

# PURITANISM AND TRADITIONALISM: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DIVISION IN BATH, 1620–1662

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In late July 1642, the citizens of Bath and North-East Somerset took to the streets of the city to engage in a bitter war of words at least three weeks before the King signified the official start of the Civil War by raising his standard in Nottingham. The occasion for this open expression of deep division within the local community was a meeting of the county assizes, attended by dignitaries from all over Somerset, and the arrival of two powerful recruitment parties in anticipation of the impending conflict – on the one hand the Marquis of Hertford for the King and on the other the newly-appointed 'County Committee' for parliament. The result of their opposing efforts in propaganda was decisively in favour of parliament.

A great popular uprising of 12,000 local people, staged on the Mendips, quickly dispatched the royalist Marquis of Hertford from the county with his meagre band of 900 supporters. This heart-felt commitment to the parliamentary cause, which was not shared with any great conviction in other parts of Somerset, was to continue unabated throughout the ensuing war as local inhabitants willingly gave assistance to Sir William Waller at the battle of Lansdown in 1643; cleverly undermined the morale of the royalist garrison under Sir Thomas Bridges between 1643 and 1645; and triumphantly mounted another massive rally on the Mendips in support of the New Model Army under Sir Thomas Fairfax in 1645.<sup>1</sup>

What caused ordinary members of this particular community to behave in a way which was not typical of the rest of the country and to display such consistency, stamina and depth of political feeling? Contrary to a commonly-held opinion, first advocated by the Earl of Clarendon, the Mendip rebellion was not caused by class division. It was not that the wealthy merchants, clothiers and 'middling sort' who dominated the area, but lacked social status, were motivated by envy as they rose for parliament against the gentry who supported the King. In fact the vast majority of local gentry themselves (the Pophams, the Horners, the Haringtons and the Hungerfords) came down firmly in

favour of parliament and encouraged their tenants to follow suit. The leadership factor indeed played an important part in determining the allegiance of the local community – but it was by no means the whole explanation. Professor David Underdown, in his book *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, has suggested that the Civil War, when it came, was a conflict between two competing cultures. As Richard Baxter had commented at the time, civil war ‘had begun in our streets before King and Parliament had any armies’. There is some evidence to suggest that a cultural division of this kind had arisen in Bath and North-East Somerset long before the first shots were fired in 1642 – but only expressed itself in terms of *political* allegiance when the war actually started.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1620s the area was already under the tight control of a puritan elite which, in addition to the influential gentry families already mentioned, included members of Bath Corporation and two other powerful figures, Prynne and Ashe. William Prynne of Swainswick was to gain future national notoriety for his opposition to bishops and immorality at the royal court in the 1630s. John Ashe and his family already employed a huge workforce in their thriving cloth industry based on Freshford and Beckington. Considering the strength of this elite, it is not surprising to find that many parishes churches in the vicinity were staffed by ardent puritan clergy, particularly those at Kilmersdon, Keynsham, Dunkerton, Woolverton, Priston, Stratton, Bathford and Claverton, where Humphry Chambers was a firebrand of the first order.

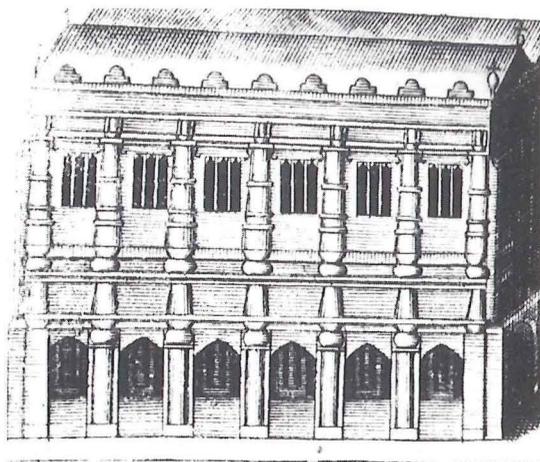
The dominant position of puritanism and the general support that it received from the populace showed themselves in various ways. For example, many complaints were received during the Bishop’s visitations about the inadequacy of certain other clergy in failing to preach the required number of sermons. The Bath Corporation revived the preaching of sermons on special days in Bath Abbey during the 1630s and established regular mid-week lectures in the city from 1627. Above all, there was a general tightening of moral standards. This deliberate policy of reform was illustrated by the mayor’s suppression of all unnecessary alehouses in Bath and the strict regulation of the strength of all beer brewed in the city (1623); by the punishment of women for breaches of sexual morality through a ‘ducking’ in the cucking stool; by the segregation of sexes in the hot water baths (1625) in an attempt to remedy ‘the great disorders committed in the common use of the baths by men and women together’; by the punishment of those guilty of sabbath-breaking, playing unlawful games, drunkenness

or swearing (as with John Tucker of Bath who was charged with opening his alehouse for 'tiplinge and drinkinge ... at the time of divine service on Sunday' and Eleonora Gibbins of Widcombe for causing 'her myll to grynd on Sunday mornings'); by the suppression of activities which encouraged large, unruly crowds – such as fairs, bear-baitings, and performances by travelling players – because such occasions were a threat to order and encouraged idleness and drunkenness; and by the suppression of popular festivals, maypoles and church revels.<sup>3</sup>

