

The Commonwealth of England and the Governors of Lancashire: ‘New Modelised and Cromwellysed’

The political fall-out following the execution of Charles I cannot be overestimated. The political nation, already starkly polarised by the events of the previous decade, was rent asunder. The purge of the House of Commons that preceded the regicide forcibly excluded a large number of MPs, whilst many more chose to stay away from Westminster following the revolutionary events of January 1649. A parallel process occurred in the provinces, as men were removed from the county committees and the commission of the peace. The upheaval was so profound that one Lancashire man declared in 1649 that the law had been ‘New Modelised and Cromwellysed’. The contempt he later showed to magistrates and constables at the quarter sessions demonstrates that it was the dramatic changes to the government of the country as much as any changes to the law that had left him bewildered.[1] The following paper will examine the impact of the creation of the Commonwealth on the government of Lancashire, beginning with the county’s MPs following Pride’s Purge. It will then explore the extent to which Lancashire’s local government was ‘New Modelled’ after 1649; were the county committees and the bench purged following the creation of the republic, or did government continue largely unaffected? To what extent did a revolution at Westminster entail a revolution in the provinces?

I

On 6 December 1648, tensions that had been building between conservatives and radicals at Westminster finally came to a head when the New Model Army purged the House of Commons. On that morning, soldiers under the command of Colonel Thomas Pride arrested forty-five MPs and prevented a much larger number from entering the House. Not surprisingly, many MPs objected to this grievous attack upon the privileges of Parliament, and refused to collaborate with the minority that continued to conduct business in the rump of the House of Commons. In total, Underdown has estimated that, whether by force or by choice, two-thirds of the members of the Commons ceased to sit

at the end of 1648. The purge of the Commons had significant implications for Lancashire. Until the purge, Lancashire was represented at Westminster by fourteen MPs, two for the county and two each for the boroughs of Clitheroe, Lancaster, Liverpool, Newton, Preston and Wigan. Of these fourteen men, eleven were either excluded by Pride or chose to withdraw from the House; a twelfth, Richard Shuttleworth junior, died in January 1649.[2]

Confused reports reached Lancashire concerning the purge, no doubt causing Humphrey Chetham consternation as he desperately sought to have his election as High Sheriff cancelled. On 11 December, five days after the purge, Chetham learnt from his London agent that

(all those our Lancashire Parliament men who would have been readie to have served you therein) with many others to the number of seaventy more, were by the Armye taken prison[e]rs and expelled the house, soe that the City is nowe in a very sadd distraccon...

Chetham was informed by one correspondent on the 12 December that William Langton had been 'interdicted by the Army from the house for the present', whilst another wrote on the same day that 'I thinke Mr Langhton is not under restraynt, but I doe not know the truth'.[3] That day Sir Ralph Assheton, MP for Clitheroe, also wrote to his steward in Lancashire, informing him of 'this base tyme of distraction, the p[ar]liam[en]t beeing upon the matter for the pr[e]sent dissolved by the disorders of the Army, who have seized & driven away this w[ee]ke the farr greater p[ar]te of the Howse'.[4]

When the dust settled, the county was left represented at Westminster by just two MPs, the radicals Alexander Rigby and John Moore.[5] That they supported the revolution is perhaps not surprising. The latter was a soldier who had run up massive debts supporting a regiment in Ireland, and in 1649 he claimed £2,368 16s. 4d. in arrears.[6] Rigby was a militant who had commanded a regiment in Lancashire during the first war, and who had strong links with the Levellers, having been one of the four radical MPs delegated to discuss the Agreement of the People.[7] He was rewarded for his constancy – or perhaps bought from his earlier radicalism – with the post of Baron of the Exchequer in late 1649. Moore and Rigby were both amongst those nominated to the

High Court of Justice that tried the King in January, and Moore actually signed the warrant.[8]

After the regicide, strenuous efforts were made to regain the support of conservative former Members, but the majority of Lancashire's MPs were too bitterly estranged ever to return to the House.[9] Two Lancashire MPs absent from events during the revolutionary winter who did resume their seats, though, were Thomas Fell, MP for Lancaster, and Peter Brooke, MP for Newton, who both returned to the House on 23 July 1649. They were soon joined at Westminster by Colonel Thomas Birch, elected MP for Liverpool in October 1649 in the place of the recently deceased Sir Richard Wynn. Despite this, Lancashire was poorly represented at the heart of government, as none of the county's Commonwealth MPs was to take much part in the proceedings of the Rump. Rigby's elevation to the post of Baron of the Exchequer carried the customary obligation to withdraw from the House. His death in the summer of 1650 removed what influence he might still have carried within central administration. Moore had been active in the pacification of Ireland since 1647; he returned to his regiment there in the summer of 1649, where he also died in the following year. The three remaining Lancashire MPs, Fell, Brooke and Birch, were frequently absent from the capital, 'turning up only when they thought that important interests (their own as well as the public's) were involved'.[10] Birch's election for Liverpool closely followed his appointment as governor of the port, and his dominant role within the administration of the county prevented him from attending Westminster. Fell was also diverted from the House by office after his appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the summer of 1649.[11]

II

The events at Westminster were mirrored by purges in the provinces, as the new regime sought to put reliable men in charge of the counties. During the war years, Parliament had created committees to oversee the affairs of each county under its control, appointing the first Lancashire committees in early 1643.[12] Although their membership fluctuated with each new ordinance, a group of around twenty men made up a stable core between 1644 and 1648.[13] Nineteen of the twenty-six men appointed to the assessment committee in March 1648 were also members of the Lancashire sequestration committee,

whilst sixteen of the assessment committeemen sat on the county's militia committee. In total, fifteen men were members of all three committees in 1648, showing why many historians refer to these bodies collectively as a single county committee. Unlike elsewhere, the Lancashire parliamentarians had avoided the extreme divisions which had racked the movement during the first Civil War. Despite some friction between moderates and militants, there had been a tremendous degree of continuity amongst the governors of the county. Pride's Purge split the parliamentary alliance permanently. The end of hostilities in 1648 enabled a return to the search for a peaceful settlement, a search that ultimately ended on a scaffold in Whitehall. This quest for a settlement necessarily entailed replacing many of the country's governors with new and less experienced men. Unable to support a regicide republic created by an independent army, Lancashire's traditional elite retreated into retirement. The events of the previous summer had rendered many of the Parliamentarian old guard undesirable to the new government, whilst the events of the winter left many of the nation's elite with no desire to serve the republic. The dramatic remodelling of Lancashire's local administration following the regicide included the appointment of four assessment committees during the Commonwealth: two in 1649, one in 1650 and one in 1652; new militia and sequestration committees were also appointed in 1650.[14]

