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**Political and Religious Reactions
in the Medway Towns of
Rochester and Chatham during
the English Revolution, 1640-1660**

by

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**Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

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Abstract

Studies of the political reactions of both the ‘county’ community and various provincial towns during the English Civil War have been tackled over the past fifty years. However no individual modern study has been undertaken of a Kent town or city for this period; neither has an examination of the relationship between two neighbouring strategic towns. This thesis intends to examine the relationship between the cathedral city of Rochester and adjacent dockyard town of Chatham in Kent from 1640 to 1660, which were both vital strategically to maintain the Parliamentary stranglehold over the county.

There is much debate in recent historiography whether those below the gentry had access to and participated in the current ideological debates. This study explores the political and religious reactions of Rochester and Chatham inhabitants to the upheaval of the English Revolution with the contention that those below the gentry were both able to understand the wider discussions and participate in them. The townsfolk were both articulate and able to couch their responses and concerns within a wider ideological framework. They expressed their opinion to central government by a variety of means, exploiting whatever weaponry was at hand. Local people’s reactions and allegiance did not standstill, but shifted with the changing circumstances of civil war.

Current research has demonstrated that the religious radicalism of the English Revolution created both diversity and conflict; particularly in the county of Kent. Yet no detailed study of the impact of religious radicalism upon a local community has so far been attempted. Part of this thesis investigates the effect that a proliferation of different religious groups had upon the Medway Towns of Rochester and Chatham. Whilst some people embraced the new sects and ideas circulating, others felt threatened by the changes taking place and responded by attacking these radical beliefs and preachers. Religious diversity was to a degree tolerated, but when it threatened the perceived social order the authorities were quick to act and prevent the spread of ‘erroneous’ ideas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Jacqueline Eales for her support over the past eight years in supervising this work. She located the signed copy of the 'Blount' petition in the Parliamentary Archives during the course of this thesis, which information she kindly supplied to me. With her assistance it was, furthermore, possible to trace a previous Tower MS document to the Royal Armouries Museum in the Tower of London, which the archivist Malcolm Mercer subsequently made available at short notice. Jacqueline Eales also supplied me with copies of several of her articles prior to publication. Dr Louise Wilkinson also kindly read some earlier versions of this thesis and offered helpful advice.

Thanks also go to Canterbury Christ Church University, which awarded me a studentship to undertake this part-time study. The Institute of Historical Research also kindly granted me the Alwyn Ruddock bursary for 2006, which permitted me to use the £500 award for attending two courses to hone my research skills.

I am grateful to Dr James Gibson for allowing me access to the Rochester Bridge Wardens archives and interrupting his busy schedule to accommodate my research. The History of Parliament Trust has supplied me with various biographies of Members of Parliament prior to their publication, whilst Jasmine Johnson made her unpublished article on Chatham church available to me. Many thanks go to Ann Oakley, the retired Kent Archivist, who translated several Latin documents for me over the past few years. Alnwick Castle has kindly given me permission to reproduce the 1633 Duke of Northumberland map to illustrate the thesis. Much appreciation also goes to all the staff of the various repositories visited and bombarded with questions over the past eight years in my search to uncover those elusive documents; in particular Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, who gave me access to the Chatham churchwardens' accounts, which are 'unfit for production'.

Other people who gave me assistance and advice were Professor Pauline McQuade, who gave me guidance on Dorothy Birch and her tract as well as placing two articles at my disposal on the Chamberlayne family that were unavailable in the United Kingdom. Professor Ted Underdown also gave me some direction, concerning the dating of Henry Denne's Grace, Mercy and Peace. Also extremely helpful was the American Baptist Historical Society, who arranged to microfilm a pamphlet for me, which was not available elsewhere. Local members of the Unitarians and Quakers have also provided me with useful historical background information on their respective congregations. Christine Stewart proof read many of my chapters and corrected my grammar etc. over the past few years, before I submitted these to my supervisor for her perusal. If I have missed anyone out this was unintentional.

List of Abbreviations

AACR	Annales Amicorum Cathedralis Roffensis
AC	Archaeologia Cantiana
AG	American Genealogist
AJ	The Archaeological Journal
AJS	The American Journal of Sociology
BL	British Library
Bod Lib	Bodleian Library
BQ	The Baptist Quarterly
CCA	Canterbury Cathedral Archives
CCC	Calendar for the Committee for Compounding
CDHS	Chatham Dockyard Historical Society
CHJ	Cambridge Historical Journal
CHS	Chatham Historical Society
CHST	Congregational Historical Society Transactions
CJ	Commons Journal
CL	Country Life
CPM	Committee for Plundered Ministers
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
DNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
EEBO	Early English Books Online
EHR	English Historical Review
HF	History of the Family
HJ	The Historical Journal
HMC	Historical Manuscript Commission
JBS	The Journal of British Studies
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JFHS	Journal of the Friends Historical Society
JIH	Journal of Interdisciplinary History

JMH	The Journal of Modern History
J.P.	Justice of the Peace
JRH	Journal of Religious History
KCC	Kent County Committee
KHLC	Kent History & Library Centre
KP	Kentish Petition 1648
LJ	Lords Journal
LP	Lambeth Palace Library
LSF	Library of the Religious Society of Friends
MALSC	Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre
MM	Mariners Mirror
M.P.	Member of Parliament
NH	Northern History
NMM	National Maritime Museum
P&P	Past & Present
PA	Parliamentary Archives
PMHB	The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography
RAM	Royal Armouries Museum
RBT	Rochester Bridge Trust
SP	State Papers
SV&C	Solemn Vow & Covenant
TEHR	The Economic History Review
TNA	The National Archives
TBHS	Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

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Word Count: 104,758

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis examines political and religious reactions during the English Revolution in the context of a unique urban environment. Rather than studying a single town or city, this thesis has adopted a different approach by comparing the responses of an adjacent city and dockyard town between 1640-1660. The contention is that the cathedral city of Rochester and the dockyard town of Chatham, both situated on the banks of the River Medway in north Kent, are a unique pair of neighbouring towns in mid-seventeenth century England, making their study an invaluable contribution towards the understanding of the diversity of urban reactions in the context of the English Civil War. Nowhere else in England was there this juxtaposition of towns. There were twenty-three cathedral cities in England in the mid-seventeenth century and only a handful of dockyard towns. Kent possessed two cathedral cities, Rochester and Canterbury, as well as three dockyards located at Chatham, Woolwich and Deptford.¹

Through this study of Rochester and Chatham it is demonstrated that urban areas were far from insular and focused on merely local issues. News transmission was extremely rapid and Medway citizens were quick to become embroiled in the ideological debates of the day. People at various levels of urban society, including dockyard workers and tradesmen as well as councillors, vestrymen and ministers, were able to sample a wide range of religious views, enter into debate on topics such as general redemption and openly express their opinion on events. Chatham and Rochester attracted a wider range of preachers than almost any other part of Kent between 1643-1655, rivalling Canterbury as a preaching centre for diverse radical groups. With the popularity of these preachers and a large military presence, in the form of the army at Rochester and Upnor as well as the navy in Chatham, there was a real concern that both the inhabitants and military personnel would be influenced by such groups as the Baptists, Ranters and Quakers. This thesis tests the conclusions of the current

¹ V. Torr, 'Rochester Cathedral in 1634', AC, Vol. 78 (1963) pp. 39-40

historical discourse surrounding the circulation of news and whether this engendered debate against the case study of Rochester and Chatham. It also examines if the findings of Alan Everitt and John Morrill, in their studies of the ‘county’ community, are valid for an urban area such as Rochester and Chatham. Their views on the county have since been criticised by both Clive Holmes and Ann Hughes in their respective works on Lincolnshire and Warwickshire.² However neither Everitt’s nor Morrill’s conclusions have been widely tested against the urban evidence.

Rochester with its civic infrastructure was readily able to adapt to Civil War events, keeping disruption in city government to a minimum and avoiding adversarial politics. Purges of city government were an effective means of ensuring an almost unbroken period of consensual politics within Rochester council between 1642-1660. This thesis argues against Roger Howell’s and Paul Halliday’s conclusions that purging and outside intervention in civic government had a negative impact on town governance, creating tension rather than harmony. Howell also contends that borough councils were intent on the preservation of the status quo and, thus, tried to minimise Civil War impact on their own towns. This is an urban parallel to the Everitt-Morrill centre versus locality debate, which this case study of Rochester and Chatham disputes.³

Before reviewing the secondary literature and historical debates it is necessary to describe the topography, the local government structures and religious hierarchy within the two towns as well as introducing some of the sources used for this thesis and several of the main personalities discussed within the study. The first

² A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660*, (Leicester, 1966); J. Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces: The people of England and the tragedies of war 1630-1648*, (1st edn., 1976; 2nd edn., London, 1999); J. Eales, “‘So many sects and schisms’: Religious diversity in Revolutionary Kent, 1640-60”, in C. Durston & J. Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England*, (Manchester, 2006) pp. 226-248; A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire 1620-1660*, (Cambridge, 1987); C. Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire*, (Lincoln, 1980)

³ R. Howell, ‘Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment in the English Revolution: the case of the Towns, 1642-9’, in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642-1649*, (Basingstoke, 1986) pp. 67-87; ‘Resistance to change: The political elites of provincial towns during the English Revolution’, in A. Beier (ed.), *The first modern history: Essays in English history in honour of Lawrence Stone*, (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 433-455; P. Halliday, *Dismembering the body politic: Partisan Politics in England’s Towns, 1650-1730*, (Cambridge, 1998) pp. 59-63

section, therefore, explains the background to Rochester and Chatham, whilst section two examines the current historical debates surrounding the thesis.

1

The strategic position of both towns is particularly important in the context of the English Revolution. Speed's 1627 map of Kent (figs.1 and 1a) clearly depicts the position of the two towns in relation to London, Dover, the River Thames and the county town of Maidstone. Chatham, as a dockyard town, was situated on the banks of the River Medway, whilst Rochester, with its bridge, was the main crossing point over the River Medway en route from London to Dover. William Schellinks, a contemporary Dutch traveller and artist, remarked in 1661 that Chatham had 'the strongest and best arms depot or arsenal in the whole of England' and Rochester due to its location had 'a very great advantage over all other places in the realm.' Chatham dockyard was vulnerable to attack from the continent and, therefore, the town came under the permanent scrutiny of Parliament and its allegiance was constantly questioned. Parliamentarian forces, likewise, considered Rochester a strategic stronghold, as it had the only lower Medway river crossing.⁴

Richard Smith's map of 1633, commissioned by the Duke of Northumberland (fig.2), demonstrates the closeness of Rochester and Chatham with little space physically separating them. Two contemporary travellers best depict the physical relationship between the two towns. In 1697 Celia Fiennes described Rochester as 'large including the suburbs and all', whilst Schellinks defined Chatham in 1661 as 'a kind of suburb of Rochester...'.⁵ Rochester and Chatham along with Strood were referred to as the 'three towns' at the turn of the eighteenth century and located approximately midway between London and Dover. These are today, along with Gillingham and Rainham, jointly known as the Medway Towns. This term is used in the thesis to collectively refer to the three 'towns'.

⁴ M. Exwood & H. Lehmann (eds.), *The Journal of William Schellinks' Travels in England 1661-1663*, Camden 5th Series, Vol. 1, (London, 1993) p. 45

⁵ Alnwick Castle, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Map of the River Medway by Richard Smith; C. Morris (ed.), *The illustrated journeys of Celia Fiennes c1682-1712*, (Exeter, 1988) p. 119; Exwood & Lehmann (eds.), *The Journal of William Schellinks'*, p. 45

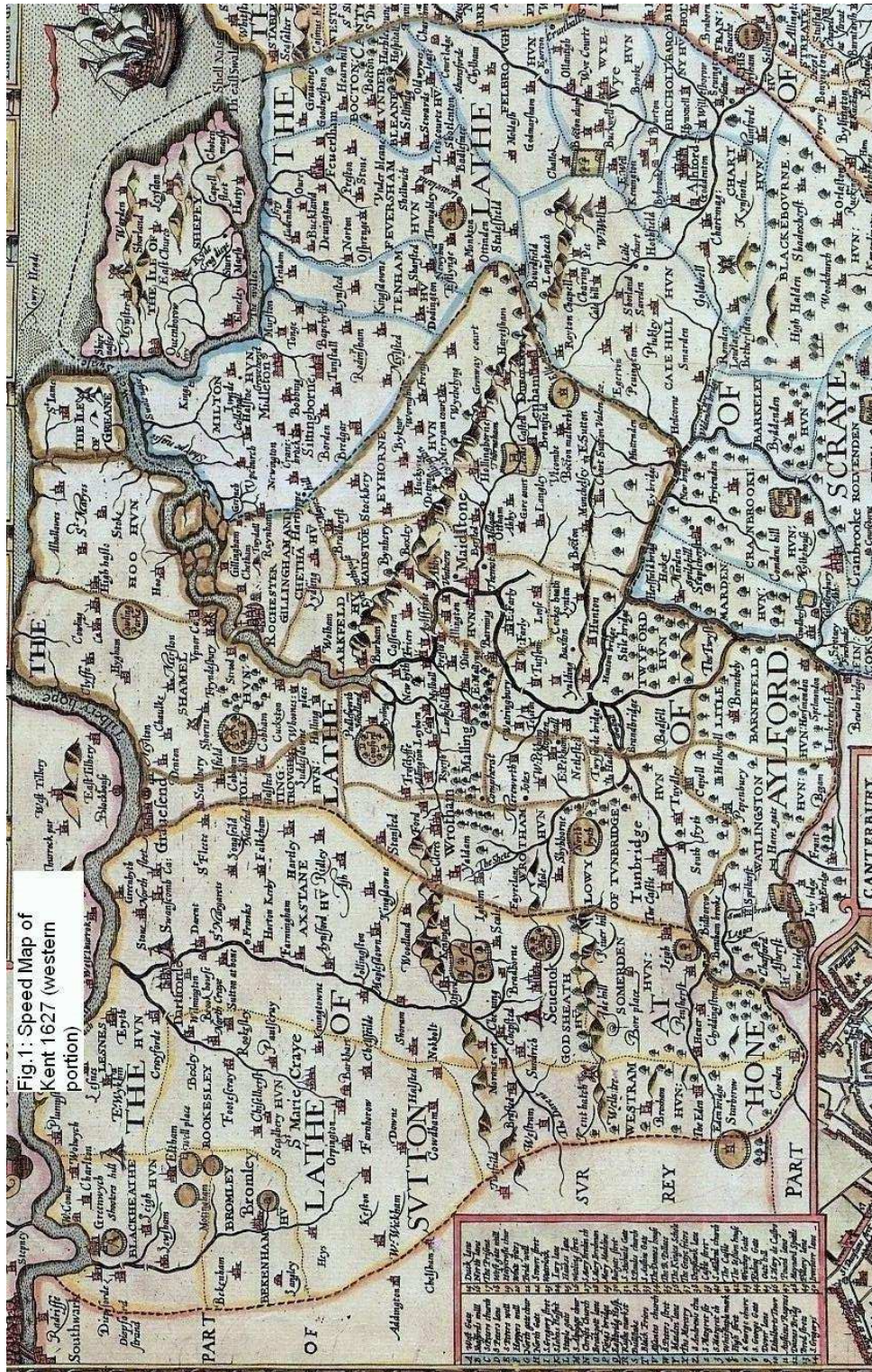


Fig.1: John Speed Map of Kent 1627 (western portion)



Fig.2: The Duke of Northumberland's Map of the River Medway and its environs, 1633

Reproduced with permission of Alnwick Castle

Rochester was the central focus of the ‘towns’, holding a twice-weekly market and a corn market on Tuesdays, which attracted parishioners from the neighbouring area. Chatham was a relatively new town having grown rapidly in the early seventeenth century due to its ever-expanding dockyard established under Elizabeth I. Contemporaries considered Chatham a town due to its size and population of approximately 1,000 in 1643. However the town lacked the appropriate civic structure. Rochester was a city with a cathedral and castle, which first became incorporated under a charter issued by Richard I in 1189. Jacqueline Bower has estimated Rochester’s population to be 2,500 in 1640.⁶

Rochester consisted of two parishes; St Nicholas and St Margaret. St Nicholas parish was bounded by the city walls, whilst St Margaret’s parish lay to the east and south of the city walls. There were seven boroughs within the city liberties; Eastgate, St Clement, South, East, Middle, Southgate as well as North (Little) Burrough in Strood. The city’s liberties extended to St Bartholomew’s Hospital in the east, Horsted and Nashenden in the south, Little Burrough in Strood to the west and the River Medway to the north. That part of Strood depicted on Smith’s map was within Rochester’s jurisdiction as was a small section of Chatham. Also located within the city walls were the cathedral precincts over which the city had no jurisdiction. There had been issues prior to 1448 over whether the mayor and city had any authority in the cathedral precincts. Under Henry VI an agreement was reached whereby the mayor and city rescinded any claim under previous charters to have jurisdiction over persons in the precincts in exchange for the right of civic attendance and processions to the cathedral.⁷

Rochester had its own council to administer its civic affairs. The city’s royal charter laid down the framework for its governing body: the common council. This body met fortnightly in the Guildhall to discuss and decide local matters. Rochester council consisted of one chamber of 24 councillors, which under the

⁶ J. Harris, *History of Kent* (London, 1719) p. 72; F. Smith, *A History of Rochester*, (Rochester, 1976) pp. 10, 181, 189, 192-193; P. MacDougall, *Chatham Past*, (Chichester:, 1999) pp. 17-23; J. Bower, ‘Kent Towns 1540-1640’, in M. Zell (ed.), *Early modern Kent 1540-1640*, (Woodbridge, 2000) p. 160

⁷ Smith, *The History of Rochester*, pp. 6-7, 46-47.60, 310-311; MALSC, RCA/A1/1, Rochester Minute Book 1621-1653 f. 690; RCA/A1/2, Rochester Minute Book 1653-1698 f. 59b; RCA/C2/1, Rochester Customal 1536-1960, ff. 88b-89a.

1629 charter of re-incorporation was divided between twelve aldermen and twelve common councillors. According to the charter these officers were nominated and elected by their fellow councillors and held the post for life. Under the charter the citizens annually elected one of the aldermen to serve as mayor. Until 1632 all the aldermen stood as candidates, but that year the decision was made that only two or three should stand for election to prevent the process becoming undignified. The mayor was effectively the leader of the council, had certain roles to perform such as making up the necessary quorum for court sessions, and was the city's figurehead on civic occasions.⁸

Each year the freemen of the city elected one from the ranks of the aldermen to the position of mayor. Freemen were essentially the wealthier and elite inhabitants of the city of Rochester. The freedom of the city could be acquired by birth, apprenticeship, purchase or gift, and occasionally by nomination. In return a number of requirements were expected of freemen, including residency within the city liberties and payment of taxes. Their function was fourfold; to carry out the various civic offices, to provide the city with local government in the form of councillors, to be able to carry out trade, and to be the voters in the mayoral and burgess elections. No complete record of the freemanry survives for 1640-1660, but numbers are estimated at 250 for 1640.⁹ Between 1640-1660 Rochester's freemanry ranged from gentlemen to tradesmen, clerics to lawyers and surgeons as well as many naval officers.

Rochester was a parliamentary borough; one of eight in Kent. The freemen of Rochester elected two members to the House of Commons to represent the city in Parliament. Elections took place at the city's Guildhall. Potential parliamentary candidates had to be freemen of the city, but, as Andrew Thrush has pointed out, Rochester council frequently admitted candidates at the last hour.¹⁰ Thomas

⁸ Smith, *The History of Rochester*, pp. 47-52; 101-102, 121-128, 183; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 277; RCA/C2/10, ff. 83b-84b; P. Bartlett, *The City of Rochester Charters*, (1961) pp. 54-55, 58, 66-67, 69-70

⁹ Smith, *The History of Rochester*, pp. 233-243. This estimate is based on 308 admitted to the freedom between 1621-1640, allowing that 25-30% died in the interim and some were admitted before 1621.

¹⁰ A. Thrush & J. Ferris (eds.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604-1629*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 2010) p. 203

Walsingham and John Clerke were returned as M.P.s for the Short Parliament in 1640. John Clerke died shortly afterwards. Walsingham, of Chislehurst in Kent, was persuaded by Sir Roger Twysden to stand for Rochester rather than a county seat in the Short Parliament and was also elected as one of Rochester's representatives for the Long Parliament in 1640. He was a Vice Admiral of the Fleet and staunch Parliamentarian in the 1640s, but played no part in Rochester's affairs during the English Revolution.¹¹ Richard Lee senior was the other member elected to the 1640 Long Parliament for Rochester. His background was local, the family owning estates in the Greater Delce and St Margaret's area of Rochester. He was related by marriage to George Newman, who was part of the lesser Kent gentry. Both families supported Parliament in the 1640s, but were to become embroiled in the Kent Rebellion of May 1648 alongside the Royalists. Some historians have labelled the Lee and Newman families as Royalist, but this is a simplistic evaluation of a complicated set of allegiances.¹² The one issue often overlooked and, thus, confusing the situation is that there were two Richard Lees, a father and son, with differing political opinions. Richard Lee junior was a Royalist involved in the July 1643 rising in west Kent, embroiled in the Penruddock rebellion in March 1655 and imprisoned in 1657.¹³ Richard Lee senior was a Presbyterian rather than a 'Royalist sympathiser', as alleged in Sue Petrie's article. His political affinity during the Civil War period is tracked throughout the thesis with the contention that he was always a staunch Parliamentarian.¹⁴

In the early 1640s Rochester council was dominated by a core of established families from a trade background. Most prominent were the Royalist Cobham

¹¹ J. T. Peacey, 'History of Parliament Trust, London', Unpublished article on John Clerke of Rochester and Ulcombe, Kent for 1640-1660 section; Unpublished article on Sir Thomas Walsingham of Scadbury, Chislehurst, Kent. I am grateful for the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see these articles in draft; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry 1640-1660', PhD thesis, London University (1957) p. 78

¹² S. Petrie, 'The religion of Sir Roger Twysden (1597-1672)', *AC*, Vol. 124 (2004) p. 148; N. Yates & J. Gibson (eds.), *Traffic and Politics: the construction and management of Rochester Bridge AD 43-1993*, (Woodbridge, 1994) p. 159; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 342, 403-404; G. Armytage, *The Visitation of Kent in 1663-1668*, (London, 1906) p. 119; M. Keeler, *The Long Parliament 1640-1641*, (Philadelphia, 1954) pp. 246-248

¹³ S. Robertson, 'Dallison Documents: Letters of Thomas Stanley of Hamptons, written between 1636 and 1656', *AC*, Vol. XVII (1887) pp. 355, 363, 365-367; BL, Add MS 4157, Thurloe Papers Vol. III, Letter of James Hood Lee 15th April 1657, f. 172; T. Birch (ed.), *A collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, (London, 1742) Vol. III pp. 253, 300

¹⁴ Petrie, 'The religion of Sir Roger Twysden,' p. 148 - See also f/ns. 44-52 in the article.

family; consisting of the father John plus his sons, William and John. Alexander and Henry Dirkin, father and son, were members of another Royalist family serving on the corporation. A Parliamentary family block also existed on the council with the Austins at the heart of the network. Thomas and Francis, father and son respectively, were related by marriage to Edward Hawthorne and Richard Wye, who were influential Independent mayors of Rochester in the 1650s. Tied into this family again by marriage was the Head family; father Richard and son William, with a Royalist allegiance. George Robinson, a Parliamentary and religious Presbyterian, was also related to the Head family. Further familial relationships existed, but these were the most prominent during the Civil War period.¹⁵

A significant character within the corporation in the 1640s was Philip Ward. He was related by marriage to Richard Lee and the Newman family. Ward was mayor in 1640 and again in 1647-8 when Rochester was embroiled in rebellion against Parliament and the Kent County Committee.¹⁶ His political stance was Parliamentary; in terms of allegiance, Presbyterian. Between 1644-1647 he served the Kent County Committee as an accountant and clerk as well as a member of the sequestration committee. Ward also acted as accountant to the Chatham Chest naval charity from 1637-1644; to Rochester Bridge Wardens in 1644-1647; and for the cathedral on behalf of the Kent County Committee between 1644-1646. In 1648, as mayor and a purser to the Navy, he was part of the ‘pretended’ committee meeting at Rochester in opposition to the Kent County Committee. He interceded with Parliament on behalf of this committee and when this ultimately failed sided with the Royalist grouping against Parliament. Ward’s prominence at county and local level makes it possible to track his progress and reactions from before the onset of Civil War in 1642, through the 1640s, to his switch of allegiance and involvement in the Kent Rebellion of May 1648.¹⁷ This thesis uses his political career as an example to

¹⁵ TNA, PROB/11/213; PROB/11/275; KHLC, DRb/Pwr22, Register of wills, ff. 415a-417b, 518a-525a

¹⁶ R. Hovenden (ed.), *Philpott: The Visitation of Kent 1619-1621*, (London, 1898) pp. 55-56; Armytage (ed.), *The visitation of Kent in 1663-1668*, p. 119; MALSC, RCA/A1/1, ff. 543, 647

¹⁷ Bod Lib, Tanner MS 57, Philip Ward’s letter to Parliament 21 May 1648 f. 93; TNA, SP28/355/3, Philip Ward’s cathedral accounts 1644-1646 (unfoliated); SP28/159, John Philpott’s KCC accounts

demonstrate that the reactions of citizens and councillors did not remain static, but changed with developing circumstances.

Religiously Kent was split into two dioceses covering east and west Kent; Canterbury and Rochester respectively. Robert Acheson has undertaken a study of the religious responses of east Kent and the Weald during the English Revolution. He considers there is little direct evidence available for west and north Kent due to the paucity of surviving diocesan records for that part of the county. Considerable ancillary material, discussed below, has therefore been sourced for this thesis covering north Kent. This material enables an examination of the religious opinions and reactions of the community of north Kent, encompassing Rochester, Chatham and Strood.¹⁸

Rochester Diocese covered the Medway Towns, excepting Gillingham, and most of the parishes to the west of the River Medway. This diocese was divided into three Deaneries; Dartford, Malling and Rochester. The Bishop's see was Rochester cathedral and his main residence Bromley Palace. John Warner was appointed Bishop of Rochester in 1637 and was regarded as a strong proponent of Archbishop Laud's altar policy. He delivered a controversial sermon at Rochester cathedral in March 1640 attacking the Scots and Puritans, which was subsequently referred to in *The Scot Scout's Discovery* of 1642, indicating that the sermon was probably published. No printed copies survive, but research for this thesis has uncovered a manuscript version in the Bodleian Library. Effectively exiled from his bishopric in 1643, Warner's influence on Rochester and its diocese was minimal during the Civil War years.¹⁹ For this reason no coverage of John Warner is given after 1643.

Rochester cathedral had its own Dean and Chapter and, hence, religious hierarchy within the city. The chapter consisted of the Dean, sub-Dean, six

1647; SP28/235, KCC records; CJ, Vol. 3, 6/11/1644; NMM, SOC/15, Chatham Chest Accounts 1637-1644; RBT, F1/110, Bridge Wardens Accounts Vol. IX 1641-1648, ff. 153a, 232a, 233b

¹⁸ R. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury 1590-1660', Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Kent (1983)

¹⁹ C. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*, (Dartford, 1910) pp. 18, 609; E. Lee Warner, *The Life of John Warner: Bishop of Rochester 1637-1666*, (London, 1901) *The Scot Scout's Discovery*, (London, 1642); Bod.Lib, English MS hist. b 205, Warner Papers, ff. 49-63

prebendaries and six petty canons. By the end of 1646 the role of the Dean and Chapter had, due to a number of sequestrations and convenient deaths, come to an abrupt end, negating the need for its actual removal.²⁰ This thesis argues that once the authority of the Bishop and cathedral chapter was relinquished an element within Rochester embraced radical religious views as readily as their Puritan counterparts in Chatham.

Rochester cathedral was situated within the city walls physically separated from the parish church of St Nicholas by just the churchyards. St Nicholas parish church was built in the fifteenth century, following disputes between the monks and parishioners over access to the cathedral for worship. As a consequence Rochester council had established stronger ties with St Nicholas than the cathedral over the past two centuries. The cathedral was set in its own college precincts within which it had legal jurisdiction, but was also within the liberties of Rochester. At times, therefore, its legal jurisdiction overlapped with that of Rochester council, which as Catherine Patterson points out, had the potential for conflict with the civic authority. However this thesis maintains that Rochester council had a reasonably harmonious relationship with the cathedral hierarchy before and immediately after 1640.²¹

Each of the four parishes covered in this study had its own church and incumbent. Rochester St Nicholas was rebuilt between 1621-1624 and, unlike the other three parish churches, came directly under the patronage of the Bishop of Rochester rather than the Dean and Chapter. The incumbent in 1640 was John Lorkin, who was also a prebendary of the cathedral. Following his ejection in 1644 two temporary ministers filled the post until Allen Ackworth was appointed in 1649. St Margaret's church was located outside the city walls within its own parish. The vicar in 1640 was Henry Selby, who was ousted in 1644 and replaced by the Presbyterian William Sandbrooke. Strood's parish church was St

²⁰ Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*, pp. 228-229, 237-239; TNA, SP 28/355/3, ff. 1-2

²¹ Smith, *The History of Rochester*, pp. 310-311, 314; PA, HL/PO/JO/LO/1/40, Nathaniel Brent's visitation to Rochester Cathedral 1634; C Hussey, 'New use for a misplaced church', *CL*, (February 1967) pp. 323-324; C. Patterson, 'Corporations, Cathedrals and the Crown: Local dispute and Royal interest in early Stuart England', *History* (2000) pp. 546-571

Nicholas with the living held by John Man from 1639 until he was ejected in 1644. Daniel French, a Presbyterian, acquired the living in 1647.²²

Although Rochester was tied to the King by its royal charter, Chatham had a more physical presence of central authority in the form of His Majesty's dockyard. Chatham was dominated by its dockyard, which according to James Crawshaw employed approximately a third of the local workforce. In 1626 roughly 300 men were employed within the dockyard, but by 1655 this number had increased to about 400 in peacetime. As a result the town was more directly connected to London than Rochester and involved in Admiralty affairs. Due to its increasing population Chatham had expanded rapidly in the first quarter of the seventeenth century creating a sprawling overcrowded town, which encroached upon the boundaries of Rochester. Its residents consisted of a mixture of new, skilled dockyard workers, unskilled labourers including migrant workers, as well as tradesmen in the town itself. The term 'Chathamite' is not in common usage today, but was a seventeenth century label for the people of Chatham. William Bodham of Woolwich referred to 'Chathamites' in 1664. This description is used here to collectively refer to Chatham residents.²³

Several of the dominant Chatham families originated from the London dockyards, Deptford and Woolwich, creating family links and networks between Chatham and London. Prominent amongst these was the extended Pett family, who feature heavily in this thesis. Phineas Pett was Commissioner at Chatham dockyard until 1647, when his son Peter succeeded him. Peter Pett was part of Chatham vestry, on the Kent County Committee, a J.P., and M.P. for Rochester in 1659. During the early 1650s he was involved in a long running dispute in the dockyard with William Adderley, the sea chaplain. Charles Bowles was the brother-in-law of Peter Pett and a leading figure at county level during the

²² MALSC, RCA/A1/1, ff. 43, 66-67, 112; Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*, pp. 319, 465, 470, 524; Bod Lib, Bodley MS 326, *Plundered ministers 1649*, ff. 179a-179b; Bodley MS 324, *Plundered ministers 1646-1647*, f. 243; Carte MSS 73, Letter Laurence Wise to General Montagu, 19 June 1660, f. 481; W. Sandbrooke, *The Church, The proper subject of the new Covenant* (1646 address)

²³ MacDougall, *Chatham Past*, pp. 18, 20-23; J. Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, 2 Vols. (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1999) pp. 3/10, 3/21 (the pagination is shown exactly as in the book); CSPD 1664-1665 p. 362

English Revolution. His various posts included Captain in the army, Kent Commissary and later High Sheriff for Kent. Thomas Rainborough, Vice-Admiral of the Fleet, was the brother-in-law of both Peter Pett and Charles Bowles. His widow later married John Parker, the city's recorder and M.P. in the 1650s.²⁴ There were various other Pett family members in the Medway Towns, who are introduced in the relevant chapters of the thesis.

Another significant group with links to the dockyard, and key players in this thesis, are the sea chaplains. After considerable petitioning Thomas Grayne was appointed sea chaplain in 1635. He was dismissed in 1649 for his participation in the Second Civil War and William Adderley, an Independent minister, was invited by fifty-one Chatham parishioners to take his place. Shortly afterwards Adderley became embroiled in a personal, political and religious feud against the Pett family, resulting in his dismissal as sea chaplain in 1654. This dispute is investigated later as an example of the relationship between the centre and its local institution; the dockyard. Adderley's replacement as sea chaplain was Laurence Wise, an Independent, who kept a lower profile than his predecessor and so avoided political conflict.²⁵ These two sea chaplains' contrasting relationships with the dockyard and its hierarchy are pursued in this study to demonstrate that reactions were not always solely based on political or religious differences.

Unlike Rochester, Chatham was not a parliamentary borough. Chatham, as Philip MacDougall points out, did not have the benefit of Rochester's civic tier of local government and had instead to rely on its vestry to manage parish affairs. St Mary's was the parish vestry in question, which had to cope with an area considered the size of a small town. It consisted of the minister and various appointed officers as well as twelve vestrymen, who were elected annually by the parishioners at a public meeting of the vestry. These twelve vestrymen had to make decisions on behalf of the parishioners, e.g. setting parish assessments as well as ensuring that poor relief was administered and regulations such as

²⁴ J. Sephton, 'The Shipbuilding Family of Pett', CDHS, Research Paper No. 24; W. Bowles, Records of the Bowles Family, (Derby, 1918); Crawshaw, The History of Chatham Dockyard, 2 Vols.

²⁵ TNA, SP16/295/26; SP16/296/22I; SP16/296/28; SP18/16/124; SP18/16/124; SP18/23/30-30a; SP18/16/119; SP18/65/29; SP18/77/85; SP18/79/206; SP18/79/163

ordinances were carried out. The elected vestrymen met in the church vestry, usually monthly or more frequently if circumstances dictated.²⁶

Chatham was served by St Mary's parish church. The Dean and Chapter of Rochester appointed Thomas Vaughan as its minister in 1636. Many Chatham parishioners regarded his appointment as controversial, which Jasmine Johnson puts down to their largely Puritan outlook. Chatham's Puritanism can be traced back to 1601 and is discussed in chapter six. Friction existed between Vaughan and the inhabitants over his adoption of 'Laudian' practices, resulting in a petition by twenty-two Chatham parishioners calling for his removal in 1641.²⁷ This document is hereafter called the 'Chatham' petition. Vaughan's ejection in 1643 left his curate Ambrose Clare, a Presbyterian, in charge of the parish. Despite pleas from his parishioners, Clare moved on to a new living in Devon in 1647.²⁸ Walter Rosewell, another Presbyterian, in turn replaced him. He refused to take the Oath of Engagement to the Council of State, passed under an Act of Parliament in February 1650, and was vocal in his opposition to the new republic, which resulted in dismissal from his post and imprisonment. In 1654, at the behest of a group of Chatham parishioners, Rosewell was reinstated to his former living.²⁹

Christopher Hill, amongst others, considers that the Civil War created the opportunity for religious opinion to develop largely unchecked, permitting all manner of sects and groups such as the Ranters to emerge in the twenty-year period of upheaval. Nonconformist ministers and sects played a vital role in the ideological religious debates prevailing in Rochester and Chatham from 1644

²⁶ MacDougall, Chatham Past, pp. 21-22; MALSC, P85/5/1, Chatham St Mary's Churchwardens Accounts 1634-1657 (unfoliated)

²⁷ Fielding, The Records of Rochester, p. 559; J. Johnson, "'Thomas Vahan, Prieste, for so hee saith he is and with much greife wee utter it'": The breakdown in relationships between Reverend Thomas Vaughan and the congregation and vestry officers of St Mary's Church, Chatham, its causes and effects during the period 1635-1662', unpublished article. p. 3 - I would like to thank Jasmine Johnson for giving me access to this article. This article has been published in *Bygone Kent* in an abridged format; L. Larking (ed), *Proceedings in the County of Kent...*, (1862) pp. 226-229

²⁸ Bod Lib, Bodley MS 322, *Plundered Ministers 1645*, f. 76; TNA, ADM7/673, *Committee Book for the Admiralty 1646-1648*, ff. 243, 264

²⁹ Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p. 517; TNA, SP25/123/167; SP25/8/23-4; SP25/123/427-8; SP18/77/85; SP18/65/29; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*; C. Firth & R. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances: The Interregnum 1642-1660*, Vol. 2 (London, 1911) pp. 325-329

onwards.³⁰ Most of these radical preachers originated from outside the Medway Towns. The first group to become established locally was the Baptists in 1644. Henry Denne, a General Baptist, arrived in Rochester in 1643 and briefly resided within the city. He was considered a possible preacher for the cathedral by Rochester council in early 1644. On his invitation other Baptists, such as Thomas Lambe and Nicholas Woodman, came to preach in the city in 1645. Lambe encountered the Particular Baptist preacher, Benjamin Cox, in Strood during 1645, which sparked off a debate over salvation. Their visits petered out after 1646.³¹

In the 1650s more extreme religious groups targeted the Medway Towns; Ranters and Quakers. Joseph Salmon, an alleged Ranter with an army background, arrived in late 1650 after his release from Coventry prison on a blasphemy charge. Shortly after his arrival he was involved in an incident with the army based at Upnor Castle against the local Frindsbury minister, George Pitman, and a few months later tried to preach to the men in the dockyard. His stay in the Medway Towns lasted nearly five years with access to all the parish churches and the cathedral. He departed from Rochester in the summer of 1655 and is regarded by some historians as the figurehead behind Rochester's early Quakers.³² Richard Coppin replaced him as preacher, but his sojourn in the city was brief, causing more mayhem than Salmon had managed in five years. The local Presbyterian minister, Walter Rosewell, challenged Coppin's beliefs, leading to a succession of debates in Rochester cathedral during the autumn of 1655, which are examined in chapter eight. Two Quaker missionaries, Ambrose Rigge and Thomas Robertson, targeted a Baptist meeting in Rochester in the late

³⁰ Eales, "So many sects and schisms," pp. 226-248; C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Town*, (London, 1991)

³¹ Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b, Letter John Philpott to Parliament 5 February 1643, ff. 545-546; T. Edwards, *Gangraena, or a catalogue and discovery of many of the errors...*, (London, 1646) p. 213; H. Denne, *Grace, mercy and peace*, (London, 1643)

³² W. Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered...*, (London, 1656) p. 4; TNA, SP25/96/248; SP25/20/44; SP18/28/32; J. McGregor, 'Ranterism and the development of early Quakerism', *JRH*, Vol. 9, (1977) pp. 356-357; D Gwyn, 'Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Ranter -and almost to Quaker', *JFHS*, Vol. 58, Part 2, (1998) p. 128

spring of 1655.³³ Rochester and Chatham's involvement with and reactions to these groups are examined within this study.

This thesis was researched around several key primary sources. For Rochester the city records are the main documentary evidence used, consisting of the council minutes, custumal and accounts, as well as various letters and the State Papers Domestic for the period in question. These latter two sources have also been widely used for Chatham. Discussion on Chatham vestry relies primarily on the surviving 'vestry' book covering 1643, which includes those who took the July 1643 Vow and Covenant as well as recording acts of iconoclasm carried out in the parish church in 1643, and a set of churchwardens' accounts for 1634-1657. Although much use has been made of this churchwarden's book in which a great deal of vestry business was recorded, its purpose was as a financial record. It, therefore, does not give a complete picture of the role of the vestry for this period or how frequently they met. The regularity of meetings discussed in this thesis is in the context of this churchwarden's book.³⁴

Various issues cropped up regarding primary source material during the research stages. One of these was the paucity of local religious material available for the period 1640-1660. Rochester Diocesan records are limited before 1660. However a set of cathedral accounts covering 1644-1646, kept by Philip Ward, came to light at the National Archives.³⁵ Other useful material to breach the gap includes the Proceedings of the House of Commons, relating to the Committee for Plundered Ministers, at both the Bodleian and British Libraries.³⁶ Various Medway parish registers have also been accessed for this thesis, but material varies widely from church to church. Chatham St Mary's has a complete run of registers dating back to the sixteenth century and a few other records mentioned above; Strood St Nicholas' also date back that far with a gap between 1639-1653,

³³ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*; R. Coppin, *A blow at the serpent...advancing itself* against truth and peace at Rochester, (London, 1656); G. Whitehead, *Constancy in truth commended being a true account of the Life...Ambrose Rigge*, (London, 1710) pp. 7-8

³⁴ MALSC, RCA/A1/1; RCA/A1/2; RCA/C2/1; P85/5/1; P85/8/1, Chatham St Mary's Church Vestry Book 1643-1791

³⁵ MALSC, DRc/Arb/2, *The Red Book 1660-1737*; TNA, SP28/355/3

³⁶ BL, Add MS 15669-71, *Proceedings for Plundered Ministers 1644-1647*; Bod Lib, Bodley MS 322-327; *Proceedings for Plundered Ministers 1645-1653*

plus their churchwardens' accounts for the period in question have been published; Rochester St Nicholas' parish registers start from 1624, but no churchwarden's or vestry records survive before 1660; Rochester St Margaret's parish registers date back to 1653 with all other early church records having been lost.³⁷

In addition to this material various petitions, printed sermons and pamphlets have been consulted to assess the nature of religious and political opinion circulating and local debates taking place. The main petitions examined in this thesis are the 1641 Chatham petition, the 1642 pro-parliamentarian Kent county petition drawn up by Thomas Blount, subsequently referred to as the 'Blount' petition, and the Royalist Kentish petition of 1648. Also under review are several petitions and 'articles' (complaints) dated 1651-2, emanating from Chatham and its dockyard, against the Pett clan and William Adderley's grouping. A number of sermons preached by local ministers and subsequently published, such as Richard Tray's *The right way to Protestantisme in 1642* and William Sandbrooke's *The Church, the proper subject of the new Covenant in 1646*, are analysed to discover the religious opinions held and debates occurring in the Medway Towns in the 1640s. This thesis contends that these various sources demonstrate that the communities of Rochester and Chatham had access to and were deeply involved in the national ideological debates of the day.

Nonconformist material came in the form of disparate documents rather than a series of records, making it difficult to ascertain a picture of the various sects' local activities. Sermons and treatises were again the main resources available. Examples of this are the Baptist tracts of Henry Denne, Thomas Lambe and Benjamin Cox, which discuss the topic of salvation in the mid-1640s. This debate was continued in the 1650s, by amongst others Richard Coppin and Walter Rosewell, making their pamphlets core components of this thesis.³⁸

³⁷ MALSC, P85/1/1-4, Chatham St Mary's Parish Records 1568-1676; P150B/1/1-2, Strood St Nicholas Parish Records 1565-1695; P305/1/1, Rochester St Margaret's Parish Records 1653-1679; P306/1/2, Rochester St Nicholas Parish Records 1624-1827; H. R. Plomer (ed), *The churchwardens' accounts of St Nicholas, Strood*, (Kent Records, 1927)

³⁸ T. Lambe, *Christ Crucified...*, (1646); Denne, *Grace, mercy and peace*; J. Spilsbury & B. Coxe, *Gods Ordinance...*, (1646), Cox's Address, pp. 39-80; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*

Other material used includes the records from meetings of the particular sect concerned; i.e. for the Baptists the Speldhurst and Pembury records dating from 1646, whilst the Kent Meeting records gave an insight into some elements of Rochester Quakerism.³⁹ These were supplemented with letters, journals and Quaker books of sufferings. Much use has also been made of wills, court records and licences to piece together Baptist and Quaker networks and congregations. The Chatham St Mary's baptism records, in which the registrar, Thomas Heavyside, ensured that all births and baptisms between 1642-1662 were meticulously recorded, have been used to gauge the level of Baptist activity in the town.

The nature of the subject matter and resources available lent a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to the research. Whilst there are numerous types of documents available many of these are official; government, naval or city records. To balance this the thesis relies on the records of other institutions such as charities, letters and printed contemporary pamphlets. Due to the adversarial nature of the period 1640-1660, most literature, correspondence and record keeping is inherently one-sided. Therefore, where possible, a wide range of sources have been consulted to give a balanced perspective. However there are times when evidence is only available from one standpoint. For certain aspects of this thesis a quantitative approach is more applicable; e.g. for estimating literacy levels. A number of databases have been created to determine trends such as the number of freemen appointed in a given year and attendance at council meetings. Some of this data has been converted into table, graph or chart form and included in the thesis.

All original dates and spellings are used in quotations. For consistency modern style dating has been followed elsewhere in the thesis. References to the House of Lords and Commons Journals follow the format in the online version.

³⁹ BL, Add MS 36709, Pembury and Speldhurst Baptist Church Minute Book 1646-1802; KHLIC, N/FQz 1, Kent Quaker QM Sufferings Book, N/FQz 2, Kent Quaker Sufferings Book 1655-1690

Whilst a considerable number of books have been written on the history of the Medway Towns, nothing has specifically focused on the Civil War or Interregnum periods. Local historians have largely treated the Civil War era as an events-based phenomenon with coverage generally limited to a few pages or at most a chapter in more detailed works. These efforts are largely narrative based versions of events with a heavily anti-Parliamentarian slant.⁴⁰ In the early twentieth century Frederick Smith used his experience as an alderman and his access to the city records to write a relatively comprehensive history of Rochester with an emphasis on local government and its operation. His history gives a relatively good insight into the administrative and political aspects of Rochester council in the seventeenth century. Smith made the connection between the council and its close relationship with the parish church of St Nicholas; particularly in regard to the significance of civic-religious ritual.⁴¹ This is an aspect, which runs throughout the city records and is indicative of Rochester council's relationship with its parish church over the twenty years of upheaval.

There are several early works specifically dedicated to Rochester cathedral, but any references to the Civil War period are brief. Both John Lewis and A. Pearman, writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, speak of the cathedral's desecration by hotheaded Puritans, citing descriptions from contemporary Royalist accounts.⁴² Frankly, more up-to-date versions offer little better analysis of the Civil War period than these older works. The general trend is for 'quotes' of vandalism, but little explanation is given of the causes behind the destruction. Nigel Yates' and Paul Welsby's recent edition of essays on Rochester cathedral offered the opportunity to explore the mid-seventeenth century history of the cathedral from a modern perspective, but is singularly disappointing in its lack of coverage of the period. Issues such as iconoclasm and the spiritual role of the cathedral have been virtually overlooked. Yates' own

⁴⁰ Smith, *The History of Rochester* pp. 26-34; J. Presnail, *Chatham: The Story of a Dockyard Town and the Birthplace of the British Navy* (Chatham, 1976) pp. 108-115

⁴¹ Smith, *The History of Rochester*, pp. 51-52, 314-322

⁴² J. Lewis, *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Rochester*, (London, 1717) pp. 118-119; A. Pearman, *Diocesan Histories: Rochester*, (London, 1897) pp. 280-284

essay promised a discussion on cathedral worship, but totally ignored the period 1645-1660 when its role as a cathedral became defunct. In his other essay, *Papists and Puritans*, Yates concluded that after 1647 Rochester cathedral had no religious role.⁴³ This was clearly not the case, as a new role was carved out for the cathedral in the 1650s in the form of a radical preaching centre. Chapters six and seven look at the role of the cathedral between 1640-1660 and the part it played in the ongoing religious debates during this period.

Philip MacDougall devotes a chapter of his book on Chatham to the seventeenth century. In his estimation Chatham vestry should have been the centre of political power for the parish, but the vestry lacked the authority to deal with more than minor matters such as poor law and highway repairs. He considered that the vestry met infrequently, not monthly as proscribed, and showed little interest in political issues. MacDougall concluded that Chatham was inadequately served by its vestry and lacked the authority that Rochester achieved with its civic infrastructure. He argues that this lack of power left Chatham the poor relation politically, compared with Rochester, and created a sense of rivalry. Much of his research relies solely on the 1643 vestry book and parish registers for the mid-seventeenth century. He failed to draw on the churchwarden's accounts for 1634-1657, which would have given him a different perspective on the vestry's role. Two volumes by James Crawshaw on Chatham dockyard were published posthumously in 1999. He considered that the vestry was the civil authority in Chatham and had a strong relationship with the dockyard.⁴⁴ It will be argued here, that although Chatham and Rochester each had their own administrative structure, they were reasonably well integrated politically. The two towns were in many ways dependent on each other. Conflict did occasionally arise, but when confronted with a perceived threat, as occurred during the Second Civil War in May 1648, the two towns acted as a united front. Chatham dockyard, likewise, was well integrated with the town and vestry.

⁴³ P. Musset, 'The Reconstituted Chapter, 1660-1820,' p. 77, D. Holbrook, 'Repair and Restoration of the Fabric since 1540', pp. 185-186, N. Yates, 'Worship in the Cathedral, 1540-1870', p. 140, C. Knighton, 'The Reformed Chapter, 1540-1660', pp. 75-76 all in N. Yates & P. Welsby (eds.), *Faith and Fabric: A History of Rochester Cathedral 604-1994*, (Woodbridge, 1996); N. Yates, 'Papists and Puritans 1640-1714', in N. Yates, R. Hume & P. Hastings (eds.), *Religion and society in Kent 1640-1914*, (Woodbridge, 1994) pp. 6, 12

⁴⁴ MacDougall, *Chatham Past*, pp. 21-23; Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, p. 3/23

Most of the dockyard men lived in Chatham, serving as parish officers and forming a considerable part of the vestry. It is demonstrated in this thesis that the dockyard personnel played a leading role within the parish vestry and so heavily influenced local politics and decision-making.

Crawshaw's *History of Chatham Dockyard* dedicates a section to religious affairs in the dockyard during the Civil War and Commonwealth periods as well as covering the parish church and its relationship with the various sea chaplains. Jasmine Johnson's work on Chatham church explored the role of St Mary's between 1635-1662, including the relationship of the two incumbents, Thomas Vaughan and Walter Rosewell, with the parishioners and vestry. She examined both the 1641 Chatham petition and acts of iconoclasm carried out in St Mary's church during June 1643 in some depth. Her work acknowledges that the 'knowing men' in the vestry were behind many of these decisions and thus she made the connection that there were political motives behind many of the religious actions carried out at Chatham between 1641-1643. Johnson could have developed the significance of the 1643 record book and political role of the vestry further, but she did not have access to the 1634-1657 churchwardens' account book.⁴⁵ This thesis argues that Chatham vestry had taken on a political as well as civic role by 1640 and that the vestry's reactions to Civil War events are recorded within the various parish records that survive. These records are examined along with the 1641 Chatham petition and the 1642 Blount petition to demonstrate that many of the religious actions undertaken between 1640-1643 were political decisions made by the parish vestry with the agreement of the dockyard men and parishioners. The two petitions were signed by 22 and 181 local men respectively, indicating the political and religious stance of many within the community of Chatham; Parliamentarian politically and Presbyterian religiously.

Earlier works that set the framework for this study are Alan Everitt's 1957 thesis on the Kent gentry and Madeleine Jones' 1967 thesis, covering Kent's eight parliamentary boroughs including Rochester. Both these theses span the

⁴⁵ Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, pp. 16/1-16/4; Johnson, "Thomas Vahan, Prieste," *passim*

period 1640-1660 covered by this study. Over the past few decades historians have taken this local emphasis on the Civil War period a step further by examining the role and reactions of specific towns or cities during the English Revolution, e.g. Norwich, Chester and Exeter, but no in depth examination of a specific Kent town during this period of upheaval has been undertaken.⁴⁶

Fundamental to this study is the historical debate about the centre versus the locality. This debate immediately flags up Alan Everitt's 1966 seminal book on the county of Kent for this period. His work was the first modern county study of the Civil War period and is therefore the benchmark for all that followed. He concluded that the gentry of Kent were largely insular in outlook and focused on local rather than national issues. Thus the gentry were conservative, moderate and opted for a neutralist stance in 1642, which they felt would maintain the county's independence and ensure the survival of their landed interest. Everitt interpreted this as a struggle between the centre and locality, citing the 1644-5 crisis over the South Eastern Association as the sticking point for many of the Kent gentry. His study was specifically of the gentry and his interpretation can thus only hold true for that definition of the 'county' community. P. Laslett's earlier work on the Kent gentry raises certain questions about Everitt's findings, as he considered the Kent gentry to be cosmopolitan in outlook and aware that they controlled a county that was both nationally and strategically important.⁴⁷

Influenced by Alan Everitt's work, John Morrill came to similar conclusions to Everitt in his 1976 book *Revolt in the Provinces*. He argued that war was the result of a breakdown between the centre and localities and thus coined the 'centre versus locality' debate. In his opinion the centre was concerned with ideological issues such as religion and the constitution, whilst the localities were preoccupied with economic and provincial affairs. The citizens could not

⁴⁶ Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry'; M. Jones, 'The Political History of the parliamentary boroughs of Kent 1642-1662', PhD thesis, London University, (1967); G. Forster, 'Civic Government in Chester, 1642-1660' NH, Vol. 37 (2000) pp. 83-103; A. Hopper, 'The Civil Wars,' in C. Rawcliffe & R. Wilson (eds.), *Norwich since 1550*, (London, 2004) pp. 89-116; M. Stoye, *Exeter in the Civil War*, (Devon Archaeology Society No. 6, 1995); *Loyalty and locality: Popular allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War*, (Exeter, 1994) passim

⁴⁷ Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, pp. 14-16, 35-46, 325; P. Laslett, 'The Gentry of Kent in 1640', CHJ, No. IX (1948) pp. 151-155

perceive their local grievances in a wider ideological framework and tended to be more concerned with their own survival; hence neutralism was the favoured option. Morrill stands by his earlier work in his 1999 revised edition, but has modified some of his conclusions. He acknowledged that both Richard Cust and David Underdown had since demonstrated that people had access to the debates, were aware of the wider issues and could hence make informed choices. However he still maintains that the people reacted to events in 1640-1642 in an apolitical manner and adopted neutralism as a political alternative. Morrill concedes in this work that neutralism can be much more subtle than in his original interpretation.⁴⁸

In the 1980s Clive Holmes and Ann Hughes re-evaluated the findings of both Everitt and Morrill in their respective county studies of Lincolnshire and Warwickshire. Holmes rejected most of their argument and contended that on the contrary the county gentry were well informed and could articulate their grievances in both national and local terms. His conclusion was that many other groups were capable of independent thought as well and chose sides rather than slid into neutralism. Both Holmes and Hughes maintain that the centre and localities were much more closely integrated than Morrill has credited. Hughes has embraced some of Everitt and Morrill's interpretation of a strong sense of localism in the early 1640s. Because of the close integration between the centre and the counties, the Parliamentarians were able to harness this localism by working with local government and other established bodies to get orders carried out. After 1640 they were better able to control the counties than the Royalists, who were heavily dependent on loyalty to the Crown for their allegiance, but did not have this institutional framework to draw on. She argues that in this sense the centre worked with the county to ensure continuity of local government machinery and maintenance of social order. The centre and locality were both part of government and could not act independently.⁴⁹ The contemporary ideological and religious debates in Rochester and Chatham will

⁴⁸ Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces*, pp. 24-25, 36, 52-54, 126-7, 181, 184-185, 187

⁴⁹ Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 141-219; Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War*, pp. 114-254, 291-343; C. Holmes, 'The county community in Stuart historiography', pp. 212-214, 220-221, 225-229; A. Hughes, 'The King, the Parliament and the Localities during the English Civil War', pp. 262-265, 267-268, 277-278, both in R. Cust & A. Hughes (eds.), *The English Civil War*, (London, 1997)

be analysed to determine how much impact the centre had on the opinion and reactions of the local residents.

Madeleine Jones was the first person to undertake a study of all the parliamentary boroughs of a county, Kent, and gauge corporate political reactions to the English Revolution. She concluded that neutrality was no longer an option after 1642 with councillors being forced to choose sides. Those who displayed Royalist sympathies were ousted in internal purges by the local corporations frequently using absenteeism as grounds for dismissal, which gave corporations the scope to place loyal Parliamentarian supporters into local government. Following the 1648 Kent Rising, central government instigated a process of purging in the eight boroughs during the early 1650s in an attempt to remove rebel councillors from office. Jones contends that this resulted in exclusion of the Royalists from local power, which left local corporations in the hands of a minority, who supported the Commonwealth regime. In her view this created disunity in the local councils and, hence, purging was not effective. After 1655 borough councils broadened their makeup and so became more inclusive and unified. She maintains that the corporations were flexible enough to ensure local government continued uninterrupted despite a twenty-year period of upheaval. Whereas Everitt described the Kent gentry as insular and unconcerned about the wider ideological issues, Jones contends that Kent's close links to London ensured that urban populations were aware of the current national ideological discourse, which in turn created an atmosphere of debate locally. Jones argues that the citizens of the Kent boroughs did assert themselves both religiously and politically. She considers that all groups had the means to express their opinion; freemen could use their vote and non-freemen had such avenues as petitioning and protest available to them.⁵⁰

Roger Howell is one of a few historians to have focused on the role of urban government during the civil war period. His first essay focused on various towns, mainly in the West Country, the Midlands and north of England, that were heavily embroiled in civil war action. In his opinion there was no one

⁵⁰ Jones, 'The Political History' pp. 62, 75, 145, 192-193, 417, 420, 489-493

particular model of a town, as each had a unique set of circumstances. Their reactions in 1642 were dependent on their own particular situation. A wide range of urban responses existed, varying from nationalist to localist, neutral to moderate. Howell defines neutralism as an ‘opt out’ in allegiance to either side; a non-alignment and conscious decision not to be involved in politics. He, however, concedes this could never be more than a temporary measure. Neutralism was adopted to prevent factionalism or social disorder and protect a town from outside forces. In his opinion local government remained largely conservative and moderate in outlook, seeking to preserve its own interests and was thus close to Everitt’s interpretation of being insular.⁵¹ Howell’s other essay focused on resistance to change in towns in this period. He felt that many of the corporations had become elitist in nature and that the exclusion of the majority from these oligarchic monopolies could lead to civil disorder. Howell argues that most resistance was against outside bodies, which tried to purge and interfere in city government. In protest local corporations either resisted implementing these purges or reacted slowly in carrying out these orders. Although this outside interference in local affairs was a disruptive influence, corporations retained a core of councillors, thereby giving a sense of continuity in local government.⁵² Paul Halliday has a similar outlook on civil war politics to Jones and Howell, maintaining that the exclusions and purges of the 1650s led to partisan politics. The centre imposed its will on local government and this in turn led to division within the corporations. In his view party politics and partisanship stemmed from the locality not the centre. He maintains that exclusion could be locally driven by means of absenteeism or resignation.⁵³

These three historians all agree that exclusion and purging were seen as unwelcome interference in local government and led to disunity within corporations during the English Revolution. This thesis takes the opposite stance and contends that exclusion and purging were an effective means to remove any opposition within Rochester corporation, ensuring that those who remained were loyal to Parliament, which created harmony rather than conflict

⁵¹ Howell, ‘Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment,’ pp. 69-74, 81-87

⁵² Howell, ‘Resistance to change’, pp. 433-434, 438-39, 447-451

⁵³ Halliday, Dismembering the body politic, pp. 59-60, 62-63

in the council. The study also argues that the oligarchic style of city government in Rochester, with an internal election procedure to replace councillors, enabled the corporation to restrict access to broadly those who were supportive of the de facto regimes during the English Revolution. Thereby the oligarchic nature of Rochester's city government gave the corporation the flexibility it needed to ensure that local politics remained for the most part consensual rather than adversarial between 1640-1660. This thesis demonstrates that this stood in stark contrast to Chatham vestry, which between 1651-1654 underwent a period of schism as a direct consequence of its elective principle.

Another debate in recent historiography is the subject of increased news transmission and whether this led to a well-informed populace, who understood the national ideological issues and could, therefore, participate in public debate on these topics. Richard Cust is one of the first historians to focus on the issues of news transmission during Charles I's reign. His conclusion was that both oral and printed news reached a wide audience including the lower orders of society through the medium of the pulpit or alehouse. However he considers that there was little public local debate before 1640, this being reserved for a private domain. Cust's article demonstrates, that through the centralisation of news collection in London and dissemination to the provinces, local and national news issues were integrated. This allowed for the manipulation of news by those at the centre and to adversarial politics. News thus created a sense of conflict and strife between different factions rather than the consensus and harmony that had been evident before 1620 in society.⁵⁴

Ian Atherton argues that there was still a strong overlap between orality and the written word despite the rapid increase in printed newsbooks in the early 1640s. He maintains that the printed newsbooks were aimed at a wide audience and were largely partisan in nature. However, unlike Cust, Atherton felt that this produced debate, which could potentially defuse divisive situations as well as create conflict. Joad Raymond maintains that Civil War circumstances created both a new press that was partisan and a different type of news circulation. The

⁵⁴ R. Cust, 'News and Politics in early seventeenth-century England', P&P, (August 1986) pp. 64-71, 74-77, 87-80

newsbooks were by now largely printed and targeted at specific audiences. Raymond contends that from the 1640s people assumed they had the right to hear or read and discuss news. Partisan print material created both conflict and political discussion. People would read a broad array of material giving differing views, which in turn encouraged public debate and thus stimulated public opinion.⁵⁵ In the light of this debate the thesis examines how news was received, disseminated and discussed within the Medway Towns.

There has been much discussion over the past decade whether print or the pulpit was the most effective medium to disseminate news to the populace and encourage public debate to flourish. Jason Peacey maintains that print potentially reached a much wider audience than the pulpit could. A single pamphlet could be distributed nationally, whilst a message from a church pulpit would only be transmitted locally. Jacqueline Eales argues that the pulpit was often the focal point in the local community for hearing news. As Adam Fox has pointed out orality and print overlapped considerably. It required orality to debate the printed word and published matter was publicly read from the pulpit. Essentially debate could not exist without both these media. Peacey's work demonstrates that by the 1640s print had been harnessed by both sides and used to try to persuade people to their viewpoint. Eales holds that Kent was a hotbed for religious diversity during the English Revolution and that many preachers used the pulpit to propagate their religious and political opinions to the parishioners. As a consequence the pulpit was the stimulus for religious debate in the local community and encompassed all social levels.⁵⁶

This aspect is explored in the thesis with the contention that both were useful tools to distribute news and, hence, encourage both debate and opinion to flourish in the Medway Towns. However, this thesis argues that in the provincial

⁵⁵ I. Atherton, 'The itch grown a disease: manuscript transmission of news in the seventeenth century', pp. 39, 48, 52-53, 56, 59; J Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the seventeenth century', pp. 114, 117, 124-125, 128, 132-133 both in J. Raymond (ed.), *News, newspapers, and society in early modern Britain*, (London, 1999)

⁵⁶ J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum*, (Aldershot, 2004) pp. 31, 33, 36-38, 41, 47, 62, 67; J. Eales, 'Provincial preaching and allegiance in the First English Civil War, 1640-6', in T. Cogswell, R. Cust & P. Lake (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Popularity in early Stuart Britain*, (Cambridge, 2002) pp. 185-207; A. Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England 1500-1799*, (Oxford, 2000) pp. 5-14, 363-364

towns of Rochester and Chatham, preaching reached a potentially much larger audience, with its four parish churches, cathedral, nonconformist meeting houses and sea chaplains' meeting place, than the printed word did. Literacy is a key component to understanding the written or printed word. Therefore chapter eight looks at Chatham and Rochester's literacy levels during the Civil War period and how accessible the printed word was for different groups in the Medway Towns. The above held views are tested by firstly examining the published sermons of Richard Tray, Henry King and William Sandbrooke, local ministers, who used print to defend their religious stance when under attack as well as the printed tracts of two nonconformist preachers, Henry Denne and Richard Coppin, who also defended their religious beliefs and secondly by investigating several recorded oral debates, such as that between Richard Coppin and three Presbyterian ministers, which took place within local places of worship between 1640-1660.

It is in the light of this background that both the efforts of Edwin Sandys in 1642 and Thomas Fairfax in 1648 to secure Rochester need to be understood. The town's close proximity to London, about thirty miles distant, meant that news was rapidly received of events in the capital and the neighbouring counties. Chatham parishioners and Rochester citizens were, therefore, in a position to respond swiftly to events emanating from London and become embroiled in the prevailing ideological discourse. Both towns were also within twenty-five miles of Canterbury, the see of Archbishop Laud until 1644, and so came under close religious scrutiny. Religious ideas circulating there and in London were no more than a day's distance from the Medway Towns, encouraging radical preachers to target these two communities as well as other parts of Kent during the period 1640-1660.⁵⁷

Whilst Peacey's book demonstrates how the centre disseminated information and views to the people and localities, David Zaret has approached the discussion from the opposite stance, examining how the populace and provinces made their opinions known to the centre through petitioning. He concludes that petitioning

⁵⁷ G. Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', *JEH*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (October 1963) pp. 175-189

was the only effective means for the ordinary people to express their opinion in the English Revolution. Petitioning and counter petitioning exploded in the Civil War period with canvassing for signatures becoming commonplace. Zaret maintains that petitioning became a political propaganda tool used by various groups to further their cause and to try to elicit popular support.⁵⁸ This thesis argues that Zaret was correct in his overall assumption that petitioning was a vital tool in the provincial repertoire to convey local opinion to those in London and Parliament, but it was by no means the only avenue available for the provinces. Letters, elections, print and protest were all means available to the populace to make their views known. Petitions and protest originating from the counties and towns often expressed the political and religious viewpoints of those below the gentry. Many of these petitions indicate that the ordinary people were engaged with events and debates circulating in London. Various petitions that Medway citizens appended their names to are analysed in this study with particular emphasis on the 1642 Blount petition, for which a signed copy survives. This thesis examines the demands of the petition's drafters and questions how typical these views were of the local signatories.

The various debates discussed above will be analysed and tested against the study of Rochester and Chatham in the ensuing chapters. Chapters two and three address Rochester politics between 1640-1662 and challenge the conclusions of Jones, Howell and Halliday that purging had a harmful effect on city government by creating disunity. Discussion also focuses on individual councillors, such as Philip Ward, and their reactions to Civil War events. Chapters four and five cover Chatham vestry and its political development during the English Revolution. This chapter analyses the vestry's political relationship with both the dockyard and Rochester. The dockyard was the government's local representative in Chatham and, so, its relationship with Westminster and the Admiralty is examined in light of the centre versus locality debate.

⁵⁸ D. Zaret, 'Petitions and the "Invention" of Public Opinion in the English Revolution', *AJS*, Vol. 101 (1996) pp. 1497-1555

Chapters six and seven explore the religious reactions and views of Medway residents. Medway parishioners articulated their views by signing three important documents; the 1641 Chatham petition, the Blount petition of 1642 and Kentish petition of 1648, which are analysed within these chapters. Rochester and Chatham both experienced acts of iconoclasm, but in a completely different manner. Chapter six scrutinises the political motivation for these acts of iconoclasm and who was behind them. Both chapters look at the development of religious radicalism through the emergence of different sects in Rochester and Chatham over the twenty years and the reactions of Rochester council, the dockyard, clergy and ordinary citizens to these groups. These chapters also examine religious Presbyterianism; its development in the Medway Towns in the 1640s and reactions of the clergy when they came under attack or felt threatened by other religious groups in the 1650s. Chapter eight focuses on public opinion in the Medway Towns. At the heart of this chapter is the debate on the circulation of news and how readily the people beneath the gentry had access to news. Jacqueline Eales' and Jason Peacey's recent work on the media of orality and print are tested against the case study of Rochester and Chatham. This chapter contends that the parishioners had rapid access to news from London, had a variety of locations to hear the news, took part in various ideological debates and expressed their opinions. In particular this chapter traces a decade of religious debate on the topic of general redemption, both in print and orally, between 1643-1657. Unlike the chapters on politics and religion this chapter is approached in a thematic rather than chronological style. Chapter nine draws overall conclusions on the significance of the political and religious reactions of the local populace and institutions to the English Revolution.

Part 1

Political Reactions

Chapter 2

Rochester Council 1621-1649

The next four chapters will consider the political opinions and reactions of the Medway Towns during the English Revolution to discover the allegiance of those below the gentry. This chapter focuses on Rochester council between 1640-1649 and establishes the corporation's position in the preceding two decades to determine its political background and allow a comparison with the political reactions of the period 1640-1660. Chapter three addresses Rochester council between 1650-1662, whilst chapters four and five tackle Chatham vestry and the dockyard. Both political groupings and family networks are examined in the next few chapters to consider their influence and impact upon the corporation and vestry during the English Revolution. A brief review of the local historical debates is given below so that the findings of the next two chapters can be tested against these arguments. But first it is necessary to explain the political labels used within this chapter.

David Underdown has defined the various political groups operating within Parliament during this period in *Pride's Purge*. However he maintains that 'Alan Everitt had shown that national party lines bore little resemblance to the political divisions and conflicts within a county community, even one as close to Westminster as Kent'.¹ This is a local urban study of the mid-seventeenth century when councillors did not attribute any of the following labels to themselves, so the definitions reached here are in the context of our perception of political allegiance. Underdown applied the term Presbyterian to those who politically supported Parliament from around 1643 and desired a peaceful settlement with the King.² The term Presbyterian is used in this chapter, as a political, not religious label. For Rochester this term describes a core of councillors from 1643 onwards, who served on the Kent County Committee till 1647, supported Parliament proactively between 1643-1647, but rebelled in May 1648. A few of these men did not rebel in 1648, but demonstrated their

¹ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 1-4, 45-46

² *ibid* pp. 69-70

disaffection with the de facto regime shortly afterwards. Before 1643 they are referred to as Parliamentarians. A group of 'neutrals' also existed within Rochester council between 1644-1646. Neutralism is a term with varying connotations for different historians. 'Neutral' is here defined as a considered decision by certain councillors not to support any of the existing political groupings and their choice to opt out of politics through absenteeism.

Independent is not a useful political label, as few local men would fit Underdown's perception of millenarian revolutionaries who supported the regicide. However Underdown also considered there was a middle group. 'Far from being the architects of a revolution, these 'middle group' Independents strove desperately to avert one.'³ Using this explanation as a benchmark a few councillors could be classified as moderate Independents. These local councillors showed a continued allegiance to the Kent County Committee throughout the 1640s and did not rebel in 1648. It was these men who were to dominate Rochester council in the early 1650s. Another grouping is those who outwardly conformed to Parliament within Rochester council from 1643-1648; i.e. conformists. The 'conformists' were distinguishable by their regular council attendance, but obvious silence on any political issues. This group did not participate in petitioning or the Kent Rebellion, nor did they act in any capacity for the Kent County Committee. The final political grouping was the Royalists. Many of this group had a past history of loyalty to Charles I, took an active part in the Kent Rebellion, promoted the Kentish petition of May 1648, were dismissed as councillors in 1650 by order of Parliament, and forced to compound in 1650-1 for their delinquency.

Madeleine Jones' thesis covered the corporate political aspects and purges of Rochester council between 1642-1662. She considered Rochester to be Royalist in 1642 when Edwin Sandys' Parliamentarian troops entered the city. This chapter contends that Rochester corporation's political stance was less clear cut at this stage with Parliamentarians emerging as the dominant force. Jones felt that neutrality was not a political option after 1642 and, so, Rochester chose to

³ *ibid*, pp. 3-4, 297-335

support Parliament between 1643-1646. However this thesis disagrees with Madeleine Jones on this aspect, arguing that Rochester council had such a neutral grouping in this period, which absented itself from city government to avoid supporting either the Presbyterian or Royalist group within the corporation. In Jones' opinion Rochester cooperated with the Royalists in the 1648 Kent rebellion. However, the political situation in Rochester was far more complex than she allows for, with both Presbyterian and Royalist councillors joining the rebellion, but for differing reasons. She states that the Mayor of Rochester, Philip Ward, was forced to participate in the rebellion, but presents no evidence for this. Ward's actions and involvement in the Kent rising are examined in this chapter with the contention that he deliberated his position carefully at each stage before taking the final step towards joining with the Royalists in open rebellion on the 29th May 1648.⁴

Whilst Jones and other historians contend that the process of purging created divisions within corporations, this study clearly demonstrates that purging guaranteed that those who were unaligned or disaffected were permanently excluded, permitting the Parliamentarians to dominate Rochester city government for most of the twenty year period with just one break between 1648-9. The restrictive nature of Rochester's election procedure also generally limited new members to those loyal to Parliament. In Roger Howell's perception town government was both conservative and insular. Although Jones concedes that the corporations tended to retain a 'nucleus of men "neutral spirited"', who were generally conservative and localist in outlook, she nevertheless argues that many of the councillors were outward focused, being both well informed and able to engage with the wider issues and debates. The next two chapters consider this centre versus locality debate in respect to Rochester, judging that the corporation responded according to particular issues or events and was far from insular or conservative.⁵

⁴ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 63, 65, 75, 116

⁵ Halliday, 'Dismembering the body politic', pp. 59-60, 62-63; Howell, 'Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment,' pp. 67-87; 'Resistance to change,' pp. 433-455; Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 489-494

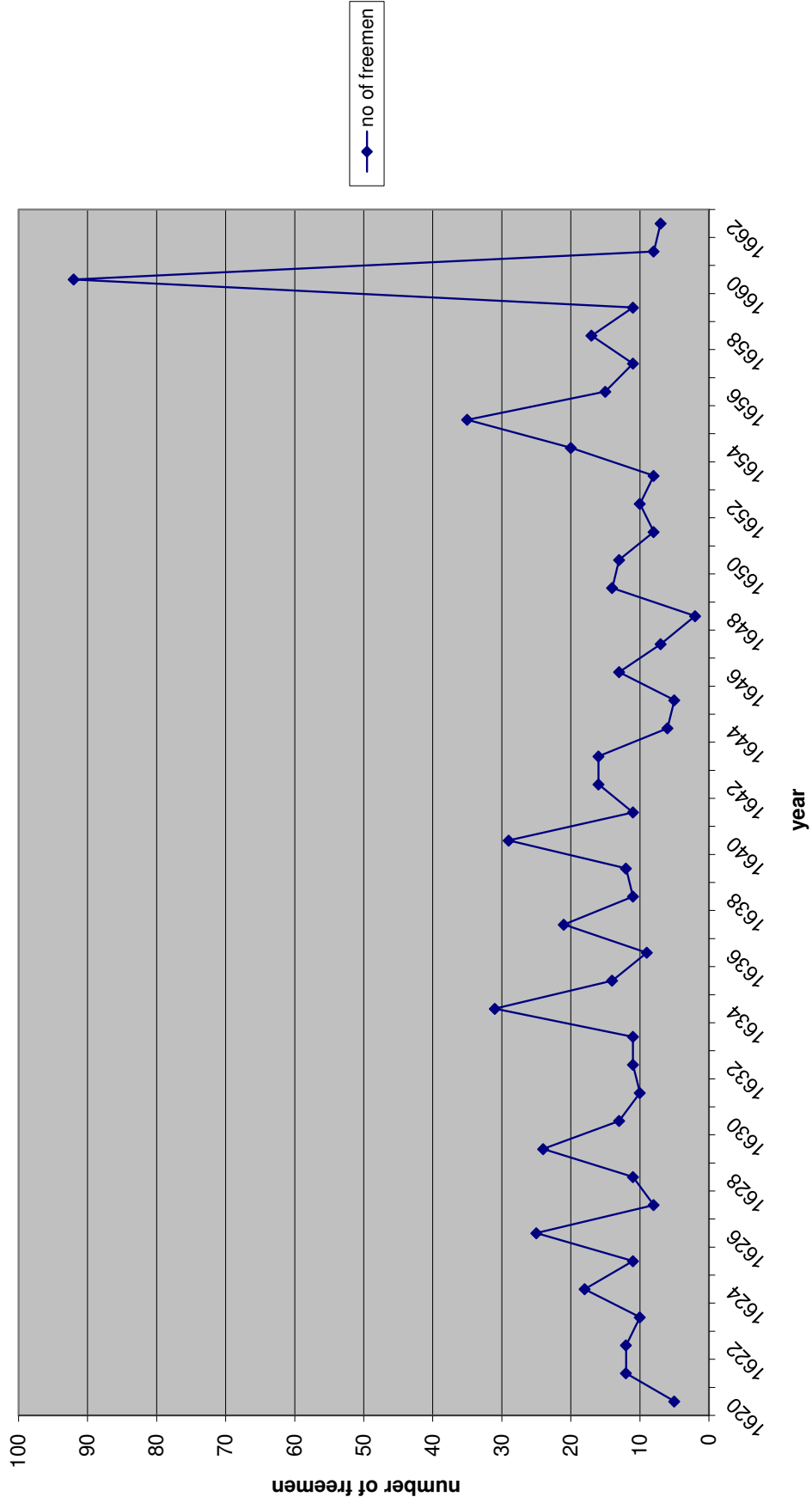
1. 1621-1640

Rochester council consisted of a mayor, eleven alderman and twelve common councillors. Under the 1629 charter of re-incorporation the mayor was elected annually by the freemen, but the other councillors were elected internally and served in perpetuity. Prior to 1640 both the aldermen and councillors regularly attended council meetings. The members felt they had a duty to attend meetings, conduct council business on behalf of the community, to maintain order and ensure good governance. A sense of civic duty and pride, as well as regulations in the city customal, dictated regular attendance. Absenteeism from council meetings resulted in fines or threats of dismissal. In 1628 Edward Mabsten, a common councillor, was fined 6s 8d for failing to attend four meetings in a row and threatened with dismissal.⁶ However such action was a rare occurrence before 1640.