The puritans therefore sought to reshape their local world by establishing a system of social and moral control. Their religion taught the need for family discipline, hard work, individual responsibility and thrift. These qualities turned them into highly successful businessmen, whose sense of duty saw them also emerge as the local elite, taking responsibility for government as parish officers, magistrates and councillors. During the Civil War their grip on community affairs tightened even further as the pace of the puritan revolution quickened nationally. The Prayer Book was abolished; the royalist James Masters was dismissed as Rector of the Abbey; a local presbyterian church system was established and puritan ministers installed where possible to replace unsuitable clergy. Bath itself was firmly under the influence of a puritan council, a puritan Recorder (William Prynne) and two puritan members of parliament (Alexander Popham and James Ashe). But one storm cloud had begun to blacken their horizon. The stability of society was being threatened by economic forces beyond their control – a population explosion, land shortage, inflation, food shortages, unemployment – which combined to create a rising number of disorderly poor. The ugly food riots on Midford Hill near Bath, in November 1630, by underlining the seriousness of the 'crisis of order' in Somerset, stung the ruling elite into action. Bath Corporation, fearful of their property and status, resolved 'to sett the poore of this cittie to work' by establishing a House of Correction for the idle to endure.<sup>4</sup>

Although this puritan and cultural revolution in North-East Somerset had received widespread support, there is no doubt that a split had occurred in the community by 1642. Not everyone approved of the changes that had been taking place. A traditionalist minority resented both the demise of 'merrie England' and the local domination by a harsh puritan elite, whose attitude they regarded as both distasteful and divisive. The early years of the Civil War therefore saw the emergence of three clear factions or groupings on the City Council. Matthew Clift's faction, which demonstrated ardent support for parliament and the

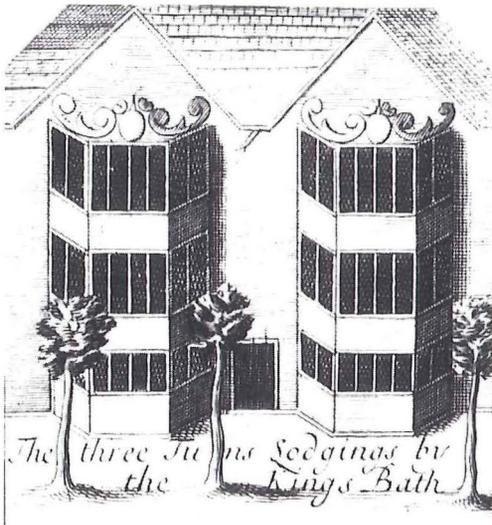
1 Vignette of the Stuart Guildhall from the border of Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694. The City Council met on the upper floor above the open-sided market house.



*The East Side of Guild Hall*

puritan revolution; a group of moderate puritans, who always sided with Clift in any crucial vote (thus giving him a normal majority of about 22 votes to 8); and Henry Chapman's traditionalist faction, which actively supported the royalist cause. In spite of their political differences, the three groups shared one aim in common – namely, to maintain at all costs the livelihood of local people in the face of severe hostilities. As a result, no matter which army occupied the city, the councillors sat together side by side throughout the war ensuring the flow of daily life.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, when the bitter war eventually came to an end, a noticeable spirit of moderation and settlement was generated by the puritan majority in an attempt to heal the divisions within the community – and it was with great reluctance that they obeyed parliament's order in October 1647 to expel the royalist faction from the Council.

Henry Chapman and his followers would not be reconciled however. A long-held objective had yet to be accomplished and it was now to be pursued with missionary zeal. Centering their activities on the inns and alehouses of the city, this traditionalist group undoubtedly commanded a certain degree of popular support in their sustained attempt to reverse the revolution. Who were these reactionary citizens? Five of them were in fact innkeepers – Henry Chapman of *The Sun* on the east side of the Market Place; Philip Sherwood of *The Three Tuns* in Stall Street; George Chapman of *The Bear* in Cheap Street; Thomas Gibbs of *The Golden Lyon*



2 The Three Tuns Lodging beside the King's and Queen's Baths, from Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694. The *Three Tuns Inn* fronted onto Stall Street.

by the South Gate; and Samuel Wintle of *The George* near the Hot Bath. Both *The Sun* and *The Three Tuns* became regular meeting places for royalist soldiers during the war, especially between 1643 and 1645 when Chapman, as Captain of the Bath Trained Bands, and Sherwood, as his Lieutenant, were responsible for mounting nightly guard on behalf of the royalist garrison.

Philip Sherwood had already been involved in a serious dispute with the Bath Corporation as early as 1622, twelve years before he himself was elected as Councillor. The controversy, which directly centred on *The Three Tuns*, arose just at the time when the local puritan elite had launched their latest campaign to suppress unnecessary or disorderly alehouses. The Mayor and Corporation, in response to instructions given by the county magistrates, had dutifully carried out a survey of all inns and alehouses within their district, listing those that were disorderly and in need of suppression.<sup>6</sup> During the course of this investigation, they discovered that Sherwood had recently attempted to upgrade *The Three Tuns* from an alehouse to an inn (which would have enabled him to accommodate guests). According to the Mayor, Thomas Murford, for about ten years or so there had merely been 'a post thrust out of the wall of the house and thereon a little sign of 3 tunns hanging, resembling the sign of an alehouse and the house used but as an alehouse'. More recently, however, he had managed to get a licence for

an inn from Sir Giles Mompesson, 'whereupon he set up a new fair sign of 3 Tunnes, and fixed to support it 2 great posts in the street being the soil of the Mayor and Commalty, which he could not do without their leave'. On the revocation of Mompesson's patent, the Corporation had acted on the Privy Council's instructions in suppressing ten inns licensed by him and removing all their signs – except that of Philip Sherwood who had refused to co-operate.