The impact of the creation of the republic within Lancashire can be demonstrated by the reorganisation of the county's militia committee following the revolution. Control of the militia, important both for the security and peace of the State and as an alternative source of power to the New Model Army, had been a crucial issue in the lead up to Pride's Purge, as all sides in the factional battles at Westminster had scrambled to ensure that it was in the hands of their allies in the provinces. In the last throw of the die by the conservatives, a new militia Ordinance had been passed on 2 December 1648 that would have taken power away from the new men who had come to the fore during the wars, returning it to the traditional elite. Pride's Purge had followed only four days later, and the Ordinance was repealed later that month, before it could be implemented.[15] Following the turbulent events of December, many of the ancient gentry retreated from active politics, and of the thirty-eight Lancashire commissioners who would have been appointed by the December 1648 Ordinance, sixteen did not serve on any committees

during the Commonwealth, including four baronets and the majority of the county's MPs.[16]

Following the repeal of the Militia Ordinance, it is unclear in whose hands the provincial militia was left. Naturally, the survival of the republic and security of the nation were amongst the priorities of the new regime, and the remodelling of the militia throughout the country consequently became an issue of prime importance. Twelve men signed a Lancashire militia order in June 1649, all of whom had also been appointed as assessment commissioners in April 1649, and it is tempting to think that the oversight of the militia had temporarily fallen to the assessment committee. It took until July 1650 before the Rump passed a new militia ordinance, although commissioners had in fact been acting by order of the Council of State since the autumn of 1649. The reshaping of the militia in 1649 and 1650 was a vital point in the formation of the new regime. For Worden, the 'zealous' creation of the new militia by the Commonwealth indicated '[t]he regime's determination to bring the localities under control'. The act itself demonstrated that the militia was intended not merely to be an auxiliary military force for the provinces, but was also to ensure State security. The militia commissioners were to seek out information 'of all Conspiracies, Designs, Practises, secret and suspicious Meetings of disaffected persons'. They also had the power to disarm and imprison Catholics and the 'ill-affected'. The result of the Militia Act has been seen as the transfer throughout the country by a now-established republican government of actual power from the traditional elite to an ever-decreasing number of more radically-minded men willing to serve the new regime. Underdown represented it as 'one more stage in the undermining of the county communities in favour of Whitehall'.[17]

No list of commissioners survives for the county, so the Lancashire committee's membership can only be reconstructed from its surviving orders.[18] Only a handful of the 1650 commissioners had had previous experience of service in local government, either as committeemen or JPs. As might be expected, the ubiquitous Col. Thomas Birch was foremost amongst them, signing nine militia orders between 1650 and 1651; he was followed by John Starkey, who signed six. However, the number of extant orders available to us is too small a sample to draw any conclusions about the relative activity of each commissioner. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the absence of

senior militia officers during the period in question. For instance, although William West, Richard Standish and John Moore appear to be amongst the least active commissioners, West and Standish were absent on active service in Scotland, as was Moore with his regiment in Ireland. In total, sixteen commissioners signed the seventeen extant Lancashire militia orders from between 1650 and 1652.[19] They were drawn from a small group who formed the nucleus of county government under the new regime, and ten of the new committee were also appointed as assessment committeemen in 1649 and 1650. Birch, Starkey, and Gilbert Ireland were the only commissioners with any extensive experience, although William West, Thomas Whittingham and George Toulson had been militia commissioners since 1648. Edmond Werden had been an assessment commissioner since 1647, whilst Toulson, Jereiah Aspinwell, Robert Mawdesley and William Patten had been promoted from the sub-committee of accounts.[20] The comparatively obscure Thomas Cobham, John Sawrey, a radical gentleman with little previous experience, and Colonel Richard Standish were all men who became stalwarts of county administration during the republic. Four townsmen were appointed to the militia committee, traditionally the preserve of the greater gentry: Werden and Toulson were the serving mayors of Preston and Lancaster respectively, with William Patten and William Shawe of Preston. To this core, the Council of State added Edward Aspinwell and John Foxe in September 1650.[21] It is apparent that not all of the old guard retreated into retirement during the Commonwealth, however, for, despite the detention by the Council of State of two of his sons in 1650 and 1651, Richard Shuttleworth still signed a militia order in March 1651.[22]

The assessment committee was also comprehensively reformed in April 1649, with only eleven of the twenty-six commissioners named in the ordinance of March 1648 surviving the revolutionary winter.[23] Alongside these men, fifteen new commissioners were nominated, many of whom had had little or no experience of the highest levels of administration within the county. Nevertheless, the Rump's search for a dependable and effective committee for the county continued, and the assessment committee appointed in December 1649 represents the apogee of experimentation in provincial government. The December committee included thirteen men who had never sat on any county committee before 1649 and, with forty members, it was significantly larger than any previous

Lancashire committee. The Rump continued all but three of the men appointed to the April committee, and reappointed Thomas Fell and Samuel Birch, experienced men who had been overlooked in April. The omissions from the 1649 committees represent the final triumph of the county's militants, led by Thomas Birch, over their more moderate former colleagues, some of whom were being sued by Birch.[24] Four conservative former MPs and five deputy-lieutenants who had dominated Lancashire affairs during the 1640s were removed from the assessment committee in 1649.[25]

Amongst the new men in 1649 with some previous experience on county committees were Richard Haworth, William Knipe and William West, who had been militia commissioners since 1645, and George Pigot, who had joined them in May 1648. Besides them, the regime promoted men from the lower levels of the parliamentary governmental machinery, men who had been sub-commissioners of the accounts or assessment collectors.[26] The new appointments also sought to remedy the deficient social status of the committee, with the inclusion of several new men who were taking their rightful position in county society. Peter Brooke was a Cheshire man, but also the MP for Newton, Peter Bold, James Assheton, John Atherton, and Alexander Barlow were all men of well-established families who had recently come of age, whilst Richard Standish had only inherited the Duxbury estates from his deceased brother in 1648.

Nevertheless, the remainder of the new men promoted in the early months of the republic must have seemed obscure and insignificant in the eyes of their neighbours. Perhaps most shocking to contemporaries was the inclusion of a number of townsmen. The Preston alderman William Cottam was named to the April 1649 committee, and William Williamson and John Walker, mayor and alderman of Liverpool respectively, were added in December, as was George Toulson, mayor of Lancaster in 1650. The Manchester merchant John Hartley and the lawyer John Lightbourne completed the roll call of newly appointed urban committeemen. The committee appointed in December 1649 formed a stable group who would continue to serve in that capacity for most of the Commonwealth. All but the recently deceased Alexander Rigby were reappointed in November 1650. To their number were added John Gilliam, Ralph Worthington, Edward Stockley, Hugh Cooper and Robert Lever, taking the total number of committeemen to forty-four. These new members were again of a much lower social standing than their

predecessors of the 1640s, prominent men within their parishes with perhaps some claims to gentility, although Cooper was a mercer from Ormskirk.