Freemen were regularly appointed to maintain the levels of those able to participate in local and burgess elections as well as supply a core of town officials. The total number of freemen in 1640 was around 250. On average the number of freemen added annually between 1621-1639 was ten to twelve. (fig.3) Like the councillors the freemen had to abide by certain regulations, which included residence within the liberties of the city. Nicholas Yeomanson was ordered to return to his residence in the city by Easter 1624 or be disenfranchised. An order recorded in the minute book for 12th April 1624 required the freemen to reside within the city, pay their assessments, take the oath and be loyal to the mayor; an entry that could simply be interpreted as a reminder to some freemen that they were no longer strictly adhering to the terms of their freedom, bearing in mind Yeomanson's recent absence. However, the entry stressed that the freemen had taken the 'corporall oath upon their admittance to their said freedome that they [would] be faithfull and obedient

⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 283, 336

Admission of number of freemen 1620-1662
Fig.3



unto the Maior...’, implying that a degree of disloyalty was being expressed by some of Rochester’s freemen.⁷

Peter Clark suggests there was an element of conflict between the citizens and Rochester council in the 1620s, referring to an entry in the city’s custumal of October 1624, which related to the annual mayoral elections. Rochester’s mayor, John Duling, issued an order then, detailing a new election procedure, as in the past the elections had been rather ‘tumultuous’ affairs. This annual event was regarded as both rowdy and confusing with all twelve aldermen standing for mayor. Rochester’s 1620 burgess election had also been a turbulent affair with the mayor, Thomas Rocke, and his allies meeting ‘in a secret and clandestine manner’ to elect Thomas Walsingham and Henry Clerke as M.P.s for the city. The corporation had failed to give the freemen sufficient notice of the election, a mere half an hour, and so were reported to the privileges committee. Rocke was berated by this committee for his actions, but the election result stood.⁸ During the 1620s there was a degree of conflict between Rochester corporation and the freemen, but this was mainly centred around election issues.

Tension was also evident between the citizens and Rochester council in the 1630s, resulting in direct action. For assessment purposes Little Burrough in Strood was included within the city limits for the first time in 1628 and marked by a bound stone. In 1635 the council had to replace the ‘bound stone’, which set out its jurisdiction. Apparently the original stone had recently been ‘plucked upp and not permitted to stand in’ its ‘owne proper place to signifie the extent of the said liberties’ by ‘some malevolent and ill disposed people who looke to disturbe the peace and quiett Government of the said Cittie and to debarre them of their rights and liberties...’. Some of Rochester’s townsfolk had resorted to riot. Such actions were considered a threat to the existing social order and the city’s good governance. A reference in the city’s custumal for 1637 gives the impression that there were still issues between the freemen and corporation over

⁷ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 86, 93; RCA/C2/1 ff. 79b-81a - See Chapter 1 f/n 9 for an explanation on the number of freemen estimated.

⁸ P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640*, (Hassocks, 1977) p. 341; Thrush & Ferris, *The History of Parliament*, Vol. II p. 206; MALSC, RCA/C2/1 ff. 83b-84b,

election procedures. The council had to remind the citizens of an ancient order, confirmed under the new charter of 1629, that only freemen who resided within the city's liberties and paid their taxes could vote at mayoral and burgess elections, indicating that some freemen had abused the regulations and not complied with the necessary prerequisites to be eligible to vote.⁹ Prior to 1640 there was a series of conflicts between the freemen and council, which although not tantamount to open rebellion, still impacted on the government of the city.

Robert Tittler contends that in the early seventeenth century town government became increasingly elitist and oligarchic. Peter Clark and Paul Slack maintain that as a consequence many citizens were excluded from political power and decision-making, which created factionalism between citizens and corporations, leading to a period of social disorder. However Rochester corporation's procedure for appointing its members was always restrictive and, so, by nature exclusive. In 1624 Rochester corporation simplified its election process for the aldermen with the surviving members nominating two contenders, whose names were then put before the whole council to elect a replacement. Previously all the common councillors had stood. Any new common councillors were simply selected from the ranks of the freemen by the aldermen. The 1629 charter clarified the election process somewhat; the whole council was involved in the nomination and election procedure for both the vacant alderman and councillor posts.¹⁰ Rochester's freemen, therefore, never had any say in the selection of councillors.

Rochester's restructuring of its mayoral election procedure in 1624, however, impacted on the freemen's right to choose the mayor. The council regarded the whole procedure as disorderly, as the 'elleccions the rather many tymes fall out to be tumultuous...'. A decision was, therefore, made that rather than putting up all twelve aldermen as candidates for mayor, in future two or three would be nominated to stand by the aldermen instead. According to the custumal this allowed the voters to 'freely debate and give their voyces', which had been

⁹ MALSC, RCA/C2/1 ff. 88b-89a, 113a-113b

¹⁰ Bartlett, *The City of Rochester Charters*, pp. 28-29, 33, 69-70; MALSC, RCA/C2/1 ff. 83b-84b, RCA/A1/1 f. 277

impossible under the past disordered system.¹¹ This new process narrowed the choice of Rochester's freemen from twelve candidates down to two or three, restricting their decision-making powers considerably after 1624.

Halliday has suggested that a royal charter would bind a city such as Rochester closely to the King. Most incorporated cities and boroughs were, therefore, conservative politically and supported Charles I in the years immediately preceding 1640.¹² There is no hint in the above evidence that Rochester was anything but loyal to the King in this period with several future 'Royalists' amongst the local councillors, including the Cobham, Dirkin and May families.

2. 1640-1643

Council attendance in this period was much the same as pre-1640. Only in 1641 was there a significant rise and that can be explained by important business transacted then, which is discussed below. However the trend in the number of freemen appointed in this period was higher than previously, especially in 1640 when twenty-nine were created. One possible explanation is that this was a reaction to events occurring nationally in 1640-1643 with men more politically in tune with Parliament being given the freedom and in turn electing a series of four pro-Parliamentarian mayors.¹³

Madeleine Jones suggests that Rochester was strongly Royalist in August 1642 when Sandys' Parliamentarian troops entered the city. Rochester corporation had nine councillors with known Royalist sympathies at this stage.¹⁴ However, several political incidents in 1641-2 support the notion that Rochester corporation also had a minority, but influential grouping, with broadly pro-

¹¹ Bartlett, *The City of Rochester Charters*, pp. 28-29, 33, 69-70; P. Clark & P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700*, (Oxford, 1976) pp. 132-134; R. Tittler, *The Reformation and the towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c1540-1640*, (Oxford, 1998) pp. 142, 145-146; p. 6; MALSC, RCA/C2/1 ff. 83b-84b; RCA/A1/1 f. 277

¹² Halliday, *Dismembering the body politics*, pp. xiii, 33

¹³ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 543, 556-557, 572, 586; RCA/C2/1 f. 114b -The mayors elected were Philip Ward in 1640, Edward Hawthorne in 1641, Barnabas Walsall in 1642 and John Philpott in 1643.

¹⁴ There were a number of Royalist family blocs within the council; these included George & Thomas May, the three Cobhams, Alexander & Henry Dirkin, Richard & William Head, who were linked to Francis Merritt by marriage. John Codd also appears to have come from a Royalist family. Two of these members had died by 1642.

Parliamentarian sympathies at the outbreak of the Civil War.¹⁵ As a powerful ‘Royalist’ family the Cobhams felt they should dominate local politics. Three of them were councillors in 1640; the father, John, and his two sons, William and John. George Cobham, the brother of John senior, also held the post of sergeant-at-mace. The first incident occurred in September 1641. John Cobham junior was annoyed, because he had not been elected an alderman on the death of his father earlier that year. Rochester’s custumal records that: ‘John Cobham one of the Comon Counsell of the said Citty hath wilfully in regard hee could not procure himselfe to bee an Alderman of the Citty according to his expectacion both in his speeches languages & behaviour contemned the Magestracy & government of this Citty.’ Cobham had either been overlooked as a candidate or simply not been elected by his fellow councillors. His reaction was to be abusive to the local officers, including the mayor Philip Ward, and ridicule the local civic ritual by getting William Streaton, a labourer, to go into ‘everie Taverne thereof in a Gowne with a white staffe in his hands in imitation & derision of the said Maior...’. Parading around in the local inns in this manner mocked both the civic ritual and current mayor. Unless he was punished and dismissed from office it was felt that he ‘would bee an encouragement to others to offend in the like kind & soe in tyme bee a meanes to cause Authority to bee despised & frowned att & to disturbe the quiett and peaceable government of the said Citty.’ John Cobham had in his actions undermined the position of mayor and stability of the city government. The manner in which he lampooned the mayor suggests this was more than resentment at not being selected by the corporation, but rather a personal attack upon the mayor.¹⁶

William Cobham was also embroiled in a political episode in November 1642 when he fell out with George Robinson. ‘And whereas the said William Cobham did ...in the Guildhall of the said Citty... call Mr George Robinson one of the Aldermen of the said Citty & formerly Maior & Justice of peace for the said Citty (as knave) & then used unto the said Mr Robinson verie manie abusive

¹⁵ One Parliamentary family bloc existed within the council. See Chapter 1 Page 7. Others that demonstrated a definite Parliamentary allegiance through their connections with the KCC were Philip Ward, Barnabas Walsall, John Philpott and Edward Whitton. Another probable Parliamentary was Robert Halstead with close friendship ties to Hawthorne.

¹⁶ Jones, ‘The Political History,’ pp. 65-66; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 556; RCA/C2/1 f. 114a

words & evill languages.’ Rochester city minutes indicate that there had been ‘differances & controversies’ between Robinson and William Cobham over a period of time. Although the minutes show Cobham had abused the other aldermen on occasions, he particularly singled out Robinson for the full vent of his anger. The Cobhams’ attacks on the aldermen and mayor were politically motivated and a reaction to being squeezed out of local power by certain Parliamentarians within Rochester council. Both opponents later dominated the Parliamentarian bloc on the council and worked for the Kent county committee. John Cobham’s actions signify that Philip Ward was behind his failure to be promoted to alderman. William Cobham’s attack on George Robinson indicates that he similarly felt politically thwarted, but the events behind his actions are unrecorded. Ward and Robinson had, by their actions, pushed the Cobhams into reacting rashly, which resulted in their exclusion from city government. Their removal from office had the effect of cleansing the council of a ‘Royalist’ family. A further incident in 1641 saw an instance of riot against the enclosed ‘common’ land of George Cobham. Andy Wood contends that enclosure rioting regained its momentum between 1641-3, whilst John Morrill and John Walter’s essay highlights that these enclosure rioters specifically targeted Royalist landowners in this period.¹⁷ Again indicating that the above riot was a concerted local effort to target the ‘Royalist’ Cobham family.

Although they made up less than half the councillors, the Parliamentarians managed to influence the corporation in 1641-2 and reduce the Royalist representation on the council. William Cobham was, in fact, readmitted as a councillor in 1643 leaving seven Royalists in city government. There was probably a third grouping in the council in this period; neutrals. John Puckle resigned as a common councillor in May 1642 after taking up the role of parish clerk to St Nicholas church. Yet many councillors held other parish offices. This post could well have been Puckle’s excuse to leave the council and so escape the

¹⁷ MALSC; RCA/A1/1 ff. 557, 574, 579; A. Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and popular Politics in early modern England*, (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 91, 137-145; J. Morrill & J. Walter, ‘Order and disorder in the English Revolution,’ in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson, (eds.) *Order and disorder in early modern England*, (Cambridge, 1987) pp. 139-141

political scene. Another two councillors, John King and Francis Brett, were later dismissed from the corporation for their political non-alignment.¹⁸

Rochester council had a diverse political makeup in 1643, but this was not necessarily a reflection of the political opinion of its citizens. The pro-Parliamentarian Blount petition of May 1642, claimed to have been signed by at least six thousand in the county of Kent, would be a good indicator of the strength of Parliamentarian support in Rochester. Recent analysis of the original petition, preserved in the Parliamentary Archives of the Houses of Lords Record Office, by Jacqueline Eales and a group of her students has identified 4,176 signatures. From the title of the document it was also representative of the city of Rochester, but there is no page attached bearing Rochester names or from its hundred of Toltingtrough. T. Woods argues that speed was of the essence in getting the petition to Parliament in early May and so Blount ordered that only those signatures already gathered up should be delivered to Westminster. Rochester's page of signatures, along with others, probably never reached Parliament. A handful of Rochester's naval elite signed the petition on the page covering the hundred of Chatham and Gillingham, suggesting that they did so in Chatham.¹⁹

Reports in August 1642 give a divided impression of Rochester's loyalty. Edwin Sandys, the Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, was ordered to secure Kent for Parliament. His letter to the Earl of Essex, dated 20th August, stated that his troop had been received by 'the Mayor of Rochester, and the rest of that city, ...with the greatest love and alacrity that might be.' A True Relation, a letter from a Parliamentarian soldier, also indicates that the troops were welcomed and accommodated within the city: 'The next day we went to Rochester, where

¹⁸ MALSC; RCA/A1/1 ff. 567, 585, 625 - The Royalists John May, John Cobham senior and Codd died between 1640-3 and John Cobham junior was never reinstated. For the Parliamentarian and Royalist breakdown see f/ns 13-14 above. Amongst those that may have been unaligned were George Gunton and William Faunce, who appear to conform after 1643.

¹⁹ PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121, Main Papers, The Humble Petition... (17th May 1642); J. Eales, 'Alan Everitt and the Community of Kent revised', in J Eales and A Hopper (eds.), The County Community in seventeenth century England and Wales, (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012) pp. 13-36 – In particular f/n 46; T. Woods, Prelude to Civil War, 1642: Mr Justice Malet and the Kentish Petitions, (Wilton, 1980) p. 83

wee had very good respect from all and made our abode there two dayes.’ On the other hand the Parliamentary diurnal account casts a different slant on the people’s reactions to their arrival; ‘we came to Strood, neer Rochester, where we heard of great preparations against us...’. Sandys’ Parliamentary forces anticipated a ‘pitcht battail’ at Rochester Bridge from the accounts of the fleeing gentry they encountered en route. Colonel Sandys, having held talks with some of the city magistrates, decided that they would not surrender the city without force. A large troop descended on Rochester, but met with little resistance. The diurnal report went on to comment that: ‘We cannot say we found such love in Rochester...’. However the reference was a comparison of Rochester and Chatham’s reactions to events; not a comment that Rochester was disloyal. From this Parliamentary account it is obvious that Sandys expected more resistance than he actually encountered. Whether Rochester councillors were opposed to the Parliamentary force or merely against troops entering the city is uncertain. Roger Howell has stressed that towns were very conservative and out to protect their own local interests by staying neutral. In this manner a town demonstrated no allegiance to either side and hoped to avoid becoming a battleground for opposing forces. Rochester had accommodated a very unruly troop in 1640, which had brought mayhem to the city and, so, the corporation may have wished to avoid a similar situation.²⁰ Rochester citizens and council outwardly welcomed Sandys’ troops, but they were there on sufferance rather than greeted with open arms.

Sandys obviously had doubts about Rochester’s loyalty as he requested 250 extra troops to act as guards in the Medway Towns on 20th August 1642. However a few days later the House of Commons ordered Captain Richard Lee, M.P. for Rochester, to muster, train and command the Rochester militia assisted by the Mayor and aldermen of the city. Thereby signifying that the city could be trusted with the task of raising troops for Parliament as well as ensuring the defence of the city in 1642 following its acquisition by the Parliamentarians. Questions were again raised in 1643 over forces based at Rochester. This was at

²⁰ CSPD 1640 pp. 539-540; CSPD 1641-1643 pp. 374-375; J.W., A true relation of the later Expedition into Kent, (1642) pp. 1-2; A perfect Diurnall of the severall passages in our late journey into Kent,(1642) pp. 2-4; Howell, ‘Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment’, pp. 72-74

the height of the insurrection in West Kent in July 1643. Rochester was considered a likely target for the rebels due to its strategic defence works and nearby dockyard. Although Richard Lee, Captain of the forces at Rochester, was deemed to be ‘a man of integritie and uprightnesse unto the Cause of God, and the proceedings of Parliament, yet many (if not all) of his Souldiers have too much of the malignant spirit in them’.²¹ Whilst Parliament considered Rochester’s M.P. and councillors loyal, there were continuing doubts as to the allegiance of the local militia, implying that some citizens were not in favour of the Parliamentary control of the city.

Rochester also came under the close scrutiny of the Kent County Committee in this period, as its meetings were held at the Crown Inn in the city. Sir Richard Hardres reported from the Committee to the House of Commons in November 1643 that Robert Fowler of Rochester had refused to take the Solemn League and Covenant of September 1643, which every male over fifteen was required to take to demonstrate their loyalty to Parliament. Fowler ‘hath not only Refused the Covenant 4 severall tymes, But hath appeared as a Champion, for defence of not taking it. Saying it is not only against his Conscience, But Inconsistent with an oath formerly taken by him to the King.’ His actions in actively encouraging others to refuse the oath meant he posed a threat to both the committee and city authorities. Robert Fowler was a Royalist, who held positions in the navy, the Tower and Rochester’s customhouse. A Royalist holding so many powerful posts was a threat to the security of the city, navy and Parliament. The county committee were, therefore, after his removal: ‘Wee confess were it in our power, our Consciences would not permit his keeping of three such place[s], showing so much ill affection to the Publique’. In December 1643 his delinquency was referred to the various committees concerned, but the only outcome recorded is for the customhouse post. Philip Ward replaced him in that role. Despite the Kent County Committee’s local presence no other cases are recorded, which would indicate that Rochester council had clamped down on other known Royalist delinquents especially with two of its aldermen on the county committee in 1643, Barnabas Walsall and Edward Hawthorne. Unlike the Cobhams, some

²¹ LJ Vol. 2 23/8/1642; *The Speciall Passages...*(18-22 July 1643) p.16; CSPD 1641-1643 pp. 374-375

with Royalist sympathies were prepared to work with the Parliamentarians in the early 1640s before distinct splits and party lines emerged. Francis Merritt, a Royalist alderman, actively secured the ferryboats for the Kent County Committee at the height of the West Kent insurrection in 1643.²²

These various sources portray a different picture of Rochester's allegiance in 1642 than that described by Jones as Royalist. Political allegiance within Rochester corporation was split between 1641-1643, as it was amongst the ordinary citizens. Whilst the Parliamentary grouping appeared to control the council in this period, they never numbered more than half the councillors with the Royalists making up about a quarter after 1642.²³ There were also a possible group of neutrals in the council and the allegiance of another four, who died in the early 1640s, is impossible to gauge. With the exception of the Cobhams the remaining Royalist sympathisers in the council do not appear to have challenged the Parliamentary grouping or caused friction within the corporation at this time.

3. 1644-1646

The appointment of freemen in this period was remarkably low compared with the preceding twenty years, suggesting that the political allegiance of the pool available was in doubt. (fig.3) Their allegiance was very fickle, returning a Presbyterian, neutral and Royalist mayor between 1644-1646.²⁴ Some of the freemen appointed in 1644 were immediately selected as councillors, giving the impression that they were specifically made freemen to fill council vacancies. Richard Paxford and Richard Cobby's rapid transition from freemen to councillors was an attempt by the Parliamentary grouping to gain further

²² CJ Vol. 3 12/12/1643; Bod Lib, Nalson MS III, Report from Kent County Committee to the Speaker, November 1643, ff. 207-208; HMC Portland MS, Vol. 1, Letter Sir Richard Hardres to Lenthall 30/11/1643; R. Almack (ed.), Papers relating to proceedings in the county of Kent AD 1642-AD 1646, (Camden Society, 1854) pp. 12, 17-18, 22, 35; TNA, SP28/158 Part 1, Philip Ward KCC A/c 1646; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 502, 504

²³ Between 1640-3 five council members died, one resigned and one was dismissed. The new additions in 1640 (John King), in 1641 (Frances Austen and William Faunce), and in 1643 (Richard Wye junior, George Gunton and James Cripps) were a mixture of Parliamentarians and those that were unaligned. William Head, added in 1642, came from a Royalist family.

²⁴ The mayors in question were Whitton, Francis Brett and Francis Merritt.

support on the council following the death of several members in the period 1642-4.²⁵

Council attendance for this period was fairly constant with usually at least half of the members present at meetings. This is despite the fact that very little business was recorded in 1644-5. On the surface it appears that city government was mundane and not entered into the minute books. However various entries for 1646 cast a different light on this period of 'silence'. Catherine Patterson maintains that council minute books and other records tended to reflect only unanimity in this period. If discord existed it was often simply not recorded and blanks left in the records. In September 1646 three Rochester councillors were effectively removed from office for non-attendance; an event unparalleled in the preceding twenty-five years of city record keeping. Rochester corporation underwent a period of turmoil between 1644-1646, which would explain the apparent 'silence' in the Rochester minutes, which, as Patterson contends, was to give an illusion of normality and harmony. An example of this are the mayoral elections; none of which were recorded between 1644-1646. Although the city minutes rarely record this process in any great depth, previously there was at least an acknowledgment of the event. During October 1646, shortly after the above dismissals, an order went out to the constables of the city to carry out searches and 'such other things as shall conduce to the good government of this City'. Again implying that Rochester city governance had undergone a period of disorder.²⁶

Jones considers that Rochester was Parliamentary between 1644-1646 and that neutralism had run its course by 1642. However in the wake of the above this view needs reassessment. Rochester had a core of Parliamentarians in 1644, numbering around nine. At least six of these were aldermen active on behalf of the Kent County Committee. Five of these aldermen would best be described as Presbyterians politically. Philip Ward played a major role on the committee

²⁵ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 542, 556, 558, 570, 585, 607; RCA/C2/1 f. 96b -Paxford and Cobby were made freemen in June 1644 and councillors in September 1644. Paxford was probably Presbyterian in terms of political allegiance, whilst Cobby shied away from political alignment.

²⁶ C. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in early modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite and the Crown 1580-1640*, (Stanford, 1999), pp. 90-91; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 336, 621, 625, 628

between 1644-1647 as an accountant, clerk, and a sequestration committee member. John Philpott served as a Kent committeeman between 1645-1647. Together with Edward Whitton and George Robinson, a religious Presbyterian, he also acted as a collector and accountant for the county committee in this period. Barnabas Walsall was a committeeman in 1643 and appears to have distanced himself from his Royalist kinsman, Thomas Stanley of Maidstone, during the 1640s; their correspondence becoming somewhat terse.²⁷ The allegiance of Edward Hawthorne, an alderman and Kent committeeman, and Richard Wye, poses a problem. Both men were religious Independents, but politically probably more 'moderate'.²⁸ There were also seven Royalist members serving in 1644 as well as at least two men, who seem to have outwardly conformed to the Parliamentary cause.²⁹ The allegiance of two further councillors is indeterminable in 1644. Events recorded in the Rochester minutes for 1646 would indicate that a neutral grouping also existed around this time; numbering four.

In 1646 neutrality was no longer a political option for these men. As Everitt has concluded the situation had changed politically by 1646 and those with a neutralist outlook, who had been tolerated within the Kent County Committee previously, were from then clearly cast as enemies and either removed or resigned from office. Rochester council carried out an internal purge in September 1646, removing three councillors due to absenteeism. Both John King and James Cripps had not attended meetings for some time and had left the city. Halliday argues that this form of absenteeism was used as a means to avoid commitment to a group. By absenting themselves from the council King and Cripps had opted out of politics and taken a neutral stance. Richard Cobby was also missing for most of his term as a councillor and was similarly dismissed. His non-attendance may have been to avoid commitment to either side, but in 1650

²⁷ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 63, 75; TNA, SP28/158 Part 1, Ward A/cs 1646, SP28/159, Philpott A/cs 1647; SP28/235; SP28/355/3; CJ Vol. 3 6/11/1644; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', p. 503; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 3, 18-19; Robertson, 'Dallison Documents', pp. 363, 368-371. The other Presbyterians councillors were Paxford and Halstead.

²⁸ TNA, SP18/16/124 – Their political views probably converged with the Presbyterians till late 1646.

²⁹ The Royalist aldermen were Thomas May, Alexander & Henry Dirkin and Merritt; the Royalist councillors were William Cobham, Richard & William Head. The conformists included William Faunce and George Gunton.

he appeared to briefly ‘conform’ on his reselection. Francis Brett, an alderman and mayor in 1645-6, was likewise dismissed in July 1647, following six months non-appearance at council meetings. All four dismissed councillors ensured that they were not only absent from the council, but also the city, guaranteeing that they would not become embroiled in partisan politics. Halliday would deem that these men had effectively excluded themselves from city government.³⁰ By removing themselves from the political arena the neutrals also reduced the potential for conflict in Rochester city government, as this left the Royalists in a clear minority.

Whether the Parliamentary grouping was acting alone or at the behest of the Kent County Committee in carrying out this purge is unclear. However this purge and the death of two other councillors effectively left space for five new members to be selected to the common council and for the Parliamentary grouping to ensure that they were at least outwardly loyal. Two of these new councillors were probably Presbyterian and two possible conformists. William Paske’s allegiance can only be determined by his later actions, which indicate he was politically inclined towards the Independents; at this stage he was possibly a moderate.³¹ By the end of 1646 Rochester council consisted of twelve men loyal to Parliament with a further four councillors, who outwardly supported this group. This twelve consisted of three moderate Independents and nine Presbyterians.³² Rochester council still contained seven Royalists including the mayor, Francis Merritt, and three aldermen. In the period 1644-1646 various groupings had a role in city government, but as a direct result of the purge the Presbyterians had gained the upper hand by 1646. Jones’ interpretation that Rochester council was Parliamentary in this period can only be accepted with certain caveats. Her assessment does not allow that various disparate groups also existed and made this a far from foregone conclusion. The Parliamentary grouping only achieved a majority in the council for most of 1644-1646 through absenteeism.

³⁰ Everitt, ‘Kent and its Gentry’, pp. 298-299; Halliday, *Dismembering the body politic*, pp. 59-60, 63, 80-82; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 625, 628, 639, 682

³¹ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 625 -The men selected were:- Thomas Mott, Matthew Parker, Gilbert Young, John Cooper, and William Paske.

³² Included amongst the Presbyterians are; Ward, Walsall, Philpott, Whitton, Halstead, Paxford and George Robinson as well as the first two named in f/n 31.

Although city government underwent a period of upheaval between 1644-1646, Rochester's Presbyterian aldermen actively supported the Parliamentary cause in those years. Many of these aldermen worked with the Kent County Committee to thwart any possible Royalist threat and guarantee the security of the city. Philip Ward, as Lieutenant of the Rochester trained band, was paid by the Kent County Committee in 1642-3 for 'examining such persons as were suspicious' and 'perusing of letters' to ensure that suspect correspondence was seized. It was a task that he undertook throughout the 1640s. In February 1646 Messieurs Montereul and Sabran complained to Parliament that the French King's correspondence and envoy had been detained and interfered with by Ward at Rochester. Several aldermen were also active in ensuring that Rochester was strongly defended against any Royalist attack, particularly in 1645 when a rising occurred in Kent, and made certain that the city remained loyal to Parliament. Two assessments were raised and collected by the accountants, Philip Ward and John Philpott, in this period to build bulwarks to defend Rochester. This action secured the city against the rebels. In addition the city was fortified with extra troops at this time to prevent attack and the garrison duly discharged in 1646 once the threat had passed.³³ It could be argued that this was a localist response to preserve the status quo and keep outsiders at bay. Rochester corporation certainly wanted stability and, so, defended the city from outside forces and invasion. However, Rochester corporation also worked closely with the Kent County Committee to defend Rochester Bridge, a strategic river crossing en route from London to Dover, suggesting an integrated approach to security rather than an inward focused reaction.

Rochester citizens' reactions are more difficult to gauge in this period, as very little evidence has survived. The fact that sixty-six Rochester citizens paid an assessment towards the cost of bulwarks at Rochester and Chatham in 1644 with no obvious complaint, suggests that they were prepared to bear the cost of defending the city and neighbouring dockyard for Parliament. Rochester

³³ CSPD 1645-1647 pp. 336, 472-473; LJ Vol. 8 9/2/1646, 14/2/1646; TNA, SP28/158 Part 1, Ward KCC A/cs; SP28/159, Philpott's KCC accounts 1646-1647; SP28/355/3 f. 11-The cathedral paid four soldiers to guard the bridge in 1645-1646; SP16/539/2; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 643, 646; A. Everitt (ed), 'An account book of the Committee of Kent 1646-1647', in Kent Archaeological Society (ed), A seventeenth century miscellany, (Ashford, 1960) p. 148 - There are payments in 1645-1647 for attending the guards on the bridge.

avoided any direct involvement in the 1645 insurrection in Kent, which would indicate a tacit allegiance to Parliament and no open Royalist support. However September 1646 saw the election of a Royalist mayor by the freemanry, which emboldened Robert Fowler and other Royalists to become more politically active. Fowler, despite his earlier animosity towards Parliament, carried out an inventory of the cathedral assets in December 1646 on behalf of the Kent County Committee.³⁴

4. 1647-1649

During this period council attendance was constant with just below half turning out for meetings until 1649 when it dropped significantly. Rochester council minutes indicate that in 1648 at the height of the Second Civil War, and in particular the Kent Rebellion, no council meetings were held in August nor was a record kept of attendance between June and September. With neither attendance nor any business recorded for these months no actual council meetings probably took place. The corporation may simply have listed the meetings to create a semblance of normality. Rochester's freeman base was also largely neglected in 1647-8 only returning to a regular number of appointments in 1649. (fig. 3) Similarly the chamberlain's accounts are non-existent for 1647-8 although the ones either side are complete.³⁵ Obviously events of 1648 had a dramatic and negative impact on council business, which is explored below.

There was a smooth political transition from the previous period into 1647. Philip Ward acted as treasurer for the county committee in 1647, whilst John Philpott, Matthew Parker and William Paske carried out duties as collectors and accountants. An assessment was raised in 1647 specifically to make bulwarks for the defence of the city. This was in response to a perceived threat by those disaffected to Parliament in early 1647. The Kent County Committee accounts also show payments for guards and a magazine at Rochester Bridge during most of 1647. Rochester worked with the committee throughout 1647 in order to ensure the city remained within Parliamentary hands. In the summer of 1647

³⁴ TNA, SP16/539/2, SP 28/235, Kent County Committee records, unfoliated

³⁵ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 651-656; Patterson, Urban Patronage, pp. 90-91

an outbreak of plague occurred in Rochester. Despite the threat of the plague spreading, the city was happy to accommodate the quartering of troops in August 1647. Reactions by the corporation to a similar incident in January 1648 were not quite so accommodating, fearing that the outbreak of plague would spread unless contained. The mayor, Philip Ward, and aldermen wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Jobbs, requesting they quarter elsewhere. However the letter was couched in conciliatory tones; it was ‘not the intent of that City to show the least opposition ...’ to Sir Thomas Fairfax or his forces. On the surface Rochester council was still behind Parliament in early 1648 despite having three sets of troops quartered upon the city in the space of eight months under difficult circumstances.³⁶

However hints of resistance had started to emerge within Rochester council. Francis Brett, the mayor in 1645-6, was threatened with dismissal in the summer of 1647 after six months absence and was believed to have ‘gonn into some parish beyond the Seas...’. Once his mayoralty was completed, as a neutral, Brett had no compunction leaving both city government and the town. William Cobham replaced him as alderman in September 1647. Both Cobham and the elected mayor for 1646-7, Francis Merritt, were strong Royalists, indicating there was a resurgence in Royalist support within Rochester council and amongst the freemen. Rochester’s citizens had also endured a siege mentality for several years and by late 1647 had had enough, challenging the need for the bulwarks, which they considered a ‘great annoyance’ to business.³⁷ In the wake of changing local opinion the above letter could be interpreted in a different light. Following the Christmas Riots at Canterbury and the arrest of the rioters by this same troop the council may have tried to resist their billeting in Rochester, fearing a negative reaction by its citizens. Outwardly Rochester was still solidly behind Parliament in early 1648, but underneath the surface were currents of discontent.

³⁶ TNA, SP28/158 Part 1, Ward A/cs; SP28/159, Philpott A/cs; CSPD 1645-1647 p.546; Everitt (ed.), ‘An account book of the Committee of Kent’, pp.146, 148; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 641-642; A declaration from the Isle of *Wyght*...(January 1647) pp. 2-3-There is also evidence of billeting in June 1647 under Hardres in *The Perfect Weekly Account* (June 7-14, 1647) p. O2

³⁷ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 625, 639, 643, 646

Despite these rumblings of discontent, neither the council nor the citizens were on the brink of open rebellion in January 1648. Nothing dramatic occurred in Rochester between January and early May 1648, but by the end of May Rochester was at the heart of the Kent Rising. What occurred in May 1648 to cause many in Rochester to openly revolt? On 11th May 1648 the Kentish petition was agreed and drawn up at the Grand Jury in Canterbury. This petition was to be circulated around Kent and then assembled together at Rochester with the intention of converging on Blackheath and from there marching to Westminster to hand in the petition to Parliament. The petitioners requested that Parliament should listen to their grievances concerning: a failure to reach an amicable settlement with the King, the continuous use of a standing army, the sidelining of the constitution and laws as they saw it, and unlawful taxation. Parliament, on becoming aware of these proposed actions, notified the Kent County Committee on 13th May ‘that a popular meeting is fixed towards the latter end of this month at Rochester, and after that [one] at Black-Heath. As such meetings may prove dangerous, we desire you to keep an eye thereupon and endeavour to preserve the peace of that county.’ The Kent County Committee reacted by issuing a declaration at Maidstone on 16th May, banning all public assemblies and disassociating themselves from the petition. This declaration was to be read out the following day in Maidstone marketplace and on Sunday 21st May in all the parish churches throughout the county.³⁸

Kent’s rebels responded to this declaration by issuing one of their own: The Manifest of the County of Kent, which was produced around 19th-20th May. This document spelt out the rebels’ scorn at their treatment by the committee: this is ‘a vindication of ourselves and purposes, from the scandall, and aspersions of the *Committee of this County...*’. The rebels’ manifesto did not elaborate on their demands contained in the petition, but was rather a personal attack upon the committee. ‘We have resolved to charge the said Committee with encreasing the Taxes of this County above the due proportions, and onely for maintaining their owne private luxury & pride; with usurping a power over the Estates & fortunes

³⁸ The Humble Petition of the Knights, Gentry, Clergy, and Commonalty of the County of Kent... (11 May 1648) pp. 2-5; CSPD 1648-1649 p. 67; M. Carter, A most true and exact Relation of that as Honourable as unfortunate Expedition..., pp. 18-20

of the Free-men of this County not granted to them by any power of Parliament; with a tyrannical & imbitter'd spirit naturally ingrafted in them, and expressed by words & actions, all along the exercise of power...to the exasperating of the peoples hearts into all animosity, & overthrowing of all love and peace in the county...' Parliament also wrote to the local M.P., Richard Lee, on 15th May warning him of the potential threat to Rochester: 'We are informed of designs to disturb the peace of that county and to raise the people in a tumultuous way. The place where you are is a considerable pass, and care taken there to hinder such tumultuous concourse may much conduce to the preservation of the peace of that county.'³⁹ Rochester was, thus, perceived by Parliament as a strategic point that controlled access to London from the county.

It was against this backdrop that Rochester became embroiled in the rising on 20th May 1648. A Rochester correspondent reported on 21st May: that 'Yesterday we had a rumour spread abroad about out this Towne' that a troop 'of Horse, were comming hither from the Army to plunder the Town, and quarter here and carry away divers Inhabitants, for joining in a petition on Foot, for the King, which caused a discontent in many who seemed to beleve the truth of it...'. The rising in Rochester started late on 20th May and continued the next morning. Within a few hours 300 to 400 men had gathered, including many from the ships in the river and dockyard. They took the magazine in the city and set up their own guard on Rochester Bridge. Rochester's correspondent added that efforts had been made to pacify the rebels and 'the mutiny this night is pretty well appeased...'. The Kingdome Weekly Intelligencer, a newspaper for foreign distribution, remarked that 'Letters from Rochester speake of an insurrection there ... yesterday, which before it grew into a high flame, was most happily composed', reassuring its readers that the incident had been quickly dealt with.⁴⁰ Rochester, although awash with rebels on 21st May, had been calmed and the Mayor, Philip Ward, was still in control of the city.

³⁹ The Manifest of the County of Kent, (May 1648); Carter, *A most true and exact Relation*, pp. 26-30; CSPD 1648-1649 p. 68

⁴⁰ *A Letter from Kent of the rising at Rochester...* (22 May 1648) pp. 1-3; The Kingdome Weekly Intelligencer, No. 261 (16-23 May 1648) p. 952

Rochester council was made up of three distinct factions in May 1648; ‘disaffected’ Presbyterians, Royalists and those Presbyterian or moderate Independents, who remained loyal to Parliament. The first two groups acted separately until their paths converged on 29th May. Philip Ward, a Presbyterian rebel, related to both Richard Lee and the Newman family by marriage, was heavily involved in the events of May 1648. Together with others of his extended family he mediated between Parliament and the rebels. When this failed several of this extended family were prepared to fight the county committee and Parliament to preserve their perceived constitutional rights; no standing army, the right to petition, no unlawful taxation. Following the rising at Rochester on 21st May, Ward interceded with Parliament on behalf of the city and its residents. He had been proactive in the Parliamentary cause for the past five years and, thus, his reasons for challenging the Kent County Committee and Parliament in May are a good indicator of the opinion of the other ‘disaffected’ Presbyterian councillors.⁴¹

Ward’s letter of 21st May, addressed to Parliament, clearly set out the problems that the city had faced over the past four years. This letter was delivered to Parliament by his brother-in-law Richard Lee. Ward stated that he was expressing the opinions of Rochester citizens, but the letter clearly indicates he was also conveying his own views. His most pressing concern was the rumour that another regiment was to be imposed on the city having just quartered three units in the past year. The mayor and citizens were also apprehensive at the reaction of the county committee to Rochester being the assembly point for the Kentish petition and the committee’s threats to punish the petitioners. They feared that the Kent County Committee had sent this regiment ‘(to be quartered here,) for the stifling of a petition intended to be humbly presented to this honourable house from this county of Kent, and for fining and plundering the petitioners; together with the expresses of one of the said committee, to have two of the chiefest of the petitioners in every parish hanged; and of another that

⁴¹ Amongst these disaffected Presbyterians were Edward Whitton, Barnabas Walsall and Richard Paxford as well as Ward; Hovenden (ed.), *Philpott: Visitation*, p. 56; Armtage (ed.), *Visitation of Kent*, p. 119

would not step across the way to save all the souls in this city...'.⁴² Ward was indicating that it was the Kent County Committee, not Parliament, which he and the citizens were blaming for recent events. Thus the councillors and citizens were expressing their political opinion at the intervention of the Kent County Committee in the circulation of this petition.

Other issues broached by Ward were the economic burdens of quartering, guard duty and taxation. We 'having been burdened with a constant guard, consisting of fourteen men every day and night, by the space of four years together, besides the charge of powder, match, and other provisions, for which, though promised, they [we] could never as yet receive satisfaction; and having been often oppressed for several months with free quarter and other great charges, occasioned by the quartering and removal of soldiers, and yet their [our] taxes, ...which have been free, exactly levied upon them [us]...'. After four years of hardship and interference, the threat of a further troop descending on the city was the final straw for Rochester citizens. The mayor was careful to reassure those in authority that their intention was not to oppose Parliament, but to seek the redress of certain issues through mediation and that this step would pacify the citizens. We 'stand upon their [our] guard...declaring ...only to defend themselves [ourselves] and estate from violence and plunder by soldiers...yet lest this course...might beget an opinion that there was something thereby intended to disturb the peace and quiet of this county, we are bold humbly to offer to this honourable house, ... that as by your diligence and care, and the mediation of captain Lee and captain Westroe, members of this honourable house, the people are already pacified...'. He went on to claim that 'some assurance given that there is no intention of this honourable house to move the people to any fears of soldiers to be brought upon them' would ensure 'that the peace and quiet of this place will be preserved for the future...'. Richard Lee went in person to the House of Commons on 21st May to present a report on the rising and mediate on behalf of the city and the mayor.⁴³ At this point Ward and the other Presbyterian councillors were seeking reconciliation and were pinning their hopes on Parliament's intervention in the situation.

⁴² Bod Lib, Tanner MS 57 f. 93

⁴³ *ibid*; A Letter from Kent of the rising at Rochester, p. 3

The Speaker of the House of Commons sent a reply to Philip Ward and others at Rochester qualifying its previous instructions to the Kent County Committee about petitioning and public assemblies. This letter, dated 22nd May, stated ‘That it never was their [our] intention to send any Forces into the County to suppress Petitioning, but only to disperse such as should Tumultuously assemble, under pretence of bringing up Petitions to the House, to disturb the Peace of the County and Kingdom, and to offer violence to the freedom of Parliament: But since both by your letter, and the relation of Captain Lee and Captain Westrow, they are satisfied of your readiness to yield obedience to the late Declaration of Parliament, directing the maner of presenting Petitions...’ and confirmed that no forces would be sent unless there was a rising in Kent. In addition to this Parliament sent down three Kent Members of the House, Lee, Westrow and Henry Oxinden, on 22nd May to try to defuse the situation at Rochester and elsewhere in Kent.⁴⁴ Parliament was at this time still seeking to avoid confrontation and willing to rein in the Kent County Committee.

Efforts made to mediate local concerns were overtaken by outsiders gathering at Rochester, who were Royalist and set upon a course of opposition to Parliament. On the 23rd May a Chatham Parliamentary reporter claimed that Rochester was now overrun with about a thousand rebels ready to defend the city against any Parliamentary troops. The Kentish petition was also ‘daily signed by additional hands’ and ‘the number is great that have joined in it.’ It was this scene, which greeted the above M.P.s on 23rd May, who had been sent to mediate with Philip Ward over his grievances. Due to the increasing numbers gathering at Rochester and escalation of direct action within the city, the three members were limited in what they could achieve. They obtained a ceasefire with effect from 24th May lasting for four days, but the rebel numbers continued to grow within the city.⁴⁵ At this stage Philip Ward was still in theory in charge of the city, but he had little control over the actions of the incomers.

⁴⁴ A Declaration of the Several Proceedings of both Houses of Parliament... (5 June 1648) pp. 4-5

⁴⁵ *Sad Newes out of Kent Certified in a Letter from Chattum...* (May 1648) pp. 1-3, 6; A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 4-6

The Earl of Thanet, aware that the county of Kent was on the brink of rebellion and that the three M.P.s had failed in their task to contain the gathering at Rochester and elsewhere in the county, offered to act as negotiator between Parliament and the rebels on 24th May. On 25th May Parliament agreed a compromise, which included an offer that once the rebels had laid down their arms and returned home their petition could be presented to the Houses of Parliament. These proposals were brought back later that day by the Earl of Thanet and shown firstly to the mayor and aldermen of Rochester with copies then dispersed all over Kent. An emergency meeting was held by a few of the rebel leaders at Sittingbourne on 26th May, including the Royalist, Francis Clerke, and Parliamentarian, George Newman, of Rochester. It was decided that a full meeting of Kent's rebel gentry was required to consider Parliament's proposals and, so, a brief letter was dispatched to the Committee at Derby House, stating that they would present their answer to Parliament by 5 o'clock the following afternoon.⁴⁶

The 'pretended' committee, as Peter Pett referred to the rebels' committee, sent their reply from Rochester on 27th May, but Sir Thomas Peyton, a Royalist and M.P. for Sandwich, did not deliver it till the following day. This letter was signed by eighteen men including Rochester's mayor Philip Ward, Edward Whitton an alderman of the city, Richard Lee junior the son of the local M.P., as well as George and James Newman. It stated: 'we have cause to believe, there are many persons now about your Lordships, who endeavor to infuse into you, very sinister opinions of our proceedings, in relation to the safety of the County at this time; who, when we shall be admitted to a fair and equal hearing, will appear to be the greatest Disturbers thereof themselves.' The subscribers to the letter declared that our 'intentions are free from all other ends then National Defence' and that they were happy to abide by the recent direction from Parliament for submitting their petition. However they were unwilling at this juncture to relinquish their weapons. 'We must desire your Lordships to put a fair interpretation upon our purposes of continuing within the safeguard of our Arms, till we have assurances from your Lordships, that the clamors of those

⁴⁶ A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 6-8; LJ Vol. 10 27/5/1648

above against us, have had no success in their enraged Design of engaging this County in Blood and Ruine, when they finde never so small a diminution of their Arbitrary power, so long exercised over us, endeavored to be taken from them...'. Whilst the earlier letter of 21st May had sought mediation this letter was much more forthright in tone, demanding action by Parliament in curtailing the power of the Kent County Committee.⁴⁷

On 27th May Philip Ward was still trying to defuse the situation at Rochester and persuade Parliament that the 'disaffected Parliamentarians' were just defending their liberties as well as themselves from the instigators of foment; the Kent County Committee. Despite the less conciliatory tone of this letter it still bore an unswerving loyalty to Parliament: 'That our present posture tends not to offer violence to the Parliament, nor suffers acts willingly unbeseeming our fair intentions, but do and shall take strict care to repress, wheresoever we finde it, the incensed Spirit we see in the people...'. Ward and a number of other councillors had become increasingly dissatisfied at the radical route adopted by the committee over the past year and had become estranged from it. Ward no longer acted in any capacity for the Kent County Committee after early 1647, suggesting his rift with them dates to then. Those who signed this letter of 27th May were members of the 'pretended committee' at Rochester, which contained both Royalists and Presbyterians.⁴⁸ There is no conclusive proof that Ward endorsed the Kentish petition, but Peter Pett included his name amongst two lists of agitators supplied to Parliament, whom he thought had signed the petition and joined in the rebellion. As late as 28th June Ward was active with George Newman in examining Cornelius Evans, the Royalist impostor, who masqueraded as the Prince of Wales, indicating that Ward had no truck with this Royalist deception.⁴⁹

Despite this, by 29th May 1648 circumstances had compelled Ward to realign himself with the Royalists. At its session on 29th May 1648 Parliament

⁴⁷ A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 9-10; LJ Vol. 10 29/5/1648; BL, Add MS 44846, Thomas Peyton's Papers, f. 44b; Everitt, The Community of Kent -Peyton was the nephew of Richard Lee.

⁴⁸ A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 9-10; 12-15

⁴⁹ HMC Portland MS Vol. 1 pp. 459-462; CJ Vol. 10 29/5/1648

deliberated over the rebels' letter of 27th May, concluding that the time for accommodation was over, as the rebels had refused to give up their arms unconditionally and were still planning to converge on Blackheath the next day. A final ultimatum was sent to the county that day by Parliament to either comply with their previous order or the troops would be sent into Kent. Until this point the Presbyterian rebels at Rochester had genuinely believed that Parliament would restrain the Kent County Committee. However this ultimatum forced the disaffected Presbyterians to reconsider Parliament's stance and many threw in their lot with the Royalist forces. News of Parliament's change of heart reached Rochester the same day. Ward's name was attached to orders that day to raise rebel troops, indicating that at this stage he considered the use of force inevitable.⁵⁰ On 30th May Ward appended his name to a letter from the rebel committee at Rochester addressed 'to the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the City of London', which was intercepted and brought to Parliament. No original of this or copy survives. However, from the papers seized by Fairfax in the aftermath of the battle at Maidstone, it is clear the rebels wanted to enlist the support of the Londoners and city council to set up an association, consisting of the south eastern counties, to unite and oppose Parliament. Once Ward put his name to that document he openly declared his opposition to Parliament. Fairfax arrested Ward on 4th June for putting his signature to various 'committee' documents. The Commons Journal of 19th June indicates that a further fifteen Rochester citizens were detained along with Ward for participation in the rebellion, one of whom was Richard Paxford, a fellow Presbyterian councillor. Jones maintains that Ward escaped punishment for his deeds because he acted under duress, but she does not cite her source. Ward was examined on 9th April 1649 by Parliament, but the original documents have been lost and so the outcome is unknown.⁵¹

Philip Ward was at the heart of rebel activity in Rochester and in the end prepared to use force to achieve his goal. He had the support of the extended

⁵⁰ CJ Vol. 10 29/5/1648; A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 12-13; Carter, A most true and exact Relation, p. 77; A letter from his Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers... (1648) p. 9

⁵¹ CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648; CJ Vol. 5 3/6/1648; Bod. Lib. Nalson MS 7, Fairfax's letter to the Speaker 4 June 1648, f. 12; A letter from his Excellency the Lord Fairfax, pp. 4, 7-9; Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 113, 115; HMC Leyborne-Popham, p. 13 – The archivist at Worcester College Library at Oxford confirms that the original document was not transferred to them with the Clarke Papers.

Lee-Newman family, who until this point had been largely loyal Parliamentarians. Ward, with the backing of this strong network, had been prepared to append his name to various letters and documents as mayor and figurehead for the city of Rochester. Nothing in the surviving documentation suggests that Ward was coerced by the Lee-Newman family to participate in the rebellion; if anything Ward appears to be the instigator of the mediation and used Richard Lee senior as an intermediary between Parliament and the city of Rochester. Jones suggests that although Rochester cooperated with the Royalists in 1648, the city may have been forced to do so. Whilst there is no denying that Rochester's Presbyterian councillors aligned themselves with the Royalists, this was through choice to obtain the political redress they sought, not coercion.

At this point the participation in the rebellion of Rochester's two main gentry families, the Newmans and Lees, needs further explanation. Sue Petrie, in a recent article, questioned whether the Lee family had 'pragmatically disguised their views in order to continue in public life...' or had 'abruptly changed sides...' in 1648. Richard Lee senior and George Newman were both members of the Kent County Committee from 1643-1648, suggesting at least a tacit allegiance to Parliament. Lee's biographer concludes he was a hard-working grassroots Presbyterian M.P, if not at the forefront of the political group at Westminster.⁵² There is nothing to indicate that the role of Captain Richard Lee senior went beyond acting as a mediator appointed by Parliament in the events of May 1648. He did not sign any correspondence, issue any orders, nor was he arrested afterwards or had to compound. In July 1648 Richard Lee senior was added to the Sequestration Committee for Kent, but was absent from Parliament for the 'regicide' vote and later sessions before the establishment of the Rump Parliament.⁵³ Colonel Richard Lee junior, son of the above, was a known delinquent prior to the rebellion. Warwick caught him in 1642 trying to leave the country and in March 1648, as a captain in the Parliamentary forces he was made to compound for 'having beene in Armes against the Parliament'. It is

⁵² J. T. Peacey, 'History of Parliament Trust, London', Unpublished article on Richard Lee of Great Delce in St Margaret's, Rochester, Kent for 1640-1660 section. I am grateful for the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft; Petrie, 'The religion of Sir Roger Twysden', pp. 148, 161; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 342, 502, 511

⁵³ CJ Vol. 5 29/7/1648; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, Appendix A

this Richard Lee, who signed the letter of 27th May 1648 to Parliament and was arrested by Thomas Fairfax along with Colonel George Newman at Penenden Heath.⁵⁴ Both these men and James Newman, the son of George, had to compound in 1651. The Newmans were disaffected Parliamentarians, but Lee junior was always a Royalist.

Neither Philip Ward nor any of the other Presbyterian rebel councillors were dismissed from office. Jones argues that after the 1648 insurrection most Kent rebel councillors refrained from attending civic meetings, ‘although in a few cases some bold spirits decided to brazen the matter out’. In Rochester all the Presbyterian rebels attended the first council meeting in October, which recorded the members present, feeling that they had little to hide. Two Presbyterian aldermen, Edward Whitton and Barnabas Walsall, were forced to compound in July 1651 for their participation in the events of May 1648. Richard Paxford, although arrested, was not made to compound, but his allegiance was questioned throughout the 1650s. Philip Ward disappeared from the council in 1651, but avoided any restitution for his actions.⁵⁵

An equal proportion of Rochester’s rebel councillors had a Royalist background. It is, therefore, not surprising that the city was selected as the assembly point for the petition as well as its easy accessibility to London. Matthew Carter, a Royalist army officer, states that on the back of every copy of the Kentish petition dispatched there was a postscript, requesting all signed copies to be brought to Rochester by 29th May 1648. Following the Kent County Committee’s declaration of 16th May, Rochester became the focal point for the petition and centre of rebel activity. On 17th May Roger L’Estrange, a Royalist agitator and author, drew up a letter in response to this declaration, which he had published. A Letter Declaratorie was a remonstrance addressed to ‘the Disturbers of the Peace’ and targeted the Kent County Committee, whom L’Estrange accused of spreading lies and promoting faction in the county. He

⁵⁴ LJ Vol. 5 22/6/1642; CCC Vol. IV pp. 460, 1686; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/257, Main Papers, Richard Lee Ordinance 4th April 1648, f. 109; The Lord Generals Letter in answer to the message of the Kentish-men... (London, 2 June 1648) p. 8;

⁵⁵ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 653-657, 672, 702; Jones, ‘The Political History’, p. 117 - See f/n 30 for the four concerned; CCC Vol. IV p. 460; CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648; CSPD 1656-1657 p. 576

personally delivered a copy of this letter to the rebels at Rochester. L'Estrange declared that 'Our addresses are to the Parliament, not you, and from them we shall await a seasonable Returne...'. At this stage the Royalist rebels were only prepared to deal with Parliament, not the county committee, whom they felt had betrayed them. According to L'Estrange over 27,000 people had signed the petition by 17th May. Carter, likewise, confirmed that the committee's declaration had the effect of bringing 'a more vigorous life to it [the petition], and made it fly through the County with a far greater velocity...'.⁵⁶

It was in the wake of L'Estrange's remonstrance that many Rochester citizens openly rebelled on 20th May. Both Royalist and Parliamentary accounts, at this point, conclude that Rochester had declared in favour of the King. John Rayney noted on the 22nd May, whilst attending a county committee meeting at Rochester, that he was told by the rebels that 'the Citty was for the Kinge' and not to bother about the meeting, as none of the committeemen would be welcome. *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, a Royalist newspaper, reported that 'since their securing Rochester, and the Magazines at Chattum and other places' the Royalists were in control of the county. Lee and Westrowe, returning from Parliament on 23rd May with instructions to appease the county, were viewed by the Royalists as traitors and, according to their accounts, detained. They 'did unworthily deceive our confidence, and abuse their [our] trust by presenting it unperfect, having first obliterated the most material passages...'. The document the two M.P.s had allegedly tampered with was Philip Ward's letter of 21st May, which they had delivered to the House of Commons. Ward's letter, deposited in the Bodleian Library in the Tanner MS, has not been amended or any part thereof erased.⁵⁷ There is no indication that the two members went to London with a rebel agenda. Lee and Westrowe accompanied a letter that as Presbyterian M.P.s they could not openly support. However, they were prepared to mediate between Parliament and their former allies; the disaffected

⁵⁶ Carter, *A Most True and exact Relation*, pp. 14, 20; R. L'Estrange, *L'Estrange His Vindication from the Calumnies of a Malitious Party in Kent*, (1649) pp. B1-B2; See DNB entries for Carter and L'Estrange.

⁵⁷ C. Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers*, Camden Series Vol III (London, 1899) pp. 13, 14, 16; *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, p. 2; L'Estrange, *His vindication*, p. B2; Carter, *A Most True and exact Relation*, p. 32; *A briefe Narration of some Arbitrary Proceedings of the committee chosen for the County of Kent*, p. 5; Bod Lib, Tanner MS 57 f. 93

Presbyterians. By 22nd May Rochester was firmly in the grip of the rebels and at the heart of the Kent Rebellion.

It is into this mix that Rochester's Royalist councillors became embroiled in the last ten days of May 1648. Thomas May, a member of the 'pretended' committee, approached Peter Pett on 23rd May to get his signature on the Kentish petition and arrange for its circulation in the dockyard as well as to borrow arms. Unlike the Presbyterian Philip Ward, who sought conciliation, May was actively promoting the petition and arming the Royalist rebels in the city. On 29th May Henry Dirkin, a commander of a local band of musketeers, brought a warrant to Pett from the committee to seize the dockyard and naval supplies there. William Cobham was also involved in seizing arms from the ships in the River Medway.⁵⁸ All of these men were aldermen of Rochester and played an active role in supporting the Royalist cause. In all likelihood as many as ten of the Rochester councillors signed the Kentish petition of May 1648, including six Royalists.

Whilst Ward was trying to pacify the city and seek an accommodation with Parliament, Royalists gathering at Canterbury on 23rd May drew up a Remonstrance, which they had published, declaring their intention 'to act the last scene of this Tragedy with our swords in our hands...'. L'Estrange states that he drew up this remonstrance to unite the various groups in Kent and get the county geared up for an armed rising if necessary. Rochester was in his estimation well prepared for the rising to follow. On 26th May Francis Clerke, a Rochester gentleman and Royalist, attended an urgent meeting to deliberate Parliament's offer of the previous day. Neither Clerke nor Rochester's Royalist aldermen desired an accommodation with Parliament, which probably explains why they did not endorse Ward's response to Parliament of 27th May. Following Parliament's ultimatum of 29th May, a general meeting of the rebel gentry and committee was held at Rochester late in the day. At this stage Royalists and Presbyterians were united in their aims. Francis Clerke penned his name

⁵⁸ HMC Portland MS Vol. 1 pp. 459-462; G.O Howell (ed.), *The Kentish Note Book Vol II* (London, 1894) pp. 72-73 - In addition to May, Cobham and Henry Dirkin, other Royalist councillors involved were Francis Merritt, Richard Head and Alexander Dirkin.

together with Philip Ward and George Newman to orders for Sir William Compton to act as Colonel to a regiment of horse.⁵⁹ Several of Rochester's Royalist councillors sought to arm themselves and played an active role in engaging the town in rebellion in May 1648.

Following the defeat of the rebels by the New Model Army in June, none of the six Royalist aldermen or councillors attended the first recorded council meeting on 7th October 1648, suggesting that they feared a backlash. They did not, however, disappear from the council as all the aldermen attended meetings and carried out civic duties in late 1648 and during 1649. Four of the Royalist aldermen were purged from office by 'an order of the Committee of Parliament for Indemnity dated 29th January 1650'; Thomas May, Henry Dirkin Francis Merritt and William Cobham. Alexander Dirkin and Richard Head probably escaped the purge due to old age. Although none of the Royalist aldermen appeared on Pett's list of suspects it would be surprising if none of them were arrested for their part in the insurrection; in particular William Cobham, who went with the Earl of Norwich's force to Colchester. Both Thomas May and William Cobham were ordered before the Committee of Merchants in May 1649, as pursers to the navy, to explain their part in the rebellion. Four of the Royalist councillors also had to compound in 1651; Cobham, Richard Head, Henry and Alexander Dirkin.⁶⁰

Little is known of the loyal Presbyterians or 'moderate' Independents during this period of upheaval and no efforts were made by them to intervene in the situation at Rochester. However one 'moderate' Independent, Richard Wye junior, a naval surgeon, was dismissed under a January 1649 Act of Parliament, disabling former rebels from holding naval office. Most of the dockyard men disabled under this Act were charged with having signed the Kentish petition of May 1648. Wye was dismissed as an alleged delinquent in February 1649, but was temporarily reinstated just a month later. He petitioned the Admiralty in

⁵⁹ The Humble Petition, (1648); A letter from his Excellency, pp. 5-9; L'Estrange, His vindication, pp. B2-B3; Carter, A most true and exact Relation, pp. 34-37, 77-79; LJ Vol. 10 27/5/1648

⁶⁰ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 657, 672-673, 680; CCC Vol. IV p. 460; Howell (ed.), The Kentish Note Book Vol. II pp. 72-73; RAM, RAR MS 0056, Minute Book of the Committee of Merchants 1649-1651, f. 15r

April and was presumably successful in his defence, as no further action is recorded against him. Many of the dockyard men admitted their part in signing the Kentish petition and were ‘pardoned’, but this does not appear to have been the case in this instance. There is no apparent reason why Richard Wye, a religious Independent, was removed from his post. He was considered to be ‘cordially affected to the Parliament’ in March 1649, indicating his dismissal was not related to protest at Parliament’s decision to try and execute Charles I. Both his rapid promotion in the dockyard in November 1649 and election as an alderman within Rochester council in April 1650 also belies this notion.⁶¹ Wye may simply have been the victim of counter accusations flying around in the dockyard during 1649, when men were desperately seeking to save their careers.

Madeleine Jones considered that in Rochester ‘corporate solidarity was much stronger than political rivalry and enabled men of different views to work together...’ in the direct wake of May 1648. She concluded that ‘there was no immediate attempt on the part of any members of the governing body at Rochester to oust those of their fellows prominently concerned in the 1648 revolt.’ Certainly, Rochester council did not take immediate action against its delinquent members, but awaited outside intervention, indicating that the civic body as a whole was not unsympathetic to the rebels’ reactions and probably contained only a handful of pro-Parliamentarians in 1649. At least ten of the 23 councillors were participants in the 1648 Kent rebellion. In 1649 the council was still divided between several distinct groups; pro-Parliamentarians, other non-rebels, who were not enamoured with the new Westminster regime, and delinquents. There was no dominant grouping in a position to impose a purge. It was, therefore, division rather than ‘corporate solidarity’, which prevented an internal purge in 1648-9.⁶² Rochester council also had a Royalist minority, who had had little voice till 1647. They had a brief spell of political activity between 1647-9, but this was short lived as by February 1650 Parliament had imposed its will on Rochester’s city government and purged the Royalists from power. Jones correctly argues that this 1650 purge by the centre was ineffective; it could only

⁶¹ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224, Admiralty Ledger 1649-1650 ff. 27v, 47r, 52v; CSPD 1649-1650 p. 395; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 682

⁶² Jones, ‘The Political History’, pp. 134–135. For the ten alderman and councillors involved in the rebellion see f/ns 39 and 56.

be deemed partially successful as six rebels remained in office.⁶³ In early 1650 Parliament still could not guarantee the support of Rochester council.

Rochester had a Presbyterian mayor in 1648 and rebel mayor in 1649, reflecting the involvement of quite a few of the freemen in the Kent rebellion. George Robinson, a religious Presbyterian, became mayor in September 1648. Although not tainted with rebellion himself, Robinson's political sympathies were similar to many of his rebel colleagues and so his election was not that surprising. As a Presbyterian he would have considered the execution of Charles I a step too far. Several years later his kinsman, Edward Hawthorne, accused him of being outspoken in February 1649. The timing of the outburst would indicate this was a reaction to the monarch's execution. In 1649 the freemen elected the rebel Presbyterian, Barnabas Walsall as mayor; an unsurprising result considering both recent events and that about fifty per cent of the council was made up of rebels.⁶⁴

Rochester's citizens also expressed their opinion on events of 1648. The Mayor of Rochester clearly indicated in his letter of 21st May to Parliament that he was speaking on behalf of 'the common people (the inhabitants of the city)', not the rebels who had gathered there. Their concerns mentioned in this letter were real. They had endured the billeting of three army units in the past twelve months and three years of continuous defence works in the main thoroughfare of the city. It is not surprising that the citizens revolted on the 20th -21st May after hearing the earlier declaration of the county committee and threat to send in the troops. Peter Pett reported to the House of Commons on 15th June that twenty-seven local men were in custody for their part in the Kent Rebellion; sixteen of these were from Rochester. This was a list of naval-dockyard connections and is by no means a comprehensive guide to those arrested in Rochester. In addition to the two Presbyterian councillors, several Rochester gentlemen were seized; Robert Fowler, who had shown his Royalist credentials as early as 1643, Maurice Eady, Zacheus Ivett, John Fortescue senior and junior, all known Royalists, as

⁶³ Halliday, *Dismembering the body politic*, p. 62; Jones, 'The Political History', p. 181

⁶⁴ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 656-657, 674; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224, f. 9v; Rawlinson MS A226, Admiralty Ledger 1651-1652, f. 26v

well as eight others. The Earl of Warwick as Vice-Admiral of the Fleet wrote to the Commons' Speaker on 14th July 1648 referring to a warrant from Parliament to send up 'many of the officers that were in the late petition and insurrection of Kent.' He declared that he 'had examined many of them and absolved some, the evidence against them failing...', but went on to add that 'some of them, whose names are in the margin, have been of great use to me in fitting out the ships...'. Amongst these names were six Rochester citizens. This would imply that that they were too useful to Warwick to have them imprisoned when the summer guard of ships was due out rather than confirmation of their non-involvement in both the petition and rising. It is also evident that several of Rochester's leading citizens were accused of signing the Kentish petition. In 1650-1 sixteen of Rochester's citizens had to compound for their part in the Kent rebellion including six councillors, three of the extended Lee family, Francis Clerke and eight other gentlemen, including several arrested in June 1648.⁶⁵ All this indicates that many of Rochester's leading citizens were embroiled in the Kent rebellion, whether as Royalists or disaffected Presbyterians.

Jones has suggested that Rochester citizens were outraged at the actions of the rebels and welcomed their departure. Parliamentary accounts certainly give an impression of bitterness amongst Rochester residents at their city's involvement in these events. An account of 3rd June declared that 'the Town were very glad they were gone...and the women of the Town helpt throw down the workes...'. Fairfax reported that when he got to Rochester he 'found the Rebels fled, and the people very full of discontent...the women reviled, with curses in their mouthes, against Goring, Hayles, and Compton, who had engaged their husbands, and now betraid them....'. The 'lowd out cry of all the common people in Rochester' was that 'not a quarter of them [were] Gentlemen and countrymen of that County, but were strangers, privately invited...'. However it must be remembered this was the political spin of a victorious side. Whilst many of Rochester's citizens were no more pleased at being overrun by a large contingent of rebel soldiers than a Parliamentary force, they did instigate the rising of the 20th-21st May and were prepared to challenge the Kent County

⁶⁵ Bod.Lib, Tanner MS 57 f. 93; Nalson MS 7 ff. 24, 70; CJ Vol. 5 16 June 1648; CCC Vol. IV pp. 460, 2553-2554, 2930

Committee and Parliament.⁶⁶ Although Rochester citizens were finally relieved when the rebels left town on 1st June, they did demonstrate their support for the Royalist-Presbyterian alliance in their actions between 20th May and 1st June 1648.

Fairfax's comments on the local reactions stands in stark contrast to that expressed in print. The strength of Royalist support in the city is evident in a pamphlet and satire, *The Kentish Fayre*, purportedly published at Rochester during June 1648 and freely circulated for sale 'to all those that dare buy them.' This appears to have been written by someone with local knowledge and from the allusions in the opening verse it is clear this pamphlet was published immediately after 1st June. Reference is made to an incident that allegedly took place on Rochester Bridge between Parliamentarian and Royalist forces on that day, when purportedly many were slain. Thomason purchased his copy of this satire on 8th June 1648, indicating that the pamphlet was available in London a few days later.⁶⁷

'At Rochester, the Faire is held,
 By all good tokens, know it:
 A thousand Saints, late there were sold
 As yet the Bridge, can show it.'⁶⁸

This satire mocks the Parliamentarian generals, Cromwell, Fairfax and Skippon, by advertising them for sale in the local marketplace. The town crier proclaimed:

'Know our most gracious godly Parliament
 Is set to sale at Rochester in Kent.'⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 114-115; *Newes from Bowe*, (London, 1648) p. 2; *The Designes of the Rebels in Kent*, (London, 1648) pp. 4-5; *The Lord Generals Letter*, pp. 7-8

⁶⁷ *The Kentish Fayre*, (Rochester, 1648); *Bloudy Newes from Kent*, (London, 1648) pp. 1-3; *L'Estrange, His vindication*, pp. A7, C1-C2, D2

⁶⁸ *The Kentish Fayre*, p. 1

⁶⁹ *ibid* p. 2

A couple of women dressed as warriors encounter two of the Kent rebels, Sir Thomas Peyton and Sir Thomas Palmer, attired as pedlars at the fair; a comment on the world being turned on its head. Peyton asks one of the women: 'What new commodities doth this Faire afford, have yee any upstart Gentleman to sell for Slaves, Parliament men to sell for knaves, Committee-men to dispose of for the galleys, and Excise-men for the gallows, have yee any Citizens that will make pimpes, and Common-Council men that weare the Cuckolds armes'.⁷⁰

The satire also lampoons the Royalist forces inability to defeat the Parliamentarians. The 'Amazonian' women declare:

'Tis time that Women armour weare,
And teach men for to fight:
Gainst those, who their destruction sweare,
and seeke it, day and night.'⁷¹

The Kentish Fayre challenges the ability of men to change the political situation and argues that the country is in such a state of confusion that only women could redress the state of affairs.⁷² This was indeed the world turned upside down.

Political allegiance was both fragile and fluent in the period 1640-1648. Many Rochester councillors, who had supported Parliament in 1642, were in open rebellion by 1648. After 1643 the council became fragmented along party lines; at any one time five different factions could be found amongst the members. Neutralism was a spent force by 1646, as the Parliamentarian bloc sought to establish its dominance and remove absent members. When the county committee and Parliament drifted away from the political views of many Rochester Presbyterian councillors in 1647-8 they elected to join forces with their Royalist counterparts and rebel against their former allies. Men such as Philip Ward started the decade full of hope politically, but were disillusioned by the close. William Cobham spent much of the decade battling against the

⁷⁰ ibid pp. 2-5

⁷¹ ibid p.4

⁷² ibid p.4

Parliamentarians, but ended the 1640s in coalition with his former enemies. These men may have been united in May 1648, but there was a clear distinction in the treatment meted out to the Presbyterian and Royalist rebels in the immediate aftermath of May 1648. Whilst the Presbyterians councillors were rebuked and, sometimes, financially punished for their involvement, the Royalist grouping was dealt with more harshly, being removed from office for their participation in the rebellion. Until May 1648 Rochester council, despite its hotchpotch of political groups, managed to function relatively smoothly with little outward sign of disunity. Despite a brief glitch in its administrative affairs the corporation resumed its duties in September 1648, as if nothing had happened. All the Presbyterian councillors appeared for meetings and the Royalists carried on as usual until they were finally removed. Although the political reactions of the ordinary people are often difficult to gauge in this period the majority of the citizens, like the councillors, did support Parliament for most of the 1640s. They were not, however, prepared to have their rights and liberties infringed by the county committee, the army or Parliament, as their letter of 21st May 1648 made clear. When this occurred they were also prepared to join in the rebellion.

Chapter 3

Rochester Council 1650-1662

Rochester council entered a new decade of city governance in the wake of the Kent Rebellion of May 1648, quickly followed by the trial and execution of Charles I in January 1649. By February 1649 the monarchy had been abolished and a republic established in its place.¹ At least ten of the city councillors had been involved in the Kent Rebellion; four of who were purged from office by the Council of State in February 1650. A further six rebels remained in office, leaving a council that was still politically divided.² It is against this background that Rochester council had to operate and remodel itself in the 1650s.

This chapter examines Rochester council's efforts to politically realign itself in the 1650s by controlling new admissions to the council chamber and dismissal of those who were disaffected. Rochester mayors worked with the Council of State in the early 1650s to ensure that those remaining within the corporation exhibited a degree of allegiance to the government; a coalition was in a sense formed. In this manner the council was dominated by a core of aldermen and councillors, who were both supportive of the de facto government and proactive in many of their dealings with the centre. Consensus, rather than disharmony, existed within Rochester corporation throughout most of the 1650s. Before the political allegiance and reactions of Rochester councillors can be examined it is first necessary to consider the earlier urban study by Madeleine Jones, which covered Rochester during this period, together with the conclusions she drew of the impact that political upheaval had on city government. It is also vital to define political allegiance and groups within the context of this chapter.

