotland by Parliamentary ordinance.<sup>55</sup> That month also saw two further weekly rates for four months of £34 16s 5d per week and £52 4s 7d imposed by the 'committee of Parliament at Norwich' and in June another weekly assessment of £52 16s 5d was imposed for a further four months.<sup>56</sup> In April 1645 there was a rate of £205 13s 4d levied per month to support the New Model Army.<sup>57</sup> The centralising and intensifying of the war effort meant that financial demands increased while the connection between the military authorities and Great Yarmouth became more distant. This left the members of the corporation fewer opportunities to mitigate their effects.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, f. 40.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. f. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, f. 34.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, ff. 35, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, f. 64.

The exactions from the Eastern Association and Parliament added to the strain on the town's already parlous finances. Matthew Brooks, the town's former conformist minister, alleged in 1641 that the town had already 'exhausted and consumed the surplusage of the stocke'.<sup>58</sup> The plate reserves, into which each councillor paid 20s silver plate and Aldermen 40s silver plate upon accession into those roles, had been emptied in December 1642 by Thomas Johnson's purchase of cannons. The members of the corporation had to borrow an additional £50 from the town's reserves meant to pay the town's orphans to cover that expense.<sup>59</sup> The corporation needed to increase its revenues to sustain the war effort, including seeking short-term loans from the town's merchants, maintaining the corporation's control over existing revenue sources, and ensuring the successful collection of taxation even as the rates and resistance to payment grew.

The corporation's regular income came from the duties paid by merchants unloading goods in the haven, and during the First Civil War, merchants attempted to avoid paying duties requiring the corporation to step in to enforce them. Great Yarmouth's 'liberties and privileges of the Towne granted by ancient charters' included the right to customs and duties for all goods landed with 'seven leuks' of the town. To enforce this all goods were to be loaded and unloaded at the east side of the Great Yarmouth haven where duties could be collected.<sup>60</sup> In November 1643 the members of the corporation ordered the aldermen Thomas Johnson, Thomas Meadow, Anthony Speck, Robert Gower, the chamberlains Thomas Goose and William Lucas, and the town clerk to investigate smuggling and they were given the authority to seize the goods and vessels of those unloading outside the east side of the

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<sup>58</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, f. 102.

<sup>59</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 9, 455; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 7.

<sup>60</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 28; Manship and Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 335-8.

haven.<sup>61</sup> The weak point in the customs system was a salt pan constructed on the west side of the haven in the 1630s as part of an experimental method of salt extraction. The process had required a large amount of coal leading to the construction of a nearby jetty to land the coal. The members of the corporation first recorded in August 1642 that the salt pan jetty was being sued for smuggling and in January 1644 they reported the first seizures of goods landed there.<sup>62</sup> The sailor William Wood and the councillor Robert Huntington were both fined £10 for landing potters' clay. Wheatley, a 'stranger' from Dorset, paid £40 for goods landed at Gorleston rather than Great Yarmouth, and Christopher Bridgewell, a fisherman, had his catch confiscated for landing ropes at the west side of the haven.<sup>63</sup> Thomas Bendish, a merchant and Miles Corbet's man of business, managed to reduce his fine for landing goods at the salt-pans from £4 to 15s by protesting ignorance of the town's privileges, but the corporation reiterated that only coals were to be landed there.<sup>64</sup> Bendish continued to argue that he should use the salt pan as a landing point. In February 1645 he claimed liberty to do so along with a Mr Barret, and Isaac Preston, a Great Yarmouth merchant. The corporation's membership roundly rejected this, and when Bendish received a writ to allow him to use the salt pan unhindered in May 1645 the members of the corporation ordered the jetty dug up the following July.<sup>65</sup> The importance of duties was as a source of revenue and as a symbol of the town's liberty. Bendish's connections and attempt to flout the customs duties reveals how those with political influence with Parliament threatened the control of the town's oligarchy.

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<sup>61</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 28.

<sup>62</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 514.

<sup>63</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 32.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, f. 56.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, ff. 59, 67, 70.

Great Yarmouth's corporation had previously covered gaps in income by relying on the town's merchants to provide loans. The corporation regularly borrowed from the town's merchant families in the form of long-term bequests left to the town which the corporation used until heirs came of age.<sup>66</sup> However, to cover urgent costs during the Civil War, the corporation took out loans from members of the corporation, but these loans could be recalled at short notice.<sup>67</sup> Officers would cover outstanding debts or sudden expenses and be paid back at assembly meetings or the annual accounts, but these left the corporation heavily indebted to its membership. Thomas Medowe bore the cost of £400 for the fortifications for over nine months, the corporation paid back Thomas Johnson £250 for money he had spent on wood for the haven and owed Edward Owner £100 for outfitting the town's warship.<sup>68</sup> As costs increased and the war damaged trade, loans to the corporation were only be a temporary solution.

Members of the corporation's initial attempt to cover the gap between the corporation's income and spending were through voluntary rates meant to cover the cost of the town's fortifications and ministry. Voluntary contributions had the advantage of allowing the corporation to begin collecting immediately without requiring Parliamentary approval, but the downside was that the corporation could not enforce collection. The members of corporation agreed on 13 December 1642 that a £400 voluntary contribution for fortifications was 'fitter' than the previously suggested rate. It was hoped that the town's commons would follow the example of the aldermen and common councillors and present subscriptions and voluntary contributions.<sup>69</sup> However, on 23 December, the voluntary rate was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, f. 55.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, ff. 14, 34, 65.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, ff. 16, 55, 79.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, f. 6.

dropped as 'inconvenient' and was replaced by a treble rate, and the corporation added additional aldermen assessors: Thomas Johnson, Nicholas Cutting, and Jeffrey Ward, to ensure collection.<sup>70</sup> The voluntary rate was abandoned because the members of the corporation could not secure popular support for paying for the town's defences. In February 1643, the members of the corporation instituted a voluntary collection for the ministers of £250, with payment expected half-yearly. The collectors were puritan councillors, Thomas Gooch and William Lucas for the south wards, and Henry Moulton and William Standley for the north.<sup>71</sup> In August this became a rate, now requiring collection by four aldermen, the chamberlains, four common councillors, and the aldermen and constables of the wards.<sup>72</sup> A successful call for contributions to pay for coal to relieve the poor in December 1643 was followed by a second failed voluntary stipend to support the town's ministers in July 1645.<sup>73</sup> The corporation hoped the cost of the ministry would be borne by subscription now that the corporation was only paying two rather than four, but an assessment was required after a month as 'most men are very backward therein [and] not willing to contribute'.<sup>74</sup> There was no popular enthusiasm for members of the corporation's demands to support the town's puritan ministry. The intensification of the First Civil War and the corporation's failure to gather voluntary funding meant that the corporation needed to collect taxation by force to sustain the town's security as support for the town's Presbyterian ministry waned.

The Great Yarmouth corporation came to rely on the distraint of goods to ensure the collection of rates and assessments, a process whereby those in arrears had goods to the value of the debt taken and sold.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, f. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, f. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, f. 17.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, ff. 29, 69.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, f. 70.

The decision to take distraint required an order from the corporation or Parliament.<sup>75</sup> The corporation licensed those taking goods in distraint and they were 'saved harmless' from legal repercussions for working on the town's behalf. The corporation had not needed to call upon distraint throughout the 1630s but started using it in July 1642 for those failing to attend the day watch.<sup>76</sup> Between October 1642 and September 1645 distraint was warranted for the fortifications, havens and piers, proposition money, the church, defaulters in the watch, and twelve separate orders for the ministers' rates.<sup>77</sup> The corporation also used its military and political authority to overawe and command residents to pay. In September 1643 the captains of the town's volunteer company were to be saved harmless to 'give any assistance for takeing any distresse of goods', and in October collectors were offered the company's help in collecting directly.<sup>78</sup> In late November 1643 the aldermen Giles Call, John Symonds, and the justices were authorised to call to the audit chamber any residents who were 'refractory and refuse to come before them'.<sup>79</sup> By August 1644 the bailiffs and justices were meeting weekly on Wednesdays in the Audit Chamber to bring further forfeited recognizances.<sup>80</sup> The duty of collection was onerous enough that collectors of the rate of fortification had to be threatened with a fine of £5 each if they failed to use their 'best indeavor'.<sup>81</sup> The straining of the vertical bonds between governed and governors was painful, as conformity required the corporation to be increasingly forceful.

The war did offer the opportunity for reform as the members of the corporation used their new powers to ensure attendance at Sunday services. They justified their Sabbatarian campaign by Parliamentary

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, ff. 13, 15.

<sup>76</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 513.

<sup>77</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 13, 15, 23, 27, 35, 36, 39, 50, 52, 60, 63, 64, 70.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, ff. 23, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, f. 28.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, f. 43.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, f. 15.

order and the disorder caused by non-attendance. In November 1643, the constables were ordered to 'goe about the Towne to looke into Taphouses Innes and Tavernes for idle [and] disorderly p[er]sons' in both the morning and afternoon. This concern for Sabbatarianism came just before the first complaints of separatist churches in the town so the 'badly exercised' could have been separatists, the recalcitrant, or prayer book protestants.<sup>82</sup> In June 1644, the members of the corporation empowered 'the Constables of every warde' to ensure observation of the Sabbath based upon Parliamentary ordinance. The constables were to immediately carry offenders to the ward aldermen to punish them or inform the justices to allow them to be 'duly punished'.<sup>83</sup> In November of that year, the corporation gave orders for two under constables and six corporals to patrol the town on Sundays to apprehend offenders and take them before the bailiffs for punishment. The justification for apprehending those who failed to attend service was the way the sabbath was being 'profaned' by 'idle persons' and 'rude and disorderly' behaviour.<sup>84</sup> Those in taverns during Sundays were not idle but were instead prayer book protestants seeking to avoid puritan service, as drinking at alehouses became an expression of royalist resistance.<sup>85</sup> The members of the corporation sought to use their powers to enforce the citizenry's behaviour as a commitment to the 'reformation of manners', and to control potentially divisive elements within the body politic.

Great Yarmouth's corporation needed to use its organisational power to fund an ambitious program of refortification, raising troops, and offering support to the wider war effort, but this also meant it was responsible for levying unpopular demands on the populace. Limited financial reserves left the town

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, f. 28.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, f. 40.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, f. 53.

<sup>85</sup> Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 106-7, 162-4; Andrew Hopper, 'The Great Blow' and the Politics of Popular Royalism in Civil War Norwich', *The English Historical Review*, 133 (2018), pp. 44, 60.



at the mercy of the wealthy merchants who supplied loans and covered the cost of the corporation's spending, and further demands risked antagonising the corporation's main supporters. Voluntary rates to cover the fortifications and minister's rates proved impossible to collect, and so the corporation had to raise the money owed by seizing of goods and dragging citizens before the bailiffs and justices to enforce the payment of duties. Ordinary citizens expressed their discontent by being unwilling to pay the corporation's demands, rejecting the voluntary rates for the ministers closely tied to the puritan hierarchy, showing how the town's financial distress undermined the support for puritan politics. The softening of support for the corporation's leadership fuelled fears that the population might turn to other authorities, such as Eastern Association, to supplant and replace the corporation's power.

#### iv. The Garrison

To defend and control the vulnerable East Coast of England the military authorities of the Eastern Association sought to impose a garrison and military governor on Great Yarmouth, against the wishes of members of the corporation. Garrisons were an important part of Civil War warfare and were relied upon to extract resources from localities, exert control over local authorities, and provide security over disputed regions.<sup>86</sup> Great Yarmouth was initially secure within the nascent Eastern Association, which was bounded by the natural choke points of the Wash at King's Lynn and Ely on the River Great Ouse. However, risings in King's Lynn and Lowestoft showed the vulnerabilities of the Parliamentary position to internal risings and attacks from the sea. Oliver Cromwell believed that allowing the

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<sup>86</sup> John Barratt, *Cavaliers: The Royalist Army at War 1642-1646* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 199-200.

Royalists to take King's Lynn would 'see Newcastle's army march up into your [Parliament's] bowels', and the rising was a threat to the security of the Associated Counties.<sup>87</sup> The rising in Lowestoft exposed Lothingland, the low-lying island to the south of Great Yarmouth, as a potential landing site with Royalist support. This justified the imposition of a garrison by the Eastern Association, but the presence of troops and a military governor threatened to supplant the Great Yarmouth corporation's power. The imposition of a governor came at the instigation of individuals within Great Yarmouth who were willing to cast aspersions on the loyalty of the corporation to do so. The garrison also threatened the unity of the town's worship, as Fleetwood's regiment brought religious non-conformists into the town.

The defensible points to garrison vulnerable Lothingland were Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft as they bordered each side of the island. The Suffolk lawyer John Ufflet argued for the necessity of an Eastern Association garrison since Lothingland was not only vulnerable but disloyal since there 'hath not been one voluntary horse or foot souldier sent out of the whole Island into the Parliaments service'. Ufflet argued it was necessary to send 'an upright and judicious Commander, one of quick eyes, patient eares, and clean hands' to 'secure themselves, awe their enemies'. Ufflet's continued demands led to his seizure and imprisonment by committee men from Bury St Edmunds who seized his papers.<sup>88</sup> Great Yarmouth had already raised a garrison made up of a company of local volunteers to resist a potential assault in 1642, but Ufflet's complaint of local disloyalty meant that there was a logic to supplement that with a loyal garrison and governor from the Eastern Association.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War*, p. 206.

<sup>88</sup> John Ufflet, *The Kingdomes Key, to Lock Out, or let in an Enemy* (London, 1646), pp. 3, 4.

<sup>89</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 26.

Military commanders imposed garrisons on communities to assure the loyalty of the local population, something felt necessary by the Eastern Association high command following the Royalist risings in King's Lynn, Ely, and Lowestoft. Despite the short and abortive nature of these rising, they revealed Royalist support within towns and their hinterlands. King's Lynn had been reportedly 'seduced by practices of strangers' and overcome by 'divers malignants, [who] disarmd the well affected inhabitants'. However, Harmon L'Estrange had successfully raised King's Lynn for the King because he could draw upon support from within the town.<sup>90</sup> The conformist Bishop Matthew Wren and the former minister of Great Yarmouth, Matthew Brooks, had both been part of rallying local Royalists in Ely and Lowestoft, respectively. In the immediate aftermath of the risings, Parliamentary troops removed dissidents and allegations of looting the properties of those believed to be disloyal.<sup>91</sup> The Eastern Association imposed garrisons on communities to prevent disloyalty, removing suspect locals, and replacing them with military officers committed to the war effort.

The governors that came with the garrisons represented an abrogation of local liberties, assuming control of urban communities that ignored existing power structures. Colonel King was a governor who usurped the networks of the civilian power structures when in Boston to pursue his agenda despite local protestations.<sup>92</sup> Cromwell and his deputy Ireton faced 'less heated' jurisdictional issues when governors of Ely but still clashed with the existing political hierarchy, especially over religion.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 62, f. 299; Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 95, 131; John Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces: The People of England and the Tragedies of War 1634-1648* (London, 1976), p. 132.

<sup>91</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 54-55, 73; Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War*, pp. 181-2.

<sup>92</sup> Clive Holmes, 'Colonel King and Lincolnshire Politics, 1642-1646', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), pp. 462-4.

<sup>93</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, p. 188; Graham Hart, 'Oliver Cromwell, Iconoclasm and Ely Cathedral', *Historical Research*, 87 (2013), pp. 370-6.

Garrisons and governors imposed by the Eastern Association were understood as a punishment for disloyal local political elites, justifying taking power from the localities and empowering the garrisons and governors to maintain control instead.

The Eastern Association's attempt to impose a military governor and a garrison on Great Yarmouth was deeply unpopular with the town's corporation, who fiercely resisted the imposition. The town's corporation first received word of the governor in December 1643 and sought immediately to oppose his arrival. Members of the corporation argued that 'there ... [was] no cause or neede of any such Govenor', and his imposition was 'much preiudiciall to our liberties and ancient Government', his role unnecessary due to the town's previous loyalty. The corporation sent the aldermen Nicholas Cutting junior and John Robins with a letter attesting the town's loyalty to the Earl of Manchester, as the Eastern Association's commander-in-chief. The resulting meeting between the Earl of Manchester and the chosen governor Colonel Francis Russell with the town's representatives was 'a full hearing' and Cuttings and Robins were 'intertained... w[ith] noble respect', but Manchester still felt it necessary to employ a governor to secure the town.<sup>94</sup> The solution pursued by the corporation was to have Colonel Russell meet with 'M[asters] Bailiffs with the Justices and m[aster] Medowe M[aster] Greene M[aster] Speck and M[aster] Cutting junior' upon his arrival on 4 January 1644 to persuade Russell of the need to defend the town's 'Ancient Government'.<sup>95</sup> The resulting accommodation was a treaty that limited Colonel Russell's power by granting a commission to the bailiff Thomas Crane, and the aldermen Thomas Johnson, Carter; M[aster] Manthorpe Gower; [and] M[aster] Cutting jun[ior] to be commanders-in-chief in addition to Colonel Russell.<sup>96</sup> Great Yarmouth's corporation resisted the

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<sup>94</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 28, 29.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, ff. 30, 31.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, f. 31.

Eastern Association's governor as an insult to their loyalty and a threat to the town's independent government, and their salvaging of the situation was to have the town's political authorities take over part of the Governor's powers.

The governor and their troops threatened Great Yarmouth's political and religious settlement despite the assurances of the officers. The first governor was a Colonel Francis Russell leading an infantry regiment, which at full strength contained around 550 men. Russell raised his regiment in Suffolk in 1643 and had served at the siege of King's Lynn and the first siege of Lincoln.<sup>97</sup> Russell tried to avoid looking like an occupier, writing to the corporation to reassure them that 'he is coming hither to advise [and] be advised for the good [and] security of the Towne'.<sup>98</sup> He and his regiment only served in the town from January to February 1644. The corporation effectively limited Russell's authority during his brief period as governor.

The second governor, Colonel Charles Fleetwood, arrived in April 1644 with his cavalry regiment. He had begun his career in the Earl of Essex's lifeguard before rising to the rank of Captain. He then joined the forces of the Eastern Association where the Association gave him the task of sequestering estates in the eastern counties in May 1643 and the command of a cavalry troop. He became linked to Oliver Cromwell and his godly circle.<sup>99</sup> His commission in the Eastern Association was controversial because of the presence of nonconformists amongst his regiment's officers, not least Fleetwood himself, and

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<sup>97</sup> Laurence Spring, *The Regiments of the Eastern Association*, 2 vols. (Bristol, 1998), ii, p. 98.

<sup>98</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 29.

<sup>99</sup> Tony Barnard, 'Fleetwood, Charles, appointed Lord Fleetwood under the protectorate (c. 1618–1692)', *ODNB*.

the radical mechanical preachers Lawrence Clarkson and John Boggis who travelled with Fleetwood's regiment.<sup>100</sup> The heresiographer Thomas Edwards alleged that the imposition of a garrison upon Great Yarmouth was part of a wider plot by nonconformists 'to get the command of the strongest Garrisons and places, yea to make Townes of consequence that were no Garrisons to have been Garrisons, as Yarmouth'.<sup>101</sup> The corporation sought to limit Fleetwood's authority more than they had Russell's. While they accepted his commission, the members of the corporation ordered that Fleetwood was 'not to admit any great companey to come in w[ith] hym; nor to have any drum beaten up in Towne nor suffer hym to exercise any power or authority here w[ith]out consent of this house', limiting the Colonel's authority over the town.<sup>102</sup> The corporation also received from Fleetwood written confirmation of his rejection of 'untrue asp[er]sions' against the town and that his commission was only for Lothingland, which sealed in the hutch book.<sup>103</sup> The corporation had more difficulty controlling the preachers who had travelled with Fleetwood, eventually dismissing Boggis for declaring 'the bible is but paper' in October 1645.<sup>104</sup> Members of the corporation were keen to further limit Colonel Fleetwood's power and the presence of his troops due to his reputation for religious nonconformity. The corporation had difficulty containing the political influence of the military governors and the governors' powers limited the corporation's abilities to curb support for nonconformity that spread from governors' troops.

The corporation discovered that the desire to garrison Great Yarmouth came from within the town, which the Councillors saw as a challenge to their authority and power over Great Yarmouth. Nicholas

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<sup>100</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, p. 189; Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. 161-2; see below chapter six for further discussion of Boggis' nonconformity, pp. 183-8.

<sup>101</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, p. 54.

<sup>102</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 39.

<sup>103</sup> NRO, Y/C20/1, f. 49.

<sup>104</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. 134, 161-2.

Cutting and John Robins reported back from their meeting with Colonel Russell that ‘some private men here in Towne were the causers and desirers to have a Governor sent hither’.<sup>105</sup> The members of the corporation ordered that an ‘inquiry be made of such p[er]sons’ who had invited in a governor to be ‘sett over us’ so that ‘they shalbe dealt withal [and] censured’. The members of the corporation were to subscribe to an oath that they ‘had not any hand nor knowledge of the designe nor gave any consent to the same’.<sup>106</sup> The members of the corporation also sought to vindicate themselves from ‘aspersions’, ‘as if we were not firme and constant to the Parliament [and] kingdome’.<sup>107</sup> The imposition of the governor was described as ‘indeavoring to alter [and] overthrow the Ancient Government [and] disturbed the peace [and] quiet of the Towne [and] impeach [and] prejudice the liberties’.<sup>108</sup> This statement echoes the language used against the allies of Benjamin Cooper when they had attempted to ‘alter the government of the town’.<sup>109</sup> Town residents were willing to accuse the authorities in Great Yarmouth of disloyalty and the leadership of the Eastern Association was willing to treat these claims seriously after the risings in Kings’s Lynn and Lowestoft. The military power of the Eastern Association threatened the traditional civilian power structures.

The members of Great Yarmouth’s corporation resisted the imposition of governors and garrisons from the Eastern Association as threats to the independence of the town. The Eastern Association employed garrisons and governors to suppress uprisings in areas of suspect loyalty, and so seeking to impose one on Great Yarmouth implied suspicions over the corporation’s loyalty to the Parliamentary cause. The members of the corporation reacted as they had done to attempts to abrogate the town’s

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, f. 29.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, f. 30.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, f. 38.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, f. 30

<sup>109</sup> NRO, C19/6, f. 131, discussed above in chapter three, pp. 81-2.

independence in the 1620s and 30s, using their political influence to appeal to a higher power and asserting their loyalty. The corporation neutered the influence of the governors by gaining a commission that shared the governors' authority amongst a group of aldermen, limiting the number of troops present in town, and preventing Colonel Fleetwood from displaying colours and beating drums in town. However, the corporation still struggled to contain the heterodox chaplains and nonconformists aligned with the garrison. They also failed to discover who was seeking to put in place a governorship, meaning the corporation's opponents within the community could threaten the corporation with impunity. The imposition of the garrison showed the corporation's vulnerability to both internal criticism and the external power structures created by the civil wars.

#### v. The Destruction of the Herring Fleet

The Royalist raids on Great Yarmouth's herring fleet had dire consequences for a large part of the town's citizenry who relied on the catch, showing the vulnerability of the town's fleet and charitable systems. The herring fleet and its catch were a vital part of the town's economy for most of the town's residents.<sup>110</sup> This undermined popular support for the members of the corporation that had failed to defend the herring fleet and whose poverty relief buckled under the pressure. The Royalists employed a fleet of privateers based in the Spanish Netherlands and their North Sea campaign between 1643 and 1645 nearly destroyed Great Yarmouth's herring fleet. The capture of the herring fleet was costly to the town's fishermen due to the loss of the catch, capturing vessels, and imprisoning and ransoming

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<sup>110</sup> See chapter two above for a description of the herring trade and its importance to Great Yarmouth, pp. 46-7.



those captured. The failure to protect the herring fleet led to popular discontent that culminated in the Royalist rising of 1648.

During the 1620s and 30s, Spanish privateers based in Dunkirk had menaced merchantmen in the North Sea, and during the Bishops' Wars, Scottish raiders attacked English vessels along the east coast. Vessels from Great Yarmouth captured included the *Hanna* owned by four of the town's aldermen which was taken to Spain in 1637; the *Virgin*, a bark captured in February 1637 laden with herring and other goods; and an unnamed pink stolen while within the town's harbour in December 1634.<sup>111</sup> In October 1632, members of the corporation complained to Parliament of Dunkirk raiders 'laying within the haven's mouth' waiting to capture vessels.<sup>112</sup> In both 1625 and 1630, the Great Yarmouth corporation requested 'wastage' or the provision of royal warships to guard the merchant fleet against Spanish raiders and in 1639 against the Scottish privateers.<sup>113</sup> In 1630 the corporation thanked the Earl of Dorset, their High Steward and a Privy Councillor, for his help in securing wastage, and in 1639 they provided a feast for the deputy lieutenant of Norfolk in hope of gaining his support for wastage.<sup>114</sup> The Spanish privateers' campaign captured more than three hundred vessels during the 1620s and 30s, representing 15%-20% of the total British merchant marine and denting the North Sea trade. By 1640 the tightening Dutch stranglehold over the Flemish coast, Spanish war with France, and the needs of imperial service on the Atlantic coast lessened the threat of Dunkirk's frigates.<sup>115</sup> However, while both the Armada of Flanders and Scottish privateers had struck at Great Yarmouth's trade, neither had been

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<sup>111</sup> TNA, SP 16/321, f. 18; TNA, SP 84/149, f.1; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/42, f. 112.

<sup>112</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 256.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, ff. 13, 19, 434.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, ff. 170, 441.

<sup>115</sup> R. A. Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders: Spanish Maritime Policy and European War, 1568-1668* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 59, 118.

a threat to the herring fleet, and Great Yarmouth's corporation was not prepared to protect the herring fleet from privateering during the Civil War.

At the outbreak of the English Civil War, the Royalists did not threaten the security of the North Sea, and it took time to contract privateers to raid Parliamentary shipping. The Duke of Northumberland and the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Warwick, secured the loyalty of the English Navy to Parliament in May 1641, and the King lacked ports to support a fleet when the Civil War broke out in August 1642.<sup>116</sup> Parliament consolidated its control over the seas in Autumn 1642, scattering Royalist shipping and supply ships from Ireland and the continent and by 1643 Parliament had sixty ships guarding the North Sea, Irish Sea and Channel.<sup>117</sup> However, in the winter of 1643, the balance of power at sea shifted. The cessation of conflict in Ireland and the Royalists capture of Jersey and Bristol allowed the King to contract privateers to supply naval power. The privateers were based in ports in England, Wales, the Channel Islands, and in Ostend where captured vessels were sold.<sup>118</sup> The Earl of Warwick estimated 250 Royalist vessels were operating in 1644.<sup>119</sup> The Royalist privateers successfully challenged Parliamentary control over the North Sea between 1643-45 and the privateers could pick targets of opportunity.

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<sup>116</sup> Adamson, *The Noble Revolt*, p. 311.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Blakemore and Elaine Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea, 1638-1653* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 59-60, 62.

<sup>118</sup> Michael James Lea-O'Mahoney, 'The Navy in the English Civil War', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2011, pp. 14, 75, 77, 175; Blakemore and Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea*, pp. 66, 109-12.

<sup>119</sup> BL, Add. MS. 72437, referenced in Ben Coates, *The Impact of the English Civil War on the Economy of London, 1642-50* (Oxford, 2016), p. 127.

Great Yarmouth came under threat from Royalist privateers led by Thomas Allin, a merchant from Lowestoft, whose local knowledge and enmity against Great Yarmouth provided a unique threat to the town's herring fleet. Allin was involved in the abortive 1643 Royalist rising in Lowestoft but escaped to join the Royalist privateering fleet at Ostend. After the failed rising John Ufflet alleged that 'many of the most expert Pylots, and Sea-men, have withdrawn themselves into *Dunkirke*, and continually rob upon the Coasts', providing the basis for Allin's crew of privateers.<sup>120</sup> Great Yarmouth corporation's confiscated and sold his pink lying in the town's haven, only inflaming Allin's enmity.<sup>121</sup> Allin's local knowledge and his crew of Lowestoft men allowed him to form a 'confederacy against Yarmouth, to retaliate the injuries they had received from that town... with the design of fitting out vessels to distress the trade at Yarmouth'.<sup>122</sup> Ufflet put an upper figure on Allin's supporters in Dunkirk at 2000 men along with a 'considerable' number of vessels.<sup>123</sup> Allin and his fellow fugitives from Lowestoft had considerable experience and knowledge of the herring trade that meant that the Great Yarmouth herring fleet was dangerously exposed.

The damage to Great Yarmouth's herring fleet by Royalist privateering was crippling. Thomas Allin's campaign in 1644 captured twenty out of twenty-three vessels travelling to Iceland.<sup>124</sup> Between 1643 and 1645 the half doles fell to half their peacetime value and two-thirds their value in 1642.<sup>125</sup> Allin claimed he had captured 'thousands of prisoners' who might have been 'endungeoned, nay hanged'.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ufflet, *The Kingdomes Keys*, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War*, p. 184; C. S. Knighton, 'Allin, Sir Thomas, first baronet (bap. 1612, d. 1685)', *ODNB*; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 41.

<sup>122</sup> Edmund Gillingwater and A. E. Murton, *Gillingwater's History of Lowestoft: A Reprint: With a Chapter of More Recent Events by A.E. Murton* (Lowestoft, 1897), pp. 56-7.

<sup>123</sup> Ufflet, *The Kingdomes Keys*, p. 7.

<sup>124</sup> Gillingwater and Murton, *Gillingwater's History of Lowestoft*, p. 57.

<sup>125</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 560.

<sup>126</sup> Gillingwater and Murton, *Gillingwater's History of Lowestoft*, p. 57.

The cost of ransoming back even smaller fishing vessels was ruinous as John Page of Great Yarmouth paid £135 to privateers in 1649 for his vessel.<sup>127</sup> Great Yarmouth's herring fleet had been severely damaged, thousands of sailors were captured, and the herring catch unsustainably low, which demanded action from Great Yarmouth's corporation.

Members of the corporation sought to defend the herring fleet by appealing to Parliament for warships to guard the vulnerable. It was only after privateers had mauled the herring fleet in the winter of 1643 that members of the Great Yarmouth corporation requested guard ships from Parliament. In November 1643, the House of Commons ordered Miles Corbet to write to the town offering a 'safe Convoy for their fishing Fleet next Spring; and for their Ships that are to go to *Burdeaux* and *Holland*', although the corporation never recorded receiving the message.<sup>128</sup> Initially, the corporation sent two relatively inexperienced councillors in the summer of 1644, unlike earlier trips when the corporation had sent aldermen and bailiffs to purchase artillery.<sup>129</sup> Walter Bullard had only been a common councillor for three years, while Geoffrey Cobbe's civic career as a common councillor had been without distinction.<sup>130</sup> Members of the corporation also expected the journey to Parliament to be funded by the 'chiefe fishermen[s] ... contributions', in other words by those suffering from privateering rather than from the corporation's funds.<sup>131</sup> It took the involvement of the bailiff-elect Thomas Johnson for Parliament to pass an ordinance for wastage while Johnson was at Parliament. Parliament agreed to provide a squadron of three ships supported by the town's ship, the *Adventure*, but at the cost of an additional rate placed on the herring catch of 3s a last.<sup>132</sup> The *Adventure* was a former merchantman

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<sup>127</sup> Blakemore and Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea*, p. 122.

<sup>128</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, iii, p.325.

<sup>129</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 7,

<sup>130</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 478.

<sup>131</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 43.

<sup>132</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 40, 45; *Journal of the House of Commons*, iii, p. 605.

in service to Queen Henrietta Maria captured by the town from when it was blown into the harbour whilst carrying troops and equipment to England, which members of the corporation equipped and manned as a warship.<sup>133</sup> However, the ship's initial purpose was 'takeing of such prize Shippes vessells [and] goods as belong to any p[er]sons or places that are in hostility against the Parliament', and in 1643 the *Adventure* captured a ketch laden with coals and a pink carrying white fish.<sup>134</sup> It was only as part of the Parliamentary ordinance for wastage that the *Adventure* became part of the guard ships, meaning members of the corporation were putting potential profit above the interests of the town's fishermen.<sup>135</sup> The members of the corporation's lacklustre response was matched by the failure of the initial deployment of guardships to stem privateering over the winter of 1644.<sup>136</sup> Following the herring fleet's heavy losses in the winter of 1644, the members of the corporation sent the aldermen Robert Gower and Giles Call in March 1645 to seek an agreement with Parliament for the next year's wastage fleet, just after the arrival of the current fleet.<sup>137</sup> When they returned with the promise of only three vessels, two more aldermen were sent out, William Lucas and the now promoted Geoffrey Cobbe, and they secured five vessels.<sup>138</sup> The corporation had failed to initially take the threat of privateering seriously, which had left the herring fleets vulnerable in 1643 and 1644.

The privateering campaign and the near destruction of Great Yarmouth's herring fleet damaged the relationship between the governed and governors of the town. The failure of members of the corporation to support the fishermen by not supplying adequate guard ships and or providing enough charitable giving only exacerbated the tensions between governed and governors. Twenty-one of the

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<sup>133</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 31, 34, 36.; *Journal of the House of Lords*, v, p. 398.

<sup>134</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 34, 41.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid f. 45.

<sup>136</sup> Gillingwater and Murton, *Gillingwater's History of Lowestoft*, p. 57; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 60.

<sup>137</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 63.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, f. 73

sailors who had employed by the town for wastage mutinied in December 1645, having not been paid for six months, and Edward Owner had to step in and offer £100 to calm the mutineers.<sup>139</sup> The corporation also prevented debtors from selling herring until their debt to the town was paid, and forbade fishing on the Sabbath by closing off the harbour with the boom, cutting off opportunities for fishermen to recover from their losses into 1645 and 1646.<sup>140</sup> The desperate situation for the fishermen only worsened for next few years town's charitable provision near collapsed under the strain of supporting the destitute sailors, leading Parliamentary authorities to fear that the town's fishermen would rebel in 1648.<sup>141</sup>

The failure of the corporation to protect the town's herring fleet from privateers showed the disconnect between the fishermen and corporation. The disaster that befell the town's fishermen was ruinous, crippling economic life for the town's poorest as the Royalist privateers imprisoned the fishermen and sold off their ships and catch. Getting Parliamentary guardships for the herring fleet was more difficult than necessary because of members of the corporation's initial diffident response. Even after the corporation had secured wastage fleets from Parliament, members of the corporation passed acts that made life more difficult for fishermen based upon the corporation's financial difficulties and need to keep the sabbath. The tension between the merchants and the struggling poor informed fears of charity refusal within witchcraft accusations as it damaged the vertical relationship between governors and governed.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, f. 81.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, ff. 73, 90.

<sup>141</sup> See chapters eight and nine.

## vi. Conclusion

During the Civil War, the Great Yarmouth corporation was treated as a mere collection body for the rapacious needs of the Parliamentary war machine. Weekly payments to the Norfolk committee, appeals to support campaigns elsewhere, and expectations of raising and paying for volunteers all required payments on top of the corporation's own financial needs. The ability to deliver taxation to the central government was the basis of the borough's independence. The war put the corporation under pressure to provide those resources or have more pliable military governors supersede them. Rather than acting as defenders of the town's liberties, the members of the corporation needed to deploy their political capital to coerce payment. This undermined the moral authority of the town's governors, creating the tension between ruler and ruled that fuelled the witch-hunt as an expression of a restoration of the corporation's authority.

The demands of local defence alienated Great Yarmouth's population from the members of the Great Yarmouth corporation. The clearing of the areas outside the wall, the construction of defence works, and the manning of the watch all required members of the corporation to conscript the town's residents as a workforce, all enforced by the agents of the corporation, the aldermen and constables. The members of the corporation also shouldered the responsibility for defending the town's herring fleets. The corporation failed to protect the fleet from being preyed upon by privateers, saw thousands of residents captured and falling into penury, increasing the demand for charity that created the

tension between neighbours that lay behind witchcraft accusations. Reports from locals that Great Yarmouth's corporation was not up to the task of defending the town or even disloyal to Parliament's cause threatened the independence of the town's corporation. The demands of prosecuting the war required new structures that threatened local independence. Parliament's control over more secure regions like East Anglia that were not war-ravaged allowed the survival of the existing local government infrastructure, but the Associated Counties could overrule them. The local committees were arbitrary and corrupt because they reflected factional fracture lines in local politics and partisan 'enthusiasts' dominated.<sup>142</sup> The Eastern Association's central committee and military machinery became further divorced from the localities as the Presbyterian civilian authorities paid for an Association army dominated by officers with sectarian leanings. The garrisons and their independent officers and men provided an inlet for religious nonconformity that threatened the town's religious settlement.<sup>143</sup> The challenge to local government from new power structures brought about by the war undermined the old visions of political and religious uniformity. The growing threat of religious nonconformity was another break within the community further fracturing the town's cohesion. Poverty, nonconformity, and the challenges to the town's corporation that emerged from the war embedded the challenges to the town's Presbyterian government.

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<sup>142</sup> Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces*, pp. 52-3, 64-6, 73-80; Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-60* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 214-5.

<sup>143</sup> Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp. 201-4.