The stability of the committee was shattered in December 1652. Some of these changes were enforced, for six men had died in the interval.[27] Doubts over the loyalty of Samuel Birch may have been the cause of his removal, after he was accused of attending a rendezvous of Royalist forces in 1651.[28] The other seven ejected men had become assessment commissioners for the first time during the republic, suggesting that with their removal the Rump's period of experimentation had come to an end.[29] It may be that experience had shown that these men were unwilling to act under the republic. Alternatively, the government may have sought to improve the social standing of the assessment commissioners, by replacing several men of little esteem with others from amongst the county's greatest gentry. Edmund Hopwood had been a JP in the county since 1623, and had recently served a term as sheriff of the county. Gilbert Ireland had also served as sheriff, during the crucial months of the purge and the regicide, and had been a militia commissioner since 1645. The appointment of Sir Thomas Stanley and Richard Shuttleworth for the first time since 1649 signals an effort at reconciliation between Westminster and the provinces. Joining them were men of lesser gentry stock who all brought useful experience of other parliamentary committees or administration to the committee. However, if some of the new appointments were designed to bolster the social status of the committee, the new appointments added to the number of urban committeemen with the inclusion of three Preston aldermen, Edmund Werden, William Patten and William Shaw.

Whilst still considering the reorganisation of the nation's militia, the new regime had turned its attention to the sequestration of Royalists' estates. In January 1649/50, the Commonwealth authorities took measures to bring the administration of sequestrations under a greater degree of central control and to ensure that the maximum amount of revenue was returned to London. The sequestration administration was streamlined nationwide, with the dismissal of the former county committees and their replacement with new commissioners. In Lancashire, three new commissioners, Robert Cunliffe, Peter Holt and George Pigot, replaced the former committee.[30] Cunliffe had been one of the most active committeemen in the county during the 1640s, Holt had been a JP in

the county since 1646, whilst Pigot was a Preston lawyer who had served as Alexander Rigby's wagon-master during the wars.[31] It is not clear by what process these men were selected as the new sub-commissioners. In Somerset, John Pyne brilliantly outmanoeuvred his opponents in the county to ensure the appointment of his own clients to the new Somerset sequestration committee.[32] Thomas Birch has been likened to John Pyne as a 'county boss' for Lancashire, yet it is not clear whether any of the new Lancashire sub-commissioners had close connections to Birch. Furthermore, when Birch tried to nominate a successor for the recently deceased Holt in September 1651, the London committee ignored his suggestion and appointed another man.[33]

Although the reformation of sequestrations was intended to bring its provincial administration under closer central control, the London committee still found the Lancashire sub-commissioners in independent mood, and they were in bitter dispute by 1651. Following a number of complaints from Lancashire about the heavy burden of work in a county with such a Royalist past, the London Committee no doubt felt that it had done the Lancashire men a service by appointing Robert Massey as a fourth commissioner in February 1651.[34] In fact, the Lancashire commissioners reacted with indignation, peremptorily dismissing Massey whilst declaring 'wee will not act with any that shall seeke the place'. Despite being of modest gentry stock, the commissioners made sneering comments about the Warrington mercer's social status, 'hee beinge a Tradesman and living upon his credit'. The commissioners found useful allies in the two MPs, Thomas Birch and Thomas Fell, who added their voices against the appointment of Massey, saying 'hee is unable in pointe of experience and iudgment for that implym[en]t and that hee hath not anie estate responsible to the Comonwealth for that truste'. The commissioners expanded this last argument, claiming that Massey had only recently compounded with his creditors for his debts; should he be appointed, therefore, 'the vote of the countrey wilbe that the business is carried on by men of broken fortunes'. Massey countered these arguments, suggesting that the commissioners were more concerned that an extra colleague would reduce their salaries.[35]

If the Lancashire commissioners had hoped to call the London Committee's bluff, they failed. In August 1652, George Pigot was dismissed from office, although, contemptuously, he was still signing sequestration orders in October. He was replaced by

John Sawrey, a commissioner for the militia and the assessment, and a JP.[36] Robert Cunliffe refused to work with Massey, and he too was removed although, strangely, his replacement was his brother, Nicholas. The authorities also took this opportunity to remove John Sawrey, although it is not clear why. Possibly his residence in north Lonsdale had proved too remote for him to be an effective commissioner, although he was certainly active during his period in office.[37] In September 1651, the deceased Peter Holt had been replaced by Edward Aspinwell, who was a militia commissioner and a major in the militia. This committee of Aspinwell, Nicholas Cunliffe and Massey continued until Cunliffe was removed in January 1654.[38] The evidence of the constant bickering between the Lancashire sequestration commissioners seriously calls into question the power and authority of the new regime. Although the Lancashire commissioners were ultimately brought to heel, they had managed to obstruct the central Committee's intentions for almost two years. Given that the new sequestration committees had been created as part of a move towards centralisation, the insubordination of the Lancashire commissioners demonstrated the severe limitations of the republic's power.

III

The reshaping of the county committees was paralleled by changes within Lancashire's commission of the peace. Across the country, quarter sessions had been interrupted in the wake of hostilities, and Lancashire was no exception; meetings ceased in 1643, not to be resumed until 1646.[39] The complexion of the commissions of the peace was not unaffected by the wars, and suspect magistrates were purged by Parliament. Understandably, this often left the county benches with reduced social status, as Royalist justices were replaced by men of a lower status. Following the purge of the Royalist JPs in 1646, the membership of the Lancashire bench had proved to be very stable. Although eight new commissions for the county were issued between August 1646 and June 1648, they made at first only very minor changes.[40] A new commission of October 1647 increased the number of Lancashire JPs from twenty-nine to thirty-nine. Nevertheless, these changes did not greatly alter the character of the bench, and this group of justices was continued with only one change in 1648.[41]

Exactly a third of the justices on the eve of the republic were men first appointed to the bench since 1646 with no family tradition of service. They included several MPs who had been elected since 1646, and a number of men who had come to prominence during the wars. Nevertheless, Parliament could still call upon a number of highly experienced men from the leading families of the county to dispense justice in Lancashire. Sixteen justices had sat on the bench before the outbreak of war in 1642, and another ten were from families represented by at least one generation between 1603 and 1642.[42] This compares favourably with the significantly larger neighbouring county of Yorkshire, where thirty-two of the magistrates in 1648 had been justices since before the war.[43] The conservative nature of the Lancashire bench in the summer of 1648 is perhaps best illustrated with reference to the aborted militia act of December 1648. Whereas only fifteen of the JPs appointed in June 1648 had also been nominated as militia commissioners in the previous month, no fewer than thirty-two of their number would have been created militia commissioners had the December Ordinance not been repealed.[44] In fact, there was very little overlap between the commission of the peace and the Parliamentary committees in Lancashire leading up to the creation of the republic. Only sixteen of the thirty-nine justices appointed in June 1648 also served as assessment committeemen, and only fifteen served on the militia committee; eight men combined membership of both committees with membership of the bench.