Madeleine Jones contends that the remodelling of Rochester corporation in the 1650s was not wholly successful, because the purges did not realign Rochester city government politically with Westminster and instead left the council divided. Paul Halliday argues that purging created partisanship leading to disunity

¹ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 173-174

² MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 680

within local government. After the turmoil of 1648-9 a group of Rochester aldermen worked together to establish a pro-Parliamentarian coalition in the council and used purging to prevent the disaffected from becoming a cohesive force. This ensured a decade of consensual rather than adversarial politics within the council. Jones concludes that Rochester council was viewed with a degree of suspicion at Westminster in the early 1650s due to its participation in the 1648 Kent rebellion. As a consequence Parliament relied on Peter Pett and Chatham dockyard to keep Rochester in check politically between 1650-1656. This assumption is questioned here as Rochester's mayors worked with the de facto governments in an attempt to remove the remaining disaffected councillors from office between 1651-1657. Jones considered Rochester council largely Presbyterian in 1657, but argues that Cromwell's death in 1658 opened the door for the Royalists. Rochester council underwent a severe purge in August 1662 with half the councillors either resigning or being removed from their posts. This evidence does not correlate with Jones' description of Rochester corporation as broadly Royalist at the Restoration.³ The chapter tracks the political allegiance of Rochester councillors throughout the 1650s with the contention that although the coalition's stranglehold over the corporation had relaxed slightly by the Restoration this alliance still had overall control, which necessitated a drastic purge in August 1662.

Rochester council's political groupings are diverse in this period. A number of those who had served in the previous decade had become either rebels or disaffected. This grouping are classified as the 'disaffected'. Several of this group had participated in the Kent Rebellion of May 1648. All of these councillors were former Presbyterians, who were unwilling to collaborate with the new de facto regimes at Westminster and were eventually removed from office due to long-term absenteeism. A second group called to serve, mainly in the latter half of the 1650s, paid lip service to the de facto government at Westminster and those in control within the council. These councillors were in essence timeservers or 'conformists', who kept below the radar and clung onto office after the Restoration purge of August 1662. The criteria for Royalists is

³ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 181-184, 200-201, 205, 226, 231; Halliday, Dismembering the body politic, pp. 59-60, 63, 80-82; MALC, RCA/A1/2, ff. 66b-68b, 71a-72a, 73b, 77a

little different from that for the 1640s, except that their attendance was generally intermittent during the 1650s. Some were dismissed in the 1650s only to be reinstated at the Restoration, whilst a few 'silent' Royalists managed to remain on the council during the decade.

Rochester council was dominated by a loose coalition of those who supported the de facto governments in the 1650s. This coalition was made up of broadly three groupings; Independent, Presbyterian and moderates. Several Independents were to rise to prominence within Rochester council during the early 1650s. Their inclusion in this group is dependent on a proactive involvement with the Westminster regimes in clearing out rebels from the council, rather than merely following orders, or a refusal to take the oath of allegiance under the Corporation Act of 1661. One other, Francis Cripps, has been added into this political grouping, because of his rapid acceleration from councillor to alderman and mayor within three years in the early 1650s. By the 1650s the label Presbyterian was politically defunct in terms of Westminster government, but a few religious Presbyterians did continue to play a role in city and county politics. Lastly a core of councillors who neither fit the Presbyterians nor Independents' criteria, but nevertheless form a loosely coherent group loyal to the Westminster regimes, are referred to as 'moderates'. They generally supported the council and were either purged or forced to resign from the council in 1662, indicating that they were perceived as a potential threat to the restored monarchy and its government.

5. 1650-1654

Following the purge of early 1650, council attendance picked up during that year. At the meeting following the mayoral election of September 1650 fourteen councillors were present compared to seven at the same time in 1649. But attendance was to plummet to new depths between 1651-1654 with on occasions only three or four present. This was partially due to long-term absence by a number of councillors, a number of deaths and removal of others. No attendance was recorded for 1652 and overall recording of business was sparse

for that year. Yet the other four years saw significant levels of important business transacted. Both the 1650 and 1651 mayoral elections were entered in the minute book after an absence of a number of years.⁴ The council was re-establishing its sense of civic duty in ensuring due process was fully entered after a brief, but turbulent period in its history.

The number of new freemen added in 1650 was about average at thirteen, but dipped between 1651-1653 to rather low levels, rising again in 1654. (fig.3) This would indicate that the pool available was limited with many of the citizens' allegiance still being suspect in the wake of the 1648 Kent rebellion. Between 1650-1654 the freemen returned five consecutive mayors, who demonstrated at least tacit allegiance to the de facto governments. By the 1650 mayoral election the council had been purged of its Royalist grouping and was more able to rigorously control, who stood for election. Rochester corporation ensured that only non-rebel aldermen were nominated to stand as mayoral candidates, so restricting the choice of the freemen to that group alone and guaranteeing the return of an acceptable mayor. Thereby the political opinion of the freemen was no longer reflected in their choice of mayor.⁵

Rochester council's internal purge of 1653, discussed below, appears to have had the desired effect on the citizenry, demonstrating that only loyalty would be tolerated. As a result it was possible to admit twenty new men to the freedom of the city in 1654, with over half of these appointments being by purchase or recommendation. Generally about two thirds of the appointments were hereditary or by apprenticeship. The corporation could to a degree ensure that those purchasing their freedom and those recommended by councillors were loyal to Parliament. Rochester's freemanry became socially broadened in the 1650s, because of this desire for political loyalty. The city's 1663 minutes contain a complaint that 'diverse persons and Tradesmen whoe never served as apprentices within the said Citty...' were admitted to the freedom in the recent past. Forster's study of Chester during the English Revolution suggests a similar

⁴ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 667-732; RCA/A1/2 ff. 1b-8a

⁵ The five mayors were Edward Hawthorne, George Robinson, Richard Wye, Francis Cripps and then Robinson again; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 680, 688, 704, 719, 732; RCA/A1/2, f. 6b

pattern existed there in the mid-1650s, with the necessary prerequisites to entry often overlooked.⁶

Whilst the council could restrict the choice of the freemen and so determine the outcome of the mayoral elections, they had to endure a degree of outside interference in city government in the early 1650s. Halliday argues that during the Interregnum Westminster opted to intervene directly in local government appointments rather than remodel borough charters. This was the case in Rochester, as central government intervened in the city's affairs by purging the council of Royalists in 1650. Still uncertain of Rochester council's loyalty in February 1653 the Commonwealth government called the city's old charter in to be remodelled. Chester was similarly ordered to present its charter to the Committee for Corporations in January 1653, which was later confirmed with little change. Rochester council urged its freemen to 'willingly contribute' towards the cost of renewing the city's charter. No objections or difficulties are recorded in obtaining the necessary funding to renew the charter. Rochester corporation, in renewing its charter, was attempting to reassure central government that only those sympathetic to the Commonwealth held office. Despite Halliday's assertion regarding city charters, Westminster was prepared to use various means at its disposal to ensure that borough councils stayed loyal and suspects were removed.⁷ This is a good example of co-operation between the centre and locality; both worked together to achieve a loyal majority in city government.

The 1650 purge left a number of vacancies on the council, as had two deaths amongst the councillors. Indeed the aldermen's bench was so depleted that it became difficult to form the quorum necessary to hold court sessions. Of the seven that remained four were rebels and one infrequently attended meetings; only Hawthorne and Robinson were untainted with delinquency. Despite his

⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 728-730; RCA/A1/2 ff. 1b-10a, 78a; Forster, 'Civic Government in Chester', pp. 96-97

⁷ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 724; Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, pp. 65-67; Forster, 'Civic Government in Chester', p. 95 - Jones also notes that Canterbury and Maidstone's charter were similarly under review in February 1653, 'The Political History', pp. 342-343

outburst in February 1649, Robinson does appear to have adjusted politically.⁸ He served loyally till his death in 1658, but was never an enthusiastic Cromwellian supporter like his kinsmen, Wye and Hawthorne. Under the mayoralty of Barnabas Walsall, a 1648 rebel, the corporation elected three new aldermen in April 1650 with a wide range of political allegiances; Richard Wye an Independent, Richard Cobby, a former neutral, and William Head, a Royalist. Head was probably elected due to his close family ties with both Edward Hawthorne and Richard Wye. However from that point onwards he absented himself from the council. Richard Cobby, reinstated as a common councillor in March 1650, was presumably elected due to his lack of partisanship, but only briefly attended council meetings before absenting himself again. He was no more enamoured with the political situation in 1650 than he had been in 1646 and adopted a similar stance as before. All three aldermen had one factor in common; non-participation in the Kent Rebellion. The promotion of these three to aldermen left only eight common councillors and two of these were former rebels.⁹

A turning point in Rochester politics was the appointment of Edward Hawthorne, an Independent, as mayor in September 1650. He appears to have been the influential figure, supported by his kinsman Wye, behind the political remodelling of Rochester council in the early and mid-1650s. Together with Robinson these two men were consecutive mayors of the city between 1650-1653. In August 1650 there were two evenly matched groupings within the council. There were seven members whose allegiance was pro-Parliamentarian and another seven, who were a combination of disaffected and Royalist members. Another four members could be considered politically unaligned to either group for varying reasons, but had to rapidly decide where their allegiance lay. At this stage the pro-Parliamentarian coalition had to rely on the non-attendance of four of the Royalists and 'disaffected' members to exercise control within the council. The only way to establish a clear majority and dominate the council was to extend their political influence. Edward Hawthorne's first task was to raise the

⁸ Aldermen Ward, Walsall, Whitton and A. Dirkin were all former rebels; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226, f. 26v

⁹ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 682

number of common councillors to its full complement by selecting four new members. The allegiance of these new councillors was mixed; an Independent, a moderate, and probably two conformists.¹⁰ Although this latter group paid lip service to the de facto government, their allegiance was always lukewarm. Rochester's alderman base remained unchanged with the exception of the Royalist, Alexander Dirkin, who had died. At this point the aldermen's bench was still technically dominated by the Royalist and 'disaffected' groups, but not all of these members attended council meetings.¹¹ In all probability Hawthorne and Wye were first determining the new common councillors' political loyalty, before filling the aldermen vacancies.

By 1651 this duo were in a position to strengthen their support on the council. Under Hawthorne's mayoralty a process was started to identify and remove a number of rebel and 'disaffected' members from the council. Hawthorne's correspondence with the Council of State in August 1651 raised the question of the loyalty of some councillors and named three aldermen. Because the original letter has not survived the names are a matter of conjecture. Jones has surmised that they were outstanding rebels from 1648. She suggests William Head, Edward Whitton, Barnabas Walsall and John Philpott as possible contenders. There is no evidence to conclude that either Philpott or Head played a role in the Kentish Rebellion. The three names that automatically spring to mind, if these were '1648' rebels, are Whitton, Walsall and Philip Ward. However careful perusal of the entry in the State Papers indicates that there were issues in Rochester council over both 1648 rebels and three more recently disaffected aldermen. On 29th August 1651 the Council of State thanked the mayor for 'giving information to [the] Council of the disaffection of some persons, Aldermen of Rochester,' and 'to desire him to returne the names of three persons such as hee thinke fitt to be putt in the places of the three hee complains off to be disaffected, to desire him likewise to take examinations concerning the miscarriages of others persons mentioned in his letter in reference to the late

¹⁰ These men were Francis Cripps (Independent), John Marlow (moderate), John Hogg and Bartholomew Lake (conformists). Cobby was still attending at this point, but was probably unaligned; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 682, 688-690

¹¹ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 692

Kentish rebellion...'.¹² These three disaffected men were probably disillusioned both at the execution of the monarch and with the new Westminster regime. John Philpott and William Head had both been absent from the council for some time, suggesting Hawthorne included them. An entry in the Admiralty ledgers, preserved within the Rawlinson collection, indicates that the third reported person was Robinson.¹³

Hawthorne's reporting of George Robinson at this stage was very significant. A threat of further rebellion existed in Kent in late August 1651 and Parliament were concerned enough to despatch Colonel Dixwell's regiment to Rochester to ensure the city stayed within its control. Rochester's mayoral election was due to take place a few weeks later and Robinson had been put forward as a candidate. This could have been an issue for two reasons; firstly creating political division in city government and secondly placing an alderman, who had previously been outspoken against central government as leader of the city council. That there was a contested election is evident from the instruction given to the four councillors, who took the voices of the freemen and were ordered to do so 'indifferently'. Both this order and the calling of a 'special meeting' for this election were unprecedented in the recorded election process between 1640-1660, suggesting that both councillors and freemen were divided in their opinion. Unfortunately the other candidate is not named, but may well have been Hawthorne's preferred choice, Richard Wye. Robinson won, but was not immediately sworn in as mayor as was usual. Hawthorne wrote to the Council of State again in late September, challenging Robinson's election as mayor. His letter was received by them on 2nd October and they concerned about 'the condition of the magistracy of the town of Rochester' referred the matter to the Admiralty Committee. Edward Hawthorne also submitted an affidavit accusing Robinson of making disloyal statements in February 1649 and tried to prevent him being sworn in as mayor.¹⁴

¹² TNA, SP25/21/92; Jones, 'The Political History', p. 181

¹³ Philpott's absence was from June 1651 and Head from 1650; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226, f.26v

¹⁴ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226, f.26v; CSPD 1651 pp. 386-387, 393, 406, 410, 463; CSPD 1651 pp. 386-387, 393, 406, 410, 463; CSPD 1651 pp. 386-387, 393, 406, 410, 463; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 703

Hawthorne's actions were only partially successful. The council minutes for 6th September 1651 simply state next to Philip Ward's name that he is 'defunct'. Initially perceived, as a reference that he had died, this now appears doubtful, as no trace of his death can be found in either of the Rochester parish burial records. This reference to 'defunct', a few weeks after Hawthorne's notification to the authorities of disaffection in the ranks, implies that Ward had either been removed or pressurised into leaving the council. Jones has found parallels for this type of action in other Kent boroughs in the early 1650s, where the names of aldermen are simply struck through or omitted from the council list. None of the other rebels or absentees were removed in 1651.¹⁵ Hawthorne's attempt to prevent Robinson becoming mayor was also thwarted. Robinson served out his term as mayor with no apparent disunity in city government, but did not follow through Hawthorne's efforts to cleanse the city council. His sympathies may well have lain with some of his former disaffected Presbyterian colleagues. However unlike them he decided to continue in office and work with the Commonwealth government. He served quietly as mayor again in 1654 for the third time in six years, demonstrating his popularity with some of the freemen and certain councillors. The one notable occasion when Robinson was proactive in supporting the de facto government was in late 1655. As a religious Presbyterian he had close friendship ties with some of the local Presbyterian ministers. It was probably this friendship that propelled Robinson into taking action against Richard Coppin in December 1655 to defend Presbyterianism.¹⁶

Philip Ward's departure from the council in 1651 left just eight aldermen of whom two had not attended recent meetings. This created considerable scope for the dominant group to elect loyal replacements. However allegiance amongst the councillors was still an issue, as only one was trusted enough to be advanced. Francis Cripps was rapidly elected as an alderman in 1651, creating a precedent as nomination for election was generally based on seniority or status. His rapid elevation from councillor to mayor in three years suggests that he was politically an Independent in tune with Wye and Hawthorne. Richard Greene, Cripps'

¹⁵ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 693-702; P305/1/1; Jones, 'The Political History', p. 188 – She indicates that some jurats in Hythe were similarly deleted or omitted from the council listing in the early 1650s.

¹⁶ TNA, PROB11/275; Coppin, A blow at the serpent; Rosewell, The serpents subtilty discovered

replacement on the common council, had a chequered past. He was implicated in the Kent Rebellion of 1648 and arrested. Pett was present when the rebel action was going on in the Medway Towns and listed Green, amongst many others, as being active in the rebellion in the capacity of a gunner on board the Charles. Warwick examined him and felt he had been wrongly accused. The council considered Greene's allegiance sound, as he was made an alderman in 1657. Greene felt compelled to resign during August 1662 in the middle of the government purge carried out in Rochester council under the Corporation Act.¹⁷ From the overall evidence Green was a moderate, who saw out the Interregnum, but was not prepared to serve under the re-established monarchy. At this stage the aldermen's bench was finely balanced; with four pro-Parliamentarians, three disaffected, one Royalist and Cobby, who was politically unaligned.¹⁸ Whilst the non-attendance of three of the opposition left the pro-Parliamentarian coalition in overall control of the council they had to ensure that their domination would continue.

It was Wye, who took the next step to strengthen this grouping in the council. As mayor, Richard Wye, called a special meeting of the council in June 1653 to purge the corporation of some of its disaffected members. John Philpott was dismissed due to his protracted absence, having failed to attend the council meetings or court sessions for about two years and having gone from the city. None of the rebel aldermen of 1648 were removed in this purge; i.e Walsall or Whitton, although absent from the council since October 1651 and June 1650 respectively. William Head also survived despite his non-attendance since his election as alderman in April 1650. Richard Cobby was dismissed in August 1653, having again left the city. Halliday considers that this form of absenteeism was a means of protest by the individuals concerned, as they no longer felt in tune with political affairs in the city. Their absence did prevent disunity, but, as the aldermen only numbered nine, the long-term non-appearance of five men

¹⁷ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 701-702; RCA/A1/2 ff. 25b, 67a; LJ, Vol. 5 19/6/1648, Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 f. 70

¹⁸ The aldermen were; Wye, Hawthorne, Cripps (Independents), Robinson (Presbyterian), Whitton, Walsall, Philpott (disaffected), Head (Royalist) and Cobby. The common bench were: Paske (Independent), Cooper, Mott, Parker, Marlow, Greene (moderates); Gunton, Paxford, Young, Lake, Hogg (conformists) and Head, a Royalist.

impacted heavily on the ability of the corporation to function properly. At the meeting in June 1653 two councillors were also removed. Richard Head, a Royalist, was 'retired' due to old age following at least five years absence from the council. His Royalist sympathies may also have influenced the council's decision. Richard Paxford resigned as a common councillor and was subsequently dismissed by the council.¹⁹

Jones has suggested that Paxford resigned, because he resented the appointment of a Royalist, Robert Fowler, as a councillor. But this seems unlikely as both were tarnished as delinquents in 1648. His actions are best described as a fit of pique at being overlooked as a potential alderman with William Paske being elected instead. This would explain Paxford's rapid return in 1654 on the promise of immediate promotion to alderman. The new alderman, Paske, is politically difficult to place. He was appointed in the wake of the council's 1646 purge, served as a collector for the Kent committee in 1647 and kept his head below the parapet in May 1648. His advancement over his fellow 1646 appointees in 1653 implies that he was loyal to the Commonwealth; placing him possibly as an Independent. Paske served as a county committeeman in the 1650s, became mayor in 1655 and oversaw the Coppin debates, discussed later in this thesis, that year. Although he remained in office, following the 1662 purge of the council, there is no record of him taking the oath of allegiance under the Corporation Act of 1661.²⁰

Fowler's appointment as a councillor in June and then alderman in August 1653 is curious to say the least, considering that the pro-Parliamentarian coalition was in control and generally elected only loyal men to positions of power. No family links have been found to the main power bloc, but this is a possible explanation. The only Royalist that remained in city government was William Head, whose family ties to this bloc had saved him. Robert Fowler, a Royalist, had a long history of delinquency dating back to November 1643. He was arrested in June

¹⁹ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 728-730; Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, p. 63

²⁰ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 728-730; RCA/A1/2, ff. 8b, 13a, 71b-72a, 74b; Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 182-183; CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648; TNA, SP28/159, Philpott A/cs; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', p. 503

1648 for his part in the Kent Rebellion, but Warwick was prepared to overlook his involvement to get the fleet prepared. In 1651 he was forced to compound for his role in that rising. By August 1653 there were only eight aldermen and ten councillors, which would imply that there was a shortage of suitable candidates to replenish the alderman's bench, indicating that Fowler's appointment might have been of necessity. Fowler was absent from the date of his election as alderman in August 1653 with the exception of one session he attended in May 1654. His non-attendance could be attributed to naval duty, as this was at the height of the first Anglo-Dutch war. However his turnout did not improve in 1655.²¹

The mayoralties of 1653 and 1654 were to pass to Francis Cripps and George Robinson in turn and this left the entire period from 1650-1654 under pro-Parliamentarian leadership. Cripps' precedent, in rapid advancement from councillor to alderman to mayor within three years, was to become a feature of the early 1650s with Paxford elevated rapidly to alderman in January 1655 after his reinstatement as a common councillor a few weeks earlier and then mayor in 1657. Halliday has commented that this was a particular facet of 1650s civic politics due to the extensive purging carried out in local government. Two new councillors elected in January 1655, John Mabb and Henry Duning, had mixed allegiances. Duning was in all likelihood a moderate, who resigned shortly after the 1662 purge of local government officers. Mabb, however, was a silent Royalist. Whilst, the corporation sought to fill any vacancies with loyal men, at times a shortage of candidates meant they had to accept others, who were clearly opponents. In January 1655 the pro-Parliamentarian coalition could rely on eleven members in terms of allegiance and count on the tacit support of five conformists. A further five members were either disaffected or Royalists, but none of them put in a regular appearance at council meetings.²²

²¹ CJ Vol. 3 12/12/1643; HMC Portland MS, Vol. 1, Letter Sir Richard Hardres to Lenthall 30/11/1643; CCC Vol. IV p. 460; CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648; Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 f. 70; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 729-732; RCA/A1/2 f. 4a

²² MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 732; RCA/A1/2 ff. 8b, 13b; Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, p. 64

Rochester corporation went to great lengths in this period to demonstrate its allegiance to Parliament, in particular the Commonwealth regime. It achieved this by self-purging and controlling access to the council. Rochester's oligarchic style of local government ensured that the new appointees were generally supportive of the de facto government at Westminster and kept the number of opponents entering the council to a minimum even if this meant they did not always have the full complement of twenty-four men. Although much of this was achieved locally there was an element of support from the centre especially in 1651. Contrary to Jones' opinion that Rochester council was divided in this period, city government was remarkably unified with the only hint of tension apparent at the mayoral elections in 1651. Halliday's perception that absenteeism and purging led to partisanship and disunity is not borne out by this research. Precisely as a consequence of their opponents absenting themselves from civic duty, Rochester council avoided confrontation. This permitted the pro-Parliamentarian coalition to dominate Rochester council for the first half of the decade.²³

Rochester not only had a city council that was loyal to the de facto regimes, but several other leading figures. The city had no M.P.s nominated to the Barebones Parliament in 1653 and under the Protectorate Rochester's representation was reduced to one M.P. John Parker was elected the city's M.P. in 1654. His biographer suggests that his 'personal connection to Oliver Cromwell' ensured that Parker was returned for Rochester in 1654. Parker had married the widow of Thomas Rainborough, Margaret, whose sisters were married to Peter Pett and Charles Bowles. With these connections Parker could count on considerable naval and dockyard support for his appointment. From his parliamentary biography it is evident Parker was a strong Cromwellian supporter. There is some dispute over whether this Parker penned the tract *The Government of the People of England*, in 1650 or another John Parker with similar legal qualifications, who was at the end of his career. This tract was a defence and legitimisation of the government's decision to remove and abolish the monarchy. Several pointers suggest it was John Parker of Rochester. He was a young

²³ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 145, 181; Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, pp. xi-xii, 5, 18-19, 59-60, 63-64

lawyer out to impress the new regime in 1649-50, following the execution of the king and establishment of the 'republic'. Parker was rewarded with several appointments in the early 1650s and worked closely with the administration in drafting legislation, which included the Act for registering births, deaths and marriages in 1653. His residence was at Shorne, a few miles from Rochester, making him a relatively local man. He served as recorder of Rochester between 1652-1655 and a bridge warden in this period. Parker was also selected as a member of the Sequestration Committee for Kent in 1648 and became a committeeman in 1649. Another prominent Rochester resident and committeeman was Charles Bowles, who was also a bridge warden in this period. Bowles was added as a Militia Commissioner for Kent in 1651.²⁴

Rochester council channelled much of its business with the centre through these prominently placed local men, rather than the Kent County Committee. On other occasions the council addressed any concerns directly to the Council of State or Admiralty, thereby again sidelining the committee. An example of this direct approach was Hawthorne's proactive stance in 1651, naming the opponents in city government and seeking assistance from the Council of State in removing them. However there were still concerns at Westminster over the loyalty of Rochester corporation in the early 1650s. At times the centre and city government worked together, whilst on other occasions Rochester council had orders thrust upon it by the centre. Rochester council cooperated with central government in various ways to ensure the security of the city; by examining all strangers, intercepting mail, and detaining delinquents or foreigners. In December 1652 the Council of State ordered that all strangers should be examined and if any Dutch were found they were to be arrested. Richard Wye, the mayor of Rochester, was proactive in this task, being reimbursed in August 1653 for detaining and accommodating Dutch prisoners. He also played a vital role in February 1653 in ensuring that the fleet set sail from Chatham on time.

²⁴ B. Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, (Manchester, 2002) pp. 54-56; J. T. Peacey, 'History of Parliament Trust, London', Unpublished article on John Parker, of Shorne and Gravesend, Kent. I am grateful for the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft; Yates & Gibson (eds.), *Traffic and Politics*, pp. 141-142, 294-295; *CJ Vol. 5* 29/7/1648; J. Parker, *Government of the People of England*, (London, 1650); Bowles, *Records of the Bowles Family*; W. Berry, *County Genealogists: Pedigree of the families in the County of Kent*, (London, 1830) p. 373; *CSPD* 1651 p. 53

In times of a perceived threat, however, the centre imposed its will on Rochester to ensure that it remained loyal. Such a threat occurred in Kent in August 1651 resulting in 400-500 soldiers being sent to Rochester to ensure the city's allegiance. Both the 1650 purge and recalling of the city's charter in 1653 indicate that central government was still suspicious of the city after its involvement in the 1648 Kent rebellion.²⁵ The overall impression gained is that Rochester corporation was loyal to the centre, but that Westminster had reservations over Rochester's allegiance due to the city's past record.

6. 1655-1659

As for the previous period council attendance for 1655-1659 was erratic. This stood in sharp contrast to the amount of business transacted, which was fairly constant over the period. The low attendance for 1655 and 1656 can be explained by the number of members, who had absented themselves from city government. Rochester council's attendance improved considerably after the purge of 1657 and several new men had been drafted onto the council. The freeman base was widely extended in 1655 with thirty-five further citizens granted the freedom of the city. (fig.3) There may have been several reasons for this expansion, but the inclusion of several citizens, who were or were apprenticed to religious radicals, does suggest that attempts were made to manipulate the freedom. In particular several Strood parishioners were admitted into the freedom in 1655-6, suggesting a source that was politically more in tune with the council.²⁶ These freemen elected two Independent mayors, William Paske and Richard Wye, for 1655-1656 at the height of the rule of the major-generals, indicating that Rochester council was again using its freemanry as a political weapon to obtain the desired outcome of loyal pro-Parliamentarian mayors.

The previous purges had failed to remove all of the 1648 rebels from office. At a council meeting of 31st March 1655 concerns were again raised about the number

²⁵ CSPD 1651 pp. 386-387, 393; CSPD 1652-1653 pp. 40, 150; CSPD 1653-1654 p. 483; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 680, 724

²⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 10b, 11a, 15a-15b

of absent councillors. George Robinson, the mayor, ‘ordered that the severall Aldermen & Comon Counsell of this Cittie be summoned to appeare in the Guildhall of this Cittie upon this day fortnight...to shewe cause why they should conforme to the good government of this Cittie ...& that such of the said Aldermen & Comon Counsell as shall then refuse to act in their severall [places] may be dismissed thereof & others elected in their steads.’ All aldermen and councillors were expected to put in an appearance on 14th April. Both William Head and Edward Whitton managed to be present at that session despite both being missing for the past five years.²⁷ Presumably they were not in agreement with those in control of the council and so had stayed away. There was a pattern of political absenteeism in Rochester council that had its origins in the neutralism of the 1640s. Barnabas Walsall failed to attend this meeting and was given an ultimatum: ‘that if hee shall not manifest his conformitie thereunto before the 24th daie of July next coming by performing the duties of the said office of Aldermen & attending the said courts & meetings in everie respect’ he would be dismissed. He was technically dismissed in July 1655, but for some reason remained on the council listing till July 1656. Robert Fowler had not attended the meeting of 14th April either, but was not reprimanded and continued in office for a further two years.²⁸ All of these men were either Royalists or former rebels, indicating that absence was either their protest at the pro-Parliamentarians’ control of city government or that they had been marginalized and squeezed out of office. No real purge appears to have taken place at this time, as in 1651 under Robinson’s watch. Although Robinson actively worked with the pro-Parliamentarian coalition to ensure the loyalty of the council, the political differences do at times come to the surface. Robinson’s reluctance to act is perhaps understandable, since several of these disaffected men were his former Presbyterian colleagues and Head was his relation. The intention was there to remove the disaffected from office, but not the political will.

Robinson’s attempt to raise the number of aldermen to their full complement in July 1655 was also not as effective as it could have been. Both Bartholomew

²⁷ *ibid*, pp. 9b, 10b

²⁸ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 685-732; RCA/A1/2 ff. 1b-18a

Lake, a conformist, and John Mabb were elected as aldermen, when more senior and politically ‘correct’ men were available. Lake had connections on the council in the shape of his uncle Richard Paxford, suggesting that family influence was at play. Mabb’s attendance as a common councillor had been intermittent and did not improve as an alderman until he was threatened with dismissal in 1657. He served as mayor in 1662 when the purges were carried out and survived. As a member of the Woodyeare family by marriage he was probably a ‘silent’ Royalist. In a period when Royalists were the enemy, it is of little surprise that Mabb politically ‘conformed’, but absented himself at the height of the rule of the major-general, Thomas Kelsey, in Kent.²⁹ Theoretically this promotion left the alderman’s bench quite vulnerable with Marlow’s refusal to take up the remaining position. Only five of the aldermen could be regarded as pro-Parliamentarians and four were opponents (three never attended meetings), leaving the balance of power in the hands of two conformists, Lake and Paxford.

Rochester council’s common bench also saw some changes at this time. John Marlow had been elected as an alderman, but declined the position and was duly punished with a fine. However he remained a common councillor and had a good attendance level. His reasons for declining are not obvious, because he accepted the role in 1657 and served as mayor in 1659. He was a moderate politically, being viewed as a threat and purged from office in 1662. Political allegiance does not, therefore, appear to have been the motive. John Cooper, a yeoman, resigned as a common councillor with the consent of the corporation in July 1655, but had regularly attended meetings previously. This would suggest it was personal issues rather than politics, which lay behind his resignation. Two replacement councillors were appointed at the same time; Bonham Spencer, an Independent, who refused to take the oath under the Corporation Act in August 1662, and Richard Walford, a moderate, who opted to resign in 1662. This brought the number of councillors up to ten of which the majority (seven) were politically in tune with those who controlled city government in 1655.³⁰ Through

²⁹ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 8a-11c, 14a-24a, 62b

³⁰ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 11c, 37a, 67a, 68b; RCA/N1/18, Rochester Chamberlain’s accounts 1654-1655, f. 12

absenteeism and new appointments to the common bench the coalition managed to dominate the council in 1655, but there always remained the potential threat of the absentee opponents returning to the council.

Politically 1656 proved to be a quiet year seeing only the appointment of Clement Brewer as a replacement for John Cooper. However behind the scenes efforts were being made to tighten up Rochester city government and finally get rid of the old rebels and Royalists. This had become a political necessity as Rochester council was in a potentially perilous state in 1656 with the Royalists and former rebels capable of resuming office and splitting the council down the middle. Wye, therefore, deemed it vital following the death of Edward Hawthorne in late 1656 to cleanse city government. The 1657 purge was carried out by the mayor Richard Wye, who had drawn up an agenda to remove all absent aldermen. On 9th May the following entry appears in the city minutes: ‘It is this present day thought fitt & soe ordered that Edward Whitton, William Head, Robert Ffowler and John Mabb aldermen of this Citty who for severall yeares past have neglected wholly their coming to the severall courts of the said Citty & the meetings of the Maior Aldermen & Comon Counsell & all other duties belonging to the said office of Aldermen’ should ‘conforme themselves to the promisses & that if they shall not manifest their conformity thereunto before the three & twentieth day of May next ensuing by performing the duty of the said office of Aldermen & attending the said Courts & meetings in every respect as other Aldermen of the said Citty doo that then they shalbe absolutely dismissed of the said office and other fitt persons elected in their steads.’ This order was signed off by ten members of the council including Wye, Robinson and Paske, but by none of the opponents of the coalition. Francis Cripps was absent, but signed the order dismissing William Head below.³¹

Edward Whitton and Robert Fowler effectively dismissed themselves on 23rd May by not responding to the injunction to resume their duties. Mabb did, however, conform to the order and was to have a long political career after the Restoration. William Head’s treatment was slightly different, in that Cromwell

³¹ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 19b, 22a, 23a

and the Council issued a declaration in September 1655 to dismiss those who failed to fulfil their office, which does not appear to have been actioned. It took a petition to the centre to get this declaration enforced in July 1657. ‘Whereas William Head gent being chosen one of the Aldermen of this Cittie and by the space of eight yeares last past hath refused to attend and exercise the office & place of an alderman and whereas by a declaracion of his highnes and Counsell dated the one & twenty of September 1655 also by the petition and advice lately presented to his highnesse the said William Head is made un[in]capable of holding or enjoying the said place or office...’. He was finally purged from office after eight years refusal to carry out his obligations. Whether his kinsman on the council had given him special treatment and overlooked his transgressions is unclear. Whilst all the Independents, Wye, Paske and Cripps signed the order to finally remove William Head, Robinson, his kinsman, did not.³²

William, despite the Head family’s Royalist leanings, never openly supported the Royalists or participated in the May 1648 rebellion. However he related a Royalist account of that event to his son William, which the son rehashed many years later as his own recollection of events. Prior to his election as alderman in 1650 William Head was an active member of the council. Politically he appears to have conformed in the 1640s, but dissatisfaction with the way Rochester’s city government was dominated by the pro-Parliamentarians in the 1650s led to his self-imposed exclusion from the council.³³ The best description for his political allegiance is a ‘silent’ Royalist.

His removal in July 1657 along with the other two absentees enabled the council to completely remodel the corporation. Both the men promoted as aldermen and new appointees as common councillors demonstrated an allegiance very similar to those, who controlled Rochester council. Three moderates and one Independent were elected as aldermen and prevented any of the opposition taking control of city government. Another three men were selected to the

³² MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 23b-24a, 24d-25a

³³ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 ff. 693-732; RCA/A1/2 ff. 1b-24a; J. Thorpe, *Customale Roffense*, (London, 1799) pp. 181-182 - William Head junior was not born till the 1650s, so could not have personally witnessed Fairfax’s soldiers defacing the cathedral tombs in 1648.

common bench, who were all considered a sufficient threat to be purged under the Corporation Act of 1662; one Independent and two moderates.³⁴ For the first time the Independents formed the largest group on Rochester's aldermen bench and together with the Presbyterian plus moderates formed a bloc of eight members. Similarly out of the ten on the common bench six could be expected to support the controlling bloc. This clean sweep of loyal new aldermen and common councillors was only possible as a direct result of the corporation's limited election procedure. Rochester's oligarchic style of city government allowed the council to restrict who entered the corporation and, as a direct consequence, permitted the pro-Parliamentarian grouping to continue its domination of that body. The city's self-purge of 1657 was, like that of 1653, driven by absenteeism rather than partisanship. Jones' observation that Rochester council was only finally remodelled in 1657 is strictly speaking true, but it would be incorrect to maintain that this was now politically a broadly sympathetic 'Presbyterian' council.³⁵ Rochester corporation, as many other boroughs, had moved on politically from the 1640s and would best be described as loyal to the Protectorate at this stage. The council was not made up of one homogenous group, but rather a coalition of individuals or small groups that could work together.

The freemanry returned two less radical mayors in Paxford and Mabb between 1657-8. This may well have been a reflection of national events in 1657; the ending of the second Protectorate Parliament, the demise of the major-generals and Cromwell's refusal of the crown. Cromwell's death in 1658 also changed the political status quo at Westminster. As a result there was a return to more moderate politics at both the centre and at county level. Both of the aldermen who died in 1658, Robinson and Lake, had broadly supported the former Cromwellian regimes. Although it left a gap within the council the dominant force was still pro-Parliamentarian. The newly elected alderman, Henry Venman, was a moderate purged in 1662. However his successor on the common

³⁴ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 24a, 26b -The new aldermen were Parker, Marlow, Spencer and Greene. The new councillors were Christopher Wade and Henry Venman (moderates) plus John Batty (Independent). Batty refused to take the oath of allegiance under the Corporation Act of 1662.

³⁵ Jones. 'The political history', pp. 183-184

council was Arthur Brooker, a Royalist, who served into the Restoration.³⁶ Thus by 1658 both the mayor and new councillor reflected the changing mood with a return to a more moderate and balanced political scene.

The 1660 'Declaration of the nobility, gentry, ministry, and commonalty of Kent, with Canterbury, Rochester, and the ports in the county' called for a return to more moderate political rule and represented a wider discontent with the government at Westminster. However there is nothing to indicate that Rochester mirrored this county view in its internal political makeup. In fact the mayor elected for 1659-60 was a moderate, John Marlow. Wade, another moderate, was promoted to alderman and Robert Leake became a councillor, following a recent death. Leake continued to serve in local government beyond the purge of 1662. The selection of freemen for 1659 saw the Cobham family restored to the civic scene for the first time since 1649. Rochester's burgess elections for 1659 were to return two strong naval candidates, Richard Hutchinson and Peter Pett; an Independent and a Presbyterian respectively.³⁷ Although Rochester was still overwhelmingly dominated by an Independent-moderate alliance in 1659, there was a gradual shift back towards partisan politics, which had been absent for nearly a decade.

Rochester neither fitted the national nor county pattern in 1659. In 1659 the Rump Parliament was recalled at Westminster and a great deal of uncertainty existed about the political future of the nation. Everitt contends that by 1657 the Kent gentry had turned against Cromwell following the overthrow of the major-generals and that by 1659 the Royalist bandwagon was in full swing. Madeleine Jones maintains that after Cromwell's death the various Kent boroughs were more accommodating to former Royalists, leading to 'new alliances' in local government. Although Jones may be partially correct in her assertion 'that the

³⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 30b-31a, 37a; CSPD 1656-1657 p.576-Paxford's loyalty was still questioned by the centre in 1657; P. Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell*, (Oxford, 1997) pp. 192-204; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 433-434

³⁷ TNA, SP18/219/37, The Declaration of the Nobility, Gentry, Ministry and Commonalty of the County of Kent, (Jan 1660) - No signed copies of this declaration have been traced. The printed versions do state, that due to circumstances prevailing at the time, this was never presented to General Monck in person and the names of the subscribers were, therefore, not made public; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 33a, 34a, 37a-37b, 48a. Gunton had died in 1659.

government's supporters at Rochester, led by the Mayor, Richard Wye...had decided in view of the imminence of the new constitution under negotiation at Westminster to' take the opportunity to finally remove all those disaffected, it was for more pragmatic reasons of survival that this was actually carried out. Jones' perception that Rochester council 'drifted towards royalism' after Cromwell's death in 1658 is not borne out by this study.³⁸ Although 'remnants of 1648' were still, theoretically, in office throughout the 1650s they played no active role in city government due to their self-imposed exclusion. Rochester council was dominated by a small core of Independents, who controlled city government through a coalition with groups or individuals, who were prepared to support the Commonwealth and Protectorate regimes at Westminster. Whilst some Royalists did serve and were occasionally elected to office, they either quickly absented themselves from council meetings or were 'silent'. There is no suggestion in the above evidence that Rochester corporation paved the way for the return of the Royalists before 1660.

Jones has described Rochester's relationship with the centre as one way in this period, entailing imposition from above. However much of the above discussion would place a different construct on this relationship; rather one that was two way and cooperative. The purges of 1653 and 1657 were internal affairs; not orchestrated by the centre, but done to ensure that local government was in tandem with the centre. Much effort was made to control who entered Parliament in August 1656. According to his biographer John Parker was the 'court' candidate for Rochester in 1656 and the only M.P. elected for the city. Everitt claims that major-general Kelsey made certain only one M.P. was selected for Rochester to prevent the Royalists winning the other seat. There is no real evidence to support this opinion. From the city minutes this does appear to have been a contested election. Parker could rely on the support of his kinsmen and through them considerable dockyard and naval support. He also had close ties with Rochester as the city's former recorder and a bridge warden,

³⁸ Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 183-184, 194, 201; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 432-434, 438, 440-445; Coward, Cromwellian Protectorate, pp. 95-112

thereby also guaranteeing the support of many in the city.³⁹ Although the ‘court’ candidate won the seat it was with the consent of the majority of the freemen of the city.

Another central imposition, which impacted on the city, was the major-general, Thomas Kelsey. Yet despite both men being, to different degrees, instruments of central government they had a good working relationship with those in local power. During the Coppin disputes of 1655 Kelsey and Parker both supported Rochester council in their actions. Several of the aldermen were also present at the debates, challenging Richard Coppin’s beliefs and later acting as J.P.s against him. Kelsey came to Rochester on 21st December at the behest of the city to listen to their concerns regarding Coppin and his religious beliefs. He consulted with Parker and several other justices on the matter. As a consequence Coppin was imprisoned to ensure that his radical preaching would not spread further amongst the troops billeted there. Walter Rosewell, the Chatham minister, declared that: ‘the Major General did both himself and the State some honour in taking the course he did with him...’ and considered that Kelsey had done the city a great favour in removing Coppin to prison. The Kent County Committee member, Charles Bowles, was also involved as a justice in quashing Coppin’s activities in Rochester. Other leading Rochester figures involved in this dispute were Robert Watson of Strood and William Paske, mayor of Rochester. Both men were to become Kent committeemen in 1657, suggesting that their loyalty in December 1655 was rewarded.⁴⁰ In this period the centre, the county committee and Rochester council collaborated to guarantee that religious radicalism was clamped down on in the city and Parliament’s troops were not infected with Coppin’s erroneous religious views.

The city also cooperated with the centre in other ways. George Robinson’s mayoral accounts indicate that the city worked with Parker and others to ensure

³⁹ Jones, ‘The Political History’, pp. 182, 184, 200; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 10a, 18b; J. T. Peacey, ‘John Parker of Shorne and Gravesend, Kent’; DNB entry for Parker; Everitt, ‘Kent and its gentry’, pp. 424, 500; Yates & Gibson (eds.), *Traffic and Politics*, pp. 294-295

⁴⁰ CSPD 1655-1656 p. 424; Birch (ed), *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, Vol. IV p. 486; Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 79-80; Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, p.15; Everitt, ‘Kent and its gentry’, pp. 502-504

the security of Rochester and its allegiance to Parliament. Rochester city records demonstrate that much expenditure was laid out in defending the city and billeting troops in 1655. However there were concerns within the council about how long it was taking Major Aske to reimburse them for the cost of providing 'fire and candle' for the troops billeted there. Every effort was made by Rochester to secure the city against Royalist threats. George Robinson, the mayor, worked with Pett to stop strangers and arrest known malignants. This was achieved by intercepting mail and by ordering all borsholders to report strangers to the authorities. As the decade progressed a few cracks appeared in the relationship. In 1657 complaints were received from Rochester that sailors were bringing disease and that the townsfolk had not been paid for quartering for over two years. By 1659 the mayor was reluctant to billet further troops in the city due to non-payment of the last lot.⁴¹ Despite these minor hiccups Rochester had a remarkably good working relationship with the centre between 1655-1659.

Rochester was, however, never entirely free of the Royalist rebels. In early 1655 the country was under threat from a series of risings, the most prominent of which was the Penruddock rebellion. In March 1655 Westminster sent down a troop 'to secure Rochester Bridg in Kent, and scower the parts adjacent' to ensure there was no serious threat to the city and its environs.⁴² Three of Rochester's gentry, Richard Lee junior, George Newman and Francis Clerke were implicated in this rising and arrested as delinquents. Because of these rebellions the estates of many Royalist supporters were subjected to a decimation tax imposed by Cromwell in 1655. Seven Rochester gentry were forced to pay this tax, including Richard Lee junior, George and James Newman, Francis Clerke as well as George May, all of whom has been involved in the 1648 Kent rebellion.⁴³ After their release both Newman and Lee were kept under close

⁴¹ MALSC, RCA/N1/19/2 Robinson's mayoral accounts 1654-1655 f. 2; RCA/N5/60; RCA/A1/2 ff. 9b, 10b, 28b; CSPD 1655 pp. 75, 127; CSPD 1656-1657 p.427, CSPD 1657-1658 p. 249; CSPD 1659-1660 p. 369

⁴² Coward, *Cromwellian Protectorate*, pp. 55-56; C. Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers*, (London, 1899) Vol. 3 p. 25

⁴³ Birch (ed.), *A collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, Vol. III pp. 253, 300; Keeler, *The Long Parliament*, pp. 246-248; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 401-404; P. Bloomfield, 'The Cromwellian Commission', in A. Detsicas & N. Yates (eds.), *Studies in Modern Kentish History*,

watch and their movements monitored throughout 1656. Richard Lee junior was, furthermore, arrested in 1657 for being embroiled in a plot against the government and whilst imprisoned called Cromwell ‘a knave, Traytor, Murtherer’.⁴⁴ Although Rochester council was behind Parliament in the mid-1650s, a number of Rochester’s leading citizens posed a continuing threat to the government at Westminster.

7. 1660-1663

Just prior to the Restoration in March and April 1660 the city created seventeen new freemen, of whom seven were gentlemen and six had connections to previous councillors. The April burgess elections returned Peter Pett and John Marsham, a Presbyterian and a Royalist. As the city’s electorate had returned Hutchinson, an Independent, in 1659 this does indicate that the freedom had been manipulated to return at least one Royalist M.P. In May General Monck was at Rochester preparing the ground for Charles II’s return. Whilst in the city he arranged for a letter from Charles to be published thanking the army for their support. Robert Gibbon of Restoration House, a Colonel in Cromwell’s New Model Army and Governor of Jersey, was to reciprocate this gesture by accommodating Charles during his stay at Rochester and present him with an address signed by all the army officers. Rochester council were equally hospitable in acknowledging the Restoration of the King. They ordered an ewer and basin costing in the region of £100, which they presented to his Majesty. Rochester minutes for May 1660 show that this entry was signed off by at least eight ‘Parliamentarian’ councillors. The ordinary people lined the streets throwing flowers and herbs to welcome their monarch.⁴⁵ On the surface Rochester appeared to support the Restoration of the monarchy.

(Maidstone, 1983) pp. 14, 23-27; J. Cliffe’s list in ‘The Cromwellian Decimation Tax of 1655: The Assessment Lists’, in *Camden Miscellany XXXIII, Seventeenth-century political & financial papers*, (Cambridge, 1996) 5th Series, Vol. 7 pp. 441-444. The original manuscript of the decimation tax list for Kent, U2341 at KHLIC, was still missing at the time of submission.

⁴⁴ R. Rhodes, ‘Suspected Persons in Kent’, AC Vol. 23 (1898) p. 75; BL, Add MS 4157, f. 172

⁴⁵ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 41b, 43b, 44b 46a; G. Monck, His Majesties Letter to his Excellency the *Lord General Monck...* (1660); *Mercurius Publicus* (24-31 May 1660) pp. 349-50; B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1660-1690*, Vol. III (London, 1983) pp. 23-24; Durston, *Cromwell’s major-generals*, p. 61; H. Reece, *The army in Cromwellian England, 1649-1660*, (Oxford, 2013) p. 152

Yet, despite this open declaration of allegiance to Charles, under the surface matters were not that clear-cut. Thomas May, a Royalist alderman purged in 1650, had to invoke a lawsuit to regain his former position, although there was spare capacity on the bench. At the mayoral elections in September 1660 Francis Cripps, an Independent, was voted into office and on his death mid-term John Marlow, a moderate, succeeded him as mayor. At this point the 'Parliamentarian' coalition still dominated local government. Active steps were taken to redress the balance. With the Restoration of Charles II an unprecedented number of ninety-two new freemen were created. This was done to ensure that the freeman pool was politically in tune with the new Restoration regime. The re-established cathedral authorities played a part by ensuring that fourteen Royalist clergymen were selected for the freedom, indicating as Jones has suggested that a 'cathedral party' existed. Although many prominent Royalists, including John Cobham and Peter Stowell, were admitted to the freedom so were a number of former 'Cromwellian' supporters such as Robert Watson and Peter Buck. Whilst many of the new names were Royalist a determined effort was also made to appoint new freemen, who supported the 'Parliamentarian' grouping. Rochester's 'Parliamentarian' group was, therefore, still able to influence the appointment of freemen through its overall domination of the corporation despite the return of the Royalists at Westminster.⁴⁶

Effectively the freemanry was used as a political weapon in 1660-1; firstly to try to return two Royalist M.P.s for Rochester and secondly to influence the choice of mayor. Christopher Wade's resignation as alderman and swift reinstatement would suggest a protest at this interference in city government and use of the freedom to support Royalist candidates. In the run up to the burgess elections for the Cavalier Parliament, Rochester's 'Parliamentarian' councillors admitted a number of Chatham men to the freedom to counter the effect of the 'cathedral' party's nominations. It was their aim that at least one naval representative would be returned and William Batten was their target as a former Presbyterian

⁴⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 47-55a, 59a; M. Jones, 'Election issues in mid-seventeenth century Kent', AC Vol. 85 (1970) p. 26; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 52a-55a

and naval officer. Francis Cripps, as mayor, was behind the creation of these twelve Chatham freemen. Rochester's 1661 burgess election was fiercely contested, with Francis Clerke's candidature supported by the Royalist Peter Stowell and the 'cathedral' party. Stowell was very much against Batten's return as M.P., withdrawing the freedom from many Batten supporters on his election as mayor in 1666 and harbouring a long term grudge against Batten's principal campaigner, John Wild. Clerke and Batten were elected members for the Cavalier Parliament in 1661. Francis Clerke was a Royalist, but Batten, as a naval man may still have been perceived by dockyard workers as holding Presbyterian sympathies.⁴⁷ Rochester corporation was, therefore, still able in 1660-1 to influence the outcome of parliamentary elections.

However the large injection of pro-Cavalier freemen was to impact on local government. In the 1661 mayoral elections Thomas May was returned and John Mabb on his death mid-term; both of them Royalists. Although Royalists were more prominent they were still in the minority in 1661-2. The auditors of the alderman's bench were two 'Parliamentarians', Henry Venman and Christopher Wade, whilst the auditors elected for the common council were two men who continued to serve under the purged corporation, Clement Brewer and Arthur Brooker. This reflected the strong 'Parliamentarian' base amongst the aldermen and more mixed grouping of common councillors.⁴⁸ Despite Jones' assertion that a gradual shift towards Royalism had occurred between 1658-1660, 'Parliamentarians' still largely dominated Rochester council in 1661. In the wake of this the parliamentary purges carried out under the Corporation Act of 1661 are no real surprise.

Halliday maintains that Charles II favoured mediation over exclusion to gain the loyalty of corporations, but this did not work leading to the need for imposition by the centre. This led to the Corporation Act of 1661, which was passed to ensure that all opposition in local government was removed. In Rochester this purging of the corporation was effected in August 1662. Six of the council were

⁴⁷ Henning (ed.), *The House of Commons*, Vol. I pp. 281, 607; Vol. II p. 88-89; TNA, SP29/201/135-139; Jones, 'Election issues', p. 26

⁴⁸ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 59a-59b, 62b.

dismissed from office despite five taking the various oaths; only Bonham Spencer and John Batty, both Independents, refusing. A further five councillors felt they could not continue to work under the newly constituted council and felt compelled to resign during 1662. Gilbert Young remained in office, but again there is no record of him taking the oath. Thus of the nineteen aldermen and councillors still in office in early 1662; one had died, eleven were effectively purged or forced to resign leaving seven to continue in office. Seven of the aldermen and four councillors lost their office; thus leaving only Mabb and Paske as aldermen and five councillors.⁴⁹ Rochester underwent a wholesale purge in 1662 with two thirds of its officers losing their seats on the council. Without this process of purging it is unlikely that a Royalist grouping would have gained control in the foreseeable future.

Rochester's freemanry was also massively purged in August 1662. Approximately ninety men from Chatham, Rochester and Strood lost their freedom and enfranchisement. Both the 1661 burgess and mayoral elections had shown that the freemen base had already been widened sufficiently to incorporate enough Royalists for voting requirements. This would infer that this was punishment rather than political necessity. There is a strong suspicion that pressure was put upon the Commissioners to cleanse the city of the entire former opposition and not merely purge those unwillingly to swear allegiance. Halliday contends that religion played a vital role in the purging and this is evident in Rochester where many Presbyterians as well as nonconformists were excluded from power.⁵⁰ The failure of the Restoration government to accommodate the Presbyterians within the established church cast many of the Medway parishioners into the category of nonconformists.

In the wake of this purge the Commission appointed seven new councillors and in September a Royalist, Stephen Alcock senior, was voted mayor. Following the election and a further resignation only fourteen councillors remained. It was decided in March 1663 to inject further new blood into the corporation and six

⁴⁹ Halliday, *Dismembering the body politic*, pp. 80, 82, 85, 87; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 66b-68b, 73b, 77a – Paske is not recorded as taking the oath.

⁵⁰ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 71a-72a; Halliday, *Dismembering the body politic*, pp. 90-92

new councillors were elected and two directly appointed as aldermen. None of the five Interregnum survivors were promoted either in August 1662 or March 1663, implying that no risk was being taken to advance possibly suspect men.⁵¹ By the end of 1662 the centre's objective of a Royalist controlled council in Rochester had been achieved.

At the onset of civil war in 1642 the city had a mixed corporation, which was largely controlled by pro-Parliamentarians. City government went through a period of self-purging in 1646 ousting the neutrals, which was not dissimilar to the actions of the Kent County Committee recounted by Everitt. Rochester as a city and corporation was to follow the Kent pattern in 1648 and participate as a Royalist-Presbyterian alliance in the 1648 rebellion against both Parliament and the Kent County Committee. A series of purges, first by the centre and then internally in the 1650s, resulted in an overall pro-Parliamentarian coalition dominating the council throughout the decade. In this sense purging brought harmony and not schism as Halliday claims. Rochester's oligarchic style of city government generally ensured the election of only those loyal to Parliament and effective exclusion of those against. This allowed the corporation to broadly control the allegiance of its membership and so ensured a remarkable degree of unity. For most of the 1650s Rochester council was in tune with national government. Kelsey described the county as a Royalist-Presbyterian alignment in 1656-7 and thus the county had reverted to its 1648 stance, indicating that Rochester and the county had drifted apart politically. By 1658 an element of mixed government had returned, which very loosely reflected the national and county trend, but overall Rochester maintained its 'Parliamentarian' dominance into the Restoration. Indeed it took a drastic purge in 1662 to finally rid the city of its 'Parliamentarian' council.

On the whole Rochester had a fairly continuous and constant period of government in political terms between 1642-1662 with pro-Parliamentarians dominating the council. The only blip in this twenty-year domination was in 1648-9 when no overall grouping was in power. Rochester council did in many ways fit Everitt's picture of a continually shifting political scene. Political

⁵¹ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 67b, 72b, 74b, 77a

allegiance shifted considerably in the mid-1640s as groups jostled for power. A unique set of circumstances persuaded previously strong Presbyterians to reconsider their allegiance and realign with the Royalists in 1648. These Presbyterian councillors were in turn to become the 'disaffected' of the early 1650s. Whilst Rochester had a small Royalist grouping, which briefly came to the fore in 1647-8, they were never to have more than that moment in the limelight, being successfully squeezed out of the corporate political scene for most of the decade. It will now be valuable to compare the findings of these two chapters against political events in Chatham during the same period.

Chapter 4

Chatham Vestry and Dockyard 1634-1649

Chapter four focuses on the political situation in Chatham between 1640-1649, whilst chapter five deals with the period 1650-1662. This chapter challenges Philip MacDougall's claim that Chatham vestry was ineffectual politically. An examination of the vestry, which was the vessel of local authority in the town, demonstrates that it took on an increasingly political role after 1640. Crawshaw argues that the vestry had a good working relationship with the dockyard. Many of the vestrymen and parish officers were dockyard workers, creating a close bond between the two institutions. Whilst the two bodies had a harmonious relationship for most of the period in question, there was a spell in the early 1650s when a dockyard dispute spilt over into the vestry, leading to friction and schism within it. A considerable part of chapter five is devoted to a discussion on this political feud between the dockyard and Chatham's dominant family, the Petts, and the sea chaplain, William Adderley. MacDougall maintains that Chatham was completely overawed by its neighbour Rochester and its civic institutions, leading to intense rivalry between the two towns.¹ Both towns had their own governing bodies, but were, nevertheless, dependent on each other. Chatham's relationship with Rochester will be analysed to determine whether the two towns cooperated, coexisted or were in conflict with each other in this period. Firstly, however, this chapter examines the political situation in Chatham between 1634-1640, allowing a comparison with the reactions and opinions after 1640.

1. 1634-1640

St Mary's vestry was the local administrative body for Chatham during the mid-seventeenth century with twelve elected members plus the appointed parish officers, who held closed meetings to discuss parish business. In Chatham the vestry officers consisted of two churchwardens, two to four overseers, a

¹ MacDougall, Chatham Past, pp. 21-23; Crawshaw, The History of Chatham Dockyard, p. 3/23

constable, two surveyors of the highway, a clerk, two sidemen, and from 1653 a registrar. Occasionally when extraordinary or controversial business was to be discussed a public meeting was called where all the parishioners could have their input. As no vestry minutes exist except for 1643 it is not possible to gauge how often they met and what business they transacted outside that recorded within the churchwardens' accounts.²

The dockyard and vestry had a generally good working relationship prior to 1640. Although the dockyard officers were exempt from holding public office this rule was, unlike Rochester, not enforced in Chatham. Chatham parishioners regularly elected dockyard men onto the vestry and the vestrymen in turn appointed dockyard workers to act as parish officials. Between 1636-1639 at least half of the recorded vestrymen and parish officers were dockyard personnel and the remainder were made up of farmers or yeomen. As a consequence the vestry and dockyard were well integrated. Many of the vestrymen and officers held significant positions as governors of naval charities in this period; five for the Chatham Chest and two simultaneously for the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital. It is, therefore, no surprise that the vestry and dockyard politically influenced parish decision-making.³

A clear indication that the vestry was involved in political issues occurred in 1635 when the sea chaplain's post became vacant, resulting in three petitions promoting two candidates, Thomas Grayne and John Piham, for the post. Grayne was Sir John Hayward's private chaplain in Rochester, whilst Piham was minister of St Mary's at Chatham. A petition, dated 4th August, from 'the parishioners of Chatham & of his Majesties Servants in his Roial Navy' supported Piham. At least nineteen of the twenty-one petitioners had dockyard connections and ten were vestrymen or parish officials in 1636. Details for the 1635 vestrymen are not available, but the records indicate the retention of many of the vestry from one year to another. This would suggest that although the petition emanated from the parishioners and dockyard it also had the backing of the vestry. Chathamites were keen to have their own minister, rather than an

² MALSC, P85/5/1; P85/8/1

³ MALSC, P85/5/1; CH108/21 ff. 125-133; NMM, SOC/15; TNA, SP16/295/26

outsider supported by the Dean and Chapter of Rochester, selected as sea chaplain; a duty Piham had undertaken in any case for the past thirty years without reward.⁴

This petition was drawn up in response to pressure from Rochester to appoint Grayne. On 27th July Walter Balcanquall, the Dean of Rochester, wrote to Sir Henry Palmer, Controller of the Navy, spelling out Grayne's credentials for the post. Twenty-one of Rochester's elite also signed a certificate dated 1st August recommending Grayne, as 'a Man whoe hath preached many learned Sermons amongst us heere at Rochester'. The argument put forward by Rochester's elite was that Grayne was unencumbered by a living and so better able to devote his time to the dockyard and seamen. Balcanquall considered that the income for the sea chaplain's living was small and only someone with a patron such as Grayne could afford to take up this post. Another reason given was that Piham would draw the seamen and dockyard personnel away from their ships to the parish church leaving the fleet unguarded. As at least thirteen of Rochester's elite, who appended their names to the certificate, had naval connections it is unsurprising that they wished to segregate the religious worship of the seamen and dockyard men from that of Chatham parish church. In simplistic terms they were not overly keen on Piham's Puritan views. The Dean was at pains to point out how learned Grayne was, whilst Rochester's elite stated they preferred Grayne, because his 'life and conversation is well approved of amongst us'. Chatham's vestry and parishioners considered Piham 'to be sufficient, ffaithfull & industrious in his Calling...'. However others were not so supportive of Piham. Henry Palmer wrote to Edward Nicholas, Secretary to the Commission for the Admiralty on 6th August: 'I heare the Minister of Chatham one Piham' is 'an arrant Duncce and a scraping wretch as lives' and concluded that Piham was 'lookinge for the gaynes without any more paynes.'⁵

A vigorous local contest went on between the supporters of Grayne and Piham, which threatened to cause a fissure between Chatham and Rochester. William

⁴ MALSC, P85/5/1; TNA, SP16/295/26

⁵ TNA, SP16/294/49, SP16/295/26, SP16/295/39, SP16/296/22I; For Chatham's Puritan past see Chapter six.

Lewis, a purser from Rochester, who had endorsed Grayne's candidature, wrote to Edward Nicholas on 3rd August concerned that 'there may be no dispute between the minister and those on whose half...' he intercedes. An indicator, even before Chatham's parishioners had submitted their petition, that matters were becoming divisive. A second certificate was produced on 25th August signed by nineteen men also supporting Grayne's application. These signatories are a mixture of Rochester, Strood and Chatham men with twelve known to have definite naval connections. It is, however, probable that they were all of a naval background, having a vested interest in the appointment of the sea chaplain. Their reasons were similar to that expressed in the certificate of 1st August.⁶ Not only was there a split between Rochester and Chatham over the appointment of the sea chaplain, but there was also a divide between the dockyard personnel and those with wider naval connections including the seamen. Chatham dockyard men supported their parish minister, whilst the seamen and navy seemed to favour Grayne. On this occasion the parishioners, vestry and dockyard were united in their opposition to the cathedral authorities and Rochester's elite. In the end the Admiralty followed the Dean's choice of chaplain.

The relationship between Chatham vestry and the cathedral was not, however, always confrontational. In 1637 the Chancellor of the Diocese of Rochester, Sir Basil Wood, was asked to mediate over a disputed assessment made in September 1636. This assessment was to complete the church building programme undertaken in 1633. Wood rescinded this assessment in March 1637 'upon a hearing of the cause in the presence of the partyes on both sides...'. It would appear that this assessment was disputed, because Thomas Vaughan, the new minister, was involved. Vaughan's predecessor, John Piham, who had died in 1636, had not been involved in the raising or signing off of assessments, but Vaughan actually endorsed the disputed assessment in October 1636. He subscribed his name to an entry that read: 'According to the title of this Asses we the parishioners have with a full and unanimous consent confirmed the same.' The assessment obviously did not have the parishioners 'full and unanimous consent' and Vaughan's role in this matter was conceived as

⁶ CSPD 1635 p. 317; TNA, SP16/296/28

unwelcome interference in parish business.⁷ Chatham vestry was happy to abide by the decision reached by the cathedral authorities to resolve the dispute and subsequently raised two assessments in April and July 1637 to pay for the church building work.

Rochester's relationship with Chatham can only be described as one of rivalry and confrontation prior to 1640. Whilst there was a limited opening up of the freedom of the city to Chatham traders, enfranchising some of the parishioners, other Chathamites were not so welcome in the city. The 1628 charter petition indicates that the sailors based at Chatham dockyard were responsible for a lot of the social disorder in Rochester. During 1632 the Admiralty granted the dockyard men an exemption from holding public office and carrying out civic duties. In 1634 Philip Ward, the Mayor of Rochester, complained to Nicholas: but 'they misconstruing, think themselves freed from contributing to any common charge in that place where they live.' Ward made it clear that their attitude was causing problems between the city and the dockyard: 'Such is the refractory disposition of some of them, that no persuasion can prevail...and their number is so great, that except they help to bear the charge, it will be too heavy for the rest of the inhabitants...'.⁸ Although resident in the city many of these officers neither contributed financially nor served in their community. Due to their lack of integration within Rochester's institutional framework issues were allowed to fester rather than be resolved. This situation was further exacerbated, as has been seen, in 1635 when both towns were keen to lobby for their own particular choice of sea chaplain, leading to intense rivalry between the two. Three of Rochester's aldermen, Philip Ward, Edward Hawthorne and Thomas Austen, had divided loyalties, siding with the city, not dockyard, in the above affair. These men had strong dockyard links and were governors of the two naval charities in this period.⁹ Integration did not necessarily lead to cooperation. Tension was, however, with the naval authorities at Chatham rather than the parish.

⁷ MALSC, P85/5/1; P85/1/2, Chatham St Mary's Parish Register 1615-1661

⁸ MALSC, RCA/A1/1, ff. 274, 277, 348; CSPD 1634-1635 pp. 59, 285

⁹ TNA, SP16/296/22I; SP16/296/28; MALSC, CH108/21 ff. 125-133; NMM, SOC/15

Crawshaw has viewed the dockyard's relationship with the Crown and its institutions as favourable between 1634-1638. Although the dockyard workers were employed by the Admiralty and were, therefore, dependent on the centre for financing and payment, they were not always in total accord over matters. The Admiralty's appointment of Grayne as sea chaplain, over the dockyard's preference for Piham, demonstrates that the dockyard did not always agree with the centre, but on occasions had to bow to its wishes. A turbulent relationship existed between the dockyard and Admiralty in the latter part of the 1620s with dockyard employees both petitioning and protesting due to non-payment of wages and dire poverty. Generally the relationship was volatile dependent on the financial state of the Navy.¹⁰

2. 1640-1643

Local historians as well as contemporaries are united in their opinion that Chatham was Parliamentary at the onset of Civil War in August 1642.¹¹ Chatham, as is demonstrated in chapter six, had been largely Puritan since the turn of the century. It is, therefore, not unexpected that the town and dockyard were largely Parliamentary in outlook. The first public statement of the parish's political viewpoint came in the 1641 Chatham petition against Thomas Vaughan signed by twenty-two parishioners. Vaughan, the incumbent, was accused of being anti-Parliamentarian: 'Hee never praid for blesseing upon the former Parliament, not yet for this [one]...', thereby exposing the position of the petitioners as pro-Parliamentarian. From the petition it can also be gathered that these parishioners supported the Scots and, hence, most probably the Presbyterian style of church government. 'Hee hath long continued, in the pulpit, to utter his bitter execrations against the Scottish nation...calling them daring Rebels, whose faith is faction, whose truth is treason, whose religion is nothing but rebellion...'.¹² Many of these petitioners were dockyard or naval personnel, however two tradesmen also signed this petition; John Lepper and

¹⁰ Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, pp. 3/4-3/6, 3/9, 3/21; CSPD 1625-1626 pp. 423, 478-479, 597; CSPD 1627-1628 pp. 21, 25, 40, 46, 136, 156, 593; CSPD 1635 p. 401.

¹¹ *A perfect Diurnall*, p. 4; Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, p. 5/8; MacDougall, *Chatham Past*, p. 22; Presnail, *Chatham*, p. 108

¹² BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

Laurence Hadlow. Both of these men also signed the 1642 Blount petition, but played no active part in the political or civil affairs of the parish vestry during the 1640s. A breakdown of the petitioners' support for other petitions, oaths and subscriptions between 1641-1643 can be found in Appendix 1.

Nineteen of these petitioners also put their hand to the pro-Parliamentarian document, The Humble Petition, drawn up by Thomas Blount in May 1642. This petition was in response to an earlier Royalist one published at the Assizes in March 1642. It appealed for both 'reformation in the church' and a peaceful political settlement between Parliament and monarch. Jacqueline Eales has located a copy of this document with all the signatures attached at the House of Lords Record Office. From this document it has been possible to identify a page of 181 Medway signatories; the overwhelming proportion of whom were from Chatham. All of the names have been deciphered, but fourteen remain to be positively identified.¹³ (fig.4)

Table 1
Residence of Blount petitioners

Place	Number of Petitioners
Rochester	7
Gillingham	18
Chatham	141
Strood	1
Unknown	14
Total	181

Many Chatham parishioners were Parliamentarian in outlook in April 1642, having penned their names to this petition. The Blount petition was generally signed by male head of households. Chatham's church rate was also levied upon households and, so, by stripping out any female ratepayers, it is possible to use the 1642 parish assessment as a general yardstick of support for

¹³ PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121, Main Papers, The Humble Petition. (May 1642)

this petition. There were 240 male households assessed for the church rate in Chatham during 1642, suggesting that approximately 60 percent of male householders signed this petition. A considerable number of Chatham's adult males were adult sons, servants or apprentices, and so relied upon their parent or master to convey their opinion, whilst others connected with the dockyard were away at sea. The actual percentage of Chatham's adult male parishioners, who supported the views of the petition, may thus have been significantly higher.¹⁴

Confirmation of the town's political allegiance in 1642 also comes from a Parliamentary account of Edwin Sandys' welcoming reception when he arrived at Chatham in August to secure the county for Parliament: 'such was the love of those who lived in Chattam, manifested to us...' that they 'made us very welcome so long as we stayed, & were very sorry when we went away.'¹⁵ Further proof of the town's political allegiance is preserved in the 1643 Chatham 'vestry' book, containing the signatures to the Vow and Covenant of July 1643, which was an oath taken by each adult male to show their support for Parliament. This oath was issued in the wake of Waller's plot, which had been uncovered, to take London and overthrow Parliament. In total 287 of Chatham's adult male parishioners took this oath of allegiance in the local parish church and quite a few on naval duty, probably, took it elsewhere. There is no record in the vestry book that any refused the oath. Richard Lee delivered the warrant and instructions to St Mary's parish church on 7th July giving them seven days to complete the procedure, but the whole process took place on 8th July, indicating that little pressure or effort had to be made to get the parishioners to comply.¹⁶ From the evidence examined above it would seem that Chatham parishioners were solidly behind Parliament in the period 1640-1643 as well as having a clear understanding of the national debates, which they engaged with by petitioning Parliament in 1641 and by supporting the Blount petition in 1642.

¹⁴ PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; MALSC, P85/5/1, 1642 assessment

¹⁵ A perfect Diurnall, pp. 3-4

¹⁶ Firth & Rait (eds.), Acts and Ordinances, Vol. 1 pp. 175-176; MALSC, P85/8/1, ff. 16-21

Civil War divisions and upheaval permitted St Mary's vestry to extend its political role in the early 1640s. Of the twenty-two signatories to the Chatham petition nine were vestrymen or parish officials in 1642, including Charles Bowles, Richard Holborne, James Benns and James Marsh. This would suggest at least tacit support for the petition by the vestry. Details for the 1641 vestrymen are not available. In 1642 the vestry declared its allegiance to Parliament with twenty-one of the vestrymen and officers penning their name to the Blount petition with only one, Richard Allen, a farmer, not doing so.¹⁷ The vestry's support for these petition indicates that they not only understood the wider ideological debates, but actively participated in them. By signing the Blount petition, which countered an earlier anti-Parliamentarian Kentish petition, the vestry also demonstrated its awareness of political undercurrents within the county as well as at Westminster.

The 1643 vestry and its officers were out of the same political mould as their 1642 counterparts with seven of the twenty-four vestrymen and officers having signed both the Chatham and Blount petitions, whilst another twelve signed just the latter petition. Interestingly three of the five vestry members who did not sign the Blount petition were farmers. Amongst the 1643 vestry members who signed both petitions were Miles Troughton and Morgan Griffin; names which crop up in Chatham vestry throughout the decade. Chatham vestry members were keen to acknowledge that dramatic change was occurring nationally and to specifically record their reactions to these events in a separate book in 1643. This book, incorrectly catalogued as a 'vestry' book, is annotated on the front cover as: 'Records of sundry kind touching this church- the parish of Chatham in Kent' in 1643. Actually contained within this book is; a list of those contributing to the Irish subscription in April 1643, an account of the removal of the imagery and other 'superstitious' items from the church, the Vow and Covenant of July 1643, a collection at the church door for an Irish minister in May 1643 as well as further collections for the relief of Hungerford, following a fire in June 1643, and wounded soldiers in London in October 1643. Notably the next three pages have been roughly torn from the book. The 1644 church

¹⁷ BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; MALSC, P85/5/1

inventory described the book as ‘containing the subscriptions of the parishioners to both the Covenants enjoined to be taken by the parliament...’. All traces of the Solemn League and Covenant were thus obliterated from this book probably after the Restoration. That the Vow and Covenant has survived is fairly rare, as at the Restoration orders were given to destroy all the parish copies. The only other known extant Kent copy is at Birchington.¹⁸

This book gives the impression of a politically active vestry. The heading to page seven best sums up the busy year the vestry encountered: ‘Records of manie things done in the parish of Chatham anno 1643’. In June 1643 the vestry records that it was responding to an order from Parliament in carrying out acts of iconoclasm. Presumably this was the 1641 ordinance, as that of 1643 was not issued till August. Despite taking their time in implementing Parliament’s instructions, the vestry was fully aware of the debate going on nationally about idolatrous images and ‘superstitious’ ceremonies. Seven of this vestry had petitioned against Vaughan and his superstitious practices in 1641. However, unlike the iconoclasm carried out at random by the soldiers and ruder sort in Essex between 1640-1, in St Mary’s Chatham it was carefully planned. There was nothing left to chance or the whims of a few hotheaded people; decisions were made by the vestry, which with the consent of the parishioners, arranged to have the church imagery dismantled in an orderly fashion by parish workmen.¹⁹ This book records that:

‘Upon offence taken by some, at the manner of the sentences upon the pillars, & by others, for the severall anticke painted works about them, with the consent of some knowing men in the parish, they were washt out.’

¹⁸ E. Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the national covenant: state oaths, Protestantism and the political nation 1553-1682*, (Woodbridge, 2005) p. 108; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/12; MALSC, P85/8/1 – this document is catalogued as a vestry book, but was specifically purchased to record events of 1643; P85/5/1; CCA, U376/8/L/I, Birchington All Saints Solemn Vow and Covenant 1643-1644

¹⁹ MALSC, P85/8/1 ff. 7, 14; P85/5/1 1643-1644 accounts; Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1 pp. 175-176; J. Walter, “‘Abolishing superstition with sedition?’ The politics of popular iconoclasm in England 1640-1642’, P&P, No. 183 (May 2004) pp. 79-123

One parishioner, however, took offence at an old ‘popish’ reminder still apparent in the church, which he felt should, likewise, be demolished and was promptly removed.

‘Upon a letter to one of the churchwardens, from an ancient parishioner, that the onely popish reliq remaining in the church was the seates in the chancell, formerly used for the fryars of the Chief’s order, & that it hath beene very offensive heretofore to Mr Pyham, once their godly pastour, it was quite demolished, & the wall where it stood repaired.’²⁰

All of this work had to be paid for. A specific assessment was agreed and raised in July 1643 by the churchwardens and parishioners ‘towards the charge of shortning [the] pews to make way for the Communion table in, the body of the Church, making new pews in, the Chancell & gallery, repairing the Churchwalls & other necessary alterations’. Only two objections were raised to this assessment with Gerrard Dalby and Hugh Fletcher both refusing to pay the assessment.²¹ Although the vestry made the decisions and implemented them the parishioners played their part. They were supportive of the work carried out, pointed out ‘superstitious’ imagery that needed removing, and were prepared to bear the cost for this demolition and the remedial work required. In the period 1640-1643 the vestry became increasingly politicised and played a part in the ongoing national debates.