## Chapter 6: The Development of Religious Nonconformity in Great Yarmouth, 1642-5

### i. Introduction

The reaction of Great Yarmouth's puritans to the growth of Congregationalism and nonconformity within Great Yarmouth provided the backdrop to the witch-hunt. There had been communities of religious nonconformists in the town during the 1620s and 30s.<sup>1</sup> However, it was only following the outbreak of the English Civil War that a group of Congregationalists established a church in the town and became visibly influential in the town. Two main nonconformist communities existed in Great Yarmouth by 1645, a Congregational church led by the minister William Bridge, and an Anabaptist sect inspired by the mechanical preacher John Boggis.<sup>2</sup> Congregationalism held an ambiguous place in the town as the corporation initially hired William Bridge a minister on equal footing with the Presbyterian John Brinsley and his assistant Thomas Whitfield.<sup>3</sup> Following a series of conversions from politically influential families and public support for congregational gatherings in Great Yarmouth, they were a significant presence in the town. When Bridge and his fellow Apologist divines at the Westminster Assembly went from accepting of a potential new puritan settlement to dissenting to a Presbyterian agreement, members of the Great Yarmouth corporation sought to challenge the influence of the

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<sup>1</sup> See chapters three and four.

<sup>2</sup> NRO, FC31/1; Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. 161-2.

<sup>3</sup> See above chapter four, pp. 122-3.

Congregational church. Nonconformity was therefore perceived by the corporation as a threat to the town's unity.

Great Yarmouth had three distinct religious groupings between 1642 and 1645, an establishment led by John Brinsley that included conservative puritans with Presbyterian sympathies seeking religious conformity, an independent Congregational church, and an Anabaptist congregation. For the conservative puritans and reformed Presbyterians 'membership of the Church of England was ultimately the line between nonconformity and schism', and they accepted the reformed institutions of a national church as a source of unity.<sup>4</sup> The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, a notably rigorously orthodox Presbyterian community, had short-listed John Brinsley to be their minister in 1639, showing his orthodox Presbyterian ministry.<sup>5</sup> His sermons in the 1640s included defences of Presbyteries and the national church.<sup>6</sup> There was obvious support for Brinsley from members of the corporation, and the corporation passed orders against church divisions and the 'congregational way', seeking instead unity and uniformity with the proposed Presbyterian leaning national settlement.<sup>7</sup> Congregationalists accepted both the authority of the civil power and professed a common Calvinist orthodoxy with the Presbyterians. What they could not accept was a 'church co-terminous with the nation, embracing saints and sinners alike'. They had a 'moral obligation' to the second commandment to establish new ecclesiastical societies that allowed individuals to worship unadulterated.<sup>8</sup> The Congregationalists sought to 'to cleave to the true worship of God' in 'our own Congregations' away

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<sup>4</sup> Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> Brinsley, *The Saints Solemne Covenant with Their God*; Idem, *The Araignment of the Present Schism of New Separation in Old England*; Idem, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*.

<sup>7</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 66, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, pp. 297-8; Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, pp. 116-7.

from the 'unwarranted power of Church Governors'.<sup>9</sup> Puritans were hopeful that a platform for Church government could be built at the Westminster Assembly of Divines between the apologists and more conservative puritans until the Parliamentary vote on the clarifying of the third proposition pushed the apologists into dissent in 1644.<sup>10</sup> Radical sects were harder to accommodate. Separatist churches rejected not just the unity of the church as a community, but as the 'Gangrene of Anabaptism', they represented a growing corruption to more orthodox puritans.<sup>11</sup> Their unwillingness of Anabaptists to partake in the community of the church was shown by their rejection of child baptism, but Brinsley alleged that the mechanical preacher John Boggis was willing to announce deeply heretical thoughts such as the bible 'was but paper'.<sup>12</sup> Members of the corporation's desire for puritan conformity and unity meant that they were faced with a challenge in responding to the growth of Congregationalism and Anabaptism.

## ii. Timeline

Congregational and Anabaptist congregations grew and prospered in Great Yarmouth between 1642 and 1645. The divide between the existing puritan community in the town and William Bridge's congregation was initially narrow, but after 1644 members of the corporation sought to curb separate

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<sup>9</sup> William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughes, Sydrach Simpson, Philip Nye, Thomas Goodwin, *An Apologeticall Narration of Some Ministers Formerly Exiles in the Netherlands: Now Members of the Assembly of Divines*. (London, 1643), pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, pp. 22-9, 91-3

<sup>11</sup> Brinsley, *The Doctrine and Practice of Paedobaptisme, Asserted and Vindicated*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, p. 134.

churches, public support for the congregational way, and the influence of Bridge and his assistant John Oxenbridge. John Boggis and the town's Anabaptists provided a more direct challenge to the town's puritan ministry, as Boggis sought to debate the ministers and criticise doctrine. The corporation's reaction was informed by national debates and divides between those seeking a Presbyterian settlement and those in support of Congregational churches at the Westminster Assembly.

The Westminster Assembly of Divines debate over Parliament's religious settlement was the background to increasingly religious strife in Great Yarmouth. Since 1641 the 'Holland Brethren' of Congregationalists had been willing to work with a larger alliance of puritans and parliamentarians in challenging prelacy as part of the so-called Aldermanbury group and recognised as fellow puritans, unlike Brownists or separatists.<sup>13</sup> In December 1643 William Bridge had been willing to subscribe to the Westminster Assembly's call 'to forbear for a convenient time the joining of themselves into church-societies' until the Assembly reported.<sup>14</sup> However, the publication of *An Apologeticall Narration* in January 1644 by the five Holland brethren: Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs and William Bridge, sparked a wider debate on the place of Congregationalism as part of the settlement that was to come out of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. This was despite the authors' intention that it was a 'last attempt to keep the godly united and protect the unity established in 1641'.<sup>15</sup> The fear of Congregationalism in Great Yarmouth cannot be divorced from the debates in the Westminster Assembly over Congregational influence.

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<sup>13</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, pp. 22, 52.

<sup>14</sup> *Certaine Considerations to Dis-swade Men from Further Gathering of Churches in this Present Juncture of Time: Subscribed by Diverse Divines of the Assembly, Hereafter Mentioned* (London, 1643), pp. 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, 'The Dissenting Brethren and the Power of the Keys, 1640-44', p. 97.

From 1644, there was a vociferous campaign against sectarians led by Thomas Edwards, whose several volumes of *Gangraena* catalogued errors and divisions conflated more radical separatism with Congregational dissent.<sup>16</sup> Edwards outlined the dangers of religious nonconformity as he railed against 'all the spirit of separation, schisme and error thorowout the Kingdome, from the highest Seeker to the lowest Independent'. Edwards accused the Congregationalists of being willing to join in 'Church-fellowship' with other sectarians and oppose 'the Orthodox and Presbyterians'.<sup>17</sup> John Brinsley was likely the author of a letter to Edwards from 'a godly and learned Minister living at Yarmouth' included in the second volume of *Gangraena*.<sup>18</sup> Edwards' attacks became all the more vociferous after Parliament elected to support presbyteries in November 1644 forced the Congregationalists to declare their dissent to the settlement.<sup>19</sup> Great Yarmouth became part of the debate played out in London, the town's religious divides connected through published letters and sermons.

The corporation was initially supportive of the arrival of William Bridge and his followers as they founded a Congregational community in Great Yarmouth. The initial foundation of the Congregational church in Great Yarmouth remains vague, with the church book only stating that with 'full Parliament called and convened in England' the members of the church of Rotterdam returned to England and sought to 'inchurch' into new communities.<sup>20</sup> The Congregational church started as a community of

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<sup>16</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. xiv, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 133.

<sup>19</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, pp. 233, 242-4.

<sup>20</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 1.

ten emigres in Great Yarmouth and Norwich who met regularly from 1642 to 1643, and June 1643 the members formed a covenant with William Bridge to form themselves into a church.<sup>21</sup>

William Bridge's assent had been vital to the signing of the covenant of the new Congregational church, and his presence was the attraction for the émigré founders of the church. Bridge's status increased as he began serving on the Westminster Assembly of Divines from 25 April 1642 and gave a series of fast sermons to Parliament.<sup>22</sup> However, it was only in March 1643 that members of the corporation confirmed the day of Bridge's weekly sermon, and in September they cut his wages for his attendance at the Westminster Assembly.<sup>23</sup> Members of the corporation also accepted Bridge's assistant John Oxenbridge, who arrived in Great Yarmouth in October 1643, and the corporation allowed him to preach at no cost to the corporation from January 1644.<sup>24</sup> However, the corporation also sought to ban Congregational worship in January 1644 by banning public exercises in private houses and suppressing a petition to Parliament calling for 'admitting and allowing of congregationall assemblies in a Church way'.<sup>25</sup> Members of the corporation were willing to continue to support Bridge and Oxenbridge as ministers but also sought to prevent independent gatherings in the town.

The members of the corporation stopped employing Bridge and Oxenbridge in 1645 as part of preventing the gathering of independent congregations. The corporation's increasing anxiety over

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, f. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.

<sup>23</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 12, 23.

<sup>24</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 2; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 31.

<sup>25</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 31, 32.

nonconformity was due to the presence of John Boggis, an Anabaptist mechanical preacher, who had come to the town as part of Colonel Fleetwood's garrison in 1644. In January 1645 Boggis faced accusations of gross blasphemy for calling the bible 'but paper', and before May 1645 he, and a local Anabaptist leader, a Mr Oats, had stormed into Brinsley's house to debate theology.<sup>26</sup> In April 1645, the corporation organised a mandatory debate for all members to settle for the 'peace of the town', and most members agreed that uniformity was the best solution. As a result, the corporation limited preaching to Brinsley and his assistant Whitfield and services were only to be held at the Parish church.<sup>27</sup> In July members of the corporation blamed men following the 'congregationall way' for the 'great divisions and distractions in Towne', but offered William Bridge the opportunity to return to preaching, but only if Bridge did so 'without maintaining the independent way here in the Towne'.<sup>28</sup> Rather than continue to seek accommodation with the Congregationalists, the conservative puritan grouping on the corporation now saw the Congregationalists as the cause of the town's divisions.

The members of the corporation's changing attitudes towards Congregationalism shows how they struggled with the growth of nonconformity. While members of the corporation could co-opt Bridge and Oxenbridge into supporting a comprehensive puritan settlement and prevent divides within the body politic, the corporation could support them. But as Congregationalist ministers explained that they could not accept the Presbyterian settlement and more radical separatists appeared, members of the corporation grew concerned about the dangers of Congregationalism. The growth in power and influence of the Congregational church in Great Yarmouth between 1642 and 1645 challenged the corporation's ability to enforce puritan conformity.

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<sup>26</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 65, 66.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, f. 69.

### iii. The Arrival of William Bridge and the Growing Influence of his Congregation

Members of the town's corporation perceived Congregationalism as the greatest threat to Great Yarmouth's conformity by 1645, because the porous boundaries between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism meant that Bridge's congregation became deeply entrenched from 1642. This section examines how a Congregationalist church formed in Great Yarmouth around the ministry of William Bridge, and why this congregation became influential. Bridge's career as a minister and member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and his ability to ingratiate himself within Great Yarmouth was vital to the success of the congregation.<sup>29</sup> The growth in numbers and political influence of the congregation shows the changing composition of the congregation as more women and politically influential families joined. This provides the basis for discussing why members of the corporation saw Congregationalism as a challenge to the town's religious and political order.

The Congregational Church that followed Bridge to Great Yarmouth was initially a small group of returning émigrés scattered between Great Yarmouth and Norwich. Many of Bridge's former congregation had left England during the 1630s to avoid the 'Popish Ceremonies & divers innovated iniunctions in the worship and servi[ce] of God by B[ishop] Wren & his instruments' and to go to Holland

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<sup>29</sup> See above in chapter four for a description of Bridge's career before 1642, pp. 123-5.



where they could 'enjoy [the] liberty of their consciences'.<sup>30</sup> 'Th[e] glad tydings of a {hope}full Parliament' was justification for the Congregationalists to call for their dismissal from the Rotterdam congregation to allow them to 'inchurch' in Norwich and Great Yarmouth 'not without hope of enjoying liberty there'.<sup>31</sup> On 28 June 1643, William Bridge and ten others 'freely solemnly [and] iontly Covenant[ed] w[ith] th[e] lord in the presence of his saintes & Angells', thereby becoming a congregation.<sup>32</sup> The early congregation community was small but tightly bound together by the experience of emigration and a Congregational vision.

What united the Great Yarmouth Congregation was a founding covenant which incorporated a distinctly Congregational vision for the new church. The foundational covenant was a common feature of gathered Congregational churches.<sup>33</sup> The Great Yarmouth church's covenant required that the members of the congregation 'will in all loue improue our communion as Brethren by watching over one another', uniting God's people in opposition to being 'polluted by any sinnefull wayes either Publicque or Private'. This was conducted through 'humbly submitting our selues to th[e] Government of Christ in his Churches'. The covenant required new members to 'giue in their argum[ents]' if they held 'contrarie iudgim[ent]' to the church, rather than acquiesce to conformity. The covenant also expected that the congregation's 'Brethren should be helpfull in building up [the] sisters in knowledge according to [the] order expounded by [the] Church'. The covenant granted William Bridge 'the Pastors office in the Church of Christ', rather than the title of minister.<sup>34</sup> To create a shared godly community

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<sup>30</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, f. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, f. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Joel Halcomb, 'Godly Order and the Trumpet of Defiance: The Politics of Congregational Church Life during the English Revolution,' in *Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England*, eds Michael Davies, Anne Duncan-Page, and Joel Halcomb (Oxford, 2019), p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 2.

the congregation agreed on the 24 August 1644 that the brethren were expected to 'giue [the] Church a taste of their gifts' through weekly sermons.<sup>35</sup> This tallied with Bridge's conception of church government, articulated in February 1644, 'that every perticular congregation should have power within itselfe', rooting authority within the particular congregation and denying the power of a universal church or Presbytery.<sup>36</sup> The congregation was initially small and centred round Bridge, but the covenant laid the basis for a community that rapidly expanded.

Between 1644 and 1645 the Congregation accepted a rapid intake of new members who were predominantly women and included members of Great Yarmouth's merchant elite. Between 1643 and the call from members of the corporation to forbear accepting new members in early 1646, 108 people joined Bridge's congregation. Seventy-six of the new members were women, thirty-two were men, and six children were baptised into the congregation, which represented a tenfold increase in the congregation's membership. The initial congregation had a near equal gender split, but by late 1645 women members outnumbered men at a rate of two and a half to one.<sup>37</sup> The gender imbalance was a common feature of gathered churches, but a controversial one.<sup>38</sup> The new female intake included members of Great Yarmouth's political elite. During 1643 there were four female converts from merchant families including two wives of sitting councillors, and there were three converts who would later serve as councillors. Six women from merchant families joined the congregation in 1644 along with three more future councillors, including Thomas Bendish, who was then acting as the MP Miles

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, ff. 1, 3, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, pp. 195-200; quoting from *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*, eds Chad Van Dixhoorn, David F. Wright, Mark A. Garcia, Joel A. Halcomb, and Inga Jones (Oxford, 2012), vol. 2, p. 498.

<sup>37</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-6.

<sup>38</sup> Keith Thomas, 'Women and The Civil War Sects,' *Past and Present*, 13 (1958), pp. 42-62; Stevie Davies, *Unbridled Spirits: Women of the English Revolution 1640-1660* (London, 1998); Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (London, 2012), pp. 71-89; Halcomb, 'Congregational Church life', p. 32.

Corbett's man of business.<sup>39</sup> The common councillor William Burton's wife Anne joined the congregation in May 1644 to have their daughter Hannah baptised. Dinah Eaton joined the congregation just as her husband Robert joined the corporation. In 1645, the church had four more female converts drawn from merchant families, including two wives of councillors, and two children of serving common councillors were baptised. There were also two more merchants joining the congregation, including the former councillor Christopher Stygold.<sup>40</sup> This represented a significant shift in the size and political influence of Bridge's congregation. Though the congregation contained just 1% of the town's total population, over a fifth of the membership was from amongst Great Yarmouth's elite families. Roughly a quarter of the families of serving common councillors had members in the congregation, but until late 1645 there were no serving common councillors in the membership.<sup>41</sup> Other Congregationalist churches had similarly influential memberships 'who mostly comprised of the middling sort, with a handful of men of more substance'.<sup>42</sup> The growing power of the Congregationalists rested on its connection to Great Yarmouth's elite, but that connection through the wives of councillors potentially disrupted the patriarchal expectations of Great Yarmouth society.

The women in the Congregational community had more independence than in the town's conservative puritan ministry. Wives joined separately from their husbands and baptised their children in a congregation that their husbands were not members of. In January 1643, the congregation agreed '[that] [the] Brethren should be helpfull in building up [the] sisters in knowledge according to [the] order expounded by [the] Church'.<sup>43</sup> While this does not imply the level of involvement shown by

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<sup>39</sup> Halcomb, 'Godly Order and the Trumpet of Defiance', p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-6

<sup>41</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7; NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-11, listing the membership intake.

<sup>42</sup> Ellen S. More, 'Congregationalism and the Social Order: John Goodwin's Gathered Church, 1640-60', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 38 (1987), pp. 218.

<sup>43</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 3.

women in radical sectarian groups, the Congregational church was a threat to community cohesion because it divided families over worship.

By 1645, Bridge's congregation had developed a network of politically influential members and supporters. Councillors with openly congregational wives, such as Augustine Thrower and Robert Eaton, had served on the corporation since the 1630s.<sup>44</sup> There was evidence of support for Bridge's congregation amongst the members of the corporation, as a vote in July 1645 had the support of only the 'major parte' of the corporation's membership to declare the Independent congregation a disturbance.<sup>45</sup> Thomas Bendish, as Miles Corbet's man of business, was likely behind Corbet's letter of October 1645 to the Great Yarmouth corporation in support of William Bridge, questioning why Bridge had been removed. In the letter, Corbet was careful to stress that he was responding to the popular will of 'most of the inhabitant[es] of the Towne' to restore Bridge rather than his support for Congregationalism, but it still showed how Corbet was a patron for Bridge.<sup>46</sup> There was political support for Bridge and his congregation amongst the members of Great Yarmouth's corporation and from the MP Miles Corbet.

William Bridge had arrived in Great Yarmouth in 1642 surrounded by ten followers who followed him from Rotterdam, but by September 1645 he was the pastor to a congregation ten times that size, firmly rooted within Great Yarmouth with a membership including members of the town's elite. The Church

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<sup>44</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 1,25,49,77.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, f. 69.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, f. 78.

book shows a commitment to a Congregational model of worship and community. The congregation had rapidly expanded between 1643 and 1645 and was becoming dominated by wealthy and influential women worshipping separately from their husbands. This more influential membership led to individuals voicing support for William Bridge, his congregation, and Congregationalism within the town's corporation. For aldermen and common councillors who had supported conformity with John Brinsley since the 1620s the threat of separatism from the Congregationalists entailed the need for a response from the corporation and pulpit.

#### iv. The Corporation's Response to Congregationalism

The growing size and influence of Bridge's congregation led the members of the Great Yarmouth corporation to protect the town's peace and conformity from Congregationalism's divisive influence. Members of the corporation who had supported the ministry of William Bridge and John Oxenbridge from 1643 until early 1645, now actively worked to limit support for Congregationalism and separatism when it appeared in Great Yarmouth. Members of the Great Yarmouth's corporation sought to enforce unity by preventing separatist meetings and controlling the behaviour of Congregational ministers. It took until 1645 for the members of the corporation's aim of both promoting the ministry of Bridge and Oxenbridge and to preserve religious unity to become irreconcilable, leading to the ministers' dismissals.

There was evidence of popular support for a Congregational settlement within the town from 1644 challenging members of the corporation's desire for a comprehensive religious settlement. In January 1644, the corporation reported that there was a 'petition drawne [and] carried about in Towne by some private p[er]sons' that called on Parliament to allow 'congregationall assemblies' being passed around Great Yarmouth. The members of the corporation ordered the bailiffs to bring in and examine the petition. The assembly book described the petition as 'inconvenient' and it was only allowed to be shared with the corporation's 'approbation'.<sup>47</sup> The petition was part of a broader national campaign of petitions against a national Presbyterian church that were published between late 1643 and early 1644.<sup>48</sup> The timing of the petition at the beginning of January meant that it was a response to two pamphlets which William Bridge had appended his name, *Certain Considerations* published in December 1643 and *An Apologeticall Narration* which had been published in London at the start of January. *Certain Considerations* argued that while 'nothing can be more destructive to the friends of the cause of Religion, then to be divided amongst themselves', the 'councells of the Assembly of Divines, and the care of the Parliament... will concur to preserve whatever shall appeare to be the rights of particular Congregations'.<sup>49</sup> *An Apologeticall Narration* also rejected separation but sought to defend Congregational gathered churches as compatible with puritan discipline.<sup>50</sup> The petition shows that there was public engagement with Congregationalism in Great Yarmouth which was responsive to the debate in the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, f. 32

<sup>48</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, p. 97.

<sup>49</sup> *Certain Considerations to Dis-swade Men*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>50</sup> Bridge, Burroughes, Simpson, Nye, Goodwin, *An Apologeticall Narration*, pp. 12-4.

At the same time as the members of the corporation discussed the petition, they sought to limit the creation of separatist churches in the town. Members of the corporation passed an order on 3 January 1644, ordering 'no publick exercise of religion in private houses' as the 'erecting of particular Churches in Towne' was 'contrary to lawe'. The members of the corporation required the bailiffs and justices 'not to suffer any takeing of members into any Society as p[ar]ticular Churches in such a way as of late hath beene used', showing that the corporation was aware of the presence of separate churches in the town. As this occurred before the arrival of Colonel Fleetwood, these were unlikely to be Anabaptist communities. The members of the corporation ordered the suppression of separatist and independent churches immediately after they had agreed with John Oxenbridge, Bridge's assistant, to allow him to preach on Sunday mornings free of charge to the town.<sup>51</sup> This suggests that the corporation's intended the agreement with Oxenbridge to make it unnecessary for him to preach to Congregationalists privately, thus justifying the suppression of their illegal private gatherings. This tallied with Bridge's support for the pamphlet *Certain Considerations* in December 1643 which, as discussed above, had called for forbearance until a resolution at the Westminster Assembly of Divines.<sup>52</sup> Members of the corporation sought to impose unity by clamping down on private preaching while co-operating with Oxenbridge to allow him to continue to minister without acting as an independent.

The Congregational leadership in the Westminster Assembly could not accept a Presbyterian settlement in 1644, making accommodation more difficult and leading the members of the Great Yarmouth corporation to seek the town's settlement through debate within the corporation in 1645. On 18 April 1645, the corporation found it necessary for an 'order to be taken against church divisions',

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<sup>51</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Certain Considerations to Dis-swade Men*, pp. 3-4.

due to 'many thing[es] being debated concerning our ministers [and] preachers for their maytenance' at that meeting of the corporation's assembly. The members of the corporation set out to find a way of 'setling in such a way as may make most for the peace of the Towne [and] of the church and people of this parish [and] congregation'. The solution was an extraordinary meeting of the corporation held in a fortnight following at the Guildhall where 'all the members of the Society now here present are required to be at that Assembly to give their assistance [and] counsell therein'.<sup>53</sup> The resultant meeting on the 25 April had 'much debate' about 'setling peace [and] Vniformity in Towne'. Most of the corporation agreed to limit preaching to the parish church and only the town's conservative puritan ministers John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield were now to be permitted to preach with 'no other to be called or setled in the ministers as yet'.<sup>54</sup> The corporation's rejection of Bridge and Oxenbridge reflected a desire for uniformity and conformity that Bridge's dissent in November 1644 now threatened to break.<sup>55</sup> Members of the corporation agreed to a settlement in Great Yarmouth that excluded the Congregationalists in the name of peace and uniformity.

Despite the initial meeting agreeing to accept uniformity, continued support for Congregationalism led to more debates within the corporation. On 3 July, members of the corporation further debated 'the great divisions and distractions in Towne' caused by 'some p[ar]ticuler men have taken upon them of their owne authority to erect p[ar]ticuler churches here in a congregationall way contrary to the presbiterian government'. The 'maior p[ar]te' of the corporation believed that setting up separate churches was a 'disturbance', and 'principall parties of that way' were to be 'admonished and requested to forbear their saide way of erecting a church'. While the corporation continued to reject

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<sup>53</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 65

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, f. 66.

<sup>55</sup> Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, p. 233.



Congregationalism as a source of disturbance to the town, the members sought to find a middle way, allowing William Bridge to continue to preach if he agreed in writing not to support 'the independent way'.<sup>56</sup> In October 1645, the corporation received a letter from Miles Corbet questioning why Bridge was no longer preaching despite his popularity, showing that Bridge had been unwilling to make this agreement.<sup>57</sup> Members of the corporation sought to prevent separatist and independent congregations emerging that would divide the community, seeing a Presbyterian church government as the best means of maintaining peace and uniformity in the town.

Members of the Great Yarmouth corporation were concerned over how the rise in separate congregations threatened the cohesion and peace of the town. This section has shown how Bridge and Oxenbridge remained acceptable to the corporation so long as they rejected forming independent churches. This was comparable to London where Independents were initially 'not only tolerated, but actually supported', until 1645, when the Presbyterian dominated corporation of London expelled John Goodwin and Henry Burton from their livings as part of a wider purge of Independency in that year.<sup>58</sup> Conservative puritans perceived that the Holland Brethren had crossed the line from acceptable conformity to separatism. However, more radical sectaries proved difficult for the corporation to extirpate.

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<sup>56</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 69.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, f. 78.

<sup>58</sup> Liu, *Puritan London*, pp.105, 110.

## v. The Threat of Radical Nonconformity

Bridge's congregation was not the only group of nonconformists within Great Yarmouth, as the Anabaptist John Boggis and his followers threatened the unity of Great Yarmouth's congregation and directly challenged Brinsley and his assistant Whitfield in debates. Great Yarmouth had a history of Anabaptist nonconformity that stretched back before the Caroline period. However, it was the Civil War that allowed the spread and propagation of radical nonconformity from 1644 onwards, as colonel Fleetwood's military garrison supported and protected John Boggis. The conflict between Boggis and Brinsley tied Great Yarmouth into the greater pamphlet war waged to decide England's post-civil war religious settlement.

Radical nonconformity a consistent presence in East Anglia throughout the early modern period. Historians have connected the communities of Anabaptists, the Family of Love, and other sectarians in East Anglian towns and cities populations to the Netherlands, especially during the 1620s and 30s.<sup>59</sup> Great Yarmouth had its fair share of nonconformists, as in 1624 there was an Anabaptist conventicle discovered and a Baptist minister arrested, and the bishop of Norwich, Samuel Harnsett, complained of continued separatism in late 1628.<sup>60</sup> In August 1630, the Earl of Dorset, the town's high steward and patron warned that the king was angry at the corporation for 'for conniving at and tolerating a company

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<sup>59</sup> Grell, 'A Friendship Turned Sour', pp. 64-66; Christopher W. Marsh, 'Nonconformists and their Neighbours in Early-Modern England: A Tale of Two Thomases' in *Religious Dissent in East Anglia III: Proceedings of the Third Symposium*, ed. David Chadd (Norwich, 1996), pp. 73-96.

<sup>60</sup> DWL, Harmer 76.3, ff. 50-57; Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 829-3; TNA, S.P. 16/124/81.

of Brownists amongst you'.<sup>61</sup> In 1636, a barn conventicle was discovered outside Somerleyton which was led by the preaching of one Isaac Knight 'a prophet' from London, and a Great Yarmouth shoemaker called Gaule. The audience of nearly a hundred people included at least one alderman from Great Yarmouth.<sup>62</sup> Nonconformity remained limited and underground during the 1620s and 30s, detected by zealous officials rather than actively proselytising and challenging the town's ministry.

It was the presence of an Eastern Association garrison commanded by Colonel Charles Fleetwood which incubated heterodox religious beliefs in Great Yarmouth. The army of the Eastern Association came under attack from 1644 onwards for its perceived nonconformity. There were accusations that Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell was 'seeking to pack the army of the Association with officers sympathetic to the sectaries' and that Cromwell and the Earl of Manchester sought to 'build up an army commanded by godly officers without respect of sectarian difference'.<sup>63</sup> There were accusations of acts of impiety from the army such as the company of dragoons who showed their contempt for infant baptism by baptising a horse in urine within the parish church.<sup>64</sup> Conservative commanders alleged that soldiers 'have gone up into the pulpitts...and preached to the whole parish' and made 'bitter invectives against the Church and ministers of England'.<sup>65</sup> Colonel Fleetwood was himself a noted supporter of sectaries, his regiment's captains including convinced Independents and the Baptist Paul Hobson.<sup>66</sup> His troops were joined by radical preachers, notably the antinomian Laurence Clarkson and

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<sup>61</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, pp. 505-6.

<sup>62</sup> Bodl, MS. Tanner 68, ff. 88-90; discussed above chapter three, pp. 93-4.

<sup>63</sup> Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>64</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, iii, pp. 17-18.

<sup>65</sup> Clive Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 202; *The Quarrel Between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell: An Episode of the English Civil War*, eds John Bruce and David Masson (London, 1875), pp. 73, 75; William Prynne, *The Lyar Confounded, or, A Briefe Refutation of John Lilburnes Miserably-Mistated-Case, Mistaken-Law, Seditious Calumnies and Most Malicious Lyes* (London, 1645), p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Barnard, 'Fleetwood, Charles'; Richard L. Greaves, 'Hobson, Paul (d. 1666)', *ODBN*.

John Boggis, both of whom were in Great Yarmouth while Fleetwood was garrisoning the town.<sup>67</sup> Clarkson acted as minister to the troops in Great Yarmouth as an experienced preacher. He had taken a 'strange pilgrimage through various sects' and by 1644 was described as an Antinomian with Anabaptist leanings. John Boggis was a Norfolk man, who had served as an apprentice in London, and served in Fleetwood's regiment as Captain Paul Hobson's surgeon.<sup>68</sup> The East Association's army protected for radical preachers to spread nonconformity that was beyond the power of local corporations.

John Brinsley perceived John Boggis as a threat to the peace and conformity of Great Yarmouth because of Boggis's continued articulation of radical and heretical thought and his willingness to challenge Brinsley through debate. Thomas Edwards in his *Gangraena* accused Boggis of blasphemy the 'like or worse are not to be found in any age since the coming of Christ, nay I think not since the Creation of the world'.<sup>69</sup> John Brinsley was the 'godly minister of Yarmouth' who wrote to Thomas Edwards to give an account of Boggis's behaviour in Great Yarmouth. Brinsley recounted an incident where Boggis along with 'Oats, (then of *Norwich*) and one *Lockier* a Ring-leader of the anabaptists' in this town' entered Brinsley's house. The Anabaptists forced Brinsley, his assistant Thomas Whitfield, and an unnamed third minister into a 'debate (amongst other matters) about the power of the Magistrate in inflicting capital punishments and taking away of life'. Brinsley believed that Boggis was the leader of the group, emboldening local anabaptists. Despite Boggis's attack on Brinsley to debate, it was not until Boggis declared that 'the bible was but paper' in October 1645 that led to a trial in January 1646

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<sup>67</sup> William Lamont, 'Clarkson, Laurence [pseud. Laurence Claxton] (1615–1667)', *ODNB*.

<sup>68</sup> Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 208.

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, p. iv.

and his dismissal from Great Yarmouth.<sup>70</sup> Boggis was a threat to Brinsley's position, a challenger seeking to threaten the town's unity of worship and puritan doctrines.

John Brinsley answered Boggis's challenges by lecturing on the dangers of Anabaptism and separatism. His 1645 Sermon *The Doctrine and Practice of Paedobaptisme, Asserted and Vindicated* was a direct response to Boggis and Anabaptism. Brinsley criticised Anabaptism as a form of 'spreading Gangrene' that 'may prove fatall to the whole body both of this Church and State'. Brinsley stated that he was responding to an 'encounter with it in the Pulpit' after 'this evill beginning to shew it selfe'. Brinsley compared the unwillingness of the Anabaptists to bring children into the covenant of baptism to the recalcitrance of 'Papists'. By rejecting baptism Anabaptists were 'casting them [their children] out amongst the children of Heathens and Infidels' and would cruelly 'exclude all Infants dying in their infancie from salvation'.<sup>71</sup> For Brinsley the Anabaptists were dangerous as they broke the bonds of fellowship with their fellow Christians, endangering the most vulnerable in the community.

Contemporary puritan authors paralleled the threat of radical nonconformity during the mid-1640s with the threat of witchcraft. Richard Bifield, when denouncing nonconformists, compared libertines and Anabaptists to witches in their ability to 'delude simple mindes'.<sup>72</sup> Thomas Edwards alleged that the nonconformists' search for toleration had led an anonymous disputant to argue for a 'Toleration of

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid*, ii, pp. 134, 161-2.

<sup>71</sup> Brinsley, *The Doctrine and Practice of Paedobaptisme, Asserted and Vindicated*, pp. iv, 30, 31, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Bifield *Temple-Defilers Defiled, Wherein a True Visible Church of Christ Is Described and the Evils Appertaining to Schisme, Anabaptisme and Libertinisme Discovered* (London, 1645), pp. 96-7.

witches'.<sup>73</sup> Peter Elmer argued that the fear of nonconformity meant that 'the godly communities of the Eastern Association were increasingly threatened by a diabolical conspiracy of witches and sectaries'.<sup>74</sup> The conflation between witchcraft and nonconformity was also seen at Wickham Skeith, where the accused was a professed anabaptist, and accusations in Manningtree have been connected to a women's prayer group in the parish.<sup>75</sup> In Great Yarmouth, the suspected witch Elizabeth Bradwell confessed that the devil was dressed in black and took her name in his book, resembling a minister as he led Bradwell into damnation.<sup>76</sup> The idea of the devil as a minister or seemingly godly figure leading women and astray was a vital part of the 1650s condemnation of Quakerism in which the Devil became 'that grand Quaker'.<sup>77</sup> The witch and the nonconformist became aligned in East Anglia in 1645, as local puritan elites sought to combat the heretic.

## vi. Brinsley's Criticism of Sectarianism

John Brinsley's printed sermons refuting sectarianism in Great Yarmouth responded to nonconformity in the town but were also part of the national debate over the settlement of religion in the kingdom. Brinsley's aim of combating error 'was a favourite theme of printed sermons', notably those preached on feast days and public sermons.<sup>78</sup> Brinsley's sermons on the dangers of separatism were published

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<sup>73</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, iii, pp. 187.

<sup>74</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, pp. 127-9.

<sup>75</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 120; Timbers, 'Witches' Sect or Prayer Meeting?', p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Elmer, 'Saints or Sorcerers': Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, eds Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge, 1996), p. 177.

<sup>78</sup> Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 81, 154-5.

in London by Richard Bifield, a minister from Kingston, who denounced 'Antinomians, Anti-Sabbatarians, Anabaptists, and Arminians'.<sup>79</sup> Puritan authors like Thomas Edwards's fear of radical nonconformity was extended from London to the provinces through pamphlets, sermons and works like *Gangraena*. Puritan London writers incorporated incidents reported to them from the provinces, such as Brinsley's conflict with the Anabaptists described above. The writers used the examples to show the insidious nature of nonconformity across England and link Congregationalism with other radical forms of dissent.<sup>80</sup> This section looks at how John Brinsley's sermons criticised separatist doctrine but also contained veiled criticisms of Congregationalism.

John Brinsley argued for the importance and authority of the Presbytery system, its ministry, and elders in his 1645 sermon *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*. Brinsley declared that the role of the preacher was to 'maintaine truth [and] so peace' and 'their lips should preserve knowledge', arguing that the minister was the arbiter of truth and the root of peace.<sup>81</sup> Brinsley justified this through the precedent of St Paul who sought to 'maintaine the peace and unity of the Church', echoing the language used by members of Great Yarmouth's corporation who sought to maintain puritanism by 'setling peace [and] Vniformity'.<sup>82</sup> It was Brinsley's duty to 'take everie opportunitie to contribute what I am able to the staying, and if it might be, to the quitting and quelling of these differences at least in this place', made necessary by the 'divisions of the times', stressing the minister's role in uniting the congregation.<sup>83</sup> Brinsley argued for the leadership role of the ministry since the minister was an 'overseer to the flock, set over them by God to feed, and to governe them'.<sup>84</sup> For Brinsley separate

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<sup>79</sup> Bifield *Temple-Defilers Defiled*, pp. 20-8; Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 82.

<sup>80</sup> Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 107.

<sup>81</sup> Brinsley, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*, pp. 3, 8

<sup>82</sup> Brinsley, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*, p. 3; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 66.

<sup>83</sup> Brinsley, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

congregations were unrealistic since 'all cannot meet in the synodically way', meaning there was the need that 'some persons of trust are selected and employed about that service' such as 'elders' and 'overseers'.<sup>85</sup> Brinsley was vigorous in defending the importance of the Presbyterian ministry, arguing that it was the means to maintain the unity and peace that nonconformity threatened.