Although a committee was appointed by the House of Commons just days after the regicide ‘to present the Names of fit persons to be named in new Commissions of the Peace’, purges of suspect justices were much slower in coming than the purges of the county committees.[45] The Commons committee included none of the Lancashire MPs still sitting in the Rump, and one wonders through what channels of influence recommendations were made for new justices. Despite their absence from the House, the remaining Lancashire MPs might still have provided useful links between Westminster and the county, as might Sir William Brereton, an influential Cheshire MP who was a member of the committee. The choice of John Bradshaw, Chancellor of the Duchy, as President of the newly-elected Council of State provided another source of patronage at the centre for Lancashiremen. Nevertheless, little evidence remains of the negotiations involved in the selection of justices under the new republic.

The first commission of the peace issued by the Commonwealth for Lancashire, in September 1649, continued all but five of the previous thirty-nine magistrates.[46] Sir Ralph Assheton of Whalley was the only secluded MP removed from the bench, alongside the Royalists Col. John Booth and Phillip Waineman, Edward Butterworth, who had drawn Birch's ire in 1645 for leniency towards Royalists, and Peter Catterall, a newly arrived justice who may have been considered of too humble stock for the bench. The cautious nature of the Commonwealth's treatment of the Lancashire commission was mirrored elsewhere in the country. The Somerset bench was purged only of its secluded MPs in 1649, although John Pyne also promoted reliable radicals to swamp the remaining conservatives.[47] Elsewhere on the south coast, Stephen Roberts noted only a small number of omissions from the Devonian bench, leading him to conclude that:

1649 was thus a year of consolidation, of affirming commitments made during the winter of 1648. There was little scope through the commissions of the peace. Public action, the humiliation offered a justice whose name was removed from the commission, was inappropriate in circumstances in which a diffident government, conscious of its weakness, needed all the support available to it.[48]

Replacing the five ousted Lancashire magistrates were seven new men, and, as with the county committees, 1649 represents the beginning of a period of experimentation within the magistracy. None of the new men were from families with a tradition of service on the county bench, and four of them, Thomas Barcroft, Thomas Breres, William Knipe and Richard Maghul were making their sole appearance on the commission of the peace during the Commonwealth.[49] Joining them were Jereiah Aspinwell and John Sawry. In keeping with the spirit of experiment, four of the new magistrates had also been newly appointed as assessment commissioners.[50]

If the changes of 1649 had been little more than cosmetic, those of the following year represented drastic surgery. Fifteen JPs were removed from the commission in restructuring that left the bench reduced to just thirty-three Justices.[51] Four of the magistrates removed had only been appointed to the bench six months earlier but had not yet attended a single session.[52] If their ejection was the result of a refusal to serve, however, the removal of William Knipe seems strange, as he continued to serve the republic as a committed and zealous militia and assessment commissioner. The majority

of ejections removed conservative men who were undoubtedly hostile to the republic. George Booth, the future leader of the Royalist rebellion, joined three former deputy-lieutenants and six former MPs in the exodus. Nevertheless, men with equally conservative reputations were not removed: the secluded MP John Holcroft survived, as did Sir Thomas Stanley and Peter Egerton, both former deputy-lieutenants attacked by Birch. It is possible that the ejections had been occasioned by the Engagement; many of those removed had reputations as strict Presbyterians, and it may only have been a refusal to take the new oath that had led to their dismissal. Desperate for stability and as broad a basis of government as possible, the new regime 'willingly embraced the conforming moderates, if only they would take the Engagement'.^[53] Indeed, despite his moderate reputation, Stanley proved to be one of the most assiduous magistrates within the county during the Commonwealth.^[54]

The calibre of the men appointed to the bench in place of the ejected justices is indicative of the desperate nature of the Commonwealth's search for support. The new appointees included two sons of Royalists, John Fox and James Assheton, and Alexander Barlow, a member of a traditionally Catholic family whose uncle had been executed as a priest at Lancaster in 1641. Barlow must have been at least nominally Protestant, though, because he was appointed sheriff of the county in 1651, but his forebears and later generations of his family were certainly Catholic. Although one pamphleteer described how Assheton had 'once [been] a desperate Malignant in the first War against the Parliament', he had in fact been a committeeman since 1645, and in 1646 his father had threatened to disinherit him as a rebel.^[55] More importantly for the Commonwealth, Assheton was from one of the county's leading families, who had been represented on the county bench for generations. The same was true of another new JP in 1650, Peter Bold, whose absence from previous commissions had been due to his youth. If these men were from the traditional elite, the same cannot be said of others appointed in 1650. John Hartley had just finished serving as the county's sheriff, but he had only recently achieved gentility. George Pigot and William West were both lawyers who had risen to prominence through Parliament's service, whilst George Toulson was the mayor of Lancaster, who had been a sub-commissioner of accounts during the 1640s.^[56]

This narrowing of the basis of provincial government was symptomatic of the exclusion from or abandonment of office by many of the nation's political elite. Across the country, 'the Commissions of the Peace lost much of their social significance; peers, baronets and knights were displaced in favour of attorneys, merchants and tradesmen'. The republic was forced to rely upon a dubious alliance of uncommitted moderates and lowly radicals.[57] In Yorkshire, the few remaining pre-war justices 'were joined by many newcomers from the lesser gentry, and the overwhelming majority of the justices active early in the Interregnum had little or no previous experience of public affairs'.[58] Nevertheless, despite an undoubtedly reduced social standing, the Lancashire magistracy was not utterly denuded of the traditional elite by the purges of 1650. The bench still included six current or former MPs, two baronets and ten men whose families had sat on the bench for at least two generations.[59] Even so, the withdrawal from government by the pre-war elite seems to have been pronounced in Lancashire. Of the sixteen pre-war JPs active in Lancashire in 1648, more than two-thirds voluntarily withdrew or were removed from the commission, compared to one-third of Yorkshire's pre-war magistracy that did not act during the republic.[60] The purge left just six pre-war JPs still active in Lancashire by 1650. Perhaps more importantly for the Commonwealth, the restructuring of the bench in April 1650 created a much greater overlap of personnel between the magistrates' bench and the county committees. Whereas only sixteen of thirty-nine JPs had also been committeemen in 1648, twenty-four of the thirty-three JPs nominated in 1650 also sat on at least one of the county committees; at least twelve JPs were both assessment and militia commissioners.[61] The positive benefit of this development for the new regime was the greatly reduced friction that must have resulted between the justices and the committees. Of course, it also left the Commonwealth dependent upon an ever-decreasing number of individuals to fulfil the administration of the country.