The relationship between the vestry and parishioners was remarkably harmonious in this period of upheaval and change. However the same cannot be said of that with its minister, Thomas Vaughan, as an element of friction existed between him and the vestry. Chatham’s 1641 petition against Vaughan spoke of differences with the congregation and the perception gained is that he was at loggerheads with his vestry. He certainly made his presence felt within the vestry attending most of the recorded meetings between 1640-1643. His propensity to sign everything off, from each page of the parish register to the churchwardens’ assessments, may well have been perceived as interference in

²⁰ MALSC, P85/8/1 f. 14

²¹ MALSC, P85/5/1 1643 assessment

parish affairs; something his predecessor had never done. According to F. Haslewood, Vaughan showed a similar tendency in his later Smarden living. Vaughan was involved in the levying of every parish assessment since his appointment in 1636. His omission in 1643 was, therefore, quite significant. Thomas Vaughan's Laudian tendencies, highlighted by his parishioners in their 1641 petition against him, would have made it awkward for him to condone both the decision to demolish the church imagery and to acquiesce to an assessment to pay for it. It is, therefore, unsurprising that he played no part in the decision-making process of 2nd July 1643, concerning the assessment to remove the church imagery.²²

Chatham dockyard was closely integrated with the vestry between 1640-1643. Of the forty-three different vestrymen and officers recorded for this period slightly over half were connected with the dockyard.

Table 2
Occupations of Chatham vestrymen and parish officers 1640-1643

Occupation	Number of vestrymen & parish officer
Dockyard/Naval	25
Tradesmen	6
Gentlemen	2
Farmers/Yeomen	7
Unknown	3
Total	43

Three of these dockyard workers were governors of the Chatham Chest with William Cooke also acting as a governor of the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital. Chatham dockyard personnel held powerful positions, were from a skilled background and politically aware. On the surface it would appear that the dockyard did not outwardly show its Parliamentary credentials until

²² MALSC, P85/5/1; P85/8/1 f. 2, 14-15; P85/1/2; BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212; F Haslewood, Memorials of Smarden, Kent, (1886) p. 35

August 1642 when forced to do so. Edwin Sandys' letter to the Earl of Essex, dated 20th August 1642, reported that 'Chatham Dock, [was] surrendered up to us by their defenders...'. Commissioner Phineas Pett had bided his time in declaring for Parliament, allowing him to weigh up the political situation before making a decision on whom to support. However the printed account gives the impression that Chatham welcomed Sandys' troops with open arms.²³ Unlike Pett, the dockyard appears to have openly demonstrated its support for Parliament in August 1642.

Confirmation of the dockyard's early Parliamentary allegiance comes from two petitions. The 1641 Chatham petition was the first indicator that the dockyard hierarchy were solidly behind Parliament. Although, addressed from the parishioners, nineteen out of the twenty-two signatories were dockyard workers, clearly indicating that they were the drafters of the petition and the main force behind Vaughan's later ejection. An analysis of this document suggests that it was professionally drafted by a clerk. In all probability John Short drew up this petition. Short was clerk of the check in the dockyard and the first to pen his name to the petition. This petition was also signed by three of the extended Pett family; Charles Bowles, Richard Holborne and Joseph Pett. Although the Pett family dominated the dockyard they appear to have had a harmonious relationship with and represented the opinion of many dockyard workers in this period. The above petition urged Parliament to remove the parish's 'scandalous' and 'malignant' minister. From the issues raised by the petitioners it can be deemed that they were Parliamentary, probably Presbyterian, in political outlook.²⁴

The Blount petition of May 1642 provides further evidence of the overwhelming support amongst the dockyard and navy for Parliament. Of the 181 local petitioners' occupations analysed overleaf, ninety-three were identifiable as dockyard men, seamen or trades connected with the dockyard. At least half of the petitioners from the Medway Towns emanated from the dockyard. Chatham

²³ MALSC, P85/5/1; CH108/21 ff. 137-153; CSPD 1641-1643 pp. 374-375; A perfect Diurnall, pp. 3-4; NMM, SOC/15

²⁴ BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

dockyard workers frequently travelled to the London dockyards in the course of their business and so were fully aware of the national political debates going on at Westminster. These dockyard petitioners desired an end to the divisions in the country, seeking an amicable settlement with the King. However they also wanted to retain the ‘Power and Privileges of the Parliament, according to the late Protestation...’. The Protestation was an ‘uncontroversial oath of loyalty in defence of the church and king’ taken between May 1641 and February 1642. Edward Vallance contends that many saw it as a voluntary oath or placed their own interpretation upon its meaning. Sadly the Protestation returns do not survive for this part of Kent, although it seems likely that most of the dockyard men did subscribe to this oath, since the petitioners used the Protestation as the benchmark for their demands.²⁵

Table 3
Occupations of the Medway signatories to the Blount petition

Occupation	Number of petitioners
Dockyard/Naval workers	73
Associated Dockyard trades	18
Associated Dockyard professions	2
Gentlemen	2
Farmers/Yeomen	11
Tradesmen	16
Professions	2
Unknown	57
Total	181

Six of the extended Pett family signed this petition; Charles Bowles, Richard Holborne, Joseph Pett, William Bostock, Robert Yardley and his father, Edward. Despite this being a pro-Parliamentarian petition, neither Phineas nor Peter Pett, the existing and future Commissioners of the dockyard respectively,

²⁵ Vallance, *Revolutionary England*, pp. 107-108; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

penned their names either to this or the 1641 Chatham petition. Both men were very conscious of the fragility of their careers and were, therefore, politically very circumspect. During the period 1640-1643 most of the dockyard were in tune with political events at Westminster and supported Parliament by penning their names to the 1642 Blount petition.

Rochester was well integrated politically with Chatham in this period through its dockyard links. Three Rochester aldermen, three civic officers and four gentlemen of the city acted as governors of the two naval charities, the Chatham Chest and the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital, during this period. Integration did not always guarantee cooperation. Chatham dockyard actively sought to reduce its civic representation in Rochester. In 1641 Chatham shipwrights and caulkers petitioned the Admiralty to enforce an earlier exemption excusing them civic duties, so they could concentrate on their naval obligations, thereby removing the limited political presence Chatham had in Rochester. Chatham and Rochester's relationship was subject to moments of tension. The mayor and citizens of Rochester petitioned the Admiralty in 1640, because they feared that the 150 soldiers billeted there might 'prove very dangerous, for the town is full of seamen and workmen belonging to the navy...'. Due to overcrowding in Chatham many seamen and dockyard workers lodged within Rochester's city liberties. Rochester council was obviously concerned about the potential for conflict between these two groups, having previous experience of the disorder Chatham sailors and dockyard workers brought with them. As a consequence Rochester had problems juggling its duty to quarter the soldiery and accommodate the overspill from Chatham.²⁶ Another relationship that was strained at this time was that between Rochester Dean and Chapter and the parishioners of Chatham, particularly the dockyard. The 1641 Chatham petition gives the impression that the parishioners blamed the Dean, Walter Balcanquall, for saddling them with the 'Laudian' incumbent, Vaughan, in 1636. They also felt that the cathedral authorities should contribute more financially towards the St Mary's living to ensure that 'an able man' might be attracted to

²⁶ MALSC, CH108/21 ff. 137-153; NMM, SOC/15; CSPD 1640 pp. 539-540; CSPD 1641-1643 pp. 35-36

replace Vaughan.²⁷ Although the relationship between the two towns was strained on occasions, Chatham was, nevertheless, dependent on Rochester both for accommodating its townsfolk and its religious affairs.

3. 1644-1646

Alan Everitt has concluded that the Kent County Committee consolidated its position by weeding out the neutrals and more moderate amongst its members in this period. Chatham's 1644 vestry retained six of its vestrymen and officers from the previous year, which is not dissimilar to the retention levels for the period 1640-1643. Out of the eighteen recorded officers and vestrymen for 1644 fourteen had signed the Blount petition of 1642 and five of these had also penned their names to the Chatham petition of 1641. These numbers are not significantly different to those for 1643, suggesting that there was no change in the political makeup of the vestry. A new name that cropped up in the 1643 vestry was Thomas Williams, a carpenter, who had been involved in both the above petitions and was a collector for the Kent County Committee in 1644. Other men, who had participated in these two petitions and served several terms of office between 1642-1645, were Richard Holborne, Charles Bowles and James Marsh. At least two thirds of the recorded vestrymen and officers for 1645 and 1646 had also signed the Blount petition. The vestry was, therefore, still very firmly Parliamentary in this period without any hint of neutralism that needed removing.²⁸

Chatham vestry's role was less dramatic in this period, but continued in a similar political vein to 1640-1643. Remedial work continued on the church building, following the removal of the church imagery in the summer of 1643, with a further assessment raised in 1645 to clear the debts incurred. According to the 1644 inventory the Common Prayer Book 'was carried away' by James Benns, an active member of the vestry during this period and a signatory to the 1641 Chatham petition. Whilst debates were going on in Parliament in 1644 over

²⁷ BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

²⁸ Everitt, 'Kent and its Gentry', pp. 298-299; MALSC, P85/5/1; P85/8/1; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

the Common Prayer Book either Chatham vestry or James Benns, acting independently, took the decision to dispose of its copy. Parliament passed an ordinance in March 1645 ‘for taking away the Book of Common Prayer and for establishing and putting in execution the directory for the publique worship of God.’ Chatham St Mary’s acquired its Directory of Worship sometime in 1645 according to the churchwardens’ accounts.²⁹

The vestry were well aware of national concerns and campaigns in this period, reacting positively to any requests from the centre. In May 1645 the vestry made a collection for the relief of Taunton, which had been besieged and burnt the previous year by opposing forces, totalling £8 10s 9d. Chatham vestry was as quick to dole out relief for Civil War victims, as it was to collect money. During 1644-1646 numerous payments were ordered by the vestry to relieve injured soldiers, refugees from Ireland and poor ministers. St Mary’s churchwardens’ account for 1644-5 lists relief paid ‘To divers distressed famellies mynesters & other person driven out of Ireland by the Rebels’ totalling £2 1s 7d with a further ‘£3 paid out by Mr Clare to distressed ministers ...’. Ambrose Clare, a Presbyterian, became the minister of Chatham in 1644 on Vaughan’s ejection.³⁰ The vestry was, therefore, prepared to contribute financially to the Parliamentary cause as well as support it politically.

Relations between the vestry and Kent County Committee were very cooperative in 1644-1646. An account book for Chatham survives amongst the Kent County Committee papers at the National Archives covering 1642-1646. This account book records the taxes, loans and sequestration payments collected by various parish officials. On occasions quadruple the usual number of collectors were required to carry out this task on behalf of the committee. Chatham vestry had a wide pool of parishioners loyal to Parliament, who could be drawn on to execute these duties, unlike Rochester, which sometimes had to rely on Royalists. A total of twenty-four Chatham parishioners acted as collectors or accountants

²⁹ MALSC, P85/5/1; Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1 pp. 582-607; B.D Spinks, ‘Anglicans and Dissenters’, in G. Wainwright & K. Westerfield Tucker (eds.), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, (New York, 2006) pp. 510-512

³⁰ TNA, SP28/157 Part 2, Chatham’s Kent County Committee Accounts 1642-1646, unfoliated; MALSC, P85/5/1

for the county committee between 1642-1646, of whom twenty had signed the Blount petition and seven joined in the Chatham petition. John Wright, a ship's cook, was a collector in 1645 and has signed both the above petitions. William Milles, who had penned his name to the Blount petition, acted as a collector in 1644 and a churchwarden in 1646. Although John Spencer, Thomas Taylor, Thomas Jacob and Thomas Cooke, all governors of the Chatham Chest and seamen, were collectors for the county committee none of them had signed the Blount petition. Their failure to sign the petition may well have been absence due to naval duty rather than lack of support for Parliament. Other men, who had signed the Blount petition, acted as accountants for the county committee, including Thomas Bostocke, Edward Hayward and Laurence Fisher.³¹ Most of these men also served on the parish vestry or as officers in this period. The parish vestry both interacted with and was supportive of the Kent County Committee's work at this time.

Chatham parishioners continued to elect a vestry that was both in tune with Parliament in this period and that reflected the expanding dockyard. No objections were raised by the parishioners to a second assessment levied by the vestry in 1645 to pay for the completion of the church reparations. Several of the parishioners were content to serve continuous terms as parish officers in order to ensure that Parliamentary taxation was promptly collected. Chatham inhabitants were particularly keen to contribute £73 towards the 'pole money' in May 1646, so that Lee's troops garrisoned at Rochester could be paid and disbanded. These troops had become a financial burden and created rivalry between the two towns over who should have priority for quartering; soldiers or sailors. Disorder was also likely to break out amongst these two competing groups in an overcrowded environment. Chatham's committee accounts for this period describe a 'malignant' assessment collected in 1645. The only parishioner eligible was Gerard Dalby, a Royalist, whose goods were sequestered and sold in December 1645.³² Whilst most of the parishioners demonstrated their

³¹ TNA, SP28/157 Part 2, Chatham KCC A/cs; SP28/158 Part 4, Thomas Bostocke's KCC Accounts 1644; SP16/539/2, 1644 Rochester Assessment for defence works; MALSC, P85/5/1; NMM, SOC/15

³² MALSC, P85/5/1; TNA, SP28/157, Chatham KCC A/cs; CSPD 1645-1647 pp. 472-473

unswerving allegiance to Parliament in this period they were relieved when the troops were finally disbanded and the two towns could return to normal.

Chatham dockyard made up about three quarters of the vestry and its parish officers between 1644-1646. This was a substantial increase over the previous period when the dockyard's representation was about half. Dockyard workers were increasingly taking on a political role and now dominated the vestry and parish affairs.

Table 4
Chatham vestrymen and parish officers 1644-1646

Occupation	Number of vestrymen/parish officers
Dockyard/Naval	31
Gentlemen	2
Farmers/Yeomen	2
Tradesmen	3
Unknown	1
Total	39

The Pett family, all employed in or with connections to Chatham dockyard, exercised more local power too in this period. This extended family had five members on the vestry between 1644-1646, suggesting that they had much greater influence on parish decision-making than before. Two of the Petts also served as governors of the Chatham naval charities.³³ In this period the Pett family extended its tentacles beyond the dockyard and Chatham to wield increasing political power in the county. Charles Bowles took up a position with the Kent County Committee in 1643-4 as Commissary as well as serving as a Captain in the army. In addition to this role he was also appointed to the

³³ NMM, SOC/15; MALSC, CH108/21; P85/5/1

Committee of Sequestrations for Kent in November 1644 by Parliament. From Everitt's examination of the Kent County Committee records it can be ascertained that Peter Pett served as a committeeman between 1642-1648, but it is not clear in what capacity.³⁴

During the period 1644-1646 the dockyard's relationship with the centre was, however, under considerable strain. In 1644 Warwick wrote that the dockyard workers were in dire straits due to lack of wages with 'the ship-keepers... ready to mutiny.' Warwick, one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, addressed the House of Lords regarding his concerns about the Navy. 'The mariners will be forced to seek maintenance elsewhere; and if for livelihood they should repair to the enemy, a greater advantage will be thereby given to man and set forth against the Parliament those ships that be already under their power.' This situation had not improved by December 1645. Warwick reported to the Admiralty that the dockyard officers 'are doubtful, owing to the sadness of the times, whether the money intended and hitherto promised for the ordinary (service) may not be directed another way. Their wants have grown to such an extremity that they cannot any longer subsist...'.³⁵ At this point dockyard workers were still only protesting about their conditions, but were on the verge of taking direct action. The dockyard's loyalty to Parliament was severely tested at this time. Whilst the vestry had a good working relationship with Westminster and its local instrument, the Kent County Committee, between 1644-1646, the dockyard had more pressing economic concerns that threatened its relationship with the centre.

Rochester and Chatham's relationship was remarkably cooperative and harmonious in the years 1644-1646. In a period when insurrection broke out in west Kent the two towns managed to avoid any direct involvement, despite attempts by Royalist rebels to target the dockyard. The unsettled state of the county called for joint action to defend the towns from outside forces, which had to be paid for. An assessment was raised and collected from Rochester citizens

³⁴ CJ Vol. 3 6/11/1644; CSPD 1645-1647, p. 608; Everitt, 'The account book of the Committee of Kent', p.115; The Community of Kent, p. 137

³⁵ LJ Vol. 3 5/7/1644; LJ Vol. 3 10/2/1644; CSPD 1645-1647 pp. 285-286

in 1644 to pay for defence works at both Chatham and Rochester. Chatham's committee account book for 1642-1646 also indicates that the town contributed towards the defence costs of Rochester during this period. Whilst Rochester garrisoned the bridge, Chatham guarded the River Medway against any Royalist attempt by sea. When necessary, Rochester and Chatham could work together to ensure that the towns remained in the hands of Parliament. However Philip Ward's accounts demonstrate that by late 1646 Chatham had problems raising substantial loans for the Kent County Committee. Chatham only contributed proportionately half that raised by Rochester and merely a quarter of that raised by Gillingham, a small village compared to Chatham; a sign of the straightened financial circumstances of many of Chatham's parishioners, who were employed in the dockyard.³⁶ Despite the economic turmoil Chatham underwent in this period the town played its part both financially and practically in ensuring that strategic points in both towns were adequately guarded.

4. 1647-1649

Prior to 1647 Chatham was strongly Parliamentary. Underdown, however, considered that by 1647 this description had become a broad term for different political groupings such as Presbyterian, Independent and a midway group of moderates. The domination of the Independent grouping within the army and Parliament in the summer of 1647 left the Presbyterian grouping marginalized within the political arena. According to Alan Everitt a small group of Independents controlled the Kent County Committee from 1646 onwards.³⁷ It is in the context of this background that the Kent Rebellion of 1648 occurred.

There were already warning signs in 1647 of the growing disillusionment with Parliament within Chatham dockyard, which was to culminate in rebellion the following year. In April 1647 the Admiralty Committee raised concerns that 'Many Officers at Chattam' had not 'taken the Nacionall Covenant & the

³⁶ Charles I, Charles Rex his Majesties answer to the Parliaments Propositions for Peace, (York, 1644) p. 5; TNA, SP16/539/2; SP28/157 Part 2, Chatham KCC A/cs; SP28/158 Part 1, Ward A/cs; CSPD 1645-1647 pp. 285-286

³⁷ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 76-83; Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, pp. 146-147, 219-220, 229, 237

Negative oath' and ordered a list to be provided of all those who had actually subscribed to it. Chatham dockyard was an expanding workplace with many incomers and newly qualified men joining the ranks of the workforce, which may account for the omission of some taking the oath. However the context within which this order was recorded does suggest that an element of protest was evident in Chatham dockyard in 1647. This order immediately follows one given to Captain Phineas Pett and Charles Bowles to supply the names of the officers who had recently disturbed the incumbent, Ambrose Clare, at Chatham during divine service, demanding the return of the ejected Laudian, Thomas Vaughan.³⁸

In May 1648 Chatham, along with many other Kent towns, rebelled against Parliament. Two factors persuaded many of the dockyard men to sign the Kentish petition and join forces with the Royalists; firstly the appointment of Thomas Rainborough in 1647 as Vice-Admiral of the Fleet and secondly the dominance of the Kent County Committee by a small group of political and religious Independents. As established earlier Chatham dockyard and parishioners were largely Presbyterian in both political and religious outlook. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Chatham as a dockyard town favoured the Presbyterian, William Batten, as Vice Admiral. Naval historians agree that Batten's ousting in 1647 and replacement by Thomas Rainborough, an army man and Leveller, led to the naval revolt of 1648. Both seamen and dockyard workers considered that Rainborough had been put into office to radicalise the Navy and try to impose an Independent hierarchy upon them. The Declaration of the Seamen in the Downs of 28th May 1648 stated that they refused to serve under Rainborough 'by reason we conceive him to be a man not well affected to the king, parliament, and kingdom...'.³⁹

The above concerns were shared by their counterparts based at Chatham dockyard. Andrew Mitchell, boatswain of the *Constant Reformation* in the

³⁸ TNA, ADM7/673 f. 264

³⁹ J. Powell & E. Timings (eds.), *Documents relating to the Civil War 1642-1648*, (Naval Records Society, 1963) pp. 333-334; W. Jones, *Thomas Rainborowe 1610-1648: Civil War Seaman, Siegemaster and Radical*, (Woodbridge, 2005) pp. 96-98, 103, 107; B. Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution 1648-1660*, (Oxford, 1992) pp. 17, 26; M. Baumber, 'The Navy during the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth 1642-1651', MA thesis, Manchester University, (1967) pp. 203, 217, 226-227

Downs and a signatory to the above declaration, had close connections to Chatham, being part of the vestry in 1645. Chatham dockyard workers and seamen were thus aware of the issues that caused the Fleet to mutiny and many entered the fray at Rochester on 21st May. A Parliamentarian correspondent claimed that ‘many Officers came ashore, both Captains, Masters, Bosons, Gunners, and others,’ totalling between 300 to 400 from ‘about 40 to 50 ships in the river’, to participate in the rising at Rochester. Commissioner Peter Pett reported to the Admiralty that on 25th May the whole dockyard was virtually empty: ‘I mustered the ordinary men of the Navy and found as well [as] divers officers of the ships missing ... also many ordinary shipkeepers that had then taken up arms to serve the Gentlemen of Kent...’. Edward Hayward, clerk of the survey, wrote in 1656: I ‘hazarded my life...in the late Kentish Insurrection, 1648, to adhere to their Interest (Parliament), when also I had but few leading Examples’. Again giving the impression that most of his colleagues in the dockyard were embroiled in the rebellion. The actions of Chatham dockyard workers and seamen in seizing three ships in the Medway on 27th and 28th May 1648 would indicate that the time for discussion was past and that they were prepared to support their colleagues in the Downs with direct action.⁴⁰

The strongly Presbyterian dockyard was also acting against the Kent County Committee, which they perceived as too politically radical and not acting in their best interests. Pett found that many of his dockyard officers had not only ‘joined in the horrid engagement’, but also acted ‘as committee men with the pretended Committee...’. This ‘pretended’ committee, based at Rochester, was concerned about the actions of the Kent County Committee and their threat of the use of force. Although the vast majority of dockyard workers were not Royalists, they feared reports that ‘the committee of this county had privately sent for a regiment of horse and foot...for the stifling of a petition...from this county of Kent...’. Chatham dockyard men believed that the Kent County Committee was preventing them from circulating and signing the Kentish petition.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7, Peter Pett’s report to the Admiralty Committee 15 June 1648 f. 24; MALSC, P85/5/1; A Letter from Kent, p. 3; E Hayward, The Answer of Edward Hayward, (London, 1656) p. 5

⁴¹ Bod Lib, Tanner MS 57 f. 93; Nalson MS 7 f. 24

The Manifest of the County of Kent clearly reflected the opinions of many of the dockyard and navy. ‘That our assembling and meeting together at this time, is no other then for a vindication of our selves and purposes, from the scandall, and aspersions of the *Committee of the County...*’. Around 26th May Peter Pett wrote to the ‘pretended’ committee at Rochester offering to mediate between them and Parliament. They did not accept his offer, but replied ‘that there was no intentions on their parts for an attempt prejudicious either to the honourable Parliament or Navy; that if there were any suspicions they did disavowe them and only protest their resolucion for the advancement of their just right of petitioning etc.’⁴² Chatham’s dockyard officers, as part of the ‘pretended’ committee, had made it plain that their grievances were with the Kent County Committee and not Parliament. All elements in Chatham dockyard, officers and workmen alike, were prepared to petition and protest against the political situation in Kent and the Navy in 1648. The dockyard men had not turned Royalist, but were trying to maintain the Presbyterian status quo both politically and religiously, which had existed in Chatham since the early 1640s and could, in their opinion, only be achieved by the removal of Independent men or bodies that directly affected them.

There is no definitive list of Medway Towns’ participants involved in the Kent Rebellion, but a diverse range of sources name suspected rebels, who are tabulated in Appendix 3. Peter Pett returned two lists of rebels with his report of 15th June to the Admiralty Committee. Nine of the twenty-seven men listed were from Chatham with the remainder coming from Rochester. Amongst those he charged with involvement in the Kent Rebellion was Thomas Bostock. Bostock admitted to the Committee of Merchants in April 1649, that he had gone along with Phineas Pett ‘to the Committee of Rochester soe called that they might see what their intentions was concerning the person and authoritie of Mr [Peter] Pett...’. This was the ‘pretended’ committee meeting at Rochester, which was in opposition to Parliament. Presumably he was questioning Pett’s authority in refusing the rebels access to the supplies and arms in the dockyard. Although Vice Admiral Warwick gave Bostock the benefit of the doubt in July 1648, the

⁴² Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 f. 24; The Manifest of the County of Kent

Committee of Merchants, on re-examining the evidence, dismissed him in May 1649 for his part in the rebellion. He did not, however, go without a fight, refusing to give up his house in Chatham.⁴³

The Admiralty Committee ledgers for 1649 indicate that another thirty dockyard men were disabled from holding office under the Act of Parliament of January 1649, which set out to remove all naval delinquents and former 1648 rebels from their posts. John Hancret was amongst those disabled under the above Act in February 1649, but reinstated on the recommendation of the Committee of Merchants on 6th March, being considered along with twenty-three others as ‘very honest men and cordially affected to the Parliament...’.⁴⁴ This would indicate that many dockyard officers were involved in the Kent Rebellion. The Commons Journal of 21st March 1649 lists the names of eighteen men, who were disabled under the above Act and were to be ‘pardoned’ for their actions; fifteen of whom had already been reinstated by the Admiralty Committee on 6th March. One of those ‘pardoned’ was James Marsh, who had previously signed both the Chatham and Blount petitions. Of the various men accused of participation in the Kent Rebellion, twelve, including Marsh, had religious sympathies that bordered on Independency, petitioning on behalf of William Adderley, an Independent minister, as sea chaplain in September 1649. This suggests that Marsh and these eleven men were politically rather than religiously motivated in May 1648 and as political Presbyterians favoured a personal treaty with the king. They joined forces with the Royalists in the hope that this action would force Parliament into a political settlement with Charles I.⁴⁵

A further five names of suspected rebels were included in the Committee of Merchants minutes for May 1649. Amongst this group were John Bright and Thomas Taylor. The Committee of Merchants accepted Taylor’s argument that he ‘signed the Kentish Petition upon inforcement’ and could produce ‘Testimony of his Integrity to the Parliament’. Bright, although retained at this

⁴³ CJ Vol.519/6/1648;Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7, ff. 24, 70; RAM, RAR MS 0056, ff. 14v, 16v, 19v, 20r

⁴⁴ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 f. 27v

⁴⁵ CJ Vol. 6 21/3/1649

time, had other charges laid against him in 1650-1, which cost him his career.⁴⁶ William Adderley also named some former rebels in his report to the Committee of the Navy of December 1651. Adderley accused Peter Pett of being ‘a Countinnance and Promoter of Malignants and prophane scandalous Persons in the states service.’ He named two of these malignants as former rebels; John Cheeseman, who was ‘a carriage maker in the Kentish Rising...’ and Cornelius Payne, who ‘hath bin...an Actor in the Kentish Rebellion...’. His report also implies that a number of other men were involved in the Kent Rebellion, but had escaped punishment.⁴⁷

Adderley had a different perception of Peter Pett’s actions in May 1648 than Pett’s report of 15th June to the Admiralty contained. He considered that Pett ‘did not publish a command to the men to stand to their dutye for the Parliament in the time of the Kentish Rebellion, as a testimony of his faithfulness and Courage to and for the Parliament and their Causes, untill after Goarings defeat at Maidstone by the Parliaments forces’. Pett produced Thomas Arkininstall, a master attendant, as a witness in his defence. Arkininstall declared: ‘That at the beginning of the Kentish riseing before Goreing was beaten or at his height the Commissioner raised a muster to be made of all the men & gave order that they should all come in to doe their duty to the state or els that they should be prickt [of their wages]. Saith some refused feareing it was a wile to send them on board & to carry them to London present[ly].’ Pett’s defendants implicated another man, Richard Allen, as a participant in the rebellion. He apparently came to the dockyard to obtain carriages for the opposing Royalist-Presbyterian coalition. Altogether these various sources give forty-two Chatham names that were suspected of or tainted with delinquency in May 1648.⁴⁸ Despite Pett’s claim that he was abandoned almost alone in the dockyard only a small number were actually accused of delinquency out of the ‘many hundreds of men which were then there under his command’ in May 1648.⁴⁹ Whilst a greater number may have participated in the Kent Rebellion than were actually charged or records survive for, his account should be approached with some caution as he was

⁴⁶ RAM, RAR MS 0056, ff. 15r, 18r

⁴⁷ BL, Add MS 22546, Navy Papers 1643-1677, ff. 50-51

⁴⁸ *ibid* ff. 51, 57

⁴⁹ BL, Add MS 22546, f. 51.

portraying an image to the Admiralty and Parliament that reflected favourably on him, being the sole defender of the dockyard.

As no signed copies of the Kentish petition survive other sources have been used to gauge the numbers and names of Chathamites, who signed this document. There is strong anecdotal evidence that many local people did pen their names to this petition. Pett's letter to the Admiralty of 23rd May, which was subsequently published, stated that 'The Petition is daily signed by additional hands, the number is great that have joined in it.' His later report to the Admiralty on 15th June demonstrates that considerable efforts were made to circulate this petition around the dockyard. Thomas May, a Rochester alderman and 'pretended' committeeman, approached Pett on 24th May to sign the petition and 'give them leave to gett hands to itt in the yard...', which he refused.⁵⁰

Pett's report of 15th June indicates that he considered many of the dockyard men had either 'beene cheefe actors in this rebellion' or had a hand in 'signing the petition'. He included two lists of suspects with his report, but these are no longer attached to the original correspondence. However it appears that these were the same twenty-seven suspects from Rochester and Chatham 'ordered in[to] custody' by the House of Commons on 19th June 1648, as the preamble to the list thanked Pett for his actions. These men were all accused of being 'active against the Parliament, in the late Insurrection in *Kent*' and were, according to the Earl of Warwick's letter of 14th July to Lenthall, also charged with signing the 'late petition...of Kent'.⁵¹ Pett was best placed in May 1648 to identify those who had rebelled and suggested 'whether it be not a thing very fit to purge the Navy of such ill members.' Warwick examined the suspects listed by Pett and reported back to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 14th July that he had released twelve of them, named in the margin, because he had found insufficient evidence of them having signed the petition or being involved in the rising. Five of these men were key players in Chatham dockyard; Thomas Bostock, William Boorman, Captain William Cooke, James Cooke, and Digory Rosogo. However Warwick went on further to explain that they had been extremely useful to him

⁵⁰ Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7, f. 24; Sad Newes out of Kent, p. 2

⁵¹ Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7, ff. 24, 70; CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648

in getting the ships ready for action against the rebel crews, indicating that they were too useful to him to dismiss from their posts rather than innocent of the above charges. The other four Chatham men, Thomas Grayne, Thomas Schovile, John Cheesewick and Robert Tayler were expendable, as their posts were either not crucial to the navy or they could easily be replaced. Four of these Chatham men, including Thomas Bostock, were later discharged from their employment due to their involvement in the events of May 1648.⁵²

Purging all the rebels of 1648 was not viewed as politically viable. The Committee of Merchants had been empowered under the January 1649 Act of Parliament to disable rebels from holding naval or dockyard positions. This committee consisted of ‘regulators’, who were mainly religious and political Independents and were, therefore, after a complete purge of former rebels. In February 1649 they ruled that all former naval or dockyard rebels were ‘incapable of holding their places,’ but the Navy Committee were concerned that this would lead to a shortage of officers.⁵³ They, thus, had to consider the impact on the navy and only ordered the actual dismissal of a small number. On 6th March 1649 the Committee of Merchants referred twenty-four names to the Admiralty Committee, who they were inclined to accept as favourable to Parliament; of these men fourteen were from Chatham and the rest worked in the yard and resided locally. From the Commons Journal of 21st March 1649 it is evident that most of these men had signed the Kentish petition in May 1648: ‘The Persons above named, being recommended by the committee of Merchants to the Committee of the Navy, to be again employed, notwithstanding the[ir] subscription to the Petitions...if they received satisfaction to their fidelity to the State.’ Between the above two lists twenty-seven men were charged with having allegedly penned their names to this petition and eighteen were effectively ‘pardoned’ for their actions. Only two of these men were actually removed from office, James Cappon and Matthew Collins.⁵⁴

⁵² Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 ff. 24, 70 – Tayler, Grayne and Cheesewick were also dismissed.

⁵³ BL, Add MS 22546 ff. 50, 55; W. Cogar, ‘The Politics of naval administration, 1649-1660’, D.Phil thesis, Oxford University (1983), pp. 74-77, 81

⁵⁴ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 f. 27v; CJ Vol.6 21/3/1649; RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 20v, 22v

James Cappon was disabled under the above Act in February, but was reinstated to his position on 6th March perceived as being repentant for his actions. He had, however, been up to further mischief and was not, thus, included amongst those to be ‘pardoned’ on 21st March. Upon hearing the evidence against Cappon on 30th May the Committee of Merchants were less inclined to leniency than their Admiralty counterparts. Mr Phineas Pett, assistant master shipwright, when examined about Cappon’s part in the events of May 1648 said: regarding ‘his Action in the Kentish business I can only say this at present That I heard him say that hee signed the Kentish Petition which he hath already acknowledged to that Committee.’⁵⁵ Cappon’s eventual dismissal was, however, for his later actions rather than signing the Kentish petition.

It was, therefore, understandable that John Short, in his petition to the Navy dated 15th May 1649, pointed the finger at many others, who had signed this document. He considered that he had been treated unfairly and ‘for noe other cause objected against him then the bare signing the Kentish Peticion he was laid aside from his employment though others equally guilty have been continued acting in their plaices in and about the Navy.’ Short had a valid point, because few men appear to have been actually dismissed for just signing the petition.⁵⁶ In April 1649 Thomas Cooke ‘was suspended...by the Committee of Regulations for noe other crime than signing the Peticion for a Personall treaty (he being forced thereto by threats of death)’ and replaced. He was quick in turn to point the finger at Thomas Whitton, accusing him of being ‘a greate promotore [of] the kentish Petition’ and going ‘a Mile to Subscribe it.’ Cooke was not the only one to complain that he was given little choice, but to sign the petition; Thomas Taylor and Richard Holborne gave similar accounts. Whether these men were under duress to sign the petition is uncertain, as from Thomas Bostock’s testimony it would appear that Thomas Whitton went to Rochester of his own accord to seek out the petition. ‘Thomas Whitton havinge a minde to signe the Kentish Petition hee (Bostock) and Phineas Pett did goe alonge to the Committee of Rochester...That this deponant (Whitton) did goe along with them [and] that

⁵⁵ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 ff. 27v, 47r, 52v; RAM, RAR MS 0056, ff. 15r, 20v, 44r; CSPD 1649-1650 p. 99

⁵⁶ TNA, SP18/5/31; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 f. 63r

they did not know whether Mr Whitton did sign the Kentish Petition or not...'. However he observed that there was 'no violence or compulsion used to Mr Whitton' to sign that petition. Whitton admitted his part in signing the petition and was cleared of the other charges against him; retaining his position.⁵⁷ Significant from Cooke's evidence is that the signatories understood the nature of the petition; a plea for a treaty with the King. This would have been a sentiment shared by many of the Presbyterians in Chatham, who desired a political settlement with Charles I.

Two men related to the Pett family were also implicated in signing the Kent petition. Richard Holborne acknowledged in 1651 when charged by Adderley of involvement in events of May 1648, that he had 'signed the Kentish petition but it was by constraint & not voluntare...'. He was reinstated to his post in March 1649. Another Pett family member, who had to answer for his part in the Kent Rebellion, was Joseph Pett. Pett was restored to his employment in February 1649 after admitting that he had signed the Kentish petition.⁵⁸ Generally speaking Chatham dockyard officers were not dismissed for merely signing the Kentish petition, whether they claimed coercion or not. In total nine dockyard officers lost their positions as a consequence of signing the Kentish petition in May 1648. Several of the men relieved of their posts were found guilty of wider issues; Thomas Cooke had claims of corruption levied against him, which also played a part in his dismissal, whereas Thomas Bostock had openly rebelled by approaching the 'pretended' committee at Rochester and Cornelius Payne had played a part in the rebellion itself. John Short actually resigned from his 'place not daring (by reason of the Act of Parliament) any longer to continue acting' in it. The Navy Office decided that 'the place beinge a trust of soe greate concernment that if a man of Cordialitie were not in it, it might be very prejudiciall to the Common Wealth, And uppon inquire[ing] after him (Short)' they did not find any 'incouragement to recommend him.' Presumably Short was not prepared to demonstrate his allegiance to the new regime.⁵⁹ Many below officer level probably participated in the rebellion or signed the petition, but

⁵⁷ RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 10v, 12r, 13r, 14r, 15r; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226 ff. 64v-r

⁵⁸ TNA, SP18/23/20-21

⁵⁹ RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 3v, 11v, 12v, 14v

were not deemed important enough to pose a threat to the Navy or dockyard and so escaped punishment.

Both Pett and Warwick had misjudged the mood of the dockyard and seamen after the Kent Rebellion. In June 1648 Pett decided to withhold the pay of those he considered were implicated in the recent events until they cleared themselves. Yet in August he had to warn Warwick that arrears in pay had left the men 'reduced to such straits, as may endanger a tumultuous address to the Parliament'. On 5th June Warwick noted that the some of the ships including the Fellowship, which had been seized by the rebels a few days earlier, were ready to set sail from Chatham to 'subdue, and bring into obedience, those mutinous and piratical seamen...'. But on 1st August Warwick had to report to Derby House, that of the seventy or so crew aboard the Fellowship, 'thirty-five have openly declared they will not oppose the revolted ships' and some of these disaffected seamen had also tried to persuade the rest to join them. As the ship was prepared and based at Chatham the majority of the crew would have been local seamen or dockyard workers. Pett had been keen to name those who participated in the rebellion, but avoided naming his own relations. Short's protest in 1649, at his unfair treatment, led to a call from the Committee of the Navy to investigate 'why any person alike culpable is kept officiating in any plaice of trust.'⁶⁰ It would appear that Pett was selective about who was purged, leaving him open to accusations of favouritism as well as misjudging the mood of the dockyard men both during and after the rebellion.

It is difficult to ascertain the opinion and involvement of other Chatham parishioners and the vestry in this period, as the surviving parish records indicate that vestry business almost ceased between 1647-1649 apart from the maintenance of church accounts. Whether the vestry failed to carry out its usual remit due to political upheaval or involvement in the Kent rising is unclear. The earlier political activity of the vestry was mainly due to dockyard influence and by 1648 this group had found another avenue to express their opinion; petition

⁶⁰ Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 f. 24; Powell & Timings (eds.), Documents relating to the Civil War, pp.344, 362-363; TNA, SP18/5/31

and protest. A similar period of inertia was witnessed within Rochester council during 1648. Details of the Chatham vestrymen and officers for the period 1647-8 are unknown. Out of the ten recorded vestrymen and officers for 1649 six were from the dockyard. This vestry also contained four members of the extended Pett family, including Commissioner Peter Pett, compared to just one in 1646. The Petts were, therefore, inclined to reassert their political influence in this sphere following the Kent Rebellion, suggesting that elements of the vestry had been disloyal in 1648. Of the fourteen listed vestrymen and parish officers for 1646 six signed the Kentish petition and, with the exception of Joseph Pett, none of these men played any part in parish affairs after 1648. Chatham vestry did, however, contain three 'rebel' vestrymen in 1649, indicating that the vestry consisted of diverse political views at this stage, but no known Royalists. No names of non-dockyard personnel in Chatham have emerged as participating in this rebellion or signing the Kentish petition. Other parishioners either played no part in the 1648 rebellion or kept a low profile.⁶¹

Rochester and Chatham's relationship was unusually cooperative in this period. In May 1648 the two towns acted as a united front during the Kent Rebellion. Chatham dockyard and naval workers participated on the 'pretended' committee at Rochester, whilst Rochester citizens were active in persuading Chatham parishioners to sign the Kentish petition and tried to secure arms from the dockyard for the rebels. Presbyterian dockyard men acted alongside rebel Rochester councillors, who consisted of both Presbyterians and Royalists. When it came to the crunch Presbyterians in both towns were prepared to align with the Royalists to oppose Parliament. Although some of the underlying reasons for supporting the rebellion were different in the two towns the Presbyterian rebels nevertheless had a common goal; to get rid of the Kent County Committee.⁶²

The relationship between the dockyard and the centre had indeed broken down in 1648, because the centre had moved away from the political opinion of the dockyard men. Chatham dockyard workers had allied with a group they believed would deliver a political settlement with the King and rid the nation of

⁶¹ MALSC, P85/5/1; CJ Vol. 5 19/6/1648

⁶² Bod Lib, Nalson MS 7 f. 24

the Independents. Following Pride's Purge in December 1648 and the subsequent trial and execution of Charles I in January 1649 this relationship would have deteriorated further. Although few Chathamites left any trace of their reactions to the regicide or newly formed republic, it is unlikely that the majority would have supported these events. Some in Chatham, however, did express their dissatisfaction with the new regime and its actions. On 7th March 1649 a 'foule Copie of the Novell' was presented to the Navy Committee from Chatham dockyard officers. This 'novell' or newsletter, deemed 'to bee Malignant', was obviously outspoken against the new regime. The Navy Committee reacted on 16th April by sending out a summons to 'divers officers', who had supported the 'Novell', which they considered fell within the compass of the Act of Parliament passed to disable delinquent officers. It would seem inconceivable that any of the twenty-four men considered by the Committee of Merchants on 6th March, as being favourable to Parliament and reinstated to their former positions, would jeopardize their future careers by being implicated in this particular incident, but James Cappon appears to have done just that. The Council of State recommended his dismissal on 19th April 1649 just a few days after the above summons was issued.⁶³ His actions in supporting this 'novell' are, perhaps, not that surprising given that he was accused on 14th April by Thomas Loddington, a fellow dockyard worker, of having 'spoken Wordes in the disparagement of the late ffleet saying it would doe as much good as the ffleete last summer', a reference to the navy's part in the Kent rebellion the previous summer and that it was still anti-Parliamentarian. Loddington went further and said Cappon had 'uttered Words in a jearing manner att the Commissioners being then att Chatham, telling Mr Short in this deponants hearing,' that 'their chaste eares would not hear it'. What the exact nature of the words was is unclear, but they occurred shortly after the regicide and establishment of the republic, leading to Cappon's eventual dismissal. John Short's reaction in resigning his post in early April and above conversation with Cappon imply he may also have supported this 'novell'.⁶⁴

⁶³ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 143-173; RAM, RAR MS 0056 f. 7r, CSPD 1649-1650 p. 99

⁶⁴ RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 3v, 20v

Walter Rosewell's protests against Parliament and the Army date back to 1649 and continued against both them and the Engagement until his arrest in the summer of 1650. Rosewell, minister of Chatham, appears to have expressed his views towards the new regime in a letter of November 1649 addressed to William Adderley, the new Independent sea chaplain, who handed the letter over to the Navy Commissioners. The exact content of the letter is unknown, as the original is no longer extant, but on 5th December 1649 the Admiralty Committee referred the letter to the Committee for Plundered Ministers, 'conceiving his deportment [t]herein to be properly within your Cognizance, so that Wee doubt not but you will send for him to Attend you, and upon his Answer proceed therein according to Justice, which wee earnestly recommend to you as a business of great Concernment to the affaires of the Navy...'. He also refused to take the oath of Engagement in February 1650, which was to swear allegiance to the new regime. In all likelihood Rosewell's opposition to the Engagement centred on Parliament's involvement in the regicide. Rosewell was sequestered from his living in late 1650 for 'refusing to take the Engagement and for bitter invecting against the proceedings of the Parliament and Army'. He was accused of 'seditious practises against the State both in the pulpit and elsewhere...', drawing receptive audiences. Both Edward Hayward and John Bright, employed in the dockyard, were threatened with dismissal for attending meetings and sermons when Rosewell 'preached against the Engagement.'⁶⁵ This would suggest that Rosewell was the voice behind Chatham's protest against the regicide. Rosewell's role as a preacher is investigated in chapter seven.

⁶⁵ A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, (Oxford, 1988) p. 484; TNA, SP25/8/16; SP25/123/167; SP25/8/23-24; SP25/123/427-428; CSPD 1649-1650 p. 426; CSPD 1650 pp. 256-257, 279

Chapter 5

Chatham Vestry and Dockyard 1650-1662

By 1650 the King had been executed, the monarchy abolished and the country was governed by Oliver Cromwell and the Council of State. In Chatham there had been opposition to these changes led by the Presbyterian incumbent, Walter Rosewell. However he and any opposition were effectively silenced with his imprisonment in July 1650. Relations in Chatham dockyard were still very tense in 1649-50, due to the accusations flying around in the wake of the 1648 Kent Rebellion. These fissures were starting to heal over when William Adderley, appointed as sea chaplain in 1649, 're-fanned the flames of discontent' by exposing some former rebels in 1651.¹ Adderley, a political and religious Independent, had been behind Rosewell's removal. He made it his duty to monitor activities at Chatham, particularly in the dockyard, and report any signs of opposition to the Admiralty. His political relationship with the dockyard officers, especially the Pett family, is the focus of the first section. Adderley's vendetta against the Pett clan, who were broadly Presbyterians politically, led to intense rivalry and factionalism within the dockyard between 1651-1654. The dispute also divided the congregation and vestry, leading to schism. This chapter examines if these disputes were politically as well as religiously motivated and whether this impacted on the dockyard's relationship with central government. Section two argues that after 1655 the Independents had less of a political influence in the town, resulting in a period of relative calm in the vestry. It was Adderley, who again upset the parishioners in 1659, but the vestry, by then made up of a wider political base, were not prepared to tolerate a second schism and were behind a petition to oust him from his remaining post.

Before examining the political situation in Chatham during the 1650s, a brief explanation of the groups operating in the town is required. Chatham was politically much less complex than Rochester. Only two groups existed within the vestry in this period; Presbyterians and Independents. The criteria for these

¹ Cogar, 'The Politics of naval administration', pp. 88, 92

groups are not dissimilar to those defined by Underdown in *Pride's Purge*.² In Chatham political and religious views were generally held in tandem and the term Presbyterian is, therefore, appropriate to use for many Chatham vestrymen in the 1650s. Royalism was not a completely spent force in the town, although this group did not play a part in the vestry until the closing years of the decade.

5. 1650-1654

Chatham vestry had returned to business as usual by 1650. No vestry meetings are recorded in the churchwardens' accounts for 1651, but 1652 was a very busy year for the vestry with a steady flow of business in 1653-4. The vestry effectively ensured that various orders from Parliament were rapidly carried out such as a collection for the town of Marlborough, following a fire in 1653, as well as the new requirements for the recording of births, deaths and marriages passed by Parliament in August 1653.³ In September 1653 a public meeting was held to appoint a registrar and 'by the major voices, chose Mr Thomas Heavyside'. He was a recent incomer into the parish through marriage and described varyingly as a scrivener and schoolteacher.⁴ Heavyside's selection was made at a public meeting with a much higher turn out than was usual for appointing officers. The vestry ensured that this information was recorded in the front of the newly purchased register and noted that the meeting was a few days late, but 'not through any wilfull neglect, or disobedience to authority'. Those parishioners, who attended this meeting, had every desire to comply with orders from the centre. Of these thirty-three parishioners no fewer than twenty-seven were dockyard men with only one having participated in the recent Kent Rebellion, demonstrating their support for Parliament. Yet in November 1653 it was considered necessary to call a public vestry meeting, as 'there is not a due observance of the late Act of Parliament' for recording births, deaths and marriages. Both the clerk, John Beckett, and the 'refusers', those who had failed

² Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, pp. 173-174

³ MALSC, P85/1/3, Chatham St Mary's Parish Register 1653-1666; P85/5/1; Firth & Rait (ed.), *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2 pp. 715-719.

⁴ MALSC, P85/1/2, St Mary's parish records 1616-1653; P85/1/3; P85/5/1; DRc/Elc/050/1, Lease dated 1671; F. A. Crisp, *Fragmenta Genealogica*, Vol. XI (London, 1906) p. 219; TNA, PROB11/384, Will of Thomas Heavyside; G. J. Armytage, *Allegation for marriage licences issued by the vicar-general of the Archbishop of Canterbury 1660-1668*, Vol. 3 (1892) p. 239

to register their children's births, were brought to task for failing to carry out their public duty. At that meeting three orders were drawn up in connection with the above failings, which the vestry decided should be publicly read on three consecutive Sundays and then hung in the public meeting place with refusers 'complained on at every quarter sessions of the peace.' Not all parishioners were keen to obey the new regulations and the vestry had to publicly remind those who did not comply. Heavyside's meticulous recording of all missing births as far back as 1642 indicates that strenuous efforts were made to ensure none slipped through the net. Edward Hayward was equally assiduous in carrying out his duty as a constable, reporting to the Quarter Sessions in 1653 that there were no 'popish recusants' in Chatham.⁵ Between 1650-1654 the vestry was very conscientious and eager to reassert its political role.

Chatham dockyard men were again in control of the vestry during this period, suggesting that they were dictating its political direction.

Table 5
Occupations of Chatham vestrymen and parish officers 1650-1654

Occupation	1650	1652	1653	1654
Dockyard/Naval	14	13	19	11
Gentlemen	1			1
Yeomen/Farmer	2	4	1	1
Trade	2	2		3
Profession		1		1
Unknown			1	1
Totals	19	20	21	18

However the vestry still contained a strong rebel element in 1650 with six of the vestrymen and parish officers having participated in events of May 1648. This prompted the Pett family to become heavily involved in local governance, having four family members listed amongst the vestry in 1649 and three in 1650. By

⁵ MALSC, P85/1/2; P85/1/3; KHLC, Q/SB4, Quarter Sessions Records 1653 f. 90

1652 the number of ‘rebels’ in the vestry had reduced to four and there were none in 1654. Peter Pett the Commissioner, unlike his father, opted to serve on the vestry from 1649-1653, asserting his influence over the parish and making sure it stayed loyal to Parliament. He had been a governor of the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital since 1648 and in 1653-4 also acted as a governor of the Chatham Chest. Two of his kinsman also became governors of the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital in this period.⁶ In the early 1650s the extended Pett family dominated local politics and institutions.

This domination of both the dockyard and other institutions by one family was to lead to a period of intense local rivalry and factionalism in Chatham. Centrally planted men with Independent political views were given jobs in Chatham dockyard between 1649-1651 to keep a close eye on activities there, following the involvement of many of the workers in the Kent Rebellion and claims by John Short in April 1649 that many of them were still employed in the dockyard. These men viewed it as their duty ‘having...bin placed by authority of Parliament in their [our] severall Employments’ to not only root out corruption, but those that they viewed as working against the Navy. William Adderley was the main force behind this group of centrally appointed men. In 1651 Peter Pett wrote to the Committee of Merchants: ‘On your new modelling the navy according to the Act, among other men put in by you to places which became void by delinquency, was William Thomson as master caulker at Chatham, and Thomas Colpott as boatswain of the yard; and, because these men pretended to religion, you were willing to encourage them...’. Both Thomson and Colpott, described as adherents of Adderley, were in Pett’s opinion placed in the dockyard in 1649 to monitor political opinion there. Others similarly positioned to observe political activities in the dockyard included John Harrison, who was recommended for the post of surgeon there by Richard Wye, an Independent alderman of Rochester, in November 1649.⁷

⁶ MALSC, P85/5/1; CH108/21; TNA, ADM82/1 f. 330

⁷ CSPD 1649-1650 pp. 99, 320, 395, 518; CSPD 1651 pp. 508, 535; CSPD 1651-1652 pp. 57-58; TNA, SP18/16/119; SP18/23/17; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 f. 63r

The first indication of strife within Chatham manifested itself in November 1649. Walter Rosewell's political opposition to Parliament and the Engagement was discussed in the last section. However it is more than coincidence that the earliest report of Rosewell's disloyalty occurred just two months after Adderley's arrival. During 1650 several dockyard officers took Adderley's side against Rosewell, whilst others openly supported Rosewell and risked dismissal. John Browne, an adherent of Adderley, gave information to the Council of State in July 1650 against Rosewell. At the same time two other Adderley supporters, William Thomson and John Harrison, accused Edward Hayward of going 'to hear Mr Roswell, when he preached against the Engagement...'. John Bright was also charged with 'countenancing Mr Roswell, a seditious preacher'.⁸ This was the beginning of a four-year period of factionalism, with the dockyard divided into two distinct camps.

After getting the parish minister removed in July 1650 and taking on this role himself, Adderley turned his attention to the dockyard in a concerted effort to remove the Pett family from their position of power there. Adderley and several others petitioned the Council of State in October 1651 for a new master shipwright, who had no connections with the Pett family. They were rewarded 'with such a man as wee since have found the Lord hath directed them to make choyce of, and by what wee see alreadye hee is likely to prove an instrument of much good and service to the state there...'. Crawshaw has suggested that John Taylor, an Independent, was appointed as master shipwright at Chatham in October 1651 with a view to keeping a close watch on the Petts' allegiance. Adderley had thereby gained a further ally, who was to promote his cause in a later dispute in 1653-4. In October 1651 Adderley observed that he 'did see by sad experience, [that] it is not for the States Advantage to have a generation of brothers, cosins and kindred, pack't together in one place of publique trust and service...'. This was a comment on the Petts' domination of the dockyard and the Commissioner's failure to root out corruption and rebels. Adderley, Thomson and Colpott's petition to the Committee of the Navy in November 1651 claimed that 'a Generation here...are greatly intraged against us, giving out

⁸ CSPD 1650 pp. 250, 256-257, 279

threatnings to affright us; and yett by others seeking an Accomodation for peace and unity with us, which wee cannot condescend to, till wee see the state past righted...'.⁹ Whilst the Petts were openly against Adderley, others were attempting to broker a peace and defuse the situation. Adderley, however, was set upon doing his duty to the State and would not contemplate a compromise.

Commissioner Pett had little influence over local appointments after 1648 and perceived that he was under suspicion at Westminster. Although Pett kept the dockyard from the rebels in 1648 his loyalty to his family left a question mark at the centre. Adderley's petitions to the Council of State and Committee for the Navy further undermined Pett's standing with central government. Pett had to act quickly against Adderley and his group to ensure his own survival. He responded on 11th December 1651 by accusing Thomas Colpott and William Thomson of neglecting their duties. Furthermore he arranged for the officers and seamen of the Navy to issue a counter petition against Adderley. This petition, signed by forty-two men, was addressed to the Council of State and accused Adderley of disregarding their spiritual welfare. However, as Adderley pointed out: 'there is a fallacye in the title of the sayd Petition, in that the persons petitioning doe stile themselves the officers and seamen belonging to the Navye at Chatham, as if they were the body and most considerable part of the Navy there, whereas it is well knowne that they are a very inconsiderable part thereof both for quallitye and number'. He went on 'neither Masters of Attendance, Pursers, Carpenters, nor Gunners, nor one third part of the Ordinary (which are Shipkeepers)' have signed this petition. Adderley argued that Pett could only get the lower ranks to petition against him. On 24th December the Admiralty Committee gave Adderley the opportunity to respond to this petition. His answers were mainly religious in nature and are, therefore, examined in chapter seven. At the same time the Council of State appointed commissioners to examine the above reported abuses and rivalries. Amongst these men were John Parker and Charles Bowles, part of the extended Pett

⁹ CSPD 1651 pp. 504, 535; TNA, SP18/16/119; SP18/23/20-21; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226 f. 36v; Crawshaw, *The History of Chatham Dockyard*, p. 5/14

family.¹⁰ Although there was little chance that Adderley's accusations against the Pett family would be upheld, he and his supporters were given a fair hearing at the inquiry.

This inquiry took place in January 1652 with articles produced against both sides. The complaints were numerous; political, religious, corruption, favouritism, neglect of duty, and personal vendettas. Whilst corruption was rife in the dockyard it is a subject, which is outside the scope of this thesis. Chapter seven investigates the religious grievances behind this dispute. However the charges of a political nature, including personal vendettas and favouritism, are relevant to this chapter and are examined here. John Browne was the first to have charges laid against him. His misdemeanours were largely centred on corruption, but the first article presented against him was of a political nature. 'That the said Capt John Browne hath severall tymes exprest himselfe in a bitter language against the Parliament saying that the Divell is in all the Parliament men & that he would have a new Representation called; and this dissolved, and called to an account for all their unjust accions.' Allegedly Adderley and Thomson were witnesses to these outbursts, but according to the above account they denied any knowledge of these episodes. Bearing in mind that Browne had accused Rosewell of similar activities in July 1650 this was probably an act of retaliation.¹¹

Articles against Thomson and Colpott alleged corruption and neglect of duty, but no political grounds were cited. Those presented against William Adderley indicate that there was a strong personal hatred between the sea chaplain and the Petts. Article two stated: 'That the said Mr Adderley did not long since instead of preaching Christ fall upon bitter Invectives against particular persons which was taken notice of by very many in the Congregation', whilst article four reported: 'That the said Mr Adderley meeting with a Gentleman in London not long since told him, that there was a great difference hapned of late between himselfe and Mr Pett of Chatham and was now growne so high that he was

¹⁰ TNA, SP18/16/124; CSPD 1651-1652, pp. 57-58, 70, 542-543; Bod lib, Rawlinson MS A226 ff. 57r, 61v, 62v-r

¹¹ TNA, SP18/23/17-17a; CSPD 1650 p. 250

resolved to sinke himselfe and his Estate, but that he would ruine him and his whole family.’ Amongst those who brought testimony against Adderley were Joseph Pett and Captain Phineas Pett. Others included the boatswains John Hancret, Thomas Trippitt and William Parker, who had signed the petition against William Adderley in December 1651. In total forty-two dockyard men were prepared to speak out against Adderley at the inquiry.¹² With the Petts dominating the dockyard a degree of coercion was probably applied to get so many to testify against Adderley.

Again the favourite weapons of corruption and neglect were wielded against the Pett family. However the family were also accused of some political misdemeanours. Richard Holborne and Joseph Pett were both accused of signing the Kentish petition of May 1648 and evading punishment. The accusations against Captain Phineas Pett and Commissioner Peter Pett were primarily based on covering up corruption, but also cited favouritism as an issue. Phineas Pett was deemed to have ‘corruptly used the power which the state hath instructed him with for there service in his place, in that he doth therewith so much advance his owne Puncktillios to revenge private discontents and reward private courtesies.’ Seventeen different dockyard men were prepared to bear witness against the Pett clan including most of Adderley’s closest followers. John Taylor, however, kept a neutral stance and was one of the two men, who investigated the alleged corruption within the stores at Chatham. He concluded that the difference in accounts recorded by Robert Saggs, one of the complainants against the Petts, and Joseph Pett was not deliberate: I ‘Think Mr Pett did not intend to deceive, and at worst, was mistaken.’¹³ Most of the articles against the men were dismissed. Adderley was appointed parish minister, a role he had assumed for himself upon Rosewell’s dismissal from office. Both sides made claims that were either untrue or mere errors of judgment, which were to result in factionalism in the dockyard, divisions in the congregation and schism in the vestry.

¹² TNA, SP18/23/30-30a; SP18/23/32

¹³ TNA SP18/23/19-25; SP18/23/29; CSPD 1651-1652 pp. 127-128, 542-543; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 f. 27v

Out of the 1650-1 vestry seven played an active part in trying to oust Adderley and his supporters later that year. There is no record of the 1651-2 vestrymen or parish officers. In May 1652 Chatham vestry contained eight who supported the Pett camp, but only one Adderley adherent. However by 1653 Taylor, Thompson and Colpott had all gained access to the vestry as had Robert Eason, Robert Saggs and John Browne, who were all supporters of Adderley. This suggests that Adderley, as parish minister, had a hand in promoting and ensuring his grouping were elected onto the vestry and appointed parish officers. In a sense the elective nature of the vestry had allowed an Independent group to emerge. Seven of Pett's kinsmen or loyal followers were also part of the 1653 parish vestry. The earlier rivalry within the dockyard had spilt over into the vestry, dividing it into two opposing camps; thereby creating schism within that body.¹⁴

The next round of infighting started in June 1653 when Peter Pett complained to the Admiralty Committee about Adderley: 'I could wish your Honours were but eye witnesses of the too great neglect of subordinate ministers in this place. The life of Christianity consists in practice, If there were more of doing righteousness and lesse of pretence I think it were more suteable to the life of Christians.' He also objected to the absence of both Colpott and Thomson from the dockyard. 'The master caulker and boatswain of the yard, in this time of public action, have been many days absent without leave.' Pett does not state the nature of his issues with William Adderley, but the conclusion of the Commissioners for the Admiralty and Navy on 30th January 1654 was that Adderley 'hath very much disturbed the peace of that place; by fomenting differences betweene the Officers in the States Yard (dividing them into ffactions) and by aspersion very Caluminously the chiefe Officer of the Navy there, to the great prejudice of the service...'. Many Chatham dockyard workers were keen to have Adderley removed as both sea chaplain and parish minister. On the 16th January 1654 the Council of State received a petition from 'the officers and others relating to the navy, and inhabitants of the parish of Chatham' to have their former minister, Walter Rosewell, reinstated, which they passed to the Admiralty for deliberation.

¹⁴ MALSC, P85/5/1

Obviously the dockyard men desired an end to the strife and considered that Rosewell would be a uniting force. The Commissioners' report of 30th January 1654 was quite clear that 'the majority of the Inhabitants of Chatham endeavour to settle' Mr Rosewell 'again in that place'.¹⁵

This petition, from the 'divers well affected parishioners of Chatham', was primarily from the dockyard officers, but appears to have been drafted by the Pett grouping within the vestry. Following a public meeting of the vestry the parishioners requested that 'Mr Walter Rosewell may preach amongst them and performe other ministerial duties' until a suitable alternative candidate was found. Thirteen parishioners signed this petition; three of these petitioners were from the Pett clan and a further two had supported their campaign against Adderley. Another petitioner, Edward Hayward, was not involved in the 1651-2 articles against Adderley, but had been a previous opponent of Adderley. Although the remaining seven petitioners had no outward connection with the Petts' campaign it seems probable they supported this grouping. The Admiralty Committee intervened and suspended Adderley as parish incumbent. On 30th January Allen Ackworth, minister of St Nicholas in Rochester, was asked by the Committee to serve the parish church in the interim. Ackworth, distantly related by marriage to Peter Pett, called for 'the settling of an able faythfull powerfull, experienced & uniting Pastor among that people great & good'. Presumably Pett was behind Ackworth's temporary cover at Chatham and his plea to the Admiralty for a 'uniting Pastor'.¹⁶ An equal proportion of the 1653-4 vestry were, however, Adderley supporters. In January 1654 both the vestry and congregation were split over whether Adderley or Rosewell should be minister.

Others were keen to broker a peace, as had been unsuccessfully attempted in 1651-2. This schism particularly troubled John Taylor, who tried to resign from his position as master shipwright in December 1653 in the middle of the dispute. Taylor considered Adderley to be an able minister and intervened on his behalf in early February 1654. He wrote to John Thurloe, secretary of State, on 6th

¹⁵ TNA, SP18/37/44; SP18/65/29; CSPD 1652-1653 p. 389; CSPD 1653-1654 p. 360

¹⁶ TNA, SP18/77/85; SP18/78/199; MALSC, P85/5/1

February requesting his assistance in resolving the affair and spelling out Adderley's religious abilities. Although Taylor had no axe to grind with the petitioners against Adderley, perhaps realising that Adderley was politically a loose cannon, he nevertheless was outspoken in his opinion of Pett, who he perceived had taken 'a distast...against him (Adderley)'. By 22nd February 1654 the dispute was still unresolved and the congregation was impatient that no decision had been made. Taylor decided again to mediate in the dispute and sent a plea to the Admiralty Committee: 'Mr Adderley & wee sitt patiently every first daye as hearers & shall till your pleasures be knowen although it be our troble to see Mr Roswell in the pulpitt & Mr Adderley seemingly laide aside...'. Whilst Taylor appears to favour Adderley in the above missive, he was in fact after an amicable settlement that would unite the congregation. At this point several in the congregation were still supportive of their minister and sea chaplain: 'the love we beare to Mr Adderley (as a man fearinge god) makes us earnestly praie that your honours would be instruments of such a speedy settlement as may be most for the honour of God and good of all...'. Taylor's intervention brought a rapid resolution to the dispute. On 24th February the Admiralty issued an order proposing that Rosewell and Adderley should jointly serve as parish ministers. According to Taylor both men were satisfied with the outcome. He concluded that 'wee neither know or can think of a more probable way or meanes that can tende to satisfaction peace & unitie of all who feare God in this place.'¹⁷ Taylor's overarching concern was that peace should be restored to the warring congregation. This action may have pacified both groups by giving them a degree of satisfaction, but it would scarcely have united the congregation.

Adderley was dismissed as sea chaplain on 29th March 1654 and replaced by Laurence Wise. Pett had won and with Adderley's removal the dockyard became a less divided workplace. With an end to the rivalry the parishioners elected a vestry that contained only half the number of Pett and Adderley supporters in 1654.¹⁸ The majority of dockyard men had been Presbyterian in 1648 and many still were in the early 1650s, resenting the intrusion and interference of 'planted' Cromwellians. Pett's position was under threat

¹⁷ CSPD 1652-1653 p. 498; TNA, SP18/79/163; SP18/79/206; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A11 f. 116v-r

¹⁸ CSPD 1654 p. 467; MALSC, P85/5/1

following Adderley's allegations of corruption and nepotism and, therefore, his reactions to Adderley were to a degree understandable. Adderley and Pett's opposing political stance, Independent and Presbyterian respectively, played a part in the dispute, but the overwhelming factor was personal animosity. Peter Pett's working relationship with John Taylor, Charles Bowles and John Parker as well as other Cromwellian supporters in the second half of the decade implies he was politically flexible and prepared to adapt to changing circumstances.

In the end it was the Anglo-Dutch war of 1652-1654, which determined who was most expendable. A divided dockyard was not conducive to a nation at war and the Petts' skills were more in demand than those of the sea chaplain. The centre and dockyard's relationship was at crisis point in this period with neither side trusting the motives of the other. Thus a shift in political allegiance away from the centre was not surprising. An analysis of the petitioners and vestry personnel on both sides for 1650-1654 confirms that the parish and dockyard were divided down the middle over the Pett-Adderley dispute. Adderley had indeed used the pulpit to divide the congregation and foster factionalism in the dockyard between 1651-1654. Some of the parishioners had conspired in 1651-2 to break the Petts' dominance in both the dockyard and vestry. Peter Pett's reporting of Chatham rebels in 1648 may well have encouraged some of them to join forces with Adderley. The petitioning and counter petitioning in Chatham between 1651-1654 led to friction within the vestry and dockyard, which resulted in a period of intense rivalry in the local community.

Chatham and Rochester's relationship in this period was largely overshadowed by fissures between the centre and locality; i.e. Westminster and Chatham dockyard. Madeleine Jones perceives Chatham as the stronger partner in the relationship with Rochester between 1650-1654. However both towns were subject to a high level of central imposition in this period, which demanded cooperation. Two of Rochester's mayors, Hawthorne and Wye, had strong dockyard connections and worked with the navy in this period to ensure that the fleet was ready on time, when Chatham dockyard faced several mutinies due to lack of pay. Similarly the towns worked together in 1653 to detain Dutch

prisoners.¹⁹ Rochester and Chatham were reasonably well integrated in this period with many of Rochester's elite citizens serving on the Chatham naval charities. John Parker's election as M.P. for Rochester in 1654 would have attracted considerable dockyard support, due to his marriage connections with both Peter Pett and Charles Bowles, again tying the towns closely together. As normal in this type of relationship there was also an element of rivalry. Several Rochester parties became involved in the dockyard disputes between Pett and Adderley. In 1651-2 Robert Cossens and several of his supporters from Rochester and Strood joined in with others in the Pett camp to try to oust Adderley and his followers from their posts. The St Nicholas minister, Allen Ackworth, also became involved in the 1653-4 dispute on Pett's side. Another issue to cause tension in this period was billeting. Complaints were received from Chatham sailors in 1653 that soldiers based in Rochester were occupying their quarters and that the soldiers should be moved elsewhere. A possible remedy to this situation was the Navy's attempts to purchase Rochester castle in 1653 as additional lodgings.²⁰ Although the two towns were rivals there is no evidence of open hostility in the period 1650-1654.

6. 1655-1659

In the context of the churchwardens' accounts the vestry met less frequently than between 1652-1654. By 1655 business was largely of routine parish affairs and unpaid assessments. The political impetus of the vestry had waned following the removal of many of its more divisive members. Although the vestry still contained several of the Pett clan in 1655, most of Adderley's adherents had disappeared from the political scene.²¹

¹⁹ CSPD 1652-1653 pp. 40, 150, 370, 606; CSPD 1653-54 p. 188-189, 191-192, 483, 517

²⁰ CSPD 1652-1653 pp. 208, 502; TNA, SP18/23/17; SP18/78/199; ADM82/1 f. 330; NMM, SOC/16; MALSC, CH108/21 ff. 174, 178, 181-2, 184, 186; Jones, 'The Political History', pp. 181-182, 304, 313

²¹ MALSC, P85/5/1

Table 6

Occupations of the vestrymen and parish officers for 1656 as well as those who attended a public meeting in May 1655

Occupation	Public vestry meeting may 1655	Vestrymen & parish officers 1656
Dockyard/Naval	17	10
Gentlemen	1	1
Farmers/Yeomen	1	3
Professions		1
Trade	3	
Totals	22	15

Chathamites, however, were no more enamoured with the Pett family than the Adderley faction and reflected their feelings in the 1656 and subsequent vestry elections. Only one junior representative of the Pett family was elected part of the 1656 vestry and one distant relation appointed as churchwarden. The surviving fragment listing part of the 1657 vestry does not include any Petts. With the loss of the Pett family the vestry seemed less divided and lost its factionalism. By 1656-7 Chatham vestry was largely Presbyterian in outlook. A gradual political change had occurred from an openly hostile Independent-Presbyterian vestry of 1653-4 to a more moderate grouping a few years later. This change reflected the national mood, which by 1657 had seen the end of the rule of the major-generals, the conclusion of the Second Protectorate Parliament and Cromwell's refusal to accept the crown. Kent's 1656 shire elections were according to Thomas Kelsey, the major-general, returning Presbyterians to Parliament, often backed by Royalists. He wrote to Cromwell in August 1656: 'At the Maidstone election, there was a sad spirit in the county against whatever good you have endeavoured to do. Most of the Cavaliers fell in with the Presbyterians against you and the Government...'.²² Nevertheless, the Royalist

²² MALSC, P85/5/1; Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 192-204; CSPD 1656-1657 p. 87

swing in the county does not appear to have been mirrored in Chatham at this stage.

When the switch to a broader political spectrum occurred within Chatham vestry is difficult to pinpoint as the churchwardens' account book finishes in 1657. However a list of vestrymen and officers, preserved in the rear of the 1643 'vestry' book, does confirm that by early 1659 the vestry consisted of a more diverse political range. The members and officers for 1658-9 included: John Short, dismissed in 1649 as a delinquent; Robert Sliter, a Royalist; several men who had not served since the 1640s; some of the Pett clan absent from the vestry since 1655 as well as several new names. Several of these new names, such as Thomas Heavyside and Joseph Lawrence, were probably political as well as religious Independents. Affairs in the vestry again reached crisis point in 1658-9 with Adderley once more behind the turmoil, following the death of Walter Rosewell in May 1658. Thomas Carter, an Independent, was appointed minister in September 1658 on the recommendation of the Kent Commissioners and approval of the parishioners. Sixteen parishioners petitioned Edward Monatagu at the Admiralty circa January 1659, concerning Adderley's refusal to allow the new minister access to the pulpit: 'They lately invited a gentleman from London to preach amongst them..., but the pulpit being denyed him by the Minister of the Navy, they are at a Stand, what to doe, or how to proceede any further to the satisfaction of the pareish, unlessee that obstruction be removed...'. Because this petition was styled as from 'some of the inhabitants of Chatham, on the behalfe of them selves and many others', this would suggest that the vestrymen were the drafters of this petition. Of the sixteen signatories ten are known to have been vestrymen or parish officers.²³

As an Independent religiously Adderley should have welcomed the vestry's decision to invite Carter as the new minister. However his personal animosity towards many of the dockyard elite and vestry probably influenced his stance. His action in 1658-9 in opposing the parishioners' choice of incumbent was the

²³ MALSC, P85/8/1; TNA, SP18/205/52 – This petition is undated, but included in the state Papers under 1659. The signatures tally with the vestry elected in 1658-9, however the burial of one of the petitioners in February 1659 would indicate that this was probably late 1658 or January 1659.

final straw for the vestry. In 1659 the vestry, made up of various political opinions, united and finally ousted Adderley from the position of joint minister to which he had been appointed in 1654. This period saw the vestry undergo a transition from friction to apparent calm and a disunited vestry had by the end of the decade reached a coalition. The Petts, who had dominated local institutions in the mid-1650s, relinquished their hold on power by the end of the decade. At county level the switch to a Royalist-Presbyterian alliance occurred as early as 1656-7, but in Chatham this was not reflected in the vestry even in 1658-9, which although politically broader only contained two Royalists.