John Brinsley argued that separatism was a dangerous novelty, in contrast to the biblical precedent for Presbyterianism he described. Brinsley argued that separatists' desire 'to set up churches in churches, the one extracted out of the other' had 'no President, no warrant, no maintenance, no countenance from any phrase of Scripture, or practice of the Apostolically times'.<sup>86</sup> Brinsley sought to show the early church had been resistant to separatism, explaining how there were 'many Congregations, and yet but one Church', and not several churches that would undermine the greater whole.<sup>87</sup> Brinsley argued that there was biblical support for the notion of 'elders' and Presbyters, and arguing that contemporary pastors and teachers were the successors of the apostles and elders of the old testament.<sup>88</sup> Thomas Edwards, in his introduction to *Gangraena*, appealed to a long list of orthodox writers, stretching from Augustine and Jerome to Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, to connect Presbyterian Orthodoxy and the protection of the true church to the church fathers.<sup>89</sup> Edwards and Brinsley sought to use the authority of the early church to vindicate their campaigns against nonconformity. Brinsley argued that separatist ministers 'were dangerous their words had a 'mixture of poyson with that hony: dangerous, and destructive errors, being interwoven with those Truths' showing how closeness to Calvinism made

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp. 6, 14.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, pp. 42-3

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, pp. 6, 9.

<sup>89</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, i, pp. ii-iii.



errors and novelty harder to detect.<sup>90</sup> Brinsley feared that separatists were dangerous because in their novelty they abused Calvinism to insert errors that would lead them and their followers astray.

Brinsley's October 1645 sermon *A Looking-Glasse for good Women* provides the strongest argument for the danger of women falling to separatism. Brinsley states that the sermon was aimed at 'all the well affected, but ill advised of the weaker Sex, who are either turned, or turning from the way of the Church of Christ in Old England, to the refined Error of seperation'.<sup>91</sup> He argued that his sermon was necessary because women were the 'weaker Vessell, lesse able to withstand the stroke of his [Satan's] Temptations'.<sup>92</sup> Women were vulnerable to separatism because of 'her Curiosity, her affecting of Novelties', to which women were attracted because they were prohibited.<sup>93</sup> Thomas Edwards had argued in 1644 pamphlet *Antapologia* that gathered churches found women 'apt to be seduced', and when converted difficult 'to be convinced of their errors'.<sup>94</sup> Brinsley was fearful that women were vulnerable to separatism due to their weaker nature and love of novelty.

Brinsley argued that women's weakness was dangerous because after falling to heresy due to their weakness they would bring yet further conversions. The fact that women were prone to fall to heresy made them 'a fitting Instrument, being her self deceived, to deceive her Husband, by conveyng the

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<sup>90</sup> Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women*, pp. 19, 44.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. iv.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Antapologia; or, A Full Answer to the Apologetical Narration of Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Ympson, Mr. Burroughs, Mr. Bridge, Members of the Assembly of Divines: Wherein Is Handled Many of the Controversies of These Time: Humbly Also Submitted to the Honourable Houses of Parliament* (London, 1644), pp. 250, 253; Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 113.

same suggestions unto him' Brinsley proclaimed; comparable to the discourse on how a witch could deceive and corrupt her husband.<sup>95</sup> The possibility of a wife being in a separate church to her husband was 'such a solecisme, such an absurdity in Christianity' Brinsley declared, 'as I think the world never saw practised'.<sup>96</sup> According to Brinsley, women were not just 'disturbing the peace of the Church for the present', but 'hindering that great good work in hand, the Reformation of it for the future'.<sup>97</sup> Brinsley was also concerned that separatists allowed 'women to take upon them the office of Teaching', which he thought 'an invasion of the course and order of nature'.<sup>98</sup> Brinsley's solution was to require a limit on female autonomy, thus re-establishing male authority 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurpe Authority over the man'.<sup>99</sup> Brinsley was concerned that female converts were a means for separatist error to spread, which justified the need for patriarchal control.

Brinsley's arguments for the dangers of separatism and female conversions were in response to female conversions to nonconformity in Great Yarmouth. As this chapter has shown both Anabaptists and Congregationalist churches grew in prominence between 1644 and 1645. However, Brinsley sought to distance his criticism of separatism from the Congregationalists, describing them in *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women* as 'our Reverend and Godly Brethren' and 'whose persons I respect and honour'.<sup>100</sup> Brinsley included both Congregational and Independent as 'odious and opprobrious nicknames' that would be 'taken away and forgotten' with the kingdom of heaven.<sup>101</sup> However, Brinsley's consistent

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<sup>95</sup> Alan Anderson and Raymond Gordon, 'Witchcraft and the Status of Women - The Case of England,' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 29 (1978), pp. 173-4; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 111; Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for good Women*, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for good Women*, p. 41.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, pp. 2, 43.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 15,

<sup>101</sup> Brinsley, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*, p. 49.

fear was separatism, and the growing size of the Congregationalist community and their support for additional churches meant that his criticism also applied to them, such as a concern for husbands and wives in different churches. As discussed above, by 1645 the membership of Bridge's congregation was two-thirds women and included the wives of councillors joining a separate congregation to their husbands, a common pattern in gathered churches.<sup>102</sup> Thus, while Brinsley believed the Congregationalists conformable in doctrine, their attraction of prominent women disrupted local patriarchy and so like the corporation he sought to restore them to unity with the rest of the town's congregation.

## vii. Conclusion

The minister John Brinsley and members of the Great Yarmouth corporation sought to maintain the town's religious uniformity and prevent the growth of separatist churches. The anabaptists led by John Boggis were a clear threat to conformity and the peace of the town as Boggis was publicly proposing inflammatory heresy and intruding on Brinsley and his assistant to have theological debates. However, members of the corporation had more difficulties in bringing the Congregationalists to conformity. Congregationalist doctrine as Calvinist had initially been acceptable to Brinsley and membership of the corporation, who were therefore pleased to have Bridge and Oxenbridge preach. However, as Congregational leaders in London found themselves unable to accept a Presbyterian settlement, members of the corporation believed that the Congregationalists' desire for separate churches was a

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<sup>102</sup> Patricia Crawford, 'Historians, Women and the Civil War Sects, 1640 - 1660,' *Parergon*, 6 (1988), pp. 19–32.

danger to the town's 'peace [and] uniformity'.<sup>103</sup> The struggle for Brinsley and those on the corporation seeking conformity was finding a way to retain the support of Congregationalists whilst preventing gathered churches. This failed in 1645, as without assurances from the Congregationalist ministers that they would reject separatism, the corporation rejected them. The pressure for conformity and unity had led to a narrowing of the ministry and a need to find a way to reunite the community. The corruption of women by nonconformists and the threat of a disruptive enemy within aligned the corporation's attempts to limit religious nonconformity with their support for the 1645 witch-hunt, as another facet of the process of healing the community.

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<sup>103</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 66.

## Chapter 7: The 1645 Witch-Hunt

### i. Introduction

In September 1645, the Great Yarmouth borough sessions tried eleven people accused of using witchcraft and found six guilty of malefic magic, based on evidence gathered by the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins, a group of searchers, and the town's ministers John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield. Why did the corporation support the 1645 Great Yarmouth witch-hunt? Their support, in large part, was due to the puritan oligarchy's vulnerability to religious division and discontent caused by the political and economic malaise facing the town in the summer of 1645. The immediate crisis that undermined puritan control was the strains caused by the civil wars. Chapter five has shown the financial demands to support the war effort and the economic dislocation caused by privateering that damaged the herring fleet impoverished the town and strained its charitable systems. Chapter six showed how the initially cordial relationship between conservative puritans and Congregationalists had broken down by 1645. More radical sectaries, drawn to the town by the presence of a military garrison, further threatened the town's religious cohesion. The anxieties of the town's governing elite over the weakening of puritan control informed their desire to support the witch-hunt as a means of reconciliation.

This chapter's discussion of the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt responds to the historiography of contemporary works discussing witch-hunt. There are two contemporary sources that best illuminate the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt. The jurist Sir Matthew Hale's description of the accusations against Elizabeth Bradwell in his *A Collection of Modern Relations of Matter of Fact, Concerning Witches & Witchcraft* provides insight into witchcraft beliefs and the process of gathering evidence.<sup>1</sup> The water poet John Taylor's scathing satirical verses discuss the failure of Miles Corbet's handling of accusations against Mark Prynn, giving details of the court case.<sup>2</sup> These works, along with the court records and Great Yarmouth assembly book provide the basis for examining the town's witch-hunt.

Contemporary historians have discussed the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt in the context of the larger Hopkins witch-hunt and as a forerunner to the Salem witch-hunt. Great Yarmouth's civic histories mention the witch-hunt as a matter of superstition, connecting it to the salacious mythology of Matthew Hopkins, or ties to the later Salem witch-hunt.<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Gaskill mentions the town in his wider study of Matthew Hopkins's witch-hunt, explaining the town's fear of witches as a response to paranoia over a potential invasion. Gaskill argues that 'fear of an enemy without was experienced and expressed as the fear of an enemy within'. This enemy within included false prophets and sectaries 'devils disguised as angels of light'.<sup>4</sup> Peter Elmer discusses Great Yarmouth in the online appendix to *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*. There he says that 'endemic religious divisions and ensuing conflict in Yarmouth were a major contributory factor in creating an atmosphere propitious for witch hunting in 1645', since 'fear of radical sectarianism and the disintegration of puritan unity' meant that

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<sup>1</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, pp. 47-9.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *A Briefe Relation*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>3</sup> Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth*, pp. 273-4; Hedges, *Yarmouth Is an Antient Town*, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 169.

witch-hunting was a 'potential rallying point for puritans of all persuasions'.<sup>5</sup> Historians of witch-hunting have stressed the place of religious and political division as the accelerant to the Great Yarmouth witch-hunt.

## ii. Context

Between April and September 1645, residents in Great Yarmouth brought forward a series of witchcraft accusations that led to an invitation from the town's corporation to the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins. During the summer of 1645, Great Yarmouth's corporation faced challenges both external from the demands of national and regional authorities, and internal from continuing economic distress and religious nonconformity within the town. This section looks at how the residents made witch-hunt accusations in a context of local and national upheaval. The struggle for control over the cause and the move towards the New Model Army in Westminster radicalised Parliamentary commanders. Great Yarmouth's economic distress due to the civil war intensified as continued privateering and a wider depression of trade, put increased demands on the town's charitable structures. Fears of religious separatism became a matter of concern to members of the town's corporation. These pressures lay behind the corporation's support for the witchcraft accusations.

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<sup>5</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, 'Appendix 2: East Anglia and the Hopkins Trials, 1645-1647: A County Guide', pp. 44-9.

The summer of 1645 saw a series of Parliamentary military victories, but the successes of the New Modelled Army commanded by General Fairfax only heightened tensions between the army and localities, and between Westminster and the Covenanters. The New Model Army had been created to end enmity amongst Parliament's forces by reducing the power of the local associations and solidifying the leadership of the Parliamentary war effort.<sup>6</sup> The confirmation of the New Model Army's role and power came from its victory at Naseby in June 1645 and the subsequent campaign subduing the West of England that surpassed the successes of the previous Presbyterian commanders and their Scottish allies.<sup>7</sup> Following the Battle of Naseby, the New Model Army fell upon the Royalist camp followers, killing, slashing, and scarring women in a display of religiously motivated violence that seemed beyond the officers to control, showing a ruthless intensity inspired by a hatred of 'Papism'.<sup>8</sup> Critics of the New Model Army feared that dissenting officers, such as Charles Fleetwood, and their followers who maintained 'strange opinions' on religion would allow their radical views to infect the entire army.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the success of the New Model Army concerned the Parliamentary and Scottish supporters of Presbyterianism, who had expected military defeat, and their faction hardened from 'animosity into permanent opposition'.<sup>10</sup> In response to the threat of religious nonconformity, Robert Baillie attempted to influence public opinion through a pamphleteering campaign by Thomas Edwards to put pressure on the Westminster Assembly of Divines to move towards a Presbyterian settlement.<sup>11</sup> Edwards had been distrustful of the military since 1644, believing that the establishment of garrisons was a plot by the 'Independents' to take further power in the Eastern Association.<sup>12</sup> The success of the New Model Army reinforced the divisions within the Parliamentary cause and increased tensions over the shaping of a new religious settlement.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 29-51.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638-1652* (London, 2007), p. 281.

<sup>8</sup> Stoye, 'The Road to Farndon Field', pp. 895-923.

<sup>9</sup> Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, p. 189; Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army*, pp. 72-4.

<sup>10</sup> Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, *Gangraena*; Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, ch. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, p. 44.



Despite Parliamentary victory seeming closer in the summer of 1645 after the victory at Naseby, Great Yarmouth remained burdened by increased taxation and the economic impact privateering had on the town's economy. The town's finances were being stretched to their limits by the war. The corporation needed to finance further fortifications and repairs, pay towards the Parliamentary armed forces, even as the town's economy continued to collapse due to attack from privateers.<sup>13</sup> In March 1645, members of the town's corporation agreed to construct additional breastworks along the coast to prevent an attack by sea, showing how the corporation still felt under direct threat.<sup>14</sup> The national war effort required the town to continue to raise large sums of money to support Parliament's armies. On 8 April, the members of the town's corporation acceded to the demand to raise £205 13s 4d to support Fairfax's army, and in October they agreed to pay a further £100 to support Eastern Association garrisons.<sup>15</sup> The financial difficulties facing the corporation led members of the assembly agreeing to harsher methods of collection. In March, members of the corporation had given authority to the bailiffs, collectors, and constables to seize the goods of those failing to pay the ministers' rates.<sup>16</sup> The 8 April meeting of the corporation's assembly received a report that Thomas Brabon had been imprisoned by the bailiffs for non-payment of assessments and the town rates and was released after he paid £3 towards the fortifications and haven.<sup>17</sup> On 19 July, members of the corporation agreed to empower the justices and bailiffs to send out warrants for unpaid court and session fines and to lock up debtors in the town gaol until they paid their debts or had their goods taken instead.<sup>18</sup> On 14 August,

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter five for a discussion of the cost of the fortifications and the labour needed, and the demands for funding from the Eastern Association, pp. 137-51.

<sup>14</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 61.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, ff. 64, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, f. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, f. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, f. 68.

the continued failure to get the funding needed for the town's fortifications led members of the corporation to employ a full-time audit officer 'to attend the business of estreats and sessions'.<sup>19</sup> In October, members of the corporation ordered that those indebted for herring duties were to have their name set up in the town chamber the following herring season to prevent from selling herring until their debt was cleared.<sup>20</sup> At the same meeting, the corporation ordered that at least one of Thomas Johnson, Thomas Gooch, or the chamberlains were to attend the audit chamber to get in the town's debts by any means available to them.<sup>21</sup> The financial demands on the town had become onerous and difficult for the corporation to collect, due in part to the economic dislocation caused by Royalist privateering.

The herring fleets that supported much of Great Yarmouth's population had come under attack from 1643 and had led to a halving of the herring catch and capture of thousands of sailors.<sup>22</sup> In February 1645 members of the corporation ordered the creation of a list of ships lost by the town since the 'Towne and Inhabitant[es] are greatly impoverished by losses at Sea', to reduce the burden of rates levied on the town, since the town was now too poor to pay them.<sup>23</sup> At the assembly meeting on 28 March, Robert Gower and Giles Call reported from Parliament that the Adventure and two ships from the navy would guard the town's herring fleet, as the threat of Royalist privateering continued into that summer.<sup>24</sup> The three vessels initially sent out in Autumn 1645 were seen as insufficient by the members of the corporation and Parliament offered to send the town five ships to protect the winter voyage to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, f. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, f. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, f. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Swinden, *Yarmouth*, p. 560; Gillingwater and Murton, *Gillingwater's History of Lowestoft*, p. 57; See chapter five for a discussion of the effect of privateering, pp. 158-64.

<sup>23</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, f. 63.

Iceland.<sup>25</sup> The impoverishing of the town's residents was a threat to the town's economy, and even a larger provision of guard ships could not restore the ships lost to privateering.

John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield, the town's puritan ministers, seemed secure in their positions over the summer of 1645, but there was evidence of waning popular support. The corporation had reiterated its support for Brinsley at the beginning of 1645, its members granting him a full stipend of £100 for the following year, compared to William Bridge's £50 while he continued at the Westminster Assembly.<sup>26</sup> Members of the corporation side-lined William Bridge and his assistant John Oxenbridge during 1645. On 10 March the town's 'two ministers' were involved in collecting funds for Sir John Meldrum to maintain the siege of Scarborough, showing Brinsley and Whitfield's involvement in maintaining the war effort alongside the members of the corporation and excluding the Congregationalists.<sup>27</sup> The members of the Great Yarmouth corporation agreed on 26 April that only Brinsley and Whitfield would preach and in October, Brinsley and Whitfield took over additional preaching on Fridays that had been previously given by Bridge.<sup>28</sup> Brinsley and Whitfield's control over the ministry was granted by the corporation and was secure as long as they had the support of the corporation's membership.

There was evidence of popular discontent with Brinsley's ministry as enforcing minister's rates and attendance at services proved difficult. An attempt to make the ministers' rates voluntary in July 1645

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, f. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, f. 54.

<sup>27</sup> John Goodall, *Scarborough Castle, North Yorkshire* (London, 2000), p. 31; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 61.

<sup>28</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 66, 79.

proved unworkable after just five days and was replaced by an enforced rate.<sup>29</sup> In October the corporation was concerned that worship at weekly sermons had become rote for the town's citizenry since parishioners were leaving the service 'as soone as the sermon is done and before the praier', disturbing the blessing with their unruliness.<sup>30</sup> It was also during this year that Brinsley produced three of his published sermons, all of which were aimed at refuting sectarians and separatists.<sup>31</sup> Brinsley's ministry challenged by popular discontent and the presence of Congregationalists and nonconformists in the town.

Bridge's Congregation had grown rapidly between 1643 and 1645, especially with a female membership that included women from prominent families in Great Yarmouth.<sup>32</sup> Members of the town's corporation initially sought to prevent religious divisions from January 1644 by banning 'particular churches' in the town, but in the spring of 1645, the members of the corporation debated the town's religious settlement resulted in the exclusion of William Bridge.<sup>33</sup> The corporation remained concerned about the 'great divisions and distractions in Towne' caused by 'p[ar]ticuler churches here in a congregationall way contrary to the presbiterian government', requiring Bridge to disown 'the Independent way' in writing before any restoration.<sup>34</sup> The town's conservative puritans dictated the town's religious policies, but their need to do so showed concern over the support for Congregationalism. The mechanical preacher John Boggis and his Anabaptist supporters challenged Brinsley's ministry and Brinsley's response reveals puritan unease at nonconformity when in spring

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, ff. 69, 70.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, f. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Brinsley, *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women*; idem *The Doctrine and Practice of Paedobaptisme, Asserted and Vindicated*; idem, *The Sacred and Sovereigne Church-Remedie*.

<sup>32</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 1-6; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 1, 25, 49, 77; See above in chapter six, pp. 188-93.

<sup>33</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 31, 65, 66.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, f. 69.

1645 Boggis challenged Brinsley and his allies to a debate.<sup>35</sup> The comprehensive puritan settlement Brinsley and his supporters on the corporation had sought to build was under threat from Anabaptists in the street and Congregationalist sympathisers within the corporation.

Witchcraft accusations over the summer of 1645 came when the town's elite was under strain from economic distress and religious divisions. The continuing war unsettled urban communities as the success of Fairfax's New Model Army came at the cost of the influence of local associations and demands for increased funding. The impoverishment of Great Yarmouth's fishermen to privateering and the consequent difficulties in collecting taxation and supplying charity undermined the authority of the town's corporation. The fear of separatist congregations worried the town's ministers and members of the corporation, who sought to quash nonconformity and woo Congregationalists back to the fold. The corporation's support for the witch-hunt shows how members of the corporation perceived investigating and punishing witchcraft as a means of healing the divisions within Great Yarmouth and assert the authority of the town's magistrates over the demonic forces.

### iii. The Witch-hunt from Accusations to Punishment

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<sup>35</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, ii, pp. 134, 161-2; Chapter six above goes into further depth on Boggis and his challenge to the puritan ministry, pp. 183-8.

The witch-hunt in Great Yarmouth began with a series of accusations beginning in April 1645 that culminated in the trials as part of the borough sessions in September, supported by the members of the corporation who invited Matthew Hopkins and paid searchers to investigate accused. The shift from personal fears of witchcraft to politically backed witch-hunt occurred as the number of accusations increased and members of the corporation took an interest. It was the differences between accusers and accused, and their backgrounds influenced the hunt. The court's staff, the searchers, and the aid of the witch-finder further characterised the hunt. The witch-hunt provides the opportunity to interrogate witchcraft beliefs and their connection to wider Great Yarmouth society.

The timeline for the first Great Yarmouth witch-hunt stretches from 1 April 1645, with the first accusations to the trials occurring on 20 September. John Holmes made the earliest accusations on 1 April 1645 against Maria Vervy and the Linsteads against Elizabeth Bradwell, and Jacob Lambert made further accusations against Vervy on 10 April. John Howlett made accusations against Mark Prynn on 22 April and Henry Moulton's accusations against Bradwell following on 1 May.<sup>36</sup> On 5 June Bridget Howard was accused, and accusations against Barbara Wilkinson and Nazareth Fassett were made on 20 June.<sup>37</sup> The corporation's invitation to the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins was sent out on 15 August, summoning him 'for discovering [and] finding out of witches shall be sent for either to come to Towne; to make search for such wicked p[er]sons if any be here'.<sup>38</sup> With the announcement of Hopkins's invitation to Great Yarmouth on 15 August, further accusations against Maria Vervy surfaced on 20 August and Augustine Thrower accused Vervy of bewitching his son on 7 September.<sup>39</sup> The process of

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<sup>36</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, ff. 195, 197, 199-200.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, ff. 196, 199.

<sup>38</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 71.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, f. 198.

investigating those accused of witchcraft occurred between the accusations and the trials. Members of the corporation agreed to pay a group of women led by Elizabeth Howard who 'searched those p[er]sons that were suspected for witches' along with 'watchers'.<sup>40</sup> Matthew Hale's account of the accusations against Elizabeth Bradwell states that the ministers Brinsley and Whitfield also interrogated the accused.<sup>41</sup> The borough sessions where the accused were tried started on 10 September continued until 20 September.<sup>42</sup> This was followed by the punishment of those found guilty and payment for the watchers in October.<sup>43</sup> The witch-hunt was the product of a series of accusations of maleficia, or harmful magic.

The accusations brought to court alleged that the accused committed three criminal acts: the devil seducing the witch, conversing with evil spirits, and practising the diabolical arts of witchcraft. This brought accusations into line with the 1563 act which proscribed that the 'use, practise, or exercise [of] any Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charm, or Sorcery, whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroyed' was a felony punishable by death.<sup>44</sup> The accusers sought to prove that those accused had caused harm using 'malas diabolicas Artes Anglice vocat witchcraft'.<sup>45</sup> The Witchcraft Act of 1604 added the 'practise or exercise [of] any Invocation or Conjurat[i]on of any evill and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose' as a felony worthy of death.<sup>46</sup> The accusers in Great Yarmouth alleged the accused were calling upon 'diabolicus spirtibus', falling under the purview of the 1604 act.<sup>47</sup> Hopkins and the searchers sought out the marks on the witches' bodies which were evidence that the accused were

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, f. 76.

<sup>41</sup> Hale, *Modern Relation*, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 191-203.

<sup>43</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Marion Gibson ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (London, 2006), pp. 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> NRO, Y/S2/1, p. 199.

<sup>46</sup> Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> NRO, Y/S2/1, p. 199.

entertaining evil spirits, such as Bradwell's blackbird familiar.<sup>48</sup> There were accusations against Mark Prynn that alleged his charms, incantations and sorceries were criminal, as was his customer John Sparks travelling south to Gorleston in search of a felt hat based on Prynn's advice.<sup>49</sup> It was magical harm and the use of spirits that were the felonies which were used to condemn those accused of witchcraft.

Those accused of witchcraft in Great Yarmouth were lower status and poorer than their accusers. Ten out of the eleven accused were women and they lacked either male family members to speak for them or had a history of criminal activity. The court records noted that Barbara Wilkinson and Joan Lacey were widows, and Elizabeth Bradwell and Mary Vervy were spinsters.<sup>50</sup> The borough sessions had prosecuted Nazareth Fasset in September 1631 for scolding and scandalous conversation, and the 1639 borough sessions prosecuted her husband John for swearing.<sup>51</sup> The borough sessions had tried Mark Prynn for charms to locate the lost goods of one John Sparke in 1638.<sup>52</sup> Low status, a lack of male relatives, or a criminal record left those accused vulnerable in court. The accusers included individuals drawn from the town's politically powerful merchant elite. Elizabeth and Susanna Linstead, who made accusations against Elizabeth Bradwell, had a cousin William Linstead who served as an elector in August 1645 and became a common councillor in July 1647.<sup>53</sup> Augustine Thrower, a merchant and common councillor since August 1635, accused Mary Vervy of practising 'witchcraft and sorcery' against his infant son, leading to his son's body becoming 'consumed and languishing'.<sup>54</sup> Vervy was also

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<sup>48</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, ff. 196-201; Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, ff. 191, 193, 196.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, ff. 196-201.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, ff. 5, 132.

<sup>52</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, pp. 91-5; see above chapter three, pp. 97-102.

<sup>53</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 73, 104; NRO, Y/S1/2, ff. 199-200.

<sup>54</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, f. 331; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 1; NRO, Y/S1/2, f. 198.



accused of bewitching Bridget, wife of John Wade a hosier, and Lucy, the infant daughter of the cordwainer James Lambert, as well as Elizabeth, the wife of the sailor John Holmes. The goldsmith John Howlett accused Mark Prynn of bewitching him and his son John.<sup>55</sup> Many accusers were from freemen families, those who had the right to set up a business and be electors in Great Yarmouth.<sup>56</sup> The social divide between the accuser and accused meant that evidence left the accused vulnerable before the court.

The witchcraft trials relied on testimony and authority, and the members of the town's puritan elite provided this with expertise from the ministers, the recorder Miles Corbet, and Matthew Hopkins. According to Hale, the magistrates sent those accused of witchcraft to be examined by the town's ministers John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield.<sup>57</sup> John Taylor alleged that Miles Corbet used his role as town recorder to put evidence before the jury, displaying some books from Mark Prynn's collection.<sup>58</sup> The experts during the trial were the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins, and Elizabeth Howard and other midwives who searched the bodies of those accused of witchcraft.<sup>59</sup> Hopkins searched for familiars, a uniquely English feature of witchcraft. Michael Dalton's *Countrie Justice* suggested that the discovery of witch's marks from which the familiar fed was evidence admissible in court and Hopkins advertised on the frontispiece of his *Discovery of Witches* his reputation for discovering familiars which.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>55</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, f. 197.

<sup>56</sup> *A Calendar of the Freemen of Great Yarmouth, 1429-1800: Compiled from the Records of the Corporation* (Norwich, 1910), pp. 60-82.

<sup>57</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 46.

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, *Brief Relation*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 76.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Dalton, *The Countrie Justice* (London, 1619), pp. 250-1; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 44, 107-8; Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 35-8.

evidence provided by the searchers, Hopkins, and Corbet was meant to reinforce accusations and inform the opinions of the jury.

The accusers brought their accusations to the borough sessions that began 10 September 1645, where the justices and jurors drawn from amongst the town's elite tried the accused.<sup>61</sup> Miles Corbet in his role as recorder presided as a judge at the borough sessions. Corbet relied on the town's justices: the common councillor Samuel Smyth, along with the current bailiffs, Thomas Johnson, and Thomas Gooch. Beside them were the justices of the peace made up of the aldermen Thomas Crane, Robert Ferrior, Robert Gower, and John Symonds. The coroners were the aldermen Thomas Medowe and Thomas Greene. The constables were eight serving common councillors, John Harmer, John Lincolne, John Arnold, Robert Harmer, Thomas Copeman, Henry Tompson, Arthur Bacon and Paul Coke.<sup>62</sup> John Arnold's wife joined the town's Congregational church in March 1644, and he followed her in 1648, while John Lincoln's wife would join the Congregationalists in January 1646.<sup>63</sup> The fifteen jurors were all serving common councillors, including the accuser Henry Moulton. Four jurors had connections to the congregational church. Robert Eaton whose wife joined the congregation in May 1644, and he followed in December 1645, William Burton whose wife joined in November 1643 and whose two daughters and son were baptised into the church, William Harmer and George Spilman who joined in early 1646. This meant more than a quarter of the jurors had connections to Bridge's congregation, comparable to the rest of the common councillors.<sup>64</sup> The members of the corporation staffed the court and were the people who were needed to be convinced of the accused's guilt.

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<sup>61</sup> See chapter two for the description of the tolhouse and its role as the courthouse, p. 48.

<sup>62</sup> NRO, Y/S2/1, p. 191.

<sup>63</sup> NRO, FC31/1, pp. 6, 12, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, pp. 5, 7, 11, 12, 16, 17; see above chapter six for the influence of the Congregational church within the corporation, pp. 176-8.

There were only six convictions out of those accused of witchcraft, and only five of the accusations ended in executions. Status, friendly witnesses, and male relatives could all supply protection against conviction. Mark Prynn brought a minister to speak on his behalf.<sup>65</sup> Fasset's marriage gave her a connection to a man who would speak on her behalf, which the other accused women lacked.<sup>66</sup> Mary Vervy's survival was related to the fact that one of her accusers, Augustine Thrower, had a family connection to the Congregationalists. Thrower's wife had joined William Bridge's congregation in June 1645, and she had their son, Joseph, baptised into the congregation weeks later.<sup>67</sup> Barbara Wilkinson's acquittal and Joanna Lacey's reprieve from execution is unexplained in the sources but points to the jury's scruples. While the jury was convinced of the guilt of six of the accused, they were not blindly following a witch panic.

The witchcraft trials in 1645 were the result of accusations stretching over five and a half months and had received the support of the town's political elite. It was individuals drawn from the town's wealthier merchant families who were willing to make accusations, drawn from politically influential families. The town's corporation supported the witch-hunt by inviting Matthew Hopkins, paying for the searchers, and manning the courtroom that tried those accused, and the town's puritan ministers even took part in the interrogation. The witch-hunt was viable only due to the support of the town's elite. To understand the close connection between the political elite, their vision of politics and

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<sup>65</sup> Taylor, *Brief Relation*, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2 f. 132.

<sup>67</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 5, 6; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 82.

religion, and the success and failures of the witch-hunt it is requisite to examine in greater detail the two cases that have richer narratives to unpick: Elizabeth Bradwell and Mark Prynn.

#### iv. Elizabeth Bradwell

The noted jurist Sir Matthew Hale supplied an account of Elizabeth Bradwell's confession of her use of witchcraft to harm Henry Moulton's son. This account is rich in emotional power as it discusses Henry Moulton's tragedy as his bewitched son had wasted away for eighteen months. Moulton's role in Great Yarmouth's polity and the support of the town's ministers infused the accusations with political and religious meaning. This segment unpacks Hale's account to show the importance of the political and religious context to the witch-hunt.

Sir Matthew Hale provided a detailed account of the Bradwell case as part of his *A Collection of Modern Relations of Matter of Fact Concerning Witches & Witchcraft*, published in 1693. Hale built a picture of the relationship between the accused and the accusers, illustrating the malignity of witches, their power over the godly, and the role of the ministers in defeating witchcraft. His account of the witchcraft accusation is largely congruent with both the details of the court records and John Stearne's account.<sup>68</sup> The two main inconsistencies in Hale's account are likely the product of misunderstanding,

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<sup>68</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, pp. 46-8; Stearne, *Confirmation*, pp. 53-4; Y/S1/2, pp. 199-200.

where he ascribes the accusations to the previous year and gives Moulton's later rank of alderman rather than his contemporary role of common councillors.<sup>69</sup> Hale's account is especially rich in detail because he received his account of Bradwell's confession from the son of the town's minister Thomas Whitfield, whom Hale praised as a 'competent relator'.<sup>70</sup> Hale's and Stearne's interest in the Bradwell case was because it was as an example of a successful accusation that showed the efficacy of pursuing witchcraft accusations. The narrative of the successful pursuit of Moulton's accusations had meaning and resonance not just in the context of Great Yarmouth, but more broadly as an example of the godly defeating the demonic that could be applied throughout the kingdom.<sup>71</sup> Bradwell's confession provided clear proof of the existence of witchcraft, while her wax poppet was clear evidence of 'Hellish Invention'.<sup>72</sup> Hale as a jurist was concerned with the power of the magistrates and ministers to curb the power of Elizabeth Bradwell and restore order. The case was an example of the victory of ministers and magistrates combined over the dark power of witchcraft.

Hale's account tells a simple narrative of Bradwell's rejected request for charity, her temptation by a demonic figure, her search for revenge against Henry Moulton and his family, her use of malefic magic to harm Henry Moulton junior, and her confession to the town's ministers. Hale explains that there was 'an Old Woman' who confessed to Whitfield that she had previously worked for the stocking merchant and 'alderman' Mr Moulton. However, when she went to Moulton's house for work, he was absent, and 'his Man' and 'the Maid' turned Bradwell away without giving her any knitting work. Bradwell left in 'great discontent and anger against them both' and that night a 'tall black man' came

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<sup>69</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 46, NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 131.

<sup>70</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 48.

<sup>71</sup> Stearne, *Confirmation*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>72</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 45; Stearne, *Confirmation*, p. 54.

to her and offered Bradwell 'that she should never want either work or any thing else'. The man confirmed their agreement by nicking her hand with a knife and using her blood in a pen had her print her name in a book from his pocket. The man then asked what she wanted, and she answered revenge on Moulton's man, and the man in black left her with some money. The man returned the next night and claimed he could not harm Moulton's man 'for he went constantly to Church to hear Whitfeild and Brinsly, and said his Prayers Morning and Evening', and so Bradwell asked him to harm the maid, but the man returned the next night unable to hurt her. Instead, he suggested that she turn her attentions to 'a young Child in the House', returning the following night with an 'Image of Wax' which they buried in the churchyard, and as it wasted away so would the child. Hale noted that the child languished for eighteen months and was near death when the minister sent Bradwell to confess to Bradwell's son at which the child rose and instantly began to recover. While those investigating could not recover the wax image, Hale reported that court convicted Bradwell because of her confession leading to her execution. He also noted that all witches had their familiars and that Bradwell's was normally a blackbird.<sup>73</sup> This narrative provides a basis for examining Moulton and Bradwell's experience of the witch-hunt.

Henry Moulton made his accusation that Elizabeth Bradwell had used diabolical witchcraft to harm his infant son John Moulton on 1 May 1645.<sup>74</sup> Moulton belonged to Great Yarmouth's elite; he was a hosiery merchant who had become a common councillor on the town's corporation in July 1640.<sup>75</sup> He took an active role in the town's government, serving variously as an assistant to the bailiff, a churchwarden, and overseer of the poor. He was also a collector for the ministers' rates in both 1642

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<sup>73</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, pp. 46-8.

<sup>74</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, p. 199.

<sup>75</sup> NRO, MF 416, f. 19; Y/C19/6, f. 462; Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 46.

and 1645 and served on the corporation's committees for the hutch and its documents. He also served the corporation on the committee for settling William Bridge as a minister in Great Yarmouth, the committee for the town's fortifications, and for procuring cannoneers.<sup>76</sup> As we have already seen Sir Matthew Hale noted Moulton family's piety. Henry Moulton was the epitome of the godly town governor, and in May 1645 his concern was for his son who had languished for the preceding eighteen months.<sup>77</sup> Moulton believed the defeat and confession of the witch who had bewitched his son could restore his son's health.

Elizabeth Bradwell's economically precarious position caused her enmity to the Moulton household that lay behind her alleged diabolical magic. She was variously described as 'an old woman' or spinster and seems to have lacked any relatives to speak in her defence.<sup>78</sup> The town's charity was not enough to provide for Bradwell and she received support from both the ministers and wealthy merchants like Moulton.<sup>79</sup> Puritan ministers in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century argued that charitable giving was both a sign of election and 'the surest, and most Christian remedy against witchcraft', and so Moulton's inability to provide charity here invited a demonic attack.<sup>80</sup> Magic offered the witch the means of revenging a perceived slight, but Bradwell's magic was resisted by the town's ministry.

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<sup>76</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 469, 471, 493, 496, 499; Y/C19/7, ff. 1, 3, 9, 45, 69, 73, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 47.

<sup>78</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, f. 199; Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 46.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988); Idem, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782* (Basingstoke, 1990).

<sup>80</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 32; Francis Tigge, *A Godly and Fruitfull Sermon Preached at Grantham. Anno Dom. 1592* (Oxford, 1594), pp. 3-4.

The puritan ministers Thomas Whitfield and John Brinsley had a vital role both in taking Bradwell's confession and in breaking the curse placed on John Moulton. Bradwell's inability to gain magical retribution she ascribed to the Moulton household's disciplined attendance at the ministers' sermons and prayers showing the power of the town's puritan ministry to defeat demonic subversion.<sup>81</sup> The ministers' success in examining the accused and gaining confessions showed their inviolability in the face of demonic magic.<sup>82</sup> The ministers were granted the power and authority to investigate and banish the power of the witch by the town's magistrates, a close relationship between the ministers and the town's magistrates.<sup>83</sup> The ministers brought Bradwell face to face with John Moulton whereupon 'the Child, who was but three Years old, and was thought to be Dead or Dying, Laughed, and began to stir and raise up itself; and from that Instant began to Recover'. The ministers were the lead agents in breaking Bradwell's power over the victim through the confession and curing him.<sup>84</sup> This was an affirmation of their authority and that of the magistrates.