Although the reorganisation of 1650 had been dramatic, it did not mark the end of change to the Lancashire bench. By August 1652, nearly half the JPs of 1650 had been excluded by death or politics. The eight removed included two known conservatives (John Bradyll and John Holcroft), the aged Robert Mawdesley, the highly active Thomas Whittingham and the wayward George Pigot.[62] His ejection coincided with his displacement as a sequestration commissioner for contempt, but he returned to the bench

in April 1653.[63] Seven new men in August 1652 illustrate the continued difficulty of the republic in finding men of status to serve it. Peter Catterall, John Gilliam, John Parker and Edward Robinson were minor gentry, Randal Sharples and Edward Holbrook were professional urban dwellers, and William Halsall was a lawyer. However, the republic, more confident after the defeat of the Royalists at Worcester, did feel able to bring back some moderates, and even Lawrence Rawstorne, whose brother had been governor of Lathom House for the King. Only four of the JPs of August 1652 were not also committee men.[64]

The several purges of the county commission during the Commonwealth had a distinct impact upon the overall character of the bench. B. G. Blackwood has demonstrated the profound impact that the republic had upon the social status of the Lancashire bench. Before the first Civil War, the greater gentry (those of the status of esquire or greater) had held a monopoly upon appointments to the commission of the peace, and even by 1646 they still formed the vast majority of justices. Their grip upon the magistracy was increasingly weakened following the creation of the republic, and the proportion of magistrates drawn from leading families fell during the republic until they did not even hold a majority by 1653. The Commonwealth was also exceptional for the appointment of plebeians to the bench.[65] Nevertheless, the retreat of the greater gentry from office in Lancashire was to the greatest benefit of the lesser gentry, just as it was elsewhere in England. In Cheshire, the compact group of leading families which had dominated office within the county were replaced after 1645 'by representatives of families with middling estates and less creditable genealogies', whilst many of the new men appointed to the Devon bench in 1650 were 'minor gentlemen of obscure genealogy and undistinguished marriage connections', some of whom 'were the most minor of gentlemen'. In Gloucestershire, 'the barrel was scraped hard' and only thirteen of forty-six new JPs appointed after 1648 'belonged to families of sufficient standing to be summoned to either or both of the heralds' visitations of 1623 and 1682-3'. Even so, the retreat of the greater gentry never became a rout; despite the gains of the lesser gentry, the majority of the Lancashire's justices during the Commonwealth were drawn from the greater gentry.[66]

The revolution in London also impacted upon the office of the sheriff, and for Roberts ‘the Interregnum shrievalty exemplified the contradictions of “settlement” and control, of how close to home governments had to fight a campaign of inducement and intimidation’.[67] Despite its ancient lineage, the shrievalty was ‘onerous and offered few compensations’ long before the 1650s. The sheriff, who managed the county court, which dealt with minor debts and outlawries, and oversaw the assizes, empanelling the juries and carrying out the sentences, had ‘some onerous judicial and administrative functions, and yet had little executive power’. The office could also be an expensive one, making it yet more unpopular.[68] Nevertheless, the sheriff still retained some important powers that made the office a matter of importance for the Commonwealth. His supervision of elections was of significance, especially in Lancashire, where Thomas Birch’s election was one of only four by-elections held during the Rump. This responsibility would have become even more important, of course, had the Rump ever finalised its plan for new elections. The sheriffs also had some responsibility for security, and in April 1649 the Council of State warned them to be wary of horse races and fairs where, ‘under pretence of recreations’, many Royalists hatched plots against the new regime.[69] Finally, the sheriff played an important role in the representation of the Commonwealth, by transmitting the Acts of Parliament into the counties. In February 1648/9, Lancashire’s sheriff, Gilbert Ireland, wrote to Speaker Lenthall to inform him of the proclamation of the Act prohibiting the proclamation of anybody as king of England in sixteen of Lancashire’s principal market towns.[70] Of course, this role as the face of the regime was more than merely symbolic and made the sheriffs the target for dissent. In March 1650, ‘very foul riots and disturbances’ broke out in parts of Lancashire, when ‘great numbers of people [resisted] the sheriff and his officers, in proclaiming some Acts of Parliament’. The Council of State was in no doubt of the ‘very bad example’ set by these offences, ‘the honour of Government and peace of the commonwealth being so much concerned in these affairs’, and instructed that the ringleaders should be gaoled and prosecuted severely.[71]

The same small clique of new men that monopolised the other positions of authority within the county also dominated the office of sheriff of Lancashire during the Commonwealth. All of the county’s Commonwealth sheriffs except John Parker served

as assessment committeemen, all but Henry Wrigley sat on the county bench during the Commonwealth, and Gilbert Ireland was also a militia commissioner and colonel. In total, six men held the post during the Commonwealth's short existence, whilst a seventh successfully had his appointment annulled. The term of Gilbert Ireland, the only sheriff from the greater gentry during the Commonwealth, should properly have ended in November 1648, but the confusion caused both by the revolution and the efforts of Humphrey Chetham to avoid the office ensured that Ireland was not dismissed until April 1649. Chetham, the former parliamentary treasurer of Lancashire, had previously served as sheriff in 1634-5 and was therefore well aware of the burden associated with the position. His plea of advanced age and infirmity may therefore have been genuine; however, his aversion to the events at Westminster cannot be doubted, and must have been a further spur to his actions. Indeed, his original appointment in November 1648 may have been another attempt by conservatives in Parliament to outmanoeuvre radicals in the provinces. If his appointment had been part of a conservative scheme, his decision to avoid the position may have been equally welcome amongst the new authorities in London.[72]