Chatham dockyard dominated the parish and vestry in the mid-1650s. Out of the twenty-two parishioners, who endorsed an application to extend the church seating at a public meeting in 1655, seventeen were dockyard workers. Likewise two thirds of the recorded vestrymen and officers for 1656 were dockyard men. By 1658-9 the dockyard's influence in the vestry had diminished considerably; only eleven of the recorded twenty-one vestrymen and parish officers were dockyard men. After Cromwell's death in 1658 the centre's influence in local politics seems to have lessened. Chatham dockyard officials were, therefore, under less pressure to engage in local politics and ensure the town's allegiance to Parliament. The 1659 parish petition, discussed above, also reflected this dwindling interest in local affairs with only nine of the sixteen petitioners having dockyard connections. It could equally be argued that Chatham parishioners had had enough of the dockyard domination of the town and strife that it had caused over the past ten years and, thus, returned a more balanced vestry containing five tradesmen, three gentlemen/farmers and a scrivener.²⁴

Although Peter Pett relinquished his role in the vestry, he kept up his governorship of the two local charities as well as acting as a J.P. locally and at the Assizes. Pett also worked actively with the centre to defend the Cromwellian regimes. In 1655 Pett assumed the role of 'defender' of the Medway Towns in response to a Royalist threat. He worked in conjunction with Thomas Kelsey to ensure that strangers were apprehended, Upnor Castle was reinforced and

²⁴ MALSC, P85/8/1; P85/5/1; TNA, SP18/205/52; Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 204

malignants were secured by the Mayor of Rochester. Pett also detained and arrested the known Rochester malignant and Royalist, John Fortescue, in 1656 for his involvement in the Penruddock Rising the previous year. Between 1656-1658 Pett found himself acting as mediator between the Chest pensioners and central government. The Chatham Chest pensioners' were in dire straits financially and Pett intervened on their behalf to try to ease their position, as the pensioners were protesting outside his house in Chatham for relief. One of his efforts to get redress for the pensioners involved trying to get part of the cathedral property sold to raise funds for the Chatham Chest charity.²⁵

Pett not only demonstrated his loyalty to the centre in practical terms, but was also keen to acknowledge his support for the Protectorate and its actions. In March 1655 Pett, writing to the Admiralty Commissioners, was quick to praise them 'for the joyful news of the defeat of the Cavaliers westward' and the government's efforts in suppressing the Penruddock rising. Again in 1656 Pett was quick to voice his support for Thomas Kelsey, who was facing stiff opposition in his contest for one of the shire seats. Pett declared: he 'thinks the Major-General has been too much undervalued, which he fears may prove a sad presage, but he and Shatterden are in competition, and polling.' This contest for a Kent county seat took place on 21st August between Kelsey and Daniel Shetterden, which Shetterden won.²⁶ By 1656 the Independents and major-generals were under threat in Kent, but Pett was quite vocal in this period in support of both Kelsey and the Protectorate government. His biographer states 'there was little doubting his loyalty to either the commonwealth or the protectorate, and he remained an active servant of the state throughout the decade.'²⁷ The evidence from this chapter largely concurs with this assessment

²⁵ MALSC, CH108/21 ff. 187-208; P85/1/3; P153/1/2, Gillingham Parish Register 1650-1753; P306/1/2, Rochester St Nicholas Parish Register 1651-1673; TNA, ADM82/1 f. 230; NMM, SOC/16; CSPD 1655 pp. 75, 373, 441, 609; CSPD 1655-1656 p. 567; CSPD 1656-1657 pp. 427, 430-431; CSPD 1657-1658 pp. 121-122, 362, 398

²⁶ CSPD 1655 p. 609; CSPD 1656-1657 p. 87; TNA, SP18/144/111; J. T. Peacey, 'History of Parliament Trust, London', Unpublished article on Daniel Shetterden of Eltham, Kent for 1640-1660 section. I am grateful for the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft.

²⁷ J. T. Peacey, 'History of Parliament Trust, London', Unpublished article on Peter Pett of Chatham, Kent for 1640-1660 section. I am grateful for the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft

of Peter Pett's political adaptability, yet at heart he was a Presbyterian with ambitions.

In 1659 Pett extended his political role beyond county level to become an M.P. for Rochester in Richard Cromwell's Parliament; flying the Presbyterian flag. Pett's close involvement with Rochester in the latter half of the 1650s ensured, that along with Chatham's elite group of electors, he gained enough backing to win a seat in Parliament. Richard Hutchinson, the naval Independent, gained the other seat for Rochester, suggesting that the Independents still had some influence in both towns, but particularly in Chatham with Laurence Wise, Thomas Carter, William Adderley and John Taylor all active at this time. Pett was frequently out of tune with local politics, but fully aware of the national political situation. In that context Pett's switch from a local focus to the centre made political sense.²⁸

Rochester appears to have been the subordinate partner in the relationship with Chatham in this period. Jones considered that Pett and the Navy kept Rochester in check politically; a task Kelsey appears to have bestowed on Pett and a role he seemed to relish in the mid-1650s. On occasions the two towns worked together to secure the Medway Towns from rebels, but Pett was generally the instigator of this action. The election of two naval men, Pett and Hutchinson, as M.P.s for Rochester in 1659, again reinforces the perception that Chatham and its dockyard were at the forefront of this relationship. However the towns were also strongly integrated in this period. A close friendship existed between Chatham's minister, Walter Rosewell, and some Rochester councillors, particularly George Robinson. Rosewell was behind the initiative to expose the Ranter, Richard Coppin, and arranged for his friends on Rochester council to attend a series of religious debates in Rochester cathedral. Other councillors such as Richard Wye and Edward Hawthorne had strong dockyard links. Rochester's M.P. in 1656, John Parker, and J.P., Charles Bowles, also served as governors of the Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital for this period. Pett tried to dominate this relationship and was not above criticising the authorities in Rochester. In 1655 he accused

²⁸ MALSC, CH108/21 f. 206; Henning, *The History of Parliament*, Vol. III pp. 229-230; See DNB entry for Pett.

the Rochester postmaster of deliberately losing his mail ‘either by negligence or wilfulness, and it is the third I have lost within a month, by them or the Dartford post...’.²⁹ Rochester remained in the shadow of Chatham for most of this period, cooperating when necessary to defend the Medway Towns from potential rebellion and threat of religious radicalism.

7. 1660-1663

By 1660 Kentish men were weary after twenty years of turmoil and their known world being turned upside down. Consequently in January 1660 a public declaration from the ‘nobility, gentry, ministry, and commonalty of Kent, with Canterbury, Rochester, and the ports in the county’ was raised, favouring negotiations with the monarchy, to which many subscribed their names. The subscribers declared: we ‘must publish our resentment of our present calamities; our friendlessness abroad and divisions at home; the loud and heart-piercing cries of the poor; the disability of the better sort to relieve them; the total decay of trade; the loss of the nation’s reputation; and the apparent hazard of the Gospel, through the prodigious growth of blasphemies, heresies, and schism, all threatening universal ruin.’³⁰ However the political situation in Chatham had hardly changed as the Presbyterian Peter Pett was again returned as one of Rochester’s M.P.s in the Convention Parliament of April 1660. This was despite attempts to manipulate Rochester’s freemanry just a few days before the burgess elections by making seventeen Rochester citizens freemen of the city and, thereby, diluting the impact of eligible Chatham dockyard men and parishioners in that process.³¹ Pett was politically astute and correctly judged, which side to support in times of upheaval. It, therefore, comes as no shock that three weeks later he was supervising ‘the removal of republican insignia’ from the fleet. He was, apparently, persuaded by his brother Phineas to support the Restoration of the monarchy. Commissioner Pett accompanied Charles on his return to

²⁹ Jones, ‘The Political History’, pp 181-182; TNA, PROB11/275; MALSC, CH108/21 ff. 188, 191, 196, 206; CSPD 1655 pp. 75, 127, 441; Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*

³⁰ TNA, SP18/219/37 – See Chapter 3 f/n 37

³¹ Henning, *The History of Parliament*, Vol. III pp. 229-230; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 41b-44b

England in May 1660, entertaining him lavishly at Chatham on his journey back to London.³²

Efforts were made by Rochester's Independent mayor, Francis Cripps, in 1661 to redress the imbalance of Chatham freemen, probably to negate the impact of the 'cathedral' party. Between December 1660 and March 1661 at least twelve Chatham parishioners were created freemen of Rochester; being a mixture of gentlemen and dockyard employees. Jones maintains that this was to try to get the town's support in the 1661 burgess elections. The political make-up of these Chathamites was diverse; Stephen Warner was appointed at Francis Clerke's request (a Royalist), William Parker was a follower of the alleged Ranter Joseph Salmon, four others had a Presbyterian background, whilst the other half were names that had left no trace in the parish records during the previous ten years; suggesting they were recent incomers or possibly returning Royalists. This was a contested election with at least three candidates. Two Royalists, William Batten, the naval surveyor and a former Presbyterian, and Francis Clerke were elected. The other contenders are unknown. With the support of these new freemen and other Chatham voters the intention was that at least one naval man, William Batten, would be returned as M.P. A heated election took place with at least two groups involved in campaigning. John Wild, a teamer in the dockyard, was the main spearhead behind Batten's election campaign. Batten also had the support of the Royalist Alcock family from Rochester, who were related to him by marriage. Peter Stovell of Rochester and the 'cathedral' party opposed Batten's election, suggesting their support was for Clerke and possibly another candidate.³³ Whether this was the desired outcome is questionable. Batten's switch of political allegiance in 1647, which closely mirrored that of the dockyard workers in 1648, may have endeared him to Chatham's Presbyterian voters, but was probably perceived by Royalists, such as Stovell, as a sign of weakness.

In December 1661 Parliament passed the Corporation Act. This was part of a series of 'Test' acts to ensure the loyalty of citizens and was aimed at removing

³² Henning, *The History of Parliament*, Vol. III pp. 229-230; See DNB entry for Pett; *Mercurius Publicus*, No. 22 (24th-31st May 1660) p. 349

³³ MALSC, RCA/A1/2, ff. 52a-52b, 53b-55a; Jones, 'The Political History', p. 284; 'Election issues', p. 26; CSPD 1667 p.117; Henning, *The History of Parliament*, Vol. 1 p. 607; TNA, SP29/201/135-139

Presbyterians from city government. During 1662 Parliament set up a series of local commissions to investigate corporations and their loyalty. Both councillors and freemen were expected to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy. The examination of Rochester council and the city's freemanry took place in August 1662. Although the purge carried out by the commissioners mainly affected Rochester citizens it also impacted on a number of Chatham parishioners, who were freemen of the city. Three of the 1659 vestry were freemen of Rochester. George Billingsley, Robert Yardley and Captain Phineas Pett, who were all Presbyterians, were discharged from the freedom in 1662 and as a consequence lost their ability to vote in both Rochester's mayoral and burgess elections. Of the vestrymen who served between 1650-1656 twelve were freemen; ten of whom were discharged in 1662. Five of the extended Pett family, including Commissioner Pett, were dismissed as freemen. At least another eleven Chathamites, mainly dockyardmen, lost their freedom in 1662 in addition to the above. In total twenty-two Chatham parishioners were to lose their franchise in 1662, depriving the town of many of its voters in both the burgess and city elections.³⁴ Chatham was thus effectively purged politically. Hence in both 1660-1 and 1662 freemen were used as a political weapon either to manipulate the outcome of the 1661 elections to Parliament or to ensure those who had opposed the Royalists were punished.

Repercussions were also felt in the dockyard after the Restoration. Eight senior officers were removed from their posts between 1660-1663; all of whom were strong supporters of the de facto regimes in the 1650s. Seven of these were disenfranchised in 1662 because they failed to take the oath of supremacy and allegiance, whilst the eighth person, Thomas Arkinstall, was arrested in 1661 for failing to take the oath of allegiance.³⁵ Despite the dockyard being purged of most of its senior officers, Peter Pett retained his position as Commissioner. Captain Phineas Pett lost his post as clerk of the check to the previous holder, John Short, dismissed in 1649 for delinquency. However Royalists still had some

³⁴ Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic* pp. 85, 87, 90-92; MALSC, RCA/AI/2 ff. 66b-71b; P85/8/1; P85/5/1

³⁵ The men purged from their employment were Captain Phineas Pett, Phineas Pett, John Taylor, Thomas Gardner, William Thompson, Thomas Colpott, Robert Eason and Thomas Arkinstall; RCA/A1/2 f. 71b; Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments Charles II 1660-1675*, No. 67.

difficulty in obtaining posts in the dockyard after the Restoration. Robert Sliter had to enlist both the support of dockyard colleagues and Rochester's mayor for the position of ropemaker. He had apparently spoken out against a radical pamphlet in 1648. Henry Bagnall, a shipwright, faced temporary unemployment after the Restoration, noting 'as had other cavaliers... they are generally the first to be discharged.' There was thus the perception that the dockyard was still controlled by a Presbyterian element, such as Pett, making it difficult for Royalists to obtain or hold onto posts. This would suggest that the centre was behind the dockyard purges. Pett would hardly have ejected his brother from office for a rebel he had removed in the first instance.³⁶ Therefore the actions taken, both within the borough of Rochester in connection with the Chatham freemen and in the dockyard, were carried out at the behest of central government and were not a local reaction.

During the period 1660-1663 Rochester and Chatham's relationship was firmly cemented by a similar experience of purging and disenfranchisement. The sudden surge of twelve new freemen for Chatham in 1660-1 had the impact of integrating the two communities, but this was short-lived as the dismissal of twenty-two Chatham freemen in 1662 negated this expansion. However cooperation did occur despite the many changes in this period. In 1661 the current mayor and several aldermen supported a Chatham Royalist, Sliter, for a post in the dockyard. Both communities worked together in 1660 and 1661 to ensure that the M.P.s returned to the Convention and Cavalier Parliaments were not entirely hardened Royalists. Batten, as MP for Rochester and naval representative for Chatham, worked on behalf of both towns. Necessity dictated collaboration, but the centre went to great lengths to try to separate this alliance using the cathedral authorities and acts of purging.³⁷

On occasions Chatham's political allegiance did mirror that of the centre and county. In 1642 Chatham was firmly in Parliamentary control and reflected the national picture. However by 1648 circumstances had changed drastically

³⁶ CSPD 1661-1662 p. 251; CSPD 1663-1664 p. 370; TNA, SP29/49/76

³⁷ TNA, SP29/49/75-76; MALSC, RCA/AI/2 ff. 52a-52b, 53b-55a, 66b-71b; For references to parliamentary elections see Chapter 3 f/ns 47, 49

with a local Presbyterian-Royalist alliance trying to oust the Kent County Committee and Independents. At this point the dockyard was more in tune with county opinion than that of the centre. During the period 1650-1654 Chatham underwent a period of political change with an Independent-Presbyterian vestry established. The elective principle of the parish vestry prevented exclusion and so permitted a politically diverse vestry to emerge. As a consequence Chatham faced a turbulent period politically with disunity in the vestry. Rochester council's limited 'election' procedure ensured cohesion in a period of general instability, whereas Chatham vestry's inability to restrict its membership led to schism. By 1656-7 the vestry was again largely controlled by the Presbyterians; a stance which was out of tune with leading county opinion. Chatham vestry had by 1659 become a diverse coalition prepared to act together, as in 1648, to finally rid the parish of William Adderley. The final analysis for 1660-1663, however, would still indicate a substantial Presbyterian element existed within the dockyard and town.

Everitt's analysis of a continually shifting political scene in Kent throughout the 1640s did not really fit Chatham, which remained largely Presbyterian throughout the decade. His assumption that Kent was largely made up of a silent Royalist majority is not borne out in this case study of an urban environment. Chatham had briefly allied with the Royalists in 1648 against a common enemy, but would never have considered itself Royalist politically. In Chatham the Presbyterians rose against a perceived Independent political threat. Again, faced with an Independent grouping locally in the early 1650s led by Adderley, the Presbyterians campaigned to get rid off him and his influence. The findings of this chapter contradict MacDougall's contention, that Chatham vestry was politically inept. Throughout the 1640s Chatham vestry took considered political decisions and demonstrated its allegiance to Parliament. Its awareness of the uniqueness of the political mood of the period is apparent in the specific record book of events for 1643. The relationship between the centre and Chatham dockyard was for most of the twenty years of upheaval relatively harmonious. During the one period in 1650-1654, when Pett and his extended family felt under threat and suspicion from the centre and its 'planted' supporters, this relationship was severely strained. Everitt's, and to a limited

extent, Morrill's perception, that the localities were not interested in the wider ideological issues of the day, is not evident in Chatham. Parishioners and dockyard workers were keenly interested in the national debates and voiced their opinions by signing or drafting petitions to Parliament. When the centre failed to respond to their ideological concerns and grievances in May 1648 the majority of the dockyard joined the Kent Rebellion to oppose Parliament. The only period when local concerns were predominant was between 1651-1654, when central government interference caused schism in the vestry and factionalism in the dockyard, forcing the government to conduct an inquiry into affairs.

Part 2

Religious Reactions

Chapter 6

Religion 1600-1647

In 1641 the country was in religious turmoil following the national settlement with Scotland and attempts by Parliament to introduce the 'Root and Branch' bill, which sought to reform the Anglican Church.¹ By 1642 Archbishop Laud had been arrested and the Anglican Church was in disarray. Puritanism had come to the fore and many of the previous 'Laudian' practices in the Anglican Church were being physically uprooted. Acts of iconoclasm occurred in many of the Essex and London parish churches in 1640-1. At the same time the Long Parliament committee for 'scandalous and malignant ministers' received a series of petitions from parishioners against their incumbents, whom they regarded as 'Laudian' or holding Royalist sympathies. The period 1643-1646 saw the ejection of many of these ministers from their livings. As the decade unfolded different sects and groups emerged with progressively more radical beliefs.

This chapter investigates the emergence of different religious groups within the Medway Towns; namely Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Baptists. It also explores the relationship between these various groups and how people responded to these changes. Medway parishioners' reactions to national religious events and how they interpreted these in the context of their own community and minister are examined by analysing several local petitions against parish incumbents. The religious demands of the Blount petition are also investigated to determine how closely they reflected the expectations of the Chatham signatories. A tract by Dorothy Birch of Strood, *A Catechisme of the Severall Heads of Christian Religion*, published in 1646 is considered as well, giving an insight into the opinions of a woman, her family and friends, and the parish minister in the midst of the upheaval of civil war.

¹ C. Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, (Oxford, 1990) pp. 119-122

Firstly, however, several issues need to be addressed before commencing this religious study of the parishes. The historical debates surrounding many of the topics covered here are examined so that the findings of this chapter can be evaluated against a wider framework. It is also essential to explain and define certain religious terms used in the context of this chapter. Secondly an understanding of the religious views prevailing prior to 1640 is necessary in order to gauge if local opinions were changed by national events in 1640-1 and the subsequent onset of civil war a year later. The first section is therefore dedicated to the period 1600-1640.

The term ‘Laudianism’ requires clarification. Historians such as Kevin Sharpe contend that ‘Laudianism’ was fundamentally a policy of conformity and uniformity initiated by Charles I with little theological underpinning.² Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, writing in 1993, regard ‘Laudianism’ as a ‘partnership’ between Charles I and Archbishop William Laud. Laud acquired royal backing for his ideas and Charles established his authority over the church as well as implementing his policy to beautify places of worship. Lake’s explanation of ‘Laudiansim’ is perhaps the most persuasive. In his opinion this was a coherent ideological ‘vision’ supported by sermons and ritual; an ‘overall package’, which was neither new nor original. The role of prayer and the sacrament of communion were central to this vision of the ‘house of God’. This meant that preaching played a secondary role and the altar became the focus of worship.³ Subsequently Nicholas Tyacke emphasised the part Arminianism played in splitting the ‘Anglican’ Church in the 1630s, driving many Calvinists previously accommodated within the church out. Fincham’s article of 2001 acknowledges that whilst the altar’s centrality to worship was not a new concept, Laud had managed to transform it into a ‘national’ policy during the 1630s, seeking Charles’ affirmation to legitimise his actions. A recent publication by Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, reinforces their previous model of

² K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, (New Haven, 1992) pp. 275-402

³ K. Fincham & P. Lake, ‘The ecclesiastical policies of James I and Charles I’, pp. 23, 37-38, 45,47; P. Lake, ‘The Laudian style: Order, uniformity and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s’, pp. 161-174, both in K. Fincham (ed.), *The early Stuart Church*, (Basingstoke, 1993)

Laudianism.⁴ For the purpose of this study the term ‘Laudian’ is used to describe the ceremonial and other innovations of Charles I or Archbishop Laud implemented during the 1630s in the pursuit of the ‘beauty of holiness’.

A topic that features heavily in recent historical debate is iconoclasm. Jacqueline Eales’ essay on this subject raised the possibility of this being more than just a response to Laudian imagery and anti-Catholic theology. She contends that this was in fact also a political statement. The iconoclasts linked Laudian and Crown efforts at conformity and uniformity in religion to an attempt to impose royal supremacy and authority over the Church. This was a battle of wills between those wishing to preserve true religion and those desiring to enhance royal control.⁵ John Walter’s 2004 article has developed Eales’ religious-political perspective on iconoclasm carried out between 1640-42. His research on the soldiery and lower sort involved in these acts demonstrates that most of the participants were able to articulate their reasoning behind the destruction, whilst their actions often indicated that they were aware of the wider ideological debates. Laud’s altar rails’ policy was viewed as an infringement of their religious right of direct access to God without restriction or enclosure. The participants were able to parody this in terms of their civil rights and breaches of this by authority. ‘Enclosure’ was thus perceived as a removal of their common right and the burning of the altar rail was a symbolic act of cleansing. Iconoclasm was not the action of a few religious radicals, but rather of a well-informed common sort who were able to express their feelings in both religious and political terms.⁶ Acts of iconoclasm were carried out in several of the local parishes, but in different ways. This chapter examines if those below the gentry, the clergy, vestrymen and ordinary parishioners, adopted such ideological arguments against idolatry and could articulate their opinions in a coherent fashion.

⁴ N. Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c1530-1700*, (Manchester, 2001) pp. 132-3, 150-152, 205-6, 211, 215; K. Fincham, ‘The Restoration of Altars in the 1630s’, *HJ*, Vol. 44 No. 4 (2001) pp. 919-940; K. Fincham & N. Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The changing face of English religious worship, 1547-c1700*, (Oxford, 2007) pp. 126-273

⁵ J. Eales, ‘Iconoclasm, Iconography, and the Altar in the English Civil War’, in D. Wood (ed.), *The Church and the Arts*, Vol. 28 (Oxford, 1992) pp. 313-314, 321-322, 327

⁶ J. Walter, “‘Abolishing superstition with sedition’?”, pp. 81-85, 108-111, 117, 121-123

Historians disagree over the origins of religious radicalism in the 1640s. Ian Green considered that the clerical ejections of the early 1640s should not be considered a simple Puritan versus Anglican issue, but was much more religiously complex. Tyacke, on the other hand, felt that Arminianism was core to Civil War events and had discredited episcopacy. Others such as J. Collins argue that this was not a battle between Arminianism and Calvinism, but rather an ongoing political dispute between church and monarch since Tudor times.⁷ Robert Acheson's thesis on East Kent has opened up the argument on whether religious separatism was a product of the civil war or had its roots in an earlier period. His study of the Canterbury diocese has concluded that although many nonconformist sects became established in the period 1640-1660 their roots can be traced back to the Puritan reaction against Laudianism in the 1630s or even earlier. The failure of Laudianism to accommodate the more moderate Puritans led to their alienation and radicalisation; it was these persons who were to later become the religious radicals of the revolution.⁸ A study of the Medway parish churches gives a conflicting picture regarding the origins of religious radicalism; Strood and Chatham had a strong Puritan tradition, whilst Rochester appeared more conservative religiously under the watchful eye of its Laudian bishop, John Warner, as well as the Dean and Chapter.

Perhaps the most comprehensive work across the spectrum of religious and political radicalism is Christopher Hill's *The world turned upside down*. The theme that occurs throughout this work is the fluidity of movement between religious sects and political groups in this period. Hill maintains that the Civil War was a social revolution and that religious freedom was the vehicle, which permitted the common sort to become politicised and engaged in this 'revolution'. Millenarianism appealed to the masses as an alternative to monarchy and this was offered by the radical sects of the day.⁹ Jacqueline Eales' recent essay on religious radicalism in Kent also emphasised the freedom and space that the English Revolution created, allowing it to develop unchecked and

⁷ I. Green, 'The persecution of 'scandalous' and 'malignant' parish clergy during the English Civil War', *EHR* (1979) pp. 509, 524-525, 530-531; Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism*, pp. 160-170; J. Collins, 'The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell', *History* Vol. 87 No. 285 (2002) pp. 37-40

⁸ Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', pp. 80, 95-97, 216, 233-234, 242-243

⁹ Hill, *The world turned upside down*, passim

many varying sects to emerge in the period 1642-1660. Without Parliamentary domination of the county this would have been impossible. The wide diversity of religious groups in Kent, ranging from Baptist to Ranter, produced a culture of debate both orally and in print within the county. Eales contends that an analysis of these debates can give a better understanding of the religious and political views and reactions of groups below the gentry. Religious opinion can also be determined from other sources such as petitions, which were drafted in the county throughout 1640-1660. Her essay, like Hill's work, suggests a fluidity of movement between different religious radical groups.¹⁰ This chapter explores the development of religious radicalism during the course of the 1640s with the contention that some of the local people, e.g. Robert Cossens, continually embraced new ideas, whilst others reacted against change or defended their religious beliefs publicly. Specific ideological debates that took place in the Medway Towns are covered in chapter eight.

At this stage it is pertinent to understand what is meant by the term religious radicalism. There has been an ongoing debate on the use of the term 'radicalism' in Civil War historiography. Ariel Hessayon and D. Finnegan contend that the meaning of 'radicalism' has changed over two centuries and, therefore, needs to be clearly defined by historians. It is largely context that dictates the use of the term and hence its definition. During the English Revolution 'radicalism' was a continually shifting concept.¹¹ For this thesis radicalism is considered that which is not mainstream, however what was radical at the outset had become the norm by the end of the period and so radicalism had moved considerably to embrace different religious groupings and ideas over a relatively short period of time.

¹⁰ Eales, "So many sects and schisms", pp. 226-248

¹¹ A. Hessayon & D. Finnegan, 'Introduction: Reappraising early modern radicals and radicalism', in A. Hessayon & D. Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of seventeenth and early eighteenth century Radicalism in context*, (Farnham, 2011) pp. 1-29

1. 1600-1640

For the parishes of Strood and Chatham a picture of religious activity can be traced back to the early seventeenth century, but for the two Rochester parishes there are no records before 1620. Naval historians have perceived Chatham to be more radical religiously than Rochester due to its contact with the London dockyards.¹² Both Madeleine Jones and Jasmine Johnson have commented on the strength of Puritanism in Chatham prior to 1640, but neither discusses the basis for their opinion.¹³

Chatham's Puritan roots can be traced back to the turn of the seventeenth century. Thomas Gataker wrote a 'godly life' of William Bradshaw, who was Chatham's lecturer from 1601-1602. Bradshaw, a Puritan, had a history of controversy with the established church, publishing several treatises anonymously in England and others in Holland between 1604-5. On the recommendation of his patron Laurence Chaderton, a Puritan and master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Bradshaw was invited to become the lecturer at Chatham in July 1601. 'A solemne letter of invitation... subscribed by the officers there (Chatham) belonging to the Navy, and the most of any note and repute in the place; intimating their "election of him by joynt consent to the place, professing a willingnesse to submit themselves to his Ministry..."' was sent to Bradshaw from Chatham. This demonstrates that both the dockyard workers and other elite parishioners were seeking a strong Puritan to support their minister John Phillips. According to Gataker he worked with John Phillips and was well received by the majority of the parishioners.¹⁴

However in April 1602 Henry Bearblocke, vicar of Strood, attacked Bradshaw's Calvinist views, stating he was 'a man not conformable to the Rites of the Church, nor well-affected to the present Government.' Sir Francis Hastings, another patron of Bradshaw's, vouched to Archbishop Whitgift in April 1602

¹² Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, p. 295; Baumber, 'The Navy during the Civil Wars', p. 201

¹³ Jones, 'The Political History', p. 55; Johnson, "'Thomas Vahan, Prieste,'" pp. 3-4

¹⁴ T. Gataker, 'The life and death of Mr William Bradshaw, who died Anno Christi, 1618', in S. Clarke (ed.), *A Martyrologie, containing A Collection of all the Persecutions which have befallen the Church of England*, (London, 1652) pp. 106-119; See DNB entry for Bradshaw; C. Cross (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Francis Hastings 1574-1609*, (Frome, 1969) pp. 81-83

that Bradshaw would ‘not offer any disturbance to the peace of the Church either in word or action...’. This petition fell on deaf ears. He was summoned before the Archbishop at Shorne on 26th May and charged with the ‘teaching of false and ungodly Doctrine’. Bradshaw was subsequently suspended and prohibited from preaching. The Chathamites and their minister petitioned the Bishop of Rochester, John Young: on ‘behalf of our too much wronged Preacher Master Bradshaw... we do voluntarily yield this testimony, that he is a man so farre in every respect, from desert of those misreports, wherewith his causelesse adversaries have endeavoured to incense your good Lordship against him.’ These parishioners went further and added ‘his doctrine [was] always holy, wholesome, true and learned, utterly void of faction and contention...May it therefore please your good Lordship ...to tender to this your poor little flock of Chatham, to restore unto us our vertuous and faithfull Teacher.’ But this plea was rejected and Bradshaw left Chatham in May 1602.¹⁵

This account suggests that John Phillips, like many of his parishioners, leaned towards Puritanism. His successor in 1605, John Piham, also had Puritan sympathies. From an entry recorded in the 1643 ‘vestry’ book it would appear that Piham was against ‘popish innovation’. Many Chathamites, especially dockyard employees, expressed their support for Piham in 1635, when the Chatham sea chaplain’s post became vacant. A contest took place for the post between Thomas Grayne and John Piham; Laudian and Puritan candidates respectively. Grayne was backed by the Dean of Rochester, Walter Bancanquall, who had expressed his Laudian opinions in an earlier pamphlet. Piham’s support came from the dockyard workers; six of whom complained against their Laudian incumbent, Thomas Vaughan, in 1641. The dockyard’s petition in favour of Piham’s candidature claimed he was ‘sufficient, ffaithfull & industrious in his Calling...’.¹⁶ Chatham dockyard men were thus largely happy with his religious views and felt that he would best serve their spiritual needs. Despite their great efforts to gain a Puritan sea chaplain, the Chathamites were unsuccessful with Grayne being appointed to the post.

¹⁵ Gataker, ‘The life and death of Mr William Bradshaw’, pp.106-119; See DNB entry for Bradshaw; Cross (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Francis Hastings*, pp. 81-83

¹⁶ MALSC, P85/8/1, f. 14; TNA, SP16/295/26

Puritan ministers had served Chatham within the established church for roughly thirty-five years. All of this changed on Piham's death when Balcanquall appointed Thomas Vaughan as minister for Chatham in February 1636. Vaughan had attended Corpus Christi in Oxford, which had strong associations with Laudianism. He was, therefore, out of the Laudian mould and caused friction soon after his arrival in the parish. In March 1637 Basil Wood, Chancellor for the Diocese, had to mediate in a disputed church assessment of September 1636 for ongoing building work. This was the only challenged parish assessment and arose shortly after Vaughan's appointment, suggesting there was more to this disagreement than concerns over the cost of rebuilding materials. The parishioners may have been objecting to payment for 'Laudian' style changes orchestrated by Vaughan. Chatham's 1641 petition accused Vaughan of Laudian practices and in particular that he had 'laboured, these two yeares and more, to sett the Communion Table altar wise, rayled about...'.¹⁷ Jasmine Johnson contends 'that in the case of St Mary's, the laity had Laudian conformity thrust upon them and did not want it'. Despite this imposition of both a Laudian sea chaplain and incumbent, the parish vestry continued to support their Puritan brethren elsewhere. Two entries in the churchwardens' accounts for 1638 indicate relief was given 'to Mr Rogers a poore minister being put to sillence in the Countye of Norfolke' and to 'Panter Homan distressed Minister exiled in the Palantine'. Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace the ministers concerned.¹⁸ The Chatham community was religiously divided in the late 1630s between Laudians supporting Vaughan and a strong Puritan element, which remained within the established church.

Strood also had a Puritan background dating back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. According to Gataker, Henry Bearblocke, a minister with Arminian theological views, was incumbent of Strood in 1602 and used the pulpit to rail against William Bradshaw. Bradshaw wrote to Bearblocke in early 1602: 'I was informed by some of your Christian Auditors at Strowd, that in your forenoon Exercise, you took occasion...to adde thereto something in bitter terms, against some Heretical Doctrine lately broached in some neighbour[ing] Church;

¹⁷ MALSC, P85/5/1; BL, Add MS 26785, ff. 211-2; Johnson, "'Thomas Vahan, Prieste,'" p. 5

¹⁸ Johnson, "'Thomas Vahan, Prieste,'" p. 10; MALSC, P85/5/1 1638-1639 accounts

which some divers of your most charitable, and the most of your judicious hearers, conceived to be directed against me.’ Some of Bearblocke’s congregation had evidently heard Bradshaw’s preaching elsewhere and seemingly preferred it.¹⁹ Local historians have had difficulty in establishing the parish clergy of Strood St Nicholas between 1600-1615.²⁰ Recent genealogical studies have, however, established that ‘Mr Winge’ was more than just a temporary minister of Strood. John Winge, a Puritan, was incumbent of Strood from 1608-1614 and possibly the curate from 1605. He was married to the daughter of the Puritan minister Stephen Bachiler, who was ousted from his living in 1605 for his religious views. Winge was afterwards employed by the Society of Merchants Adventurers as a minister in Hamburg, Flushing and later The Hague. Works on the early English Church in the Netherlands place him as a Presbyterian.²¹ His brother-in-law, Robert Chamberlayne, succeeded him in 1615, serving the parish till his death in 1639. Chamberlayne was recommended by his former employer and Puritan patron, Sir Richard Chetwood of Warksworth. On becoming widowed Chamberlayne married another Puritan, Elizabeth Scudder, who was the daughter of Thomas Stoughton silenced in 1606 for his outspoken religious opinions.²² Strood, thus, had a background of nearly thirty-five years Puritan preaching.

There is also some indication of the parishioners’ Puritan leanings. Strood churchwardens’ accounts demonstrate a similar support for fellow Puritan ministers as those of their Chatham counterparts. In 1639 the vestry paid relief to ‘one Mr Baker a poore minister’, who was probably the John Baker installed as Strood’s Presbyterian incumbent in 1644, and ‘a poore Scotch minister’.²³ More firm evidence of Puritanism can be garnered from the number of Strood

¹⁹ Gataker, ‘The Life and Death of William Bradshaw’, p. 110

²⁰ H. Smetham, *The History of Strood*, (Chatham, 1899) pp. 106-107; H. Plomer (ed.), *The Churchwardens’ Accounts of St Nicholas, Strood*, pp. xxvi-xxvii

²¹ R.T. Wing, ‘WING, An American Family History,’ <http://worldcupcafe.pbworks.com/w/pag/15367942>; ‘John Winge’, <http://www.nashfamilyhistory.com/winglibrary.org/john.html>; J. B. Dobson, ‘A note on the Reverend Robert Chamberlayne of Strood, Kent’, *AG*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (July 2004) pp. 229-230; W. Scot & J. Forbes, *An Apologetical narration of the state and government of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation*, (Edinburgh, 1846) p. lxiv

²² Dobson, ‘A note on the Reverend Robert Chamberlayne’, pp. 228-234; ‘Chamberlayne’s in the ancestry of the Betts Family of Newtown, Long Island,’ *AG*, Vol. 82, No.3 (July 2007) p. 230

²³ Plomer (ed), *The Churchwardens’ Accounts of St Nicholas*, p. 183

parishioners, who emigrated to New England in the 1630s to escape the Laudian clampdown on Puritans in England. Whilst Robert Chamberlayne had Puritan sympathies he would have been under increasing pressure to conform, as Strood was under the immediate eye of the Bishop of Rochester. In 1632 his sister-in-law Deborah Winge followed through the plan of her recently deceased husband and sailed for New England with her children. At some point between 1632-1635, Bridget Verry, a widow of Strood, and her children also travelled to New England.²⁴ Several others followed in 1635 aboard *The James*, including Thomas Ewer, a taylor, and his family as well as John Scudder, stepson of Robert Chamberlayne, plus Elizabeth Newman and Sara Beale, who accompanied them.²⁵ John Johnson, a shoemaker, and his family from Strood apparently emigrated to New England aboard the same ship.²⁶ They were followed by the Chamberlayne family, Elizabeth plus her children, in 1639-40, following the death of her husband.²⁷ Several of these emigrants and their families later went onto embrace the more radical sects, e.g. some of the Ewer and Winge families became Quakers.

The appointment of the Laudian, John Man, as vicar of Strood in late 1639 caused dismay amongst many Strood parishioners, who had been used to the 'godly' sermons of Chamberlayne. Man had the royal coat of arms installed in the church at considerable expense to the parish, something his predecessor had not troubled over.²⁸ Peter Birch, an incomer to Strood, served on the vestry and as a parish officer for most of the period 1629-1639, but suddenly disappeared from the records after Man's appointment. Dorothy, his wife, claimed in her 1646 tract, *A Catechisme of the severall Heads of Christian Religion*, that John

²⁴ Wing, 'WING, An American Family History'; Samuel Very of Salem, Mass.,

<http://ntgen.tripod.com/bw/verry>

²⁵ For the Ewer family see 'Ancestors of Timothy Mark Farr', <http://dustyhills.net/aqwg103.htm>; P.W. Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660*, (Baltimore, 1987) p. 150

²⁶ 'History of American Johnson Family', <http://www.branches-n-twigs.com/genealogy/gelperson.php?PersonID>; See also 'Lechlater, Gerwig Families of Maryland', <http://homecomcast.net-lsfyancestry/deich/pafc31.htm> and a discussion on where this family originated from in England. I have certain reservations about the attribution of this family to Strood, despite several similarities in the parish register there are also certain anomalies.

²⁷ Dobson, 'A note of the Reverend Robert Chamberlayne', p. 228; 'Miner Descent', www.minerdescent.com/2011/04/10; See D. Hill's *A reforming people: Puritanism and the transformation of public life in New England*, (New York, 2011) for a background on the early New England Puritans.

²⁸ Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*, p. 470; Plomer (ed.), *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Nicholas*, pp. 184-189

Man had described himself as ‘descended from Rome’; a comment this Puritan couple took to refer to his Laudian background. Birch states that Man had been against her and other Puritans in the parish, ‘*because my selfe and others will not honour him in the way he is in*’.²⁹ Some parishioners were obviously not in accord with Man’s religious or political views. It seems reasonable to conclude that Peter Birch had fallen out with Man, as had some of the other parishioners.

Madeleine Jones suggests that the ‘fanaticism of the Laudian movement appears to have passed Rochester by, which doubtless accounts for the comparative absence of Puritan agitation in the city’. Peter Clark argues that Bishop Bowles’ lack of influence due to ill health in the mid-1630s may have allowed dissent to become more widespread than otherwise assumed or reported, but presents little evidence to support this.³⁰ Rochester was broadly Laudian in the 1630s, having little scope to express any dissent under the watchful eye of the Bishop. Nevertheless there is evidence of some dissent in the city prior to 1640.

Concerns were raised by William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1634 that Rochester cathedral did not reflect the Laudian ideal of the ‘beauty of holiness’. A report on the cathedral, carried out by Nathaniel Brent on Laud’s behalf in 1634, suggests that much was in neglect and short of his high expectations. Brent instructed that ‘you are withoute delaye, to repayre the glasse windowes of your church, in a decent manner...’ and ‘to separate your churchyard from the other that ioyneth to yt, with a verie handsome fence...that the consecrated ground may be kepte from future prophanacion...’. The reply indicated that matters were not that clear cut. Significant sums of money had been spent on repairing the fabric of the cathedral and so funds were not available for minor work such as glazing. The enclosing of the churchyard was a problem, as this was both a right of way and adjacent to the parish churchyard.³¹

²⁹ Plomer (ed), *The Churchwardens’ Accounts of St Nicholas*, pp. 159-184; D. Burch, *A Catechisme of the severall Heads of Christian Religion*, (London, 1646) p. A2 – The spelling of ‘Birch’ has been adopted in the text as this was how the name was signed in the parish records.

³⁰ Jones, ‘The Political History’, pp. 54-55; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 362, 367

³¹ LP, MS 943, Laud’s Metropolitan Visit 1633, f. 248; PA, HL/PO/JO/LO/1/40, Nathaniel Brent’s visitation to Rochester Cathedral 1634; V. Torr, ‘Rochester Cathedral in 1634’, pp. 41-43

Although much of the cathedral's state was due to simple neglect, Laud placed a different interpretation upon the Dean and Chapter's lack of action. Laud believed that they were making excuses concerning his request for a visitation and trying to block any changes he wanted. Yet sermons published by two of the chapter, Walter Balcanquall and Henry King, strongly point to solidarity with Archbishop Laud and later Bishop Warner of Rochester. Item 8 of Brent's report stated that 'you are to place the communion Table, at the end of the Quyer, in a decent manner, as also to make a fayer rayle to goe crosse the Quyer, as in usuall in other cathedrall churches.' Balcanquall, Dean of Rochester and one of the respondents to Brent's report, gave the reason for failing to separate the altar from the congregation, as concerns of distance and hearing rather than lack of will. His 1633 sermon, preached at Whitehall before Charles I, clearly placed him as a Laudian adherent and in favour of railing of the altar. He stressed that 'the Sanctum Sanctorum, [was] the inclosed place where the Altar or Communion-Table stood, into which none did enter but such as were in holy Orders, and had power to consecrate the blessed elements...'. Bishop Warner's visitation articles for Rochester Diocese in 1638 enquired 'whether your Communion Table be decently rayled in whereby the communicants may receive the holy Sacrament kneeling in an humble manner...'. Fincham has suggested that Warner probably required kneeling boards in his parish churches as well as altar rails. A 1642 report refers to deal boards being ripped up in the cathedral. This was more than just tacit support for Laud's altar rails policy with Warner pursuing this aspect further than most other bishops.³²

Balcanquall challenged those who were against the Laudian ideal of the beauty of holiness. 'From whence appeareth the vanity and ignorance of those humorists, who ask, what needeth all this cost of oyntment upon Christ his head, all this cost upon building and ornaments of Churches...'. In his sermon he attacked those who showed a lack of reverence for God's house, but instead 'pull[ed] down as fast as our Fathers built, and deface[d] as much as they did decke...'. The Laudian emphasis on prayer rather than preaching is also evident

³² PA, HL/PO/JO/LO/1/40; W. Balcanquall, *The Honour of Christian Churches*, (London, 1633) p. 9; J. Warner, *Articles to be enquired of within the Diocesse of Rochester...*, (London, 1638) p. 3; Fincham, 'The Restoration of the Altars,' pp. 937-939; *A perfect Diurnall*, p. 5

in his sermon. ‘There is a generation of fools risen up in the world, who think all that religion consisteth in preaching and hearing of Sermons, and will run some miles to heare them: But for the publike prayers of the Church, they will hardly crosse the street...’.³³ A sermon delivered by Henry King, Dean of Rochester, at St Paul’s in 1640 re-emphasised the theory of the Divine Right of Kings, poured scorn on the Presbyterians and defended the Common Prayer Book.³⁴ This portrays a picture of Rochester Dean and Chapter in accord with Laud in the 1630s.

John Warner’s accession to the bishopric of Rochester in 1637 also placed a Laudian stamp on the cathedral clergy. Warner became Charles I’s royal chaplain in 1625 and accompanied him to Scotland on his coronation in 1633. He allegedly gained his bishopric, following a sermon given in 1635 concerning the Puritan threat entitled *Christ in the Clouds or God’s comming to Judgement*. Warner described it as ‘a short treatise, very necessary in these evill and dangerous times’ and warned his readers to watch out, as it was easy to become beguiled by these false doctrines. ‘That in the latter end some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and Doctrines of Devills, speaking lyes in Hypocrisie, and having their conscience seared with an hot iron...’.³⁵ Bishop Warner also delivered a sermon, *Forget not the voice of thine enemies*, at Rochester cathedral in March 1640, condemning both Puritanism and the rebels. Warner appears to have had the sermon published, conveying his anti-Puritan message to a broader audience, as *The Scot Scout’s Discovery*, a newsletter, used it against him in 1642.³⁶ The sermon was certainly outspoken and in a city so close to the more radical Chatham dockyard this could only be considered very provocative preaching.

³³ Balcanquall, *The honour of Christian Churches*, pp. 7, 22; See DNB entry for Balcanquall

³⁴ H.King, *A sermon preached at St Pauls*, passim

³⁵ J. Warner, *Christ in the Clouds, or Gods comming to Judgement*, (London, 1635) p. 5; See DNB entry for Warner

³⁶ *The Scot Scout’s Discovery*, p. 22; J. Lee Warner, ‘A hitherto unpublished passage in the life of John Warner, Bishop of Rochester from AD 1637 to 1666,’ *AJ*, No. 21 (1864) pp. 42-47; Lee Warner, *The Life of John Warner*, pp. 17-19; E. Lee-Warner, ‘John Warner 1580-1666, Bishop of Rochester 1637-1666’, *AACR*, (1937) pp. 28-32; *Bod.Lib, English MS hist. b 205*, ff. 49-63

Two prebendaries of the cathedral chapter, Elizeus Burgess and John Lorkin, served as ministers of St Nicholas parish church in the 1620s and 1630s. Both of these men were ejected for their Laudian views in the mid-1640s. The church was adjacent to the cathedral and was, therefore, subject to close religious scrutiny. Worship would undoubtedly have conformed to Laudian practice. No church records survive for this period to ascertain if the interior of the church was altered in the 1630s to meet Laudian standards. There is even less information available regarding the other parish church, St Margaret's. Henry Selby became incumbent in 1627, abandoning his living at the onset of civil war. Contemporaries probably regarded Selby as a Laudian.³⁷

Although most Rochester citizens worshipped within the Anglican Church in the 1630s, there are, nevertheless, some indications that not all were happy with the Laudian style of worship on offer. In 1635 Ralph Farnam, a barber, and his family accompanied a group of Strood Puritans to New England aboard the *James*. Farnam reputedly 'lectured on theology while he shaved' his clients.³⁸ Thomas Brewer, a Brownist and yeoman from Boxley, was active in the area in 1637. Laud's 1637 report for the Diocese of Canterbury, commented that 'Brewer slipt out of Prison, and went to Rochester...and held Conventicles...', indicating some were receptive to his views. The delivery of Warner's anti-Puritan sermon at Rochester cathedral in early 1640 also suggests an element of dissent was visible within the local community.³⁹

Whilst little comment survives on the ordinary people's reaction to religion in Rochester in the 1630s, the council's relationship with both St Nicholas parish church and the cathedral is well documented. Between 1622-1637 individual aldermen raised several loans to pay for the rebuilding costs of the parish church and the council took responsibility for ensuring any outstanding debts were paid. Various aldermen also acquired specific pieces for St Nicholas church and made certain this was acknowledged within the building's fabric in terms of

³⁷ Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*, p. 231; A. Matthews (ed.), *Walker Revised*, John Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy during the Great rebellion 1642-60*, (Oxford, 1988) pp. 212-215, 219, 221

³⁸ 'Ralph Farnham', www.geni.com/people/Ralph-Farnham

³⁹ H. Wharton (ed.), *History of the Troubles and Tryal of William Laud*, (London, 1695) p.546; Lee Warner, 'A hitherto unpublished passage', *passim*

monumental inscriptions.⁴⁰ In 1624 John Duling, the Mayor of Rochester, donated a pulpit to St Nicholas on its dedication. From the outset the rebuilt church was stamped with the mark of civic authority and the inscription, over the west door, ‘dedicated by John Duling, 20th September 1624’, reflected the significant role he played in the opening of the new church. John Cobham similarly donated a glass window with the dedication over the north window reading: ‘This window is set up at the charge of Mr John Cobham, esquire, and alderman of this cittie, 1624’. Again as an alderman he was leaving his civic mark on the new church. There are also several references in the city records to enclosing the churchyard during Charles I’s reign. Enclosure was to protect the churchyard from animals and other undesirable elements. This was a particular facet of Laudian policy to segregate the churchyard and create a sense of sanctity.⁴¹ The above actions by the corporation and individual councillors indicate that Rochester’s civic elite were closely connected with the parish church and its hierarchy.

Rochester corporation also expressed its solidarity with the parish church through its civic-religious ritual. In 1630 an order went out ‘that everie Alderman that hath beene Mayor of this Cittie shall upon everie Sabbath day attend the Mayor of this Cittie for the tyme being from his house to Church & back againe in his gowne.’ This was a ritual that dated back to the fifteenth century and was reinforced at this point to emphasise the relationship between the two bodies. The council also decided in 1631 to parade through the city on certain feast days bearing the maces and other civic regalia. By 1637 the mayor had also insisted that all ‘his Bretheren upon everie Ffryday beinge Lecture day shall decently come unto the Church in their gownes and ruffe bands.’ Although these processions were primarily displays to promote the civic identity and importance of the corporation, they were nevertheless also carried out to stake a civic claim to certain religious events and mark the corporation’s role in the parish church.⁴²

⁴⁰ MALSC, RCA/A1/1, ff. 43, 66-67, 112, 336, 349, 366, 424, 497-498

⁴¹ Lewis, *The History and Antiquities*, Part II p.25; J Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense*, (London, 1769) p. 721; MALSC, RCA/A1/1, ff. 132, 170, 206-207

⁴² MALSC, RCA/C2/1, f. 75; RCA/A1/1, ff. 321, 359, 505

The corporation similarly had a good working relationship with the cathedral. Hasted's History of Kent indicates that in 1440 the Bishop of Rochester gave permission 'that the bailiff and his successors might cause to be carried before them, by their sergeants, their mace or maces...as well to and in the parish church as in the cathedral and cemetery, especially on festival days and processions, and solemn sermons.' Rochester council, therefore, had a two hundred year history of parading the civic regalia in the cathedral. An entry in the city minutes for 1636 confirms that the mayor and aldermen still regularly attended the cathedral. Two sextons were paid twenty shillings annually for maintaining the 'Mayor and Aldermens cushionings in the said Cathedrall Church and sweepe[ing] and cleane[ing] their seate[s]...'. Despite Charles I and Laud's desire to remove civic ceremony from places of worship this was not enforced in the cathedral or parish church.⁴³

Catherine Patterson argues that from 1633 onwards there was increasing conflict between cathedral and city jurisdictions. There is little evidence of this in Rochester. When issues arose regarding the state of the cathedral churchyard in 1634 the mayor and corporation were quick to give assurances 'that such order is taken, as hereafter there shall be no iuste cause for them to complayne.' The only cause for concern was in 1635 when George Robinson, the mayor, noted that 'the Bayliffes of the Lord Bishope of Rochester and other Bayliffes have lately entered in to the liberties of the said Mayor and Cittizens of Rochester and there have arrested divers persons ... which by lawe they ought not to doe'.⁴⁴ However there appears to have been no repetition of this incident. On the whole Rochester council cooperated with and supported the cathedral authorities in the decade preceding the Civil War.

2. 1640-1643

The Medway Towns were quick to react against their Laudian clergy with several incidents of early protest against the incumbents in 1640-1. Three

⁴³ E. Hasted, The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent, (Canterbury, 1798) Vol. IV p. 53; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 482; Fincham & Lake, 'The ecclesiastical policies', p. 41

⁴⁴ Patterson, 'Corporations, Cathedrals and the Crown', pp. 545-571; quote cited in Torr, 'Rochester Cathedral in 1634' pp. 50, 53; MALSC, RCA/C2/1 ff. 88b-89a

petitions were presented to Sir Edward Dering, a member of the committee for scandalous and malignant ministers, from Medway parishes. Those against Thomas Vaughan of Chatham and Richard Tray of Bredhurst are preserved in the Dering collection at the British Library, but that for John Man has not survived.⁴⁵ All three parishes concerned had a background of Puritanism. Whilst there are claims these three ministers frequented taverns and other such misdemeanours, the main implication is that these men were either adhering to Laudian standards or openly against Parliament.

In 1640 Richard Tray, the vicar of Bredhurst and Lidsing, villages just outside Gillingham and Chatham, was the subject of a petition by inhabitants from both parishes complaining about his pluralism in holding the rectorships of Bredhurst, Lidsing and St Mary's Hoo, whilst residing in Boxley. Both Bredhurst and Lidsing were just a few miles from Boxley, a Brownist centre of activity during the previous two decades. Tray was also accused of neglecting Lidsing: 'and, neither he, nor any other Curate for him, hath administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there by the space of three yeares last past and upwards.' His main transgressions, however, appear to have been disputes with individual parishioners causing personal animosity, rather than religious misdemeanours. Although Tray produced a strong defence and a counter petition from his leading families, announcing their satisfaction with his preaching and religious duties, there is other evidence which demonstrates he was not in complete accord with Presbyterian notions of religious worship in the early 1640s, when incidents of iconoclasm in Essex and Kent had resulted in prayer books being destroyed as part of a drive against 'popish innovation'.⁴⁶

During 1642-3 Tray delivered a sermon at Sergeants Inn, London, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, which was subsequently published. This sermon spelt out his opinion on so called popish ceremonies and use of the Common Prayer Book. He attacked those who think 'it is not lawfull for our English Church to comply *with the Roman in the use of Ceremonies, formes of Service*' and 'decry our

⁴⁵ BL, Add 26785 ff. 131-132, 211-212; J. White, *The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests*, (London, 1643) p. 24

⁴⁶ BL, Add 26785 ff. 131-132

common Service, and all rites, ceremonies and gestures in religious worship, that have been used by Pontificians.’ Tray supported the role of the bishops, condemning those that ‘now adayes...are transported with such a furious indignation against the godly Fathers and Bishops of the Church.’ His views smack of Laudianism, but he blamed ‘*Papistical Arminians*’ in his sermon for creating this situation. At this point he appears to distance himself from Laud, suggesting Tray was an Episcopalian, who had moderated his views after Laud’s imprisonment. Whilst, this was not explicit in the above petition, it may well have been the reason behind the parishioners’ efforts for his removal in 1640.⁴⁷

As we have seen the Chatham petition against Thomas Vaughan was supported by a strong dockyard contingent. A re-analysis of the original document has cast doubts on Larking’s reading of the signatures and made it possible to trace all twenty-two petitioners from the assessments contained in the churchwardens’ accounts and identify their occupations. Nine of these petitioners served as vestrymen or officers in 1642 compared to four in 1640, showing that they were gaining political and religious control of the vestry following their protest. Chatham’s petition had its roots in the town’s Puritan tradition and build up of religious tensions over the past few years under Vaughan’s ministration. This petition is more explicit than the other two in its condemnation of Vaughan on religious points. He is accused of spending several years getting the altar positioned in the Laudian manner and using popish ceremonies. John White, M.P. and chairman of the Long Parliament committee which handled the petitions against ‘scandalous’ and ‘malignant’ ministers, accused him of being ‘a great practiser of the late illegal superstitious Innovations and presser of the same upon the consciences of his auditory, protesting against them when they would not comply with him therein, as men of devillish spirit...’. White and many of Vaughan’s parishioners regarded him as a Laudian. When the parishioners objected to his style of worship, Vaughan ‘endeavoured to hinder his parishioners from going to heare Sermons else where, when they had none at home, affirming to them, that it was as lawfull for him to use Dalliance, or lie with his neighbours wife, as for them to goe from their owne Parish.’ In Vaughan’s

⁴⁷ R. Tray, *The right way to Protestantisme*, (London, 1643) pp. 14, 18-91, 21

perception many of his parishioners were Puritans. His parishioners claimed that ‘Hee is a man much dignifying himselfe, and velyfying of others who are orthodox and sound, with the name of Puritanicall Ministers, the whole kingdome fairing the worse (as he said) for such.’ The Puritan parishioners were keen on ‘godly’ sermons, which expounded the scriptures. However Vaughan was of the view ‘*That to preach nothing but Scripture without authority of the Fathers, was like the devils sheering of hoggs, a great cry, but a little wooll.*’⁴⁸ Laudians like Vaughan considered that Puritans placed too much value on preaching.

Vaughan’s political leanings are exposed as anti-Parliamentarian and anti-Scottish in the petition and were thus abhorrent to a largely naval and pro-Parliamentarian community. White charged Vaughan with calling the members of the Short Parliament ‘a company of logger headed fellowes’. The Chatham petitioners stated that Vaughan ‘never praid for [a] blesseing upon the former Parliament, not yet for this, till of late.’ He was obviously in an awkward position and had to reconsider his political stance. Chatham’s petitioners requested not a radical replacement, but ‘a man orthodoxall, sound and profitable, painefull in his ministry, and peaceable in his conversation...and wee edified.’ In their opinion Vaughan was ‘a turbulent man, full of differences and controversies with his parishioners’. From the petitioners’ support for the Scots and their anti-Laudian rhetoric it seems highly probable that they were Presbyterians. These same petitioners, excepting John Waterman, who was probably at sea in 1642, and George Weede and Thomas Day, who had died in the interim, appended their names to the Blount petition of 1642, demanding reformation of the church and its hierarchy.⁴⁹ Vaughan was ejected from Chatham in 1643, but appointed to Smarden in 1644 with the blessing of Parliament. The Smarden parishioners had heard him preach, were happy with

⁴⁸ MALSC, P85/5/1; BL, Add 26785 ff. 211-212; Larking (ed.), *Proceedings in the County of Kent*, pp. 226-229 – Larking’s transcription of some of the names was inaccurate; J. White, *The First Century of Scandalous*, pp. 43-44

⁴⁹ BL, Add 26785 ff. 211-212; White, *The First Century of Scandalous*, pp. 43-44; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121

his doctrine and subscribed to his petition. It would appear that financial hardship forced Vaughan to conform, resulting in his second ejection in 1662.⁵⁰

The third petition was against John Man of Strood. The only record of this comes from John White's pamphlet. Most of Man's alleged failings were indiscretions such as drinking and swearing, but there was also an accusation that he 'scorned the Parliament, and [said] that the Parliament-men were not Gentlemen of quality, and hath otherwise expressed great malignity against the Parliament.' There was again a political motive behind this petition of c. 1641 and Man's subsequent removal from office in 1643.⁵¹ From Dorothy Birch's tract it is obvious that Man had religious differences with a number of his parishioners as well. *'He hath ever since in publicke and private, laboured to make me and others, odious in the eyes of the people...he reviles me and others almost where ever he comes; my selfe heard him say, that wee were poore ignorant simple people, and as concerning God wee knew nothing...'*⁵² This may explain White's reference to Man as 'a common quarreller and fighter'. Although no outward comment is made on Man's religious views by Birch, phrases suggest as *'stumbling block'* and *'to vindicate the honour of my God'*, as well as Man's own claim *'to descend from Rome'*, would indicate he was a Laudian. Birch's pamphlet was published to defend herself and her friends publicly against Man and his accusations. She describes her friends *'as a knowing people, and precious in the sight of God.'* The refusal of this group to *'honour him (Man) in the way he is'* would place them as Puritans.⁵³ Others demonstrated their disaffection with Man's preaching by staying away from the parish church and attending conventicles elsewhere. John Clipton, yeoman and later churchwarden of St Nicholas; John Beckett, a weaver and Isaac Carter, a mason and part of the vestry in 1653, were all prosecuted for recusancy on six consecutive Sundays in

⁵⁰ Matthews (ed.), Walker Revised, p. 227; Haslewood, Memorials of Smarden, pp.33-37; TNA, SP28/235, Kent County Committee Collections -Vaughan's taxes were abated in 1644 and assessment waived in 1649 for Smarden Rectory; Matthews (ed.), Calamy revised p.501; Bod Lib, Bodley MS 324 f. 259; LP, COMM I/113, Certificate appointing Thomas Vaughan to Smarden Rectory 5/7/1644

⁵¹ White, The First Century of Scandalous, p. 24; Matthews (ed.), Walker Revised, p.222. See DNB entry for White.

⁵² Burch, A Catechisme, pp. A2-A3

⁵³ White, The First Century of Scandalous p. 24; Burch, A Catechisme, pp. Title page, A2-A3

1642 along with some from the Weald of Kent.⁵⁴ With the exception of Rochester, which had little Puritan activity pre-1640, there appears to have been religious protest in most of the local parishes in 1640-1.

However the period 1640-3 saw not only protest, but also action against popish innovation. In 1643 Chatham vestrymen realised the significance of events that were happening and purchased a separate book, mistakenly catalogued as a vestry book, to record these events. It is possibly unique, as few parish accounts of the iconoclasm carried out exist. The 1641 petitioners, in the form of the vestrymen, ensured that action was taken in June 1643 to remove those innovations that they had protested against. On 3rd June ‘Those sentences which were in the chancell, having reference to the sacrament of the lords supper, were washt out’ and the following day ‘The Images of the church porch, tending to superstition, were broken down’.⁵⁵ Unlike the earlier iconoclasm in Essex which was frequently carried out by soldiers with the assistance of parishioners, that in St Mary’s was organised and carried out by workmen of the parish, who were paid to demolish these innovations and repair or replace them. An assessment was specifically levied in 1643 to pay for the removal of these images with the citizens raising few objections. The churchwardens recorded entries against two parishioners, indicating that they protested at the charge. Gerard Dalby was described as ‘with the king’s partie’ and Hugh Fletcher as ‘a refuser to pay for pews in the chancel’; neither of these men had appended their names to the Blount petition of 1642.⁵⁶

This contrasts sharply with the iconoclasm carried out at Rochester cathedral in August 1642. A Royalist newspaper, *Mecurius Rusticus*, has suggested that there was more reluctance here than elsewhere to act rashly: ‘but in wisdom [they] thought it not safe, to give them the same scope, here as there (Canterbury); for the multitude though mad enough, yet were not so mad, nor stood yet so prepar’d to approve such heathenish practices...’. The protagonists were

⁵⁴ Plomer (ed.) *The Churchwardens’ Accounts of St Nicholas*, pp. 182, 188; Cockburn (ed.), Kent Indictments: Charles I, No. 2217

⁵⁵ MALSC, P85/8/1 f. 14;

⁵⁶ MALSC, P85/8/1 f. 14; P85/5/1, 1643-1644 accounts, 1643 assessment; J. Walter, ‘Popular iconoclasm and the politics of the parish in Eastern England, 1640-1642’, *HJ*, (June 2004) pp. 261-290

Sandys' troop acting on his instructions. Although the soldiery carried out the actual acts of iconoclasm, there appears to have been some local input into what was destroyed and how this was subsequently disposed of. Mercurius Rusticus reported that a mob had gathered to witness events. Both Parliamentary and Royalist accounts depict acts of destruction at the cathedral, but the Parliamentary account suggests a subtle understanding of the wider issues behind iconoclasm in this period and irony in the way items were destroyed. The altar rails of the cathedral were broken up and given to the poor as 'kindling wood'. John Walter has seen a parallel between enclosure of the altar on a religious level and land enclosure at a social level; the exclusion of the ordinary people from direct access to God and their right to use the common land unimpeded. Unless the men involved in this incident had local connections they would have been unaware of a local enclosure riot the previous year. Rochester corporation had leased part of the common land to George Cobham and allowed him to enclose it. In September 1641 the city minutes record that the 'said posts rayles and pales weare since latly by evill disposed people pulled upp & carried away, pretendinge the said grownd to be parcell of the Comon there...'. The close time span between the two incidents suggests a link with local people involved in the distribution of the altar rails to the poor. Mercurius Rusticus also describes how the Common Prayer Book was torn up and thrown in the street, denying the need for a routine liturgy in the Roman mode.⁵⁷

The Parliamentary newsletter, *A perfect Diurnall*, claimed that this incident of iconoclasm took place on St Bartholomew's Day, the 24th August. This was a significant day in the Protestant calendar, as 10,000 French Huguenots had been massacred in Paris on that day in 1572. Hence the act of removing 'popish innovations' had further symbolic significance as it was carried out on a day that French Catholics had massacred Protestants. Sandys' troop had been in Rochester since the 21st and could have carried out this act before the 24th.⁵⁸ There was a degree of symbolism and ritual in the iconoclasm at Rochester, which did not occur at Chatham. Whilst both towns had some local involvement

⁵⁷ Mercurius Rusticus, (1646) pp. 199-200; *A perfect Diurnall*, p. 5; Walter, "Abolishing superstition with sedition", p. 83; MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 557

⁵⁸ *A perfect Diurnall*, p. 5

in the acts of iconoclasm, in Rochester this was spontaneous and unplanned, whereas in Chatham the reactions were well planned and had the backing of the political elite.

Whilst the iconoclasm carried out in Rochester and Chatham is well documented that of Strood can only be garnered by reading between the lines of the churchwardens' accounts. Plomer did exactly that in 1927 when transcribing the accounts for publication. His introduction refers the reader to specific entries in the accounts, which he connects to the 'Puritan ascendancy' of 1642-4. Strood vestry did remove certain imagery and items regarded as 'popish innovation'. In 1642 the vestry disposed of the surplice by selling it and during 1643 a workman was paid 'for tacking the Crosse [down] from the steeple...'. Various payments in the 1644 accounts indicate that the baptismal font was also replaced by a basin in the preceding year. St Nicholas' 1642 inventory of movables listed a book of common prayer, but as Plomer noted there was no mention of the moveable communion table in this report. The 1644 inventory listed the prayer book as 'torne', whether this is a reference to its state or destruction is unclear. Until 1637 all the inventories register a moveable communion table and so does that of 1644; there are no inventories listed between 1638-1641. Presumably Man had the old communion table removed and replaced it with one fixed in the Laudian style. It was back in place under his successor, John Baker, in 1644.⁵⁹ As in Chatham these were carefully planned acts of iconoclasm with the vestry sanctioning the necessary payments for the work.

In September 1641 the House of Commons ordered that lectureships should be established and paid for by voluntary subscriptions.⁶⁰ This was a useful opportunity for parishioners burdened with Laudian incumbents to seek another voice that was more in tune with their religious sympathies. The first of the local parishes to petition Parliament for a lecturer was Strood in late 1642. Many Strood parishioners were keen to hear more 'godly' sermons than those delivered by Man. Following 'the humble petition of divers of the Inhabitants of

⁵⁹ Plomer (ed.), *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Nicholas*, pp. xxv, 180, 186, 189-191

⁶⁰ Holmes, *Seventeenth century Lincolnshire*, p. 194

the Parish of Strowde...’, Walter Penrose was recommended as a lecturer for the village in December 1642. Parliament described him as ‘an orthodox Divine, and in Orders’. John Man was requested ‘to permit him [use of] the pulpit’.⁶¹ Nothing further is known of Penrose or his religious views. In December 1642 a petition from ‘the Parishioners and Inhabitants of the Parish of Chatham...desiring a lecturer, whom they voluntarily offer to maintain at their own Charge’ was submitted to the House of Commons. Samuel Annesley, a Presbyterian and ‘learned Divine’, was appointed the lecturer for Chatham. By the reply received from Parliament it would appear that the vestry had drawn up the petition and had indicated that Thomas Vaughan would object to his appointment and preaching in the parish church. The House of Commons, therefore, ‘Ordered, That Mr Tho Vaughan, the Minister of that Place, shall be required from this House, to permit the said Mr Anneley to preach there...without Lett or Interruption...’. Chatham parishioners were prepared to bear the cost of Annesley, as this gave them access to a man more in tune with their religious views.⁶²

In contrast Rochester’s petition for a lecturer, from ‘the Mayor, Aldermen, and other Citizens and Inhabitants’, was not received till July 1643. Rochester corporation had also ‘procured the Consent of Mr Larkin, their Pastor’, which stood in sharp contrast to Chatham where Vaughan had raised objections. Their emphasis was not so much on ‘orthodox’ as a ‘painful and laborious’ minister. John Piggott, the lecturer appointed by Parliament, was presumably a man in a more conservative mould than Annesley, being acceptable to both John Lorkin and some of the corporation. Whilst Vaughan was ordered to comply the churchwardens of St Nicholas were requested ‘to permit him (Mr Piggott) quietly to perform his Duty.’⁶³ The relationship between the political elite of Rochester and Chatham and their incumbents was markedly different. At Chatham it was felt Annesley would bring a more radical perspective and thus a sense of antagonism existed between the vestry and the vicar. On the other hand Rochester was trying to acquire another learned man to back up Lorkin in his

⁶¹ CJ Vol. 2 13/12/1642

⁶² CJ Vol. 2 20/12/1642

⁶³ CJ Vol. 3 1/6/1643

spiritual work, suggesting a degree of collaboration between the corporation and its parish church.

Further protest at the lack of religious change was expressed in the 1642 Blount petition. This was a counter-petition to Sir Edward Dering's petition of March 1642. As M.P. for Kent Dering and his supporters wanted moderate change within the Anglican Church, but not a 'root and branch' transformation; i.e. the removal of episcopacy. Blount's petition demanded 'Reformation in the Church' as well as 'the establishing of a Preaching Ministry throughout the whole Kingdome'. From the surviving original copy of this petition it has been possible to identify a page of signatures as coming from the Chatham and Gillingham hundred, which contains 181 names. Chatham contributed at least 141 of the signatures to this petition, representing about 60 per cent of male head of households in the town. The town's Puritan background and support for the Scots in the Chatham petition would suggest that many of the townsfolk were Presbyterian religiously.⁶⁴ Some of the petitioners later supported Independency, whilst others defended Presbyterianism when it came under attack in 1648. At least seven members of the extended Pett family penned their names to this petition, including Charles Bowles, Joseph Pett and Richard Holborne, who had all signed the 1641 Chatham petition to remove Thomas Vaughan. Many surnames are repeated amongst this page of signatures, e.g. three Caines, three Daltons, four Lawrences plus numerous pairs of names, indicating strong family patterns of religious and political allegiance. However not all these men had the same religious views or expectations.

Preserved in Chatham's 'vestry' book for 1643 are the signatures to the Vow and Covenant. Parliament introduced the Vow and Covenant in July 1643 to ensure the loyalty of its citizens, following recent risings. Thomas Vaughan, the minister, signed the Vow and Covenant to the side. Ian Green contends that some ministers did exercise a degree of protest in taking or signing the Covenant and did not encourage their parishioners to take it. Vaughan's sympathies were certainly not with Parliament or the oath of allegiance required to be taken, but

⁶⁴ PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; Woods, *Prelude to Civil War*, pp. 35-36, 41, 83

he had little room for manoeuvre as he was already under the threat of clerical ejection following a petition against him in 1641. Richard Lee, M.P. for Rochester, wrote on the top of the document addressed to Thomas Vaughan: ensure ‘that you cause this Vow & Covenant herewith sent unto you, to be taken by yourselve, and your severall parishioners, according to the instructions thereunto annexed; hereof faile you not, at your further peril.’⁶⁵ As the vicar Vaughan was expected to set an example to his congregation. The vestry elite appended their names in order of status and headed the list. Whether Vaughan was coerced or felt it in his best interests to sign is unclear, but his later actions certainly indicate that he was prepared to conform. There is no mention in this record of any protest or refusal to take the Vow and Covenant, suggesting a parish broadly in sympathy with Parliament and its religious programme.

Whilst Chatham and Strood vestries’ respective relationships with their incumbents were fraught with difficulties between 1640-3, Rochester council’s dealings with its parish church were much more supportive and cooperative. No objections were raised by the council in 1642 when John Puckle resigned as councillor to take up the post of parish clerk. The mayor and aldermen, with the backing of the minister, petitioned for a lecturer on behalf of St Nicholas church in 1643. On an individual basis two of the city’s aldermen left requests in their wills in this period, which marked their civic link with the parish church. Thomas Faunce bequeathed a new carpet for the communion table in 1642 and John Cobham senior requested that the common councillors of the city should carry his body to St Nicholas in 1641.⁶⁶ No reference has been found to Rochester council’s link with the cathedral between 1640 and late 1643. It is possible that the dominant Parliamentarians in the corporation had decided to distance themselves from the cathedral and its Laudian associations.

The cathedral chapter was the subject of heated debate in this period at both parliamentary and local level. ‘Root and branch’ petitioners wanted the removal of the bishops, which would make the role of the cathedral and its chapter

⁶⁵ MALSC, P85/8/1, ff. 16-21; Green, ‘The persecution,’ p. 516

⁶⁶ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 567; KHLC, Drb/Pwr22, Register of Wills 1632-1644, ff. 415a-417b, 519a-525a

redundant. However not much pressure was needed to remove Bishop John Warner from Rochester. Warner was absent from the cathedral after 1642. From Warner's correspondence it is possible to pinpoint his departure from Kent and exile to the latter part of 1643. Whilst he gives various reasons for leaving; financial ones were the most pressing: 'But that which more nearly moved me to depart was, that being assessed in Kent (September 1643) for the 20th part, £500, and because of the first demand I was unable to pay the same.'⁶⁷ He, therefore, had little spiritual compunction in abandoning his bishopric leaving the chapter to its own devices.

By the end of 1643 the cathedral chapter was also greatly depleted. John Lorkin tried to defend the cathedral against acts of iconoclasm in 1642 and was shot at for his pains. According to his son, Edward, he was sequestered from this living and lost his position as prebendary c.1643 at the behest of the Kent county committee. The cathedral accounts for 1644-1646, maintained by Philip Ward on behalf of the Kent county committee, indicate that there was no dean and only one prebend, Robert Cheek, still in place in early 1644. Although several of the dean and chapter were subsequently sequestered from their livings, e.g. Elizeus Burgess and Edmund Jackson in 1645, none seem to have been formally deprived of their prebendaries. Rochester Dean and Chapter consisted of only Cheek, the sub-Dean, and five petty canons by the end of 1643.⁶⁸ One of these petty canons, Francis Kirk, assisted at both Luddesdown and Chatham in this period. He was cited in the sequestration of the Luddesdown curate, John Johnson, in 1644, as 'a singing man of Rochester by profession a Taylor and is superstitious in his practices and hath permitted his servants to work on the Solemne fast daies and his Children to prophane the Lords dayes by sporting and gaming thereon and hath expressed great malignancy against the Parl[iament]'. Despite these failings Kirk frequently performed baptisms and burials at Chatham in the void left by the ejected minister Thomas Vaughan

⁶⁷ Lee-Warner, *The Life of John Warner*, pp. 25, 28-29, 32, quote cited from pp.33-34; See DNB entry for Warner.

⁶⁸ TNA, SP28/355/3, ff. 1-2; A. G. Matthews (ed.), *Walker Revised: John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Great Rebellion 1642-60*, (Oxford, 1988) pp. 212, 219, 221

during 1643-4.⁶⁹ By the close of 1643 the cathedral was clearly rudderless and had no effective leadership.

Responsibility for the administration of the cathedral and its chapter had passed into other hands by the end of 1643. Philip Ward managed the financial affairs of the cathedral from 1644 onwards, whilst the council was involved in establishing a preaching ministry to replace the now largely defunct chapter. In November 1643 the Deputy Lieutenants of Kent ordered the Mayor and corporation of Rochester to draw up a shortlist of preachers acceptable to the House of Commons for the cathedral. The corporation took its time to consider alternative candidates and hear them preach before deciding on a suitable list for Parliament in February 1644. John Philpott, the mayor, returned the names of Henry Denne, a General Baptist, Samuel Annesley, a Presbyterian, and two conformists, Thomas Grayne and Thomas Garraway.⁷⁰ This broad spectrum of recommendations would indicate that the members of Rochester council were religiously diverse in outlook.