Bradwell's case supplies a clear insight into the tensions within Great Yarmouth in 1645. Hale's account stresses the role of the loyal and pious servants whose devotion led to divine protection. The ministers strengthened their reputation through their ability to break Bradwell's curse, Hale recounted the story of her confession curing John Moulton to show how the ministers' authority as God's agents on earth combatted witchcraft. The witch-hunt offered an opportunity to enhance the authority of the town's political and religious elite through besting demonic foe.<sup>85</sup> Hale and the witchfinders sought to promote

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<sup>81</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 47.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 597.

<sup>84</sup> Hale, *Modern Relations*, p. 47.

<sup>85</sup> Elmer, 'Towards a Politics of Witchcraft', p. 104.



Bradwell's confession and the curing of John Moulton because it proved the efficacy of the town's puritan ministers and magistrates at a time when that power was under threat from Congregationalism.

#### v. Mark Prynn

The trial of Mark Prynn proves the limits of the influence of the town's political elite as Miles Corbet failed to convince the jury of Prynn's guilt. James Howlett's accusations against the astrologer Mark Prynn and Miles Corbet's feud with Prynn show how personal enmity influenced the court cases. The accusation became part of John Taylor's collection of Miles Corbet's 'Idiotisms', showing how failed witchcraft accusations were politicised as criticism. The accusations of witchcraft against Prynn went back to the 1630s, showing the deeper roots of witchcraft fears back into the Caroline period. This brought together three traditions of astrology: its place as an acceptable practice in Great Yarmouth for members of the town's court linked elite, Miles Corbet's puritan fears of astrology as a damnable practice and John Taylor's cynical view that it was just a con trick.

Corbet's failure to convict Prynn was infamous enough to be part of John Taylor's list of 'Idiotisms' included in a 1646 broadside that attacked Miles Corbet's legal expertise and moral character. Taylor had been ill-disposed towards Corbet ever since Corbet and the Lord Mayor of London arrested and interrogated Taylor in November 1642 by for seditious words against the Five Members. Taylor's later career producing polemical and satirical Royalist squibs aimed at Parliamentary hypocrisies included

an attack on Miles Corbet in a satirical speech attributed to Corbet and in the *Unidecimo*.<sup>86</sup> Taylor attacked Corbet's legal ability and character, showing how he could make the 'guiltlesse guilty, guilty guiltlesse'.<sup>87</sup> Taylor also sought to undermine Corbet due to his role within the Parliamentary regime in London. Corbet chaired the committee which prepared a bill against scandalous ministers in 1641, the committee for examinations, and the committee that drew up charges against Archbishop Laud.<sup>88</sup> Taylor's cynicism about astrology was likely a result of the first civil war when he 'damned the parliamentary astrologers' for their role in predicting Parliament's success which he contested in print.<sup>89</sup> The failure to convict Mark Prynne was an example of Corbet's supposed injustice, credulity, and ignorance that Taylor deployed to make the MP look ridiculous.

*A Briefe Relation of the Idiotismes and Absurdities of Miles Corbet, Esquire, Councillor at Law, Reorder and Burgesse for Great Yarmouth* is an eighteen-page pamphlet poem that lists eleven 'idiotisms', which Corbet's prosecution of Mark Prynne is the sixth. Taylor initially described Miles Corbet's personality faults, his nonconformist religious views, and political corruption.<sup>90</sup> Taylor followed this with a list of Corbet's 'idiotisms', including having a dog presented to the sessions to accusing a man of stealing his own goods.<sup>91</sup> Taylor discussed Corbet's campaign against Mark Prynne by framing Prynne as a con artist harassed by Corbet. According to Taylor 'Marke Pryme' was a 'juggling cunning man of fame, a nick-named conjurer' who used his skills in astrology 'many folks to cheat' through his ability

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<sup>86</sup> Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet, 1578-1653* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 150, 180, 184; John Taylor, *A Most Learned and Eloquent Speech, Spoken or Delivered in the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster, by the Most Learned Lawyer, Miles Corbet, Esq. Recorder of Great Yarmouth, and Burgess of the Same, on the Thirty-First of July, 1647* (London, 1681); Taylor, *Persecutio Undecima*, p. 17.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor, *Brief Relation*, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Barber, 'Corbett, Miles (1594/5–1662)'.

<sup>89</sup> Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet*, p. 179.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *Brief Relation*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4, 6.

to recite the technical terms and jargon of astrology including 'fiends and planets', 'wherefore the Country Folkes admir'd his Art'. His customers came to him to find 'lost Cowe, Calfe, Horse or Cart, or silver spoone, or Bodkin, Knife or Ring, or Milstone, Windmill, Corke'. Taylor believed that those cheated by Prynn made their allegations to Miles Corbet who personally committed Prynn to jail ahead of the next sessions and Corbet sought out evidence of Prynn's guilt by searching Prynn's study.<sup>92</sup> When the searchers discovered a copy of *Moulson's Almanack*, 'A Book of merry fortune telling, with the formes of Dice, Starres, etc.' they brought it to Corbet. According to Taylor, Corbet declared that 'this is the Book the knave doth conjure by, this wicked book shall help him to a check, that at this Sessions now will break his neck'. Corbet showed the jury the almanack, describing it as 'damnable and dangerous' and 'enough to hang Mark Prime'. However, 'an understanding man', the minister Thomas Cheshire, refuted Corbet's argument by explaining that the book was as an astrological guide rather than a means to raise spirits and so Prynn should be found innocent.<sup>93</sup> As a result, Prynn was found not guilty and 'escap's a *Popham Check*' and Taylor sarcastically remarked that 'there the learn'd *Recorder* gain'd much credit'.

Prynn had been accused in 1638 of using witchcraft to locate lost goods and the accusation had been a response to Prynn's close connection to the town's Caroline conformist ministry.<sup>94</sup> Prynn had been granted a tenancy by Matthew Brooks, a conformist Calvinist minister between 1630 and 1642.<sup>95</sup> Brooks had struggled against the town's nonconformists and in 1637 he had attacked Miles Corbet for harbouring two émigré nonconformist ministers.<sup>96</sup> The religious and political differences between

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 91-5; see above chapter three, pp. 97-102.

<sup>95</sup> Bodl., MS. Tanner 68, f. 323.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, f. 283.

Corbet and Prynn influenced accusations.<sup>97</sup> Thomas Cheshire, who spoke in Prynn's defence, was likely Brooks's former assistant in Great Yarmouth, who had been driven from the town by puritan abuse.<sup>98</sup> Religious divides from the 1630s still haunted the witch-hunt.

According to John Taylor, Corbet declared that the discovery of Moulson's almanack in Prynn's house was damning evidence of his witchcraft. Corbet declared that 'this Book is damnable and dangerous, he hath described here each Celestiall House'.<sup>99</sup> Corbet here connected astrological knowledge to demonic magic, an orthodox view amongst puritans.<sup>100</sup> Thomas Cheshire defended Prynn by explaining the difference between astrology and conjuring. Cheshire showed that 'the substance of the book... to be as farre from Maister Corbets talke as Oatmeale is from egges, or cheese from chalk' because it did not provide a means to conjure spirits.<sup>101</sup> The jury still needed to be convinced of Prynn's guilt, and Miles Corbet's argument that astrological interest was damning did not suffice.

The accusations levelled against Bradwell and Prynn in 1645 emerged from the political and religious divisions within Great Yarmouth. The accusations were intensely personal, but both cases also reveal the tension between the ideals of the merchant oligarchy and the population of the town. Hale used the success of the town's authorities in prosecuting Bradwell to show that puritan ministers could protect witches. John Taylor used Miles Corbet's failed accusations against Prynn to argue that Corbet

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<sup>97</sup> Gregory, 'Witchcraft, Politics and "Good Neighbourhood"', pp. 47-9.

<sup>98</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/60, ff. 102-12.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor, *Briefe Relation*, p. 9.

<sup>100</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 464-6.

<sup>101</sup> Taylor, *Briefe Relation*, pp. 7-9.

was ill-informed and vindictive. The accusations within the witch-hunt held political and religious meaning for those involved and those commenting on them.

## vi. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the witch-hunt was possible in the summer of 1645 due to the support of the town's political elite, who were struggling with governing a divided town. Despite Parliamentary victories in the field, Great Yarmouth's position in 1645 continued to deteriorate as the threat of invasion and piracy drained the town's resources. Religious divisions over nonconformist communities led to vigorous debates within the town's corporation. The witch-hunt supplied a potentially unifying moment because it stressed combating a common threat of demonic subversion, an exaggeration of the dangers of separatism and disunity. Successful convictions enhanced the authority of the town's ministers, but Miles Corbet faced criticism for his role in a failed accusation. The same religious and political tensions that fuelled the hunt also made them of limited value as a means of reconciliation.

The 1645 witch-hunt did not resolve the underlying tensions that had inspired the hunt, leading to the second series of witchcraft trials in April 1646. The accusers in the spring and summer of 1645 were only partially successful in prosecuting their accusations. Only six of the ten people accused of witchcraft the jury at the borough sessions found guilty and the corporation only executed five of them. By October 1645, the corporation displayed doubts over the effectiveness of the searchers. The

corporation did not invite Matthew Hopkins to the April sessions to use his skills on the second group of accused witches. If members of the corporation's intention of the witch-hunt was to unite the puritans and heal the rifts within the corporation over the town's religious settlement, here too it failed, as conversions to the Congregational church in Great Yarmouth spiked in the winter of 1645-6 and members of the corporation struggled for a resolution. The witch-hunt was an attempt by the corporation to halt the slide into factionalism and the religious division and popular unrest that followed proved its failure.

## Chapter 8: The Witch-hunt of 1646

### i. Introduction

At the Great Yarmouth borough sessions in April 1646, the court tried six women accused of witchcraft, but the jury found them all innocent, showing how support for witch-hunting had collapsed within half a year. The religious and political consensus that justified the witch-hunt collapsed, as local and national unity and conformity became unenforceable. Nationally, Presbyterian influence over the New Model Army, the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and Parliament was becoming more tenuous. In January 1646, members of the corporation agreed to tolerate the Congregationalist church following a series of conversions amongst common councillors. The conservative puritan councillors accepted a church they had previously declared a danger to the town's peace. The distracted and divided members of the corporation were unwilling to support the witch-hunt as they had in 1645, with no evidence of the employment of the witchfinder or searchers. Support for the 1645 witch-hunt petered out because it had failed to unite the town's puritans. The combination of political instability, religious uncertainty, and poverty that had fed the witch-hunt now dampened the desire to prosecute it further.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 75-6; Elmer *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, pp. 131-2

While Witch-hunts could last for years, they also burnt out quickly, as a change of political leadership, a shift in local control, a reaction to the excesses of the hunt, or criticism of its theory and practice brought an end a witch-hunt. The initial hunt could trigger a sustained persecution, as seen in hunts in southwest Germany or the spiralling cases in Salem, where convictions led to further accusations intensifying the witch-hunt.<sup>2</sup> Behringer ascribes the failure of the initial witch panics in the 1590s to create a sustained hunt in Germany to the 'the mass of criticism provoked by the first great wave'.<sup>3</sup> In Sweden in the 1670s and Salem in 1692 the hunt came to an end with the rejection of children's spectral evidence in response to criticism and due to the local governor's distaste.<sup>4</sup> The impact of growing criticism by learned authors on bringing an end to witch-hunts in Protestant Germany and England is contested, but they provided a way for officials in local government to express unease that limited the efficacy of witchcraft accusations.<sup>5</sup> Midelfort identified military control over areas Germany as crucial to suppression to witch-hunting after 1634, as both Swedish troops in the North and Catholic troops in the southwest sought to put end the witch panics.<sup>6</sup> The imposition of a change in political leadership brought an end to a witch-hunts, such as Salem's new governor in 1688 and Eichstätt's new Coadjutor.<sup>7</sup> However, in Great Yarmouth, there was no shift in external control or change in local leadership, but instead a crisis of political confidence that lost faith in the efficacy of the hunt.

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<sup>2</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, p. 392.

<sup>4</sup> Bengt Ankarloo, 'Sweden: The Mass Burnings, (1668-1678)' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, eds Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford, 1990), pp. 295-9; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, p. 304.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition and Everyday Life* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 392; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 517-8.

<sup>6</sup> Midelfort, *Witch-hunting in Southwestern Germany*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan B. Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender and Society in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 36-7; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, p. 279.



## ii. The Changed Political and Religious Context

In the spring of 1646 Parliament's imminent victory over the king failed to bring a Presbyterian settlement, and the Parliamentary alliance was breaking down. Parliamentary successes brought 'no substantial relief from crippling taxation, free quarter, the petty tyranny of county committees, and violence and plunder by ill-paid and mutinous soldiers'.<sup>8</sup> Military success failed to heal the fractures within the Parliamentary forces as the control of the fragile peace was contested between Presbyterians and nonconformists.<sup>9</sup> The success of the New Model Army challenged Presbyterian ascendancy, the Westminster Assembly struggled for consensus, and Parliament remained divided. The contradiction between Parliament's military superiority and its inability to turn success into a political settlement provided the paralysis that brought uncertainty and unrest to the provinces. In Great Yarmouth, the members of the corporation shifted from continuing to enforce a comprehensive puritan settlement in the autumn of 1645 to accepting the toleration of congregationalism in January. The brief period between the two borough sessions changed political fortunes, impacting the ability to conduct a witch-hunt in Great Yarmouth.

The success of the New Model Army was a double-edged sword to the Parliamentary cause in Westminster, as radical religious nonconformists used the victories of the New Model Army as a sign of God's favour for the cause of sectaries. The aristocratic Presbyterian commanders who had begun

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<sup>8</sup> Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, p. 347.

<sup>9</sup> Gary Rivett, 'Peacemaking, Parliament, and the Politics of the Recent Past in the English Civil Wars', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 76 (2013), pp. 589-615.

the war in control of Parliament's forces had proved unable to win a decisive victory after the Earl of Essex's two years of ineffectual campaigning ending in defeat at Lostwithiel, or unwilling to prosecute the war effectively, an accusation made against the Earl of Manchester.<sup>10</sup> The creation of the New Model Army by the Committee of Both Kingdoms in January 1645 and Parliament's passing of the Self-Denying Ordinance in April, was understood as means of securing a new army that was not bound by the regional concerns of the Associations.<sup>11</sup> The new centralised army eclipsed the county committees and regional associations, moving power from local elites to Parliamentary committees. In February 1646, the Eastern Association moving administration from the Cambridge committee to a Parliamentary committee in Westminster, showing how the localities were being side-lined.<sup>12</sup> This military success gave the New Model Army an unassailable position as the most powerful armed force in the three kingdoms.

The New Model Army's success gave it power and influence that allowed the army independence and authority to support religious radicalism. The New Model Army was primarily drawn from the Eastern Association that had a deserved reputation for religious heterodoxy.<sup>13</sup> The army's successful campaigning was understood by the Scots, Cromwell, and the nonconformists in London as a vindication of toleration. The survival of Sergeant-Major-General Skippon at Naseby became part of a

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<sup>10</sup> Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp. 197-8; John Morrill, 'Devereux, Robert, third earl of Essex (1591-1646)', *ODNB*.

<sup>11</sup> Charles H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Protectorate* (London, 1962), pp. 49-50; Ian J. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 220-2.

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion of the garrison in Great Yarmouth in chapter five pp. 151-8, and the role of Lawrence Boggis discussed above in chapter six, pp. 183-8.

narrative of divine favour for the New Model.<sup>14</sup> The New Model Army's supporters saw it engaged in a 'decisive millenarian conflict'. Leading preachers serving in the army declared that 'the Spirit had abandoned the puritan Parliament' and instead 'directly guided the "saints" in Parliament's army'.<sup>15</sup> The New Model Army's victories late in 1645 and early 1646 were a springboard for a Parliamentary victory, but their success side-lined the Presbyterian leadership of Parliament and vindicated nonconformity.

Pressure from Scots and Presbyterian campaigners in London who sought to create a united Presbyterian state and the need to keep the nonconformists in Parliament and the religiously heterodox New Model Army who favoured toleration onside divided Parliament. The debate over the liberty of conscience created further ruptures as the Parliamentary Independents made progress on the Committee for Accommodation but faced 'blatant factional manipulation of procedure in revived committee' in the autumn of 1645 polarising Parliamentary Independents and Presbyterians.<sup>16</sup> There was an active Presbyterian lobby in London from October 1645, campaigning against Parliament's plans for church government. This turned into a campaign for the city's common council in December, and in May 1646 they supported the common council's 'remonstrance'. The Presbyterians deployed 'all the techniques of early 1640s Parliamentarianism – preaching, petitioning, pamphleteering, lobbying meetings, street-corner and vestry debate', alarmed at the break down of religious and social order.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie 1637-1662*, ed. David Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1841) ii, p. 291; Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 323; Ismini Pells, "'Stout Skippon Hath a Wound': The Medical Treatment of Parliament's Infantry Commander Following the Battle of Naseby" in *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars*, eds Andrew Hopper and David J. Appleby, (Manchester, 2018), pp. 78-94.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Iver Kaufman, *Redeeming Politics*, (Princeton NJ, 1990), pp. 71, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Youngkwon Chung, 'Parliament and the Committee for Accommodation 1644-6', *Parliamentary History*, 30 (2011), p. 307.

<sup>17</sup> Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 349.

The *Grand Remonstrance* of 1646 alleged that ‘private and separate Congregacons daily erected in divers parts of the City and elsewhere’, showing Presbyterian alarm at the growth of nonconformity.<sup>18</sup> London remained divided and the Scots who supported moving a Presbyterian settlement were unpopular, leaving a contested settlement with neither Presbyterians nor Independents in Parliament able to dominate.<sup>19</sup> The paralysis over agreeing on a settlement for the church and state eroded the power and authority of Parliament and left communities throughout England and Wales to seek local settlements.

In Great Yarmouth, members of the corporation continued to push for conformity and support for the war effort following the witch-hunt in September. In October 1645, members of the corporation continued to support the strict collection of funds to support the town’s ministry, the war effort, and to pay the women who had searched those accused of witchcraft.<sup>20</sup> Members of the corporation also sought to persuade Whitfield and Brinsley to repeat their Sunday sermon in the Dutch chapel from 2 pm on Fridays, replacing the services previously allotted to Bridge and Oxenbridge.<sup>21</sup> Edward Owner proposed the construction of a workhouse for the town’s poor in October, in response to a large number of beggars in the town. The demand for £50 from the Norfolk committee to raise cavalry was paid by members of the corporation alone to take the pressure off the citizenry.<sup>22</sup> In December members of the corporation passed an order for continuing the watch over the town, now strictly monitored by an alderman during the night.<sup>23</sup> However, the town’s financial troubles were beginning to have serious consequences as the crew of the town’s warship, the *Adventure*, mutinied after

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<sup>18</sup> Corporation of London Record Office, CCJ 40, ff. 178-179.

<sup>19</sup> Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, pp. 95-102.

<sup>20</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 76-7, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, f. 79.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, ff. 79, 80.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, f. 80.

remaining unpaid for six months.<sup>24</sup> Members of the corporation continued to push for conformity and obedience during the autumn, but there were symptoms of financial distress and poverty undermining the corporation's control over the town.

From January 1646, members of the corporation accepted limited toleration of the Congregationalist church and sought relief for the town's financial problems representing a decline in authority. At the beginning of January, members of the corporation organised a committee to meet William Bridge, at the instigation of Edward Owner and Thomas Whitfield, about the divisions caused by Bridge's church. The corporation sent the bailiffs John Rowe and Nicholas Cutting junior, the aldermen Thomas Johnson, Thomas Gooch, Thomas Manthorpe, Robert Gower, Edward Owner and the Chamberlains.<sup>25</sup> The corporation did not record the outcome of the meeting, but the Congregationalist church book records that the Congregationalists agreed 'That for a timewee shoulde forbear to receiue any into Church fellowshippe until wee gaue notice to [the] towne [that] wee could forbear no longer'.<sup>26</sup> The corporation's tacit toleration of the Congregationalists represented a shift in approach likely motivated by a series of conversions of members of the corporation during the autumn. The corporation's financial difficulties in March 1646 led members of the corporation to send the aldermen Robert Gower and Thomas Johnson to Norwich to ask for the reduction of the rates the town had to pay, blaming the town's inability to pay on 'great losses and poverty fallen upon the Towne by enimies upon the Sea', and the Norwich committee agreed to the reduction.<sup>27</sup> The members of the Great Yarmouth corporation could no longer sustain religious conformity or the war effort as poverty became a visible problem in the town.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, f. 81.

<sup>25</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 82; NRO, FC31/1, f. 6.

<sup>26</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 6.

<sup>27</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 92, 93.

The corporation's ability to enforce conformity and control over the town was in decline between the summer of 1645 and April 1646. The failure to secure a national Presbyterian settlement in Parliament or the Westminster Assembly meant that there was uncertainty over any future settlement, making it harder to enforce a comprehensive puritan settlement in the town. The New Model Army's religious radicalism meant that their success protected, supported, and vindicated nonconformity. Despite Parliamentary victory being imminent Great Yarmouth suffered from further financial hardship and emboldened nonconformists. The town's dire financial situation required members of the corporation to cover costs as raising further taxation was unpopular and difficult. The political influence of Bridge's congregation meant that members of the corporation were willing to accept the Congregationalists' restraint on membership in January 1646 rather than try quashing the group.<sup>28</sup> The members of the corporation had to find new ways to co-exist with the erosion of puritan comprehension.

### iii. The Challenges to Puritan Conformity, September 1645 - April 1646

During the winter of 1645-6, the town's dire finances and the influence of the town's Congregationalist church weakened the authority of the corporation's governance. The acceptance of the presence of Bridge's independent congregation, even with the limits placed upon it, represented a retreat from corporation's position that Congregationalist churches were a source of division during the summer of 1645. The continued cost of the war was exhausting the corporation's financial resources and ability

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<sup>28</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 82.

to provide charity that led in turn to popular discontent. In response members of the corporation shifted responsibility for charity away from the corporate body to individuals, showing declining confidence in the ability of the corporation to carry out the work of governance and reformation. The members of the corporation no longer supported a return to its full-throated support to a new witch-hunt.

The First Civil War taxed the confidence of the godliest of communities as finances collapsed and the comprehensive puritan reformation failed to materialise. London's poor relief was struggling to cope, and Dorchester's poor relief was 'at point of collapse' by the end of the First Civil War, meaning the vision of a 'reformed, God-fearing Dorchester seemed to have come to a dead end'.<sup>29</sup> The debates in London produced 'something of a collapse of self-confidence' in William Dowsing. He feared that Independency and nonconformity would undermine the role of the civil magistrate in leading the reformation of the provinces.<sup>30</sup> The corporation in Great Yarmouth was not alone in being caught between the challenges of repairing strained poor relief and maintaining the cohesion of their godly reformation.

Despite the best attempts of members of the town's corporation, Great Yarmouth had failed to establish a comprehensive religious settlement and was unable to quash nonconformity in the town. Bridge's congregation had continued to grow in numbers and political influence despite repeated

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<sup>29</sup> Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*, pp. 209, 219, 221; Ben Coates, 'Poor Relief in London during the English Revolution Revisited', *The London Journal*, 25 (2000), pp. 40–58.

<sup>30</sup> Morrill, 'William Dowsing: The Bureaucratic Puritan', p. 185.

attempts by members of the corporation to co-opt the ministers into conformity and persuade the congregation to end its separation.<sup>31</sup> Members of the corporation's resistance to congregationalism peaked in July 1645 when they had sought to prevent religious 'divisions and factions' as a disturbance of the peace, admonishing those seeking to set up a church in a congregational way.<sup>32</sup> Despite the restrictions placed on Bridge and the Congregationalists over the summer of 1645, Miles Corbet sent a letter in October 1645 informing the corporation that 'most of the inhabitant[es] of the Towne were very desirous that M[aster] Bridge might preach in our parish church every Thursday'.<sup>33</sup> Members of the corporation sought to continue their restrictions on Congregationalism imposed over the summer of 1645 into the autumn.

From the beginning of 1646 members of the corporation moved towards limited toleration of the Congregationalists following a failed attempt to persuade them to rejoin the puritan community. On 4 January 1646, there was a conference between leading members of the corporation and William Bridge. The Congregationalist church book records that Edward Owner and Thomas Whitfield who first made contact on 2 January, 'griued [and] sore displeased that M[aster] Bridge should gather a Church here in Yarmouth'.<sup>34</sup> Members of the corporation formed a committee made up of the bailiffs, John Rowe and Nicholas Cutting Junior, the aldermen Thomas Johnson, Thomas Gooch, Thomas Manthorpe, Robert Gower, Edward Owner, and the chamberlains Thomas Goose and Joseph Warde to discuss with Bridge 'such differences as have beene betwixt the Towne and hym'.<sup>35</sup> The result of the meeting was that the Congregationalists agreed to cease taking on further members as long as they could 'forbeare',

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<sup>31</sup> See above chapter six, pp. 173-9.

<sup>32</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, f. 78.

<sup>34</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 6.

<sup>35</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 82.



which lasted until 14 April 1646.<sup>36</sup> Later in January, four members of the town's common council joined Bridge's congregation: Augustine Thrower, George Spillman, Laurence Eaton, William, and Thomas Harmer.<sup>37</sup> This undermined the ability of members of the corporation to enforce conformity now that the membership of the corporation was itself divided. This was not the toleration of 'parochial' independency seen in London where gathered churches used the existing church structures. However, there was a shift to a situation like London where Congregationalist members of the corporation had continued involvement in civic society.<sup>38</sup> The meeting between Bridge and the delegation from the corporation was comparable to the abortive December 1645 meeting between moderate Presbyterians and Independents in London seeking a way to toleration.<sup>39</sup> Members of the corporation no longer had the will or the consensus amongst them to argue effectively for a comprehensive puritan settlement and against Bridge's separatist congregation.

Members of the corporation continued to legislate to maintain compulsory Sunday worship. The existing orders for the sabbath from October and November 1644 had sought to ensure attendance at Sunday service by employing the coercive power of the constables and night marshals to apprehend and punish those 'profaning the Sabbath'.<sup>40</sup> In September 1645 members of the corporation ordered the great chain across the haven raised between 8 am and 8 pm on Sunday to prevent fishermen leaving the haven, part of wider efforts by godly reformers to limit economic activity on Sundays.<sup>41</sup> In October 1645 the churchwardens were ordered to prevent 'disorderly persons' leaving Sunday service after the sermon but before prayer as it was creating a disturbance.<sup>42</sup> This profaning of the Sunday service was

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<sup>36</sup> NRO, FC31/1, ff. 6, 7; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 82.

<sup>37</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, pp. 281-4.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, *The Triumph of the Saints*, pp. 128-9.

<sup>40</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 51, 53.

<sup>41</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 91; Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, pp. 102-4.

<sup>42</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 76.

likely from prayer book protestants, following their obligations to attend the service but keen to leave. The continued campaign against a recalcitrant population shows how discontent with the town's ministry was growing.

The town's financial woes led to popular discontent with the collection of taxation and the corporation's failure to pay those in service to the town. Parliament's highly successful military campaigns in 1645 and 1646 by the New Model Army did not reduce the burden of taxation and privateering damage affecting the town.<sup>43</sup> The Eastern Association demanded £100 17s 6d in October 1645 to support their garrisons and the Norfolk committee asked for £50 as a loan to Parliament which the corporation ordered the town's aldermen and common councillors to pay rather than try and collect from the town.<sup>44</sup> The ministers' rates required a coordinated effort between the constables and aldermen of the wards to ensure payment.<sup>45</sup> In March 1646, members of the corporation sent two former bailiffs, Robert Gower and Thomas Johnson to ride to Norwich for the abatement of a proportion of the public rates due to 'the great losses and poverty fallen upon the Towne by enimies upon the Sea', along with a written list of those losses.<sup>46</sup> The bailiffs reported that Norwich assembly was supportive and subscribing to a letter to be sent to Parliament to mitigate Great Yarmouth's costs, to which the corporation appended a petition in the Town's name.<sup>47</sup> The corporation failed to pay Captain Wilch and his crew for six months service in wastage, leading to mutinies amongst Wilch's and a captain Swinley's crew and the arrest of 29 mutinying sailors, and Edward Owner offered £100 of his own money to cover the sailors' pay.<sup>48</sup> In April 1646, the corporation ordered the collectors for the

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<sup>43</sup> Blair Worden, *English Civil Wars, 1640-1660* (London, 2009), pp. 61-2.

<sup>44</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 76, 79.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, f. 76,

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, f. 92.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, f. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, f. 81.

poor rate to recover money due to Great Yarmouth over the previous two years, showing how ineffective the system had now become.<sup>49</sup> The members of the corporation sought alternative short-term revenue-raising methods, choosing to sell off corporation property to pay the town's debts and researching the feasibility of renting out the town's ship.<sup>50</sup> London faced similar levels of economic dislocation, as coal and food shortages and a decline in trade compounded the effect of heavy taxation, with a sixth of the cost of Parliament's wartime funding drawn just from London.<sup>51</sup> The town's empty treasury meant that members of the corporation had to step in to cover the town's debts and prevent discontent from turning into further mutiny.

Maintaining the conscription of 'sufficient' men to watch and ward the walls of Great Yarmouth required strenuous effort from members of the corporation, but from late 1645 to early 1646 the corporation shifted responsibility for maintaining the watch from aldermen to the constables. Despite the corporation's perceived need to maintain town guards in a time of war, the townsfolk had repeatedly 'neglected' the watch. The corporation made new orders in October and December in 1645 and January 1646 enforcing attendance at the watch. In October there was a review of the watch overseen by the bailiffs, the justices of the peace, and the aldermen John Lucas, Anthony Speck, John Carter and Thomas Felstead, who decided that the ward aldermen were to ensure attendance by monitoring the watch all night.<sup>52</sup> In December, the corporation agreed that the ward aldermen were only expected to be with the watch until midnight when the aldermen were to be relieved by two

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, f. 83.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, ff. 84, 85.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Porter, "The Economic and Social Impact of the Civil War upon London," in *London and the Civil War*, ed. Stephen Porter (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 175–204.

<sup>52</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 76.

common councillors each.<sup>53</sup> In January 1646, the corporation switched responsibility for maintaining the watch to the ward constables, and the corporation ordered the constables to present those failing to attend the watch before the bailiffs and warn those expected to serve on the watch to attend.<sup>54</sup> Members of the corporation pushed confrontation with the general population away from the aldermanry and towards the constables and showing a weakening of the vertical connections between the town's godly governors and residents.

The corporation's need to establish a poorhouse showed how the town was struggling with poverty following the damage done by royalist privateering in the preceding years. In October 1645, the alderman Edward Owner proposed the corporation should construct a workhouse for the poor and pledged 'a large stock of money' to that cause.<sup>55</sup> Edward Owner intended for the workhouse to 'sett the pore into worke' and so prevent beggars and the idle poor from being 'suffered to wander about in the towne'. There was concern over the increasing numbers of beggars on the town's streets. He also proposed support for 'the impotent [and] aged poore not able to worke' who would be kept and maintained at the proposed workhouse.<sup>56</sup> In April 1646, the corporation granted Owner the hospital houses in part to 'mayntaine a schole there for pore children, to be taught to read [and] knit [and] braide'.<sup>57</sup> The hospital houses were provided rent-free, but the school and buildings were to be maintained at Edward Owner's cost. In December 1645, members of the corporation agreed that new aldermen and councillors would donate £5 per alderman and 50s per common councillor towards the new workhouse instead of adding to the town's civic plate.<sup>58</sup> Members of the corporation supported

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, f. 80.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, f. 82.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, f. 79.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, f. 79.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, f. 84.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, f. 80.

Owner's desire for the provision of workhouse and school because it sought to reduce the presence of poverty on the town's streets. This also reduced the problem of refused charity that had caused the enmity that had sparked witchcraft accusations.<sup>59</sup> There was a 'strong puritan impulse' behind similar charitable works in London and the 1650s local associations formed so that individuals could donate to support hospitals and schools.<sup>60</sup> Difficulties in raising money led the corporation to outsource charitable provision to the philanthropy of the town's wealthiest merchant.

The authority of Great Yarmouth's corporation declined between September 1645 and April 1646, as the members of the corporation were no longer able to resist Congregationalism and begged for relief from funding the war effort. The inability of the corporation's embassy to dissolve the Congregationalist church in January 1646 showed that the members of the corporation no longer had confidence they could restrain the Independents that they had labelled dangerous months before. Bridge's congregation was now a politically and religiously influential force with the backing of common councillors. Members of the corporation struggled with how to react to increasing poverty in Great Yarmouth. The corporation could not easily raise further funds through taxation, and their failure to pay sailors in service to the town turned into a mutiny. The economic damage caused by royalist privateering requiring members of the corporation to request the Norfolk county committee and Parliament for relief from rates. Members of the corporation grew concerned over citizens in poverty begging in the street, supporting Edward Owner's proposed workhouse and school that sought to remove beggars and the impotent poor from the streets. The lack of support from the corporation for

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<sup>59</sup> See above chapter seven, pp. 211-3.

<sup>60</sup> Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, pp. 117-8.

the witchcraft accusations in 1646 was symptomatic of the corporation's wider disunity and financial collapse.

#### iv. The Failure of the 1646 Witch-hunt

This section argues that the accusations in the 1646 witch-hunt failed because there was no longer political support in Great Yarmouth for the hunt. The witch-hunt in September 1645 had resulted in the conviction of six out of the eleven accused of witchcraft, but the second in April 1646 failed to convict any of the five accused and the changing political and religious context of the trial was the reason for this failure. To show this requires looking at how the witchcraft accusations of 1646 emerged from the 1645 hunt, in-depth at the trials themselves, the accused, the jury, and officers of the court. The changing reputation of the witchfinder, waning political support for the witch-hunt, the changing status of accusers and the changing reality of the town's religious settlement all helped ensure that the outcome of the trials held in 1646 was different from those of 1645.

It was the success of the first witch-hunt in 1645 which was unusual, rather than the failure of the second. Successful witchcraft accusations were unusual and witch-hunts rare in England. Brian Levack has calculated that there were around 5,000 successful witchcraft prosecutions in the British Isles and that more than half of those were in Scotland. He also established that Europe, excluding Germany,

had a conviction rate of 46%. Essex had a conviction rate of 24% for the whole period.<sup>61</sup> During the reigns of James I and Charles I accusations were 'highly likely to fail', as difficulties in reaching sufficient evidence, concern over fraud, medical explanations, and political disapproval from James and Charles made judges cautious of prosecuting witchcraft.<sup>62</sup> Witch-hunts too were rare and could break down as communities ran out of suspects and lost confidence in accusations, as the stereotype of the witch broke down and evidence for convictions became sparser.<sup>63</sup> Peter Elmer has argued that the end of witch-hunting occurred in East Anglia because 'Independency undermined puritan consensus and provoked irreparable divisions within the ranks of the godly'.<sup>64</sup> This thesis has argued that the particular confluence of political division and puritan insecurity could fuel or diminish support for the witch-hunt, rather than just the breakdown of puritan unity.

The individuals accused of witchcraft in 1646 were comparable in status to those accused in 1645 and accorded with the contemporary stereotype of the witch. The court rolls record five individuals coming before the tolhouse bar on 2 April 1646 accused of practising witchcraft. Joseph Smyth was a labourer, accused of consulting with spirits. The other four were women accused of diabolical seduction and diabolically raising spirits. The sessions book records Dionis Richard alias Avery and Dorothea Dewe alias Vittry as spinsters, while Anna Parke and Elizabeth Clark were widows.<sup>65</sup> The two spinsters' aliases likely denoted their bastardy implying low-status unmarried parents.<sup>66</sup> Like most of those tried for witchcraft in 1645, those accused in 1645 were poorer members of society and the women lacked husbands who would speak for them. However, there was an absence of accusations by politically

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<sup>61</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>62</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 32

<sup>63</sup> Levack, *Witch-hunt*, pp. 196-9; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 235.

<sup>64</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p.134.

<sup>65</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 203-5.

<sup>66</sup> Alan Macfarlane, 'Illegitimacy and illegitimates in English history' in *Bastardy and Its Comparative History*, eds Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard M. Smith (London, 1980), p. 82.

powerful accusers with bewitched relatives, unlike the 1645 hunt when the common councillors Henry Moulton, Augustine Thrower, and members of the influential Linstead family had made accusations. Those accused of witchcraft in 1646 were of a similar social status to those in the previous witch-hunt, but the accusers lacked influence compared to 1645.

The members of the corporation continued to staff the borough sessions and there was a continuity in personnel between the September 1645 and April 1646 sessions. Miles Corbet remained as the Recorder and joined by five out of the eight justices from the September 1645 sessions along with the same coroners and constables. Seven of the fifteen jurors had served during 1645 hunt.<sup>67</sup> In 1646, the justices were aldermen except for the Recorder Miles Corbet and Samuel Smyth a Common Councillor. Out of the fifteen jurors only three were not serving common councillors, and amongst those three Thomas Copeman would join the corporation in 1647.<sup>68</sup> The officers and jury who staffed the court were from the same political elite as those who had manned the court in 1645. To understand the differing results, it is necessary to look at how differently the corporation treated gathering evidence in April 1646 compared to September 1645.

As Matthew Hopkins became aligned with disruptive forces such as Independency, support for his witch-hunt declined. Hopkins and Stearne had been extraordinarily successful in the first half of 1645 in providing expertise for communities to convict those accused of witchcraft. This was the reason members of the corporation had invited Hopkins to come to Great Yarmouth in August 1645. However, there had been a growing resistance to Hopkins's witch-hunt despite his success. When Hopkins gave

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<sup>67</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, p. 203.