A frequent visitor to the Quarter Sessions on charges of 'uttering his beer by smaller measures', he was now indicted there 'by his fellow innkeepers for keeping an Inn without a lawful title and an alehouse without a licence'. In consequence, he was fined £5, while his inn was ordered to be suppressed and his sign removed. However, when bailiffs arrived to dismantle the sign, they were confronted by Sherwood's son 'with a loaded weapon and a maidservant with gunpowder'. In view of the fact that a crowd of some three hundred had now gathered to witness the dispute, the bailiffs waited to complete their task under the cover of darkness. Next morning, Sherwood contemptuously set up the sign again but, although he complained to the Privy Council that the Corporation had conspired against him 'out of private and particular respects' (Murford was, for instance, a rival innkeeper of *The Hart*), the Privy Council rejected his petition. Anxious to support recent proclamations 'touching inns and alehouses', they accepted the Corporation's outline of the 'sundry disorders' that had been committed in *The Three Tuns*. This episode undoubtedly embittered Sherwood in his attitude towards the Corporation and the puritan oligarchy, feeling as he did a sense of 'oppression' and victimisation.<sup>7</sup>

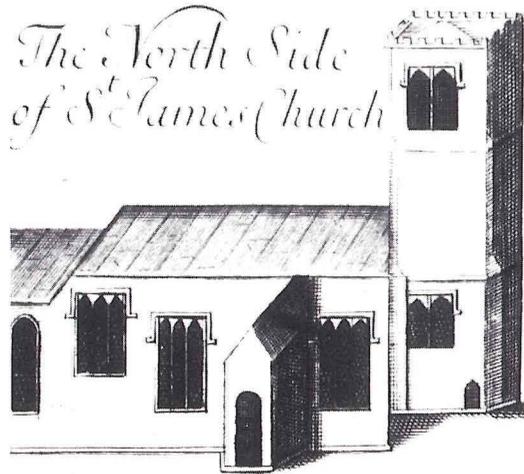
It is also worth recalling that Philip Sherwood belonged to a well-known Catholic family. His father Dr John Sherwood, who lived in Abbey House until his death in 1621, was described by Anthony Wood as 'an eminent practitioner ... in the City of Bath ... much resorted to by those of the Roman Catholic religion, he himself being of that profession'. Dr Sherwood's own father and mother were devout papists; his brother, Thomas, an Elizabethan martyr; and three other brothers Catholic priests. Furthermore, four of his seven sons were all converted to the Catholic faith – Thomas (who joined the Society of Jesus), Robert and William (both of whom entered the Benedictine Order) and John (who was a practising Catholic in Ireland). There is no direct evidence that Philip followed his brothers' example, just as there is no evidence for Catholic recusancy in the Bath area between 1627 and 1660. It is nevertheless unlikely that Sherwood, with his particular

family background, would look favourably on the growing domination of puritanism in the neighbourhood. There are also suspicions that another member of the Chapman faction had secret Catholic tendencies. In 1683 Thomas Gibbs (a brewer and eldest son of Thomas Gibbs, innkeeper of the *Golden Lyon*) was one of nine people presented by the Grand Jury in Bath under the terms of the Papists (Removal and Disarming) Bill of 1680. His wife, Margaret Carne, had already been presented as a suspected papist at an Archdeacon's visitation in 1662, which investigated absenteeism from Anglican services.<sup>8</sup>

During the Civil War, both Philip Sherwood and Thomas Gibbs were members of the traditionalist coterie which lent active support to the royalist war effort. The Goldsmith's Hall Committee heard evidence in 1646 that Sherwood 'was in armes against the Parliament forces'. As Lieutenant of the Bath Trained Bands under Henry Chapman, he had also alienated local public opinion by giving assistance to the highly unpopular royalist Governor, Sir Thomas Bridges, after parliament had lost control of the area between 1643 and 1645. Thomas Gibbs was accused both of 'aiding and assisting the forces against the Parliament' and of possessing a commission from the Marquis of Hertford 'for takeing away armes from the well affected in and about Bathe, which accordingly he disarmed'. Of the other members of the group, Henry Chapman himself admitted in his petition to compound for his delinquency that he had been a 'Captain of a foot company in his Majesty's Army for the space of six months'. Robert Fisher, an alderman and mercer by trade, not only admitted that he fought against parliament, but also confessed that while the royalists had control of Somerset, he 'did supply them with corn, bread and other victualls for their money', having 'a commission to that purpose under the hands of the Lord Mohun and Sir Ralph Hopton'. George Chapman's offence was simply being 'in armes against the Parliament'.<sup>9</sup>

Philip Sherwood's clash with the Corporation over his alehouse in 1622 has already given one clue to the underlying attitudes of the traditionalist party – attitudes which had caused them to oppose the majority view of the community within North-East Somerset when hostilities commenced in 1642. Much more convincing evidence was given in 1648, when two years of brittle peace were broken by the Second Civil War. A series of sporadic risings of royalist groups up and down the country followed the Engagement made by Charles I with the Scots and the invasion by a Scottish army aimed at restoring the King to his throne.