During this period Chatham and Strood had shown evidence of an increasing reaction against Laudianism. This manifested itself in Chatham in the form of protest and action; its parishioners at all levels of society could express their opinion, which they did both in numbers and in a radical manner. Strood inhabitants were equally prepared to protest and absent themselves from the parish church. In contrast Rochester citizens displayed little open hostility against the established church. John Lorkin was not ejected as a result of local protest or the involvement of the local council. Whether this was because the citizens were more conservative spiritually or the corporation was divided religiously is unclear. Neither Warner nor the cathedral chapter would have been in any position to influence the council after 1642. The county committee, which was based in Rochester in 1642-3, was the main force behind Lorkin's removal. Despite the corporation's support for a Baptist minister, any undercurrents of radicalism in Rochester in the lead up to the civil war remained

⁶⁹ Matthews (ed), Walker Revised, p. 220; MALSC, P85/5/1, 1643 and 1644 accounts

⁷⁰ CJ Vol. 3 3/11/1643; Bod.Lib, Tanner MS 62b, Letter John Philpott to Parliament 5 February 1643/4, ff. 545-546

well hidden. On the surface the corporation presented a united front religiously, but was still feeling its way through the upheaval and change of 1640-3 and appeared unclear as to its collective religious position.

3. 1644-1647

Most of Medway's Laudian ministers had been dismissed by 1644. The increasing radicalism of the Kent County Committee ensured that measures were swiftly put into place to remove the remaining incumbents by 1644. As a consequence the Medway Towns had a clean sweep of ministers between 1643-1646 with Presbyterian replacements installed in all the parish churches. Some of these incumbents were more welcomed by their parishioners than others. Chatham parishioners gained the Presbyterian minister they desired and petitioned for in 1641. Ambrose Clare became Chatham's minister in 1644. His religious leanings can be gleaned from descriptions in Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena* and John Goodwin's *Cretensis*, where both men refer to Clare as 'a godly Orthodox Presbyterian Minister'. After Clare moved to Devon in 1647 he signed *The Joint-Testimonie of the Ministers of Devon* in 1648, which was a Presbyterian manifesto. Yet not all the parishioners desired a Presbyterian as their vicar. In 1647 a number of dockyard workers had 'disturb[ed] Mr Clare Minister of Chatham at the time of his administring the holy sacrament & have or doe countenance the reinvesting of Mr Vaughan the evicted Minister there...'. These men were keen to have their ex-Laudian incumbent restored to office, disrupting the church service to voice their opinion. On the other hand Clare was not radical enough for the Baptist carpenter, Robert Cossens, who after hearing him preach in 1645 threatened to put in articles against him.⁷¹ Clare's 1647 replacement, Walter Rosewell, was again in the Presbyterian mould as his later treatise, *The Serpents subtilty discovered*, indicates and was very popular with many of the parishioners.⁷²

⁷¹ MALSC, P85/5/1, 1643-1645 accounts; T. Edwards, *Gangraena*, or a catalogue and discovery of many of the errours... (2nd ed., 1646) p. 213; The first and second part of *Gangraena*, (3rd ed., 1646) p. 103; J. Goodwin, *Cretensis*, (London, 1645) p. 40; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, p. 116; TNA, ADM7/673 f. 264

⁷² Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, p. 554; Rosewell, *The Serpents subtilty discovered*; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*

The Strood parishioners were rewarded with John Baker in January 1644, following their petition against their former incumbent John Man. He was probably the poor minister they had heard preach in 1639 and were, therefore, familiar with his religious views. His ejection from a later living in 1662 would suggest he was probably a Presbyterian. However certain parishioners were discontented with Baker's style of preaching and put in articles against him in June 1646; a situation similar to that experienced by Clare of Chatham. Baker had issues with poverty for most of his career and probably left the parish in 1647 for financial reasons to take up a better preferment in Folkestone, being replaced by the staunch Presbyterian Daniel French.⁷³

Several factors indicate that Strood parishioners were exposed to a wide range of preaching between 1645-6, which altered the religious views of some of them. At Rochester the General Baptists, Denne and Thomas Lambe, were in full voice, whilst the Particular Baptist, Benjamin Cox, preached at Strood in 1645. Dorothy Birch's tract also suggests a wider debate took place at this time. Her catechism was published in spring 1646, yet her fall out with John Man dated to around 1640-1. Something occurred in the local community that empowered her to go into print that particular year. Patricia Demers argues that 'radical women added powerful voices to the rhetoric of dissent'. She considered Birch's catechism 'a public embarrassment of this cleric (Man)'. Although Paula McQuade feels this is a standard Puritan catechism there are several indicators that point to a sub text. Ian Green considered her work as 'not the usual staples' of a catechism. This was a genre Birch could comfortably use as a woman to express her religious views. As a mother she would have catechised her own children, but this is only given as the third reason for her committing to print.⁷⁴

⁷³ Bod.Lib, Bodley MS 323, Plundered Ministers 1646, f. 152b; Bodley MS 325, Plundered Ministers 1647-1648, ff. 132a-132b; BL, Add MS 15670, Proceedings for Committee for Plundered Ministers 1645-1646, f. 103b; Add MS 15671, Proceedings of Committee for Plundered Ministers 1647, f. 176b; Matthews (ed), Calamy Revised, p. 23

⁷⁴ T. Lambe, *Christ Crucified*, (1646) p. A7; See DNB entry for Denne; Burch, *The Catechisme*, p. A3; P. McQuade, "A knowing people", *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, Vol. 32 No. 3 (2010) pp. 167-186; I. Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and catechising in England c1530-1720*, (Oxford, 1996) pp. 606-607; P. Demers, *Women's writing in English: Early Modern England*, (Toronto, 2005) p. 183

The style of questions and answers adopted in catechisms was also a genre favoured by Baptists such as Henry Denne to explain ideas to their audiences. Birch was demonstrating to an adult audience that she was able to articulate theological points of view. Her tract is entitled ‘A Catechisme of the severall Heads of Christian Religion, Gathered together in Question and Answer, it being intended for private use, but now published for the good and benefit of others...’. Whilst the phrase ‘severall Heads of Christian Religion’ is not uncommon in catechisms, its usage during the English Revolution when many different religious strands and sects were prominent is significant. No other catechism has been traced between 1641-1648 with a similar phrase in its title. This title indicates her tract was targeted at several religious audiences, not just John Man. The tract hints there was a religious breach within the local community and a need for a coming together in unity. Birch was persuaded by friends and family to publish, suggesting that her views were representative of many in Strood. She poses the question of how children can be saved? Her answer was: ‘God is as able to worke it in children as in others; this new birth is the worke of God in the creature, and not any worke of the creature, nor is any saved for any worke of their own. Gods love is free and doth save whom he pleaseth we know not how God saves children, with it or without it, and we must not presume above what is written, and if any teach other doctrine, they darken the free grace of God to people; and such as doe workes to be saved, are as bad as Papists, which teach that wee are saved, partly by workes, and partly by Christ.’ Although Birch herself expresses a Calvinist viewpoint she clearly conveys the message that other doctrines were circulating in Strood with which she had no truck.⁷⁵ Whether Dorothy Birch was a Presbyterian or Independent religiously cannot be ascertained from her pamphlet, but she was prepared to question the views of others publicly and in print. Whilst many in Strood were content with a Presbyterian ministry others were dissatisfied with this message, leaving the parish church to explore more radical beliefs.

However the same cannot be said of Rochester. There is nothing to indicate that the parishioners desired a Presbyterian ministry. According to the Committee

⁷⁵ Burch, *The Catechisme*, pp, A6-A7, B1-B2; Demers, *Women's writing in English*, p. 183

for Plundered Ministers St Margaret's was 'deserted by Henry Selby vicar thereof and the same is thereby disprovided'. The county committee's presence at Rochester seems to have driven Selby from St Margaret's to a remoter living at Aylesford. William Sandbrooke, by his own account, was installed at St Margaret's in 1644, probably on the recommendation of the county committee. He was a learned man, being described as a 'master of arts, batchelor of law, a godly and orthodox divine'. However his sermons were not always popular with his audiences. During 1646 Sandbrooke came under attack from various people, following several sermons preached locally. From his pamphlet it would appear that Sandbrooke was challenged by both Baptists and Episcopalians alike. This forced Sandbrooke to publish three of these sermons delivered at Rochester and Gravesend in defence of Presbyterianism. His tract, *The church, and proper subject of the New Covenant*, expressed a desire for a Presbyterian church-settlement. The address is to the Kent County Committee, which would indicate that these sermons were delivered at their behest, as was their publication to convince a sceptical audience.⁷⁶

In 1643 John Lorkin was ousted by the county committee from St Nicholas, the parish church, and replaced by a succession of Presbyterians; John Guibon in 1644 and Samuel Dillingham in 1647. Both men resigned their posts after just a few years, suggesting that they did not receive a welcome reception from their congregation. Rochester corporation appears to have been divided over the spiritual direction of the parish church. The short-listing of four widely differing religious ministers to serve the cathedral in early 1644 is indicative of this. Some of the Royalist councillors probably retained Laudian sympathies, others such as George Robinson were Presbyterian, and the recorder Henry Clerke was an Episcopalian. Presumably some councillors, such as Richard Wye and Edward Hawthorne, had more radical religious views, as the Baptist Henry Denne was included amongst that list.⁷⁷ Whereas Chatham and Strood parishioners generally welcomed the Presbyterian presence, in Rochester it was foisted upon

⁷⁶ Sandbrooke, *The Church, the proper subject*, pp. the address, A2, A2; BL, Add MS 15669, Proceedings of Committee for Plundered Ministers 1644-1645 f. 64b

⁷⁷ Tray, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, the address; Bod Lib, Bodley MS 322, Plundered Ministers 1645 f. 71; Bodley MS 323, f. 153b; Bodley MS 325, ff. 125b-126a, 313b-314a; Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546; TNA, PROB11/275, Will of George Robinson; SP18/16/124

the citizens and received a mixed reaction. By the mid-1640s Presbyterianism was the norm in the Medway Towns, yet on occasions dissent against this strand of Puritanism was expressed.

Rochester cathedral chapter, unlike the parish clergy, petered out rather than was systematically uprooted. Although Parliament did not abolish the Dean and Chapters till April 1649, Yates believes that Rochester cathedral chapter was already redundant by 1647 and not replaced. This seems largely true, as Walker claimed from a correspondent, that by 1646 the cathedral had no remaining prebendaries; only five petty canons.⁷⁸ Orders were given by the Committee of Plundered Ministers in August 1646 ‘that the officers of the foundation of the Cathedrall Churches of Canterbury & Rochester shall have their stipends & fees payable by the ancient foundation continued unto them that have taken the Covenant & have not beene delinquents by any ordinance of Parliament...’. Two of the petty canons paid between 1644-6 were Royalist and had religious sympathies out of tune with the local Presbyterian clergy. The petty canon, Francis Kirk’s religious views were alluded to in the last section. Robert Dixon, was according to his son, James, imprisoned at Rochester in 1644 ‘for his unchangeable Loyalty to the said Martyr (Charles I) and for refusing the covenant, which he never took.’ His *Doctrine of Faith*, published in 1668 places him as anti-Presbyterian and an Episcopalian: ‘what reason they have to stand off, and be so shy of the Episcopal and Royal Party, because they do but their duty to stand to the Discipline and Worship which by Law is established.’ He claimed: ‘There was all along a moderate Party, especial at this last overture: but they could not be heard for Peace, because the Cry of the Zealots was against them...’. Dixon was sequestered from his living at Tunstall in 1647 for his Royalist sympathies and anti-Presbyterian stance. Three of the prebendaries died in 1646-7 and the remaining three were sequestered from their parochial livings between 1643-1645.⁷⁹ Effectively the cathedral chapter no longer existed after 1646, which made its removal unnecessary.

⁷⁸ Yates, ‘Papists and Puritans’, p. 6; Matthews (ed.), *Walker’s Sufferings*, p. 14; Rait & Firth (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2 pp. 81-104

⁷⁹ Matthews (ed.), *Walker’s Sufferings*, pp. 212-213, 215, 219, 221, 225, 322; Bod Lib, Bodley MS 323, f. 163b; Walker MS C1, John Walker’s Correspondence, ff. 39-40; See DNB entry for Dixon; R. Dixon, *The Doctrine of Faith, Justification and Assurance*, (London, 1668) pp. 104, 107

Yates concludes that ‘No Puritan ministry was established in place of the former chapter and the cathedral was simply allowed to decay...’. Attempts were made by the government in 1643 to try to control and approve the preachers in the Kent cathedrals. Rochester council responded to a Parliamentary demand for a list of preachers in February 1644, short-listing four candidates for the post, but none of these appear to have been officially appointed. The Committee for Plundered Ministers’ records confirm that three successive ministers of St Nicholas were also appointed to serve the cathedral church from 1644 onwards. Their role was to officiate in the cathedral church ‘once on the Lords daie & once in the weeke’ for which they were paid £140 per annum.⁸⁰ Although divine services were held in the cathedral it was also used as a preaching centre on other occasions. John Codd, a son of a Rochester alderman and the Laudian rector of Leybourne, was paid to preach three sermons in the cathedral in 1644. He had been sequestered from his living in December 1643 for deserting his cure and participating in the west Kent rising of June 1643. At some stage in late 1643 or early 1644 Henry Denne, the Baptist preacher, also delivered two sermons at the cathedral and subsequently published the same.⁸¹ The other three nominees for the post may similarly have preached in the cathedral in this period. Rochester cathedral experienced a wide range of preaching between 1643-1647 with all having access, including more radical preachers. Yates’ assertion that the cathedral simply died out spiritually is not borne out by the above evidence. Both central and city government, as well as the Kent County Committee, tried to forge a new spiritual role for the cathedral in this period.

Not only did itinerant radical ministers preach in the cathedral in this period they also established meetings within the Medway Towns. Acheson has demonstrated that parts of Kent, particularly the Weald and the East of the county, had become radicalised by this period with sects such as the Baptists gaining a firm hold in villages and towns. Although little direct evidence of sectarian activity survives for the Medway Towns, sources such as the parish registers and Thomas Edwards’ *Gangraena* do indicate that religious

⁸⁰ Yates, ‘Papists and Puritans’ p. 6; Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546; Bodley MS 322 f. 71; Bodley MS 323 f. 153b; Bodley MS 325 ff. 125b-126a, 313b-314a

⁸¹ Matthews (ed.), *Walker Revised*, p. 214; TNA, SP28/355/3 f. 9; Denne, *Grace, Mercy and Peace*; Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546;

nonconformity had become established in the Medway Towns by 1647.⁸² William Kiffin, the Particular Baptist, possibly preached at Chatham in 1643-4, whilst en route to both Dover and the continent, but claims that the Zion Chapel in Chatham dates back to 1644 are inaccurate. Nonetheless there is some suggestion that a Particular Baptist meeting did exist in the Medway Towns. In 1645 Thomas Lambe, a General Baptist, encountered Benjamin Cox, a Particular Baptist, 'preaching at Strood, neere *Rochester*.' Edwards also claimed that some were baptised by the General Baptists in Chatham in 1645. As the Quaker and former Baptist Luke Howard had observed, many Particular Baptists in Kent did convert and were re-baptised by the General Baptists.⁸³

Much more solid ground can be found for General Baptist claims to date that far back. Henry Denne was resident in Rochester from late 1643 till spring 1644, preaching at least two sermons in the cathedral and presumably others in the vicinity whilst dwelling there. The above two sermons were published as *Grace, Mercy and Peace*, around February 1644, 'for the Benefit of the City of Rochester'. He equates his visit to Rochester as a mission from God: 'I am this day by the providence of the Almighty, come a stranger to your City...'.⁸⁴ Further evidence of General Baptist evangelising in the Medway Towns comes from Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena*. He spoke of three Baptists missionaries active in Rochester and Chatham between 1644-6. Whilst Baptist histories credit Denne and Thomas Lambe with visits no mention is made of the third man named by Edwards; Nicholas Woodman of Dover. Edwards maintained that they were very active in the Medway Towns, drawing great crowds and baptising a considerable number. Although a Presbyterian trying to discredit various sects, there would be little advantage in Edwards overstating the Baptist cause. Ann Hughes' recent work on the heresiographer, Thomas Edwards, has concluded that although his work is somewhat disordered and extremely biased

⁸² Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', *passim*

⁸³ Lambe, *Christ crucified*, p. A7; L Howard, *A Looking Glass for Baptists* (1672) p.5; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; see DNB entry for Kiffin

⁸⁴ Denne, *Grace, Mercy and Peace*, p. 5; Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546

much of his material can either be verified elsewhere or Edwards named his source in the text.⁸⁵

Edwards' *Gangraena* implies there was a ready-made audience at Rochester, but the city had no previous history of religious radicalism. There are three possible reasons for the Baptists' activity at Rochester. Firstly Denne's residence in Rochester had allowed him to do preliminary work in the city and his recommendation by the corporation persuaded him that his preaching was acceptable to local government and the community. Secondly Robert Cossens, a carpenter, who had a later history of inviting even more radical preachers to Rochester, may have encouraged them to come to the city. Thirdly Rochester castle was used as an army barracks for most of the civil war period, ensuring there was a continual army presence in the city. The army was possibly another group that attracted and encouraged the Baptists in this period.⁸⁶

Rochester and Chatham were radical enough to attract two of the leading Baptist preachers of the day and for them to travel down from London on a regular basis to hold meetings. These General Baptist preachers attracted large audiences. On the fast day in December 1645 'Den preached to about eight score' in a private house. Some auditors 'came out of towns near at hand', whilst 'some [were] inhabitants'. People were, thus, attracted from all over the Medway Towns to this meeting. Lambe and Denne had an established congregation at Rochester with the 'names of many of the Auditors that were present' known locally.⁸⁷ Chatham baptism/birth records give an insight into the numbers involved from that town, as Baptists did not believe in paedobaptism. The parish registers have all births, as well as baptisms, recorded for the period 1642-1662. From 1646 onwards there is a gradual increase in the number of non-baptisms recorded annually. This is not conclusive proof of Baptist activity in Chatham in the mid-1640s, but the list becomes progressively

⁸⁵ A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution*, (Oxford, 2004) pp. 13, 21, 43, 119-120, 170, 262-265, 302-305; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; L. Howard, *Love and Truth in Plainness manifested...* (1704)

⁸⁶ Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546; Rosewell, *The Serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 4; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; *The first and second part of Gangraena*, p. 103

longer after 1648, suggesting that this was more than a mere abstinence by a few families from parish baptism. John and Alice Atkins decided not to baptise their daughter Alice in 1646 or her sister, Mary, in 1648. Another five families opted not to have their children baptised in 1647 or subsequent offspring over the next few years. Edwards claimed that Denne ‘dipped many’ in this tour of Kent, including some at Chatham.⁸⁸ All of this evidence indicates that a number of Medway townfolk converted and became Baptist members.

The Baptists generally met in private houses, as in December 1645 when Denne had been refused permission by a local Presbyterian minister to use a local church. Robert Cossens also permitted his home to become a regular meeting-place for the Baptist ministers Denne, Lamb and Woodman in 1645-6. Edwards wrote: ‘And now this man being at liberty, entertains in his house the Sectaries that come from London and other places into those parts, as Den, Lamb, Woodman, *who have preached in his house since.*’ Cossens later denied this to John Goodwin, but Edwards replied in his second part of *Gangraena* that ‘’Tis a mainfest truth, and will be witnessed by many that Den, Lamm, and Woodman, all three of them have preached in Cosens house, which is so evident in Rochester, that as the dayes of the moneth when they preached are known, so are the names of the Auditors that were present: and for proof of it, ’tis given me under hand from Rochester, “that Woodman himself confest it the very same day he preached [at Cossens] before a justice of the peace and other witnesses...’.⁸⁹ Chatham Baptists appear to have travelled to Rochester to attend meetings from Edward’s account.

The focal point of radicalism had shifted from Chatham to Rochester by the mid-1640s. Robert Cossens not only entertained Baptists, but was also accused of blasphemy in 1644 by the J.P.s and Kent County Committee. He allegedly stated ‘that Jesus Christ *was a Bastard*’. Goodwin challenged this material published by Edwards in *Gangraena*. This forced Edwards to answer back and

⁸⁸ MALSC, P85/1/2; P85/1/3 - At the rear of P85/1/2 is a four-page list of all births and non-recorded baptism entries between 1642-1653 compiled by the registrar, Thomas Heavyside; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; The first and second part of *Gangraena*, p. 103; Goodwin, *Cretensis*, p. 40

cite his source. Edwards was adamant that his source got this information from the Rochester Mayor's court. Whilst only a fragment of Rochester court records have survived for this period, the names of the J.P.s and local councillors do tally with the Rochester city minute book for 1644-5. Ann Hughes could find no trace of this case in the Kent County Committee records, but again not all are extant. Cossens appears to have been released without being found guilty of blasphemy. In 1644 Cossens' brother, John, gave testimony as a witness that he had also denounced the Common Prayer Book and bet that it would soon be banned.⁹⁰ Robert Cossens had shown a pattern of increasing radicalism between 1644-6, which was to progress to the more extreme sects in the 1650s.

However he was not the only individual in the Medway Towns to demonstrate radical tendencies in this period and be prepared to go to prison for their beliefs. The court records show Thomas Haddocke, a cooper from Chatham, was apprehended for attending a conventicle in Ash in 1646 at the home of a relative, Leonard Haddocke, and also attended by Francis Cornwell. Both the latter two were well known Baptists. In Strood a number of men were also expressing their discontent with Presbyterian preaching, by absenting themselves from the parish church in 1646. George Williams, James Orgar and Isaac Carter, all yeomen, were charged with recusancy. Isaac Carter had already been charged with a similar offence in 1642. Both he and James Orgar were purged as freemen in 1662. William Bowling, a joiner from Rochester, was charged at the same time, but his case was dismissed. He was, however, similarly purged as a freeman at the Restoration.⁹¹ How representative they were of radicalism in their respective communities is unclear.

By 1647 radicalism had moved onto new ground with groups such as the Baptists emerging and Presbyterianism thus redefined as moderate. In this light Chatham's radicalism had slowed down since 1643 and acceptance of Baptist ideas was limited. The naval dockyard there, which was generally Presbyterian

⁹⁰ Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution*, p. 201 n.192; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; The first and second part of *Gangraena*, pp. 91-104; Goodwin, *Cretensis*, pp. 38-41

⁹¹ J. Cockburn (ed.), *Kent Indictments: Charles I*, nos. 155, 2114, 2158, 2217, 2357, 2365, 2446, 2453, 2535, 2587

in outlook, influenced religious opinion in the town. Thus reactions by the Chathamites were much more constrained under the watchful eye of the naval authorities. With the disintegration of the cathedral chapter, Rochester had in comparison moved more sharply in its religious stance to accepting a degree of Baptist preaching and gatherings in this period. The reactions of Rochester citizens to Baptist preachers was mixed; whilst Denne's preaching was popular and he had acquired a local following, others found his beliefs less welcome. Rochester council initially gave tacit support to Denne's preaching in 1643-4, but as the Baptist bandwagon gained momentum and their radical views became more widely known the corporation took action. According to Edwards, as well as charging Cossens with blasphemy in 1644, the corporation also arrested Nicholas Woodman in 1645-6 for preaching at Cossen's house and ordered him not to preach within a five-mile radius of Rochester in future.⁹² In 1645-6 a number of renowned London Baptists could regularly visit the Medway Towns to preach and debate, but after 1646 outside Baptist preachers disappear from the scene, indicating a clamp down by the local authorities on their activities. Both Sandbrooke and Birch's tracts imply these groups were dividing the local community and that unity was called for. Presbyterians perceived they were harangued by all sides in this period; Baptists, Laudians and Episcopalians alike. As Jacqueline Eales has concluded in her study of Kent, religious diversity often led to schism in the community.⁹³

⁹² Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena*, p. 103

⁹³ Eales, "So many sects and schisms", pp. 226-248

Chapter 7

Religion 1648-1676

As various groups pushed for a settlement with the defeated King between 1646-1648, the divisions amongst Independents and Presbyterians became more apparent. David Underdown and Robert Ashton contend that until 1647 there was movement and alliances between the various political groupings, as each jostled for position. Both felt that by 1647 more clear ground had emerged to differentiate the groups. Presbyterianism was never a uniform religious and political entity; some were politically more moderate and others leant towards the Independents. Presbyterians had demanded a national church hierarchy without bishops, whilst by 1646 they had achieved the latter the former never came to fruition. From 1647 onwards the Presbyterians felt increasingly threatened by the strength of the Independent grouping and its gain of political power. Ashton concludes that as this stage Presbyterians realigned themselves with the Royalists locally. Everitt maintains that in Kent the gulf between Presbyterians and Independents was already evident in 1646 and by late 1647 the Presbyterians had repositioned themselves alongside the Royalists. The Presbyterians had also failed in their efforts to establish a countywide church settlement in Kent.¹ In May 1648 Kent was in open rebellion against Parliament and the Kent County Committee.

This chapter follows the religious progress of the Medway Towns from 1648 into the Restoration and briefly considers its impact on the statistics of the 1676 Compton Census. In May 1648 Medway parishioners became embroiled in the Kent rebellion. The Kentish petition as well as several pamphlets are examined to establish the religious reasons behind Medway parishioners' actions in May 1648. Religious radicalism continued to develop and expand in the 1650s with groups such as the Ranters and Quakers emerging. Both the reactions of the

¹ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, passim; R. Ashton, *Counter Revolution, The Second Civil War and its Origins, 1646-8*, (London, 1994) passim; Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, pp. 146-147, 152, 219-220, 229, 237

Presbyterians and Baptists to these new groups are explored, contending that religious diversity was not only perceived as a threat to the existing social order, but also created schism within the local community. Rochester cathedral's role also altered in this period, changing from a Presbyterian place of worship under centrally appointed ministers to become a radical preaching centre by 1650. This chapter analyses the authorities' reactions to this venue's popularity as a radical preaching centre. Another aspect covered is the role of the military and political bodies in religious events during the turmoil of the period 1648-1660. Chatham dockyard, and in particular, Peter Pett's relationship with the Independent sea chaplain, William Adderley, is investigated to determine what lay behind the religious friction of the early 1650s. Naval historians generally regard Pett and the dockyard as Presbyterian, both religiously and politically, so concluding that Pett had issues with Adderley's religious views. However his recent biographer has cast doubts on this assessment, considering him a possible Independent politically and establishing he had empathy with certain Independent ministers.² At this point it is prudent to first consider the historiography surrounding the Ranters, discussed at some length in this chapter, and who they were.

Ranterism was a group of ideas, which amongst others included the rejection of a need for an institutional style of worship or indeed any type of intercession by another, maintaining that all men had direct access to God and potential for redemption from sin. In many ways this was not dissimilar to the early tenets of Quakerism, although the Quakers quickly adopted a national structure and, thus, became institutionalised. Christopher Hill believes 'it is extremely doubtful whether there ever was a Ranter organisation', but concedes contemporaries did identify such a group between 1649-1651.³ J. MacGregor concludes that 'Ranterism was more of a religious mood than a movement,' arguing that many so-called Ranters were later either absorbed into or on the edge of Quakerism. He contends that a decade of Quaker campaigning against the Ranters in the 1650s gave historians the illusion that Ranter doctrine continued beyond 1651,

² J. T. Peacey, 'Peter Pett of Chatham, Kent'; W. F. Scott, 'The Naval chaplain in Stuart times', D.Phil, Oxford University (1935) p. 40; Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, pp. 295; Baumber, 'The Navy during the Civil Wars', p. 201

³ Hill, *The world turned upside down*, pp. 203-230, 241-242

but no persuasive argument has been produced to support this notion.⁴ J. C. Davis, writing in the 1980s, challenged the existence of the so-called Ranters and any specific set of core beliefs attributable to them in his book, *Fear, Myth and History: the Ranters and the Historians*. In Davis' opinion the Ranters were an ideological construct of the mid-seventeenth century, which was rehashed by twentieth-century historians. Whilst Davis does not entirely 'abolish the Ranters', he was sceptical of their existence based on contemporary literature and modern interpretation.⁵ However J. Friedman, writing at the same time as Davis, contends that the Ranters were a sect and had a coherent set of core beliefs with their peak being between 1652-1655. He emphasises that much of Ranter theology could be found amongst the other radical sects, but the main difference lay in their total rejection of any sort of institutional structure. He bases much of his opinion on Richard Coppin's writings, who he considers to be the intellectual theologian behind Ranterism; their most consistent and articulate preacher.⁶ Nigel Smith referred to Davis' work, but gave it short shrift with the comment that 'If the Ranters were a fiction they were one of their own as well as others' making.'⁷ For the purposes of this study the 'Ranters' are regarded as a loose network of people with similar religious ideas, but not a sect or group, as we would understand it.

1. 1648-1654

The previous chapter established that Chatham was still broadly Presbyterian in religious outlook in 1647 and had lost its radicalism of earlier in the decade. Rochester had experienced an element of religious diversity, but the local council had clamped down on the Baptists during 1646. Presbyterianism was the dominant religious grouping in the Medway Towns in 1648, yet Independency held a fear for many. A significant number of Medway residents signed the Kentish petition and were embroiled in the Kent Rebellion of May 1648, which was broadly a Presbyterian-Royalist alliance. Whilst the Kentish petition of 11th

⁴ McGregor, 'Ranterism and the development of early Quakerism', pp. 349-363

⁵ J. C. Davis, *Fear myth and history: The Ranters and the historians*, (Cambridge, 1986) passim

⁶ J. Friedman, *The Ranters, Immortality, and Anarchy: the Ranters and the English Revolution*, (Ohio, 1987) pp. 12-58

⁷ N. Smith, *Perfection proclaimed: Language and literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660*, (Oxford, 1989) pp. 8-9

May 1648 made reference to religious concerns and called ‘for the perfect settling of the Peace of...the Church’, there was no specific demand for a Presbyterian or other kind of settlement. Neither the Manifest of the County of Kent nor the *Declaration...from the County of Kent* made any reference to religious concerns.⁸

Other sources, however, do give an indication of religious discontent behind events of May 1648. The *Groans of Kent*, published in July 1648 and addressed to Thomas Fairfax, was from the ‘well-affected’ of Kent and in particular the East of the county where the mutiny in the Downs was still in full swing. This group had not become involved in the rebellion and bemoaned the part of the Royalist coalition in this event, perceiving them as ‘violent men... whose design was doubtlesse the utter extirpation of the very life, and power of Religion...’. These same ‘well-affected’ citizens of Kent cited and supported Fairfax’s Declaration and Representation of the 14th June 1647 and commitment to preserving the religious status quo. In this document Fairfax had reassured those fearing military support for an Independent religious settlement with the message that: ‘whereas it has been suggested or suspected... our design is to overthrow Presbytery, or hinder the settlement thereof, and to have the Independent government set up, we do clearly disclaim and disavow any such designs...’. Although not ‘disaffected’, these citizens were by and large Presbyterian, both religiously and politically, rather than Independents, seeking an accommodation with the King. There were thus concerns on all sides in Kent that an Independent settlement was pending following the Parliamentary success.⁹

Chatham, as a strongly Presbyterian dockyard town, had an immense stake in ensuring that the government and prevailing religion remained so. Part of the naval and dockyard involvement in 1648 revolved around Thomas Rainborough, an Independent army officer, who had been appointed Vice Admiral of the Fleet in 1647. Many of the seamen and dockyard workers were antagonistic because he espoused very radical religious ideas. There were also fears that religious

⁸ The Humble Petition of the Knights, p. 2; The Manifest of the County of Kent; The Declaration and Resolution of the Knights, Gentry, and Free-holders of the County of Kent, (London, 1648)

⁹ The *Groans of Kent*, (1648) passim

Independency was gaining ground both in Parliament and the county committee. A combination of these factors pushed many of the dockyard personnel into rebelling in May 1648 and signing the Kentish petition. Local letters suggest that numerous dockyard and naval personnel at Chatham participated in the Kent Rebellion of 1648.¹⁰ Edward Hayward's 1656 pamphlet, which was a defence against charges of corruption, made it clear that religious reasons were at the heart of dockyard participation in the rebellion. Hayward, clerk of the survey, maintained: I 'hazarded my life...in the late Kentish Insurrection, 1648, to adhere to their Interest, when also I had but few leading Examples'. He was making the observation that he had remained loyal to Parliament both politically and religiously when nearly all his colleagues had switched allegiance. 'I appeal to all that know me, Whether I have not been a Friend to the Godly Ministry, a constant Hearer of the Word...'. His comments indicate that others in the dockyard, had unlike him, not remained loyal in religious terms in 1648, but had rebelled.¹¹

Whilst the Chatham signatories to the Kentish petition have already been examined in chapter four, it is pertinent at this point to scrutinise some of their religious motives. Amongst those involved in the rebellion was the sea chaplain, Thomas Grayne, who allegedly signed the Kentish petition. Grayne would only have jeopardised his living for religious reasons. He was removed from office in August 1649 under an Act of Parliament, which disabled former rebels from holding naval office. Yet few officers were actually dismissed for just penning their name to this petition. Grayne had been chaplain for thirteen years without outward discord in the dockyard. However in September 1649 the dockyard workers claimed that 'for divers yeares past wee have layne under the judgement of haveing a Minister in the Navy whose Abilityes and Conversation (wee conceive) were noe way suteable to that great worke'.¹² There was, thus, the implication that Grayne was not merely dismissed for his participation in the 1648 rebellion, but because religiously he was unacceptable. He had been appointed with the support of the Laudian Dean and Chapter of Rochester in

¹⁰ Jones, 'Thomas Rainborowe', pp. 96-98, 103, 107; A Letter from Kent, p. 3; Sad Newes out of Kent, (1648) pp. 2-4.

¹¹ Hayward, The Answer of Edward Hayward, p. 5

¹² TNA, SP18/16/124; RAM, RAR MS 0056 f. 16v

1635; not being the choice of the dockyard personnel. Thomas Grayne was probably a Laudian and Royalist, who conformed during the 1640s.

From an analysis of various documents in chapter four, sixty-five men have been identified as possibly signing the 1648 Kentish petition.¹³ Five of these dockyard petitioners had also penned their names to the 1641 Chatham petition against their Laudian minister, Thomas Vaughan, and thirteen had appended their signatures to the 1642 Blount petition, demanding reformation of the church. These men had all sought religious change in the early 1640s, but had differing aims by 1648. From an analysis of these petitions and other documents, it has been possible to establish some of the religious views of the participants in the Kent rebellion and signatories to the Kentish petition. John Short and Richard Holborne, who had signed both the earlier petitions, were Presbyterians, still hoping for a national church settlement in 1648. Dockyard officers, Thomas Bostock, John Cheesewick, John Hancret, Richard Isaacson, Ralph Bayly, William Cooke, and William Boorman, who had signed both the Blount and Kentish petitions, possibly had similar aspirations. Other men such as Thomas Cooke and James Cappon had not signed either of the earlier petitions although they were serving Chatham dockyard officers at the time. They may have preferred the ministration of the former Laudian incumbent, Thomas Vaughan. Both men were dismissed from office, which may suggest they had Royalist sympathies as well.¹⁴

Other dockyard officers' religious views had little bearing on their support for the Kentish petition, being motivated by political rather than religious ideals in May 1648. Joseph Pett, James Marsh, George Wiggins, Robert Warwick, and John Waterman, who had all supported the Blount petition tended towards Independency religiously, inviting an Independent minister into their midst the following year. William Parker, a boatswain from Strood, had no history of signing previous petitions. His radical religious sympathies are evident from his later actions in trying to introduce the Ranter, Joseph Salmon, into the dockyard

¹³ See Chapter 4 pp. 27-30

¹⁴ TNA, SP18/5/31; SP18/23/80, SP25/94/101; ADM7/673 f. 264; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A224 ff. 27v, 47r, 63r; Rawlinson MS A226 ff. 64v-r; CJ Vol.5 19/6/1648; Vol. 6 21/3/1649; RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 14r, 15r, 20v; CSPD 1650 p. 194

in 1651, implying that Parker was not supporting the Kentish petition on religious grounds. Robert Pullman and Robert Hilles were resident in Chatham in the early 1640s, but did not support the Blount petition. However their support for Adderley in 1649 would again indicate they were religious Independents, rather than objectors to religious change in 1641-2. Newer Chatham names who signed the Kentish petition included Edward Goodwin and Thomas Whitton, who were both religiously in tune with Adderley in 1649.¹⁵ These men, although not religiously motivated, may still have had a grievance against Rainborough's appointment as vice admiral, because of his army and Leveller background.

Whilst the Chatham minister Walter Rosewell was not implicated in the 1648 rebellion, he nevertheless had reservations about the religious and political changes taking place both nationally and locally in 1648-9. He wrote in 1656 that 'Many changes there have been in this our British world, since my first coming hither (to Chatham), under all of which ...I have been...no Changling.' Rosewell was reflecting back on how he had stood up for his beliefs in 1649-50, both political and religious, and not changed his stance despite enduring imprisonment. In November 1649 Rosewell wrote a letter to William Adderley, the new sea chaplain, the contents of which Adderley obviously regarded as treacherous. Given Rosewell's propensity to openly voice his opposition to perceived religious errors, it seems likely that this letter, amongst other things, accused Adderley of holding radical views. Adderley passed the letter over to the Admiralty Committee, who in turn referred it to the Committee for Plundered Ministers to deal with. The outcome of their deliberations is not recorded, but Rosewell continued in office. Rosewell refused to take the Oath of Engagement of February 1650, which several other Presbyterian ministers, such as Thomas Case and Nicholas Thorowgood, had also objected to on the grounds that this meant renouncing the Solemn League and Covenant, which they had sworn in 1643. During 1650 Rosewell continued to spread seditious messages from the pulpit and hence was 'sequestered from that [his] living by the Committee for Plundered Ministers, and by order of the Councill committed to the Gatehouse,

¹⁵ Bod Lib, Rawlisnon MS A224 f. 27v; CJ Vol. 6 21/3/1649; TNA, SP18/16/124; SP18/23/21; SP18/23/32: RAM, RAR MS 0056 ff. 12r, 13r, 14r

and prohibited from preaching any more at Chatham.’¹⁶ Not only were Rosewell’s actions considered treacherous, but the authorities also feared that he would influence other parishioners with his malignant views.

There was considerable support for Rosewell in Chatham during 1650. On 24th July 1650 the Council of State ordered the examination concerning ‘the business of the miscarriage of the minister & others at Chatham...’. In July 1650 both Edward Hayward and John Bright were accused of listening to Rosewell’s ‘seditious preaching’. Hayward was further accused of going ‘to heare Mr Rosewell when hee preached against the Engagement...’ and avoiding William Adderley’s services in the sail loft. Yet both men were happy to pen their names to Adderley’s invite a year earlier. It seems doubtful that the two men’s religious views had regressed in such a short space of time. Hayward by his own account, written several years later, was religiously sympathetic to the Independents. However Hayward and Bright’s political stance was more in tune with Rosewell. Adderley’s actions ensured that these two men, and probably several others, preferred the ministration of the Presbyterian Walter Rosewell. Chatham parishioners’ loyalty to their Presbyterian minister is further evident from a petition in January 1654, supporting his reinstatement to his former living. Rosewell also claimed in his 1656 tract that most of the parishioners had embraced him in 1647 and that several of the incomers also sought him out in the 1650s.¹⁷

This does suggest that many Chathamites were Presbyterian in outlook in this period, but appearances can be deceptive. A satirical Royalist pamphlet, published at Rochester in June 1648, was quite clear that the area was a hotbed of radical religious activity. The tract entitled *The Kentish Fayre* parodies a sale of wares at Rochester immediately following the May 1648 rebellion. At this sale ‘you may Buy, pretended false Religion’. One of the women, Mrs Web, retort:

¹⁶ D. Wootton, *Divine Right and Democracy: An anthology of political writing in Stuart England*, (Indianapolis, 2003) pp. 357-358; D. Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day: Preaching, polemic and Restoration nonconformity*, (Manchester, 2007) p. 27; TNA, SP25/8/10; SP25/11/40; SP25/8/23; SP25/123/167 CSPD 1649-1650 p. 426; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. A4

¹⁷ TNA, SP25/8/10; SP25/8/24; SP25/123/427-428; SP18/77/85; SP18/65/29; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. A4

**‘Come all yee Sectaries that dwell
 within the cursed Cittie:
 And wee will send you unto Hell,
 Unto the black Committee.’¹⁸**

This would indicate that the Medway Towns already had several well-established groups aside from the Presbyterians.

Chatham had an equally strong group of religious Independents in this period. In September 1649 a letter was sent from a fifty-one strong contingent of dockyard and naval men, inviting William Adderley, an Independent minister, to become their new sea chaplain. Adderley’s religious views can be gauged from his connections with a number of well-known Independents such as William Bridge and William Greenhill plus his close friendship with the New England Independent minister, Thomas Shepherd. William Adderley wrote the preface to Shepherd’s tract of 1648, considering it to be an ‘Embassie from Heaven, on purpose, to set thy house in order,..(…the voice of one crying in the wilderness) to a wearie and heavy laden soule in this Island’. He also endorsed the second volume of Bridge’s collected works in 1649.¹⁹ From the State Papers it is apparent that Adderley had preached at Chatham prior to his appointment and met with the approval of many of his auditors. The invitation stated: we ‘doe hope that the God who hath [...] so extraordinarily inclined our hearts to make these our earnest Addresses to you for this thing, will allsoe move your heart by his spirit to an Acceptance of it, which (as it will bee a sweet & comfortable returne of some of our prayers made to our good God to that purpose, so it will bee an exceeding great Confirmation of us in our opinione that the Lord hath some gracious worke to doe in these parts in the Conversion of souls, when as to so many good people of lately Providence sent to reside here, shall Crowne his blessing with sending faithfull Ministers’.²⁰

¹⁸ The Kentish Fayre, p. 4

¹⁹ TNA, SP18/16/124; T. Shepard, *Certain Select Cases Resolved*, (London, 1648) p. A4; W. Bridge, *The Works of William Bridge*, Vol. 2 (London, 1649); See also DNB entries for Shepherd, Bridge and Greenhill.

²⁰ TNA, SP18/16/124

Fifteen of these fifty-one officers had also signed the 1642 Blount petition. The religious changes they sought in 1642 may have differed to those anticipated by many of the other Chatham signatories to that petition or their religious views altered over the decade. Men such as James Benns, Abraham Sampson, James Buck, a later Baptist, and Henry Woodcatt were by 1649 seeking more radical religious ideas than many of their 1642 counterparts. This invite was also signed by two of Rochester's most prominent aldermen in the 1650s, Edward Hawthorne and Richard Wye, suggesting they were the councillors behind the short-listing of Henry Denne as a minister for the cathedral in 1644. Not surprisingly some of the incomers such as Thomas Colpott and William Thomson, appointed by the Admiralty and Council of State for their godly zeal, also welcomed the Independent sea chaplain. John Taylor, who later became master shipwright on Adderley's recommendation, signed the invite.²¹ A returning Puritan from New England, William Hudson, also penned his signature to this letter. Hudson was an ensign in Colonel Rainborough's regiment on his return to England in 1645 and it may have been these connections that brought him to Chatham. His background was, thus, religiously radical. Other names that crop up amongst the signatories, Robert Moorcock, Thomas Arkinstall, Thomas Rabenet and Robert Eason, were all families connected with the General Baptists. Commissioner Peter Pett also heard and approved of Adderley, but that judgment was to be short-lived.²²

Despite wide support for Adderley's ministration in 1649, many in the dockyard were quickly to come into conflict with him. Edward Hayward avoided his preaching in 1650, whilst the seamen felt that Adderley made little effort with regard to their spiritual welfare. Commissioner Pett also accused him of neglecting his religious duties. A petition from forty-two naval officers and seamen, addressed to the Council of State in December 1651, requested that Adderley should be ordered to 'preach aboard some of the ships most centred to the rest, [so] that your Petitioners may enjoy the means of Salvation' rather than

²¹ TNA, SP18/16/124; SP18/16/119; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; Bod.Lib, Tanner MS 62b, ff. 545-546; CSPD 1651 pp. 57-58, 535

²² TNA, SP18/16/124; S. Drake, *The history and antiquities of the city of Boston: From its settlement in 1630 to the year 1670*, (Boston, 1854) pp. 181, 289; *The Hawksley-Wood Family*, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op..db....>

spend ‘his time and pains amongst a people not properly appertaining to the petitioners, or to him.’ The seamen argued that they were ‘deprived of the means of life and salvation in the Ministry of the Gospell, and must remayne under the desparate notion of heathens and Infidells.’²³ Adderley was given the opportunity to respond to these charges on 24th December, countering that ‘I have preached constantly on the Lords dayes twice to the Navye men in the convenyentest place on shoare, whence the most considerable part of the whole Navye with their numerous families have dayly come to hear me, ever since I was sent downe thither...’²⁴ He had by all accounts preached in the sail loft, the allotted meeting place for the dockyard officers and seamen, but due to the absence of a parish minister he had also filled that role, making it difficult for him to meet his obligation to serve the men on board the ships. Adderley explained the impracticalities of preaching aboard the ships, stating that:

‘Ffirst the conveniences of preaching one shoare, is that the publique meeting place is situated neere the dock yard in the center and eye of the Navye, where those that live one shoare with there servants from a board may meet together to hear the word and be within call from the ships if any occasion should require.

It is evident that the sayd meeting place hath bin judged and approved of formerly as most convenient, els what meant the severall pewes therein, erected and aloted for the severall Officers of the Navye, which they hold as properly belonging unto them by vertue of their places.’²⁵

Peter Pett, who was the instigator behind this petition, had apparently been aware of Adderley’s position and ordered the men ‘to come a shoare every Lords daye twice to hear or els to be punished as Malignants...’. The decision of the Admiralty Committee was that Adderley should preach on board the ships at Chatham according to custom.²⁶

²³ TNA, SP18/16/124

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*; Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A226 ff. 62v-r

Cogar contends that Adderley stirred up a hornet's nest in his drive to rid the dockyard of corruption and former rebels. In his opinion the fissures created by the Kent Rebellion had only just started to heal when Adderley resurrected the affair in 1651, demanding dismissal of several of the participants. William Adderley and his adherents saw it as their religious duty to root out corruption and delinquents from the dockyard and so put in a petition to the Council of State in October 1651, complaining about the Pett family, which was perceived by Commissioner Pett as a personal vendetta against his family. He countered these accusations by putting in articles against Adderley in January 1652.²⁷ Whilst it is difficult to determine Peter Pett's own religious stance, it is evident he had good working relationships with several Independent ministers, including Hugh Peter, John Durant and Laurence Wise, and was not above rooting out malignant ministers. Pett's will demonstrates he owned an eclectic range of works by religious divines such as John Preston and Samuel Bolton.²⁸

Pett's disagreements with Adderley did not stem from religious differences; he could tolerate most ministers' religious views as long as they did not meddle in dockyard business. Pett perceived Adderley's main duty as 'preaching catechising praying' on behalf of the seamen to ensure their 'faithfulness to the present power', but not to use the pulpit to blacken his family name and divide the congregation. William Adderley replied to the latter accusation: 'this respondent saith that he knowes that his work lies principally in preaching the Gospell of Christ & his Cruxificion & woe unto me if I preach not the Gospell. But as concerning bitter Invecting respondeth which this Respondent is charged he knowes of none; unles mens consciences are so corrupted that they can not endure sound preaching.' Pett also had no truck with those he considered were 'pretended to religion', counting Adderley's two followers, Thomas Colpott and William Thomson, amongst this category. Adderley defended his friends, calling them my two 'Christian friends whom I know love Jesus Christ in sincerity'.²⁹

²⁷ Cogar, 'The Politics of naval administration', pp. 88, 92; TNA, SP18/16/119; SP18/23/30

²⁸ Peacey, 'Peter Pett of Chatham, Kent'; CSPD 1655 p. 373; CSPD 1658-1659 pp. 96-97; M Jones, 'The divine Durant – a seventeenth century Independent', AC, No. 83 (1968) p. 200; TNA, PROB11/340; See DNB entries for Preston and Bolton.

²⁹ TNA, SP18/23/30; SP18/23/33; CSPD 1651-1652 pp. 57-58

However Pett's most pressing concern was that Adderley's neglect of his religious duties had caused the seamen to turn to a more radical preacher for spiritual guidance. Captain Phineas Pett, in his testimony against Adderley, confirmed that there was 'an endeavour in some of the Officers of the Navy to bring in J. Salmon to preach or exercise amongst them' and 'that some of the officers of the Navy were willing to subscribe to make some allowances for him so that he might preach & Exercise in these partes'.³⁰ Pett's fears that a radical preacher might infiltrate the dockyard were justified, as Joseph Salmon, had recently been released from Coventry prison, following his arrest for blasphemy. He had also had personal experience of Salmon's disruptive influence at Frindsbury just a few months earlier.

Joseph Salmon arrived in the Medway Towns towards the end of 1650. His first known posting was as an army chaplain between 1647-1649 when he was heavily influenced by the Independent religious stance prevailing within the army. He published *A Rout, A Rout* in 1649, which although addressed to the army hierarchy, was mainly aimed at the ordinary soldier. This tract was printed in the wake of Charles I's execution and envisaged the rule of the saints on earth. In this treatise Salmon encouraged the soldiers to be the 'saints' and rule in the end period before the return of Christ. Salmon's exhortation would effectively have 'turned the world upside down' and was potentially threatening to those in power.³¹ Several historians have described this as a Ranter tract. Salmon certainly had connections with several other acknowledged Ranters such as Thomas Webbe, John Wyke and Abezier Coppe. He was released from Coventry prison in March 1650 on condition he published a recantation of his blasphemous views. His most radical treatise, *Divinely Anatomized*, was written whilst in prison and it was for this work that he was required to make his recantation. The authorities ensured that most copies of this tract were destroyed and hence none have apparently survived.³²

³⁰ TNA, SP18/23/30; SP18/23/32, SP18/23/33

³¹ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 4; J. Salmon, *A Rout, A Rout*, (London, 1649) pp. 3-4, 6-8; see DNB entry for Salmon

³² N. Smith (ed), *A collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th century*, (London, 1983) p. 12; F. McGregor, 'The Ranters 1649-1660', PhD thesis, Oxford University (1969) p. 17; Friedman, *Blasphemy, immorality and anarchy*, p.144; Gwynn, 'Joseph Salmon' p. 120; BL, Add MS 37345,

Some ‘Ranter’ historians have stressed that Salmon’s recantation expressed a world-weariness in explaining his ideas to the people and that he had become spiritually withdrawn during his stay in the Medway Towns.³³ Salmon’s activities in the Medway Towns during 1651, however, contradict this notion of a man withdrawing from the world. He came to the Medway Towns, because there was a potential audience for his religious ideas amongst the army and navy. It is highly probable that Salmon was invited to come by Robert Cossens, who was described by Walter Rosewell as one of his ‘fautors.’³⁴ Cossens had progressed from his passage through the Baptists in the mid-1640s to more radical religious ideas. He may have become acquainted with Salmon’s army treatise, *A Rout, A Rout*, through the local soldiery quartered at Rochester castle. Not long after his arrival in June 1651 Salmon was at the centre of a controversy, involving the army barracks at Upnor Castle and the local minister, George Pitman of Frindsbury. Pitman submitted a petition to Whitehall, accusing Salmon of stirring up the army against him. Little is known of Pitman, but presumably he was of a Presbyterian leaning and not radical enough for the local garrison. Salmon’s incitement of the soldiery against Pitman had overtones of his treatise *A Rout, A Rout* and, therefore, it seems more than coincidence that his target was an army garrison. The authorities hastily dealt with the soldiers by sending for Colonel Harrison, the governor of Upnor Castle, and bringing the offenders to justice. Without this action there were fears that these ideas might spread to the other local army garrisons and contaminate the dockyard nearby. It was proposed to examine Salmon and the witnesses and bring him before the Assizes to be prosecuted, but there is no trace in the surviving court records that Salmon was ever indicted. The action succeeded as Pitman was ousted shortly afterwards.³⁵

Salmon’s recantation, published whilst in the Medway Towns in July-August 1651, can thus be viewed in a different light. Rather than being weary of the religious scene and using his recantation to enter a reclusive stage of his life,

Whitlocke’s Annals Vol. V ff.57b, 60b; *A Perfect Diurnall*, (11-18 March 1649) p.128; E. Stokes, *The Wiltshire Rant*, (1652) pp. 13-14

³³ Smith (ed.), *A collection of Ranter Writings*, pp. 26-27; Friedman, *Blasphemy, immorality and anarchy*, pp. 149, 155

³⁴ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 1

³⁵ TNA, SP25/96/248; SP25/20/44; CSPD 1654 p. 270

Salmon was in fact using it as a sub-text to reach his followers; several of whom were local. His recantation targeted two different audiences; firstly for those in authority he provided a rebuttal of his previous blasphemies and secondly for his own followers his recantation held an element of ambiguity in the denial of his previous beliefs. An example of this was Salmon's facetious explanation of the Trinity, when he renounced his anti-Trinitarian views: 'The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, as multiplied into form and distance; I may lawfully and must necessarily maintain three: -but then again trace them by their lineal descent into the womb of eternity, revolve to the center, and where is the difference?' He admitted he had to comply with the authorities wishes, but his final comment was 'Let the skilfull Oedipus unfold this.' Salmon's recantation lacked clarity, leaving it up to the individual reader to interpret his true meaning. His world-weariness and withdrawal in the recantation was to give those in authority the illusion that he had given up preaching, but he never had any intention of becoming a spiritual recluse and abandoning his radical ideas.³⁶

This notion is further reinforced by Salmon's switch of emphasis from the army to the navy in the autumn of 1651. It was Salmon's activities that made Peter Pett so adamant that Adderley should preach regularly to the seamen. From the testimony of Captain Phineas Pett, William Adderley was well aware of the hazardous position he was placing the dockyard in: 'he being present...[when] Mr Adderly was making a relacion to the Committee of the grounds & reasons why Comm. Pett would have him preache aboard the shippes, instan[tan]ious in this particular, if it was to the end that they might bring in on[e] Salmon an abominable wicked notorious person...'. Phineas Pett, clerk of the check, named Boatswain (William) Parker of the Resolution, from Strood, as one of the main ringleaders behind Salmon's invitation, but refused to name the others in his testimony against Adderley. Parker had supported Adderley in 1649, but petitioned against him in 1651 and was purged as a freeman in August 1662 for his nonconformity.³⁷ The above evidence suggests that Salmon's reputation, as a radical preacher was widely known throughout the Medway Towns. His regular

³⁶ J. Salmon, *Heights in Depths*, (1651) pp. A8, 52, 54

³⁷ TNA, SP18/28/32

preaching in the local parish churches between 1650-1655 acquainted many of the residents with his religious views.³⁸ The chance to address a wide military audience appealed to Salmon and hence Pett felt he had to act swiftly to prevent religious radicalism becoming established in the dockyard. From his point of view this was a defensive act to ensure Adderley carried out his religious role and thereby stop Salmon finding an opening within the navy and dockyard.

However it was not just the navy that were after a more radical religious preacher in 1651. It is no coincidence that several of the witnesses against William Adderley and his followers in 1651-2 were known 'factors' of Salmon. In their opinion Adderley was not radical enough religiously and so sought to remove him as sea chaplain. The articles presented against the Adderley grouping were accompanied by a letter from the 'Reall hearted friends to the Common wealth of England' claiming: 'what hard usage wee have found, from John Browne clerke of the Ropeyard and his Adhearants, namely Mr Adderley, Mr Thomson & Mr Colepott...'. This letter from three radical nonconformists, Robert Cossens, John Fineas, a carpenter, and Isaac Carter, confirms that there were opposing religious networks operating both within the dockyard and Medway Towns. These three acted collectively with Richard Hills, a carpenter and William Parker, against the Adderley grouping to oust them from office. Four of these men had links with Salmon and Carter, a known recusant, was friendly with Cossens.³⁹ Salmon was welcomed in several quarters of the Medway Towns between 1650-1655; the army at Upnor, the officers of the navy at Chatham and his followers among the ordinary parishioners. Both Rochester and Chatham had by the early 1650s embraced one of the most notorious of preachers in Joseph Salmon.

The above activity would indicate that the Presbyterians in Chatham had become marginalized during the early 1650s. Their parish minister had been banned from preaching and imprisoned in 1650 for his outspoken views. Furthermore they had been encumbered with William Adderley as parish

³⁸ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 4

³⁹ *ibid* p. 4; Cockburn (ed.), *Kent Indictments: Charles I, Nos. 2217, 2246; TNA, SP18/23/17; SP18/23/30a*

minister in 1652 despite many of the parishioners having fallen out with him or not agreeing with his religious stance. It is, therefore, unsurprising that many of the parishioners and dockyard personnel petitioned for the reinstatement of Rosewell in 1654 and removal of Adderley. This petition was described by the Commissioners of the Navy as from ‘(... the majority of the Inhabitants of Chatham [who] endeavour to settle [him] againe in that place)’. Amongst the thirteen signatories was Edward Hayward, who had originally backed Adderley in 1649, but by 1650 had switched his loyalty to Rosewell. Ten of the thirteen signatories had shown no inclination to support Adderley in 1649 and were probably Presbyterians. Amongst these can be counted Captain John Pilgrim, the nephew of Rosewell, and Richard Isaacson, who was one of Rosewell’s close friends. The other two petitioners, Phineas Pett and Matthias Christmas had been sympathetic to Adderley in 1649, but for either religious or personal motives acted against him in the Adderley-Pett dispute of 1651-2 and were no more enamoured with him in 1654. Several of the vestry were amongst the signatories to this petition and paid for Rosewell’s extended stay in London in 1654.⁴⁰ William Adderley was temporarily suspended as parish incumbent in January 1654, whilst an investigation was carried out by the Admiralty into affairs at Chatham. Clearly there was strong support for the Presbyterian Rosewell from all sections of Chatham society; dockyard, navy, vestry and general parishioners. There is, however, the underlying perception that much of this support was tactical, due to Adderley’s outspokenness.

However not all Chatham parishioners were hostile to Adderley. A core of Independents were happy with his preaching and led by John Taylor voiced their concerns that ‘Mr Adderley is laid aside & others apoynted to preach in his stead’. Taylor appealed to John Thurloe to intervene in the above affair. He wrote to Thurloe on 5th February 1654, laying Adderley’s case and credentials before him for consideration. Taylor was careful to cast no aspersions on the petitioners, describing them as ‘a company of Crissians at Chatham...whose praier therein that they would apoynt som godly able minister in that parish to

⁴⁰ TNA, SP18/77/85; SP18/65/29; SP18/16/124; MALSC, P85/5/1; T. Case, *Elijah’s Abatement or Corruption in the Saints*, (1658) p. A3

carraie on the work of the Gospell...'.⁴¹ However Taylor was worried that the Council of State might come to the wrong decision: 'that if through mistakes the Counsell should lay aside Mr Adderley itt would be a thing of the sadest consequences amongst us, he being a man knowen (by Mr Bridg, Mr Greenhill, Mr Brooks, & others) to be sound in doctrine unblamable in life & one who is tender to all in whom he sees the least apearans of god, never was such a man laid aside from preaching since the daies of the bishops power, its true their hath bin a distast taken against him by Commissioner Pett and the greate ground is because he said Mr Pett did countenance ungodly men & did discountenance thos who feared god, if this must be a ground of depriving this plase of a man that hath bin an Instrument of so much good to soles as he hath bin wee shall be made sadd...'.⁴²

John Taylor went on to add: 'I profess I had rather they should cast mee out of my place & proffits then that his highness & his Councell should have their hand lift up against such a person of knowen integritie & godliness as Mr Adderley...'. Taylor's plea to the authorities succeeded in a solution whereby both Rosewell and Adderley were to act as joint ministers of Chatham, which they both appeared to accept. Whether this turned out to be a workable solution is unrecorded, but the parishioners' petition of 1658-9 gives the impression Adderley's access to the pulpit was severely restricted.⁴³ However Adderley's position as sea chaplain was more problematic, he having 'much disturbed the peace by fomenting differences between the officers in the State's yard...'. On 29th March 1654 the Admiralty Committee ordered the removal of Adderley as sea chaplain and appointment of Laurence Wise in his place.⁴⁴ Some of Adderley's religiously radical opponents had got a new sea chaplain more amenable to their own views over issues such as salvation.

Amongst these could be counted the General Baptists, who had a rather mixed relationship with the Presbyterians and Independents in the early 1650s. Two General Baptists, Robert Moorcock and Thomas Arkinstall, had opposed the

⁴¹ Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A11, Papers relating to the Navy, ff. 116v-r; CSPD 1656-1657 p. 448

⁴² Bod Lib, Rawlinson MS A11 ff. 116v-r

⁴³ *ibid*, TNA, SP18/79/206; SP18/205/52

⁴⁴ TNA, SP18/65/29; CSPD 1654 p. 467

Independent William Adderley in the above dispute. However it would appear that the Baptists were happy to work with Laurence Wise, an Independent, having similar views on salvation. Walter Rosewell considered Wise's belief over salvation akin to the General Baptists and was also quick to challenge those who opposed paedo-baptism. Thomas Gamman, an Anabaptist preacher, was prepared to stand up to the Presbyterians and Ranters in December 1655, during the course of the Coppin debates over both baptism and salvation.⁴⁵ This would suggest that General Baptist numbers had grown since the departure of the London preachers in 1646 and found new local leadership. By the early 1650s they had expanded with congregations in both Rochester and Chatham. Chatham churchwardens' accounts refer to a collection of May 1653 made at the meetinghouse in the town, which is probably a reference to the General Baptists place of worship. This congregation was formed around the extended Moorcock family; of which Edward Moorcock, a ship's captain, was the pastor. Rochester also had a Baptist congregation, which was targeted by the Quakers in 1655. Thomas Gammon was the Rochester Baptist minister in the mid-1650s.⁴⁶

Whilst some such as Robert Cossens had progressed from the Baptists to the more extreme groups since the 1640s, other new names were attracted to the General Baptists. The parish registers are a possible indicator of Baptist numbers in this period. Under an Act of Parliament of September 1653 it became a legal requirement for parishes to record all births within their jurisdiction as well as the usual baptisms. Both Strood and Chatham parish registers record a high level of children born in the 1650s, who were not subsequently baptised. Although this is not indicative in itself that the Baptists had grown rapidly, most other religious groups operating in the Medway Towns, such as the Presbyterians and Independents, would have tended to baptise their children. Over eighty Chatham families with two or more children born in the 1650s failed to have them baptised. Although the General Baptists were against paedo-baptism and incurred the wrath of the Presbyterian minister, Walter

⁴⁵ TNA, SP18/28/32; Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 77-78, 82; Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, pp. 11, 14; Case, *Elijah's Abatement*, p. 56

⁴⁶ MALSC, P85/5/1; A. C. Underdown, *A History of the English Baptists*, (London, 1947) p. 99; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 14; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, p. 78; Whitehead, *Constancy in truth commended*, pp. 7-8

Rosewell, for this stance, suggesting that this was a particular issue in Chatham, the above number is nevertheless very high to put down to the General Baptists' refusal to baptise their children alone.⁴⁷ It cannot be discounted that a number of these children born to dockyard personnel may have been baptised by one of the sea chaplains in the 1650s and, therefore, not recorded in the parish registers, e.g. neither of the sea chaplains' own children are entered as baptised in the parish registers for this period. A number of names, which can be positively identified as General Baptists, such as Edward Moorcock, Thomas Gardner, and Philip Eason, all had a handful of children each, who were all registered as birth only entries in the 1650s. In 1661 the new vicar recorded the births of further children to these same families as 'unbaptized' in the register.⁴⁸ Strood registers also contain several names of families with un-baptised children, who were connected to the more radical sects in the 1650s. A Strood Baptist family that stand out are Thomas Blunt, a cordwainer, and his wife Isabella, who refused to have four of their children baptised in the 1650s and another in 1665 at Rochester. Blunt lost his freedom of Rochester in 1662 due to his nonconformity.⁴⁹ In the light of this evidence it is fair to conclude that the Medway Towns had a thriving Baptist community in the early 1650s.

Presbyterianism was perceived to be under threat in the Medway Towns from all sides in the 1650s. Although no Presbyterian settlement ever emerged in Kent, a strong Presbyterian framework existed within the Medway Towns, which defended Presbyterianism when it came under attack. The Presbyterian ministers of Chatham, Rochester and Strood supported each other and had strong friendship links with some of the elite and powerful in the local community. Two prominent citizens, Laurence Fisher and George Robinson, left bequests to Daniel French, Allen Ackworth and Walter Rosewell in their wills, describing them as friends. Robinson, alderman and Mayor of Rochester, considered them 'worthy friends' and left them 20s each 'as a testimony of my

⁴⁷ MALSC, P85/1/2;P85/1/3; Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, p. 14; Case, *Elijah's Abatement*, p. 56

⁴⁸ MALSC, P85/1/2;P85/1/3; Cockburn (ed.), *Kent Indictments: Charles II 1660-1675*, Nos. 67, 107, 109, 341

⁴⁹ MALSC, P150B/1/2, Strood St Nicholas Parish Register 1653-1695; RCA/A1/2 f. 71b; *Debrett's Baronetage, Knightage and Campanionage*, (London, 1901) pp.55-56; See DNB entry for John Blunt.

love and respect' in 1658.⁵⁰ This Presbyterian network was apparent in the 1655 Coppin disputes when five of the ministers were scheduled to oppose him in the cathedral; an event facilitated by Robinson. A mobile preaching ministry also seemed to operate within the various Medway Towns parish churches in this period. Rosewell preached in the other local parish churches in the early 1650s whilst barred from preaching at Chatham and first encountered Richard Coppin, a Ranter, whilst preaching at Rochester in the late summer of 1655. Allen Ackworth, the vicar of St Nicholas Rochester, acted in Chatham in the capacity of temporary minister in January 1654, whilst William Adderley was under investigation. Daniel French, vicar of Strood, and William Sandbrooke, of St Margaret's, Rochester, would have heard Salmon preach in their parish churches and attacked his radical ideas in their sermons.⁵¹ In this sense the Presbyterian ministers supported each other and covered for each other when adverse circumstances arose.

This peripatetic preaching role was not restricted to just Presbyterians. Adderley, the sea chaplain, covered for Rosewell at Chatham St Mary's in an unofficial capacity between 1650-1. Joseph Salmon, the Ranter, did a tour of the parish churches of Strood, Rochester and Chatham before making the cathedral the focus of his attention. Laurence Wise, the Independent sea chaplain, was familiar with the views of Frindsbury parishioners, suggesting he had ministered there in 1654. By 1654 the Medway Towns had a proactive preaching ministry, offering the citizens a wide range of religious viewpoints from Ranter to Baptist, Independent to more moderate groups such as the Presbyterians. Very little is known of individual's beliefs with perhaps the exception of Robert Cossens and a few other Salmon followers.⁵² Kent court records for this period are notable for the absence of any religious persecution. Even threats to prosecute Salmon in 1651 do not seem to have materialised. For a period almost all persuasions and beliefs were tolerated.

⁵⁰ TNA, PROB11/275; PROB11/294

⁵¹ TNA, SP18/78/199; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, pp. 2, 6; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, passim

⁵² Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p 1; TNA, SP18/65/29 CSPD 1654 p. 270

What happened to the cathedral in this period of great religious uncertainty and upheaval? No single body appears to have been accountable for the spiritual welfare of the cathedral in this period. During 1648 and 1649 the Committee for Plundered Ministers appointed the Presbyterian, Allen Ackworth, to act as minister of Rochester cathedral. Beyond that date no records survive to confirm whether he continued in this role. There is, however, strong evidence to suggest that by late 1650 the cathedral had developed into a radical preaching centre. Joseph Salmon had ‘set up a course of preaching every Sabbath day in the Cathedrall at *Rochester...*’, frequently preaching there twice on Sundays. Whether this was with the approval of Rochester corporation or not is uncertain, but, unlike the situation in 1655, they took no action against Salmon. Walter Rosewell, on the other hand, openly condemned Salmon, accusing him of using the cathedral to ‘Allegorise the Scripture’ and sow ‘the seeds of Ranting Familism’. Salmon ‘mannaged his devilish designs so slily and cunningly, that it was not easie for an ordinary hearer to discover them, though to a judicious ear, they were discernable enough; his language was smooth and taking, especially with carnall auditors, that delight more in Play-books, then in the Book of God’. According to Rosewell ‘he was a great snare of the devil, and many were intangled in him, through the allurement of his sweet language.’ There was enormous support for Salmon’s sermons amongst the citizens of Rochester and visiting soldiery. Although Rosewell classified Salmon’s followers as the baser sort, more at home with salacious reading material, and ordinary people, who could not distinguish religious errors, because they were veiled in bewitching words, they did not tire of Salmon and encouraged him for over four years.⁵³ Whilst the cathedral was rudderless in terms of overall organisation in the early 1650s, it still managed to fulfil a religious function in this period, accommodating various differing viewpoints.

Rochester council had to re-establish its former relationship with its parish church in this period. The city minute book indicates that much of Rochester’s civic religious ritual had been abandoned during and immediately following the 1648 Kent Rebellion: ‘Fforesomuch as by reason of the late troubles &

⁵³ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 1; Bod Lib, Bodley MS325 ff.125b-126a; Bodley MS326 ff.179a-b; Bodley MS327 f. 272

distraccions the severall orders touching the Aldermen & common Counsell attending upon the Major everie meeting day & on everie Sunday to & from his howse to & from the Church in their gowns have beene neglected...'. In September 1650 under the new mayoralty of Edward Hawthorne an order was issued to revive the custom with a penalty imposed on those who failed to adhere to the rule.⁵⁴ This period of turmoil had led to a serious breakdown in civic-religious tradition that had been implemented in the 1630s and maintained by successive councils until 1648. The resurrection of the tradition under the city's first religiously Independent mayor would imply that the lapsing of this custom was more to do with disunity in civic government than religious disapproval.

The Medway Towns witnessed a period of expanding religious diversity with groups such as the Ranters and Baptists active in the first half of the 1650s. This would appear to have been a cross-parish phenomenon with Salmon being the lynchpin behind the new radicalism. Although there was opposition to his style of beliefs by the authorities this was not followed through with legal action. Rather than nipping Salmon's activities in the bud, the dockyard and army hierarchy adopted a policy of containment to prevent the problem spreading. However this seemingly lax approach by the authorities enabled the parishioners to hear a wide range of religious opinions. That Salmon was entertained for so long and indeed recommended a successor would indicate that some of the parishioners were not against the more radical preachers or sects and in fact welcomed them. The Independent sea chaplains, William Adderley and Laurence Wise, added to this breadth of religious diversity. An analysis of some of the Chatham signatories to the May 1648 Kentish petition suggests that the religious aims of the Chatham and Blount petitioners of the early 1640s differed considerably; some were Presbyterian, others were Independents, whilst several had progressed to the Baptists. As a consequence Chatham Presbyterians felt under attack from both Baptists and Independents in the early 1650s and went on a counter offensive, leading to a period of religious tension in Chatham, which created schism in the congregation and community. Several Rochester citizens, such as Cossens, continued their flirtation with the more radical religious

⁵⁴ MALSC, RCA/A1/1 f. 690

groups, but this surprisingly caused no Presbyterian or other religious backlash. Rochester, therefore, had a more stable period religiously between 1648-1654 than Chatham, which faced the debates and tensions that Rochester had encountered in the period 1644-1647.

5. 1655-1662

The religious diversity of the early 1650s was to develop and offer the Medway parishioners a plethora of religious sects to choose from in this period. There were established Baptist congregations in both Chatham and Rochester by 1655. Thomas Gammon, a Rochester Baptist minister, tried to challenge Richard Coppin on the issue of baptism in December 1655, but was silenced by Rosewell. Gammon was a cordwainer and freeman of the city, residing in the cathedral precincts. He was dismissed as a freeman for his nonconformity in the 1662 purge. From Bishop Warner's 1662 visitation enquiries it would appear that sectaries dwelt within the cathedral precincts and conventicles had in the past been held there; as a resident Gammon was the likely culprit.⁵⁵

A Baptist meetinghouse had existed in Chatham since 1653. The Pembury and Speldhurst General Baptist minutes indicate a quarterly Baptist meeting was held at Chatham in March 1657, indicating the congregation was well established. This and the subsequent Biddenden quarterly meeting in May 1657 raised some interesting concerns. At Chatham it was agreed that 'for officers of churches to list themselves either as private soulders or Comission officers yt is altogether unlawful.' Edward Moorcock may have had issues with this rule, as he was a serving officer in Cromwell's navy. The Biddenden meeting also ordered that neither ministers nor members could preach or go to hear sermons in other churches. Presumably this order was made following the recent targeting of Baptist congregations by Quaker missionaries and was passed to

⁵⁵ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p.14; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, p. 78; Harrington (ed), *Hearth Tax Returns*, p.210; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 f. 71b; DRc/Arb/2, *The Red Book* ff. 22, 23a-23c

avert further defections in the county. An example of this was the Rigge-Robertson mission, which specifically targeted the Rochester Baptists in 1655.⁵⁶

Several of the General Baptists were imprisoned for their beliefs. Court records attest that Arkinstall and Moorcock were both arrested in 1661 for refusing to take the oath of supremacy and allegiance required of all males to demonstrate their loyalty to the monarch and Restoration government, being described as ‘anabaptists and sectaries.’ They were to petition successfully together with several other renowned Baptists for their release by bond in May 1661. A family network existed in the Chatham meeting. Thomas Arkinstall, master attendant, was the father-in-law of Edward Moorcock, a captain in the Navy, and Thomas Gardner, a shipwright. None of these three served on the parish vestry after 1646 despite their dockyard connections and relatively important jobs. Philip Eason, a ship’s carpenter, was arrested in 1662 for attending a Baptist conventicle in Deptford.⁵⁷ By 1655-1660 the Baptists were prominent enough in Chatham for other religious groups to comment on their role and schism in the local community. This schism is covered in chapter eight. A percentage of Medway citizens had by 1655 become disillusioned with Presbyterianism and found the General Baptists’ belief in universal salvation more attractive than a Calvinistic notion of the ‘elect’.