<sup>68</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 75.



evidence in Norwich assizes in July 1645, he claimed to have delivered his response to ‘severall queries’.<sup>69</sup> These queries included accusations that Hopkins was ‘the greatest Witch, Sorceror and Wizzard himselfe’, and that his method ‘forced [the accused] through that cruelty to confesse’ showing distrust of Hopkins’ methodology.<sup>70</sup> John Gaule’s *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts*, published circa May 1646, was one example of the reaction against witch-hunting as a minister with puritan allies and connections ‘confronted the witchfinders and went into print to expose their ill doings’.<sup>71</sup> Gaskill makes a compelling argument that the growing resistance to Hopkins and Stearne was part of a wider reaction against the assumed authority and corruption of good order engendered by the Civil War. Gaskill shows that Gaule saw the witch-hunters becoming part of the disturbance of society rather than a means of healing, aligned with disruptive individuals such as ‘Coblers and Tinkers turn’d Preachers, Souldiers turn’d Lawgivers, Subjects turn’d Tyrants, and Servants turn’s Masters.’<sup>72</sup> The Hopkins hunt had lost its shine for communities in East Anglia. The challenges to Hopkins’s authority and ability made the witch-hunt part of the social and political disruption of communities, rather than a means of restoring unity.

Members of the corporation chose not to employ Hopkins and his searchers for the 1646 hunt which showed a lack of confidence in the witch-finder and his methods. The inspiration for the 1646 accusations was the 1645 hunt and the presence of Hopkins in the town since the sessions recorded the accusations as occurring between 17 and 20 September 1645, within ten days of the start of the September 1645 sessions.<sup>73</sup> There was no invitation for Hopkins to come to Great Yarmouth before the

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<sup>69</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 144.

<sup>70</sup> Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Stuart Clark, ‘Gaule [Gall], John (1603/4–1687)’, *ODNB*; Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 135; John Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1646).

<sup>72</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p. 222.

<sup>73</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 195, 203-5.

sessions in April 1646, unlike 1645, and no evidence he returned to Great Yarmouth.<sup>74</sup> In October 1645, members of the corporation agreed to pay the searchers and watchers of witches for their services in the 1645 hunt, but no similar agreement or set of figures for the payment of searchers can be found after the trials in April 1646.<sup>75</sup> The failure to call Hopkins for the second hunt was likely a response to the failure of the first hunt to convict nearly half of those accused, the high cost of the midwife searchers, and the public criticisms Hopkins faced. Great Yarmouth's political authorities were no longer unwilling to support the skilled practitioners that made the 1645 witch-hunt successful.

Members of Great Yarmouth's ruling elite had supported the 1645 witch-hunt by making accusations and employing Hopkins and searchers. However, they did not support the second due to the political and personal costs of failed accusations and Hopkins' declining reputation. Miles Corbet's failure to secure a conviction against Mark Prynn was likely to have reduced Corbet's interest in pursuing accusations after the poet John Taylor had used the failure as part of his criticism of the recorder, portraying Corbet as gullible and ill-educated.<sup>76</sup> Members of the corporation's reticence to employ Hopkins and the searchers, or to engage with the hunt themselves by bringing forward any further accusations, shows that the political elite no longer saw the witch-hunt as effective or unifying. At the September 1646 assizes, no further witchcraft accusers came forward, bringing an end to the witch-hunt.

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<sup>74</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 71.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, f. 76.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, *Briefe Relation*, pp. 8-9, see above chapter seven for further discussion of John Taylor's poem, pp. 215-7.

## v. Conclusion

Great Yarmouth's corporation had its political authority diminished by the town's poverty and religious nonconformity. The acceptance of William Bridge's Independent Congregational church in January 1646, after members of the corporation, spent so much of 1645 campaigning for its removal as a dangerously disruptive element within Great Yarmouth, shows how the leadership of conservative puritans on the corporation had weakened. Great Yarmouth had financial difficulties that left members of the corporation unwilling to raise further taxation and instead sought relief from Parliament's demands. The corporation was reliant on the philanthropy offered by Edward Owner to cover the costs of an ambitious school and workhouse project to relieve the growing poverty in the town. Members of the now divided corporation were no longer willing to support witchcraft accusations with the expertise employed in the first hunt, leaving the accusations to flounder.

The corporation's divisions and distress continued to mount, undermining any consensus amongst the corporation membership that would have allowed a continuation of witch-hunting. As the next chapter shows, the corporation could not easily resolve the unrest caused by the town's poverty, especially as harsh weather and an unresolved peace leading to higher fuel and food prices, stymying England's economic recovery. The Presbyterian cause floundered as the New Model Army flexed its power. During the tense peace that followed the divides within the town continued to fester rather than heal and antagonism towards the Congregationalists fed into the 1648 Royalist rising and subsequent purge. The next chapter shows how antagonism within the corporation and Great Yarmouth boiled over in 1648 into support for Royalism during the second civil war.

## Chapter 9: Poverty, Rebellion, and Occupation, 1646-9

### i. Introduction

Following two years of poverty and discontent, Great Yarmouth's sailors and members of the corporation rose in support of the King during the Second Civil War, and the town was occupied by Parliamentary troops and members of the corporation were purged. The town's 1648 insurgency was rooted in the town's economic hardship, as the corporation's financial woes limited their ability to supply charitable relief when the harsh winters of 1646-7 and 1647-8 left the town's poorest in dire need. The need to maintain religious conformity was part of the inspiration for the leadership of the rising. The subsequent military occupation of the town and the Parliamentary purge of the corporation's membership provides a political and religious terminus for this thesis as it broke the power of the town's conservative puritans. The promotion of Congregationalists to the aldermanry led to pluralist politics that would continue to affect the town into the Restoration and beyond.

The chapter demonstrates the causes, course, and impact of the rising by looking at the general context, the uncertainty that bred discontent, the leadership and logic of the rising, and its consequences. Great Yarmouth was not unique as a formerly loyal Parliamentary urban community that had a popular uprising with support from members of the political elite in 1648. To understand

the weakness of the town to the rising the chapter looks at how the corporation and the wider population drifted apart due to the extremity of the town's poverty and the failure of charity. The chapter then examines the leadership of the town's insurgents during the Second Civil War, showing how they from the town's religious conformists and were men of good standing amongst the corporation. The rising led to the imposition of a military garrison, and a purge of the corporation's membership. The result was a new political dynamic in which the town's Congregationalists surpassed the influence of the Presbyterians.

## ii. The Context of Crises, 1646-9

The period 1646-50 was one of uncertainty and division as the national government at Westminster failed to reach a permanent settlement with either the King or New Model Army, culminating in a series of rebellions in the Spring and Summer of 1648 and King Charles I's execution in January 1649. Between 1646 and 1648, political and religious infighting fractured the Parliamentary alliance that had won the First Civil War. The increased taxes to pay for the New Model Army further impoverished a war-torn country, and through the cruelly harsh winters of 1646-7 and 1647-8 charitable systems struggled under the additional strain. The risings that made up the Second Civil War represented a popular rejection of godly reform and nonconformity across the country. In the wake of the Second Civil War, the Parliamentary authorities purged corporations of those who had proved to be less than loyal. The second civil war was the product of a failed peace resulting in continued political violence.

Nationally, the failure to reach a settlement with the king, distrust of the Scots who occupied northern England until February 1647, and fear of resurgent Royalism meant that Parliament could not risk disbanding the New Model Army and had to sustain the unpopular taxes needed to pay for the army. Parliament had needed to abandon 'all pretence of respecting the traditional modes of consultation', which led to a 'great revulsion' against the wars amongst the wider population.<sup>1</sup> The 'unprecedented burdens' imposed by Parliament continued despite the end of the war. This led to resistance to the excise and free quarters that spilled over into violence and contemporary sources blamed this popular violence for the outbreak of the Second Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Despite Protestant factionalism becoming 'the most serious problem of the peace', it was the failure to reach a religious settlement in the mid-1640s that led to 'new forms of community... from myriad negotiations amongst diverse Protestant factions'.<sup>3</sup> The tension of what settlement should be imposed led to popular unrest. The 1647 mutiny in the New Model Army had threatened the stability of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup> In 1647, the New Model Army occupied London and destroyed the city's defences bringing an end to debate over whether Parliament would enforce a Presbyterian or more Independent religious settlement. Risings across England and Wales, and a Scottish invasion in support of the King in 1648 were a rejection of Parliament's settlement, and the crushing of the rising justified military control.<sup>5</sup> Between the end of the First Civil War and 1648, the failure to establish a permanent settlement and the continued need to support the army created resentment that led to the violence of the Second Civil War.

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<sup>1</sup> John Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 2001), p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Ashton, *Counter-Revolution: The Second Civil War and its Origins, 1646-8* (New Haven CT, 1994), pp. 43-80.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Beaver, 'Behemoth, or Civil War and Revolution, in English Parish Communities, 1641-82', in *The English Revolution c. 1590-1720: Politics, Religion and Communities*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (Manchester, 2007), pp. 134, 137.

<sup>4</sup> Kishlansky, *Rise of the New Model Army*, pp. 223-8.

<sup>5</sup> Gentles, *English Revolution*, pp. 314-5, 323-51.

The struggle for power between Parliamentary factions and the increasingly politicised role of the New Model Army created instability at the centre of the regime. The conflict between Independents and Presbyterians was partially resolved in 1647 by an occupation of London by the New Model Army and the symbolic throwing down of the city's defences, described as a crushing of the 'Presbyterian counter-revolution', but no new settlement was agreed.<sup>6</sup> The war had damaged the kingdom's economy, and poor harvests and continued demands for taxation from Parliament stifled economic recovery.<sup>7</sup> The innovation of the excise continuing to be imposed on the country to pay for the standing army led to popular violence in London, which spread out across the country from 1647 onwards.<sup>8</sup> Economic stagnation became linked to discontent with the continued financial exactions needed to fund the army and Parliament's failure to formulate a settlement that would allow them to disband the New Model instead. The national repercussions of this uncertainty were a series of risings culminating in the Second Civil War with consequences for the effectiveness of Great Yarmouth's godly governance.

The Second Civil War emerged from popular discontent across the country that mixed Royalist support with Anti-Pathy towards the Parliamentary government. The urban risings in Essex, Kent and Norfolk were part of the larger conflict as the Scots invaded, Wales rose for the King, and part of the fleet defected.<sup>9</sup> There was an 'older, simpler strain' of royalism that emerged in Devon and Cornwall.<sup>10</sup> However, across the country, resurgent Royalism was 'closely linked with a dislike of the post-war religious settlement'. The spark for the Kent rising was the commission to try the Christmas rioters, in Bury St Edmunds it was the setting up of a maypole. This reflected tension between traditional beliefs

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<sup>6</sup> Gentles, *New Model Army*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> Braddick, *Nerves of State*, pp. 95-9; Trevor Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-1660* (London, 2004), p. 395.

<sup>8</sup> Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, pp. 70-9.

<sup>9</sup> Royle, *Civil War*, pp. 444-7.

<sup>10</sup> Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, pp. 406, 411-2.

and Parliament's religious reforms. In East Anglia, the heartlands of the early Parliamentary movement, the gentry were 'dismayed' by the rise of nonconformity, leading to hostility to a Parliament unable to stamp it out.<sup>11</sup> Norwich's 'Great Blow' in April 1648 emerged from popular discontent with excises, bans on traditional religious services and was triggered in an attempt to remove the mayor due to his perceived Royalist sympathies.<sup>12</sup> Popular violence emerged through discontent that was no longer mediated by local elites who were willing to ignore or abet local violence due to their antipathy towards Parliament.

Victory in the Second Civil War did little to reconcile the New Model Army to Parliament, as Parliament continued to seek to enforce a Presbyterian settlement and negotiate with the King, leading to Colonel Pride's purge of Parliament, regicide, and purges of the disloyal. The members of the New Model Army had religious concerns over how Parliament sought a Presbyterian settlement that ran contrary to the army's desire for toleration of sects, and the troops were angry over their pay whose value had been diminished by dearth if it arrived at all.<sup>13</sup> The result was a military intervention, as Colonel Pride purged distrusted Presbyterian leaning members of Parliament, and the subsequent trial of Charles I led more to distance themselves from Parliament.<sup>14</sup> The result was a much wider reform of localities due to the 'exclusion of traditional ruling families untrusted or unwilling to serve', relying on smaller groups of

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<sup>11</sup> Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, pp. 238, 359-61.

<sup>12</sup> Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, pp. 369-75; Andrew Hopper, "The Civil Wars," in *Norwich since 1550*, eds Carole Rawcliffe, Richard Wilson, and Christine Clark (London, 2004), pp. 106-8.

<sup>13</sup> Ashton, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 478-9; Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic, 1649-1660* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Hutton, *The British Republic*, pp. 8-10



more committed individuals.<sup>15</sup> The British Republic that followed the Second Civil War further isolated previously loyal Presbyterians.

The corporation struggled with governing Great Yarmouth between 1646 and early 1648, as the town's financial problems continued to mount, and the town's charitable networks struggled under the weight of demand. In October 1646, members of the corporation sought to clear the debt of the overseers of the poor, and in December set up a coal store for the poor's use.<sup>16</sup> In February 1647, these coals were distributed to the poor on a ticketed basis, but the cost was large enough to require an additional quarter's poor-rate and led to renewed debate amongst members of the corporation for a workhouse.<sup>17</sup> In July 1647, members of the corporation complained that the rates for the ministers were three years in arrears, requiring a new rate in September which remained in arrears.<sup>18</sup> In October, members of the corporation ordered aldermen and constables of the words to check the town fortnightly for poor newcomers who could be expelled and idle beggars and vagabonds to be punished and for the watch to prevent townsfolk breaching the sabbath and fast days.<sup>19</sup> Financial problems in late 1647 led members of the corporation to give power to bailiffs to arrest those in debt in November. In December, they sent Miles Corbet to get relief for the rates on the town, while a fifth quarter rate was needed to cover the poor rate.<sup>20</sup> The members of the corporation struggled during this period with poverty and the demands of taxation, which made it difficult to act to enforce conformity or loyalty.

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<sup>15</sup> Hutton, *The British Republic*, pp. 37-9; David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (London, 1985), pp. 304-5.

<sup>16</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f.95.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, f. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, ff. 103, 107, 109.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, f. 112.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, ff. 113, 115.

The rising of 1648 was the brief seizure of the town by Royalist insurgents during the summer. In May 1648, the members of the corporation were concerned over wider disorder throughout the kingdom and ordered the revival of the artillery company and the watch and extra funding to support the town's sailors who were still struggling financially.<sup>21</sup> On 7 June, the Parliamentary Committee of Both Houses were concerned that 'there are some distempers now growing about Yarmouth in Norfolk', which put the town at risk due to the 'revolted Ships' who had defected to Prince Charles being in the seas nearby.<sup>22</sup> On 15 June, members of the corporation agreed to appoint new cannoneers, maintain curfews, and search for arms amongst the town's population, centralising power around Thomas Ingram as the captain of the militia.<sup>23</sup> On 7 July, the Committee of Both Houses ordered Norwich and Captain Barker to offer assistance to Great Yarmouth in the event the ships attacked the town.<sup>24</sup> On the same day, members of the Great Yarmouth corporation agreed to the formation of a committee of defence, centralising power to the aldermen in a time of crisis, and requiring all corporation members and the town's militia to subscribe to the National Covenant.<sup>25</sup> When Parliament sought to impose a garrison on the town from 20 July, members of the corporation refused, responding on 24 July that the troops had led to 'tumults' amongst 'the rude multitude', and so despite the sailors' disaffection, the orders to send troops into Yarmouth were rescinded.<sup>26</sup> The uneasy standoff between the local authorities who had barred entry and Parliament continued until early September.

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<sup>21</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 121.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, SP 21/24, f. 107.

<sup>23</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 123.

<sup>24</sup> CSPD, 1648-9, pp. 170, 171.

<sup>25</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 125.

<sup>26</sup> CSPD, 1648-9, pp. 203, 208-9, 212-3; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 125.

Parliament's initial response to the rising was to impose a garrison on the town, and the following year the Parliamentary committee of indemnity purged the corporation of members connected to the rising. On 7 September, the corporation received a letter from General Ireton with an ultimatum, either the town accepted a garrison, or the army would destroy the town's walls and build a fort at the mouth of the River Yare.<sup>27</sup> The corporation's attempted to stall Ireton by requiring a direct order from Lord General Fairfax. However, Fairfax's arrival in front of the town two days later led the members of the corporation to concede and accept the garrison.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the autumn and winter of 1648 and the spring of 1649, the members of the corporation struggled to raise money to fund the existing costs to the town and the charge of billeting the garrison.<sup>29</sup> In July 1649, the Parliamentary committee of indemnity moved to investigate the loyalty of the members of the corporation. This led to a pre-emptive request for dismissal from twenty-one members of the corporation and their replacements were largely from members drawn from Bridge's congregation.<sup>30</sup> This represented a large shift in power within the corporation caused by the influence of Parliament and the corporation's lack of independence after the rising.

Great Yarmouth's insurgency during the Second Civil War was part of a much wider crisis in Britain but remained rooted in the town's poverty and the tensions between puritan conformists and Congregationalists. The rising in Great Yarmouth was possible because of the wider rebellion, but the discontent that lay behind the insurgency was rooted within the town's corporation and its failure to handle the increasing burden of charity and the failure to maintain a comprehensive puritanism.

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<sup>27</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 129.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, f. 129.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, ff. 129, 134, 135, 142.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, ff. 147, 148.

However, to understand the crisis befalling the corporation, and how its members lost control over the town it is necessary to consider how the conditions within Great Yarmouth deteriorated between 1646 and 1648.

### iii. The difficulties of an Uncertain Peace

This section of the chapter describes the problems facing the corporation in four parts. First, there is a restatement of Great Yarmouth's political, religious, and economic difficulties at the end of the First Civil War. Second, the section looks at how peace did not reduce the town's economic dislocation and the effect this had on the town's citizenry. Third, the continued economic dislocation affected the corporation's ability to provide relief for the poorest in the town. Finally, the section shows how members of the corporation and John Brinsley continued to push for conformity, concerned at the growth of divisions and disorder, and look briefly at a witchcraft accusation in 1647. This sets the scene for the popular and political discontent that fuelled the insurgency of 1648.

Great Yarmouth reached the peace in 1646 divided and distressed, the town's vital herring fleet shattered, and conformity undermined. Great Yarmouth's religious, economic, and political strain between 1646 and 1648 resulted from problems that had emerged during the First Civil War and the peace did little to heal those divides. The First Civil War had allowed religious nonconformity to take root in the town, both under the aegis of the army of the Eastern Association and as part of William

Bridge's congregation. The conversions of members of the corporation to Bridge's congregation had shifted the political makeup of the corporation and made puritan comprehension harder to enforce. The cost of fortifying the town and the ravages suffered by the town's herring fleet from Royalist privateering had damaged economic life in Great Yarmouth.<sup>31</sup> The corporation was struggling with the town's economic distress and divisions, even before it the continuing crises of the late 1640s worsened the situation.

The end of the First Civil War left the corporation still indebted for the cost of the war and facing demands for further taxation to continue to support the army. Members of the corporation needed to borrow £300 in February 1647 to cover Thomas Meadow's May 1642 bond of £400, and asked the fortification collectors to bring their accounts to the corporation in an attempt to collect the money due from five years previous.<sup>32</sup> George England was still taking an account for the costs and payments owed for the town's ship in July 1647, despite its sale.<sup>33</sup> In April 1647 members of the corporation finally settled the demands of Elis Dawdy, a carpenter owed 44s 4d for building 56 barrows for the town's fortification back in the early 1640s.<sup>34</sup> In addition to these existing costs, there were continued demands from Parliament for taxation to pay the standing army. The Westminster government expected the corporation to collect a monthly assessment in July 1647 for the New Model Army, which required six aldermen, seven common councillors, and six 'commoners' to assess.<sup>35</sup> In December 1647 members of the corporation expressed resistance to continuing to pay this rate and ordered a letter to be sent to Miles Corbet in Parliament to complain that 'the Towne is [and] allwaies have beene much

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<sup>31</sup> See above chapter five for the cost of the war, pp. 137-51, chapter six for the rise of religious nonconformity.

<sup>32</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 13, 96.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, f. 103.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, f. 100.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, f. 102.

overcharged farr beyond other places in the proportions of Parliam[en]t rates'. The members of the corporation wanted Corbet to seek an abatement and to contact the county committee to confirm it.<sup>36</sup> These unpopular financial demands that the corporation struggled to raise money led members of the corporation to seek new sources of income.

Fortifying Great Yarmouth had required limiting the town's economic activities to inside the walls and limiting the number and availability of points of access to the town. The peace from 1646 gave the members of the corporation opportunities to reopen the town to economic activity. This meant letting out land outside the walls previously left fallow because of the risk of giving cover to potential enemies or were part of the town's outerworks and making the town more accessible by opening smaller side gates that the corporation had locked and filled with soil during the war. It took until late 1646 for members of the corporation to consider letting out the denes to the North of Great Yarmouth and opening two smaller gates to the northeast of the town.<sup>37</sup> The corporation rented out the land of the former defence works in 1647. The corporation let the tower outside the south gates to a John Bennet in 1647, on condition that tower was returned to the corporation operational.<sup>38</sup> The chamberlains were empowered in December 1647 to let out the castle yard to the east of the town.<sup>39</sup> Members of the corporation also revived extra charges on non-citizens importing salts and coals, moving from 6d per weight to 8d in 1646 and 1647, advantaging to Great Yarmouth's merchants.<sup>40</sup> These attempts to stimulate the town's economy were focused on opening the town to further farming, industry, or

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, f. 115.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, ff. 95, 100.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, f. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, f. 114.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, ff. 86, 103.

supporting Great Yarmouth's merchants and increasing the corporation's revenues, but did nothing for impoverished fishermen who had been so affected by the First Civil War.

The town's herring fishermen had suffered most during the First Civil War as sailors had lost their catch and vessels to Royalist privateering, while the corporation had proved to be slow to respond to the threat. Chapter five showed how badly Royalist privateers mauled the town's herring fleet, as the catch halved, and the privateers captured and held over a thousand sailors from the town. Despite these hardships, the corporation's response was initially unsympathetic. Members of the corporation banned those in debt to the town from the herring heyning in August 1646. This meant that the fishermen were expected to pay their bonds to the town or be taken to court by the corporation, showing the town's financial priorities were put ahead of struggling sailors.<sup>41</sup> The limits put on fishing on the Sabbath by members of the corporation in September 1645 had prioritised the town's Sabbatarian policies over the fishermen's difficulties.<sup>42</sup> The corporation's lack of support for the town's sailors in the aftermath of the First Civil War did little to endear the sailors to the government

Members of the corporation sought to support the fishermen from late 1647, ahead of growing concern over the sailors' loyalty. October 1647 when members of the corporation attempted to limit the influence of competing fishermen from outside the town by requiring them to pay the same 5s on white herring as they paid on red herring.<sup>43</sup> In February 1648, members of the corporation acknowledged the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, ff. 90, 103.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, f. 91.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, f. 112.

crisis facing the town's herring fisheries in a response to Parliament's imposition of fifty out of every thousand fish caught as a charge for wastage. The corporation described 'the great losses the Towne have already suffered by enemies at Sea... especially in those fishing voiages w[hich] can not be recovered againe in a long tyme'. The resultant 'losses by the fishing trade upon poore fishermen taken at Sea by the enemy have beene so great', that it required 'that the rate for the reliefe of the pore in the Towne was increased from 400 li unto 1000 li p[er] Annum'.<sup>44</sup> Members of the corporation agreed to relieve fishermen May 1648 still affected by 'the rovers [and] pirates', seeking to collect a benevolence from the town's population to cover the costs.<sup>45</sup> Members of the corporation took until late 1647 to respond to the suffering of the town's fishermen, their late response and initial lack of support fuelling sailor's discontent in the town.

The spiralling cost of charitable provision resulted from the town's economic hardship and worsened it. The town was not alone in trying to deal with a creaking administration of poor laws, disrupted by 'military conflict and wartime taxation'.<sup>46</sup> Members of the corporation had declared in February 1648 that the burden of poor relief had increased from £400 to £1000 since 1645.<sup>47</sup> Members of the corporation sought to reduce the burden of charity by removing the idle poor who had entered the town and preventing further immigration. The corporation ordered the aldermen and constables to renew their search for newcomers to the town in August 1646.<sup>48</sup> The members of the corporation extended the order in October 1647, ordering that aldermen and constables were 'to goe about their wardes euery fortnight', to seek out 'new commers to Towne that are like to bring a charge upon the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, f. 116.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, f. 121.

<sup>46</sup> Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 114.

<sup>47</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 116.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, f. 89.



Towne' and remove them. Additionally, they were to 'enquire for vagabonds Idle p[er]sons [and] wenches liveing out of service [and] take such order w[ith] them as they shall thinke fit' showing a desire to control the idle poor and limit the burden they placed on the town.<sup>49</sup> This strictness showed that the members of the corporation were concerned that the town's charitable provision could not cope with further migration into the town.

Edward Owner continued to push for a more philanthropic solution to the town's beggars by providing a central workhouse that would both take beggars off the streets and teach them a craft.<sup>50</sup> The workhouse plans initially fell into abeyance after Edward Owner moved to secure funding in early 1646, but following the harsh winter of 1647, the members of the corporation returned to the idea.<sup>51</sup> The corporation created a committee of over twenty councillors, including the bailiffs, ten other aldermen, and the common councillor Henry Moulton, to 'consider of the great worke intended of building a workehouse for the pore and setling them in worke there w[ith] a Governor over them'. The committee was concerned not just with how to construct the workhouse but the financial necessities 'for a stock, and sufficient yerely meanes of mayntenance'. There were only two members of the town's Independent congregation on the committee, while members of the corporation stressed that the workhouse was 'so pious a worke'.<sup>52</sup> Their words echoed that of Thomas Atkin, London's mayor, in his 1645 order for the reform of poor provision in London, implying that the project emerged from puritan utopianism.<sup>53</sup> In April 1647 the alderman Anthony Speck became the treasurer for the workhouse,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, f. 112.

<sup>50</sup> See above chapter eight for Owner's previous attempt, p. 234-5.

<sup>51</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 79.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, f. 97.

<sup>53</sup> Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers, 57/4/5A; Paul Slack, 'Hospitals, Workhouses and the Relief of the Poor in Early Modern London' in *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700*, eds Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London, 1997), p. 241.

receiving funds supplied by new councillors.<sup>54</sup> However, despite the support of Edward Owner, there is no evidence of progress on the workhouse before the Second Civil War broke out. Poor relief through workhouses allowed the reformation of the poor that reflected a godly preoccupation with preventing idleness and controlling the poor both spatially and in behaviour that justified the immediate expense.

The cost of charity grew to crisis proportions during the harsh winters and dearth of 1646-1648, which together with the higher levels of poverty in the town, strained the ability of the members of the corporation to provide enough funding for poor relief.<sup>55</sup> In December 1646, the corporation set up a 'committee for the coal store for the poor', led by five aldermen and four common councillors. In February 1647, the corporation order the aldermen and constables of the wards to use the coal store and 'see what miserable pore people there are abideing in their wardes [and] they with the overseers of the poore to distribute to euery of the same poore: one or two metts of coales'. The aldermen and constables would give tickets that the poor would take to George England who would deliver them their coal. Due to the cost of the coal stock and the shortfall in the poor rate, members of the corporation ordered an immediate assessment equal to a quarter of the annual poor rate.<sup>56</sup> In July 1647, members of the corporation appointed George England to provide coal for the poor and provided a yard for the storage of fuel, stockpiling ahead of the next winter.<sup>57</sup> However, by January 1648 these provisions proved insufficient and the members of the corporation required an addition quarterly assessment and a parted bill for 12d per thousand herring to cover costs.<sup>58</sup> In May 1648 members of the corporation agreed that 'Pore fishermen [were] to be relieved', noting that the town's fishermen

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<sup>54</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 98.

<sup>55</sup> Steve Hindle, 'Dearth and the English Revolution: The Harvest Crisis of 1647-50', *The Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 64-98.

<sup>56</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 97.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, f. 103.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, f. 115.

had been 'ruined in their estates... by being taken at Sea in their fishing voiaiges by Rovers [and] pirates', leaving them without a living or opportunity to go back to sea. Members of the corporation sought to relieve the fishermen through a door-to-door collection of money by the town's Aldermen and each ward's constable, and the collected money delivered to the Bailiffs and Justices of the Peace to distribute with the churchwardens and overseers of the poor.<sup>59</sup> This release of funds to the poor provided relief from the immediate crisis but did little for the long-term prospects of sailors and their lost livelihoods. The failure to resolve the sailors' economic prospects damaged their confidence in members of the corporation left the sailors mutinous and willing to back a Royalist rising.

Members of the corporation's continued support for religious conformity around John Brinsley's ministry opened a dangerous rift between governors and governed. The members of the corporation had to choose a new minister and schoolmaster after the loss of the curate John Whitfield and the school mater Mr Dove in June 1646. In July 1646, the members chose John Swaine, likely the same John Swaine who had been involved in witchcraft accusations in Aldeburgh, as a town minister, and Mr John Hall of Hoxon as the grammar school teacher.<sup>60</sup> However, Swaine proved to be a contentious figure, demanding his quarter's tithe 'in an angry passion'.<sup>61</sup> In July 1646 members of the corporation agreed to punish members for failing to wear gowns to services.<sup>62</sup> Members of the corporation resurrected warding the town during the day on Sundays and fasting days in October 1647, as a means of watching for disorders. They also ordered all the Justices of the Peace to 'examine all offences complained of for breach of the Sabbath or P[ro]faneing the same or not observing the fast Daies in a

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, f. 121.

<sup>60</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 181-5; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 86, 88.

<sup>61</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 99.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, ff. 87, 88.

due manner', along with rooting out disorders from drinking houses, showing a continued zeal for puritan reform, but the need to continue to try to root out the group of inveterate sabbath breakers in the town's alehouses suggests a community of former conformists disenchanted with the puritan ministry.<sup>63</sup> Samuel Dubbleday, whose wife Anne was amongst the Congregationalists, was dismissed as a councillor in part because he did not 'at any tyme cometh to the place of Gods publick Worship'.<sup>64</sup> Despite members of the corporation's commitment to godly worship, it took until January 1648 for the font at St Nicholas's Church to be removed due to Parliamentary ordinance rather than pressure from the town's godly.<sup>65</sup> Members of the corporation continued to use the powers of the corporation as a vehicle for enforcing godly worship, but enforcement grew harder.

Despite members of the corporation's support for John Brinsley's ministry, the townsfolk were uncooperative in paying the ministers' rates. In July 1646, members of the corporation passed an order for the effective payment of ministers' rates, which required sending an alderman and common councillor to each ward to ensure collection.<sup>66</sup> The common councillor and member of the Independent congregation, Arthur Bacon, was committed to the tolhouse jail in December 1646 for owing £4 in tithes and herbage fees.<sup>67</sup> In April 1647, Miles Corbet was granted a gratuity of £50, in part for securing yearly maintenance of £32 for the town's ministers from the Dean and Chapter of Norwich.<sup>68</sup> However, there remained a large gap between monies owed and paid, and in July 1647 members of the corporation required the bailiffs and five aldermen to take account for the previous three years of

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<sup>63</sup> Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, pp. 72-5, 162-7; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 112.

<sup>64</sup> NRO Y/C19/7, f. 108.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, f. 116.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, f. 88.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, f. 95

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, f. 99.

assessments 'to use all good meanes for getting in the Moneys still behynde [and] not payd'.<sup>69</sup> A new rate for the ministers was established in September 1647 by order of 'the present Bailiffs and Justices,' to be conducted by the current and newly elected bailiffs.<sup>70</sup> The continued reluctance of citizens to pay the ministers' rates showed how members of the corporation's support for Brinsley was not shared by the wider population.

The membership of the corporation had agreed to a de facto toleration of the Independent congregation in 1646 but continued to exclude the Congregationalists from a larger role in governing the town, despite the continued growth and prestige of Bridge and his congregation. On 14 April 1646, the Congregationalists gave notice to the corporation that they could 'no longer forbear their duty of admitting into fellowshippe [and] they looked upon this iniunction as a burden'.<sup>71</sup> The membership of the corporation had lost its sway over the Independent congregation, and free from constraints imposed by members of the corporation, the congregation continued to grow. On 30 September 1646 they admitted the alderman and former bailiff Thomas Crane, in October, they accepted members of the Wakeman family, and the son of the common councillor John Wakeman was baptised into the congregation in December. On 9 March 1647, the congregation accepted the common councillor, John Arnold.<sup>72</sup> There were no further conversions of councillors before the rising, showing a plateauing of the influence of the Congregational church within the corporation. The congregation did not contest control in the same way as Independents in London, as Presbyterian petitions inspired counter-protests in the city between 1646-7, rooted in the power the Independents had amongst London's aldermanry.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, f. 103.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, f. 107.

<sup>71</sup> NRO, FC31/1, f. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, ff. 8, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, pp. 382-92.

The Independent congregation continued to increase its presence within Great Yarmouth's corporation, albeit more slowly, but members of the corporation still excluded Congregationalists from promotion within the upper echelons of the town's polity, maintaining the conformist organisational hegemony for now.

The puritan conformists had continued influence over the town's politics and the pulpit but could not disguise their unease at nonconformity which John Brinsley expressed in his 1647 sermon *Stand Still: Or, A Bridle for the Times*, where he argued for the need to trust in the authorities and maintain stability. Brinsley's argument rested on a divine injunction to 'stand you still, not doubting, not wavering', arguing that Christians should 'stand still, standing their ground against whatever opposition they meet with in respect of the faith which they professe' against the fear of inconstancy and wavering.<sup>74</sup> Brinsley feared that without 'sound Iudgement, and true Christian Direction' some individuals had 'fallen upon Separatisme, others upon Anabaptisme, a third upon Familisme, a fourth upon Antinomianisme, all in hazard to be lost (at least to the Church)'.<sup>75</sup> This danger was amplified by 'murmurings', justified by 'many dangers and difficulties, and discouragements, are dayly represented unto us for us to encounter with', but which ran the risk of 'provoking' God in their 'envy and malice', asking not for necessities but 'libertie for our lusts'.<sup>76</sup> The result was 'Contumacious, Wanton, Malicious, Envious Murmurings', as Brinsley feared material concerns were crowding out loyalty to the ministry and God.<sup>77</sup> Brinsley's sermon shows that the town's ministry was concerned by the uncertainty that was not only producing

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<sup>74</sup> John Brinsley, *Stand Still: Or, a Bridle for the Times* (London, 1647), pp. 25-6.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp. 35, 37.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp. 8, 11, 12, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

theological doubts that spurred nonconformity but also by popular discontent resulting from the town's economic woes.

Despite the popular discontent and poverty, there was only one witchcraft accusation made in 1647 against Maria Vervy in 1647, who had previously accused of witchcraft in September 1645. In 1647 the grocer Thomas Childres accused Vervy of using sorcery against his daughter.<sup>78</sup> Vervy had faced four accusations in 1645, including one from the common councillor Augustine Thrower, and so had a long-standing reputation for witchcraft.<sup>79</sup> Childres was a member of merchant elite in Great Yarmouth, but neither involved in the town's politics or a Congregationalist. This accusation was no more successful than those of 1645, which was unsurprising considering Childres's lacked support from the corporation. Witchcraft accusations no longer had the perceived power to unite or resolve the town's divisions.

The difficulties facing the members of the Great Yarmouth corporation had worsened between 1646 and 1648 despite the peace. The town was unable to recover from the economic malaise caused by the First Civil War. The members of the corporation resisted the continued financial demands from Parliament, as they claimed the town already had too high a burden placed upon it due to continued poverty caused by privateering. The corporation's claims were borne out by the one hundred and fifty per cent increase in the costs of poor relief that required additional assessments in 1647 and 1648, sparked by the town's poor being unable to keep warm through the winters of 1646 and 1647.<sup>80</sup> Poor

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<sup>78</sup> NRO, Y/S1/2, p. 195

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 234.

<sup>80</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 116.

relief was insufficient, the crisis comparable to London where economic dislocation meant that trade had decayed, the tax burden grew, the rich had fled, and those in poverty increased, meaning that the revenue of the poor rates in even the wealthiest parishes fell by twenty per cent as the costs grew.<sup>81</sup> In Warwickshire and Lancashire too, poor relief broke down between 1646 and 1648.<sup>82</sup> By early 1648 the failure of charity became linked to discontent amongst the town's sailors. Members of the corporation continued to press for conformity as part of securing the town's stability but doing so now required more coercion. The pressures put on the vertical political relationship between the corporation and the rest of the population by poverty had fuelled the fears of witchcraft in 1645, but by 1648 was the root of popular discontent with the corporation's government.

#### iv. The Rising

Great Yarmouth's rising over the summer of 1648 was the takeover of the town by a small grouping of previously loyal puritan aldermen and common councillors. The insurgents prevented the entry of Parliamentary troops and provided support for the Royalist fleet that arrived outside the town in late July. This rising was part of a much wider tide of discontent across England beginning with violent pro-Christmas riots across the country in the winter of 1647. This became more dangerous as spring mutinies emerged in Wales, the south-west and east of England. In May Kent rose for the King and part of the navy defected to the Royalist cause, as a Scottish force moved south in support of the king. The arrival of the fleet under the command of Prince Charles in front of Great Yarmouth was the catalyst

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<sup>81</sup> Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, p. 344; Porter, 'The Economic and Social Impact of the Civil War upon London', p. 192.