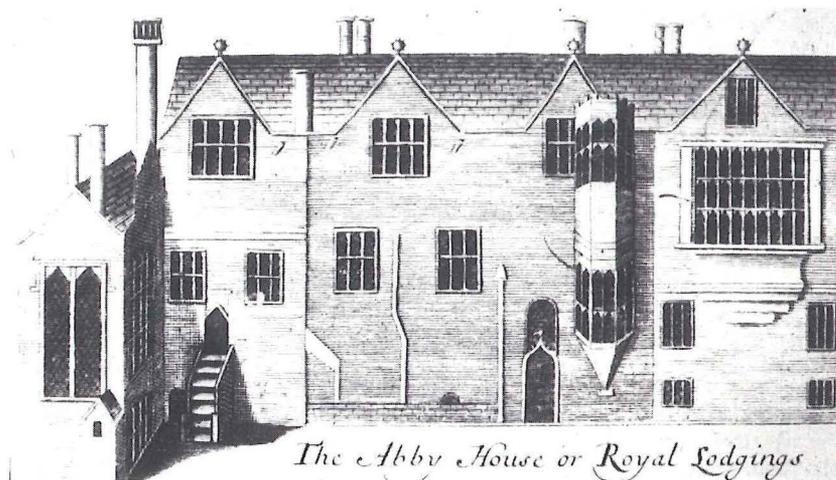
3 St James's Church from  
Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694.



On 3 May *The Moderate Intelligencer* gave news of a rising at Bath.<sup>10</sup> This, in fact, turned out to be a slight exaggeration, but *The Perfect Weekly Account* of the following week carried a full account of the ugly and provocative scenes which had been duly reported to parliament at the end of April:

... One Henry Chapman of the city of Bathe, a Captain of the King in the late wars, a desperate Malignant, had not only openly affronted Mr Long, the Minister there lately settled by the Parliament, but likewise caused one Doctour Jones, a great plunderer and late Chaplain of the King's Army, to read the Booke of Common-Prayer and Preach publickley against the Parliaments proceedings in St James Church.

In view of the abolition of the Book of Common Prayer, this clearly offended the puritan convictions of the Recorder (William Prynne), the Mayor and the Justices, who twice tried to interrupt their proceedings. It was all to no avail. After the service Dr Jones 'was guarded from the Church by about 100 malignants to Chapman's house, some of them armed with swords, and after dinner he was in like manner guarded by them to the same Church where he read Common Prayer again'. This open defiance and the inability of the authorities to take action caused



4 The Abbey House from Gilmore's plan of Bath 1694.

considerable anxiety amongst the 'well affected people ... who are now in great fear of having their throats cut and of a party there sodainly to be raised for the King against the Parliament'. The Corporation paid ten men to keep special watch at night.<sup>11</sup> Their suspicions of an imminent rising had been increased by the recent steady influx of royalist supporters from neighbouring districts under the pretence of visiting the hot water baths. To enable these visitors to confer freely with local royalists, Chapman and his friends had 'for some weeks before set up a Bulbaiting every Monday neere the city wals, but without the precincts, to which disaffected people flocked from the Adjoyning Counties'. Vigorous complaints against this were made at the city Quarter Sessions, but the magistrates' authority did not stretch outside the city boundary. To emphasise his contempt for the local authorities, Chapman arranged a special bull-baiting assembly on the very day of the Quarter Sessions. He and his followers, showing utter disregard, 'marched to it with a drum before their dogs in affront of authority'. When they heard of the outrages, the House of Commons ordered on 1 May that Henry Chapman and Dr Jones should be sent for as delinquents to appear before them.<sup>12</sup>

This episode reveals in a most vivid manner the sense of frustration felt by the traditionalist faction at the overthrow of their ancient culture by the puritans – a frustration which suddenly burst forth during the fleeting opportunity created by the Second Civil War. It is highly

significant that Chapman and his supporters chose three symbols to express their attitudes: namely, the Book of Common Prayer, the public demonstration against Prynne, and the bull-baiting ceremonies. These symbols starkly epitomised the pre-war struggle that had taken place over the form of religion and the survival of popular recreations. The indignation expressed by Prynne and the Bath Corporation at these outrages merely emphasised the extent of the rift that now existed between local citizens, sufficient indeed to divide the community in war.

The feeling aroused by this attempt of 1648 to frustrate the operation of puritanism within the locality was, however, minor compared with the furore which arose in 1661, one year after the Restoration, when the same traditionalist forces tried to unseat the puritan survivors on the City Council. The action again centred on Henry Chapman, who was joined in the conspiracy by his old wartime associate, Sir Thomas Bridges. Chapman had by then already been restored to the City Council (29 June 1660) under the terms of the Restoration settlement. Of the other members of the original royalist group, expelled from membership by order of parliament in 1647, Samuel Wintle and Robert Sheppard had also recovered their places, whereas Philip Sherwood and Thomas Gibbs were both dead and Robert Fisher (aged 88) was presumably too old to consider re-election. The faction had nevertheless been bolstered by a number of more recently-recruited adherents – John Bush, Robert Child, William Child, John Fisher (son of Robert) and Walter Gibbs (son of Thomas). Once Chapman had gained the further distinction of being elected an Alderman on 17 August 1660, he launched his plan to gain control of local affairs at the expense of the mainly puritan councillors. Just one month later he signalled his intent by standing as candidate for the office of Mayor in opposition to Alderman John Ford. The ensuing election (26 September) resulted in a heavy defeat for Chapman by 22 votes to 8, figures which indicated from the outset the size of the puritan majority on the Council. It was later alleged that Chapman demonstrated his disgust at being ousted from high office by one whom he regarded as being his social inferior. Calling him 'a saucy fellow' and claiming that 'he [Chapman] was a better man than himself', he openly 'affronted and reviled the said Mayor sitting on the Bench in open Court with very approbrious and distasteful language.'<sup>13</sup>