The Baptists were not the only sect to flourish in the Medway Towns in this period. In 1655 Quaker missionaries made efforts to convert the people of Rochester; in particular targeting the Baptist community. They did not come on a whim, but had information that this was ripe ground for a hearing and possible conversion. Quaker literature referred to these missionary groups as the ‘Valiant sixty’, who set out in 1654 from the north to spread the message. Robert Acheson contends that a group of seven were destined for Kent at Easter 1655. Each pair had been given an area of Kent to focus on. The order of their

⁵⁶ MALSC, P85/5/1; KHLC, Sa/ZB/2/139, Chatham Anabaptist Licence 1672; BL, Add MS 36709, Tunbridge Wells Church Book ff. 32a-32b; C. Horle, ‘Quakers and Baptists 1647-1660,’ BQ Vol. 26 (1976) pp. 345-348; J. McGregor, ‘The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy’, in J. .McGregor & B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, (Oxford, 1984) p. 61; Eales, “‘So many sects and schisms’”, pp. 241-242

⁵⁷ MALSC, P85/5/1; Cockburn (ed), *Kent Indictments: Charles II 1660-1675*, Nos. 67, 107, 109, 341; TNA, PROB11/334; PROB11/415

arrival is ambiguous. Henry Fell, a clerk, targeted Gravesend, which is located just ten miles from Rochester, in March 1655. George Fox was probably next chronologically, stopping at Rochester, although he did not preach there despite his previous association with Joseph Salmon at Coventry in 1650. William Caton and John Stubbs, followed in May 1655, but considered that Rochester did ‘not having any publique Testimony to beare’ and moved on. Ambrose Rigge, a plumber, and Thomas Robertson, yeoman, both from Grayrigg, Westmorland, were assigned to the Medway Towns, arriving in the early summer, before travelling onto the Kent coast. Rigge recorded in his journal nearly fifty years later that ‘we Travelled to Rochester, where it was laid upon us to go to a Baptist-Meeting, at which we were apprehended by Souldiers...’. Gammon’s Baptist group at Rochester was the focus of their mission.⁵⁸

Despite their rapid capture the two Quaker missionaries did leave their mark. Sources at the Restoration present a picture of a thriving Quaker community at Rochester. Samuel Fisher, writing in 1660, reflected on an encounter he had had with Allen Ackworth around 1657 while passing through the city: ‘Witness one Ackworth of Rochester, who was once heard by the writer hereof, deprecating & declaring against the *Qua(kers)*...’ to ‘deliver this poor City from the *Qua(kers)*...’. This would suggest, that like the Ranters, the Quakers had gained a following in the city. Our next insight into the Quaker presence in Rochester was through a newsletter written by William Caton to George Fox in August 1660 about his previous tour of Kent. He describes that on the third Sunday of July he was ‘at a generall meeting in Rochester, to which there came many friends & it was exceedingly serviceable...’, giving the impression that many Quakers attended this meeting from all over Kent as well as from Rochester itself.⁵⁹ Again giving the impression that Rochester was an established meeting with its own members.

⁵⁸ O. Greenwood, *The Quaker Tapestry*, (London, 1990) pp. 11, 59; J. Nickalls (ed.), *The Journey of George Fox*, (London, 1952) p. 209; N. Penney (ed.), *The first publishers of Truth*, (London, 1907) p. 130; Acheson, ‘The development of religious separatism’ p. 233; Whitehead, *Constasy in truth*, pp. 5, 7; E. Taylor, *The Valiant Sixty*, (York, 1988) p. 41.

⁵⁹ S. Fisher, *Rusticus and academicos...*, (London, 1660) ff. A5-A6; LSF, Swarthmore MS 4, Early Quaker Letters to 1660 f.271; Swarthmore MS 356, Letter Henry Fell to George Fox 27/3/1655, f. 167; Swarthmore Transcripts, Vol. 3, Letter John Stubbs to Margaret Fell 19/10/1657

None of the early Rochester Quaker records have survived and other sources can only give a partial picture of the strength of the meeting. John Besse's *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, published in 1753, referred to several Rochester Quakers. In January 1661 Roger Ellis, Thomas Ewer, and Ralph Young from Rochester were arrested at their workplaces. The East Kent Quarterly Meeting recorded that they 'were taken from their employment by armed men & brought before the magistrate who tendered them the oath of allegiance & they refusing to swear for conscience sake: weare comitted to Maidston gole to be kept close prisoners.' This was one of the few Rochester sufferings for which court records survive. On 18th February 1661 Francis Clerke, Robert Watson and George May signed a Mittimus 'committing Roger Ellis, Ralph Young and Thomas Ewer, being sectaries, to Maidstone gaol for refusing the oath of allegiance.' The only one of the three that more is known about is Thomas Ewer, a grocer from Chatham. He was born in Strood and may have been influenced in his beliefs by other members of his extended family, who had become Quakers in New England. A further two arrests were recorded at Rochester in 1661 by Besse; William Ockenden and John Church were similarly taken from their work and tendered the oath of allegiance.⁶⁰

Another suffering recorded in several accounts was that of a young woman, Rebecca Elkington of Frindsbury. She was arrested in 1662 at a meeting in Rochester and committed to the Dolphin prison. There is no record of how many were detained with her, as Rochester court records are virtually non-existent for this period. She died there of fever in May 1663. A second meeting was targeted in September 1663 when seven were arrested including Katherine Evans, who was released after a few days. Her early release was probably in the wake of Rebecca Elkington's death in prison a few months earlier. These were just a few of the early members, who were convinced in the Quaker conversion period of the late 1650s. By 1660 the Rochester meeting was firmly established.⁶¹ Whether some of the targeted Baptists were convinced is unclear, but a Baptist

⁶⁰ M. Gandy (ed.), *Besse's Sufferings of early Quakers: Southern England, 1653 to 1690*, (York, 2006) p. 290; KHLC, N/FQz1f.25; Cockburn (ed.), *Kent Indictments: Charles II 1660-1675*, No. 66; 'Anna Ewer: second wife of Daniel Wing', <http://www.nashfamilyhistory.com/winglibrary.org/annaewer.htm>

⁶¹ Gandy (ed.), *Besse's Sufferings*, pp. 293, 296; LSF, Temp MSS 750, Extracts from Register Books f. 436; KHLC, N/FQz1 loose leaf

congregation still existed in Rochester after the Restoration. Several ‘Ranter’ historians, including McGregor and Gwyn, have tried to persuade us that Joseph Salmon became a Quaker convert and that his followers were the foundation of the Quaker group in Rochester.⁶² This notion has no historical evidence to support it.

Whilst the interest in Ranter preaching had not waned by the summer of 1655, Salmon’s popularity had. On Salmon’s departure in the summer of 1655 his former supporters invited the Ranter, Richard Coppin, down from London, which ensured he had a receptive audience awaiting him. Friedman considers that Coppin was the most articulate and intelligent of the Ranter writers. Richard Coppin was not, however, bewitching like Salmon; in fact Friedman suggests he was rather dull in his preaching. Yet Coppin’s ability to expound controversial tenets coherently and logically made him a greater threat than Salmon. In September 1655 Rosewell heard Coppin preach and realised the impact that he had on his listeners both civil and military. ‘Coppin’s doctrines were so gross from Sabbath to Sabbath, that they were in the mouthes of many that heard him’. Rosewell challenged Coppin’s erroneous religious views in a series of weekly lectures at the cathedral in October 1655. This culminated in the debates of December 1655 between Coppin and several local Presbyterian ministers. Rosewell was able to round up considerable support from William Sandbrooke of St Margaret’s, Rochester, and Daniel French of St Nicholas, Strood, as well as the schoolmaster Daniel Pegler, who was also minister of Wouldham. Allen Ackworth of St Nicholas, Rochester, was also invited along by Rosewell, but did not participate in the proceedings.⁶³

Other ministers were also present to support the Presbyterians, including the Baptist, Thomas Gammon, and sea chaplain, Laurence Wise. These Presbyterian ministers and their supporters were concerned with the detail of Coppin’s beliefs, whereas the authorities, represented by the army, council and J.P.s, were troubled that Coppin’s radical ideas might contaminate in the first

⁶² Smith, *Perfection proclaimed*, p. 66; A collection of Ranter wrtings, p. 17; McGregor, ‘Ranterism and the development of early Quakerism’, pp. 356-357; Gwyn, ‘Joseph Salmon’, p. 128

⁶³ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, pp. A2, A3, 2-3, 14; Friedman, *Blasphemy, immorality and anarchy*, pp. 17-18, 58; LP, COMM III/2, Register of approved ministers 1654-1660, f. 163

instance the soldiery quartered at the castle and secondly the ‘ruder multitude’, who might easily be swayed. Although barred from preaching inside the cathedral, Coppin still managed to attract a large crowd outside in the precincts for his Sunday morning sermon on the 23rd December and in the afternoon took to the fields of the Common.⁶⁴ Coppin had been prepared to enter into a debate about his beliefs and go to prison for them. His treatise, published whilst in prison in 1656 on a blasphemy charge, publicly reaffirmed his position and denounced Rosewell and his supporters. Unlike Salmon he did not write a recantation and denounce his beliefs to the world.

With the arrival of the major-general, Thomas Kelsey, in Kent the future of the Ranters was short lived. On Coppin’s imprisonment in 1655 the period of open Ranter activity in the Medway Towns came to an abrupt halt. There is, nevertheless, some evidence that his supporters did carry on for a few years after his imprisonment. Coppin’s tract of 1657, *Crux Christi*, was addressed to his followers at Rochester. A comment by Thomas Case in his 1658 dedicatory epistle to Walter Rosewell would also indicate that some in the community had ‘either erroneous principles, or loose practises,’ that ‘occasioned [them] to look upon him, as their Enemy’. This hints at a degree of residual hostility by ‘Coppinites’ to Rosewell and a small element of local Ranter activity. After 1658 there is no further reference to the ‘Coppinites’ in the Medway Towns, suggesting that upon the death of Robert Cossens, the mainstay behind the local Ranters, the group died out.⁶⁵

Equally active in this period were the Independents. Their support had been growing since the appointment of Adderley in 1649, but had faced a temporary set back because of his interference in non-religious issues. However John Taylor, master shipwright, was an Independent, who, unlike Adderley, inspired others with his godly zeal. He spent most of the decade attempting to recruit godly men into vital dockyard positions and seems to have been respected for his stance. His religious tolerance was perhaps another reason why he was popular

⁶⁴ Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 14; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, pp. 76, 78-79, 82; Birch (ed.), *A collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, Vol. IV p. 486

⁶⁵ Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, passim; *Crux Christi and judgement executed*, (London, 1657) - the Epistle; Case, *Elijah’s Abatement*, p. A6

with the dockyard workers. Taylor had close ties with the London Baptist minister and teacher, Samuel Bradley, ‘although disagreeing with him on the subject of baptism’ and Thomas Carter, an Independent minister, who later became the incumbent for Chatham.⁶⁶ Laurence Wise, the new Independent sea chaplain, also had strong support from the dockyard men. He was a proponent of general atonement, which may have sat well with many religiously radical seamen, but would not have been altogether popular with some of the Presbyterian dockyard hierarchy. Wise kept his nose out of political and dockyard issues, so Pett did not interfere in his religious role. However the Presbyterian minister, Walter Rosewell, was not prepared to allow Wise’s views on salvation to go unchallenged. During the Coppin dispute Rosewell launched a vitriolic attack upon Wise and his erroneous views on salvation, comparing his stance with the General Baptists.⁶⁷ This is discussed in chapter eight in the debate over salvation.

William Adderley continued his joint parish ministry with Rosewell, but his access to the pulpit had been severely restricted. Chatham parishioners stated in early 1659: we ‘have for some yeares past out of a tender respect to the Commissioners of the Admiralty (by whose meanes occasionally the Minister of the Navy hath hitherto possessed the pulpitt) beene silent...’. This was a reference to the former sea chaplain William Adderley rather than Laurence Wise.⁶⁸ The parishioners had not been particularly happy with Adderley, but had endured his ministration in silence out of their respect for Rosewell. However his actions in 1659 were to finally wear the patience of even the most tolerant parishioners. Thomas Carter, an Independent, was appointed to the living on the death of Rosewell in September 1658 on the recommendation of the Kent Commissioners, which included Laurence Wise. In their 1659 petition the Chatham parishioners claimed that ‘the minister of the navy’ had denied them the right to free election of their choice of minister by refusing Carter access to the pulpit. Adderley had always had a confrontational streak, but whether his

⁶⁶ CSPD 1656-1657 p. 427; CSPD 1652-1653 pp. 498, 615, 618; G. Whitehead, *The authority of the true ministry in baptizing with the spirit...*, (London, 1660)

⁶⁷ CSPD 1654 p. 467 Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 30-31, 82; Rosewell, *Serpents* subitly discovered, pp. 7-8

⁶⁸ TNA, SP18/205/52; Cogar, ‘The Politics of naval administration’, p. 172.

obstruction in this instance was on religious grounds or not is unclear. Religiously Adderley and Carter had a similar outlook.⁶⁹ William Adderley may well have desired the post solely for himself, having no other living to fall back on.

Six of the above petitioners had also signed the 1654 petition, calling for Adderley's replacement, and ten were current members of the vestry. Four of these vestrymen and petitioners were Presbyterians, having also signed the previous petition against Adderley in 1654. Amongst these were Robert Yardley and Peter Ellis, who had both penned their names to the Blount petition of 1642, but had shown little inclination to protest until Adderley appeared on the scene. Two of the petitioners had a previous record of supporting Independency, James Marsh and Robert Hilles, a vestryman in 1659, but had become disillusioned with Adderley over the decade. Other petitioners such as John Wright, a signatory to the 1641 Chatham petition, and John Davis had both signed the Blount petition, but remained quiet religiously and politically for the next seventeen years, suggesting that Adderley's actions had finally driven them to protest. The support for this petition by two other vestrymen, Robert Sliter, a Royalist, who had opposed Adderley in 1654, and John Baynard, a farmer, who had never signed any of the previous petitions, indicates that opposition to Adderley was from across the political and religious spectrum.⁷⁰ It is not possible to gauge the religious opinion of the remaining six petitioners, as they were all relatively new men. Royalists as well as religious Presbyterians and Independents were all prepared to unite to finally rid the parish of William Adderley.

Both Wise and Carter served Chatham in their respective capacities until the Restoration. Laurence Wise was popular with many of the parishioners as well as dockyard men. Nevertheless an instance in the late 1650s does indicate that some Chatham parishioners were out to besmirch Wise's character. Wise's correspondence to the Navy Commissioners, dated 6th February 1661, refers to

⁶⁹ LP, COMM III/7, Register of approved ministers 1658-1659, f. 97; TNA, SP18/205/52

⁷⁰ TNA, SP18/78/199; SP18/16/124; MALSC, P85/5/1; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/12; BL, Add 26785 ff. 211-212

the re-emergence of old gossip about an accusation of bastardy levied against him a few years previously, from which he had been exonerated. ‘My grand accuser is a notorious strumpet, who had a bastard concealed at nurse in the towne of Chatham at the same time when she accused me for attempting her chastity...’. His letter maintains that her lies are ‘publicly knowne not onely in Chatham but in all the towns round about it, and to many hundreds in this citty (London)’. He states: the parishioners ‘first hearing of it, they did suspend me from communion’, but ‘have given me again the right hand of fellowship’ on being found innocent of the charge. Some parishioners obviously had issues with Wise’s preaching and had used this as a weapon to undermine him.⁷¹ Wise was by his own account dismissed from his post in early 1660 for his religious stance. He sought Sir Edward Montagu’s assistance in June 1660: ‘I have solicited your favour to stand my friend in a just and righteous cause namely to restore me to my place in Chatham out of which I was maliciously ejected by Sir Henry Vane...’. In this letter to Montagu he accused Peter Pett of undermining his chances of reinstatement to his former position by engaging ‘one Mr Ackworth of Rochester’. Ackworth was related to Pett by marriage and at the Restoration was probably considered more religiously acceptable by Pett than Wise. He was never reinstated to his post and in late 1660, when the old accusation resurfaced, he had to defend himself again. Wise had got ‘the testimony of above four hundred sober Christians (who are no phanaticks but such as have learned both to fear God and honour their King)’, who were prepared to support him.⁷² Thomas Carter had also been removed from office by September 1661. Although Laurence Wise had a strong following, the local version that Carter and Wise set up the Ebenezer Congregational Church at Chatham in 1662 is without foundation.⁷³

Presbyterianism, although no longer the unopposed force it was in the 1640s, was still the main focus of local worship in this period. In Chatham Rosewell was popular with many of the parishioners, as the petition for his reinstatement in

⁷¹ TNA, SP29/30/68, Letter Wise to the Navy Commissioners, 6th February 1660/1

⁷² Bod Lib, Carte MSS 73 f. 481, Letter Laurence Wise to General Montagu, 19 June 1660; TNA, SP29/30/68

⁷³ T. Timpson, Nonconformist church history of Kent, (London, 1859) p.323 – Timpson implies they were the spiritual founders; F. Belsey & W. Dunstall, Centenary of Ebenezer Sunday schools, Chatham: Memorial records 1799-1899, (Chatham, 1899) pp. 13, 27; CSPD 1661-1662 p.400

1654 demonstrates. A 1659 petition from the parishioners also expressed their appreciation for Rosewell's 'continued ... paines amongst them' over the past few years. Rosewell also had the support of leading dockyard officers such as Peter Pett and Charles Bowles.⁷⁴ However the 1655 cathedral debates are a good indication that the Presbyterians felt under attack in this period. Religious toleration had allowed various radical sects and groups to emerge that challenged Calvinist thinking and vied with them for audiences. Richard Coppin, an opponent of Rosewell, referred to local friction between the Baptists and the Presbyterians in his publication. In Chatham the local Presbyterian minister, Rosewell, openly voiced his objections to both Thomas Gammon's and Laurence Wise's preaching.⁷⁵ Walter Rosewell took it upon himself to become the local defender of Presbyterianism and was often a lone voice against what he perceived were religious errors. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that he attracted both considerable support and a large degree of condemnation at the same time.

Thomas Case, a London Presbyterian and close friend of Rosewell's, offers us an insight into Rosewell's character and his outspokenness. He noted 'that the black adult humour of choler, held the predominancy in his individual Constitution, which many times gave a tincture to his discourse & action: and which standers-by, more censorious then candid, interpreted to his unjust *prejudice*.' Many Chatham parishioners were aware of the hardships Rosewell had endured for his beliefs and were prepared to overlook his bluntness, as he did not direct his venom at the dockyard. Case spoke of there being 'many living monuments of the power of God, in his Ministry', referring to Rosewell's ability to draw men and convince them to his view. Case considered Rosewell a 'faithful servant of Christ...no intruder, or up-start of the times, who like the false Prophets of old, run before they are sent, and speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.'⁷⁶

⁷⁴ TNA, SP18/205/52, SP18/65/29; Case, *Elijah's Abatement*, p. A3

⁷⁵ Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 78, 82; Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, pp. 11, 14

⁷⁶ Case, *Elijah's Abatement*, pp. 41, 45-46, 53, 59

Rosewell was an able man very capable of engaging with his adversaries over the religious controversies of the day. He was described by Case as ‘singularly verst...in the Controversies between the Papists & Reformed Churches, so specially in the Controversies of the times, which rendered him very able, quick & potent to convince gain-sayers, who in all their congresses with him, were not able...to resist the wisdom and the Spirit whereby he spake: save that their Masters have taught them this piece of their Mystery: that what they cannot clear by argument, they will darken by *clamour*...’. In his funeral sermon Case maintained that Rosewell ‘was a Boanerges; his Ministry was a thundring *Ministry*’ and ‘In all the Changes that went over his head, in all the Controversies of the times, wherein he exercised his Ministry, he was a most strenuous Assertor of the truth, and a most courageous opposer of Error and *Innovation*.’ ‘He could not endure *unsound doctrine*...knowing the dangerous tendency thereof.’ Case went on to declare that Rosewell ‘could not bear with seducers, nor they with him; so that by this means he became a man of contention, his righteous soul was *vexed from day to day, in seeing and hearing*.’ Rosewell saw it as his role to eliminate these erroneous spirits, including ‘Anabaptists and Antinomians, Arrians, Quakers, Antiscripturists, etc.’⁷⁷ Both friend and opponent give the impression that Rosewell was a man prepared to speak out and challenge those that swayed from his religious beliefs.

After his death in May 1658 disharmony was evident in the congregation and parish. Part of this stemmed from the issues with Adderley, but religious differences were also apparent. This was particularly noticed and commented upon by Thomas Case. He had a long history with Chatham that spanned about twenty years. Case’s family background was from Boxley where his father was vicar and, according to *Athenae Oxonienses*, he himself preached in the vicinity prior to 1641 when as a Presbyterian he came into favour and went to London. In October 1643 he was in Chatham, possibly covering the parish on Vaughan’s ejection. Case was one of the London representatives on the Westminster Assembly of Divines. It is highly probable that he was the Presbyterian preacher and ‘Assembly’ representative who informed Thomas Edwards about Baptist

⁷⁷ *ibid*, pp. 47-48, 52-53, 56-58; Mark 3:17 - Jesus referred to his disciples, James and John, as ‘Boanerges’, meaning fiery preacher.

activity in the Medway Towns and Cossens' attack upon the Chatham Presbyterian minister, Ambrose Clare. The churchwardens' accounts indicate that he preached in the parish church in 1657 on a day of humiliation. Case also delivered Rosewell's funeral sermon in 1658, which was subsequently published.⁷⁸ His longstanding connection with Chatham meant he was aware of undercurrents and disunity in the congregation. He urged the parishioners in 1658 to set aside 'all your differences, and animosities, and unite' to make a wise choice of minister. His comment that 'It is time for Christians to close, and to make up their breaches' was either an observation on the rift between Adderley and the parishioners or religious rivalry in the congregation. Case declared during Rosewell's funeral sermon: 'I am not afraid on his behalf to appeal to his Adversaries' and 'I dare appeal even to his Adversaries'.⁷⁹ An indication that there were many opponents of Presbyterianism in Chatham and the Medway Towns. Case's decision to publicise his sermon was to ensure it reached these very opponents of Presbyterianism; Rosewell's adversaries.

The other local Presbyterian ministers did not generally experience the schism in their parishes that Rosewell had in Chatham. Daniel French remained vicar at St Nicholas until 1660, when he appears to have been removed from office. Court records show that he became involved with conventicles at Strood in 1661, was arrested for this and subsequently died in prison in 1663. He certainly had the support of most of his parishioners in the 1650s as no open dissent is recorded and many may have followed him after his ejection. In 1658 William Sandbrooke of St Margaret's, Rochester, died and was replaced by Edward Alexander, an Independent. The transition in Rochester St Margaret's went smoothly and avoided the ructions witnessed in Chatham. Edward Alexander was ousted at some point in 1661, but was according to Edmund Calamy, a

⁷⁸ Case, *Elijah's Abatement*, pp. A4-A6, A14-A17, A20-21, A23; MALSC, P85/5/1, 1657 accounts; P85/8/1 f. 22; A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, (London, 1692) Vol. II p. 529; Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena*, p. 103; See DNB entry for Case; Firth & Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1 p. 181

⁷⁹ Case, *Elijah's abatement*, epistle dedicatory

nonconformist minister, ‘respected by Persons of various Persuasions’. He subsequently held large nonconformist meetings at Rochester in 1663.⁸⁰

Allen Ackworth of St Nicholas, Rochester, however, had some issues with his parishioners. He was accused by Laurence Wise in 1660 of having preached against the monarchy for the past two years and caused many in Rochester to rail against him. This could account for his clerical ejection prior to June 1660. Ackworth appears to have been a complex character religiously. He served as an assistant to the Kent Commission in 1657-8. As a Presbyterian he was favoured by many of the seamen, but loathed by some of his own parishioners for his anti-Royalist stance. Allen Ackworth openly attacked the Quakers during his preaching, but despite an invitation from Rosewell played no part in the Coppin debates on his doorstep. His ties of friendship extended to include the Presbyterian alderman, George Robinson, as well as ministers, Daniel French and Walter Rosewell, in the 1650s. Rochester corporation also favoured Ackworth by making him a freeman of the city in 1656; an honour not bestowed on any other member of the local clergy during the twenty-year period covered by this thesis.⁸¹

Yet there are pointers that Ackworth, despite his anti-Royalist stance, was repositioning himself religiously from 1659. In 1659, on the return of the Rump, Ackworth together with several other ministers from the surrounding villages supported Richard Tray junior in his attempt to gain the living at Murston in Kent. Tray had been sequestered in 1655 for openly rebelling against Parliament. His views, like his father’s, were probably Episcopalian. On his ejection in 1660 Ackworth, unlike some of his other Medway counterparts, did not seek to hold illicit meetings, but instead applied for the post of sea chaplain and when this did not succeed he conformed to become the vicar at Wandsworth

⁸⁰ Cockburn (ed.), Kent Indictments: Charles II 1660-1675, nos. 238, 324, 405; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. II p. 129; TNA, SP29/88/73 f. 245; SP9/26, Williamson’s Spy Book 1663, f. 2; LP, COMM III/2 f. 172; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, p. 4

⁸¹ Bod Lib, Carte MS 73 f. 481; Fisher, *Rusticus and academicos* pp. A6-A7; TNA, SP18/78/199; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, p. 3; MALSC, RCA/A1/2 f. 22a; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy Revised*, p. 1

in 1661.⁸² Ackworth, as part of the extended Pett family, was prepared to change his opinion to match the changing political and religious situation, so he could continue as a clergyman in the restored Anglican Church.

The role of the cathedral has already been touched upon in this section. Salmon's audiences had dwindled by 1655, reducing him from two sermons to one a day at the cathedral. Coppin, his replacement in the summer of 1655, only lasted for six months as a preaching vessel. This was the pinnacle of the cathedral's religious radicalism. That a wide audience was still attracted by the Ranter preachers cannot be denied, but by then the authorities were keen to end this use of the cathedral to influence the soldiers and citizenry. Richard Coppin's imprisonment ended the use of the cathedral as a preaching centre. By 1656 the cathedral finally had no spiritual role and was left to fall into decay. The corporation and army authorities were more concerned with closing down this radical centre of worship than ensuring a suitable role was found for it.⁸³

Between 1655-1662 the Medway Towns saw a proliferation in the number of sects available, which resulted in tension between the various groups. Rochester witnessed one of the most controversial debates of the 1650s in the shape of the cathedral disputes of December 1655. The Presbyterians in both towns felt under threat in the period 1655-1660 and this led to open schism in Chatham St Mary's. Whilst the army authorities were concerned about radical preachers influencing their soldiers in this period, the dockyard seemed more inclined to worry over economic matters. Perhaps the dockyard had learnt its lesson from the period 1648-1654 and realised that it could not prevent religious dissent. Although not actively supporting religious radicalism the dockyard to a degree tolerated it. By 1662 nonconformity had an established presence locally, the Quakers in Rochester, the Baptists in both towns, Independents at Rochester and Presbyterian conventicles reported in Strood. As Jacqueline Eales succinctly quoted: "so many sects and schisms".⁸⁴ This is indeed the picture that emerges

⁸² Bod Lib, Walker MS C1 f. 361; Matthews (ed.), Walker Revised, pp. 226-227; G. Alexander (ed), Freedom after Ejection, (London, 1917) p. 341

⁸³ MALSC, DRc/Arb/2 ff. 22, 23a-23c

⁸⁴ Eales, "So many sects and schisms"

from the Medway Towns in the 1650s; religious diversity brought with it freedom of choice in terms of worship, but also division in the local community.

6. The Restoration of Anglicanism 1660 and beyond

At the Restoration John Warner returned to his post as Bishop of Rochester and the cathedral chapter was reinstated. Warner was quick to ensure that the clergy was given its previous status within the city and set out to remove the Puritans from office. The second article of his visitation in 1662 enquired ‘whether any doe preach declare or speake any falce or suspected doctrine or any thing in the derogation of the book of common prayer which is a set forth by the lawes of this Realme or administer otherwise then in the same booke is prescribed or being not ordynarie ministers of the sayd Church.’ Kent had a high level of clerical ejections between 1660-1662. This pattern was reflected in the Medway Towns. John Warner had removed all four of the parish ministers covered by this chapter before the Act of Uniformity was passed and the great ejection occurred on St Bartholomew’s Day 1662. Under the immediate eye of the bishop, there was an early clampdown on the scope of preaching permitted within the Rochester parish churches. This led to a number of reported conventicles in the Rochester area in the immediate post-Restoration period. Chatham doubtless continued to encompass an element of Presbyterians within the mainstream church, as a significant proportion of the dockyard was of this religious persuasion and many of the hierarchy remained in office. However more radical or Independent minded parishioners had to seek worship in the nonconformist sects.⁸⁵ With at least four nonconformist groups operating in the Medway Towns between 1660-1676 a ratio of ten per cent nonconformity given by the Compton Census returns seems somewhat low. The returns for Chatham are particularly rounded numbers, suggesting this was guesswork rather than an accurate picture of the town’s nonconformity.⁸⁶ This does contest the reliability of the nonconformist returns for the Compton Census of 1676. The truer figure may have been much higher.

⁸⁵ MALSC, DRc/Arb/2 ff. 23a-23c; P150B/1/2; Matthews (ed.), Calamy revised, pp. 1-4, 102, 213, 539-40; Fielding, *The records of Rochester Diocese*, p. 350

⁸⁶ C. Chalklin (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676: The dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester*, in Kent Archaeological Society (ed.), *A seventeenth century miscellany*, (Ashford, 1960) pp. 153-174

After the Restoration the corporation of Rochester was under the watchful eye of the bishop. The reinstated Bishop, John Warner, and cathedral chapter influenced the local councillors to change the balance of religious opinion amongst the voters by appointing members of the clergy to the freedom. One of the corporation's first acts was to make fifteen of the clergy and cathedral chapter freemen of the city. Michael Hudson, a Rochester minister and rector of Strood in 1663, was the first to be made a freeman in December 1660. February 1661 saw a wholesale group of the cathedral chapter made freemen. Some of these were names that were familiar from earlier in the civil war period, including Henry Selby, minister of St Margaret's, and John Codd, preacher in the cathedral in 1644. Robert Dixon was to become minister of St Nicholas in 1660. In March 1663 another round of freemen were created and included the Royalist Francis Kirk, who managed to survive the civil war and Interregnum intact as well as Edmund Burgess, new vicar of Frindsbury. The city authorities were forced by the Commissioners under the Corporation Act to purge both parish ministers and nonconformists as freemen in August 1662. Allen Ackworth, the vicar of St Nicholas, and Thomas Gammon, the Baptist preacher, were dismissed as well as known nonconformists, Edward Moorcock, Thomas Gardner, Thomas Blunt, Isaac Carter, William Parker, Henry Clegatt and James Orgar.⁸⁷ Thus between 1660-1662 the corporation carried out a religious review of its freemen and replaced them to reflect government and ecclesiastical opinion. In both the 1660 appointments and 1662 dismissals the aldermen and councillors were reacting to outside opinion and pressure.

The period 1660-1676 saw a complete upheaval in religious terms with the reinstatement of 'Anglican' style worship after the Restoration. The majority of the Medway clergy were ejected in 1660-2, as they had been in 1643-1646. Thus in a sense religion had come full circle in a twenty year period. However the rise of nonconformity over the interim twenty years had not halted at the Restoration despite government legislation to thwart toleration, but was to increase in numbers over the next fifteen years. The nonconformist statistics of the 1676 Compton Census had their origins firmly rooted in the Interregnum and,

⁸⁷ MALSC, RCA/A1/2 ff. 52b, 56a, 57b, 58b, 71b

perhaps, even in the 1640s. Many of the Baptists and Quakers were prepared to suffer for their conscience and withstood the Restoration backlash to thrive in the next decade. Although the Quakers could not apply for a licence in 1672-3 we know that their meetings continued and flourished into the 1670s, as did the General Baptists and Presbyterians. Both Rochester and Chatham experienced a similar pattern of religious radicalism and nonconformity after the Restoration, which despite concerted efforts was never eradicated. However Chatham probably continued with a wider range of religious views within the established church than Rochester, as it had done before the Civil War period. In Rochester, Chatham and Strood a significant number of parishioners made the decision that mainstream 'Anglicanism' and Presbyterianism were not for them during the 1640s and 1650s. They chose to opt for one of the several sects in existence locally and despite the Restoration reversion to 'Anglicanism' they were not convinced to return to it. Hence the religious radicalism of the period of upheaval was not a temporary reaction by the citizens, but a viewpoint that was to transcend the political changes and last beyond the Glorious Revolution.

Chapter 8

Public Opinion 1640-1660

Upon A Desire After News

‘Strange how our precious time away we squander,
 How our Athenian spirits rove and wander,
 How they do tire themselves in reaching at
 Some strange relation, at this news and that,
 How all improvement of converse we use
 Into one question to resolve: ‘what news?’

What news from this, what news from tother league?’¹

Thomas St Nicholas c. 1644

The Medway Towns had a number of venues, which permitted the parishioners’ access to a wide range of ideological debates. Due to Rochester and Chatham’s close proximity to the capital an array of radical preachers visited and resided in the area for short spells. Various historians contend that this increased access to news and debate polarised politics and religion.² In the Medway Towns public debate sometimes resulted in an element of disunity and schism, but on other occasions it actively unified seemingly opposed groups. Section one will focus on the prerequisites necessary for well-informed public debate to flourish and the necessity of a public sphere. The main part of this chapter is a case study of public opinion within the Medway Towns from 1640-1660, using a range of primary source material from petitions through to sermons and treatises. The first part of the case study analyses various petitions emanating from or signed by Medway inhabitants, whilst the second part considers a range of debates that took place locally; both orally and in print.

¹ H. Neville Davies (ed.), *At Vacant Hours: Poems by Thomas St Nicholas and his family*, (Birmingham, 2002) p. 31- St Nicholas was born in Sandwich, Kent. The poet moved to Ash in Kent around 1649 and was a staunch Parliamentarian later serving under the Protectorate regimes. This poem was written on his release from Pontefract around 1644 and sums up the Civil War fascination for news; See DNB entry for St Nicholas.

² See Chapter 1 pp. 27-28 regarding the historical arguments over increased news transmission, debate and conflict.

Before public opinion can be discussed or analysed it is vital to establish how public views were shaped. The ability to form an opinion was dependent on several factors; a supply of news, a public interested and able to access that news, and the ability of the people to read or comprehend the news. It is thus imperative to examine the nature of news and how it was disseminated to the people. Historians have discussed the necessity of a public sphere for debate to flourish. This section examines these aspects and the nature of the public spheres available in the Medway Towns.

The opening few lines of verse reflect the thirst for news in the Civil War period. Written by a Kent Parliamentarian poet at the height of the first Civil War he captured the mood of the people. This desire to know is often considered a phenomenon of the multi-media society in which we live today. Between 1640-1660 civil war upheaval and instability turned the known world upside down. People were particularly keen to make sense of the issues that drove their nation into opposing camps. Adam Fox contends that contemporaries ‘referred to the constant buzz of people talking to each other: asking for news, swapping stories, exchanging views.’ This stands in stark contrast to the stance of Alan Everitt, who considered the Kent gentry insular, preoccupied with local issues and largely far removed from London society with its ideological concerns.³

Whilst the soldiers were removing idolatrous imagery from Rochester cathedral in August 1642 a ‘multitude’ had gathered outside to watch and find out what was going on. The Rochester citizens had come out in numbers to witness a newsworthy event. Although the people were curious about this event, no local comment survives on the Parliamentarian seizure of the Medway Towns in the summer of 1642. This does not, however, mean that local people were not aware

³ C. Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information*, (Oxford, 1996) p.46; Fox, *Oral and literate culture*, p. 336; Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, pp. 14-16, 35-46.

of the ideological debates of the day. Medway inhabitants had access to various pamphlets and numerous petitions circulating then. Chatham parishioners drafted a petition against their incumbent in 1641, whilst 181 Medway inhabitants appended their names to the 1642 Blount petition, indicating that the people were reasonably well informed on religious and political issues. By 1648 the situation had changed considerably with people much more inclined to express their views openly. A plethora of local correspondence and printed matter survives commenting on the events of May 1648 in the Medway Towns. An example of these are the local correspondents; firstly one from Rochester reporting on the situation there on 21st May and secondly one from Chatham by Peter Pett imploring Parliament to take action. At this time Rochester was the focal point for the Kentish petition and at the heart of the news emanating from the county. Within a short period of time Rochester had changed from a quiet provincial city to the centre of debate in the county.⁴

News was available to the public in different formats. Oral news could be gossip, but just as likely a proclamation read from the pulpit or a pamphlet read aloud. The Civil War period saw the collapse of press censorship, which led to an explosion in print literature. David Cressy estimates that two million pamphlets a year were printed between 1640 and 1660.⁵ There is considerable surviving evidence of oral news transmission in the Medway Towns. Much rumour circulated in the towns in 1648. Philip Ward wrote to Parliament on 21st May 1648 warning that ‘least this course (by anie uncerteyne relacion) might begett an opinion...’. His implication was that unless Parliament took action people would believe the rumours that were circulating, concerning the impending actions of the Kent County Committee. Rochester’s correspondent of 21st May stated: ‘Yesterday we had a rumour spread abroad about this Towne...’. Pett’s letter from Chatham, dated 23rd May 1648, similarly reported that many believed the rumour that Prince Charles had landed: ‘which was at first believed; and many labour still that it may carry credence...’. Thus in the

⁴ Mercurius Rusticus (1646) p.199; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121; BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212; A letter from Kent; Sad Newes out of Kent; The Humble Petition (1648)

⁵ J. Miller, ‘Public Opinion in Charles II’s England’, *History* 80 (1995), p. 361; After the Civil Wars, (Harlow, 2000) pp. 53, 55; D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Cambridge, 1980) p.47

confusion of those ten days rumours abounded and few knew the true picture of events.⁶

Oral news was not merely the subject of rumour. Orders were given for official declarations to be read from the pulpit. In July 1643 Richard Lee sent a warrant to the churchwardens of Chatham: 'That the ministers shall give public notice, upon the first Lords Day, after their receipt of such copies, what day the vow and covenant shall be taken in their severall parishes.' This was the Vow and Covenant of July 1643 that all males were ordered to take by Parliament. Similarly the vestry felt it necessary to order that the Act of Parliament, concerning the recording of births, deaths and marriages should be read publicly on three consecutive Sundays due to non-compliance in 1653. Thus the pulpit was used to convey political messages orally to the parishioners. However the main use of the pulpit was to disseminate diverse religious opinion to the masses. The Medway pulpits experienced a raft of religious sermons from Presbyterian preaching through to Ranter tirades. Several of these sermons survive in print; three sermons delivered at Rochester St Margaret's by the Presbyterian William Sandbrooke as well as two by the General Baptist, Henry Denne, at Rochester cathedral. Richard Coppin's treatise mentioned that the sea chaplain Laurence Wise preached to his congregation about universal salvation, whilst Rosewell's tract confirmed that Joseph Salmon had preached in various parish churches in the area. From the State Papers it is also evident that Salmon tried to address the army and navy locally. These same records reveal that the Presbyterian minister of Chatham, Walter Rosewell, and sea chaplain, William Adderley, also used the pulpit to deliver political messages. Hence the residents of the Medway Towns had access to a wide range of religious and political viewpoints.⁷

There was also an overlap in orality and the written word. Orders and declarations from the centre were read out by the minister and then frequently pinned up on church crosses or other public places. In 1651 Peter Pett posted up

⁶ Bod Lib, Tanner MS57, f. 93; A Letter from Kent p. 1; Sad Newes out of Kent p. 3 - See also Bloudy Newes from Kent (1648)

⁷ MALSC, P85/8/1 f. 17; P85/1/3; TNA, SP18/23/30; SP18/65/29; SP28/23/32; SP25/96/248; Sandbrooke, The Church, The proper subject; Denne, Grace, Mercy and Peace; Coppin, A Blow at the Serpent p. 82; Rosewell, The Serpents Subtilty discovered p. 1

orders for attendance at the sea chaplain's service 'upon the gate at the new dock, and also aboard the *Sovouraigne*.' At a meeting of Chatham vestry in November 1653 it was declared that 'these orders [are] to bee faire written & hanged up in...the publiq meeting place.' This was to ensure that the 1653 Act of Parliament on births was duly observed. Those that could not read these orders would have got someone to read it out loud. Several sermons that were preached in Rochester were subsequently published. William Sandbrooke's sermon of 1646 was printed as he delivered it in three sermons at Rochester and two at Gravesend: 'I have not to my best memory omitted nor added a material passage or sentence...'. Thus a sermon delivered orally was often followed up in print.⁸

A diverse range of printed material was available in the Medway Towns. In the aftermath of the Second Civil War in Kent, a number of political tracts surfaced in the Medway Towns. A Royalist satire was published at Rochester in June 1648, sending a challenge 'to all those dare buy them', lampooning the Parliamentary officers. At about the same time some of Reynolds' Parliamentary troops were imprisoned at Rochester for spreading seditious literature around the county. In July 1648 the Derby House Committee warned Sir Michael Livesey, the Independent M.P. for Queenborough, and the Kent County Committee of literature distributed by Reynolds' troops. 'We send inclosed a printed paper, of which many copies have been spread about by the forces of Reynolds' troop; we need say nothing to you of the dangerous tendency thereof, but desire you to enquire into the author and spreaders of it, and certify what you shall discover.' No further report was made, so the author and exact pamphlet are unknown. John Reynolds was cashiered from his office in 1647 for his part as an agitator in the army, but according to Aylmer in 1648 he 'was allowed to recruit his own regiment as a kind of auxiliary force based in Kent, and this unit seems to have attracted a more than random number of soldiers with Leveller sympathies.' Robert Sliter, a Royalist from Chatham, had sight of a tract in 1648, which he described as a 'diabolicall libel and treasonous pamphlet', which was 'against all Regall authority and government', suggesting

⁸ MALSC, P85/1/3; TNA, SP18/16/124; Sandbrooke, *The Church, The proper subject*, preface

a Leveller pamphlet was circulating in Rochester where several of these soldiers were imprisoned. This demonstrates that a wide range of printed political matter of all persuasions was available locally in the wake of the Great Rebellion.⁹

During the twenty-year period of upheaval a wide range of religious literature of all hues circulated in the locality. In 1643-4 the Baptist, Henry Denne, published *Grace, Mercy and Peace* specifically 'for the Benefit of the City of Rochester', whilst the Presbyterian minister, William Sandbrooke, had his 1646 sermons printed especially for Gravesend and Rochester audiences. Joseph Salmon's recantation *Heights in Depths* was published in July-August 1651, whilst he was settled in the Medway Towns. His influence amongst the army and navy in the area in 1651 would indicate that his reputation was known locally and that access was available to both his previous and current work. Richard Coppin's material was owned by a few of the local ministers. William Sandbrooke had a copy of *Truths Testimony* and burnt it, whilst Rosewell was coy about owning a copy: 'if I had but your work here. Coppin: Why did you not bring it with you...'. Edward Garland obtained a copy of Coppin's *A blow at the Serpent* from his kinsman Robert Watson: 'I have read over Coppins book which you *were pleased to leave with me.*' In his preface, Rosewell, asserted that '*multitudes of Copies were dispersed in City and Country...*', suggesting that many local people had gone out and acquired a copy of Coppin's tract.¹⁰ The Medway Towns, thus, had access to a wide array of printed material for those capable of reading it.

There is an ongoing debate over whether literacy is critical to the understanding of news. Certainly the availability of print literature required an audience capable of reading it. Levels of literacy are perhaps indicative of how wide an audience print literature reached. Cressy concludes that signing was the only reliable measurement of literacy; calculating levels of 30 per cent in rural areas, but as high as 78 per cent in London. Margaret Spufford has contested some of

⁹ The Kentish Fayre; TNA, SP21/24/239, SP29/49/76; See DNB entry for Reynolds and Livesey.

¹⁰ Sandbrooke, *The Church, The proper subject*; Denne, *Grace, Mercy and Peace*; Salmon, *Heights in Depths*; *A Rout, A Rout*; Coppin, *A blow at the serpent* pp. 32, 63; Rosewell, *The serpents subtly discovered*, the preface; E Garland, *An answer to a printed book*, A2 dedicatory epistle, p. 83

Cressy's findings and does not necessarily equate the ability to sign as evidence of reading.¹¹ Adam Fox's more recent work on orality and literacy has questioned this distinction between orality and the printed or written word. His research has led him to conclude that there was a tremendous overlap in these different media and hence that literacy was not a necessary prerequisite for access to the printed or written word. The early modern period saw no correlation between the ability to read and write. Thus the ability to sign is no longer necessarily regarded as an accurate estimate of those that could read. Fox's estimation of literacy levels is about 50 per cent. In his opinion many more people had access to print material that was read aloud by friends, from the pulpit or notices posted at the market place and read by a passer-by. This was an age where those with limited reading skills would tend to read out aloud and be overheard by others. Many were able to read the printed word, but found difficulty in deciphering a written hand. Orality was in fact essential to discuss the printed word and thus foster debate.¹²

An alternative method of gauging literacy, suggested here, might be to combine signatures with those leaving recognizable marks in the form of their initials; perhaps an indicator that they had a rudimentary reading ability. From the Vow and Covenant of July 1643, preserved in the St Mary's vestry records, using the above method it is possible to reconstruct the literacy rates for Chatham. This record included all males over fifteen and numbered 287. Out of these 154 signed their names and another 64 left marks that were recognizable initials, suggesting that although not literate in the sense of being able to write they could identify letters and, therefore, had a reading ability. The number that could read was about 75 per cent, reflecting Chatham's close proximity to London and recruitment from many of its dockyards. Thomas Whitton, a storekeeper in the dockyard, had in 1651 kept a written account on 'the substance of such sermons as Mr Adderly preached on & after the 23rd November last as neere as he...could take it from his mouth.' A clear indicator that this worker could not merely read, but also note down several sermons he heard. Nearly all the vestrymen

¹¹ M. Spufford, *Small Books & Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction & its Readership in Seventeenth Century England*, (London, 1981) pp. 22, 27; Cressy, *Literacy & the Social Order*, pp. 72-73

¹² Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 5-48, 363-364

and parish officers could sign their name; out of several hundred who served from 1635-1659 only ten could not sign their names. There are no similar extant documents for Rochester, but the literacy of the councillors can be gleaned from the minute books. Of the 54 councillors, who served between 1640-1660 six could not sign their names and another two's signatures are not recorded. Most of Chatham's male parishioners and a good proportion of Rochester citizens could read, making much of the written as well as oral news accessible to all but a few.¹³

News distribution was considered rapid and widespread. Chatham dockyard sent regular reports to the Admiralty in London and these were received the following day in normal circumstances. Even at the height of the Great Rebellion in 1648 reports dispatched to London received a reply within a day or so. Philip Ward's letter of 21st May was received on the 22nd, discussed and answered the same day. More remarkable was the correspondence from Rochester of 21st May and Chatham of 23rd May, which Gilbert Mabbott had licensed to be printed in London on the following day. If news from the provinces could reach London the next day, so could that from London into the Medway Towns. Taylor's *A Carriers Cosmography* details some of the Kent routes and carriers in 1637. Rochester appears to have been served directly by water: 'A Hoigh from Rochester...doth come to St Katherines Dock'. Much of the mail came by water to Gravesend and was then carried by coach to Rochester.¹⁴ A regular postal network existed between London and the Medway Towns making the delivery of news possible within twenty-four hours.

Spufford and Raymond both emphasise the many pedlars and hawkers of pamphlets and ballads.¹⁵ In 1644 a petty chapman, Henry Platt from Maidstone, was created a freeman of the city, allowing him to peddle his wares. The middling and lower sort may well have purchased their copies of pamphlets from him, which was probably the case with the 1648 satire published locally.

¹³ MALSC, P85/8/1 ff. 17-21; P85/5/1; RCA/A1/1; RCAA1/2; TNA, SP18/23/32

¹⁴ Bob Lib, Tanner MS57 f. 93; A Letter from Kent; Sad Newes out of Kent; Taylor, *The Carriers Cosmography*, (London, 1637) p. C3

¹⁵ Spufford, *Small Books & Pleasant Histories*, pp. 118-126; J. Raymond, *Pamphlets & Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, (Cambridge, 2003) p. 56

Although this may have been the access point for merchants and tradesman, the elite would have visited a bookshop or had delivery via the post or a friend. The likes of Sandbrooke and Rosewell would have received their tracts by post or from a bookshop. Thomas Edwards reports in *Gangraena* how he met a Rochester Presbyterian minister in a London bookshop. Others had their books supplied by friends or kinsman. Edward Hayward's 1655 correspondence indicates that his tract was distributed to friends and colleagues in the navy personally.¹⁶ News was accessible to all classes in a variety of media.

However many historians argue that a public forum is also necessary, as well as access to the news, for public, as opposed to private debate, to occur. A social model of the public sphere was first propounded by Jürgen Habermas and placed at the turn of the eighteenth century. It was a theory peculiar to the economic and capitalist environment of that period. Habermas felt that the purpose of the public sphere was to allow critical debate to flourish. In order to do this it required certain criteria to be met; equality of access, liberty of speech and a politically neutral environment. He also regarded the model as fixed in time.¹⁷ A weakness of the model was that people and debate did not exist in a vacuum; people had vested interests. Joad Raymond has challenged both the theory and its flexibility. His case studies of the Interregnum and Restoration led him to conclude that in practice the Habermasian model could not be superimposed on another era and was thus redundant.¹⁸

Raymond does not, however, deny the need for a public sphere, but it could not conform to Habermas' high ideals. He considered that the 1640s' press: 'created an arena of propagandistic conflict which engaged with and stimulated public debate', thereby encouraging rather than stifling debate. David Zaret felt that the public sphere was a development of the English Revolution, a product of the increase in petitioning and print facilitated by the events of civil war divisions and political groupings. On the other hand Tim Harris does not accept the need

¹⁶ CSPD 1655 p. 104; MALSC, RCA/N1/13, Rochester Chamberlains Accounts 1643-1644; The Kentish Fayre; T. Edwards, *Gangraena*, (London, 1646) p. 213

¹⁷ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, (1989) pp. xvii, 14-16, 29, 33, 51-52, 57-58.

¹⁸ *ibid* p. 32; Raymond, 'The Newspaper,' pp. 111-125

for a public sphere for organised public opinion to develop.¹⁹ This thesis takes the stance that a public sphere was a vital component in the development of public opinion. For the purpose of this thesis a public sphere was a venue where people met to exchange news and debate views. This could range from the alehouse to the local church; from the workplace to the marketplace. These locations were accessible to all groups in society and had been so before the Civil War period.

A wide range of public spheres existed in the Medway Towns for the parishioners to hear the news and air their views. In 1655 Richard Coppin, banned from preaching in the cathedral, attracted a large crowd to his sermons in the college precincts and on the Common. Coppin could, thus, reach his desired audience both within the traditional sphere of the church and when required in the open air. The cathedral itself was the venue for a series of lectures and debates in the autumn of 1655 involving Coppin, local ministers of both Presbyterian and Independent persuasion, the army and local political elite. William Adderley, the sea chaplain, used St Mary's Chatham in 1651 to vent his personal and political grievances against the Pett family to his congregation of parishioners. Similarly Rosewell found St Mary's pulpit a good venue in 1649 'for bitter invecting against the proceedings of the Parliament and Army...'.²⁰ The pulpit had more than just a religious function and was often used in the Medway Towns for political purposes. Hence the public sphere of the church opened up both religious and political debate in the Medway Towns.

Equally important in fostering religious debate was the private house and workplace. During 1645-6 Robert Cossens allowed his house in Rochester to be used as a meeting place for the General Baptists, whilst the Chatham Baptists met in a private tenement leased from the Chatham Chest since 1653. Some of these Baptist meetings attracted large crowds, 160 people on one occasion, implying that this was a public rather than private venue and so capable of

¹⁹Zaret, 'Petitions and the "Invention" of Public Opinion', pp. 1497-1555; Raymond, 'The Newspaper' pp. 111-125; T. Harris, "'Venerating the Honesty of a Tinker": The King's Friends and the Battle of the Allegiance of the Common People in Restoration England', in (ed.) T. Harris, *The Politics of the Excluded C1500-1850*, (Basingstoke, 2001) p.221.

²⁰Coppin, *A blow at the serpent*, pp. 25, 79; Rosewell, *The serpents subtilty discovered*, pp. 14-16; TNA, SP18/23/30; SP18/65/29; CSPD 1650 p. 279

stimulating public debate. The workplace was also a public sphere for both religious and political discussion. In this respect Chatham dockyard, as a large government employer, presented a wider opportunity than most seventeenth century workplaces. William Adderley preached in the sail-loft every Sunday in the early 1650s as well as in the parish church. It was easy, therefore, for religious or political discussion to overspill into the surrounding dockyard workspace. Ample evidence of this is demonstrated in the Pett-Adderley dispute. The views heard in the parish church or sail-loft were circulated and debated within the dockyard, leading to the formation of factions and creating disunity in the workplace. Royalist supporters considered the dockyard an attractive sphere in 1648 to attempt to circulate the Kentish petition and gain backing for their standpoint. Both public and private space to a degree overlapped with no clear-cut boundaries.²¹

Debate also occurred on a more organised political level within both Rochester council and Chatham vestry. These were corporate spheres where the elite would discuss issues and form opinions. In the case of council and vestry meetings they were restricted to an elite group of people, often not meeting in public. However these were elected or chosen officials of a body who represented the opinions of the local community and at a corporate level would have conducted discussions and formed opinions based on the needs of the wider community. On that basis policy formulated at these meetings would be deemed to be representative of a degree of public opinion. Council minutes or vestry records were also kept of these meetings, placing them in the public domain.²² These two corporate spheres have been tackled in chapters' two to five.

2

The next two sections focus on a case study of public opinion in the Medway Towns. David Zaret has contended that petitioning was an indicator of public opinion and a propaganda weapon. One of the few surviving Kent petitions with

²¹ Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; MALSC, DRc/Arb/2 ff. 22-24; TNA, ADM 82/1 f. 5a; HMC Portland MS Vol. I pp. 459-462

²² MALSC, RCA/A1/1;RCA/A1/2; P85/5/1; P85/8/1

the signatures attached is that drawn up by Thomas Blount in May 1642, which includes a page of 181 names from the hundred of Chatham and Gillingham. Signatories to this petition were proclaiming their support for the Parliamentary cause and aims. At least 141 Chatham parishioners (population c. 1000) signed this petition compared to 185 in Canterbury, which was a city of about 7,000 inhabitants. This was a counter petition drawn up in response to the Kentish petition arranged by Edward Dering at the Maidstone Assizes in March 1642, setting out a Royalist agenda, and which was in turn countering two earlier petitions in February 1642 by the Parliamentarians, Anthony Weldon and Michael Livesey. Four petitions in as many months indicate that political campaigning was going on to attract support for both sides. Woods has pointed out that a new concept of canvassing for signatures had emerged. The Blount petition is a good example of how pages of signatures were gathered together from all over the county. Both the Kentish and Blount petitions were printed so that they could be widely circulated. In Chatham the Parliamentarians canvassed vigorously with 181 signatures gathered; probably at the parish church.²³

Over 60 percent of all Chatham male householders penned their names to this petition and supported the content of this document. The town had a history of Puritanism dating back to the turn of the seventeenth century with several religious petitions emanating from the parish before 1642. There is, thus, little doubt that the Chatham petitioners understood the nature of the religious and other reform demanded in the Blount petition. One of the demands of the petition was ‘for Reformation in the Church, for a Consultation with Godly and Learned Divines; and for the establishing of a Preaching Ministry throughout the whole Kingdome’. From the issues raised in the 1641 Chatham petition and the vestry’s recording of the acts of iconoclasm carried out in 1643, it is evident that the Chatham signatories to the Blount petition not only understood the

²³ Zaret, ‘Petitions and the “Invention” of Public Opinion’, pp. 1497-1555; Woods, *Prelude to Civil War*, pp. 3, 32, 35; J. Eales, ‘Kent and the English Civil Wars, 1640-1660’, in (ed.) F. Lansberry, *Government and Politics in Kent, 1640-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2001) pp. 13-14; ‘The Clergy and allegiance at the outbreak of the English Civil Wars: The case of John Marston of Canterbury’, *AC*, Vol. CXXXII (2012) p. 85; ‘Alan Everitt and the Community of Kent,’ p. 29

nature of the religious demands, but were keen to play an active role in ensuring that change was implemented. This petition does not detail what format the national church settlement should follow, but was perceived by some Chatham petitioners as a Presbyterian style of church government. Whilst this petition reflected the opinion of the majority of Chathamites and their support for the Parliamentary stance, there were nevertheless a minority who backed the Royalist cause and others, such as the more high-ranking Petts, who were not inclined to show their allegiance at this stage. A sign that not all were in agreement with the religious aims of the Blount petition is hinted at in the 1643 ‘vestry’ book, when Nicholas Pinder was employed ‘on every lords day, and ffast day at the church to keepe the boyes in order, or any others, that shall breed disturbance in the congregacion’. There was, thus, the concern that some were not in agreement with the religious changes, such as the removal of imagery and repositioning of the communion table, implemented at St Mary’s.²⁴

In contrast the 1648 Kentish petition had a different aim. The intention was to harness different disaffected groups under a political umbrella. This petition was orchestrated at the May Grand Jury in Canterbury and circulated all over the county. In all likelihood this was printed in order to mass as many signatures as possible. Although no signed copy survives, the lengths that the drafters went to capture and persuade public opinion is well recorded. Peter Pett wrote that on the 23rd May Thomas May, a Rochester alderman and member of the ‘pretended’ committee, came to the dockyard and requested him ‘to signe their petition’ and ‘give them leave to gett hands to it in the yard...’. Thus great efforts were made to distribute the petition amongst workers and seamen at Chatham dockyard. An anonymous letter in May 1648 claimed that 27,373 signed the petition. Whilst this figure may be grossly exaggerated, the anecdotal evidence, discussed in chapters’ two and four, indicates that the use of petitioning as a propaganda tool had worked. Everitt concluded that this was a Royalist petition. The content of the petition is quite broad; seeking a constitutional settlement, the disbanding of the standing army, rule by the established laws of the land and no illegal taxation. In Everitt’s view the Kentish

²⁴ MALSC, P85/8/1 f. 14; BL, Add 26785, ff. 211-212; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/121

petition was inward looking and highlighted local grievances. However the petitioners expressed their unity with other counties in the sufferings they had endured and cloaked their grievances in a general ideological context of defending their rights and liberties. This petition was also an anti-committee agenda. It was, thus, a petition that could appeal to all groups that were disillusioned with Parliament and the Kent County Committee. Disaffected Kentish men of all political persuasions; Royalist, Presbyterians and neutrals, backed and signed this petition.²⁵

This was particularly evident in the Medway Towns. Chatham, a Presbyterian stronghold, had wide dockyard support for the petition and subsequent rebellion. Whilst the Kentish petition does not make any particular religious demands, it does mention the desire for a peaceful church settlement; a sentiment that was supported by many of the Chatham rebels. In Rochester both Royalists and Presbyterians participated in the rebellion and allegedly signed this petition. Rochester rebels had issues with taxation and the army as well as the Kent County Committee. Philip Ward, Mayor of Rochester, articulated these grievances in a letter to Parliament of 21st May 1648, phrasing the letter in brackets as from the 'common people'. The city's argument was basically with the Kent County Committee and its treatment of them: 'being exasperated by such facts, expressions, and sufferings...'. For Ward and other Rochester rebels the Kentish petition expressed many of their concerns and grievances. The Kentish petition clearly reflected the local rebels' general discontent with political events in May 1648. In this instance the disaffected united to get redress for their grievances by petitioning and protesting, using the Kentish petition as a vehicle to mobilise a disparate group of people to form a coalition.²⁶

Petitions emanating from within the Medway Towns best reflect the stance of local people. A series of religious petitions from Chatham are extant for the

²⁵ The Humble Petition, (1648) pp. 2-3; HMC Portland MS Vol I pp. 459-462; A Letter Declaratorie, *to the Disturbers of the Peace...* (May 1648) - This was in fact drawn up by L'Estrange; A Letter from a gentleman in Kent (1648) p12 -This tract makes similar claims of 30-35,00 petitioners; Everitt, 'Kent and its gentry', pp. 316-318; Eales, 'Kent and the Civil War', pp. 24-25

²⁶ The Humble Petition (1648); Bod Lib, Tanner MS57 f93; A Declaration of the Several Proceedings, pp. 9-10; HMC Portland MS Vol I pp. 459-462

period in question. Chatham had a history of petitioning that can be traced back to 1602 on particular religious issues. On that occasion the parishioners backed their Puritan lecturer William Bradshaw, who was under threat of ejection following a heresy charge by Henry Bearblocke, by petitioning the Bishop of Rochester. In 1635 the dockyard workers petitioned the Admiralty to get their Puritan minister, John Piham, appointed as sea chaplain rather than the Laudian candidate, Thomas Grayne.²⁷ Although unsuccessful on both occasions they were to persist in their attempts to secure a Puritan minister or lecturer.

In 1641 the inhabitants were behind a petition to remove their Laudian minister, Thomas Vaughan. Their petition against Vaughan was both articulate and based on ideological concerns of idolatry and political allegiance. Issues raised include Vaughan's 'superstitious' practices: He 'is a man superstitiously afflicted in urging and pressing of ceremonies in his pulpit...'. Point two states that 'Hee hath laboured, these two years or more, to sett the Communion Table altar wise, rayled about...'. Further popish practices included Vaughan 'provoking the people in his publique teaching to bow knee at the name of Jesus, binding the conscience of his hearers unto a necessitie of that act, under a curse, that their bowels might dropp out that did not observe it'. In point four the parishioners claim that Vaughan failed to preach what was subscribed 'by an order...from authoritie' and he thanked 'God for that miraculous worke in preventing' him from delivering such sermons. A clear indication that Vaughan used the pulpit to deliver anti-Parliamentarian rhetoric. Point seven indicates 'Hee is a turbulent man, full of differences and controversies with his parishioners.'²⁸ This petition demonstrates the opinion of the dockyard workers and parishioners; that Vaughan was clearly at odds with his parish on both religious and political issues.

The Presbyterian viewpoint of the petitioners is evident in their reaction to Vaughan's opinion of the Scots: who 'utter(s) his bitter execrations against the Scottish nation...calling them daring Rebels, whose faith is faction...whose religion is nothing but rebellion...'. From the final summing up it is obvious

²⁷ Gataker, 'The life and death of Mr William Bradshaw', pp.106-119; TNA, SP16/295/26

²⁸ BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212

that there was also friction with the Laudian cathedral authorities at Rochester, who they felt had imposed Vaughan upon them. On one level this petition articulated the petitioners' objections to Vaughan's stance, whilst on another it left behind a trace of their own ideological views and opinions. The original petition is different in tone and content to that published in 1643 by John White in *The first Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests*. White put his own spin on the petition, portraying Vaughan as a drunkard and accusing him of calling the Parliamentarians 'a company of logger headed fellows.'²⁹

The parishioners had to endure Vaughan a few years longer, but in the meantime sought to secure a Puritan lecturer for the parish by petitioning the House of Commons in December 1642. Parliament's choice was Samuel Annesley, a Presbyterian minister, who was 'to preach there every Lord's Day in the afternoon, and One Day in the Week; and to preach in the Afternoon on every Fast Day.' This must have been music to the ears of many Puritan parishioners, who had little choice until then but to hear Laudian style sermons from either Vaughan or the sea chaplain, Grayne. In the 1641 Chatham petition the dockyard men protested at Vaughan's lack of preaching on Sundays and in 1649 commented that Grayne's abilities were 'noe way suteable to that great worke'. Annesley's arrival meant the parishioners had access to frequent and 'godly' sermons.³⁰

At Vaughan's ejection in 1643 Ambrose Clare took on the mantle of minister, but in 1647 he was offered an alternative living at Poltimore in Devon. However some parishioners were eager to retain his services. In March 1647 three dockyard officers, Captain Phineas Pett, Edward Hayward and Henry Goddard, petitioned the Admiralty on behalf of the dockyard to this effect. The Admiralty wrote a letter to Clare, dated 30th March 1647, trying to persuade him to stay. 'We have received notice that some endeavours are used to remove you from Chatham where you have spent some time in the exercise of your Ministry to the contentment of your hearers & (as we hoped) to the doing of much good... And perceive you are there well beloved & much desired & should take much

²⁹ BL, Add 26785, ff. 211-212; White, *The First Century*, pp. 43-44; See DNB entry for White

³⁰ CJ Vol. 2 20/12/1642; TNA, SP18/16/124

contentment in your Resolucion to continue there still, that you may see the fruite of your former paines & glad the parishioners by there hopes of enjoying your further labour...'. This correspondence again shows that Chatham dockyard personnel were willing to actively pursue their religious interests. Clare may, however, have considered it judicious to take up a new appointment at that particular time. Within the same Admiralty ledger is an instruction to Phineas Pett and Charles Bowles to supply the Admiralty with 'the names of such officers or other persons employed in the Navy as did lately disturb Mr Clare Minister of Chatham at the time of his administring the holy sacrament & have or doe countenance the reinvesting of Mr Vaughan the evicted Minister there, he being cast out of the said liveing as this Committee it is informed by authority of Parliament.' Evidently a small element of dockyard workers retained Laudian sympathies and were prepared to protest against their Presbyterian incumbent, desiring the reinstatement of the recently ejected minister, Thomas Vaughan. All sides in Chatham were capable of voicing their religious opinions and reacting to different viewpoints.³¹

Thomas Grayne was removed as sea chaplain in 1649 for his involvement in the Kent Rebellion. This left a vacancy, which Chatham dockyard men were keen to ensure would be filled by a 'godly' minister. In September 1649 fifty-one dockyard and naval workers from Chatham invited William Adderley, by letter, to become their new sea chaplain. We 'whose names are heereunder subscribed belonging to the Navye being well satisfied of the abilityes & Godlynesse of yourselfe so as to inable you for such an Employment, doe make it our joynt and earnest request that you would bee pleased to accept of the place wherin wee shall expect only preaching expounding of Scripture and Catechising of youth from you...'. These petitioners had heard him preach and were convinced he was the right minister for them. The petitioners added: 'wee are confident you will endeavour the glory of God in the conversion of soules'. Chatham dockyard men considered that there were many in the town who needed spiritual guidance and that Adderley had the religious credentials to fulfil this task.³²

³¹ TNA, ADM7/673 ff. 243, 264

³² TNA, SP18/16/124

The petitioners had certain standards that their ministers should adhere to. When Adderley fell short of these expectations and, as an outsider, used the pulpit to criticise some of the local dockyard elite, they used the same weapon, petitioning, to remove him. Adderley antagonised many of the local people with his accusations and factionalism in the early 1650s. Twelve of the above petitioners, who supported him in 1649, were prepared to give evidence against him at an inquiry in January 1652. The articles presented against Adderley at this inquiry accused him of particular preaching: ‘not long since instead of preaching Christ fell upon bitter Invectives against particular persons which was taken notice of by very many in the Congregation...’. This was one example of the pulpit being used to express a political opinion and influencing some of the dockyard workers against the Pett family.³³ He became even more unpopular after being appointed minister for St Mary’s in March 1652. A petition of January 1654, styled from ‘divers well affected parishioners of Chatham’, indicates William Adderley was up to his old tricks again, ‘fomenting differences betweene the Officers in the States Yard (dividing them into ffactions).’ The vestry met to consider a permanent appointment in January 1654, but felt this required more ‘mature deliberacion’. However in the meantime they petitioned for the temporary reinstatement of their previous incumbent, Walter Rosewell. Outside interference in their choice of ministers was not welcomed. Walter Rosewell’s dismissal from office in 1650 for sedition was perceived as central interference in Chatham’s religious affairs. The petitioners also considered Adderley had been imposed upon the parish without their consent and so asked to have their ‘just priviledge of which for some yeares they have been deprived,’ allowing them to choose a suitable minister, restored. Ultimately the parishioners did not get their desired outcome, but had to accept a joint ministry of Adderley and Rosewell.³⁴

The next occasion of religious petitioning from Chatham was on Rosewell’s death and again involved Adderley. In early 1659 the navy and other inhabitants of Chatham petitioned Edward Montagu, that ‘they lately invited a gentleman from London to preach amongst them upon likeing, but the pulpit

³³ TNA, SP18/23/30; SP18/16/124

³⁴ TNA, SP18/79/206; SP18/65/29; SP18/77/85; CSPD 1651-1652 pp. 169-170

being denied him by the Minister of the Navy, they are at a Stand, what to doe, or how to proceede any further to the satisfaction of the parish, unlessee that obstruction be removed...'. Adderley was the obstacle in question, who refused their choice of minister, Thomas Carter, access to the pulpit. Chatham petitioners made it clear they had endured him on sufferance and it was now their wish to not only 'be free as to their Election of a minister, but also that they may have the pulpitt wholly at their dispose[al]'.³⁵ This petition made it abundantly clear that they no longer wanted Adderley to minister unto them.

Chatham parishioners had traditionally used petitioning to resolve their issues, especially those of a religious nature, and continued to successfully use this as part of their weaponry during the English Revolution. Rochester and Chatham inhabitants also used other routes besides petitioning to engage with the leading political and religious issues of the day. The two most effective ways of communicating views were print or the pulpit, as both had potentially large audiences.

3

Jason Peacey maintains that print had the potential to reach a much wider audience than the pulpit. Yet Jacqueline Eales' work on Kent demonstrates the centrality of the pulpit to local religious debate. She contends that a diverse range of religious opinion circulated in Kent with many preachers using the pulpit to disseminate their religious and political views. The pulpit was, therefore, the stimulus for religious debate in the local community and reached all social levels. However, as Peacey argues, to reach a national audience these local sermons or debates had to be published.³⁶ This case study of the Medway Towns examines whether the pulpit or print had most impact upon fostering local debate. The Medway Towns experienced a wide array of outside preachers, ranging from the Episcopalian to the conservative Presbyterian; from both the Particular and General Baptists to the more extreme groupings of Quakers and

³⁵ TNA, SP18/205/52

³⁶ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 6; Eales, 'Provincial preaching', pp. 185-207; Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 5-9

Ranters. Virtually every branch of religious persuasion was available at some stage between 1640-1660 in Rochester and Chatham. These preachers often attracted large and diverse audiences. This created an atmosphere of widespread discussion, which consequently led to an element of schism in the local community.

Many religious issues dominated debate in the early 1640s. Amongst these was the location of the altar in the body of the church and whether it should be railed or not. Under Archbishop Laud a policy of placing the altar in the east end of the church and railing it had been adopted in order to distance and separate the altar from the congregation, thereby creating a sense of reverence around the act of worship. Walter Balcanquall, Dean of Rochester, had promoted this Laudian stance as early as 1633. He declared that ‘we must observe a reverend distance in all our approaches which we make to God...’. Puritans, however, associated the tradition of railing the altar with ‘popish’ practice and, hence, opposed it. The Medway Towns entered into a vigorous debate on this topic. By 1640 acts of iconoclasm against the altar had already taken place in various Essex parishes. This may have prompted Henry King to comment on these acts of destruction in his sermon of March 1640. King, Dean of Rochester, delivered his sermon at St Paul’s on the anniversary of Charles’ coronation. He challenged those that regarded the Anglican liturgy as ‘Romish Superstition’ and ‘any such amongst us...that destroy, where they might Build hopes of amendment; or Pluck up by the Root, where they need but pare the Lease...’.³⁷ His belief was that many of the differences could be ironed out within the existing religious framework without all this destruction and wholesale uprooting of many Anglican ceremonies. Richard Tray, rector of Bredhurst, also attacked the Puritans, who consider that ‘our rites, ceremonies and gestures are Popish and *Superstitious*’, during a sermon delivered at the Inns of Court in late 1642 or early 1643. As an Episcopalian his reaction may well have been in response to the acts of iconoclasm carried out at Rochester cathedral in 1642 when the altar rails were broken. Both sermons were subsequently published to reach a wider audience. Richard Tray’s sermon was preached at the behest of Henry Clerke, the

³⁷ Balcanquall, *The honour of Christian Churches*, p. 12; King, *A sermon preached at St Pauls*, pp. 45, 49

recorder of Rochester, in front of a relatively small number. In all likelihood Clerke was behind the publication of this sermon, so that it could reach a local as well as a national audience.³⁸

Whilst, the above two clergymen defended the ceremonies of the Anglican Church, the Chatham parishioners petitioned against their Laudian minister Thomas Vaughan in 1641, perceiving him as ‘a man superstitiously affected in urging and pressing of ceremonies in his pulpit...’. Vaughan was accused of not only railing the communion table, but ‘giving his reasons out of the pulpit, for the decensie of it, complaining how hee is abased in administering the sacrament, going from pew to pew...’. The largely Puritan congregation had been happy with this previous practice and were moved to protest that their religious rights had been violated. In June 1643, while Vaughan was still minister, the vestrymen arranged that ‘The Comunion Table was removed from the chancel into the body of the church...’ and paid ‘3 joyners... for the shortening and new fitting of 8 pews to make way for the Comunion table, which by order of parliament, was removed into the body of the Church.’ From the entries in the vestry book and churchwardens’ accounts it is obvious there had been a period of debate between the vestrymen and parishioners over the Laudian practice of separating and railing the altar, which was to result in the parishioners collectively agreeing to dismantle the altar in a planned fashion.³⁹

Another bone of contention in this period was the Common Prayer Book, which many felt under the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 was still tainted with popery. King defended the 1559 Common Prayer Book, which had ‘occasioned so much Cavill’ declaring it had changed little since the Reformation and observed that apart from one omission and one addition it was in essence the same as the King Edward VI version. Richard Tray stated that ‘Schismatickes’ maintain that ‘our Common-prayer Booke, are used in the Masse-booke of the Church of Rome’ and ‘therefore our Common-prayer Booke hath Popery in it.’ His desire was ‘to stop the mouthes of our bawling Schismatickes, who... decry our common Service’. In 1642 Sandys’ troops had strewn ‘the Pavement with the

³⁸ Tray, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, pp. address, 18-19

³⁹ BL, Add MS 26785 ff. 211-212; MALSC, P85/8/1, f. 14; P85/5/1, 1643-1644 accounts

torne mangled leaves of the booke of Common-Prayer...' from Rochester cathedral. The soldiery thereby expressed their contempt for this 'popish' innovation. Tray's sermon was delivered not long after this incident and was circulating in print by February 1643. Both Tray and Henry Clerke would have been familiar with this event and used this sermon to express their feelings on the matter. Chatham vestry disposed of its prayer book in 1644 with the inventory noting that 'this was carried away by Mr Bends', but whether any discussion took place beforehand is unrecorded.⁴⁰

The most outspoken opinion against the Common Prayer Book came from the Baptist Robert Cossens. Cossens was charged with blasphemy in August 1644. His brother, John, recollected in his deposition against him: that 'they fell into discourse concerning the Book of Common Prayer, when the said Robert laid a wager that the same should be put down within a moneth, and should be read no more...'. Francis Tillett, in his deposition of August 1644 and examination before the Kent County Committee in November 1644, stated that whilst on sentry duty during Lent 1643 he, Cossens and a few others were discussing 'the troubles of the Church' and in particular 'were talking of the Common Prayer, and the Lords Prayer' when he reiterated 'That the Lords Prayer was taught unto *him by his Forefathers, and that it was of Christ's making and framing*, whereunto Robert Cossens replied, That if our saviour were again upon earth he would be *ashamed of what he had done...*'. Tillett also confirmed that when relating this episode to John Cossens he responded 'that his Brother Robert had said as much unto him before.' The dating of the discussion to Lent 1643 would suggest that Cossens had read Tray's sermon, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, which had recently come out in print. From the depositions, printed by Thomas Edwards a defender of Presbyterianism, it is evident that Robert Cossens had railed against the use of the Prayer Book on several occasions to his brother and workmates. This account was reported to Thomas Edwards by a local Presbyterian minister, possibly Thomas Case, and subsequently included it in his work *Gangraena*. John Goodwin, an Independent minister and campaigner for religious toleration, defended Cossens in *Cretensis*, which led to Edwards divulging his source and

⁴⁰ King, *A sermon preached at St Pauls*, pp. 46-47; Tray, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, p. 19; *Mercurius Rusticus* p. 200; MALSC, P85/5/1, 1644 inventory

printing the evidence in another edition of his work. Although Cossens had not originally sought to publicise his views he met Goodwin and gave him the details: ‘This Counter-Information I had from the mouth of the said Cosens himselfe, and have the particulars under his hand.’ Cossens also sought out Edwards on 30th March 1646 to give him his version of the proceedings against him. At this point Cossens must have been aware that he was the subject of a wider religious debate and used Goodwin and Edwards to make his views known to a broader public.⁴¹ The Medway Towns experienced a range of debate from defence of the Common Prayer Book to open attack upon it.