<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Healey, 'The Development of Poor Relief in Lancashire, c. 1598–1680', *Historical Journal* 53 (2010), p. 566; Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire*, pp. 277–8.



for the rising. The rising represented a shift in Great Yarmouth, uniting rebellious sailors and disenchanted members of the corporation against Parliament.

The insurgents took a deliberately obfuscated position on their own and the town's loyalty during the summer of 1648. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, briefly referenced the rising in his correspondence with Prince James Stuart while he was in Paris. He had heard that Great Yarmouth had been overthrown by six aldermen and declared for the King in early June.<sup>83</sup> The 'humble Petic[i]on of Thomas Johnson sen[ior] Nicholas Cutting, Nathaniel Ashby, Edmund Thaxter [and] James Johnson' from 3 July 1660 included a copy of the articles used against insurgent councillors in July 1649. These articles alleged the insurgents threatened to disarm Parliamentary troops entering the town in June, and in July supplied food to the Royalist fleet and raised a 'maligne multitude' to 'make opposition to the said forces of the Parliam[ent]'.<sup>84</sup> The Great Yarmouth assembly book remains coy on the town's allegiance during the crucial summer months of 1648. The Committee of Both Houses, wrote to the Lord General Fairfax in early June 1648, to inform him of 'some distempers now growing about Yarmouth in Norfolk'. The Committee thought it was of 'very great importance that the breaking out of those distempers bee prevented' and advocated sending 'the Troupe of the Regim[ent] of Col[onel] Fleetwood that was lately in Norfolk' to the town. The Committee treated the locality around Great Yarmouth and the sailors as hostile but treated the town as an ally.<sup>85</sup> These accounts show the falseness of the town's ostensible loyalty to Parliament.

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<sup>83</sup> Bodl., MS. Clarendon 31, f. 128.

<sup>84</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, ff. 114-5.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, SP 21/24, f. 107.

Parliament was concerned in the summer of 1648 that Great Yarmouth would suffer from a popular uprising and vacillated between sending troops to secure the town and empowered the town's corporation to prevent further unrest. The Committee of Both Houses feared on 25 July that the 'comeing in of force may stirre up the people that otherwise would be quiet' and were willing to leave Great Yarmouth's defence to the town's forces. The Committee argued that the members of the corporation needed to confirm the loyalty of the commanders of the town's forces and disarm those 'as have openly manifested their disaffection'.<sup>86</sup> The Committee of Both Houses reported to Colonel Scrope in July 1648 that 'many Masters and Seamen are going towards Yarmouth to be ready there to ioyne w[ith] the Revolted Ships'.<sup>87</sup> While these concerns of external and internal enemies were well-founded, Parliament's warnings were ineffective because Great Yarmouth was already under the control of Royalist sympathisers when they wrote to the town.

The insurgency was successful in securing the town because its leadership dominated the town's existing power structures. Clarendon claimed that the individuals in the town had 'thrust out their Maio[r]& six of their Aldermen' implying that removing only seven members of the corporation was necessary to give the insurgency control over the town.<sup>88</sup> The committee of indemnity accused twenty-eight members of the corporation of supporting the insurgency. The alleged insurgents included eight aldermen, and one of the serving bailiffs and the captain in the militia, Israel Ingram.<sup>89</sup> According to Thomas Johnson and his allies petition at the restoration it had been Thomas Johnson's words that

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, f. 263.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, f. 243.

<sup>88</sup> Bodl., MS. Clarendon 31, f. 128.

<sup>89</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, f. 115; NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 105.

swayed members of the corporation in favour of resisting Parliament's troops.<sup>90</sup> The willingness of members of the town's corporation to rise against Parliament after supporting the war effort throughout the First Civil War was highly significant.

The committee of indemnity ascribed the leadership of the rising to the aldermen Israel Ingram and Thomas Johnson, both previously impeccably Presbyterian.<sup>91</sup> Israel Ingram was a brewer, who had joined the corporation as a common councillor in November 1633, was one of a succession of Ingrams to serve on the corporation. He served as chamberlain in 1639, had been chosen as an alderman in 1641, serving on the corporation's fortification committees during the war, and became a captain of the trained band in May 1646.<sup>92</sup> His relation, Thomas Ingram, joined the corporation in March 1648, and acted as Israel Ingram's agent during the rising, searching for hidden weapons and supplying the Royalist fleet when it arrived outside Great Yarmouth.<sup>93</sup> Ingram's importance to the rising came from his role as one of town's bailiffs and as a captain leading a company of one hundred men of the town's trained band. Ingram as bailiff could give warrants to his supporters, and as captain of the trained bands could appoint and set the town's guards. The appointment of Ingram's allies as the cannoneers, those meant to command the town's wall defences, on 15 June, and Ingram taking charge of the search for weapons in the town shows how his position gave him the ability to control the town's defences and disarm his rivals.<sup>94</sup> Ingram had the power in 1648 to take control of the town's political and military leadership due to his existing position of trust and authority. Thomas Johnson's political career was longer and more illustrious. The leadership of these two men was vital to the success of the rising due

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<sup>90</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, f.115,

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, f. 115.

<sup>92</sup> NRO, Y/C19/6, ff. 288, 392, 446, 489; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 4, 19, 69, 70, 85, 88.

<sup>93</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, f. 115; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 117, 123.

<sup>94</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 123.

to Ingram's political power and Johnson's moral leadership giving them the authority to persuade the corporation and the town's militia to support the rising.

The insurgents justified taking control over the town as a means of preventing the entry of Parliamentary troops. Excluding Parliamentary garrisons from the town had been a consistent goal of the members of the corporation following their experience in 1643-4 when a garrison had threatened members of the corporation's control of the political and religious life in the town.<sup>95</sup> Israel Ingram and Thomas Johnson had both been deeply involved in the negotiations over the imposition of a governor during 1644. They had both established Great Yarmouth's independent military capacity as captains of the trained band. They later claimed that they had offered to 'aide [and] assist the said Charles son to the late King then being w[ith] the revolted ships by sending of victualls [and] other p[ro]visions, vnto the said Charles' to prevent the landing of Royalist troops.<sup>96</sup> The committee of indemnity accused Ingram and Johnson of in 'severall waies ioyntly [and] singly hinder w[i]thstand [and] oppose the said forces of the Parliam[ent] from Coming into the said Towne'. Johnson spoke against the garrison, and he and Ingram had set guards at the entrances to the town to 'disarme the soldiers of the Parliam[ent]'.<sup>97</sup> Members of the corporation had told late July that the town could raise sufficient forces 'against all enimies' and so did not need extra forces.<sup>98</sup> This convinced the Committee of Both Houses that bringing in troops might 'stirre up the people that otherwise would be quiet', leading the Committee's to rescind orders for the town to be garrisoned by Colonel Scrope.<sup>99</sup> The insurgents used

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<sup>95</sup> See above chapter five for this discussion, pp. 151-8.

<sup>96</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, f. 114.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, f. 115.

<sup>98</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 125.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, SP 21.24, f. 264.

the fear of a Parliamentary garrison to control Great Yarmouth and prevent Parliamentary occupation that would prevent their support for Prince Charles and his fleet.

The insurgents' control over Great Yarmouth was organised through manipulation of the corporation's committee of defence and Parliamentary orders to secure the town to ensure their control over potential rivals. On 15 June, members of the corporation ordered the aldermen Robert Gower and Jeffry Cobbe, and the common councillors Jeffry Warde, Thomas Muriell, and Thomas Ingram to search for weapons in the town. They were to investigate the houses of 'all those who are suspected to have stored up armes upon any secret designe', and deliver any weapons found to the town's control.<sup>100</sup> On 7 July, members of the corporation formed an emergency standing committee 'for the prevention of tumults in the Towne'. The town's aldermen, bailiffs, justices and two of the captains of the guard made up the committee, and unsurprisingly contained many those accused of leading the insurgency. Members of the corporation ordered that it was 'lawful for any other the members of this Society to come to them [and] informe them [the committee] of any thinge w[hich] concerneth the publick and to give their advice [and] speake their myndes freely touching the same'. The committee was given the emergency power to 'call before them such as shall be thought to be disturbers of the publick peace [and] to take order for punishing such p[er]sons'. Members of the corporation subsequently moved to secure the loyalty of the corporation by ordering the common councillors present to openly declare 'themselves that they will stand for kinge [and] Parliam[ent] according to the nationall Covenant' and publicly subscribe their names in the assembly Book. Members of the corporation also required the town's captains to subscribe their troops and the town's artillerymen to the national covenant, and those refusing to do so needed to be reported to the committee for the town's safety.<sup>101</sup> Between 1646 and 1647, the National Covenant 'came to be clearly identified with a conservative political and

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<sup>100</sup> NRO Y/C19/7, f. 123.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, f. 124.

religious programme that urged a negotiated peace with the king, the disbandment of the New Model Army, the suppression of religious sects and the enforcement of a Presbyterian church settlement'.<sup>102</sup> John Brinsley had defended the Covenant in 1644 at a Sermon preached at Beccles in Suffolk, at the taking of the National Covenant by local worthies, praising it as a means to 'endeavour the extirpation as of Heresie, so of Schisme'.<sup>103</sup> The oaths represented an attempt to enforce the loyalty of the town's governors and armed forces to protect an earlier and more conservative vision of the Parliamentary settlement.

The rising was an attempt by conservative puritan within the corporation to maintain a comprehensive puritan settlement by allying with the royalist cause to exclude Parliamentary forces. The authors of the rising were initially successful in securing the town because they could draw upon both popular support and authority within the corporation to dominate the town. The town's population had become hostile towards Parliament and its troops, and this was justification for the corporation giving control over to the committee of safety and to support keeping Parliamentary troops outside the town. The alderman Thomas Johnson swayed the councillors in favour of continued isolation from Parliament, while Israel Ingram used his position as bailiff and captain of the town to prevent the entry of Parliamentary troops. Thomas Johnson and Israel Ingram had both supported the corporation's puritan reforms in the 1630s and during the First Civil War. Their support for the royalist cause in the rising and antipathy towards Parliament as part of a wider reaction to religious radicalism and an unpopular army that had led to the Second Civil War. The rising was not successful in holding the town

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<sup>102</sup> Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 157.

<sup>103</sup> Brinsley, *The Saints Solemne Covenant with Their God*, p. 35.

for the King and the result was the occupation of the town and the purge of disloyal corporation members.

## v. The Consequences of the Rising

A military garrison imposed after rising led to the end of the corporation's independence and Parliamentary committee of indemnity's subsequent purge of the corporation's membership at the request of Congregationalists shattered the puritan control over the aldermanry. The immediate crisis was the Parliamentary garrison imposed on Great Yarmouth for the year following the rising, and how the garrison's threat of military force removed the corporation's independence. Members of the corporation proved unwilling even to discuss the rising and punishing those who raised it amongst themselves. However, the purge of the corporation's membership by Parliament's committee of indemnity and the subsequent promotion of Congregationalists to the aldermanry shows the power shift away from the conformists and the entrenching of the Congregationalists as a politically powerful faction. Unlike Newcastle which had a 'revolution in town government' during the war that had allowed a new godly government intent on purging the community and pursuing a witch-hunt to emerge, the shift in personnel in Great Yarmouth reinforced existing divides, like the purge of the Norwich corporation following the 1648 Great Blow, when a third of common councillors were removed, resulting in a 'clique of Independents who lacked popular support'.<sup>104</sup> The political status quo entrenched political and religious divisions and made a consensus for witch-hunting nigh impossible.

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<sup>104</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, pp. 142-3; Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution*, pp. 173-7, 191, 232-3; Hopper, 'The Civil War', pp. 111, 113.

Great Yarmouth's political purge was part of the much wider breakdown in consensual politics caused by the vicissitudes of the Civil Wars. The Civil Wars led to a shift in politics throughout the country as demands for loyalty led to a collapse in the expectations of consensual politics, as political partisans were employed over existing urban elites. Borough corporations were 'dismembered by forces within and far beyond them' as 'the visits of competing armies, and their tax collectors and governing committees would undo the politics of unity'. The purgation of the Great Yarmouth's corporation was similar to other purges during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, as victorious military forces moved to remove 'malignants' from the polity. Royalist forces purged Exeter, and Parliamentarians cleared the corporations in Oxford, Newcastle, Chester, and Bristol of disloyal members, and supported the purges within the corporations of Norwich and York.<sup>105</sup> External military authorities enforced the purges based on 'local pressure and local information'. Political success was not based on politicians 'ability to work with or around opposition in local government, but on their ability to exclude it'.<sup>106</sup> The reliance on purgation as a means of healing the body politic of dissent changed the dynamic of urban corporations, fuelling further divisions.

The imposition of a military garrison in Great Yarmouth in early September 1648 brought an end to the town's political independence from the central government as the garrison's military leadership

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<sup>105</sup> Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich*, pp. 124-7, 184-92; Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, pp. 59-62; David Scott, 'Politics and Government in York, 1640-1662', in *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution*, ed. R. C. Richardson (Manchester, 1992), p. 53; Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, pp. 169-70; Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction*, p. 96; Ian Roy, 'The City of Oxford, 1640-1660', in *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution*, ed. R. C. Richardson (Manchester, 1992), p. 155-6.

<sup>106</sup> Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, pp. 58-60.



imposed itself over the corporation. On 7 September, the corporation received a letter from Commissary-General Ireton from his headquarters at the house of John Wentworth in Somerleyton. Parliament gave Ireton leave to 'inguarding the Towne if he thinke it necessary or otherwise to have the walls [and] forts of the Towne demolished, and a fort built at the Havens mouth to secure the Towne against enimies'. Ireton informed the committee of defence that this was 'the Townes choice', but he required an answer by 2 pm. Members of the corporation sought to stall Ireton by accepting that 'there must be a guarison of soldiers brought into the Towne', but that they would not accept the presence of troops until their messengers to Fairfax returned or Ireton revealed his commission. Two days later, when Fairfax arrived at Great Yarmouth, a party of members of the corporation greeted him, dominated by those accused of leading the rising.<sup>107</sup> The threat of destroying Great Yarmouth's defence and the presence of the Lord General himself was enough to overawe the town into submitting to military governance despite years of resistance. Previously, members of the corporation had been able to call upon their allies in the local committees, the Eastern Association, and Parliament to forestall and limit the influence of garrisons. However, Fairfax's New Model Army had no such constraints. The suspicion of disloyalty to Parliament left the corporation unable to resist losing its independence as the garrison was a means of securing the town's loyalty.

The presence of the garrison upended the town's political status quo, partly because it represented an additional financial burden on a poverty-stricken town, and partly because the garrison usurped the corporation's control over the town. Members of the corporation had to secure funding for the troops stationed in the town to prevent the garrison from claiming free quarter from the citizenry. This initially required borrowing £400 in late September 1648, £200 from the corn stock and a £200 loan from the

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<sup>107</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 129.

general market, but within days the cost of the garrison rose to £800.<sup>108</sup> In November, members of the corporation approved a monthly and weekly rate, needed to borrow from the town's wealthy to cover the costs of the garrison. These included the provision of three barrels of coal and candles every night for the soldiers' courts of guard, even if that was meant to be chargeable to Parliament.<sup>109</sup> In May 1649, the corporation considered a further monthly rate to cover the cost of billeting troops.<sup>110</sup> The garrison also usurped the political authority of the corporation. In October 1648, members of the corporation needed to request the help of the garrison to prevent the soldiers from causing disorders on Sundays. The corporation suggested that twelve to fourteen competent men from the town would have the same number of soldiers matching them to check alehouses. Simultaneously, the garrison replaced the town gunners and took control over every bulwark and fort from the corporation.<sup>111</sup> In November, the corporation even relinquished control of the tolhouse hall, the corporation's municipal seat, to provide the site for the soldiers' council of war.<sup>112</sup> The garrison undermined the power of the corporation over the town, leaving the members of the corporation more vulnerable.

Great Yarmouth's assembly book obscured the course of the rising and its resolution, and the members of the corporation sought to maintain a veil of silence over the incident. The corporation brought an end to the initial crisis on 29 July by desiring that Israel Ingram 'resigneth his Captaines place' as a means of 'quieting [and] pacifying of tumult in Towne' which Ingram did 'voluntarily and of his owne accord'.<sup>113</sup> The only expression of the tensions between the members of the corporation recorded was in August

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, ff. 129-30.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, ff. 134-5.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, f. 143.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, ff. 132-4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, ff. 135.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, f. 125.

1648 when Briant Harper received a fine of twenty shillings for calling his fellow common councillor Walter Bullard a 'malignant knave' in response to Bullard putting down a post next to Harper's home.<sup>114</sup> Malignant was a term used for Royalist supporters and Bullard was listed amongst the supporters of the rising, showing that there was a division between those who had supported the rising and their fellow councillors.<sup>115</sup> However, Bullard's views remain opaque, since his service to the corporation studiously avoided issues of religion, but he was involved in naval matters, implying his alignment with the town's rebellious fishermen.<sup>116</sup> The corporation's ordinances that enforced behavioural norms within meetings sought to obscure personal enmities. There was no attempt to exclude the supporters of the rising from the corporation, as Abraham Castle was promoted to a common councillor in August and the corporation elections on 29 August saw over half the roles go to those accused of joining the rising.<sup>117</sup> In March 1649 Nathaniel Ashby was promoted to Alderman after the death of John Trendle despite his alleged role in the insurgency.<sup>118</sup> The committee for the town's debts created in March 1649 included the alleged ringleader Thomas Johnson and his supporter Joseph Warde.<sup>119</sup> Members of the corporation proved unwilling or unable to move against the insurgents, instead of seeking to clamp down on public debates within the corporation.

The town's financial troubles, which the cost of the garrison had exacerbated, meant that members of the corporation were unable to respond effectively to the ongoing problem of poverty in the town. There was a continued attempt to mollify the sailors and disaffected poor who had supported the rising. In November 1648 members of the corporation ordered the distribution of money to sailors struggling

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, f. 127.

<sup>115</sup> Leng, 'The Meanings of "Malignancy"', p. 846

<sup>116</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 18, 39, 43, 49, 50, 51, 56, 58, 62, 66, 74, 85, 116

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, f. 128.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, f. 139.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, f. 142.

due to enemy action from the half doles, the church rates, and an additional three-month rate for the poor.<sup>120</sup> In July 1649 the corporation's cancelled the yearly banquet and the bailiffs instead gave £10 to the poor.<sup>121</sup> However, the 'extraordinary charge of the poor and the billeting soldiers' extended Great Yarmouth's debt to unsustainable levels. The solution was raising further taxes, with an additional three months rate agreed in March 1649, and in May members of the corporation considered imposing another monthly rate.<sup>122</sup> There were limits placed on spending in March, as members of the corporation ordered that the overseers of the poor and the churchwardens were not allowed further money for fear they 'might continue to live beyond their means', crippling the town's ability to provide for the poor.<sup>123</sup> Members also supported recouping debts to the corporation, by forming a standing committee of the two bailiffs, six aldermen and three common councillors to get in the town's debtors. In May, members of the corporation required the committee's 'strict endeavor of looking to get in those summes of money [which] are due from free men of this Corporation', noting how the town was suffering due to the lack of care in getting the town's debts.<sup>124</sup> The corporation's continued debts and the need to raise extra funds added to the weakness in support for the members of the corporation.

Parliament finally moved to purge the corporation in June 1649, by supporting an investigation of the corporation's membership by the committee for indemnity. The committee of indemnity had been set up by Parliament to punish those who had supported the king and had included Miles Corbet since

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, f. 135.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, f. 148.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, ff. 135, 142, 143.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, f. 140.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, ff, 142, 144.

January 1649.<sup>125</sup> The committee's investigation was inspired by articles 'signed on the behalfe [and] by the appointm[ent] of the towne' by Francis Tyton.<sup>126</sup> The requirement for the members of the corporation accused of disloyalty to travel a hundred miles to the committee or resign their places led to a series of pre-emptive resignations in July and August 1649. Thomas Johnson and Anthony Parmenter choosing to do so in writing, and Israel Ingram, Giles Call, George England, Nathaniel Ashbie, Anthony Wyn, Henry Tompson, Thomas Gentleman, Walter Bullard, William Standley, Henry Peach, Thomas Copeman, Jeffry Lambly, Edmund Thaxter, William Lynstead, Thomas Bright, Benjamin Sayer, Thomas Muriel, Thomas Ingram, Abraham Castle, James Johnson all resigned in person. The aldermen Giles Call, Nathaniel Ashbie, and the common councillors Thomas Bright, Thomas Muriel, and Thomas Copeman were restored to their places in August 'by a speciall order of the honorable committee of Parliament for indemnity'.<sup>127</sup> The replacements were drawn mostly members of the town's Independent congregation, including three of the four promoted to aldermen, and six of the new common councillors.<sup>128</sup> The 1660 petition Nicholas Cutting, Nathaniel Ashby, Edmund Thaxter, and James Johnson blamed their exclusion on a 'dangerous ffaction' within the town. It seems plausible that the Congregationalists were the 'faction' seeking to exclude the insurgents, and likely aided by Miles Corbet, who joined the Independent congregation in September 1649.<sup>129</sup> The purge unsettled the corporation's political consensus as it privileged the Congregationalists over long-serving merchant families, opening new divisions within the corporation.

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<sup>125</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, vi, p. 113.

<sup>126</sup> Francis Tyton is likely the London printer who printed the work of Richard Baxter and other religious tracts as well as Roger L'Estrange's treatise on the freedom of the press.

<sup>127</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 147-8.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, f. 131.

<sup>129</sup> NRO, Y/FC31/1, f. 11; HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/294, ff. 114-5.

The popular uprising in Great Yarmouth had destroyed the members of the corporation credibility as the governors of the town for Parliament, requiring military governance and a new settlement before Parliament could trust the corporation. The main pillar of members of the corporation's legitimacy to govern over the town had become loyalty to the Parliamentary cause and the rising had proved that the corporation was neither loyal nor able to control the town's population. Parliament's need for a military garrison to control the town shows the collapse of trust in the members of the corporation. The imposition of the garrison even curtailed the town's financial independence. The members of Great Yarmouth's Independent congregation, previously excluded from the corporation and promotion to the aldermanry, used the scrutiny of the rising to force a purge of the corporation's membership. In the aftermath the Independents gained increased authority within the corporation. This was comparable to similar purges of captured towns and cities, such as Exeter, where following their capture by Parliamentary forces Parliament purged members of the towns' corporations.<sup>130</sup> Norwich was also purged after the abortive rising in the spring of 1648, with two aldermen and a third of the common councillors removed.<sup>131</sup> The corporation of 1649 was not as independent or as influential as it had been before the Second Civil War, and membership of the corporation had narrowed.

## vi. Conclusion

The rising in 1648 transformed the town's corporation into a body too divided to support witch-hunting. The witch-hunt in 1645 was possible because members of the corporation mobilised

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<sup>130</sup> Stoye, *Deliverance to Destruction*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>131</sup> Andrew Hopper, 'The Civil Wars', p. 111.

organisational and ideological power against an internal threat, with a unity of purpose and widespread support within the corporation. The witch-hunt drew upon membership that saw puritan conformity in the town, from the pulpit, the corporation, and within the court as a source of conformity and unity. In contrast, the membership corporation that emerged after the rising no longer had the independence or unity to engage in witch-hunting. The uncertain loyalty of the members of the corporation after the corporation had barred the gates to Parliament's troops and sent victuals to Prince Charles's fleet provided Parliament with the cause to garrison the town and purge the corporation of suspect members. The purge ended the exclusion of Independents from the corporation and broke down the politics of consensus and the ability of the corporation to work in concert supporting a religious settlement. These new complexions of power meant that the Congregationalists were now part of the power structure with central government support which led to complex wrangling over the town's politics that continued into the Restoration. The divided membership of the corporation could not offer the leadership needed to support a witch-hunt as the witch-hunt would no longer reinforce the Presbyterian orthodoxy, since that orthodoxy had crumbled away.

This chapter concludes the narrative sweep of this thesis by showing how the corporation's political traditions that had underpinned the puritan governance of Great Yarmouth and inspired the witch-hunt collapsed. The narrative cuts off at the watershed of the purge following the rising, which the conclusion extends to show the uncertain and uneasy toleration that followed. Attitudes to witches illuminated the rise and decline of puritanism as a political force within Great Yarmouth. It was the ideological alliance between minister and magistrate which had fostered the witch-hunt. The conclusion takes the narrative apart to show how the transient moment of witch-hunting had

resonance and meaning for Great Yarmouth's political elite within a particular moment in time which was defined by Presbyterian anxiety and military struggle.



## Chapter 10: Conclusion

### i. Introduction

The 1645 witch-hunt was a moment of terror during a period of political and religious upheaval for Great Yarmouth. The collapse in support for comprehensive Presbyterianism and the embedding of division in the 1650s brought an end to the political consensus that had justified supporting the witch-hunt. This thesis has rooted the witch-hunt and the support it received from members of the Great Yarmouth's corporation in the wider context of the town's political and religious divisions. The narrative has shown how members of the corporation's search for a comprehensive puritan settlement for the town was a defining feature of their political aspirations. The fear of division, Laudian corruption, and nonconformity influenced the corporation's desire to pursue witchcraft accusations as a symptom of corruption. This chapter covers how the town's political and religious life remained unsettled throughout the Interregnum and into the Restoration and resulting careers of the major players in the town's political and religious life. Finally, this chapter shows how the thesis advances our understanding of urban witch-hunting and argues for its wider applications.

### ii. Great Yarmouth in the Interregnum and Restoration

The failed Royalist rising and the Parliamentary purge that followed changed the complexion of the town's politics but failed to resolve the popular discontent and only entrenched the town's divides. During the contested 1650s the different denominations in the town reached a rapprochement, but this resulted in divided worship within the parish church and unsettled politics. Parliament enforced the promotion of Congregationalists within the corporation but did not resolve the underlying tensions between Congregationalist members of the corporation and their rivals who had popular support. The Restoration upended the corporation once more, as councillors dismissed at the rising sought to return to the corporation while Congregationalists and puritans either resigned their place or the new government purged them. The restored episcopate dismissed Bridge and Brinsley in 1661, and Miles Corbet fled for his life to the Netherlands for his part in the Regicide. The differing but intertwined fortunes of Edward Owner, Miles Corbet, and the town's ministers John Brinsley and William Bridge show how unsettled and uncertain politics continued to be.

The 1650s saw continued economic distress in Great Yarmouth as the Anglo-Dutch Wars and continued poverty caused by civil war privateers left the town economically depressed. In January 1653, the bailiffs Robert Harmer and John Arnold reported to General Monk in London that the town had lost £200 000 in the wars, and that poverty required a weekly rate of 8 to 10s. They complained that 'not 3 boats are now preparing to go forth fishing, where 150 sail used to be making ready'.<sup>1</sup> There were signs of economic recovery as the corporation constructed a new merchant's exchange during the 1650s.<sup>2</sup> The continued disconnect between struggling the fishermen and the merchants who had coped better with the crises of the 1640s fed into continued political resentment.

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<sup>1</sup> *CSPD*, 1652-3, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth', p. 45.

The religious divides that had troubled members of the corporation in the 1640s continued into the 1650s. Members of the corporation agreed in January 1650 to partition St Nicholas's church for £900 to allow three denominations to worship together. The corporation assigned the Congregationalists the chancel granted those worshipping from the Book of Common Prayer the north aisle, and those following Brinsley sat in the south aisle.<sup>3</sup> This was William Bridge's return to St Nicholas after his dismissal in 1645, and evidence of a more conservative constituency within the town. Great Yarmouth was not alone in partitioning its church to accommodate Congregationalists, in Exeter, the 'Independents were assigned the west end of the former... divided by a brick wall from the rest of the building'.<sup>4</sup> An order from the Council of State to the governor of Great Yarmouth removed John Brinsley from the town in January 1651, only for the order to be suspended in February in response to a petition from Brinsley and dropped after the council of state investigated Brinsley in May 1651.<sup>5</sup> The division of St Nicholas's church between Presbyterians, Prayer bookers, and Congregationalists and the attempt to remove Brinsley shows how completely comprehensive puritan worship had broken down in Great Yarmouth.

Influential converts, Parliamentary support, and a closer relationship with John Brinsley strengthened Great Yarmouth's Congregationalist community in the 1650s. In September 1649, the MP Miles Corbet officially joined Bridge's congregation.<sup>6</sup> In November 1649 Bridge received an endorsement from the

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<sup>3</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 158; Francis Worship, 'Crowmer Monument, Yarmouth Church', *Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Transactions* 2 (1849), pp. 35–42.

<sup>4</sup> Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, p. 244.

<sup>5</sup> CSPD, 1651, pp. 25, 52, 55, 201.

<sup>6</sup> NRO, Y/FC31/1, f. 11.

Council of State and a payment of twenty marks, and in 1651 Parliament awarded Bridge a stipend of £100 from tithes.<sup>7</sup> Bridge's status was enhanced by a series of roles in the Cromwellian government, advising Oliver Cromwell on the selection of members for the Nominated Assembly in 1653, the next year serving as an assistant to the Norfolk commission for expelling scandalous ministers. He served on the commission to consider the readmission of Jews to England in 1655.<sup>8</sup> By 1658 the relationship between Brinsley and Bridge had become cordial enough that Bridge provided an epistle to Brinsley's *Gospel-Marrow*, part of both ministers' attacks on Quakerism in the town.<sup>9</sup> The support for William Bridge and his continuing role in the Cromwellian government, unity in response to Quakerism, and a near decade of communal worship in the parish church made the Congregationalists an established part of Great Yarmouth's polity.

The purge of insurgents from the town's corporation following the 1648 rising left a political vacuum in Great Yarmouth that led to a volatile polity, worsened by a second purge of the corporation's membership at the restoration. The 1649 purge by the committee of indemnity shifted the centre of gravity in Great Yarmouth's corporation away from a generation of conservative puritan aldermen who had served on the corporation since the 1620s, and towards the Congregationalists who had been previously restricted from the aldermanry.<sup>10</sup> The death of Edward Owner was a blow for the town's conservative puritans, and he was buried in St. Nicholas's Church on 15 August 1650.<sup>11</sup> Members of the corporation were unwilling to elevate Congregationalists to the aldermanry, the aldermen's places left empty until March 1652 when the Council of State had to recommend the promotion of seven

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<sup>7</sup> NRO, Y/FC31/1, f. 11; Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.  
<sup>8</sup> Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.  
<sup>9</sup> Brinsley and Bridge, *Gospel-Marrow*; Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, pp. 89-90; Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.  
<sup>10</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 147-8; See above chapter nine, p. 275.  
<sup>11</sup> NRO, Y/C39/2, unfol.

Congregationalists to the aldermanry to bring the aldermen back to full strength.<sup>12</sup> The 1654 parliamentary election reopened the wounds of the rising. The reinstated common councillor Nathaniel Ashby opened the doors of the tolhouse chamber during the election, allowing in an influx of the freemen who needed to be removed before the election could continue.<sup>13</sup> When the March 1660 election was opened up to the freemen, Miles Corbet and Sir John Palgrave, a Parliamentary colonel, were edged out in favour of Sir John Potts, a moderate Parliamentarian, and Sir William Doyley, a royalist commissioner of array.<sup>14</sup> Twenty-three Congregationalist members of the corporation resigned or were dismissed in July 1660 and William Burton fled to the Netherlands in December, and they were replaced mainly by those ousted in 1649.<sup>15</sup> Those excluded included some of Great Yarmouth's leading merchants, and in the following four years, factional conflict continued within the Great Yarmouth corporation due to the power vacuum caused.<sup>16</sup> At the restoration Congregationalists and the Presbyterians lost their political influence, but this entrenched factional conflict and division even further.

Witchcraft accusations continued into the 1670s, but there were no further conviction and the number of accusations continued to dwindle. In 1650 Dionis Avery once again faced witchcraft accusations.<sup>17</sup> In 1654 the borough session tried Thomas Wollerton for using enchantments to discover lost objects.<sup>18</sup> Margaret Kempe accused her neighbour Margaret Ward of bewitching her in 1670. Rather than turn to the town's authorities, she initially relied on the advice of neighbours who 'advised to make a hart

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<sup>12</sup> CSPD, 1651-52, p. 168; NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 213-4.

<sup>13</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, f. 246; Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, pp. 116-8; Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Eveline Cruickshanks and Basil Duke Hennings, "Great Yarmouth 1660-1690," *History of Parliament Online* (1983) <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/constituencies/great-yarmouth>.

<sup>15</sup> NRO, Y/C19/7, ff. 352-5

<sup>16</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, pp. 90, 102-12.

<sup>17</sup> NRO, Y/S/1/2, pp. 203-5.

<sup>18</sup> NRO, Y/S1/3, f. 122.

with a peece of Redd cloath and to putt the same w[i]th old nayles pinns and Needles into a bottle and closs stopp up the same and to boyle it on the fyre for aboute twoe howers'.<sup>19</sup> Residents no longer saw witchcraft as a shared concern between governors and governed, but instead turned to their neighbours and white magic before turning to the ministers or the legal system.

The political and religious vicissitudes of the Interregnum and Restoration had a profound effect on the fortunes of Miles Corbet. Corbet remained as Recorder and MP throughout the Interregnum and having signed the King's death warrant became one of the Regicides.<sup>20</sup> Parliament appointed him a commissioner for Irish affairs in 1650, and Corbet spent much of the 1650s in Ireland.<sup>21</sup> However, as the political situation changed with the death of Cromwell, the new parliament dismissed from Ireland, and in 1660 failed to gain his parliamentary seat in Great Yarmouth for the convention Parliament. At the Restoration, he fled to Holland, where Sir George Downing captured him in 1661 and brought him back to England.<sup>22</sup> Corbet faced the scaffold in April 1662 for his part in the regicide, but he continued to affirm his allegiance to the Congregational way even then.<sup>23</sup> Corbet's support for Parliament had brought him status in the Interregnum, but was his undoing at the restoration, just as it changed the fortunes of the town's ministers.

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<sup>19</sup> TNA, ASSI 16/21/3.

<sup>20</sup> HLRO, HL/PO/JO/10/1/297A.

<sup>21</sup> Barber, 'Corbett, Miles (1594/5–1662).

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Jenkinson, *Charles I's Killers in America: The Lives and Afterlives of Edward Whalley & William Goffe* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 58-9; Charles Spencer, *Killers of the King: The Men Who Dared to Execute Charles I* (London, 2014), pp. 214-7, 219-20, 222.

<sup>23</sup> Barber, 'Corbett, Miles (1594/5–1662),'; Kennett White, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London, 1728), pp. 664-5.

John Brinsley and William Bridge were both dismissed by the Restoration government but remained popular locally. After his ejection in 1662 Brinsley continued to publish sermons in which he stressed his loyalty to the King and attempting to reassure his congregation to maintain their faith in trying times.<sup>24</sup> Despite rumours that Brinsley was tempted to conform to the act of uniformity, he continued to preach to his Presbyterian congregation. The congregation presented him with a pension of £80 per annum until he died in 1665, and he was buried in St Nicholas's Church.<sup>25</sup> In 1661 the bishopric of Norwich ejected Bridge and his assistant Job Tookey from Great Yarmouth and Bridge moved to Clapham in Surrey by 1663. Bridge returned to Great Yarmouth in late December 1667 or shortly after due to support from the town's Congregationalists and Presbyterians. His preaching led to a court case in January 1669 where Bridge admitted to holding conventicles and violating the Five Mile Act, at which point the court banned from coming within five miles of Great Yarmouth. Bridge died in Clapham in March 1671.<sup>26</sup> Both Brinsley and Bridge spent the 1660s excluded but ministering to a dedicated group of supporters.

The purges in the corporation in 1649 and 1661 exaggerated the existing divides, led to a corporation whose politics had consistent factionalism. Religious nonconformity had become entrenched in Great Yarmouth during the Interregnum. Popular discontent at the existing political leadership shows how fragile the alliance between Congregationalists and Presbyterians was. The result of narrowing political leadership caused by multiple purges was political instability. The end of support for comprehensive puritanism amongst the members of the corporation, as even John Brinsley became a nonconformist

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<sup>24</sup> Cust, 'Brinsley, John (1600–1665)'; John Brinsley, *The Christians Cabala* (London, 1662); Idem, *Aqua coelestis, or, A Sovereigne Cordial* (London, 1663)

<sup>25</sup> Cust, 'Brinsley, John (1600–1665)'.

<sup>26</sup> Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth*, p. 122; Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)'.

at the restoration, meant that the pressure for politically motivated witch-hunting as a means of promoting a puritan magistracy was gone.