Undeterred by the electoral defeat, Chapman and Bridges now plotted an extraordinary coup. When writs were issued for the new parliamentary elections of 1661, they rightly suspected that the Corporation would again nominate Prynne and Popham as M.P.s for

the city. Determined to prevent the return of these 'persons notorious enough for their actions in the late rebellions, and that still court the populacy for their applause by their p'tended supporting of their libertyes', Bridges decided to offer himself for election together with Sir Charles Berkley, the Comptroller of His Majesty's Household.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately the Mayor of Bath (John Ford) refused to show any interest in the claims of these self-appointed rival candidates. Not to be outdone, Bridges lodged a complaint against Ford before the Privy Council, charging him with a history of various misdemeanours. His plan, which he outlined in a letter to Sir Edward Nicholas, was quite clearly to get Ford dismissed as Mayor by the Privy Council and to secure, as his replacement, the appointment of Henry Chapman, 'a person whose loyalty is unquestionable nor blemished by the least failing under his great sufferings'.<sup>15</sup> It was his hope that Chapman would then be in a position to sway the Corporation in their election of the two M.P.s. The scheme failed dismally. When Ford appeared before the Privy Council on 3 April, he was quickly able to refute the charges and secure his immediate acquittal, which allowed him time enough to return to Bath and organise the election.<sup>16</sup> Bridges nevertheless continued to lobby support among the other local cavalier gentry in an attempt to substantiate his charges against Ford so that the case could be re-opened. In a letter to Sir Hugh Smyth of Long Ashton, Bridges urged both Smyth himself and Sir George Norton 'to make a speedy return' of their evidence to the Privy Council. He also suggested it would perhaps be wise not to mention a previous refusal by Ford to confer on Bridges the status of freeman of the city. The danger was that this would play into the hands of their opponents, who were arguing that Bridges was simply seeking retaliation for that insult.<sup>17</sup>

When the Council met on 12 April, Chapman's faction quickly realised that they would be outvoted and, according to Prynne, 'voluntarily left the Hall'. Their names are underlined in the Council Minute Book – Robert Child, Henry Chapman, Walter Gibbs, Robert Sheppard, John Bush, Samuel Wintle, William Child and John Fisher. As they stormed out of the chamber they demanded that *all* freemen should be allowed to vote.<sup>18</sup> The Mayor ignored this outburst and proceeded with the formal election of Prynne and Popham as Bath's representatives in parliament. Meanwhile, Chapman had 'commanded his drummer to beat up his drum in every street in the City, to summon all the Freemen immediately to repair to the Guildhall to give their voyces'. According to Prynne, Chapman's success was limited – only

thirty-two of the freemen or thereabouts answered the call ('some few of the meaner and younger sort, being his souldiers or creatures'), whereas at least two hundred could have done so ('but all the ancient substantial citizens and freemen staid at home, refusing to come because they had no voyces, and never heard of any election made by the freemen'). All the same, Chapman proceeded with the mock election of Bridges and Berkley, which was conducted 'in a most tumultuous manner' outside the Guildhall and later 'ratified at the Captin's Tavern' (i.e. *The Sun*, which stood next door) 'where they carroused so long that many of them were scarce able to return home'. Ford and Chapman each submitted to the Sherriff a formal return of their own separately-organised election, with the result that when parliament convened on 8 May all four candidates (Prynne, Popham, Bridges and Berkley) arrived to take up their seat. Chapman's plot was finally thwarted when the Commons ruled that the election of Prynne and Popham should stand.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in a letter describing the episode, the Mayor and Corporation implored Prynne 'to take speedy course that they may be eased of this burden, for Chapman's insolence is insufferable'.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile Bridges and Chapman were nothing if not persistent. In anger and desperation they now pursued their schemes to gain control of the city with almost lunatic frenzy, turning to the pro-royalist Somerset gentry for help. Chapman gained a warrant, signed by Sir Thomas Bridges and Sir Hugh Smyth (both of whom were deputy lieutenants), for the arrest of nine leading members of the Council 'seditious persons of known disloyalty and disaffection to Kingly government'. This was served by Sir William Bassett's troop of horse following an order by Sir Maurice Berkeley on the opening day of the Quarter Sessions (Thursday 19 September) just as the Recorder (Prynne), the Mayor, Justices and Councillors were processing to the Guildhall. In an outrageous perversion of justice the nine councillors, who included such staunch puritans as Matthew Clift, John Biggs and John Parker, were escorted as prisoners on a two-day journey to Ilchester where they were presented to the Sheriff, together with George Long, the recently displaced minister. The Sheriff released them immediately for lack of evidence, enabling them to return to Bath by the evening of Monday the 23rd.<sup>21</sup> In the meantime, Prynne, who had just arrived as Recorder to preside over the Quarter Sessions, wrote an angrily-worded letter of complaint to Sir Hugh Smyth of Long Ashton, one of the two deputy lieutenants who had signed the warrant. In it he listed the motives which lay behind these unjust and illegal arrests. 'It is

generally interpreted by the city and the country', he argued, 'to be a design ... to interrupt the Quarter Sessions of the city this day, and the election of the Maior and all other officers for this city on Monday next, for the year ensuing (wherein nine of them ought to have voices) and to put an affront upon myself their newly elected and sworn Recorder'. Knowing that Smyth had aided and abetted Bridges, he gave him warning, 'as your friend and neighbour', that failure to release them speedily would result in 'complaints thereof to his Majesty by the next post, and unto the Parliament at their next meeting'.<sup>22</sup> Earlier, on 27 August, Chapman's faction had been thwarted in their attempt to prevent Prynne being elected as Recorder in succession to Robert Hyde (who had been automatically restored to office after the Restoration but who had since resigned). Having failed to gain the election of Hyde's son on the first vote, the eight ostentatiously abstained when Prynne was elected by 20 votes to nil in the second ballot.<sup>23</sup>