Whatever the reasoning, he was replaced as sheriff by another merchant-gentleman from Salford hundred, John Hartley. Chetham's appointment in the 1630s demonstrates that the nomination of former merchants was not unique to the Commonwealth, but the appointment of Hartley and Henry Wrigley, another former merchant, further demonstrates the retreat of the traditional gentry from office during the republic. Although Blackwood has noted that the county gentry 'lost their monopoly of the shrievalty' during the Interregnum, when four of the twelve sheriffs appointed were neither baronets nor esquires, his conclusions are diluted by his treatment of the entire Interregnum as a single period. By comparing the Commonwealth with the Protectorate, it is possible to see that the monopoly lost during the former regime was firmly grasped again during the latter. Although the remainder of the Commonwealth sheriffs were drawn from the gentry, none were from the greatest families, and only Edmund Hopwood had been a JP before the wars. Alexander Barlow may have been the son and grandson of knights, but he was from a family of very suspect religious leanings and surely would not have been appointed in normal circumstances. Blackwood was also satisfied of the

‘ancient lineage’ of John Parker of Extwistle, although none of his forebears had served as sheriff or sat on the county bench before the Commonwealth. The sheriffs of the Commonwealth certainly contrast starkly with those appointed during the Protectorate, who included two baronets and two esquires of undoubtedly ancient lineage.[73]

IV

Ostensibly, the revolution of 1649 impacted on the nation dramatically, removing at a stroke two of the three pillars of its ancient constitution. If the Commons survived this attack upon the constitution, nevertheless it was left unrecognisable by Pride’s Purge. A similar remodelling occurred in many counties following the creation of the republic, and in Lancashire the personnel of government changed conspicuously. The commission of the peace, the assessment and the militia committees, all traditionally the preserves of the greater gentry, were transformed in the wake of the regicide. In the months after the execution of Charles I, the Lancashire militia commission was purged as extensively as the Commons. Almost all of the Parliamentary stalwarts of the 1640s were removed, leaving the republican governors within the county dominated by radicals, in particular Thomas Birch. The new government moved more slowly against the commission of the peace, making only a few changes in 1649. However, by the summer of 1650 it felt confident enough to dispense with the services of a number of experienced leading men from the county, replacing them with the ubiquitous ‘new men’ of lesser gentry and urban stock.

Whilst sneers might have been levelled at the reduced social status of the Lancashire bench during the Commonwealth, ultimately its authority was not diminished. Despite the changes that the bench underwent during the Commonwealth, the business of government seems to have been largely unaffected.[74] Furthermore, the magistrates’ standing was bolstered by the inclusion of several young men from well-established families who were taking up their rightful position in county government on their coming of age. The renewed reputation of the commission of the peace in Lancashire was marked with the return of formerly ousted moderates. Far from forming an estranged and hostile opposition, the surviving members of the Parliamentary old guard who had been removed early in the life of the regime were beginning to return to the service of the state in Lancashire in 1653. The changes on the bench mirrored developments in the county

committees, marking the continuing rapprochement between the Commonwealth, now more confident of its security after the defeat of the Royalists at Worcester, and the traditional elite of the country. Perhaps it was the gradual return of these men to positions of power in the provinces, alongside efforts in the Rump to hold recruiter elections, which so alarmed the army and spurred them once again to move against Parliament.

What is apparent is the contraction of government during the Commonwealth. Exactly half of the forty Lancashire magistrates appointed in September 1649 were also members of at least one of the county's committees. Seventeen JPs were appointed to the assessment committee three months later, whilst eleven were militia commissioners from 1650, with eight men holding both offices. This was a situation similar to that of the previous year, when twenty-three of thirty-nine magistrates (59 per cent) had served on at least one committee. By the close of the Commonwealth, this figure had risen to 80 per cent, with twenty-four of the thirty JPs appointed in March 1653 also serving on at least one committee. Twenty-one magistrates were also assessment committeemen, whilst twelve were militia commissioners, and nine men served as both.

As elsewhere, this group was largely united by membership of a common social group and a common religious outlook. Although conforming Presbyterians from the upper gentry like Gilbert Ireland were still able to acquire and maintain positions of prominence during the Commonwealth, they were outnumbered by more radical men from the lesser gentry like the Aspinwell brothers, who amply represent the kind of man promoted under the Commonwealth. From an obscure family with Puritan traditions from Toxteth, by 1652 Jereiah and Edward Aspinwell were JPs and commissioners for both the militia and the assessment, whilst Edward was also one of the county's three sequestration commissioners. Robert Cunliffe was another man with a modest estate who featured prominently in government during these years. He was also a member of Thomas Jolly's gathered church at Altham. William West was a lawyer who also served as a soldier during the wars, and who consolidated his small estate with purchases during the 1650s. His religious sympathies were demonstrated when he supported the Quaker leader George Fox at the Lancashire assizes in 1652. Thomas Fell was another lawyer who famously protected the Quakers, though it seems that he never converted himself. Although less is known about John Sawrey, his selection as a member for Barebone's

Parliament perhaps hints also at a radical leaning in religion, despite his hostility to George Fox.[75] These men were joined by a number of professionals, merchants and urban patricians. Robert Mawdesley may have been from a gentry family, but he himself was a lawyer, whilst Henry Wrigley and John Hartley had both recently acquired landed estates from the profits of merchant careers.

What we can see is a core of committed new men emerging under the republic, who dominated office in both the county committees and the commission of the peace. Nineteen of the thirty magistrates in 1653 had survived from those appointed in September 1649. In total, nine men served as both JPs and assessment committeemen throughout the Commonwealth, and six of those were also militia commissioners. They serve as a useful cross section of the type of men who served the Commonwealth in Lancashire. They included the three MPs, Peter Brook, Thomas Fell and Thomas Birch. Brook, John Atherton, Richard Standish and John Starkey were of the traditional elite. The others – Birch, Fell, Jereiah Aspinwell, Richard Haworth and John Sawrey – were men of more obscure origin who had risen to prominence through service in the sequestration administration, the sub-committee of accounts, or the county's militia during the 1640s.

It is these latter men who demonstrate that the Commonwealth represents the nadir of the traditional elite in the government of the county. The presence of a handful of experienced men and younger scions of the leading families cannot hide the prominent role of previously obscure men, in particular a number of townsmen. Yet it is important here to echo Blackwood's conclusion that, despite the unprecedented number of townsmen thrusting their way into county government, the changes to the personnel of both the county committees and the commission of the peace represented a shift of power within a class, rather than from one class to another. [76] Although the greater gentry may have temporarily surrendered their monopoly of high office within the county, nevertheless the majority of the new governors of the county were still gentlemen.

[1] L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], QSP/24/27; QSB/1/338/10.