In 1646 the idea was mooted to introduce a Presbyterian style church government into Kent, but this was never actually implemented. Although this did not come to fruition, Presbyterians remained a strong force in Kent and issued a declaration, which was to be read in all parish churches in January 1647, demanding a ‘well-grounded Government in Church & State...’ and suppression of the Independent sects.⁴² William Sandbrooke preached to both his own congregation of Rochester St Margaret’s and Gravesend in 1646 concerning the subject of the ‘new covenant’ and with the support of the Kent County Committee called for a Presbyterian style church government. His own thoughts were that ‘the wisdom of the State’ should ‘set up a way which is Uniforme...’. Despite the Medway Towns being a Presbyterian stronghold Sandbrooke noted that ‘Exceptions were taken by such as heard them not delivered, but by report...’. He addressed the Gravesend mayor and jurats: ‘*You know how it was calumnized, and with what bitterness interpreted by him who heard it not...I commend them to you, to judge whether the things are censurable or no...*’. It is interesting that Sandbrooke did not address his publication to Rochester corporation; the city being a hotbed of Baptist activity at that time. Sandbrooke never had that close link with Rochester aldermen that the other Medway Presbyterian ministers had. The notion of a Presbyterian settlement would have neither appealed to Episcopalians such as Tray, who wished to retain the bishops or radical groups such as the Baptists at Rochester.

⁴¹ Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; The second part of *Gangraena*, pp. 115-121; Goodwin, *Cretensis*, pp. 38-41; See DNB entries for Edwards and Goodwin.

⁴² A Declaration set forth by the Presbyterians within the County of Kent, (1647)

Yet Sandbrooke was not the only Presbyterian minister to come under attack. Ambrose Clare of Chatham was attacked in 1647 by a small group of Laudians, demanding ‘the reinvesting of Mr Vaughan the evicted Minister there...’. John Goodwin claimed in *Cretensis* that Robert Cossens had told Ambrose Clare after hearing him preach that ‘he had not delivered the Truth...’. Edwards’ version was more explicit: ‘and this *Cossens is so bold...and threatened upon hearing him to complain of him, and put in Articles against him.*’ Although Clare came under attack from both Laudians and Baptists, he unlike Sandbrooke, had the backing of the navy and dockyard hierarchy.⁴³ At both Rochester and Chatham parishioners were able to discuss and express their opinion on Presbyterianism. In Chatham a small group went so far as to openly challenge the minister during the service.

Although the finer ideological points were discussed, the overarching concern of Medway ministers in the first half of the 1640s was the division caused by religious diversity. Henry King thought that the Presbyterians had challenged Charles’ position as God’s divinely elected head of the Anglican Church. He likened the sects to weeds that throttled true religion, i.e. Anglicanism: ‘the Schismatick is a Thorne in the sides of the Church, the factious a Thistle in the State.’ Tray felt trapped in a religious minefield: ‘For the truth (which [lies] betwixt the Charybidis of Papisme, and Scylla of Brownisme, is now likely to suffer *shipwrecke*)...’. ‘Tis the Brownisticall Puritan, and Papisticall Arminian hath done all this.’ Even Sandbrooke was saddened ‘in these tumultuous dayes sorely perplext with contentions and difficulties...’. He added that in this ‘condition, I steared a course as neare as I could: betwixt these two desperate rocke(s)...’. His sermon clearly identified the two parties as ‘A speckled Bird’, referring to the sects, and the other Episcopalians, who were so preoccupied with condemning the other that they were ‘opening a way to the unsettling of the peace and unitie of the Church.’⁴⁴

⁴³ Sandbrooke, *The Church, the proper subject*, pp. A3- A6, A11, A13-14, 7; TNA, ADM7/673 ff. 243, 264; Goodwin, *Cretensis*, p. 40; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213

⁴⁴ King, *A Sermon preached at St Pauls*, pp. 28-29, 34; Tray, *The Right Way to Protestantisme*, pp. A2, 21; Sandbrooke, *The Church, The proper subject*, pp. 4-6

These comments were based upon the personal experiences of the ministers in their local communities. Richard Tray resided in Boxley and was familiar with the Brownists, who had operated in the vicinity since the 1620s, whereas Sandbrooke witnessed firsthand the progress and expansion of the General Baptists in Rochester from 1644. There was a wide diversity of religious opinion surfacing in Rochester at this time with the council submitting the names of four local candidates to Parliament as suitable, godly, orthodox ministers for the cathedral, ranging from a Baptist to a Presbyterian and a conformist to a Laudian. Because of this wide diversity of opinion division and schism was perhaps inevitable. Although a countywide Presbyterian settlement was never achieved, the Medway Towns of necessity was to create a strong Presbyterian network of its own after the Great Rebellion, which gave support to Presbyterian ministers and defended Presbyterianism when it came under attack.⁴⁵

An issue that caused much debate in the mid-1640s was salvation; general versus predestination. This ongoing debate spanned about a fifteen-year period and involved all religious persuasions, suggesting that the Medway Towns had a considerable and receptive audience for the concept of universal salvation. The Medway Towns were unusual in that both the Particular and General Baptists had gained a foothold by 1645. William Kiffin, a Particular Baptist, toured Kent in 1643-4, whilst Benjamin Cox preached at Strood in 1645, following his conversion from the General Baptists. Two of the General Baptist leaders, Henry Denne and Thomas Lambe, held regular meetings in Rochester between 1643-1646, as did the Kent preacher Nicholas Woodman of Dover. Stephen Wright contends that in the early 1640s there was no clear distinction in the definition of redemption between the two strands of Baptists, who worked and worshipped alongside each other. It was not till 1644 that fissures appeared and a clear separation occurred. In Wright's opinion both believed in an element of predestination. As Benjamin Cox argued God preordained the elect and only they could be saved. Thomas Lambe wrote *Christ Crucified* in 1646, which reinforced his earlier view that general atonement had to be qualified by particular election. All had the potential for redemption, but they had to become

⁴⁵ Wharton (ed.), *History of the Troubles and Tryal of William Laud*, p. 535; Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 546.

believers to do so. Wright contends that although some General Baptists had taken on board the notion of universal salvation with no qualification, this was played down by the leaders as it smacked of antinomianism.⁴⁶ This view was espoused very early on by Henry Denne.

David Como considers that antinomianism was a ‘heretical notion that believers were free from the Moral Law’. Antinomianism had its background in the Puritan movement of the late 1620s and 1630s. Como contends that antinomianism was an underground branch of Puritanism; a radical strand. Both Puritans and the antinomian wing ‘argued that true believers would be utterly sanctified by the experience of divine grace,’ but had varying opinions on how this manifested itself. As Como clearly spells out, ‘freedom from sin did not mean freedom to sin’. The upheaval of 1640-1 and breakdown of press censorship permitted this underground movement to ‘come into the open’. Como argues that religious groups or individuals then assimilated antinomian ideas together with other particular teachings, e.g. Denne coupled the notion of free grace with believer’s baptism.⁴⁷

Contemporaries clearly labelled Henry Denne as an antinomian. The Assembly of Divines sent a petition to the House of Commons on 10th August 1643, accusing several Baptists, including Denne, of antinomianism. Two Presbyterian opponents, Thomas Rotherham and Nathaniel Holmes, openly attacked Denne’s antinomian views in print. Both Rotherham and Holmes accused him of espousing the view that justification came before faith, which went against the grain of Calvinist belief that justification was by faith alone. Denne had preached and published a number of contentious sermons on baptism and God’s grace between 1641-1644, which were deemed to be antinomian in character. Amongst these were two sermons he delivered at Rochester and then had printed in one pamphlet, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, ‘for the Benefit of the City of

⁴⁶ Howard, *A Looking Glass for Baptists* p. 5; S. Wright, *The early English Baptists 1603-1649*, (Woodbridge, 2006) pp. 115-116, 119; Lambe, *Christ Crucified*, See DNB entries for Lambe and Denne; Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 213; The second part of *Gangraena*, p. 125; J. Spilsbury & B. Coxe, *Gods Ordinance...*, (1646) Cox’s Address, pp. 39-80

⁴⁷ D. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England*, (Stanford, 2004) pp. 1, 3, 8, 22-25, 28, 426, 434, 447, 455

Rochester'.⁴⁸ The Wing catalogue dates this tract to 1645, whilst his biographer, Ted Underwood, cites it as circa 1640. However Holmes wrote *An Antidote to Antinomianism* in early 1644, which countered two of Denne's works, including *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*. This places the publication of the first version of this tract to between November 1643 and February 1644. Holmes by his own account acted swiftly in replying to Denne's treatise. Thomason purchased Holmes' pamphlet on 13th April 1644, indicating a print run of March-April that year.⁴⁹ Rochester corporation was ordered by Parliament in November 1643 to provide a shortlist of suitable preachers for the cathedral and in February 1644 supplied Parliament with a choice of four candidates, which included Henry Denne, who was at that point resident in the city. Denne's arrival in the city must have been fairly recent, as his pamphlet indicates: 'I am this day by the providence of the Almighty, come a stranger to your City...'. Presumably Denne was given the opportunity along with the other potential candidates to preach in the cathedral and used these sermons to influence the corporation to nominate him.⁵⁰ The publication of *Grace, Mercy, and Peace* had a twofold function; to impress the city council and to answer local opponents, who attacked his beliefs.

Contemporaries considered Denne a very entertaining and persuasive preacher, who appealed to the common sort and could explain his tenets in simple terms. The ordinary citizens of Rochester were his target audience. 'This that hath been spoken may prove a helpe to administer a spirit of discerning unto the simple, in these distracted times, wherein the Commonwealth is not more distracted than the Church. Now among so many diversities of opinions, how shall we know which is the old and the good way, that we may walk in it?'⁵¹ However from Denne's comments in *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, it is obvious that a number of

⁴⁸ T. Rotherham, *A den of thieves discovered*, (October 1643) passim – Rotherham addresses this tract to the Assembly of Divines; D. H., *An antidote against Antinomianisme*, (1644) passim; B. Howson, *Erroneous and schismatic opinions: The questions of orthodoxy regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (c.1599-1691)*, (Leiden, 2001) pp. 79, 99-101 – He names Nathaniel Holmes (DH) as the author of the above tract.

⁴⁹ See EEBO for Wing dating; See DNB entry for Denne; Holmes, *An antidote against Antinomianisme*, p. 42 – the postscript; E. Underhill, *Records of the Church of Christ at Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham, 1644-1720*, (London, 1854) p. ix.

⁵⁰ Bod Lib, Tanner MS 62b ff. 545-546; Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, pp. 5-6 (single version with faulty pagination); W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, (London, 1923) p. 69

⁵¹ Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena*, p. 23 (second series pagination); Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, pp. 58-59

local ministers voiced their objections to or countered Denne's radical opinions on both baptism and salvation. Denne used these two sermons to answer his opponents: 'But I perceive by this objection, that thou accountedst this a doctrine of libertie, to declare the free love of God in Jesus Christ: and thou thinkest it were better to hide this from the people, and to terrifie them with Hell fire, with wrath, and judgement, and with the fierie flashings of Mount Sinai, and to keepe them in bondage.' Here Denne was attacking the local church ministers, whom he considered kept the ordinary people in the dark about God's plan of salvation for all.⁵²

According to Thomas Edwards and other contemporaries, Denne preached the message of universal salvation. Edwards considered him 'a great Antinomian, and a desperate Arminian', who believed that Christ died 'for Judas as well as *Peter*.' In *Gangraena* Edwards claimed that Denne 'often preached the everlasting Gospel, to believe that Jesus Christ hath died for all men, Turks, Pagans; and that all the sins of men committed against the Moral law, were actually, forgiven and pardoned when Jesus Christ shed his blood; and none of them that ever men had committed, or should, were imputed to them; but men were only damned for not believing in Christ...'.⁵³ Grace, Mercy and Peace set out to reinforce the message that all could be saved. 'He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. Again, Hee hath predestinated us unto to the adoption of sonnes, by Jesus Christ to himselfe, according to the good pleasure of *his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace...*'. Denne believed 'that the Gospel of peace should bee preached to all Nations.' In principle Christ died that all had the potential to be saved; believer and unbeliever. Man had free will and could choose to believe or not believe. On their baptism the believer became part of the elect and could not, in the eyes of God, commit 'actual' sin. 'God is freely, and fully reconciled to the elect, and loveth them in Jesus Christ without any previous dispositions, without any qualifications, without any performances of

⁵² Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, pp. 50-51

⁵³ Edwards, ; *The first and second part of Gangraena*, (3rd ed, 1646) pp. 22-23 (second series pagination - Trinity College, Dublin version); Rotherham, *A den of thieves discovered*; Holmes, *An antidote against Antinomianisme*

conditions on their parts...'. This notion that justification came before faith and the inability of the believer to sin were considered antinomian.⁵⁴

Denne's views on free grace and his belief that the elect could not commit 'actual' sin presented a conundrum. He was quizzed by his opponents over the need to use the Lord's Prayer and, in particular, '*forgive us our trespasses*', if the believer could not commit sin in the eyes of God. His response in *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, was to argue that this was a reassurance to the elect of God's mercy rather than a request for pardon from sin. A debate over the importance of the Lord's Prayer had already occurred between Robert Cossens, his brother and work colleagues during Lent 1643. In August 1644 Cossens denied he had rejected the Lord's Prayer as the work of a child. However Cossens was always outspoken, holding radical opinions. Cossens' denial of these former views may have been genuine, as he had heard Denne's explanation of the significance of the Lord's Prayer in the interim. He was convinced by the General Baptists' message of universal salvation, inviting Denne and others to use his home as a Baptist meeting-place on his release from prison in 1645. It is evident that some of the tradesmen in Rochester had already been discussing issues in the church and Denne's arrival merely spurred on and widened the debate. Debate was, thus, stimulated locally by Denne's two preached sermons as well as the publication of them.⁵⁵

The next stage in the local debate over salvation took place in 1645. Thomas Lambe, a frequent visiting preacher to Rochester, encountered Benjamin Cox delivering a sermon on redemption in Strood at this time. This was shortly after Cox's conversion from the General to Particular Baptists. Lambe challenged Cox in print: 'But if you restraine it from any person, as you did in your preaching at Strood, neere Rochester, in handling this scripture, then your grant of some sence is but a meere colour, to cover over the business withal, to deceive yourself and others....'. In this instance Lambe was accusing Cox of restricting salvation to believers only, i.e. Christ died to atone the sins of the elect or baptised only, whilst preaching at Strood. Yet as Lambe pointed out, on being

⁵⁴ Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, pp. 11-12, 26

⁵⁵ *ibid*, pp. 44-45; Goodwin, *Cretensis*, p. 39; Edwards, *The second part of Gangraena*, pp. 115-121

baptised Cox had declared that even the sins of Cain, an unbeliever, could be atoned and had persuaded Lambe to acknowledge that Christ died for the remission of sins of all. This contrary viewpoint preached by Benjamin Cox in the vicinity of Rochester, which was a General Baptist domain, undermined the work of Denne and Lambe.⁵⁶

A second print run of Denne's *Grace, Mercy, and Peace* was produced together with his other 1643 tract, *Seven Arguments*. It has several features that distinguish it from the first edition, e.g. the word city is spelt citie and the preface is spread over two pages rather than just one. *Seven Arguments*, was a response to a critic and was written in reaction to Thomas Rotherham's attack upon him in 1643. All of this points to the second edition of *Grace, Mercy, and Peace* being published in defence of the General Baptist stance on universal salvation when it was under attack again locally in 1645. Both tracts were included as this was a twofold response; to counter Cox publicly, hence the inclusion of *Seven Arguments*, and again to reassure the people of Rochester that all could be saved.⁵⁷ A local debate, therefore, took place on the topic of general redemption in Strood and Rochester in 1645, which influenced such men as Robert Cossens. This disputation led to answers and challenges in print as well as the re-print of earlier tracts to reach a wider audience. How much of this material was available locally or read by the populace of Rochester is unclear, but both editions of *Grace, Mercy, and Peace* were specifically produced for the city. Rochester had witnessed the first few episodes of an ongoing debate in the Medway Towns over the issue of general salvation, which was to culminate in the 1655 Coppin debates.

According to Richard Coppin some discussion took place during the autumn of 1655 between the Presbyterian, Walter Rosewell, and the Independent sea chaplain, Lawrence Wise, concerning the issue of general redemption. Rosewell had told Wise: 'that if all were redeemed. All must of necessitie be saved, therefore... your judgement of Generall Redemption was as erroneous as those of

⁵⁶ Lambe, *Christ Crucified*, pp. A4, A7; Spilsbury & Coxe, *Gods Ordinance, Cox's Address*, pp. 39-80; See DNB entries for Lambe and Coxe.

⁵⁷ Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace; Seven Arguments to prove, that in order of working God doth justifie his Elect...*, (1645); Rotherham, *A den of thieves discovered*

General Salvation...'. Coppin maintains that Wise went to great efforts to distance himself from Rosewell's accusation: you 'did the last Sabbath day before declare in your Sermon, that though you held General Redemption, yet you did believe that not one of a hundred in all England should be saved.'⁵⁸ Wise's views were akin to the General Baptists, whom he joined shortly after the Restoration.

Wise revealed his true opinion on salvation during the Coppin debates a few weeks later. Coppin was explaining his belief of how Christ atoned for his own sins as well as those of mankind with biblical references, when Wise interjected by answering Coppin's rhetorical question: 'what High-Priest is this say you?', with 'Jesus Christ'. Wise had come to support the Presbyterians and so incurred Rosewell's wrath. Rosewell commented as follows: 'but then another (whose voice only I heard, but knew not who it was) very unwisely (at best) made answer, that it was meant of Christ out of doubt; which answer I was so farre from approving of, (having declared my self to the contrary before)...'. Rosewell knew very well it was the sea chaplain Laurence Wise, making a pun of his name, i.e. '*unwisely*.' Coppin relates that Rosewell responded to him: 'I will fetch one Oyster-Wise from Billingsgate shall answer you.'⁵⁹ This was again a pun on Wise's name. In essence Rosewell was comparing Wise with a fishwife, who did not know when to keep quiet. As sea chaplain Wise spread this message of general redemption to his congregation of dockyard personnel and seamen. Apart from Rosewell's outburst there was little open opposition to the sea chaplain's views over salvation. The opinions of the dockyard workers and seamen were probably mixed. A small percentage of Chathamites were General Baptists. These Baptist workers and seamen would have had no issues with Lawrence Wise's preaching on general redemption. Other religious groups such as the Independents had mixed views on the issue of salvation; some may have agreed with Wise.

Presbyterian dockyard men had the option of avoiding Wise by attending the parish church and opting to hear Rosewell's views on the subject instead.

⁵⁸ Coppin, A Blow at the Serpent, p. 82

⁵⁹ Coppin, A Blow at the Serpent, pp. 30-31; Rosewell. Serpents subtilty discovered, pp. 7-8

Walter Rosewell, the parish incumbent, was outspoken in his condemnation of the belief of general atonement: ‘the Doctrine of Universal Redemption, as ‘tis held forth by our Anabaptists (who thence inferred Universal Salvation of all from Original sin) is a dangerous doctrine, near of kin to Coppins doctrine; affirming, that the Elect of God are not actually saved from the Original sin...’. He went further and accused the Baptist minister, Thomas Gammon, of holding ‘carnall opinions and practices...’. In light of his open hostility to the Baptists it is no surprise that several contemporaries spoke of schisms and splits between the Presbyterians and Baptists in the community. Thomas Case, who delivered Rosewell’s funeral sermon in 1658, desired that those ‘in CHATHAM would herein be exemplary; that you would lay by all your differences, and animosities, *and unite...*’. Richard Coppin also observed the division between the two in 1655: ‘If the Presbyterian Sect have done, then Anabaptists may begin...for though you are one against another, yet I see you will both joyne together against me...’.⁶⁰ Tensions were apparent between the two groups in the community and visible to outsiders.

In the summer of 1655 Richard Coppin, the Ranter, replaced Joseph Salmon as the cathedral’s preacher. On hearing Coppin preach in the cathedral Walter Rosewell, ‘perceiving what a resort of Auditors there was to him (Coppin)’ and how little notice they took of his warnings ‘to take heed of such Doctrines’, decided to act. Coppin also challenged: ‘That if any were offended with what then, or at any other time he had delivered, they should object, and he would answer for himself; complaining of those that would speak and preach against him *behind his back, but never object any thing to his face.*’ Rosewell instigated a series of weekly lectures by the local Presbyterian ministers in the cathedral, commencing in October 1655, to counter the radical views of Richard Coppin. George Robinson, alderman and friend of Rosewell, helped set up the lectures and subsequent debates. Both Captain Smith, in overall charge of the army based at Rochester, and the mayor, William Paske, approved of the arrangements. Following several weeks of lectures, Rosewell considered that the Presbyterian ministers had not made much impact on the soldiery or townsfolk

⁶⁰ Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, pp. 11, 14; Case, *Elijah’s Abatement*, Epistle Dedicatory pp. A4-A6, A14-A17, A20-21, A23; Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, p. 78

and so challenged Coppin to a series of public debates in the cathedral between 3rd-13th December 1655. The audience present were both clerical and secular; civic officials and ordinary folk. Rosewell maintains that Coppin announced the debate to his congregation on the Sunday before ‘that he might have as considerable a party of his own proselytes at the meeting, as was possible.’⁶¹ There was, thus, a wide spectrum of people present at the debates.

One of the issues under discussion was Coppin’s views on universal salvation. Rosewell maintained that Coppin ‘being charged with the Doctrine of universall salvation, he at large avouched it, adding, that all the good works that men did, should do them no good, and all the evil works which men did should do them no *harm*.’ In his own defence Coppin agreed that ‘he that believes can be saved, and he that believes not, is condemned already’, but he went further and argued that ‘the righteous shall have everlasting life, and that the wicked shall have everlasting torment, but that doth not prove that there is no Salvation or Redemption out of hell...’. Coppin was expressing an antinomian notion of salvation, which was conceived as blasphemous and smacked of a Catholic view of purgatory. Rosewell, although persistent, was often ensnared by Coppin. Under pressure Rosewell asserted ‘But the Apostle means all sorts of men, and that some of all sorts shall be saved.’ Coppin replied ‘Then by your own words there is no whole sort of men in the world left out from salvation...’. Sandbrooke calmly defined his own stance on redemption: ‘He that believes shall be saved, but he that believes not, shall be damned.’ Unlike, Rosewell and Daniel French, Sandbrooke was not prepared to get embroiled in a long dispute with Coppin. Challenged by the Presbyterians, Coppin accused the ‘Gospel Ministers’ of keeping the people in ignorance and teaching them ‘the Doctrine of Damnation’, whereas Christ preached ‘salvation to all men.’ This is not a dissimilar view expressed by Henry Denne to Rochester audiences in 1643-4.⁶²

At times the ‘ruder’ audience interjected with laughter and ridiculed Rosewell, who compared them to silly children. George Robinson asked Coppin: ‘*Will you*

⁶¹ Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, pp. A2-A3, 1-10; TNA, PROB/11/275

⁶² Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, pp. 5, 13; Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 8, 43, 61, 64; Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, pp. 50-51

say that Christ suffered for his own sins?’ The Royalist lawyer, Richard Head, stated: ‘This is damnable Doctrine, what need a coming to judgement, if all shall be saved, you are a Blasphemer, and destroys the Fundamentals of Religion by *your impudency.*’ Both Independent and Baptist ministers, Laurence Wise and Thomas Gammon, tried to have their input into the debate over salvation, but were effectively silenced by Rosewell. This discussion continued in print with Coppin setting out his defence in *A Blow at a Serpent*, whilst in Maidstone prison during February 1656, and Rosewell countering shortly afterwards with *The Serpent Subtly Discovered*. The debate over salvation was, however, not left there as Edward Garland, of nearby Hartlip, replied in print in 1657, setting out the Presbyterian case more succinctly than Rosewell and Coppin responding with *Michael opposing the Dragon* in 1659.⁶³ A public discussion aimed at denouncing Richard Coppin and removing his influence within the city had the opposite effect. Instead the disputation continued in print over the next three years and reached a significantly wider audience.

Although Coppin continued his argument with his opponents he did not forget his own local audience. Whilst still in gaol Coppin wrote another tract in early 1657, *Crux Christ*, about Christ’s death and salvation to reassure his followers. This pamphlet was aimed at his local followers and advised them they had to bear a cross and suffer just as he had for God’s plan of salvation to be accomplished. ‘To all the beloved of the Lord, that love the appearing of Jesus Christ in spirit and truth, in and about the City of Rochester in Kent, and wherever they may be scattered...’. This would indicate that Coppin still had a significant following around Rochester. He opened his address with ‘Friends and Brethren, in the friendship and brother-hood of the Lord Jesus, with whom, and for whom we...have suffered together for the witness of Jesus...’. The work is ‘written and experienced by Richard Coppin, in his sufferings for the Truth.’ At this stage in his writing Coppin demonstrates a very close affinity with the views of and sufferings expressed by the Quakers.⁶⁴ His language of ‘Friends’ and ‘brother-hood’ suggests that he may have been appealing to a

⁶³ Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 4, 28, 55; *Michael opposing the dragon*, (London, 1659); Garland, *An answer to a printed Book*

⁶⁴ Coppin, *Crux Christi*, the Epistle

Quaker audience as well, whom he would have been familiar with at Rochester in 1655.

Around 1657 Allen Ackworth, the Rochester St Nicholas Presbyterian minister, was involved in a similar discourse against the local Quakers: in ‘his publicke prayer’ accusing them of being ‘*a people Lord....[that] deny that Righteousness of Christ, deny Justification by Christ alone...*’. Samuel Fisher, an East Kent Quaker, reported hearing him ‘deprecating & declaring against the Qua(kers)’ and asking God for deliverance of ‘this poor city from the Qua(kers)....’. ‘It was at that time by this Author prefered (*though not permitted*)’ to have the issue ‘publicly proved.... *on behalf of that people*’, so that their beliefs could be openly discussed. However the authorities prevented Fisher from getting embroiled in a similar debate with Ackworth by nipping it in the bud.⁶⁵

Rochester cathedral also witnessed a three-way debate on the merits of water baptism in December 1655. Baptists did not believe in paedobaptism or that children required remission from original sin. By this time both Chatham and Rochester had established General Baptist congregations. The parish registers for Chatham demonstrate that very few children were actually baptized in the 1650s. It is, therefore, not surprising that this was a bone of contention between the Presbyterians and the Baptists. Walter Rosewell made his opinion of those who cried down paedobaptism abundantly clear, scathingly describing Thomas Gammon as ‘a great dipper, I know him to be dipt over head and ears in many dangerous errours...’. Thomas Case considered Rosewell ‘an hammer to beat down error and blasphemy...he could not bear with them that preach down Paedobaptisme’. During the cathedral debates Coppin declared: ‘concerning Baptisme...they have no ground from the Lord Jesus Christ...to baptize with water.’ Amidst this argument between Rosewell and Coppin, Gammon tried to stand up and put across the Baptist stance on baptism. He felt that the Presbyterians had not made much impact upon Coppin on this matter: ‘I see you Priests are all carnal, and your weapons are not spiritual, seeing you cannot deal *with this man...*’. George Robinson felt Gammon was on a par with and ‘a very

⁶⁵ Fisher, *Rusticus and academicos*, pp. A6-A7

fit man to incounter Coppin'. Gammon had tried to continue the debate started by Denne in 1643-4 and the need for believers' baptism.⁶⁶

The evidence from the Medway Towns case study would suggest that a wide social range of the local community were capable of articulating their opinions through petitioning as well as other avenues such as debate and rebellion. Chatham's history of religious petitioning and radicalism predated the Civil War period. However during the Civil War a new impetus behind petitioning had emerged with both counter petitioning and canvassing for signatures becoming commonplace. Petitions did not always necessarily reflect the views of the signatories, but rather their opposition to the status quo. Whilst many from Rochester and Chatham allegedly signed the Kentish petition of 1648, this was more in protest against the county committee than necessarily agreement with the aims of the drafters. In that sense petitions cannot reflect a broad public opinion, but only that of a handful of proposers. On the other hand the 1642 Blount petition had widespread support in Chatham. These petitioners demonstrated their support for that particular viewpoint and the petition in turn reflected a degree of local opinion. Peacey's claim that the printed word reached a wider audience than the pulpit is difficult to substantiate from the Medway Towns case study. The Medway Towns had an active and diverse preaching ministry, which delivered everything from Presbyterian sermons through to extreme Ranter views and, often, political opinion as well. Orality was, therefore, at the heart of both news and debate. Both the cathedral debates and dockyard disputes suggest that political and religious discussion were vibrant in the Medway Towns. Equally some of the parishioners had access to and were influenced by print matter. Indeed many of the debates were subsequently published and made available particularly for the local audiences; Denne, Sandbrooke, Coppin and Rosewell all published tracts for local consumption. There was the perception by the authorities that both the pulpit and print material radicalised people in the Medway Towns. These concerns were in fact a reality and created a level of disunity and conflict within the local community, which was not evident before 1640. This case study has reinforced

⁶⁶ Rosewell, *The Serpents Subtilty Discovered*, p. 14; Case, *Eliahs Abatement* p. 56; Coppin, *A Blow at the Serpent*, pp. 76-78; Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*; MALSC, P85/1/2-3

the stance of current historians that diversity created its own problems of schism and polarisation. However on occasions, such as the Coppin debates, the Kent rebellion and the Pett-Adderley dispute, opposing groups were prepared to work together to obtain a common goal.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

This thesis investigated whether the findings of Alan Everitt's and John Morrill's studies of their respective 'county' communities were valid for an urban scenario. Both historians observed that the 'county' gentry were insular, localist and generally ignorant of the wider ideological debates of the civil war period. Morrill later modified some of his conclusions, accepting that further research by David Underdown and Richard Cust had demonstrated that people had access to news and understood the contemporary ideological debates. People could therefore make informed choices, but often used neutralism as a means to remain politically unaligned. Jacqueline Eales' work on Kent challenged this stance, arguing that many beneath the gentry in Kent were aware of the prevailing national ideological discourse and engaged in debate over political as well as religious issues. This urban study reinforces the opinion of Eales and other historians that citizens were aware of the national issues and surrounding ideological debates. Although the townsfolk did on occasions raise local concerns these were generally couched in ideological terms, indicating that they could conceive their grievances within a wider framework.¹

Chapter eight has clearly shown that people from all levels of Medway society had access to the news, participated in various ideological debates and made informed choices. Robert Cossens, a carpenter from Rochester, had such a discussion with his brother and fellow workers in 1643 over the validity of using the Common Prayer Book. Dorothy Birch disagreed with the views of her minister, John Man, and published a pamphlet in 1646, setting out her religious stance in the form of a catechism. Chatham vestry recorded their opinion of events in 1643 in a specifically purchased 'vestry' book. All of these people or groups exercised their ability to air their views. Others took their actions a step further and were moved to protest about the actions or views of their minister.

¹ Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, passim; Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces*, passim; Holmes, 'The county community', passim; Hughes, 'The King, the parliament and the localities', passim; Eales, *Community and Disunity*, passim; "'So many sects and schisms"', passim; 'Kent and the English Civil Wars', passim

Chatham dockyard officers drafted a petition against their Laudian incumbent, Thomas Vaughan, and his ‘popish’ ceremonies, whilst others were prepared to express their opinion by disturbing Ambrose Clare during divine service. Most people did make informed choices. Cossens was convinced to join the General Baptists after hearing Henry Denne’s preaching on salvation. A few Rochester councillors made a conscious decision in 1643-4 to remain neutral and absented themselves from the political arena. This thesis has, therefore, argued that Everitt’s findings for the Kent ‘county’ community cannot be superimposed on an urban area such as Rochester and Chatham. The urban model of the Medway Towns does, however, closely fit with Eales’ conclusions for Kent; a populace both well informed and able to enter into debate on the current ideological issues of the day.

David Zaret maintained that petitioning was the main avenue for people in the provinces to bring their concerns before Parliament. As chapter eight section two has revealed, Chathamites had a previous history of petitioning and continued to harness this weapon during the English Revolution to redress their grievances and acquire suitable ministers. The Medway Towns also supported some wider Kent petitions. At least 181 local inhabitants signed the Blount petition of May 1642, demanding amongst other things reformation of the church. Many Medway parishioners similarly penned their names to the 1648 Kentish petition, seeking a peaceful settlement with their monarch after six years of civil war. Whilst Rochester’s grievances included economic burdens such as quartering and taxation, the petitioners were able to cloak these concerns in a wider context of their just rights and privileges. Zaret has also propounded that canvassing for signatures became widespread in this period.² Both the above petitions were circulated around the Medway Towns. In 1642 a considerable amount of support was drummed up for the Blount petition in Chatham and likewise the Kentish petition was taken around by Thomas May to amass names at the dockyard in 1648. Whilst petitioning was a vital tool in the repertoire of Medway parishioners this study has demonstrated this was not the only means available to achieve their aims.

² Zaret, ‘Petitions and the “Invention” of Public Opinion’, pp. 1528-1531

This thesis explored whether the pulpit or print was the most effective means to disseminate news in a provincial town. There has been some discussion over the past decade whether print or the pulpit reached a potentially larger audience and, thus, was responsible for stimulating widespread debate. Jason Peacey contends that print reached a national audience, whereas the pulpit could only target a particular community. However Jacqueline Eales has persuasively argued that in Kent the pulpit was one of the main sources of oral news and, thus, the stimulus for local debate, being accessible to all.³ Chapter eight section three has demonstrated that the pulpit was frequently the central focus for debate in the Medway Towns with its numerous churches and meeting places, but it also acknowledges that print was often used to extend a disputation and bring it within the compass of a wider audience. Walter Rosewell openly utilised the pulpit to attack Parliament and his religious opponents. Both the printed pamphlets of Henry Denne and William Sandbrooke are examples of sermons being published to answer their local critics. The Coppin debates, staged in Rochester cathedral during 1655, were continued in print locally over the next few years. Nevertheless this thesis has shown that the workplace has proven to be an equally significant place for debate to occur. Cossens entered into his discussion on religious topics whilst at work and the Puritan, Ralph Farnam, used his barbershop in the 1630s to disseminate his religious views to his customers. Chatham dockyard was also the focus of the Adderley-Pett dispute, which had spilled over from the pulpit. Medway people thus had a variety of places to hear opinions articulated and enter into a discourse; sometimes orally and at other times in print.

Robert Acheson's thesis on East Kent and the Weald concluded that the religious radicalism of the English Revolution had its roots in the Puritan movement of the 1630s.⁴ Although not a specific issue addressed in this study it is nevertheless a finding of this thesis that the religious protest of Strood and Chatham in the early 1640s was rooted in the two parishes' Puritan tradition. They both drafted petitions against their Laudian incumbents in 1641 and removed their superstitious church imagery in 1643 as well as welcomed their

³ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 6; Eales, 'Provincial preaching', pp. 185-207

⁴ Acheson, 'The development of religious separatism', *passim*

new Presbyterian ministers. Rochester, without this background, was slower in accepting new ideas and less inclined to protest. However by 1644-6 this gap had narrowed with Rochester being more receptive of radical religious ideas than its neighbour Chatham. This religious radicalism developed during the 1650s with a wide array of groups entertained in the Medway Towns and many parishioners taking on board these new ideas. Whilst the basis for the local nonconformist statistics of the 1676 Compton Census returns were established in the English Revolution, their roots can be traced back to the Puritan movement of the early seventeenth century.

In his work on Kent Alan Everitt suggested that political allegiance was continually shifting in the 1640s, which was mirrored by the later research undertaken by David Underdown and Robert Ashton at a national level.⁵ Yet the pattern for Rochester and Chatham's corporate bodies are dissimilar. Rochester had a period of fragmented political allegiance between 1642-1646 with as many as five groupings within the corporation. The change in the political balance of power both at county and government level during 1647-8 had a major impact on the allegiance of Rochester councillors with many Presbyterians throwing in their lot with the Royalists in May 1648. These same men entered the 1650s as disaffected or rebel councillors rather than pro-Parliamentarians. A dominant Presbyterian council of 1646 had changed to a divided corporation by 1648, whilst the 1650s saw a coalition control Rochester council. Chatham vestry on the other hand was broadly Presbyterian throughout the English Revolution with a brief incursion into that body by Adderley's Independent faction in the early 1650s. Some individuals altered their allegiance due to changing political stances; e.g. Philip Ward was a Presbyterian, but joined forces with the Royalists in 1648 and was ousted from the council as a 'disaffected' member in 1651. Others such as Peter Pett declared their support for Parliament in 1642 and remained loyal throughout the English Revolution. The continually shifting viewpoint of individual Rochester councillors impacted upon city government, often forcing the corporation to form alliances to obtain a majority in the council. Rochester council reacted to

⁵ Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, passim; Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, passim; Ashton, *Counter Revolution*, passim

constantly changing circumstances, whereas Chatham as a dockyard town sought to preserve the status quo. This thesis has also concluded that the incorporated city of Rochester with its firmly established political framework was more able to adapt to changing conditions than its new counterpart, Chatham, without this traditional infrastructure.

Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* demonstrated that this fluidity of movement was also evident amongst the radical religious groups of the English Revolution and was later confirmed by both Robert Acheson and Jacqueline Eales in their work on Kent.⁶ Whilst many religious sects became established in the Medway Towns between 1643-1655, insufficient evidence is available to indicate whether individual people progressed through the sects. The one exception to this is Robert Cossens, who was a Baptist in 1645, but by 1651 had joined the Ranters. Some Chatham Presbyterians, such as the extended Moorcock family, later embraced the Baptists, whilst others veered towards Independency by the 1650s. With the introduction of so many radical sects into the local community the Medway inhabitants sampled a wide range of different beliefs and for a time were bewitched by preachers such as Joseph Salmon. Only the persecution of many Medway nonconformists in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration and seizure of entire congregations by the authorities give a true picture of the breadth and numbers that were attracted to these more radical groups, but their journey along this route is undocumented.

Both political and religious historians have conceded that diversity created disunity in the local community. This thesis explored whether the wide array of political and religious opinion circulating in the Medway Towns during the Civil War period effectively unified or produced schism in the towns. Paul Halliday and Roger Howell claimed that purging during the 1640s and 1650s led to division within local councils and was thus not an effective means to ensure

⁶ Hill, *The world turned upside down*, passim; Eales, "'So many sects and schisms'", passim; Acheson, 'The development of religious separatism', passim

political allegiance.⁷ However chapters two and three plainly indicate that purging was successfully employed by Rochester council to remove the opposition and leave a dominant grouping within the corporation. Rochester corporation also used its restricted ‘election’ procedure in the 1650s to control those who entered the council. A loose coalition of members or groups could thus be established within the council, who cooperated and ensured city government ran smoothly. Thereby ensuring consensus rather than disharmony existed for most of the decade.

Joad Raymond argued that the removal of press censorship in the early 1640s lead to an eruption of partisan print material, which created both an atmosphere of debate and conflict. Jacqueline Eales’ recent essay on religious diversity in Kent came to similar conclusions: “so many sects and schisms”.⁸ The findings of this thesis agree with much of her work in this respect. Rochester and Chatham witnessed a series of debates over the twenty-year period, which often led to tension and, sometimes, schism in the community. Walter Rosewell was particularly vociferous in defending Presbyterianism and attacking those whom he considered held erroneous beliefs, leading to both his friend and opponent commenting upon the disunity evident in Chatham and the congregation. He attacked the Baptists for their views on baptism and salvation, the Independent sea chaplain for his stance on atonement, and Richard Coppin for numerous religious errors he considered blasphemous. However on other occasions seemingly opposed groups united to prevent factionalism or achieve a common goal. Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists were all prepared to work together to prevent Richard Coppin preaching at Rochester in 1655. Similarly many dockyard men united to oust William Adderley from the dockyard in 1654 and the parish vestry acted collectively to dismiss him in 1659. Politically the local Presbyterians and Royalists cooperated in May 1648 to challenge the Independents at both county and national level. Whilst an element of public debate was encouraged, when this created fissures action was taken to prevent a breakdown in social cohesion and the possibility of rebellion.

⁷ Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, pp. 59-60, 63, 80-82; Howell, ‘Neutralism, Conservatism and Political Alignment,’ pp. 69-74, 81-87; ‘Resistance to change’, pp. 433-434, 438-39, 447-451

⁸ Raymond, ‘The Newspaper,’ pp. 114, 117, 124-125, 128, 132-133; Eales, “So many sects and schisms”, *passim*

This thesis drilled down to a local level by examining an urban community in Kent and its reactions to events at both county and national level during the English Revolution. People were concentrated in close environs and could not avoid the dialogue going on within their community. They either embraced it, as many Medway people had, or went on the defensive as many of the Presbyterian clergy did when faced with challenges to their religious values. Reactions were diverse. In 1655 the clergy united to challenge the Ranter Richard Coppin and Rochester council supported their actions. Chatham vestry united in 1659 to finally oust William Adderley from the parish. During 1643-4 Rochester corporation welcomed and suggested a Baptist, Henry Denne, as a potential preacher for the cathedral, yet by 1646 they had clamped down on Baptist activity. Chatham dockyard never openly demonstrated any animosity towards the Baptists, but feared Joseph Salmon. Walter Rosewell was, however, scathing of Ranters, Baptists and the Independent sea chaplain, Laurence Wise, and their notion of general salvation. The army and navy were both attracted to the Ranters and their views. Dorothy Birch, as a woman, felt able to publish her views and publicly denounce John Man's treatment of her and her friends, whilst Robert Cossens and his workmates had a discussion over religious practices in the church. Politically the Cobhams expressed their dismay at being squeezed out of power and Pett demonstrated that political allegiance was paramount to him. Rosewell used the pulpit to remonstrate against Parliament and its treatment of the monarchy. The Hawthorne-Head-Wye-Robinson family bloc showed how Civil War could divide a family and leave members on opposing sides. Philip Ward, perhaps, best epitomised Medway opinion with his unswerving loyalty to the Presbyterian party and Kent County Committee until a point of no return in 1648, when disillusioned with the direction of county and centre politics, he united with the Royalists to preserve the Presbyterian status quo. Individuals, such as Cossens, Richard Hill and John Fineas, invited Coppin to Rochester, whilst William Parker introduced Salmon into the dockyard. Others such as the extended Moorcock family openly practiced as General Baptists in Chatham under the watchful eye of the dockyard. These men were from a variety of backgrounds; naval and trade, clergy and gentlemen. All groups in the Medway Towns were able to express their views on religious and

political issues in a variety of ways; petitioning, protest, acts of iconoclasm and in the final event rebellion.

Rochester and Chatham's civil war experience often mirrored each other. However they were separate entities, which on occasions were well integrated and cooperated as in 1648, but were in other instances rivals and in open competition with each other as in the period 1640-3. Whilst Rochester moved from a Royalist council pre-1640 to a mixed corporation led by Presbyterians in the 1640s to a pro-Parliamentarian coalition in the 1650s, which was only removed by a central purge in 1662, Chatham was to remain largely Presbyterian throughout the twenty years. Religiously Chatham was always perceived as more radical than Rochester, but this thesis has turned this notion on its head as Rochester citizens were more willing to adopt radical ideas than Chatham after 1644. In conclusion Rochester moved forward both politically and religiously, whereas Chatham was broadly in tune with Parliament from the outset and was generally happy with this situation except for a short spell in 1648 when the dockyard rebelled.

Appendices

Sources for the Occupations gathered in the following appendices are as follows:-

Wills at Kent History & Library Centre and the National Archives

Parish Registers for Strood, Rochester, Chatham & Gillingham

Parish Assessments for Strood & Chatham

Freemen in Rochester Customal

Parliamentary Subsidies for the Medway Towns

Calendar of State Papers Domestic

Commons Journal

Churchwardens Accounts for Strood & Chatham

‘Vestry’ book for Chatham

Rochester Minute Books & Accounts

Chatham Chest Accounts

Sir John Hawkins Knight Hospital Accounts

Court records in Cockburn (ed.)

Rochester Bridge Wardens Accounts

Rawlinson MS A224

RAR MS 0056

British Library Add MS 22546

**Trade tokens from William Boyne, *Tokens issued in the seventeenth century...*
(1858)**

Appendix 1

Signatories to the Chatham Petition of 1641 against Thomas Vaughan

Name	Occupation	Blount Pet 1642	Irish Sub 1643	V & C 1643
Nathaniel Apslyn	Asst master shipwright	Y	Y	D
James Benns	Ships carpenter	Y	Y	N
Charles Bowles	Storekeeper	Y	Y	Y
Thomas Day	Naval	D	D	D
Laurence Fisher	Naval/gent	Y	Y	Y
Henry Goddard	Master shipwright	Y	Y	Y
Morgan Griffin	Master caulker	Y	Y	Y
Laurence Hadlow	Shoemaker	Y	Y	Y
Richard Holborne	Master mastmaker	Y	Y	Y
Guy Jones	Ships carpenter	Y	Y	Y

Name	Occupation	Blount Pet 1642	Irish Sub 1643	V & C 1643
William Lawrence	Storekeeper	Y	N	Y
John Lepper	Taylor	Y	Y	Y
James Marsh	Boatmaker	Y	Y	Y
Joseph Pett	Asst master shipwright	Y	Y	Y
Israel Reynolds	Boatswain	Y	N	Y
John Short	Clerk of the check	Y	Y	Y
Miles Troughton	Mariner	Y	Y	Y
John Vinkell	Boatswain	Y	Y	N
John Waterman	Ships carpenter	N	Y	Y
George Weede	Farmer	N	D	D
Thomas Williams	Ships carpenter	Y	Y	Y
John Wright	Ships cook	Y	Y	Y

Key: V & C= Vow & Covenant, Y=yes, N=no, D=deceased

Appendix 2

Signatories to the Blount Petition May 1642

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Adames	John	Chatham	Gunner
Alexander	Peter	Chatham	
Apslyn	Nathanaell	Chatham	Assistant Master Shipwright
Awner	William	Chatham	Glazier
Baker	Thomas	Chatham	
Baylie	Ralph	Gillingham	Gunner
Baylye	Richard	Gillingham	Ropemaker
Beckett	John	Chatham	Clerk
Benns	James	Chatham	Carpenter
Benson	Thomas	Chatham	Carpenter
Billingsley	Thomas	Chatham	Ropemaker
Blundell	Edward	Unknown	
Blunden	William	Gillingham	Master House Carpenter
Boak	John	Chatham	Turner
Boggis	William	Chatham	Blacksmith
Booman	William	Chatham	Shipwright

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Bostock	William	Chatham	Joiner
Bostocke	Thomas	Chatham	Master Joiner
Bowers	Thomas	Chatham	
Bowles	Charles	Chatham	Clerk of the Check
Boys	Richard	Gillingham	
Bradshawe	Roger	Chatham	
Bright	William	Chatham	Shipwright
Buck	James	Chatham	Shipwright
Burbidge	John	Rochester	
Burden	Robert	Gillingham	Baker
Burley	Richard	Chatham	Mathematician
Caine	William	Chatham	Gunner
Caine	Richard	Chatham	Joiner
Caine	Stephen	Chatham	
Chapman	John	Gillingham	Bricklayer
Cheldrey	Robert	Rochester	Painter
Chiswick	John	Chatham	Cook
Christmas	Garrard	Chatham	Carver
Collison	George	Chatham	
Cooke	William	Chatham	Master Attendant

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Cooke	Robert	Chatham	
Cowell	William	Gillingham	
Coxford	George	Chatham	Teller
Crimburne	Thomas	Chatham	Husbandman
Crosley	Richard	Chatham	Carpenter
Cumber	John	Chatham	Retired seaman
Curtis	John	Chatham	Labourer
Dalton	John	Chatham	Shipwright
Dalton	Isaac	Chatham	
Dallton	Willyam	Chatham	Joiner
Davis	John	Chatham	House Carpenter
Edwardes	Richard	Strood	Boatswain
Ellis	Peter	Chatham	Sailmaker
Elmestone	Christopher	Gillingham	Boatswain
Ewell	Isack	Chatham	Master Carpenter
Fawler	John	Chatham	Surgeon
Fetell	Henry	Gillingham	
Fisher	Lawrence	Chatham	Gent/naval
Fisher	Hugh	Chatham	Joiner
Fletcher	Samuel	Chatham	Maltster

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Fowles	Henry	Gillingham	Yeoman
Garmen	Gregory	Gillingham	Joiner
Gloaver	Leonard	Chatham	Smith
Goddard	Henry	Chatham	Master Shipwright
Goodwine	Thomas	Gillingham	
Gore	Anthony	Chatham	Carver
Griffin	Morgan	Chatham	Master Caulker
Griffin	William	Chatham	Gent
Haddocke	Thomas	Chatham	Hoopmaker
Hadlow	Lawrence	Chatham	Shoemaker
Hall	John	Unknown	
Hancret	John	Chatham	Boatswain
Hardinge	Peter	Chatham	Carpenter
Hayman	William	Chatham	
Hayward	Edward	Chatham	Clerk of the Survey
Hixx	John	Chatham	
Holborne	Richard	Chatham	Master Mastmaker
Holt	William	Chatham	Gent
Houtting	Richard	Gillingham	Farmer
Hughting	Thomas	Chatham	

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Isaackson	Richard	Chatham	Master Painter
Jones	Mawrice	Chatham	Naval
Jones	Guy	Chatham	Ships Carpenter
Larkyn	Thomas	Chatham	Yeoman
Lathe	Samson	Unknown	
Lawrence	Thomas	Gillingham	
Lawrence	William	Chatham	Keeper of Instores
Lawrence	Richard	Chatham	Schoolmaster
Lawrence	Henry	Chatham	
Layls	William	Chatham	
Leoper	John	Chatham	Taylor
Lester	John	Chatham	Seaman
Light	Stephen	Chatham	Mariner
Locke	Samuel	Rochester	Caulker
Longe	Thomas	Chatham	Farmer
Lovell	James	Chatham	
Lowdwell	Stephen	Chatham	Yeoman
Lumcall	William	Unknown	
Maber	Samuel	Chatham	Grocer
Mallet	John	Chatham	Caulker

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Mapliden	Edward	Chatham	
Marlin	John	Chatham	Shipwright
Marsh	James	Chatham	Boatmaker
Marsh	Thomas	Chatham	Carpenter
Martin	William	Chatham	Carpenter
Mathewes	Richard	Chatham	Yeoman
Michell	Elias	Chatham	Boatswain
Milles	William	Chatham	Grocer
Milton	Thomas	Chatham	
Moorcock	Robert	Chatham	Shipwright
More	Robert	Gillingham	Smith
More	Francis	Chatham	Sawyer
Mortton	Richard	Chatham	
Munds	Joseph	Chatham	
Newell	William	Chatham	Ropemaker
Newman	John	Chatham	Brewer
Olliver	John	Rochester	
Paine	Richard	Gillingham	
Payne	William	Chatham	Naval
Perrin	Richard	Chatham	Blacksmith

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Pett	Joseph	Chatham	Assistant Master Shipwright
Plover	Joseph	Unknown	
Plumber	Timothy	Unknown	
Ponchedown	Peeter	Chatham	Caulker
Powle	Ellis	Chatham	Carver
Prudham	Andrew	Chatham	Shipwright
Rainbow	William	Gillingham	Shipwright
Rawlins	John	Chatham	Farmer
Reginaldes	Israel	Chatham	Boatswain
Rivers	William	Rochester	Ship Caulker
Rivers	John	Chatham	Caulker
Rogers	John	Chatham	Yeoman
Rumney	Nathanaell	Chatham	
Safford	William	Chatham	Shipwright
Saly	Joell	Chatham	
Sampson	Abraham	Chatham	Boatswain
Sanders	Thomas	Chatham	Sawyer
Sanders	Matthew	Unknown	
Sargood	Richard	Chatham	
Sheringe	Edward	Chatham	Victualler

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Short	John	Chatham	Clerk of the Check
Skarlen	Henry	Gillingham	
Skillen	John	Chatham	Shipwright
Slanie	John	Chatham	Butcher
Slanie	Benjamin	Chatham	
Smith	Thomas	Chatham	Blacksmith
Smyth	Richard	Chatham	Seaman
Stampe	John	Chatham	
Starland	Thomas	Chatham	
Stonehouse	Nicholas	Chatham	Mariner
Symonson	Edward	Chatham	Carpenter
Taylor	Edward	Chatham	Farmer
Taylor	James	Chatham	
Tellen	Richard	Unknown	
Thread	Steven	Chatham	Narrowweaver
Thwaits	Edward	Chatham	
Tilghman	Nathanaell	Chatham	House Carpenter
Tillman	Joseph	Unknown	
Troughton	Myles	Chatham	Mariner
Tucker	John	Unknown	

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Tunbridge	Thomas	Chatham	Master House Carpenter
Vallis	William	Unknown	
Vinkell	John	Chatham	Boatswain
Vinkell	Edward	Chatham	Butcher
Wall	Richard	Chatham	
Warwick	Robert	Chatham	Carpenter
Waterman	Phillip	Unknown	
Waulers	John	Chatham	Storehouse Keeper
Welding	Edward	Chatham	
Wiggins	George	Chatham	Master Boatbuilder
Williams	Philip	Unknown	
Williams	Thomas	Chatham	Carpenter
Williams	Thomas	Chatham	Gunner
Willsonn	Thomas	Chatham	Boatswain
Wilson	Nicholas	Rochester	
Wood	John	Chatham	Joiner
Woodard	Thomas	Unknown	
Woodcatt	Henry	Chatham	Carpenter
Woolie	John	Chatham	
Wright	John	Chatham	Cook

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation
Wright	John	Chatham	Purser
Yardley	Edward	Chatham	Gent
Yardley	Robert	Chatham	Shipwright
Yeomanson	Nicholas	Rochester	Oyster Fisherman
Yeomanson	John	Chatham	

Appendix 3

The Kent Rebellion May 1648

List of Participants from the Medway Towns

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
Allen	Richard	Chatham	Carpenter		Alleged	14
Allen	James	Chatham			Alleged	13
Barton	Thomas	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser		Alleged	1
Bayly	Ralph	Gillingham	Gunner		Yes	12
Blundell	John	Rochester	Purser		Yes	1, 8, 11, 12
Boorman	William	Chatham	Carpenter		Alleged	1, 8
Bostock	Thomas	Chatham	Master joiner		Yes	1, 8, 13
Branford	John	Strood	Husbandman			6
Bright	John	Chatham	Master shipwright		Alleged	13
Cadman	Harbert	Rochester	Boatswain		Alleged	1
Capon	James	Chatham	Instore Keeper		Yes	2, 11, 13
Cheeseman	John	Chatham	Shipwright		Alleged	14
Cheesewick	John	Chatham	Cook		Alleged	1, 13
Clerke	Francis	Rochester	Gentleman			3, 6, 9

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
Cobham	William	Rochester	Mercer/Purser	Alderman	Alleged	3, 6, 7, 13
Collins	Matthew	Rochester	Cook		Alleged	1, 11, 12, 13
Cooke	James	Chatham	Boatswain		Alleged	1, 8
Cooke	William	Chatham	Seaman (Captain)		Alleged	1, 8, 13
Cooke	Thomas	Chatham	Boatswain		Yes	2, 11, 13
Countrey	John	Chatham	Boatswain		Yes	11, 12, 13
Cowdall	Henry	Chatham	Boatswain		Yes	11, 12
Crane	Edward	Rochester	Gunner		Alleged	1, 8
Curwin	Peter	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser		Alleged	1
Davis	Roger	Chatham	Cook		Alleged	11
Dirkin	Henry	Rochester	Sawyer	Alderman		5, 7
Dirkin	Alexander	Rochester	Woollendraper	Alderman		3
Eady	Maurice	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser		Alleged	1, 3
Egden	Mark	Rochester	Cooper		Alleged	1, 13
Fortescue	John sen	Rochester	Gunner		Alleged	1, 8
Fortescue	John jun	Rochester	Gunner		Alleged	1
Fowler	Robert	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser		Alleged	1, 3, 8

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
George	May	Rochester				3
Godfrey	Thomas	Rochester				4
Goodwin	Edward	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	12
Goter	William	Rochester				3
Grayne	Thomas	Rochester/Chatham	Sea chaplain		Alleged	1, 2, 13
Green	Richard	Rochester	Boatswain/Gunner		Alleged	1, 8
Hadd	John	Chatham	Collarmaker		Alleged	13
Hancret	John	Chatham	Boatswain		Alleged	11
Harbert	William	Chatham	Purser		Yes	11, 12
Head	Richard sen	Rochester		Councillor		3
Hennis	George	Rochester	Boatswain		Yes	11, 12
Hilles	Robert	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	11, 12
Holborne	Richard	Chatham	Master mastmaker		Yes	2, 11
Isaacson	Richard	Chatham	Master painter		Alleged	11
Ivett	Zacheus	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser		Alleged	1, 3
Lee	Richard jun	Rochester	Gentleman		Alleged	3, 4, 9
Marrow			Gunner		Alleged	1

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
Marsh	James	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	11, 12
May	Thomas	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser	Alderman	Yes	5, 7, 13
Merritt	Francis	Rochester	Mariner	Alderman		7
Merryman	Thomas	Strood	Miller			6
Mitchell	Andrew	Chatham	Boatswain		Alleged	10
Moore	Robert	Gillingham	Smith			6
Morland	Christopher	Strood	Gentleman			5, 6
Morland	Augustine	Strood	Gentleman			5, 6
Mudge	Thomas	Strood				3
Newman	George	Rochester	Gentleman		Alleged	3, 4, 9
Newman	James	Rochester	Gentleman			3, 4
Painter	William	Gillingham				6
Parker	William	Strood	Boatswain		Yes	11, 12
Paxford	Richard	Rochester	Gentleman/Master		Alleged	1, 2
Payne	Cornelius	Chatham	Plugmaker		Alleged	14
Payne	Michael	Chatham			Alleged	11
Pett	Joseph	Chatham	Asst master shipwright		Yes	2, 11, 13

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
Pullman	Robert	Chatham	Ropemaker		Alleged	11
Rabenet	Thomas	Frindsbury	Shipwright		Alleged	13
Ridgway	Nicholas	Rochester	Gunner		Yes	11, 12
Risley	Henry	Rochester				6
Robinson	Abraham	Rochester	Purser		Alleged	1, 8
Robinson	John	Rochester	Boatswain		Alleged	1, 8
Rosogo	Digory	Chatham	Gunner		Alleged	1, 8
Saggs	Robert	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	11, 12
Schovile	Thomas	Chatham	Purser		Alleged	1
Severne	Thomas	Rochester	Boatswain		Yes	12
Short	John	Chatham	Clerk of the Check		Yes	2, 11, 13
Sliter	Robert	Chatham	Ropemaker			2
Spencer	John	Chatham	Gunner		Yes	11, 12
Stowell	Peter	Rochester	Gentleman			3
Tayler	Robert	Chatham	Pumpmaker		Alleged	1, 5, 13
Taylor	Thomas	Chatham	Gunner		Yes	13
Thompsett	Henry	Chatham				3

Surname	Christian Name	Residence	Occupation	Position	Kentish Petition 1648	Sources
Troughton	Samuel	Chatham	Purser		Yes	11, 12
Walker	John	Rochester	Painter			3
Walsall	Barnabas	Rochester	Brewer	Alderman		3
Ward	Philip	Rochester	Gentleman/Purser	Mayor	Alleged	1, 4, 9
Warwick	Robert	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	11, 12, 13
Waterman	John	Chatham	Carpenter		Yes	11, 12
Whitton	Edward	Rochester	Draper	Alderman		3, 4, 6
Whitton	Thomas	Chatham	Outstore Keeper		Yes	11, 13
Woodgreene	John	Strood				3
Wriothesley	Henry	Rochester				3, 6
Wye	Richard jun	Rochester	Naval surgeon	Councillor	Alleged	11
Wye	Richard sen	Rochester	Naval surgeon		Alleged	11

Key:-

Source 1=Commons Journal June 1648

Source 2=Calendar of State Papers 1649-1650

Source 3=Calendar of the Committee for Compounding

Source 4=Philip Ward's correspondence May 1648

Source 5=Peter Pett's report June 1648

Source 6=Kentish Note Book Vol. II

Source 7=Rochester City Minute Book

Source 8= Vice Admiral Warwick's correspondence July 1648

Source 9=Thomas Fairfax correspondence June 1648

Source 10=Seaman's Protestation 1648

Source 11=Rawlinson MS A224

Source 12=Commons Journal 1649

Source 13=RAR MS 0056

Source 14=British Library Add MS 22546

Appendix 4

Petitioners and Witnesses for and against William Adderley 1649-1652

Signatures to Invitation to William Adderley to become Chatham Sea Chaplain September 1649

Aldredge, Humphrey

Arkininstall, Thomas

Benns, James

Bright, John

Browne, John

Buck, James

Burley, Richard

Cane, Richard

Christmas, Mathias

Colpott, Thomas

Eason, Thomas

Frewing, Hugh

Goodwin, Edward

Griffin, William

Hanch, Matthew

Hawkins, Thomas

Hawthorne, Edward

Hayward, Edward

Hills, Robert

Hudson, Robert

Hudson, William

Jemson, Thomas

Loddington, Thomas

Lodge, John

Maplidsen, George

Marsh, James

Moorcock, Robert

Nodes, Butler

Pearle, William

Pett, Joseph

Pett, Peter

Pett, Phineas

Pett, Phineas Capt

Prudham, Andrew

Pulman, Robert

Rabenet, Thomas

Rogers, Andrew

Rowden, Edward

Sampson, Abraham

Smith, Humphrey

Smith, Thomas

Susmith, George

Taylor, John

Thomson, William

Tomes, Francis

Warwick, Robert
Waterman, John

Whitton, Thomas
Wiggins, George

Woodcatt, Henry
Wye, Richard

Peter Pett's Petition against William Adderley December 1651

Abbit, Thomas
Abbot, Edward
Baker, Benjamin
Baker, John
Bennet, Christopher
Country, John
Cowell, William
Crockford, Thomas
Cryer, Edward
Currin, Henry
Fuller, Thomas
Hancret, John
Hardin, John
Haris, Robert
Harris, John

Hennis, George
Hewe, Henry
Hewes, Abraham
Janus, William
Jenkins, Robert
Juerser, Thomas
Kay, John
Knight, Henry
Laine, Francis
Lofield, Daniel
Mizerell, Nicholas
Noris, John
Osbone, Augustine
Palmer, Richard
Parker, William

Peckham, Thomas
Pilcher, Francis
Rowly, William
Scipin, James
Terry, John
Thomas, John
Tripitt, Thomas
Wadkins, William
Wailes, John
Washlee, William
Whitehead, Lewis
Williams, Evan

Witnesses against William Adderley at the Inquiry during January 1652

Ambrose, William
Arkininstall, Thomas
Baker, Richard
Battle, William
Bell, Robert
Benns, James
Billers, Captain
Booner, Thomas
Burnett, Thomas
Chapman, John
Christmas, Mathias
Clerke, John
Deane, Mathew
Dixe, Walter

Downes, John
Elmistone, Christopher
Evans, Richard
Ewell, Isaac
Finnes, John
Goodwin, Thomas
Griffin, William
Hampton, Jeffery
Hanch, Matthew
Hancret, John
Hawkins, Thomas
Hill, Richard
Hilles, Richard searcher
King, Thomas
Laslin, Christopher

Manley, Edward
Moorcock, Robert
Paine, Cornelius
Paine, William
Parker, William
Pett, Joseph
Pett, Phineas (Capt)
Rabenet, Thomas
Stinton, Stephen
Stinton, Thomas
The Drum Boyes
Trippett, Thomas
Whitton, Thomas jun

Appendix 5

Rochester Councillors' allegiance and occupations

Key: 1. Parliamentarian is adopted till 1643 rather than Presbyterian. 2. The term Independent (moderate) was not appropriate before 1646. 3. Neutralism may have been adopted before 1644. 4. Conformist possibly, but insufficient evidence to confirm. 5. Possible neutral or Royalist.

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Austen	Francis	Purser	Parliamentarian		1642	1644	Died
Austen	Thomas	Naval Captain	Parliamentarian		Before 1640	1643	Died
Battie	John	Ironmonger		Moderate	1657	1662	Purged & refused oath
Brett	Francis	Gentleman	3.Neutral from 1644		Before 1640	1647	Dismissed for absence
Brewer	Clement	Cordwainer		Conformist	1656		
Brooker	Arthur	Cointner		Royalist	1658		

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Cobby	Richard		Neutral	Disaffected	1. 1644	1646	Dismissed for absence
					2. 1650	1653	Dismissed for absence
Cobham	William	Mercer	Royalist		Before 1640	1650	Purged
Cobham	John jnr	Gentleman	Royalist		Before 1640	1641	Dismissed
Cobham	John sen	Gentleman	Royalist		Before 1640	1641	Died
Codd	John	Taylor	Royalist		Before 1640	1643	Died
Cooper	John	Yeoman	4.Conformist	4.Conformist	1646	1655	Resigned
Cripps	James	Gentleman	3.Neutral from 1644		1643	1646	Dismissed for absence
Cripps	Francis	Gentleman		Independent	1650	1661	Died

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Dirkin	Alexander	Woollen Draper	Royalist	Royalist	Before 1640	1650	Died
Dirkin	Henry	Sawyer	Royalist		Before 1640	1650	Purged
Duning	Henry	Mariner		Moderate	1645	1662	Resigned
Evans	Thomas	Plumber	Unknown		Before 1640	1644	Died
Faunce	Thomas jnr	Grocer	Unknown		Before 1640	1643	Died
Faunce	William		Conformist		1642	1649	Died
Fereby	Robert		Unknown		Before 1640	1646	Died
Fowler	Robert	Purser/Gent		Royalist	1653	1657	Dismissed for absence
Greene	Richard	Boatswain		Moderate	1651	1662	Purged
Gunton	George	Cooper	Conformist	Conformist	1643	1659	Died

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Halstead	Robert	Haberdasher	1.Presbyterian		Before 1640	1649	Died
Hawthorne	Edward	Gent/Purser	2.Independent (moderate)	Independent	Before 1640	1656	Died
Head	William	Mercer	4.Conformist/Royalist	Royalist	1642	1657	Dismissed for absence
Head	Richard		Royalist	Royalist	Before 1640	1653	Dismissed old age
Hogg	John	Barber		Conformist	1650		
King	John	Gentleman	3.Neutral from 1644		Before 1640	1646	Dismissed for absence
Lake	Bartholomew	Plumber		Conformist	1650	1658	Died
Leake	Robert	Haberdasher		4.Royalist /Conformist	1659		
Mabb	John	Haberdasher		Royalist	1654		
Marlow	John	Butcher		Moderate	1650	1662	Purged

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
May	John	Gentleman	Royalist		Before 1640	1640	Died
May	Thomas	Gent/Purser	Royalist		Before 1640	1650	Purged
Merritt	Francis	Mariner	Royalist		Before 1640	1650	Purged
Mott	Thomas	Cointner	1.Presbyterian	Moderate	1646	1662	Resigned
Parker	Matthew	Haberdasher	1.Presbyterian	Moderate	1646	1662	Resigned
Paske	William	Gentleman	2.Independent (moderate)	Independent	1646		
Paxford	Richard	Gentleman /Naval	1.Presbyterian	Conformist	1.1645	1653	Resigned/dismissed
					2.1654	1662	Died
Philpott	John	John	1.Presbyterian	Disaffected	Before 1640	1653	Dismissed for absence
Puckle	John	Barker/Doctor	5.Unaligned /Royalist		Before 1640	1642	Resigned

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Robinson	James	Cordwainer	Unknown		Before 1640	1646	Died
Robinson	George	Gentleman/naval	1.Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Before 1640	1658	Died
Spencer	Bonham	Gentleman		Independent	1655	1662	Purged & refused oath
Venman	Henry	Brewer		Moderate	1657	1662	Purged
Wade	Christopher	Goldsmith		Moderate	1657	1662	Purged
Walford	Richard	Cabler		Moderate	1655	1662	Resigned
Walsall	Barnabas	Brewer	1.Presbyterian	Disaffected	Before 1640	1655	Dismissed for absence
Ward	Philip	Gentleman/Purser	1.Presbyterian	Disaffected	Before 1640	1651	Defunct (possibly dismissed)
Whitton	Edward	Draper	1.Presbyterian	Disaffected	Before 1640	1657	Dismissed for absence
Wye	Richard jun	Naval surgeon	2.Independent (moderate)	Independent	1642	1662	Purged

Surname	Christian Name	Occupation	Allegiance 1640-1649	Allegiance 1650-1662	Appointed	Left	Reason
Young	Gilbert	Grocer	Conformist	Conformist	1646		

Appendix 6

Signatories to the Chatham Petitions of 1654 and 1659 for the Parishioners' choice of minister

1654 Petition

Christmas, Matthias

Clay, Robert

Ellis, Peter

Ewell, Isaac

Hayward, Edward

Isaacson, Richard

Jeyes, John

Pett, Phineas

Pilgrim, John

Sliter, Robert

Walker, Isaac

Yardley, Edward

Yardley, Robert

1659 Petition

Baynard, John

Davis, John

Ellis, Peter

Fletcher, Thomas

Hilles, Robert

Jeyes, John

Marsh, James

Nash, John

Sliter, Robert

Strong, Thomas

Walker, Isaac

Webb, Stephen

Wright, John

Wymshurst, Joseph

Yardley, Robert

Young, Henry

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Carte MS 73 Lord Montague's Papers 1656-1661

English MS hist. b 205 Warner Papers c. 1600-1666

Nalson MS 3 Papers addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons 1643-1645

Nalson MS 7 Papers addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons 1648-1649

Rawlinson MS A11 Papers relating to the Navy (17th century)

Rawlinson MS A34 Thurloe Papers 1656

Rawlinson MS A224-A226 Admiralty Committee Ledgers 1649-1651

Tanner MS 56-58, 62b Civil War & Interregnum correspondence to the Speaker of the House of Commons 1640-1660

Walker MS C1 Correspondence of John Walker

British Library

Add MS 15669-71 Proceedings for Plundered Ministers 1644-1647

Add MS 22546 Naval Papers 1643-1677

Add MS 26785-6 Dering Committee collection of clerical petitions 1640-1641

Add MS 36709 Pembury and Speldhurst Baptist Church Minute Book 1646-1802

Add MS 37345 Whitlocke's Annals Vol V 1649-1653

Add MS 44846 Thomas Peyton Papers 1640-1656

Canterbury Cathedral Archives

U3 76/8/L/I Birchington All Saints Solemn Vow and Covenant 1643-1644

Kent History & Library Centre (Maidstone)

16/1914 John Speed map of Kent (Rochester inset) 1610-1611

DRb/Pwr 22-23 Register of Wills 1632-1662

N/FQz 1 Kent Quaker QM Sufferings Book 1655-1759

N/FQz 2 Quaker Sufferings Book 1655-1690

Q/SB 4 Quarter Sessions Records 1653

Sa/ZB/2/139 Chatham Anabaptist Licence 1672

Lambeth Palace Library

COMM I/113 Institution of Thomas Vaughan to Smarden Rectory 1644

COMM III/2 Register of approved ministers 1654-1660

COMM III/7 Register of approved ministers 1658-1659

MS 943 Laud's Metropolitan Visit 1633

Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre (Strood)

CH108/21 John Hawkins Knight Hospital Minute Book 1617-1691

DRc/Arb/2 The Red Book 1660-1737

P85/1/1-4 Chatham St Marys Parish Records 1568-1676

P85/5/1 Chatham St Marys Churchwardens Accounts 1634-1657

P85/8/1 Chatham St Marys Church Vestry Book 1643-1791

P150B/1/2 Strood St Nicholas Parish Records 1653-1695

P153/1/1-2 Gillingham St Marys Parish Records 1558-1773

P305/1/1 Rochester St Margarets Parish Records 1653-1679

P306/1/2 Rochester St Nicolas Parish Records 1624-1827

RCA/A1/1	Rochester Minute Book 1621-1653
RCA/A1/2	Rochester Minute Book 1653-1698
RCA/C2/1	Rochester City Customal 1536-1960
RCA/N1/8-19	Rochester Chamberlains Accounts 1632-1655
RCA/Z1/1	Miscellaneous Mayor's Accounts 1590-1765

National Archives

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ADM 82/1	Chatham Chest Account 1653-1654
ADM 82/2	Chatham Chest Account 1656-1657
E179/128/66	Rochester Irish Contribution 1642
E179/128/641	Four Subsidies 10 th -23 rd December 1640
E179/128/642	Four Subsidies 10 th -23 rd December 1640
E179/128/653	Grant of £400,000 February 1642
E179/128/659	Rochester Parliamentary Assessment 1641
E179/128/660	Four Subsidies 10 th -23 rd December 1640
E179/128/661	Two Subsidies 13 th May 1641
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SP9/26	Williamson's Spy Book 1663
SP14	Calendar of State Papers Domestic-James I
SP16	Calendar of State Papers Domestic-Charles I
SP18	Calendar of State Papers Domestic-Interregnum 1649-1660
SP25	Calendar of State Papers Domestic-Interregnum 1649-1660
SP28/157	Kent Committee Records 1642-1660
SP28/158	Kent Committee Records 1642-1660
SP28/159	Kent Committee Records 1642-1660

SP28/235	Kent County Committee Records 1642-1660
SP28/355/3	Philip Ward's Rochester Cathedral Accounts Book 1644-1646
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National Maritime Museum

SOC/15	Chatham Chest Accounts 1637-1644
SOC/16	Chatham Chest Account 1654-1655

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HL/PO/JO/10/ 1/121	Main Papers, Humble Petition of Kent' with signatures (1642) [Blount Petition]
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Rochester Bridge Trust

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