Prynne's interpretation was correct. Chapman's whole aim had been to seize control of the Council from the puritans during the absence of their leading members at Ilchester, and in addition to subject Prynne to a public humiliation. During the attempted coup he wasted no time. According to the articles presented against Chapman later and entered in the Council Minute Book, he and his confederates met together on Sunday 21 September 'in an ale-house during the time of the evening service and sermon, from which they absented themselves'. There they worked out the probable voting intentions of the remainder of the Council at next day's election of Mayor. Much to their dismay, they concluded that a majority for Henry Chapman was by no means certain. Early on the Monday morning, therefore, Chapman himself (as the recently reinstated Captain of the Trained Bands) arrested under warrant two more of the Council and sent them under escort to Keynsham, where they were kept overnight in the stables of Sir Thomas Bridges. Meanwhile the election proceeded with a depleted Council, which now numbered twenty-one. During the debate Chapman 'publicly affronted and reviled with very uncivil language the said Mayor and Mr Prinn, Recorder of the said City'. For his part, Prynne deplored the 'unparalleled disturbance of their election by force of armes' and reminded them that 'a city divided against itself cannot stand.' He also stated that a statute of Edward I had commanded that 'no great man or other by force of armes or menaces should disturbe any to make free elections' and that 'this disturbance now made by Capt. Chapman's procurement was the highest breach of their Charter

and privilege and of their freedom of elections...'. On the question being put, 'who shall be Mayor of this Citty for ye yeare next ensuing', 8 votes were recorded for John Parker and 11 for Henry Chapman. A second vote resulted in 10 members supporting Parker and 11 supporting Chapman. The result of the election, amid uproar, was duly entered in the Minute Book in these words: 'Mr Henry Chapman is by the voyces present elected Mayor of this Citty Bath.' However, by the late evening, eight of those originally arrested had returned to the city. Hurrying to the Guildhall under the instructions of Prynne, they cast their votes for Parker and entered them accordingly in the Minute Book (the different ink is clearly visible). The statement recording Chapman's election as Mayor was then crossed out, being substituted by the words 'Mr John Parker is Mayor elected for ye next year'.<sup>24</sup>

True to his threat, Prynne had reported the matter to the Privy Council, refuting a counter-claim by Smyth and Bridges that they had merely responded to a petition from the citizens of Bath 'for the securing thereof from frequent meetings held there by seditious persons of knowne disloyalty and disaffection to kingly government'. When eventually the Privy Council summoned all parties to appear on 25 October, it rebuked the city for its perpetual squabbles which were 'much to his Maties [Majesty's] disservice, the disturbance of the peace and government of that city, and being of bad example to other corporations'. The King, who was present, expressed his displeasure that 'his Militia should be in any way employed to strengthen a faccon and to disturb the civil government'. He urged that 'all enmity might cease and all animosity be so quieted that no seeds of division might remayne amongst them'. The Council ruled in favour of John Parker who had been newly elected Mayor and ordered Henry Chapman to be dismissed as Captain of the Trained Bands.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime the Bath Quarter Sessions, which had been postponed for a week in view of the arrest of the councillors, had finally got under way on 25 September. Chapman, who was summoned to appear before Prynne on a number of charges, treated the court with contempt. According to the articles presented against Chapman, he arrived surrounded by friends and shouted mockingly at Prynne, 'What have you to do with sitting in judgement? You ought to have lost your head when you lost your ears'. He then left the courtroom. On being summoned to reappear by the Mayor's officer, he sent back his defiant reply that 'he would not appear before any such saucy and imperious fellows'; that 'they had placed a prick lowse lousy tailor in his

place' and that he would 'appeal to their betters.' (John Parker, the new Mayor, was a clothier and draper by trade.) Two days later, with six of the faction absent, the Council displaced Chapman from his office of Alderman by 20 votes to 2 and from his position on the Council by 21 votes to 2, although they allowed him to retain his status as freeman. By November he was languishing in the city prison 'for divers great debts'. Even then he continued to defy the local authority by encouraging his friends and 'late soldiers' to rescue him from prison. Such was the scare that the Mayor doubled the city watch and 'commanded the chiefest inhabitants to watch with himself all night, with some musketeers of the Trained Band, sending away the rude multitude then gathered about the Prison door'.<sup>26</sup> This vivid picture of Henry Chapman locked in prison, guarded in person by the puritan elite outside, seemingly provides a significant footnote to the struggle that had taken place in Bath over the previous thirty years. It is not, however, quite the end of the story.

By 1660 the gentry of North-East Somerset had been happy on the whole to compromise on a Restoration settlement that ended the fear of tyranny in church and state, restored a free parliament, reduced the threat of radical extremism, and enabled them to regain their traditional authority within the county. William Prynne, Alexander Popham, John Ashe, James Ashe, John Harington junior and others had all worked together in a spirit of moderation to bring about the Restoration of Charles II. They were, in time, successfully accommodated within the new regime.<sup>27</sup> Their old allies on Bath Corporation were not to be so fortunate. Throughout the bitter controversy surrounding Henry Chapman and the 1661 elections in Bath, William Prynne had maintained that the chief objective of the cavalier gentry was to discredit the corporations in order 'to make way for their total purgation'. Events proved him right. The Corporation Act, which Prynne himself fiercely opposed in the Commons, became law in November 1661. It required all persons holding office to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy, to swear an oath of non-resistance to the King, and to subscribe to the declaration removing the Solemn League and Covenant. In fact the commissioners who were appointed by the King with powers to remove all those regarded as a threat to Church or State (even though they had taken the oaths) had almost limitless opportunity to remodel town government as they wished. Local Cavalier gentry, many of whom became commissioners themselves, had finally gained their way.