[2] Underdown estimated that 186 of 471 active MPs were excluded by the Army, whilst another eighty-six chose to withdraw from the House. Of Lancashire's fourteen MPs, he has suggested that seven were excluded by Pride and four withdrew. The seven secluded members were Ralph Assheton of Middleton (MP for the county), his cousin Sir Ralph Assheton of Whalley (Clitheroe), Sir Robert Bindloss (Lancaster), Peter Brooke (Newton), John Holcroft (Wigan), William Langton (Preston) and Sir Richard Wynn (Liverpool), whilst the four who withdrew were William Asshurst (Wigan), Thomas Fell (Lancaster), Sir Richard Hoghton (county) and Richard Shuttleworth senior (Preston): David Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 209-20, 366-90. However, Blair Worden has cast serious doubts upon Underdown's conclusions, arguing that the unreliable nature of his sources means that we can only be certain of the names of twenty men who were actually excluded by Pride; A. B. Worden, *The Rump Parliament* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 391-2. Certainly it seems strange that a man like Peter Brooke, who resumed his seat in July 1649, and who was active in the provinces throughout the Commonwealth, would have been amongst those who were secluded. Nevertheless, whether or not the withdrawal of Lancashire MPs was voluntary, the ramifications for the county's representation at Westminster were the same. There seems to have been some confusion surrounding the date of the death of Richard Shuttleworth junior, but his burial is recorded in the parish register of Padiham on 21 Jan, 1649: *The Registers of the Parish Church of Padiham*, ed. John Laycock, Lancashire Parish Register Society, XVI (1903), p. 100.

[3] *The Life of Humphrey Chetham*, ed. F. R. Raines and Charles W. Sutton, 2 vols, Chetham Society, new ser. XLIX-L (1903), XLIX, 158-68.

[4] Chetham Library, Mun. A.3.90, fol. 25.

[5] William Ashhurst had briefly made an effort to return to the House on 19 December, but withdrew again when the army refused to compromise: Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 166, 218.

[6] Liverpool Record Office, 920/MOO (847).

[7] John Lilburne, *The Legal Fundamental Liberties of the People of England*, (1649), p. 37.

[8] *Acts & Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, 3 vols, (1911) I, 1253-56 [hereafter *A&O*].

[9] Worden, *Rump Parliament*, pp. 61-73.

[10] Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, p. 265. See also Worden, *Rump Parliament*, pp. 313, 387-94.

[11] W. R. Williams, *Official Lists of the Duchy and County Palatine of Lancaster*, (privately printed, 1901), pp. 70-1, 82.

[12] *A&O*, I, 85-100, 106-17. For a brief history of the use of these committees in both central and local government, see G. E. Aylmer, *The State's Servants* (1973), pp. 8-57.

[13] *A&O*, I, 531-53, 630-46, 703-14, 758-62, 958-84, 1072-1105, 1107-14, 1141-43. For a history of Lancashire's committees during the 1640s, see J. M. Gratton, 'The Parliamentarian and Royalist War Effort in Lancashire, 1642-51' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester Univ., 1998).

[14] For the assessment committees: *A&O*, II, 24-57, 285-319, 456-90, 653-88. For the militia and sequestrations commissioners, see below.

[15] *A&O*, I, 1238-9; *C[ommons] J[ournals]*, VI, 97-99.

[16] A seventeenth, Christopher Bannistre, died in 1649.

[17] LRO, DDX/840/1; *A&O*, II, 397-402; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, p. 303; Worden, *Rump Parliament*, pp. 223-24.

[18] Most of these survive amongst the sequestration papers for the county: National Archives: Public Record Office, State Papers, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP28/211, fols 608, 611, 620, 629-30, 660, 662-63, 665, 669-71, 690-91, 705; British Library, Additional MSS, 59661, fol. 25.

[19] Three more men also signed many of these orders, but it has been assumed that they signed these in their capacities as sequestration commissioners. It is not clear whether they might have held both offices simultaneously. The three men were Robert Cunliffe, George Pigot and Peter Holt.

[20] The MP Peter Brooke was probably also a militia commissioner for the county, although he last signed an order in July 1650. Nevertheless, he was amongst the most active JPs in his native county of Cheshire, and continued to be named to assessment committees for Lancashire throughout the length of the Commonwealth. John Morrill,

Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society During the English Revolution (Oxford, 1974), p. 258.

[21] *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers] D[omestic]*, 1650, p. 359.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 523; *CSPD*, 1651, p. 522; NA: PRO, SP28/211, fol. 690.

[23] *A&O*, I, 1107-14, 1141-43; II, 24-57. Two more men, George Pigot and Robert Mawdesley, had previously been nominated to a short-lived assessment committee in February 1648: *A&O*, I, 1085.

[24] NA: PRO, State Papers, Committee for Indemnity, SP24/6, fol. 84; /7 fols. 17v, 34v, 44v; /8 fols. 52, 58; /77. The lack of assize records for the period in question or the minute book for the conclusion of the Indemnity Committee's deliberations means that the outcome of Birch's legal action is unclear.

[25] The MPs were William Ashhurst, Ralph Assheton of Middleton, Sir Ralph Assheton of Whalley, and Richard Shuttleworth. The deputy lieutenants were Richard Holland, John Bradshaw, Peter Egerton, Sir Thomas Stanley and Edward Butterworth.

[26] The sub-commissioners were Jereiah Aspinwell, Peter Catterall, Robert Mawdesley, William Patten, George Toulson and Thomas Wilson, and Peter Holt and William Rawlinson had been assessment collectors; B. G. Blackwood, *The Lancashire Gentry and the Great Rebellion*, CS, 3rd series, xxv (1978), 50, 68; NA: PRO, SP28/236; LRO, DDHp/39/19; Cumbria Record Office (Barrow), BD/HJ 90/17/7, 12-15, 17.

[27] The six men were James Assheton, George Dodding, Robert Glest, Peter Holt, John Moore, John Walker.

[28] *C[alendar of the] C[ommittee for] C[ompounding]*, I, 569-70; *R[oyalist] C[omposition] P[apers]*, ed. R. H. Stanning and John Brownbill, 6 vols., *R[ecord] S[ociety of] L[ancashire and] C[heshire]*, xxiv, xxvi, lxxii, lxxxxv & lxxxxvi (1891-2, 1898, 1916, 1941-2), lxxxxvi, 390.

[29] The seven men were Robert Lever, John Lightbourne, Richard Maghul, Alexander Norris, Leonard Rawlinson, Thomas Strangeways, Thomas Wilson.

[30] *CCC*, I, 168.

[31] Gratton, thesis, p. 341; LRO, QSC/43-52.