### iii. Witch-hunting and the Experience of Religious and Political Division

The 1645 witch-hunt was a moment of high political drama that illuminated the strains and tensions within Great Yarmouth's polity from 1625 to 1650. Witchcraft accusations and acts of civic violence punctuated the corporation's changing politics during the Caroline period and the First and Second Civil Wars. This thesis has shown how the oppositional politics of the 1620s and 30s between puritans and Laudians created an ideological background to religiously purgative violence. It has also shown how members of the corporation sought a comprehensive puritan settlement during the First Civil War through conciliation with Congregationalist ministers but banning separatist churches, which proved unsustainable. This thesis's approach has stressed the political and religious context of witch-hunting. Peter Elmer's conception of the 'politicisation' of witchcraft fears in the 1630s and 1640s has been a useful framework, arguing that puritans' increasing obsession with witchcraft was part of its response to the threats of Laudian conformity and religious radicalism which was recast as demonic concerns.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, chs 3-4



Puritan political culture in Great Yarmouth was radicalised in opposition to Laudian dominance. This led puritan members of the corporation to use violence and witchcraft accusations against the town's conformist ministry to remove the Laudians and rebuild the town as a puritan community. The puritan minister John Brinsley built a network of puritan aldermen after he arrived in 1625, and they continued to support him even after Brinsley's dismissal from Great Yarmouth and move to preach at nearby Somerleyton from 1629 to 1642. Laudianism was a radicalising force as the presence of the unbending Matthew Brooks used by puritan officials and supporters to justify their campaign of harassment and violence.<sup>28</sup> The Laudian minister, Matthew Brooks, recorded a history of violent threats and acts made against Church of England conformists throughout the 1620s and 1630s that he claimed the puritan members of the town's corporation directed. The desire for puritan comprehension justified the support of politicised violence and witchcraft accusations against an astrologer close to Brooks. However, the collapse of episcopacy and central government after 1638 allowed the puritans on the town's corporation to set up organisational control over Great Yarmouth.

The puritan grouping of aldermen and common councillors in control of Great Yarmouth's corporation in the early 1640s were influential over the organisation and ideology of the town, but the First Civil War and the privations caused by the conflict weakened their position. The central committees and garrisons of the Eastern Association, and later the New Model Army, were threats to the independence of corporations and a vehicle for the spread of radical nonconformity.<sup>29</sup> Maritime raiding almost wiped out the town's herring fleet and consequently, its charitable support networks came under increasing strain. The town's financial and political concerns meant that the collapse of charity and political

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<sup>28</sup> Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, pp. 291, 292; Milton, 'Creation of Laudianism', pp. 169, 183; Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and Urban Politics', pp. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 226-8.

weakness fed into support for a witch-hunt as part of the restoration of order.<sup>30</sup> The economic strain and alternate sources of political authority put a strain on members of the corporation's ability to enforce comprehensive puritanism over Great Yarmouth.

The biggest threats to the town's conformity of comprehensive puritan worship were nonconformity and separatist churches, and the members of the corporation responded differently to the town's Congregationalist and Anabaptist communities. The presence of Anabaptists and the fears of their influence in Great Yarmouth added to John Brinsley's concerns over subversive forces within the town, echoing previous research into nonconformity and witchcraft.<sup>31</sup> Congregationalists shared a Calvinist faith with the conservative puritan members of the town's corporation and could initially work together, but the Congregationalists' desire for separate worship was unacceptable to members of the corporation. The Congregationalist church divided families, as wives joined the church and baptised their children into a separate community from their husbands. The witch-hunt was part of a wider programme from the pulpit and members of the corporation to reunite the town to support a comprehensive puritan settlement in 1645. Successful investigations of witchcraft accusations showed the power of the godly magistrates and ministers to work in concert to combat a demonic enemy and heal the town's divides.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 18-19, 77, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Timbers, 'Witches' Sect or Prayer Meeting?', pp. 29-33; Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p. 128.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 443, 575; Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, p.134.

The second witch-hunt's failure to convict any of those accused of witchcraft in April 1646 showed how internal political and religious upheaval had shifted the balance of power away from members of the corporation who had pursued a comprehensive puritan settlement. While the accusations made in second witch-hunt came within weeks of the trials of the first hunt and against women of a similar social status to the first hunt the jury did not convict any of those accused. Members of the corporation were unwilling to invite back Matthew Hopkins or pay the searchers of the witches' bodies to investigate the cases which made convictions more difficult. Unlike 1645, no members of the corporation made accusations. Members of the corporation's reticence were likely the product of the limited success and high expense of the first witch-hunt and the failure of the hunt to halt the rise in Congregationalism. Congregationalists gained new politically influential converts and members of the corporation had to concede they could no longer prevent the gathering of the Congregational church in the town. The final collapse of the cause of puritan comprehension came from a failed rising in support of Prince Charles and the Royalist fleet in 1648, and subsequent Parliamentary purge of members of the town's corporation in 1649. This solidified the Congregationalists' position in the town. The Great Yarmouth rising was a watershed, the result of popular unrest over the failure to provide for the town's poor and discontent over the town's religious settlement. The members of the corporation promoted Congregationalists into the aldermanry for the first time to fill the gaps left in the corporation, cementing the Congregationalists' role in the town's politics. Great Yarmouth fits Elmer's argument that the collapse of political support for religious comprehension in local government made witch-hunting impractical.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, pp. 142-3.

Great Yarmouth illuminates how the corporation's attempts to enforce a comprehensive puritan settlement and prevent the divisions caused by independency and nonconformity gave the impetus for pursuing witch-hunting as a form of spiritual healing. The solidifying of puritan identities during the Caroline period in opposition to Laudianism led to a conception of divisions caused by Caroline reform as demonic. The conception of the puritan politicians' role in urban politics changed from the search for unanimity between councillors to the imposition of a comprehensive godly politics during the Caroline period as the only means of protecting godly reform. This was a reaction to and rejection of the influence of the Westminster government and the Laudian Church. The resistance to Laudianism contained within it fear of demonic subversion but initially aimed at the agents of the episcopate. When puritan politics could re-establish its control firmly in East Anglia following the Bishops' Wars, there was an optimism that local polities could be united and healed. However, the drawn-out military conflict and the continued wrangling at Westminster Assembly over a church settlement created fertile ground for nonconformity to entrench itself within the military and local communities. The presence of witches was a symptom of the failure of puritan comprehension, a personification of how nonconformity and separatism led to demonic subversion. The discovery and destruction of those accused of witchcraft was a form of exorcism that sought to heal the divides within urban society. However, the witch-hunt offered only limited relief and as the influence of nonconformists grew, it was necessary to move to toleration rather than exclusion. The acceptance of religious nonconformity undercut the pressure for unity and comprehension expressed through witch-hunting.

Concentration on Great Yarmouth's complex and changing polity has given the thesis a temporal depth that has allowed it to map witch-hunt and witchcraft fears on to the changing political and religious context within the town. The pressure for comprehensive conservative puritan settlements in East

Coast towns and cities threatened by nonconformity provides a wealth of further case studies for the interplay of politics and religion in witch-hunting. In Colchester, there was no major witch-hunt despite the presence of Matthew Hopkins and the political influence of Congregationalism has been posited as the cause of the unwillingness to support the witch-hunt. This provides an example of how an earlier breakdown of puritan unity prevented corporate support for witch-hunting.<sup>34</sup> In Ely, ex-military religious radicals pushed for a witch-hunt in the teeth of Presbyterian protest, showing how witch-hunting acted as a means of protest for a now powerful religious faction.<sup>35</sup> Newcastle's 1648 witch trials were supported by a frustrated puritan establishment empowered by the Parliamentary occupation of the town.<sup>36</sup> Further afield puritan identity in Bermuda was disturbed by Independents, including the same John Oxenbridge as ministered in Great Yarmouth, which preceded witchcraft accusations.<sup>37</sup> These examples show how a model of political depth studies can offer new insights into how witch-hunts related to local politics.

This thesis's model of political and religious depth has its limitations as a means of interpreting witch-hunting since it relies upon a close reading of rich records available for an urban centre over an extended period. Other, more diffuse hunts involving smaller communities that lack the same corporate records, such as the Scottish or Swedish hunts in the countryside, make close reading difficult. Determining the religious affiliations of members of the town's corporation proved difficult, with the difference between conformity, active support for comprehensive puritanism, and Presbyterian beliefs were difficult to judge amongst members of the corporation without unambiguous

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp. 242-3; Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, p. 188.

<sup>36</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>37</sup> Bernhard, 'Religion, Politics, and Witchcraft', pp. 706-8.

evidence of personal ties. Confirming Congregational leanings amongst councillors also requires good quality records and careful analysis, and even with Great Yarmouth's extensive church book confirming confessional beliefs was difficult.

Nonetheless, his thesis shows that witch-hunts provide insight into the complexities of how local political elites understood and reacted to political and religious division, and how the complex threads that make up a society could lead to support for witch-hunting. There is room left for further study of Great Yarmouth's history into the 1650s and expanding the scope to the other towns where Miles Corbet was recorder. Miles Corbet's role as part of Aldeburgh and King's Lynn's Civil War politics and their witch-hunts offer opportunities for further study. Great Yarmouth's unsettled politics in the 1650s involves a limited number of witchcraft accusations and continues and complicates the narrative of political and religious division within the town. The uncertain politics of the divides and alliances between Prayer-bookers, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians had political consequences that continued to rumble on into the restoration that deserves a deeper study.

The 1645 witch-hunt was the product of the upheaval felt in Great Yarmouth between 1625 and 1650. It was a period of frequently violent change within the town inspired by national unrest, rebellion, and revolution, and the town's corporation supported the witch-hunt in response to the divisions created by the changes. The town's puritan community inspired the pressure for comprehension that fuelled violent unrest backed by members of the town's corporation, while fears of nonconformity tore apart the puritan community and the unity of the corporation. The political weakness that created and the

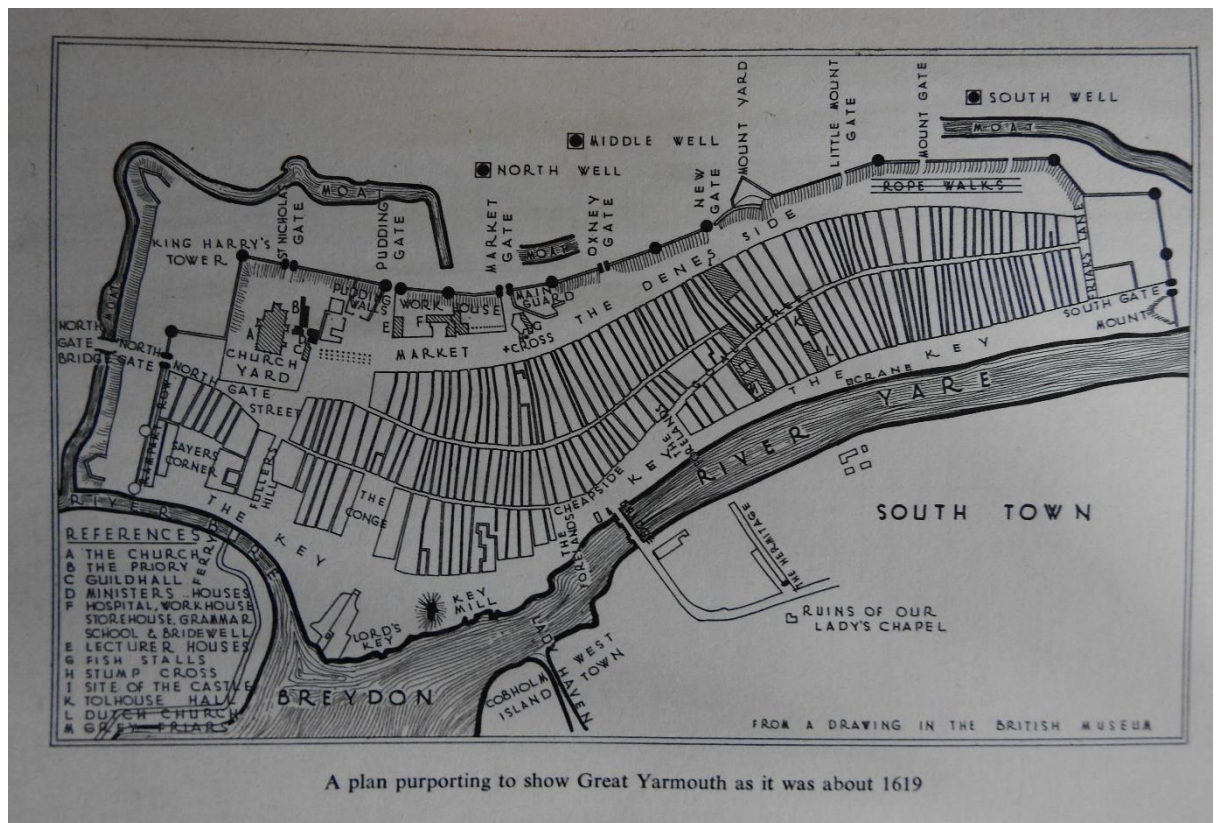
popular unrest caused by wartime suffering led to a pressure cooker of fears for the corporation, and witch-hunting offered a means of healing the community. Witch-hunting gains a clearer place as part of a puritan response to a community losing its cohesion, a model for further study that treats witch-hunting as part of puritan politics.

## Appendix 1: Maps of Great Yarmouth

- a. Engraving from C.J. Palmer's edition of *ManSHIP's History of Yarmouth* depicting a plan of the town and harbour of Great Yarmouth, c. 1570, NRO, Y/C45/16

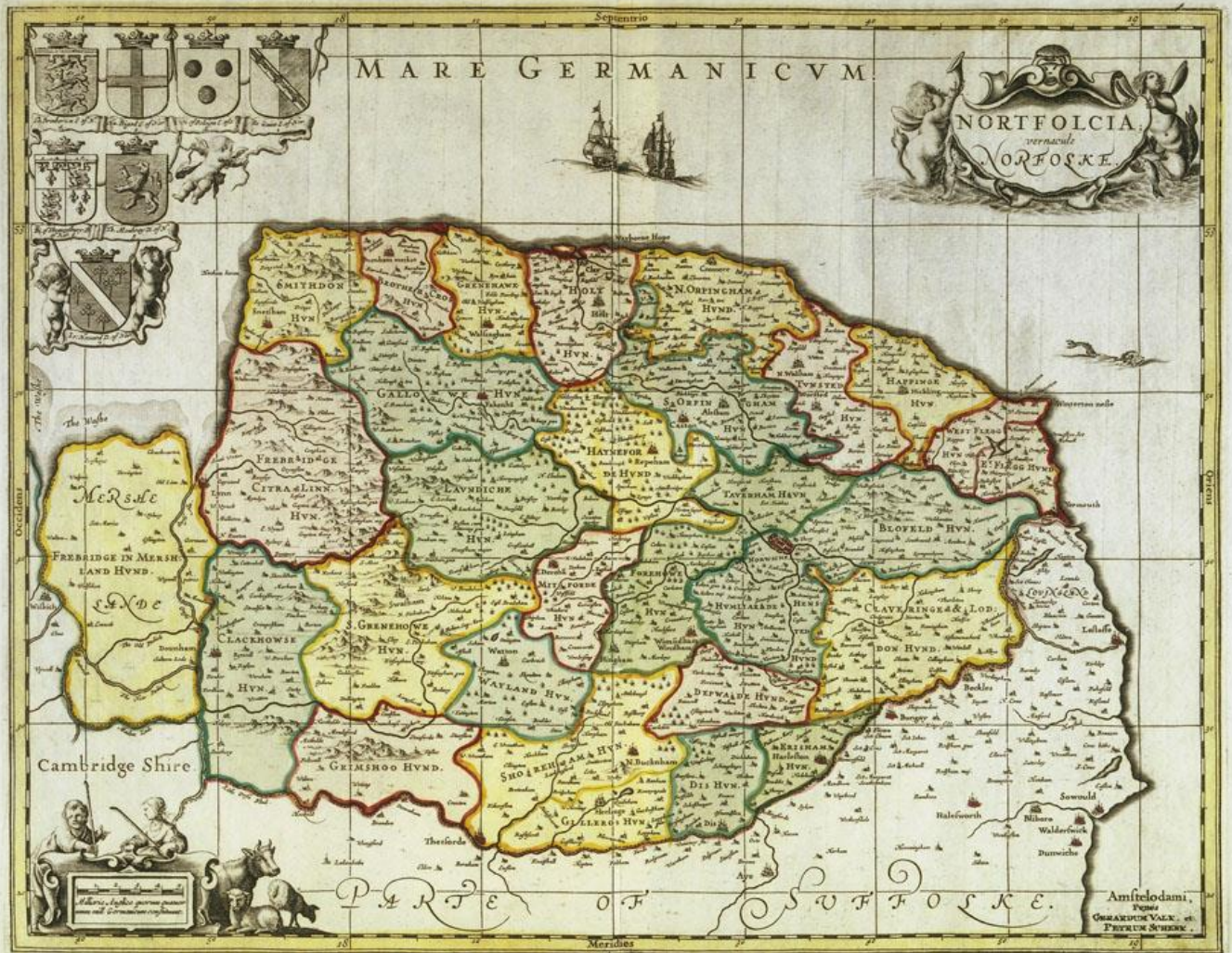


- b. A. W. Ecclestone, *Henry ManSHIP's Great Yarmouth* (Great Yarmouth, 1971), p. 59



- c. *Nortfolcia; vernacule Norfolk*, (Amsterdam, 1670-90)





## Appendix 2: Great Yarmouth Timeline 1625-1649

1625

4 April            Members of the Great Yarmouth corporation seek approval from the Bishop of Norwich to have John Brinsley as the town's minister.

Summer            Conformist minister Thomas Reeve flees the town during a bout of plague.

7 April            Election of Sir John Corbet and Edward Owner as the town's MPs.

29 August        The corporation pay John Brinsley £20 for remaining in Great Yarmouth during the plague.

16 September   Miles Corbet chosen as the town's recorder.

4 December     Miles Corbet made a freeman.

29 December    The corporation complains there are too many poor, therefore 'very requiste to intreate M[aster] Brinsleye our Minister to forbear' marriages, unless the poor get the permission of the alderman and chief constable of the ward to prove they are inhabitants.

1626

26 January       Sir John Corbet Baronet and alderman Thomas Johnson chosen as MPs.

30 January       The town's corporation requests wastage against Dunkirkers.

17 February     Brinsley receives a certificate from the commission at Lambeth confirming his loyalty and conformity to doctrine.

22 March        Minister Thomas Reeve warned to leave as 'the Towne hath taken such dislike of hym'.

29 May           Mr Hardware, Mr Bright, Mr Buttolph and John Robbyns sent to Benjamin Cooper to retrieve all 'moneyes Books, rolls, Briefes... papers' concerning the town in his possession.

17 June           Reform of St John's day from a public event to a private dinner at one of bailiffs' house.

17 July           Corporation members raise complaints against the altering of the town's ancient constitution by other members.

22 September   Jeffrey Le Neve dismissed as alderman due to his 'long absence... [and] for diu[er]se other reasons'.

4 October        Introduction of assistants to the Bailiffs 'for the avoiding of many Assemblies' and 'better government of the town'.

12 November    Production of certificate in support John Brinsley when he was required to come before the high commissioners since his absence left the town without ministers. Beggars not resident to the town banned from marriage without the permission of the minister or his clerk.

## 1627

- February        The Court of Chancery orders Brinsley's removal as the town's minister.
- 21 February    The arrest of Sir John Corbet for resisting the forced loan.
- 16 March       The auditors Edward Owner and Thomas Johnson assigned to Benjamin Cooper in response to Benjamin Cooper's recovery after an absence from town business due to a 'great dangerous [and] long sickness'.
- 26 April        The Archbishop of Canterbury allows the town to make recommendations to the bishop of Norwich for minister and on following Thursday organised meeting in Ludham between the town and the bishop.
- 24 May         Miles Corbet ordered to gain Jefferey Le Neve's letter of commission from the king while in London.
- 7 August        A Letter from the king received requesting Jeffrey Le Neve's return to the aldermanry. Questions from the common council as it is only addressed to aldermen and bailiffs.
- 14 August      Le Neve's return debated by the corporation, of the fifteen aldermen present only eight consent to let him return.
- 22 August      No majority for the restoration of Le Neve from common council.
- 29 August      Unilateral restoration of Le Neve as alderman by Bailiff Eachard.
- 11 September   Meeting between the bailiffs and 'Mr Benjamin Cooper's company', the bishop of Norwich moderating.
- 2 October       Report that Jeffrey Le Neve has attempted to buy the monopoly on duties on salted fish travelling in stranger's boats.
- 5 October       A general certificate for Mr Brinsley under the town's seal which declared he 'was well lyked of dislyked by none'. Formation of a committee against Mr Neve's petition for a monopoly.
- 3 December    An agreement reached with Benjamin Cooper for him to pay £32 6s 8d immediately and the same again on 4 September 1628 and the further demands from both sides dropped.

## 1628

- 3 January       Arrival of a letter from bishop of Norwich offering to discuss the town's choice of preacher.
- 24 January      Bailiff Davy to ride to London to discuss Le Neve.
- 7 February      The corporation orders an investigation into Le Neve's various misdemeanours.
- 29 February    Benjamin Cooper and others are reported to have been secretly giving evidence to the investigation on Le Neve's position, inviting members of the assembly and others in the town to do the same. The members of the corporation agree that Thomas Greene should remain an alderman despite a royal request that he should step down to allow Le Neve to return. Sir John Wentworth and Miles Corbett elected MPs by the majority of the aldermen and common councillors.

12 May Mr Warryn, Hardware, Johnson, Buttolph appointed to ride to the Norwich Dean and Chapter of Norwich and get agreement that the town can choose and maintain 'preaching ministers or curates'.

18 August Bailiff Davy riding to Norwich to talk with the Norwich Dean and Chapter to argue for the town choosing its own minister as it had done so 'tyme out of minde'.

12 September Suits received from the Church citing bailiff Davy and others for detaining and failing to pay the minister Mr Barker.

29 September The corporation searches for a new lecturer to be preferred to the bishop of Norwich for the bishop's approval.

8 November Mr Johnson and Mr Eachard appointed to look for a new minister.

1629

John Brinsley's marriage to Edward Owner's daughter.

26 January Letter received from the Lord Secretary accusing the town of disorder and factious government. The corporation assembly books, and chamberlain's books were sent to the Lord Secretary by bailiff Cooper.

9 February Francis White is confirmed as the bishop of Norwich replacing Samuel Harsnett.

18 March Members of the corporation receive credible information that Cooper and Hardware were 'presenting business against the Towne' in London. In response the corporation send two aldermen and four common councillors to London. Deputation made to each of them under the town's seal, giving them the authority to oppose Cooper and Hardware, and to defend the town's franchises and liberties.

16 April The corporation ballot, agreeing that the actions of Cooper and Hardware were acting without their consent, one alderman and five common councillors disagreed.

25 May Cooper and Dasset acknowledge a forfeiture of all the town's liberties and charters to the King. The corporation calls in all books and volumes to be used in the town's defence.

8 July George Hardware removed as alderman and free burgess for sending charters to London.

9 July The corporation orders the prosecution of those seeking to alter the town's government.

29 August A letter from Lord Dorchester confirming the town is to hold normal yearly elections, restore Hardware, and Robert Norgate and Thomas Meadowe are to be made bailiffs by royal recommendation.

9 September The corporation confirms the restoration of Hardware.

23 September Reading of King's letter restoring the town's government to general acclamation and rejoicing. Cooper proposed a motion to find a minister. Bailiff Buttolph propounded Mr Whitfield to the Dean and Chapter.

30 September The corporation request a letter be written to the bishop of Norwich requesting John Brinsley as lecturer by 'all gen[er]all consent [and] vote of this Assembly'.

20 October Letter from privy council allowing Thomas Crane to sit amongst the aldermen in church and to have the next vacant alderman's spot.

30 October The bishop of Norwich lets Brinsley return based on the assent and support of the corporation.

30 November Mr Buttolph speaking to Lord Dorchester regarding the bishop of Norwich and Brinsley. The corporation was concerned that Dorchester reported that Cooper sought to be installed as bailiff for a second year and was providing lists of bailiffs and aldermen 'contrary to his majesties' mandate' and believed that Hardware and Meadowe were the bailiffs 'fittest for the alteration of government'. Dorchester offered the place of High Steward to the town in thanks for reporting this.

1630

7 February Brinsley in London asking to be allowed to preach, given a certificate of support from the town's the bailiffs, aldermen, MPs and common councillors. Mr Hardware refused to sign, Mr Goose and Samuel Dubbleday left before it was created, the rest present subscribing their name, certificate sent to London.

15 February Brinsley is 'questioned for the breach of the decree in chancery upon div[er]se Interrogories [and] aboute other imployem[ent]'. Petition sent to the Lord Keeper by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich against Brinsley 'as having contemptuously broken the sayd decree'. Cooper linked to another petition that alleges that Brinsley was the cause of expense and contention.

13 April The town's attorney called before the lord chief justice to reconcile any differences between him and the town. Sir John Wentworth, recorder Miles Corbet, Mr Buttolph, Mr Johnson, Mr Davy to attend with the town's counsel, having been given full power and authority to maintain the ancient government by bailiffs.

2 August Report from Buttolph of meeting with the Lord Keeper of the Seal, Dorchester, Dorset, and the bishop of London. Cooper was alleged to be trying to replace bailiffs with mayors, with himself as the first. Mr Dasset said Mr Attorney General had order from the lord chief justice to draw up a new town charter. The corporation voted unanimously to maintain the ancient government.

7 September Objections to Benjamin Cooper read in his absence, Mr Harrys and Mr Jonson delivering a copy of the objections to him within two days, and he had until the next assembly meeting to answer them or be dismissed.

16 September Benjamin Cooper's appearance at the assembly meeting. He faced accusations of corruption, making false claims of faction and failure to uphold his oath as bailiff, acting poorly in the absence of other bailiffs, failure to protect the town's rights and liberties, allowing the seizure of documents, called those opposing him 'Sawreboxes, knaves, madmen', removed the town's common seale by 'unlawful means', forbade the December sessions in the fourth year of Charles's reign, interfered in the trial of John Seaman for riot, secretly allied with the Dean and Chapter in deciding curates, picked a 'Birch of London' to act on the town's business who 'plundered' the town with false and untrue allegations, removed John Howgrave as constable, created a

certificate that changed the order of the eight candidates and added his own name with Hardware's help, counterfeited the signatures of aldermen to do so, and embezzled a grant of money from King James and King Charles for repair of the town's piers. The corporation dismissed Cooper out of the corporation.

23 September The corporation gains a confirmation of the town's 'ancient government'.

7 December The Earl of Dorset acted on behalf of the town to support the herring licence but his attempt to get Brinsley to return as minister is thwarted by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich. Cooper petitioned the House of Lords to be restored as alderman.

1631

6 June The corporation orders that the wives of common councillors are to be moved from their current seats in St Nicholas's church to the 'alley' where the wives of aldermen sit to allow the wives of 'best ranke [and] quality' to sit down for the 'most decency [and] conveniency of the church [and] people'

15 June The corporation records that 'false and foule Aspersions cast upon the Towne' in letters sent to privy council, 'by whome it is uncertayne'. Davy, while in London, is ordered to find out who was behind them, for fear it is members of the corporation trying to move for a new charter. The corporation requires the subscription of members of the corporation in support of the 'ancient constitution' and those unwilling to do so not allowed on positions of trust in the Assembly.

26 June A letter is received from the lords of the privy council, delivered by Benjamin Cooper to John Stevenson concerning the restoration of Cooper as an alderman. The common councillors vote against this and an answer sent to the Lords.

25 July Readmission of Cooper, due to a 'command' from the privy council. As a result, Buttolph is suspended as alderman until he can take the place of another. While Cooper accepted back, a list of his misdemeanours is sent to the privy council.

15 August The corporation records that the town's money is 'utterly exhausted', blaming Benjamin Cooper. Those indebted to the town 'grow factious [and] will not pay', forcing the corporation to sell their 'old houses'.

28 September The corporation prepares for the visit of Sir Henry Vane, comptroller and ambassador, by giving the 'best enteraynment they can', including meeting with the aldermen at the bridge foot in their gownes, along with the artillery company, armed musketeers, and pikemen. There is the discharge of artillery on the mound and walls and chambers at the quayside

2 December Harbottle reports from London that he received a licence for herring importation, and a licence from the bishop of Norwich granting the town the power to choose their lecturer and preacher. The corporation sends an invitation to John Brinsley to meet with them and return to the ministry. The corporation orders the chamberlains not to pay the minister Matthew Brooks.

5 December The corporation order Brinsley to return and to start preaching from the following Tuesday in the chapel or Dutch church.

9 December Brooks is arrested by Ezekiel Harris, Thomas Greene, Henry Davy, and the Recorder Miles Corbet for speaking out against John Brinsley's preaching during Brinsley's sermon.

1632

27 January A petition from Brooks to the King with support of the Dean and Chapter read out in the corporation meeting, criticising the government of the town, diverse aldermen, bailiffs, and the justices of the peace.

7 May Richard Corbet confirmed as new bishop of Norwich.

25 May Concern amongst the corporation that money raised for the Palatine has gone missing, Cooper blamed.

30 July Order from the Lords of the Privy Council from the 11<sup>th</sup> July read: the town is allowed to select a lecturer either a master Vincent and master Norton vouched by the bishop of London, but neither are acceptable so the corporation offer their own two choices.

8 October The corporation accepts the choice of George Burdett as their minister

22 October Burdett elected as lecturer by members of the corporation after being heard the day before by a full congregation.

1633

13 February The corporation agrees that Brooks will preach on Sundays when Burdett is leading divine service, and Burdett will preach when Brooks is giving divine service.

12 April Restoration of Benjamin Cooper to alderman agreed on the orders of the privy council, replacing William Buttolph who stood down.

20 July The corporation reports that Burdett has been cited by Brooks to the chancellor at Norwich for not bowing at the name of Jesus, leading to Burdett's suspension by the bishop of Norwich.

2 August Letter from the bishop of Norwich ending Burdett's suspension.

6 August William Laud nominated as archbishop of Canterbury

1634

29 January Letter sent from the corporation to the privy council to certify George Burdett's good behaviour.

1 November The corporation sends a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury in support of Burdett.

1635

3 April The corporation forms a committee for finding a new preacher as George Burdett has been suspended by order of the high commission leaving the place 'voyd and vacant'.

18 May Brooks petitions the corporation to have Burdett's house and garden, to preach on all scarlet days, and twice if they fall on a Sunday, to preach on sessions days, and at the election of the town's bailiffs. Edward Owner seeks permission from the corporation to repair the hospital, and £5 from the corporation for the construction of a school for poor children in the hospital buildings.

25 May The corporation rent out Burdett's house to Thomas Crane for 7 years.

9 July Annuity of 20 marks granted to Mrs Burdett by the corporation after Burdett fled to the New World.

5 December Matthew Wren confirmed as the new bishop of Norwich.

#### 1636

9 May A report is made of the presence of 60-100 men and women from Great Yarmouth, including at least one alderman, at a barn conventicle in Somerleyton, allegedly to hear Issack Glass, a prophet from London, and Gaule, a shoemaker from Great Yarmouth.

#### 1637

20 April The corporation agree that Violet Smith is to be sent to Norwich on suspicion of being a witch.

7 August A visit from the bishop of Norwich to the town on Monday handled by the bailiffs.

#### 1638

January The astrologer Mark Prynn accused of using sorcery to discover John Sparke's lost goods.

28 February Signing of the Scottish National Covenant.

9 March Roger Wisse, the church warden, requests the corporation levy a rate to repair decayed timbers in the church, particularly the steeple.

20 April The corporation agrees to send the bailiffs, justices, and chamberlains to Lambeth to take part in a court case against Brooks on 11 May.

12 May Richard Montagu confirmed as Bishop of Norwich

31 May The corporation receives a petition from the town's fishermen complaining of poverty due to overfishing.

#### 1639

26 January King Charles I proclaims his intention to raise an army against the Scots.

29 March Christopher Steygold and Anthony Wyn 'for some reasons best knowne to themselves' desired to be dismissed from the corporation's common council. They end up in Netherlands as part of William Bridge's Rotterdam church.



5 April Due to the Bishops' War the corporation put a watch on the town, lock the gates at night, seek wastage for the herring fleet, and prepare to lodge 1500 soldiers and the members debate if the soldiers should be armed.

19 June Signing of the Pacification of Berwick, end of first Bishops' War.

21 June The corporations entertains the deputy lieutenant of Norfolk to persuade him to support wastage and funding for the 1500 soldiers.

3 July The corporation reports the arrival of soldiers from Lindisfarne who lack officers and pay.

18 September The corporation reports that ship money hasn't been collected, so bailiff Medowe will pay the missing money and be reimbursed later.

13 December The corporation receives a letter from the Earl of Dorset requesting Sir John Suckling as the town's MP, the corporation only agrees to 'propound' him.

## 1640

3 January The corporation agrees to raise £220 for a ship of war.

19 March Edward Owner and Miles Corbet are chosen as MPs in the Short Parliament, the bailiffs write to the Earls of Dorset and Northumberland to explain that their respective choices were propounded and rejected in a fair election.

4 May The corporation set up a committee for grievances to be sent to Parliament, in particular the impositions upon salt, double composition of fish and a lack of preaching.

5 May Dissolution of the Short Parliament.

31 July The grammar school master, Mr Falkes is given notice by the corporation to leave due to his neglect.

3 August The Scottish pre-emptively invade Northern England in the Second Bishops' War.

21 September At the bailiffs' assistants meeting it was agreed that Matthew Brooks should not be paid for preaching festival days, sessions, and other solemn times since he prevented the corporation from inviting 'strangers' to preach on festival days and solemn times for free.

16 October The corporation passes an ordinance requiring the aldermen and constables of the wards search their wards fortnightly for newcomers, idle persons that live disorderly, and poor people. The corporation elect Miles Corbett and Edward Owner as MPs for the Long Parliament.

23 October The corporation sets up a new committee for grievances to send to Parliament.

26 October The treaty of Ripon brings an end to the Second Bishops' War in the Scots' favour.

3 November The Long Parliament meets.

18 December The corporation agree to a proposition to provide for settling the poor in work and keeping them from idleness, begging, and allow the training up of poor children.

## 1641

- 5 January        A complaint made by the corporation to Parliament against Brooks for his alleged scandalous life, the exaction of undue fees for marriages and burials, and not carrying out ministerial functions, which required collecting donations from the population for the complaint and establishing a new preacher. The corporation sent a petition to Parliament to exempt the town from mustering troops.
- 2 February      Miles Corbet at Parliament advises the corporation that they could resume the right to present their own choice of minister to the bishop.
- 27 March        The corporation orders continued fortnightly inspections of the wards, additionally looking for disorder in inns and alehouses.
- 31 March        The bailiffs seek a Master Frank to become the town's new preacher after a trial of his preaching.
- 24 April        The corporation have a meeting with dean and prebendaries of Norwich and with the owner of the parish fee farm about obtaining the nomination of ministers and curates.
- 27 April        Mr Dove established as master of the town's free school.
- 23 July        The corporation calls for a voluntary contribution for the town's costs at Parliament and the payment of witnesses against Brooks. Anthony Wyn, returned from Holland, had his place on the corporation's common council restored.
- 17 August       Mr Franks the minister discharged at his request, as he sought somewhere more peaceful. The corporation received a report that diverse freemen and corporation members had made a complaint against the town for hayning herring, the decay of the haven, and the rotting roof of the church. The corporation orders that those discovered to be part of the complaint to be dismissed from the corporation and punished.
- 23 September   Robert Rush, the town's choice as parish clerk is restored and paid 20s a quarter, after being ejected from that position by Miles Hull, Matthew Brooks's choice of clerk.
- 20 October      The corporation send for the preacher Master Stanton to preach every Sunday over the winter.
- 23 October      Outbreak of the Irish rebellion.
- 10 November    As Stanton is unavailable the corporation invites a Master Archer to preach for three months. John Brinsley expressed interest in returning as the town preacher and the corporation agree that he should be invited back and continue his Wednesday lectures. The corporation gives Miles Corbet £30 for his work in Parliament.
- 7 December     Archer agrees to preach for the three months after Christmas. Private persons in the town propose inviting William Bridge and John Burroughs to preach in Great Yarmouth and to pay their maintenance which the corporation accepts.
- 14 December    The corporation agrees to pay Brinsley £40 a year for Wednesday preaching at a rate of £10 per quarter, and £20 for his past service.
- 27-9 December   Riots at Westminster against bishops and catholics.

- 5 January        The corporation invites William Bridge to Great Yarmouth to join with John Brinsley in preaching. The corporation orders the gates shut nightly.
- 4 February       A committee for the town's fortification set up ordered to stop up smaller gates with earth, mounting ordinance on the wall, and providing halberds for guards. The corporation organises a night watch and require the constables to report those failing to attend to the bailiffs.
- 4 March        The corporation grant a commission to the bailiffs and recorder to require all suspicious persons residing or entering the town to recite the oaths of supremacy and allegiance. The fortifications committee send a written report to the Earl of Warwick for the charge of fortifying the haven. The corporation seeks to conclude their agreement with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich for the nomination of the town's ministers.
- 19 April        Edward Owner reports a voluntary contribution to Parliament to fight the Irish rebels, Owner offers £100 of his own, the town to provide a further £500.
- 10 May        The corporation authorise eight councillors to teach forty poor boys to braid nets and who will be set up in jobs paid for by the overseer of the poor.
- 30 May        Assistants to the bailiffs meet together to consult on providing a godly minister having disavowed Brooks.
- 4 June        The corporation receive a letter from the Parliamentary speaker asking for a loan to cover of the cost of government at 8% interest. A letter is received from Miles Corbet in London saying ordinance is available.
- 17 June        Thomas Whitfield chosen as curate to replace Brooks. Three quarters of the money owed for the Irish adventure yet to be paid.
- 1 July        The corporation agrees a £100 stipend and house each for both John Brinsley and William Bridge.
- 9 July        The corporation receives both the King's and Parliament's proclamations to form a militia and share only the Parliamentary one and prevent the proclaiming of the King's orders.
- 26 July        Parliament orders no compulsion to billet soldiers on Great Yarmouth without Parliament's consent. Orders for watching and warding enforced with two men watching every town gate still open and the bridge. Gates locked 9 pm to 4 am, day watch 4 am to 9 pm, and a fine of 2s for those unable to watch or find a replacement. Houses outside the walls razed.
- 17 August       The corporation receive a letter from the bishop of Norwich complaining of unacceptable church practices including that communion is being celebrated by a stranger. The corporation seeks to prevent goods being landed or loaded at the salt pans or houses to the west of the bridge.
- 22 August       Charles I raises his banner at Nottingham, beginning the First English Civil War.
- 29 August       Orders from Parliament received allowing the corporation to command and train their own trained band and to appoint treasurers for collecting money and plate to pay soldiers.
- 9 September   John Gostling delivered the grant of the nomination of ministers and curates for St Nicholas to the corporation.
- 13<sup>th</sup> October    Mr Whitfield requesting a £100 allowance and to be defended from Brooks by the corporation for taking a curate's place until he can take the position officially.