On 27 October 1662 Bath Council took note of the fact that 'several persons are removed from their places in this Corporation' under the

terms of the Corporation Act.<sup>28</sup> Just over a fortnight earlier, on the tenth and eleventh of the same month, commissioners had visited the city to administer the oaths of allegiance and supremacy on the mayor, aldermen, councillors and officers of the corporation. The commissioners, who were composed of local cavalier gentry (Hugh Smyth, William Wyndham, John Warre, George Norton and George Stawell), noted that those present at the meeting 'did reddily take' the oaths – with the exception of William Russell, 'an Anabaptist', who refused and was in consequence disqualified from his place on the Council. Two failed to attend, however, and were also disqualified – namely Recorder William Prynne ('a person disaffected to the peace and government of the Church') and Alderman Richard Druce (allegedly disaffected to both the Church and the State). Furthermore, of those who had taken the oaths, eleven were nevertheless considered, 'based upon just reason shown', unfit to 'continue any longer in their respective places and trusts', bearing in mind 'the safety of the publick'. Those affected by this judgment were John Parker\* (Mayor), John Ford and John Boyce\* (justices), Matthew Clift\*, John Biggs\* and John Atwood (aldermen), Anthony Colloby\*, Richard Biggs, Edward Parker\*, Henry Moore\* and George Reeve\* (councillors).<sup>29</sup> These were, of course, close members of Matthew Clift's faction which had been involved in the series of bitter disputes with Henry Chapman's group in 1661. The men chosen by the commissioners to replace them in key positions on the Council included Robert Child (mayor), Henry Chapman (justice), Walter Gibbs and Robert Sheppard (aldermen), William Child (chamberlain), Samuel Wintle (bailiff), and John Bush (constable) – all of whom were members of Chapman's faction which had walked out of the Council meeting in April 1661 in protest at the election of Popham and Prynne as members of parliament. At the same time the commissioners appointed Lord Francis of Hawley to replace William Prynne as Recorder.<sup>30</sup>

In Bath, therefore, the Corporation Act had largely achieved in 1662 what Henry Chapman had striven unsuccessfully to achieve one year earlier. Bearing in mind their public support for the Restoration and their willingness to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, there can be little doubt that Matthew Clift and his allies had been perfectly willing to play their part in the healing and settlement process. It was not to be. Single-minded throughout, Henry Chapman, in alliance with the cavalier gentry, had never lost sight of his ambition to dominate the local Council and thereby reverse the cultural revolution that had taken place. It is almost certain that the commissioners, in deciding that Clift

and his faction were unfit to continue in office, based their verdict to a large extent on the 'just reason shown' to them in evidence presented chiefly by Chapman. Indeed, a letter of indictment survives from Chapman to two of the commissioners, Sir Hugh Smyth and Sir George Norton, written shortly after the expulsions as they awaited the backlash. 'Ford, Clift, Collibee and Reeves', he wrote, 'were in Armes against his late Majestie; Boys and Brigges fled from their homes in 1643 when the Kings Army came to Bath and sheltered themselves in the Parliamentary Garrison at Bristoll; Druce, Parker and Atwood were carried away by his late Majestie in 1644 into Devon for indeavoring what in them lay to starve the Kings Army, refusing to bake bread when required; Moor, Parker and Biggs were putt up into the Places of those turned out for their loyalty'. Chapman and his faction had sent the Town Clerk up to London to keep 'an yspecial eye on Mr Prynns motion', as he undoubtedly sought to resist the decisions taken by the commissioners in Bath. In the meantime, Chapman, with the close support and advice of his gentry allies, Smyth and Norton, took steps not only 'to muster up' what force could be 'procured to keepe off Mr Prynns storme', but also to ensure that 'ye proceedings of the Hon. Commissioners' could 'be justified'.<sup>31</sup>

Matthew Clift and the twelve members of his group, who had fiercely resisted the pretensions of Henry Chapman in the disputed mayoral election of 1661 and at other times, were the real losers in the Restoration settlement. Whereas the local gentry, who had led the rebellion in 1642 (or their sons), had all been rehabilitated in the new regime, their lesser accomplices on the City Council, the mercers and bakers, were the ones to have been sacrificed. For although Henry Chapman, who barely a year earlier had vigorously opposed William Prynne's nomination as member of parliament, describing him as 'a public enemy to the King and Kingdom',<sup>32</sup> was willing to accept him now in that capacity, he was nevertheless unflinching in his determination to win the battle for local control.

The loss sustained by Matthew Clift symbolised far more than defeat in a bitter, local rivalry between strongly conflicting personalities. Defeat symbolised, in one respect, the defeat of the local puritan elite who had fought the war, at least in part, in order to impose their culture and their religion on a reprobate minority. The 'reprobates' had finally won. There would be no presbyterian system of religion, no guarantee that local affairs would in future be controlled by the godly. James Masters was back at the Abbey resplendent in surplice and vestments; Henry

Chapman was back at the Guildhall resplendent at last in mayoral robes.<sup>33</sup> Chapman, in fact, turned out to be a remarkably inventive Mayor, who devoted himself to the good of the community in a most business-like and efficient manner. Elected to that office also on a second occasion in 1672, he set about the task of promoting the city's healing waters by writing a book, *Thermae Redivivae* (1673) and marketing its tourist attractions by placing the Corporation's first ever advertisement in a London newspaper (*The Intelligencer*, 26 March 1664). In doing so he helped to lay foundations for the golden days of Bath, more than half a century later, under the social leadership of Beau Nash. This was certainly not what Matthew Clift and his friends had had in mind.