[32] David Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum*, (Newton Abbott, 1973), pp. 163-67.

[33] *CCC*, I, 481.

[34] *Ibid.*, I, 404.

[35] *Ibid.*, I, 435, 448, 450, 463-64, 478, 499-500, 506-07, 515, 579, 583, 587-88, 592,

[36] *Ibid.*, I, 603, 613.

[37] *Ibid.*, I, 621, 626, 629, 633.

[38] *Ibid.*, I, 481, 486, 491, 592, 672-73.

[39] LRO, QSO/2/18-19; QSR/40.

[40] LRO, QSC/42-7.

[41] LRO, QSC/48-9. The figures for the size of commissions given in the following paragraphs do not include honorary appointments, such as Oliver Cromwell, the assize judges or the Chancellor of the Duchy.

[42] Evidence for the appointment of magistrates between 1603 and 1642 is derived from D. J. Wilkinson, 'The Commission of the Peace in Lancashire', *T[ranscations of the] H[istoric] S[ociety of] L[ancashire and] C[heshire]*, CXXXII (1983), 41-66.

[43] These thirty-two men for the whole county formed a fifth of the 1648 bench for the East Riding and a third of the benches for the West and North Ridings: G. C. F. Forster, 'County Government in Yorkshire During the Interregnum', *N[orthern] H[istory]*, XII (1976), 101.

[44] *A&O*, I, 1238-9.

[45] *CJ*, VI, 134.

[46] LRO, QSC/51. A sixth, Christopher Bannister, had died.

[47] Underdown, *Somerset*, pp. 157-8.

[48] Stephen Roberts, *Recovery and Restoration in an English County: Devon Local Administration, 1646-1670* (Exeter, 1985), pp. 25-6.

[49] William Knipe would be named in a commission of 1658, whilst both Barcroft and Breres were appointed Justices in 1660: LRO, QSC/59-62.

[50] Aspinwell, Knipe, Maghul, Sawrey.

[51] LRO, QSC/52. Edmund Hopwood has not been included amongst the omissions, having been 'pricked' for the shrievalty in that year.

[52] The four men were Thomas Barcroft, Thomas Breres, William Knipe and Richard Maghul: LRO, QSO/2/24.

[53] Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, p. 297.

[54] Alex Craven, 'Coercion and Compromise: Lancashire Provincial Politics and the Creation of the English Republic, 1648-1653' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester Univ., 2004), pp. 67-102..

[55] Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, p. 74; John Vicars, *Dagon Demolished* (1660), BL, Thomason Tracts, E1021 (2), pp. 7-8; CCC, II, 1466. Assheton was first named to the militia committee in August 1645: *A&O*, I, 758-60. He was acting as a sequestration commissioner by June 1646: *RCP*, VI, 3.

[56] The bench had occasionally included mayors of Wigan during Charles I's reign, but no mayors of Lancaster; Wilkinson, 'The Commission of the Peace', pp. 63-6.

[57] Bertram Osborne, *Justices of the Peace 1361-1848*, (Shaftesbury, 1960), p. 110; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, p. 297.

[58] Forster, *NH*, XII, 101.

[59] Of the MPs, Holcroft had ceased to sit in the House at the purge, whilst Rigby and Moore would soon be dead.

[60] Forster, *NH*, XII, 101.

[61] The number of JPs who sat on both committees might have been as many as sixteen. It is hard not to believe that both John Moore and Alexander Rigby were not appointed militia commissioners. The nature of the records also makes it unclear whether either George Pigot or Peter Holt combined their position of sequestration commissioners with a militia commission.

[62] LRO, QSC/53. Although there is no extant commission for the year 1651, the attendance of three magistrates recorded in the quarter session order books makes it clear that some changes must also have been made in that year.

[63] CCC, I, 613; LRO, QSC/54.

[64] Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, p. 104; *The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester*, ed. J P Earwaker, 12 vols, (Manchester, 1884-90), IV, 168.

[65] Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, pp. 77-79. The problem of defining social status in the early modern period – and particularly of identifying the gentry – has been discussed by John Morrill. Blackwood has ascribed status according to the terminology used consistently in official documents. Although Morrill agrees that there are many positives

to this approach, he still harboured reservations: J S Morrill, 'The Northern Gentry and the Great Rebellion', *NH*, xv (1979), 66-87. As Blackwood himself admitted, 'esquire' and 'gentleman' were often vague and meaningless terms, and were too readily applied to some, such as town officials or even men of lower status, who had no claims to gentility'. Despite this statement, he seems to have been happy to accept the gentility of George Toulson of Lancaster, for instance; Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, pp. 4-5, 98. Although Blackwood claimed that the entire bench had been composed of esquires or higher before 1642, 8 mayors of Wigan had served on the bench *ex officio* under James I and Charles I; Wilkinson, *THSLC*, cxxxii, 47-50. Nevertheless, despite the doubts about the exact definition of the status of individuals, there can be no doubt that the social status of the bench was dropping overall.

[66] John Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 223-24, 233-34; Roberts, *Recovery and Restoration*, p. 27; A. R. Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire 1640-1672* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 100; Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, p. 78.

[67] Stephen Roberts, 'Local Government Reform in England and Wales During the Interregnum', in *Into Another Mould*, ed. Ivan Roots (Exeter, 1981), pp. 47-69, quoting p. 55.

[68] Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 30. John Hartley's shrievalty papers demonstrate the personal cost to the individual who was nominated as sheriff, who then had to purchase the appropriate finery for himself and an entourage to fulfill the dignity expected of the position: John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Ducie Muniments, D340b X1-2.

[69] *CSPD*, 1649-50, p. 68.

[70] Bodleian Library, Tanner MSS, 57 fol. 522.

[71] *CSPD*, 1650, pp. 40, 49-50.

[72] S. J. Guscott, *Humphrey Chetham 1580-1653: Fortune, Politics and Mercantile Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, CS, 3rd ser. XLV (2003), 257-61.

[73] Public Record Office, *Lists*, ix, 72-3; Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, p. 85. The Protectorate sheriffs were Peter Bold (1653-4), John Atherton (1654-6?), Hugh Cooper (1656-7), Sir Robert Bindloss Bt (1657-8) and Sir Richard Houghton Bt (1658-59). Another merchant – George Chetham – was appointed sheriff in 1659.

[74] Craven, thesis, pp. 67-102.

[75] Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, pp. 86, 98-99; *The Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly*, ed. Henry Fishwick, CS, new ser. XXXIII (1894), 126; George Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Nigel Smith (1998), pp. 91, 94-95, 100-01, 104-08.

[76] Blackwood, *Lancashire Gentry*, p. 86.