1 November The charges for the court case brought by Brooks against Green and Wakeman paid for by the corporation. Both bailiffs summoned to Norwich to discuss developing a local association for mutual defence and to hire engineer.

7 November The bailiffs report back that they had formed a defence organisation with the hundreds of East and West Flegg and brought the engineer Erasmus Sandes from Norwich. The corporation orders ships removed from the west side of the town's haven, courts of guard and sentry houses set up to support a night watch.

18 November The corporation sends a written appeal to Sir Miles Hobart, deputy lieutenant of Norfolk, Sir John Wentworth and Mr Brewster as deputy lieutenants of Suffolk over their concerns for the defences of Great Yarmouth and Loathingland. The corporation agrees to hire both the engineer Sandes and captain Dengayne, and orders the construction of a ditch sixty-foot-wide and nine-foot-deep from the haven to the town's close around the north denes from the north and Church walls, to the pudding gates. The corporation seek to procure scone baskets and other materials to begin the works of fortification. The corporation orders the clearing of the town's towers of the poor to allow the watch to use them. Captain Dengayne and the aldermen of the wards are to arm the town watch with muskets. Alderman Robert Norgate takes charge of ordering the watch by appointing a clerk to record those attending, to charge those who fail to attend, and to organise fires and candles for the courts of guard. The corporation order all newcomers be vetted by the bailiffs and justices of the peace.

28 November A lieutenant Knight is sent from London by Miles Corbet on a three-year contract at a rate of £100 a year. Alderman Thomas Johnson is sent to London to purchase artillery and to encourage Parliament to authorise a rate for the town's fortifications. The tower in St Nicholas churchyard is ordered to taken down and filled with earth. The corporation requires the town's inhabitants to help with the construction of the town's defences or send someone in their place to take earth and break ground. The construction work is to be paid for by a rate of £400.

13 December The corporation agree that a voluntary contribution would be a better than a rate to raise money for the fortifications, beginning with the payments by the aldermen and common councillors present at the assembly meeting. Whitfield is given 20 marks to move to Great Yarmouth and officiate between midsummer and Michaelmas.

20 December The creation of the Eastern Association of counties.

23 December Thomas Johnson reports that Parliament would contribute to the town's defence, and that he had spent £1000 of the town's plate and contributions on purchasing artillery. Thomas Meadow and Thomas Johnson investigating constructing an iron chain to go across the haven. Lieutenant Knight paid £15 and discharged. The corporation replace the voluntary rate for defences with a treble rate for £400.

1643

2 January The corporation push for increased speed in raising money for the ditch and defence works for the south of the town.

10 February The corporation borrow £50 borrowed from the treasury for orphans. Parliamentary ordinance for the fortification rates, watching and warding, and appearance at musters with the exercise of arms arrives. The corporation calls for a voluntary collection of £250 per year to pay for preachers to be collected twice a year.

28 February      The corporation receive a demand from Lord Grey of Wark, general of the associated counties, for the town to send eighty dragoons to Cambridge with a month's pay, Gower, Cutting and William Freeman ordered to ride to Norwich to explain the town lacks horses. The corporation give Whitfield Matthew Brooks's house, next to the Guildhall.

3 March            After Gower, Cutting and Freeman's conversation with Lord Grey, Lord Grey spares the town raising dragoons since the town's population is mostly fishermen. The top of Mr Harris tower is ordered to be dismantled and replaced by ordinance platforms, the poor living there are to be taken away by the church wardens and overseers of the poor.

13 March          Lowestoft abortively rises for the king. Matthew Brooks is captured for his role in the rising.

24 March          Committee for fortifications to look at the south gates. The corporation organises two groups of four councillors each to monitor the construction of the town's fortifications between Monday and Saturday. The corporation gives Whitfield control over the free school every Sunday afternoon to catechise the town's youth.

30 March          Bailiff Giles Call to ride to Norwich to help organise the Norfolk weekly rate of £1250 to maintain Parliament's army. The town is assessed for a rate of £200 by Parliamentary ordinance. Bailiffs ordered to make a warrant to distress those not paying towards the fortifications after complaints that payment is not forthcoming.

10 April           The corporation attempt to prevent Captain Johnson and his company of volunteers from leaving the town to join Essex's army by paying them weekly. The corporation takes control over the south mount tower and removes the people living there to install gunpowder.

27 April           Parliament grants the corporation the right to levy the money by the distress and sale of goods of those unwilling to pay for the fortifications, and to imprison those failing to watch or appear at musters. The bailiffs lobby parliament for a rate to be assessed on the town for the haven and piers via distress and sale of goods.

17 May            The corporation orders the construction of a substantial bridge over the moat at the north gate to allow the passage of horses, cattle, carts, and carriages.

29 May            Due to the failure of collectors to bring in money for the fortifications, the corporation orders them to bring in the money in the next eight days or face a £5 forfeit.

28 June            William Bridge and ten others set up a new congregation in Great Yarmouth.

1 July              First meeting of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

14 July            William Freeman, Arthur Bacon and William Standley are sent to the four north wards of the town to collection donations towards the ministers' salary for the last year.

1 August          The corporation levies fines of 40s for those neglecting to pay heyning fees and orders an assessment of £250 to pay for the town's preachers and lecturers.

14 August          Members of the corporation expect aldermen and common councillors to join the town watch in person, if able bodied, send two replacements, or face a 2s 6d fine. The corporation forms a committee to raise, arm, and train an additional hundred men for the town's militia.

21 August          Captain Thomas Johnson's militia company is no longer willing to guard the town during the day, so the corporation require the watch to put two men to a gate, 2s fine for failure

to attend. The corporation expects that all aldermen and common councillors except John Smith, William Moulton, Nathaniel Doe, and Richard Hurry will each equip a man with arms and powder to be trained weekly by Captain Dengayne. The corporation raise two more captains for the town's militia.

28 August        King's Lynn declares for the King and comes under siege by the Earl of Manchester.

29 August        A letter received from Parliament from 23 August requiring the bailiffs of Ipswich and Yarmouth provide money for ships to guard the North Sea coast. The corporation sends mortars, grenades, and petards to the Earl of Manchester to support his campaign to pacify King's Lynn. The corporation receives reports that the Earl of Manchester is offering to guard the town with a foot company.

7 September    The corporation send Nicholas Cutting junior to Norwich to request a month's pay in advance for the garrison and that the corporation can raise an additional company of 120 men to defend the town. Bridge's salary cut to £50 while he remains at the Assembly of Divines.

12 September   The corporation orders collectors to collect the haven rate and to send the names of those failing to pay to the bailiffs. The corporation send £25 to Miles Corbet for good service.

15 September   King's Lynn surrenders to the Earl of Manchester.

18 September   The corporation orders Captain Henry Dengayne and William Freeman to ride to Wrentham to get more men for the new company. The corporation orders that the mount gates are opened and guarded during the fishing period and that the militia captains will be excused from any legal repercussions for helping seize goods from those not paying the weekly assessments or proposition money. The bailiffs call before them those in debt to the town.

25 September   Parliament signs the Solemn League and Covenant.

11 October       The corporation orders that the collectors for the musters, fortifications, and propositions are to have the help of Captain Dengayne and his company of troops in collecting the town's debts.

14 November    Nicholas Cutting Junior discharged as an alderman of the wards to be a town militia captain. The corporation dissolves the garrison company. Miles Corbet sent £50 for his service at Parliament.

30 November    The corporation order the distress and seizure of good for those not paying: the haven rate, the fortifications and ministers' maintenance, also to be used for the weekly assessment. The corporation receives reports of goods being landed at the salt pans to the west of the haven, Gorleston and Lowestoft, contrary to the town's right to collect duties. The corporation orders constables sent out on Sundays to check inns and taverns for idle persons and punish them. The corporation grants the power of constables to call those that refuse to pay fines before them in the audit chamber to the justices, Giles Call and John Symonds.

18 December    The corporation receive a letter from the Earl of Manchester saying he has chosen Colonel Francis Russell to be the governor of Great Yarmouth, the corporation choose Nicholas Cutting Junior and John Robins to go to the Earl of Manchester and Miles Corbet in Parliament to prevent the governor's imposition as prejudicial to the government of the town. Anthony Speck, John Carter, John Symonds, and Giles Call are all fined £5 for refusing to travel to the Earl of Manchester. The corporation proposes a voluntary contribution organised by the aldermen and constables of the wards to pay for coals for the relief of the poor.

29 December    Nicholas Cutting junior and John Robins report back from meeting with the Earl of Manchester that Manchester needed to secure the town and Loathingland from attack, and that the governor had been requested by private individuals in the town. The town is to be paid £314 3s 3d for the provisions used in reducing Kings Lynn and the deputy lieutenants of the county are to pay the costs of the garrison. The corporation agree to an inquiry into who invited the governor into the town, seeing it as an attempt to overthrow the town's government and the members of the corporation present say they did not invite a governor. The bailiffs, justices, Thomas Medowe, Thomas Greene, Anthony Speck and Nicholas Cutting Junior are to entertain Colonel Russel on his arrival and Medowe offers to house him.

1644

3 January        The corporation agrees a welcoming committee for Colonel Russel of Thomas Johnson, Thomas Medowe, Thomas Manthorpe, Anthony Speck, Robert Gower, Nicholas Cutting junior or any three of them. Publication of *An Apologeticall Narration*.

4 January        Having spoken with Colonel Russel, Thomas Johnson thought his commission was too powerful and thought it necessary to have the Earl of Manchester annul, revoke, or qualify it. The corporation set up a committee to consider how to use the queen's ship blown into the town's haven. The ordinance passed for the Presbyterian Directory of Worship to replace the Book of Common Prayer.

5 January        Meeting between Mr Hingham, Miles Corbet, Thomas Johnson, and Colonel Russel concerning Russel's commission, leading to an agreement to qualify the governor's power. Thomas Johnson and Nicholas Cutting were ordered to ride with a letter from the bailiffs to the Earl of Manchester seeking ratification of the limits on Russel's power. John Oxenbridge permitted by the corporation to preach in the Sunday mornings, finishing at 8.30am, without charge to the town. The corporation bans services held in private houses and setting up separate churches, and the bailiffs and justices ordered to suppress them.

19 January      The army of the Covenant marches into England.

25 January      Thomas Johnson, Robert Gower, and Nicholas Cutting report their meeting with the Earl of Manchester in London. Manchester supports the corporation by giving commissions to the bailiff Thomas Crane, Colonel Russel, Thomas Johnson, John Carter, Thomas Manthorpe, Robert Gower, and Nicholas Cutting junior as commanders in chief with the power previously granted to Russel alone. The corporation prevent the landing of goods outside the haven with fines and seizure of goods. The corporation call in a petition shared by private individuals in the town promoting congregational assemblies, to have it examined by the bailiffs and prevent its spread.

12 February    The corporation outfit the queen's ship from Holland captured by the town as a warship to prize ships and goods. John Purvis appointed captain with a commission from the lord admiral.

20 February    The commanders in chief given the power to maintain watching and warding of town and levy fines by distress and sale of goods against those failing to watch.

13 March        The corporation order the parish clerk William Miller to go out after Easter to collect the duties owed to the ministers for the two preceding years. The corporation order that constables have power to collect unpaid church duties through distress.

5 April            The corporation order the sale of the wool belonging to the Earl of Manchester seized by Thomas Bendish to cover the £314 owed to the town for ammunition and provisions sent to the siege of King's Lynn.

23 April            The corporation draws up a petition to defend the town against aspersions that the town was disloyal to parliament. The corporation send the aldermen and constables of the wards would go with the collectors for the ministers' rate. The corporation warrant the parish clerk William Miller to distress those not paying their Easter offerings. The corporation order that Colonel Fleetwood is to be welcomed to the town by the bailiffs and justices to see his commission as a governor, but they are to prevent him coming into the town with an armed company, have drums beat, or allow him to exercise power without the permission of the corporation.

17 June            Due to heavy losses to the herring fleet from pirates, Jeffry Cobbe and Walter Bullard are sent to the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Warwick, or the committee of the navy to get three ships to act as a convoy for the herring fleet. The corporation order the constables of the wards to maintain the observation of the sabbath according to parliamentary ordinance and to carry offenders to the justices to be punished.

27 July            The corporation received a demand for a rate of £208 18s 6d per month for two months for the defence of the Eastern Association, as Miles Corbet has promised £200 by next Tuesday. The corporation order that no land to be available for burial in the church yard without duties paid to the minister first. Captain Thomas Allin, now a privateer for the king, had his pink in the haven seized and sold by the town.

1 August            The corporation send Jeffry Cobbe and Walter Bullard to Parliament to secure ships to guard the herring fleet but ask the chief fishermen to fund the trip. The corporation review the ministers' rate since collection remains low. The corporation orders the bailiffs, justices, and others they think useful to meet every Wednesday in the audit chamber to bring in money from forfeited bonds.

13<sup>th</sup> August        The corporation orders that those in debt to the town are to pay the corporation by next corporation meeting, appear to defend themselves at that meeting, or else lose their freemen status.

3 September       Thomas Johnson reports that Parliament passed an ordinance for ships to be used to guard the herring fleet including the town's ship the *Adventure*. The corporation orders again that no graves should be dug until duties are paid and that a mistress Freeman who refused to pay should be pursued legally. John Oxenbridge given a gratuity of £15 for his preaching on Sundays now he is leaving.

4 October           The corporation orders that duties for marriages and burials be paid before services are carried out, and a new rate of 2d yearly to be raised for bread and wine. The corporation agree that the town's commanders and aldermen should meet to ensure watching and warding continues. The corporation agrees to subscribe to a petition from Sir Hobart and the Norfolk standing committee to keep the Earl of Manchester's forces in the Eastern Association and to protect the government of the church. The corporation agrees that the collection of the ministers' rate should continue with the constables and collectors empowered to distress and the bailiffs to move against those that refuse.

5 October           The corporation orders that ministers' rate are to be raised with 'all possible care and diligence', allowing collectors to use distress, and to send those that fail to pay to the bailiffs to be imprisoned until payment.



22 November The corporation orders the further collection of the ministers' rates with warrants from the bailiffs for distressing goods, and the Easter offerings and arrears of tithes and offerings to be collected by the parish clerk William Miller. The corporation orders that that two underconstables and six of the night corporals of each wards will travel round each Sunday and fast days to reduce disorders and bring offenders before the bailiffs.

1645

3 January The corporation grants John Brinsley a stipend of £100 per year paid quarterly and a town house rent free and to pay William Bridge £50 per year during his absence at the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The corporation allows the bailiffs, justices, aldermen of the wards, and constables to license sixty inns rather than forty because of the increased population in the town. The corporation reports a need to prevent ships loading and unloading on the west side of the haven to avoid duties and the bailiffs, Robert Gower, Thomas Medowe and the chamberlains are to investigate.

6 January Establishment of the New Model Army.

9 January Thomas Bendish fined £4 for unloading at the salt pans to the west of the haven and his ship brought to the town's quay at an additional 15s fee for its release. Attempts to lease out corporation property in the deans and hospital tenements.

7 February Due to money unpaid for the haven, fortifications, sick houses and firewood for the watch rates, the corporation agrees that there will be a meeting of the corporation every Friday at 3 pm with the aim of clearing all rates.

14 February Chamberlain Thomas Goose to equip the town's warship for military service.

21 February Mr Barret, Mr Preston, and Thomas Bendish spoke to the corporation about their liberty to land goods at the salt pan, but the corporation disagrees and orders the removal of the quay at the salt pan. The corporation agrees that the bailiffs should provide warrants to the constables to bring before them those not paying the haven, fortification, or ministers rates. Due to losses at sea the bailiffs, Thomas Medow, Charles Gooch, Thomas Felstead, William Harmer, Laurence Eaton, and the chamberlains are to make a list of losses to piracy over the last two years to send as petition to Parliament to argue for the easing of the town's rates.

7 March Mrs Bransby called to the assembly meeting and jailed for refusing to pay the fortification rates. The corporation orders the bailiffs to punish those breaking down the bulwarks and works of fortifications in the town and denes.

10 March The corporation agrees the town will send money to Sir John Meldrum in Scarborough with contributions collected by members of the corporation and two ministers. Sir John Wentworth reported there was a further attempt to put a garrison in Loathingland, Great Yarmouth and Flegg, the corporation desired to work with the Norfolk and Suffolk committees against its imposition. The astrologer Mark Prynn claimed 30s from the corporation for curing a distracted man in the Bridewell, the churchwardens are to clear his rates and assessments in lieu of payment.

21 March The corporation orders the construction of additional breastworks to protect from attack by the sea to be overseen by Thomas Manthorpe, John Carter, chamberlain Thomas Goose, Thomas Felstead, Jeffry Warde, John Arnold and William Burton guided by the engineer Nathaniel Camant.

28 March Robert Gower and Giles Call report from Parliament that the Adventure and two ships from the navy will provide the convoy for the herring fleet in the autumn. The corporation order further distress of goods for the ministers' rate and bailiffs.

1 April John Holmes accuses Maria Vervy of witchcraft, and the Linsteads accuse Elizabeth Bradwell of the same.

3 April Passing of the self-denying ordinance.

8 April The corporation fears that the watch is being neglected and the constables are not enforcing it, so the bailiffs, justices, captains, and aldermen of the wards are to take over the punishment of recalcitrant. Thomas Brabon is imprisoned by the bailiffs for non-payment of assessments and the town rates, released after paying £3 towards the fortifications and haven. The corporation pay a Parliamentary monthly rate of £205 13s 4d for forces under Thomas Fairfax. The corporation sets up a committee for fortifications to defend from attack by sea. The corporation debates the maintenance of ministers and preachers and the dangers of religious separatism to the town's peace. The corporation organises a special mandatory assembly meeting at the Guildhall in a fortnight's time to resolve the debate. The corporation orders an assessment to pay Edward Owner's allowance and any excess funds to pay a gratuity to Miles Corbet.

10 April Jacob Lambert makes further accusations of witchcraft against Maria Vervy.

22 April John Howlett accuses Mark Prynn of witchcraft.

26 April The members of the corporation engage in 'much debate' over how to secure religious uniformity in the town, the result being a majority position that services would be carried out only by John Brinsley and Thomas Whitfield and solely in the church of St Nicholas.

1 May Henry Moulton accuses Elizabeth Bradwell of witchcraft.

2 May Thomas Bendish bringing a writ against Samuel Smith and the waterbailiffs for preventing him unloading at the salt pan.

5 June Accusations of witchcraft made against Bridget Howard.

20 June Accusations of witchcraft made against Barbara Wilkinson and Nazareth Fassett.

19 July Justices and bailiffs send out warrants for unpaid court and session fines, those unwilling to pay to be locked in the common gaol until they pay or have their goods taken in lieu. Most of the corporation supports the motion that the presence of congregational churches was a disturbance to the town. The corporation allows William Bridge to continue to preach if he produces a letter confirming he would not promote congregationalism.

20 July The corporation organise a voluntary collection for the ministers' pay and councillors are sent out in the wards to collect.

25 July Due to the limited support for a voluntary collection for the ministers' pay, the corporation agree to turn the collection into an assessment and the constables to distress those who will not pay. Chamberlains ordered to remove the jetty at the salt pan.

14 August The corporation calls for an account of the fortification rates to fund repairs the south mount and other decayed defence works. The corporation seeks to hire a permanent salaried audit officer to organise fines. The corporation invites the witch-finder Matthew Hopkins to the town to search for 'wicked persons' and agrees to pay him his fee and.

- 20 August Further accusations of witchcraft made against Maria Vervy.
- 29 August The corporation orders that those in debt to the town for herring duties to have their name set up in the town chamber the next herring season and be prevented from selling herring until they pay. William Lucas and Jeffry Cobbe report from Parliament that the committee for the navy will send five ships for the coming year's convoy for the herring fleet.
- 7 September Augustine Thrower accuses Maria Vervy of bewitching his son.
- 10 September Beginning of the borough sessions where eleven people accused of witchcraft were tried.
- 11 September Edward Owner refuses to serve as bailiff while he is MP, so Nicholas Cutting junior chosen instead. The corporation reiterated the expectation for aldermen and common councillors to attend every sessions of the peace and those not attending without a decent reason or leave of aldermen would be fined 5s.
- 17-20 September A further five accusations of witchcraft made.
- October John Brinsley gives the sermon that becomes *A Looking-Glasse for Good Women*.
- 7 October The corporation orders weekly meetings at the audit chamber for constables to bring in those failing to watch to punish them, overseen by the bailiffs, Thomas Johnson and the other justices, John Lucas, Anthony Speck, John Carter and Thomas Felstead. The corporation orders the constables and aldermen of the wards to bring in the ministers' rate. The corporation orders that the women who searched those suspected of witchcraft be paid 12d a day for their service and that in future that only four women were to be employed: Elizabeth Harwaid and three other midwives of her choice. The corporation orders that the church wardens should prevent members of the congregation leaving Sunday service after the sermon but before the prayer since it was disturbing the service. The corporation orders that one or more of Thomas Johnson, Thomas Gooch, and the chamberlains should attend the audit chamber to get in the town's debts by any means. The corporation again orders that the chamberlain should dig up the quay at the salt pan to prevent its use. The corporation receives a letter from Miles Corbet stating that most of the town's residents would like William Bridge to preach on Thursday afternoons. Corbet wished to know who opposed Bridge's preaching and why.
- 13 October Edward Owner proposes to set up a workhouse to prevent beggars and idle poor wandering the town, and to support the impotent poor. He agrees to provide the initial funds. The corporation repeats the order to remove the jetty at the salt pan. As Thomas Whitfield and John Brinsley were willing, the corporation allows them to repeat their Sunday sermon in the room used as the Dutch chapel on Fridays from 2 pm starting in a fortnight. The corporation orders Edward Owner and Anthony Speck to write to the navy committee for payment for the town's ship used as part of the convoy for the herring fleet.
- 5 December The corporation changes the cost of entry to the corporation from plate to £5 for aldermen and 50s for common councillors, the money going towards the cost of the new workhouse. The corporation sought to continue the watch and required an alderman to join the watch every night, who would work with the constables to ensure fit men were serving, before being relieved by two common councillors at midnight. The corporation orders that constables are to bring in those failing to watch weekly.
- 8 December Captain Wilch of the *Adventure* reports that the crew had not been paid for their six months service on convoy with the herring fishermen. Edward Owner offers £100 of his own money to cover pay, Anthony Speck adding available funds, Thomas Johnson and Thomas Gooch

as treasurers for the wastage money to pay the sailors. The corporation pays the jailer Richard Wright £21 for holding twenty-one of Captain Swinleys's and eight of Captain Wilch's sailors who had rioted.

1646

2 January        The corporation agrees that the orders for the night watch need to be observed and that constables are to warn and present those failing to attend to the bailiffs and the committee for the watch on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The corporation forms a committee to meet with William Bridge on the following Wednesday afternoon to discuss the divisions caused by his separate church.

20 March        The corporation order Thomas Johnson and Robert Gower to ride to Norwich to get a reduction in the rates due to the town's losses to piracy, using the evidence of the aldermen and constables' collation of a record of losses.

2 April           Borough sessions at which five alleged witches are tried.

14 April        The Congregational church informs the corporation that they need to admit new members to their church.

15 April        Report from Thomas Johnson and Robert Gower that the Norwich committee was supportive over the town's losses to piracy and have sent a letter to London to which the corporation order that a letter by James Johnson and town clerk be appended. The corporation to keep £400 from the public rates to cover the cost of the *Adventure*. The corporation set up a new committee for the workhouse to be built at the Bridewell. The corporation orders that money owed for the poor rates for the last two years to be brought in by the overseers of the poor, the churchwardens, collectors of the poor rate, and ward aldermen. The corporation ends the guarding of the town's gates during the day except on Sundays, fast days, and thanksgiving days. Bailiff Cutting discharged as captain of the militia at his request, William Lucas replaces him. The corporation grants Edward Owner the town's hospital houses rent free if he repairs them and uses them for charitable purposes such as school for poor children to be taught to read and knit.

5 May           King Charles surrenders to the Covenanter army at Newark.

11 May        Israel Ingram replaces John Carter, Thomas Gooch replaces Robert Gower, and John Symonds replaces Thomas Manthorpe as captains of the town's trained bands. The town's artillery yard and exercises revived. The corporation orders that town's house and lands called Friars minors be valued and sold off to pay the town's debts.

27 May        Anthony Parmenter to pay £5 or be dismissed from the corporation for twice refusing to come to assembly meetings. Thomas Manthorpe is deputed under the town's seal to collect the town's half doles via legal means or distress.

17 June        Thomas Whitfield informs the corporation that he is keen to return home to Yorkshire but is willing to wait for a replacement as curate before leaving.

28 July        The corporation chose John Hall of Hoxon as grammar school master, and John Swaine to replace Whitfield as minister. The corporation to take account for the ministers' rates for the previous years with an alderman and a common councillor sent to each ward to collect monies owed. The corporation raise a general assessment of a quarter of year's rate to cover the costs of caring for plague victims.

- 7 August        The corporation order aldermen and constables of the wards to search for newcomers fortnightly. The corporation orders that no-one indebted to the town can heyne Herring.
- 11 September   The corporation orders Samuel Smyth to close the chain near the south gate between 8 am and 8 pm on Sundays to prevent fishing. The corporation borrows £100 to pay the overseers of the poor.
- 12 October       The corporation orders last year's bailiffs, Rowe and Cutting, to sit at the Audit chamber to confirm fines of the courts and sessions still owed for the previous year. The corporation consider opening the church gates and pudding gate.
- 3 December      The corporation orders former and current overseers of the poor to clear debts owed on the poor rate. The corporation send Anthony Wyn to prison for £20 owed in herbage and Arthur Bacon for owing £4. The corporation allows the Dutch Congregation to excuse itself from the poor rate since they look after their own poor and their congregation is reduced to a few able men. The corporation sets up a committee for a coal store for the poor.

## 1647

- 4 February       The corporation orders that the money owed for the fortifications should be brought in. The corporation orders that coals are to be distributed among the 'miserable pore' by the aldermen and constables of the wards. A new committee set up to consider the provision of a workhouse.
- 9 April           The corporation agrees a gratuity of £50 for Miles Corbet for his work at Parliament. Simon Wells of Woodbridge to be trialled as school master. Ellis Dawdy is to be paid the remainder of money owed for building fifty-six barrows for the town's fortification in 1642.
- 5 May            The corporation orders the town's militia captains to muster and discipline their companies quarterly on pain of £5 fine for every failure.
- 29 July           Overseers of the poor and collectors of the poor rate are called before Thomas Johnson and Thomas Gooch to account and punish those failing to pay. The corporation appoints George England to provide coals for the poor and a coal yard provided at the town house. The corporation orders the bailiffs, Thomas Johnson, Giles Call, Robert Gower, Thomas Wilde, and John Robins to gather the ministers' rates owed for the previous three years.
- 5 August         The corporation agrees to pay the captains of the trained band £4 every time they muster and to reduce the companies of militia from four to three as no one is willing to take the fourth captain's place and there are insufficient soldiers.
- 6 August         The New Model Army occupies London after the Presbyterian eleven members fail to mobilise the city against the army.
- 31 August        The corporation has the *Adventure* valued at £400 and agrees to sell her fully equipped.
- 10 September   The corporation agree to a new rate for the ministers.
- 23 September   Samuel Dubbleday is dismissed from the corporation for not attending public worship.

4 October        The *Aventure* is sold to William Lynstead for £416. The corporation orders aldermen and constables to tour their wards fortnightly to remove newcomers to the town. vagabonds, idle persons, and women out of service as they see fit, a 10s fine for failure to do so.

19 October       The corporation orders continued warding by day on Sundays and fast days. The corporation orders the justices of the peace to examine all breaches or profaning of the Sabbath and disorders in Inns, Alehouses, and Taverns.

17 November    The corporation empowers the previous years' bailiffs, Edward Owner and Charles Gooch, to imprison those still in debt to the town.

17 December    The corporation give control of the church half doles to Gilbert Water to be sure of raising enough money to maintain the ministers.

25 December    Riots in London, Ipswich, and Canterbury against the suppression of Christmas celebrations.

27 December    The corporation send a letter to Miles Corbet asking for abatement of the monthly rate for Fairfax's army as the corporation consider the town overcharged. The corporation require a fifth quarters rate for the poor to be assessed.

1648

17 January       The corporation grants 12d per sale of a thousand herring to poor relief. The corporation protects the overseers of the poor and the church wardens distressing goods for money owed for poor relief. The corporation agrees to take away the font from St Nicholas's Church in accordance with Parliamentary ordinance.

24 February     The corporation receives a letter from Miles Corbet requiring that sailors pay 50 out of every 1000 fish caught towards wastage. The corporation notes that the cost of the town's poor relief had increased from £400 to £1000 a year.

24 April          Norwich rises for the King culminating in the 'Great Blow' as the rising is put down and the city's gunpowder store explodes.

3 May            Due to the 'great danger of mutinies in these unsettled tymes' the corporation orders the constables to maintain the night watch until 5 am. The corporation orders the revival of the town's artillery company.

23 May           The corporation orders the aldermen and constables to lead a house to house collection for money to relieve the town's fishermen and their families with distribution organised by the bailiffs and justices.

2 June            The corporation organises a new order for watching and warding by day and night, the town's gates are locked up except the north, south, market, master Harris, and bridge gates, organised by a committee of the bailiffs, justices, ward aldermen, and town captains. The corporation lends two cannons to Thomas Ingram for the use of John Purvis and his vessel.

10 June           Due to neglect of the night watch, the corporation passes a strict order for watching and warding.

15 June           Cannoneers are chosen from amongst the members of the corporation to control the town's large pieces of ordinance. An extra order for the watch is passed requiring corporation members to take part from 10 pm and requiring all innkeepers to report every night all strangers

lodging with them. Thomas Gower, Geoffrey Cobbe, Jeffry Warde, Thomas Muriell, and Thomas Ingram are appointed by the corporation to search houses for stores of arms. Stores of gunpowder made in diverse places in the town.

7 July                The corporation authorises the creation of a standing committee for the town's safety made up of the bailiffs, the justices, Thomas Meadow, Giles Call, Thomas Crane, Robert Gower, Thomas Rowe, Nicholas Cutting, Thomas Gooch, Geoffrey Cobbe, Joseph Ward, and Thomas Wilde. Corporation members subscribe to stand for King and Parliament according to the National Covenant. The corporation requires the town's trained bands and artillerymen to also subscribe to the National Covenant. The Bailiff Thomas Manthorpe is to have the keys to the town's gates overnight.

25 July                Thomas Meadow, Thomas Johnson, John Symonds, and Nicholas Cutting are sent to Colonel Scrope at Bradwell to request him not to bring a garrison into the town.

27 July                The corporation received a letter from the committee of Both Houses agreeing to Geoffrey Cobbes's 'engagement', if the town can raise sufficient troops for its defence then no garrison will be imposed. The town restores its fourth trained band captain.

29 July                Bailiff Israel Ingram resigns as captain of the trained bands to quieten the town's unrest and is replaced by Robert Gower. William Greenwood is chosen as captain for the horse to be raised in the town.

10 August            Town to raise a further twenty men for each company of the trained band and a further 120 soldiers with officers to be trained daily, led by Arthur Bacon. Geoffrey Cobbe asked to purchase one hundred spades in London.

22 August            Briana Harper fined 20s for calling Walter Bullard a 'malignant knave'. Arthur Bacon's 'auxiliaries' to be paid by the chamberlains from a new rate.

25 August            Robert Harmer to buy one hundred halberds, 50 for the town store and to rest to be sold to members of the corporation. The town's chain to be raised nightly during the fishing period. George England allowed to store up corn from across the sea in case of 'necessity'. Augustine Thrower to pay Robert Harmer £100 for the provision of artillery and gunpowder.

7 September        A letter from Commissary General Ireton received requiring members of the corporation to meet with him at Sir John Wentworth's house in Somerleyton, along with a second letter from Ireton requiring the town to have a garrison or else its walls will be pulled down and replaced by a fort at the river's mouth. In response the corporation requires Ireton's commission to submit, sending Thomas Lucas, Thomas Johnson, and Robert Gower to prevent bringing a garrison into the town until a message has been received from Lord General Fairfax.

9 September        Lord General Fairfax arrives at the town, so the corporation accept the garrison.

12 September       Corporation seeks to borrow £400 to pay and quarter the garrison soldiers.

20 September       The town is ordered to provide three barrels of coal every night and candles for the guards. £800 in loans advanced to the state by the town for soldiers pay.

7 October            The bailiffs are ordered to find a way to prevent disorder on Sundays, Lieutenant Cobbett is required to do the same for the garrison soldiers.

17 October           The corporation seeks to enforce the Sabbath with constables backed by 12 to 14 competent men and the same number of soldiers to check inns, alehouses, and tippling houses to bring offenders before the bailiffs.

31 October      The corporation retires the town gunners since the garrison is now in control of every bulwark and fort.

3 November     The corporation raises £173 for the garrison through weekly and monthly rates.

21 November   The corporation borrows money from the wealthy in the town to prevent the garrison from having free quarter in the town. The garrison takes over the tolhouse for their council of war.

30 November   The corporation distributes money to struggling sailors, institutes an additional three-month rate for the poor.

2 December    The New Model Army occupies London.

6 December    Pride's purge of Parliament.

1649

20 January     The trial of Charles I begins.

30 January     King Charles is beheaded, Miles Corbet is amongst the regicides.

5 February     The corporation orders that the proclamation against proclaiming Charles Stuart king is read out.

17 March       The corporation will not grant any further money to the overseers of the poor and church wardens as they continue to spend more than they are receiving.

24 March       Creation of a corporation standing committee for getting in the town's debt as the corporation borrows a further £250 and assesses the town for a three-month rate.

7 May           The corporation considers its dire financial situation, blaming it on the 'extraordinary charge of the poor and billeting soldiers', and so requires a monthly rate of taxation and a strict order for getting in the money due from the corporation's freemen.

24 July          Colonel Barkstead takes control over the town's garrison.

31 July           Members of the corporation resign their place ahead of an order from the committee of indemnity: Israel Ingram, Giles Call, George England, Nathaniel Ashbie, Anthony Wyn, Henry Tompson, Thomas Gentleman, Walter Bullard, William Standley, Henry Peach, Thomas Copeman, Jeffry Lambly, Edmund Thaxter, William Lynstead, Thomas Bright, Benjamin Sayer, Thomas Muriel, Thomas Ingram, Abraham Castle, and James Johnson appear to be dismissed. The yearly banquet is cancelled, the corporation instead giving £10 to the poor.

23 August       The aldermen and common councillors resigning dismissed, with Thomas Johnson's and Anthony Parmenter's resignation received in writing. The committee of indemnity recommends that Giles Call, Nathaniel Ashbie, Thomas Bright, Benjamin Sayer, and Thomas Copeman are to continue on the corporation. Benjamin Norgate dismissed due to poor health.



### Appendix 3: Witchcraft Accusations 1625-63

Date of trial	Name of Accused	Result
1637	Violet Smith	Sent to Norwich Gaol
1638	Mark Prynn	Not guilty
1645	Maria Vervy	Not guilty
1645	Elizabeth Bradwell	Executed
1645	Mark Prynn	Not guilty
1645	Bridget Howard	Executed
1645	Barbara Wilkinson	Not Guilty
1645	Nazareth Fassett	Not Guilty
1645	Mary Blackburn	Executed
1645	Alice Clipwell	Executed
1645	Elizabeth Dudgeon	Executed
1645	Joanna Lacey	Found guilty, not executed
1646	Dorothee Vittry	Not guilty
1646	Elizabeth Clark	Not guilty
1646	Dionis Avery	Not guilty
1646	Anna Parke	Not guilty
1646	Joseph Smyth	Not guilty
1647	Maria Vervy	Not guilty
1650	Dionis Avery	Not guilty
1654	Thomas Wollerton	Not guilty

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MSS. Willis 85: Papers of Browne Willis, (1682-1760)

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Add MS 15857: Original letters of Sir Richard Browne, (1605-1683)

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Add MS 22619: Collections relating to Norwich, vol. 1, 1633-1730

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