## Notes

- 1 For a detailed account of these events and the raising of the area for parliament see John Wroughton, *The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset, 1642–1650* (Bath, 1973) – and especially the new, revised edition to be published in 1992.
- 2 Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Great Rebellion* (Oxford, 1888), Vol 2, p. 296; David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 181–2.
- 3 E.H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records for the County of Somerset* (Taunton, 1907–8), Vol.1, pp. 7, 199–200, 250; Vol. 2, pp. 116, 138–9, 144, 209; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1619–23, p. 501; Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 7 April 1634; Bath Chamberlain's Accounts, 1569–1628 passim; Somerset Record Office, D|D|Ca 194, Comperta 1615.
- 4 Somerset Record Office, Session Roll, 64ii, f200–204; Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 23 May 1634, 29 Dec 1634; Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of all Authority* (California 1980).
- 5 For a full description of the puritan and cultural revolution in North Somerset, see John Wroughton, 'The Community of Bath and North-East Somerset and the Great Civil War' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1990). For much of the detail on buildings and families the author owes a great debt to Elizabeth Holland and Marta Inskip and their scholarly Survey of Old Bath.
- 6 E.H. Bates-Harbin, op.cit., Vol.1, pp. 199–200; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1619–23, p. 501.
- 7 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1619–23, p. 374 (Mayor of Bath to the Council, 11 April 1622); *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1620–23, p. 123.
- 8 J.A. Williams, *Post Reformation Catholicism in Bath*, Vol.1 (London, 1975), pp. 22–39; Public Record Office, E.351–415 (Accounts of Receiver of Recusants' Forfeitures, 1627–39).
- 9 Public Record Office, SP 23.73 (831, 844), SP 23.117 (331), SP 23.204 (666, 671, 701, 717), Committee for Compounding (papers relating to the petitions of Philip Sherwood, Thomas Gibbs, Henry Chapman, Robert Fisher and George Chapman).
- 10 British Library, E.441, *The Moderate Intelligencer* 17 April–4 May 1648.
- 11 Bath Record Office, Bath Chamberlain's Accounts, 1648.

- 12 British Library, E.441, *The Perfect Weekly Account* 3–10 May 1648.
- 13 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 29 June, 17 Aug, 26 Sept 1660; 27 Sept 1661 – Articles exhibited against Capt. Henry Chapman.
- 14 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1661–2, p. 544 (Sir Thomas Bridges' letter to Secretary Nicholas, 20 March 1661); E.W. Kirby, *William Prynne: A Study in Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), pp 153–4.
- 15 Letter quoted in full in William M. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne, 1600–1669* (London, 1963), pp. 235–6.
- 16 Public Record Office, PC2.55, ff.177, 191–2, Privy Council Register (petition of Bridges and appearance of Ford, March–April 1661).
- 17 Bristol Record Office, AC/02/10, Smyth of Ashton Court MSS, Bridges to Smyth, 4 April 1661.
- 18 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 12 April 1661; William Prynne, *Brevia Parliamentaria Rediviva* (London, 1664), pp. 315–18.
- 19 R.E.M. Peach, *The Annals of the Parish of Swainswick* (Bath, 1892), pp. 41–2; *Commons' Journals*, Vol.7, p. 250; Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 27 Sept 1661; E.W. Kirby, *William Prynne*, pp. 155–6.
- 20 Bristol Record Office, AC/02/11, Smyth of Ashton Court MSS, Mayor of Bath to Prynne, 1 June 1661.
- 21 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 23 Sept 1661; William Prynne, *Brevia*, pp. 345–6.
- 22 Bristol Record Office, AC/02/10, Smyth of Ashton Court MSS; Nicholas Marlowe, 'West Country Boroughs 1640–1662' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1986) p. 268; William M. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, p. 236.
- 23 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 27 Aug 1661.
- 24 *Ibid.* 23 and 27 Sept 1661; William Prynne, *Brevia*, pp. 346–7.
- 25 Public Record Office, PC2.55, Privy Council Register (3 Oct 1660–30 May 1662), ff.385, 419A; R.E.M. Peach, *Swainswick*, pp. 43–4; Nicholas Marlowe, 'West Country Boroughs', pp. 269–70; William M. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne*, pp. 237–8.
- 26 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 27 Sept 1661; William Prynne, *Brevia*, pp. 349–50.
- 27 For a full description of the work of the local gentry in bringing about a moderate settlement see the 1992 revised edition of John Wroughton, *The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset*.
- 28 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 27 Oct 1662; Court of Whitehall – Order in Council.
- 29 The eight councillors marked with an asterisk signed the 'Articles exhibited against Capt. Henry Chapman', brought before the Recorder, Mayor and Council on 27 Sept 1661.
- 30 P.R. James, 'Documents of the City of Bath' (unpublished typescript in Bath Record Office), pp. 557–567, No. 44 – Commission for regulating the Corporation, 10–11 Oct 1662; No. 45 – Appointment of Lord Hawley, 11 Oct 1662; William Prynne, *Brevia*, pp. 334–6.
- 31 Bristol Record Office, AC/02/12, Smyth of Ashton Court MSS, Corporation of Bath to Smyth and Norton.
- 32 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 27 Sept 1661.
- 33 *Ibid.* 20 Oct 1663.